

ACTION PLAN ON TRANSFORMING PUBLIC GOVERNANCE FOR DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

The following are the key public governance areas of action for governments in OECD countries to respond to the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation for democracy. The actions build on the work of the Public Governance Committee (PGC) and on existing and future work of relevant OECD committees.

Key area 1 – Strengthen democratic representation and participation in the context of digitalisation

Encourage greater participation and engagement in elections and wider democratic processes through digital means by:

- Using dedicated digital channels to better inform, listen to and increase the engagement of citizens before, during and after electoral processes;
- Providing targeted support to citizens, such as through digital literacy, skills development and capacity building, to effectively and safely leverage digital channels to enhance their participation in democratic processes and empower them to exercise their civil and political rights;
- Supporting the development of digital channels for meaningful participation, deliberation and consultation beyond elections, at the national and sub national levels, leveraging civic technologies (see [Action Plan on Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life](#)); and
- Fostering information integrity to support fact-based public debate and promoting safe digital civic spaces where citizens can access information, express themselves, associate, organise and participate in public life, enabling democratic deliberation, preventing political polarisation during and beyond elections, and combating manipulation and deceptive content generated through or as a product of artificial intelligence systems (see [Action Plan on Public Governance for Combating Mis- and dis-information](#)).
- Promoting transparency and accountability in the development and use of digital and emerging technologies by companies, aiming for full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Ensure participation and engagement in elections and wider democratic processes is open to all by:

- Fostering political agency and political inclusion, including by providing easily accessible options for participation in electoral processes, in particular for young people, while preserving privacy and security;
- Preventing digital disenfranchisement of vulnerable and under-represented groups – such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and minorities – through measures such as ensuring equal access to information, use of clear and simple language, and guaranteeing equitable access to digital tools;
- Closing divides in participation in elections and democratic processes between urban and rural communities, with special considerations to vulnerable and under-represented groups, through differential training, support, consultation, and

access to infrastructure (including digital public infrastructure), to promote inclusion;

- Preventing abuse and online harassment of women candidates and candidates from vulnerable and under-represented groups during electoral campaigns and in public debates;
- Preventing disengagement from civic life and democratic processes by strengthening media and digital literacy of citizens in relation to civic education, in particular young people, to help them navigate public debate in an informed manner, and empower them to exercise their civil and political rights in the digital age, deploying civic tech solutions within government and/or in partnership with wider civic tech actors;
- Providing a smooth and cohesive experience across different channels to facilitate participation in democratic and electoral processes, while ensuring that human support remains available; and
- Promoting voter education to raise awareness about the potential risks and benefits of artificial intelligence in electoral processes, engaging citizens in understanding how these technologies are being used in elections and how they can contribute to safeguarding the integrity of the democratic process.

Protect the integrity of electoral systems, elections and wider democratic processes by:

- Ensuring the integrity, fairness, accuracy, and accountability of electoral administration, when using digital tools, including artificial intelligence, to strengthen trust in the electoral process;
- Combating mis- and dis-information during electoral campaigns ([Action Plan on Public Governance for Combating Mis- and Dis-information](#));
- Putting in place safeguards against undue domestic and foreign influence through digital platforms and other parts of the digital information eco-system affecting the public debate (see [Action Plan on Stronger Open Democracies in a Globalised World](#) and [Action Plan on Public Governance for Combating Mis- and Disinformation](#) and [Action Plan on Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life](#));
- Strengthening the digital capacities of electoral administrations to ensure electoral integrity and protect electoral data against undue domestic and foreign influence (see [Action Plan on Stronger Open Democracies in a Globalised World](#), [Action Plan on Public Governance for Combating Mis- and Disinformation](#) and [Action Plan on Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life](#));
- Closing regulatory gaps in online election-related processes, such as online campaign financing, online political advertising, and data-driven political micro-targeting, and support appropriate enforcement and redress mechanisms in case of breaches by electoral justice authorities;
- Supporting increased open data on political parties and campaign finance to facilitate civic monitoring and improve trust in electoral campaigns; and
- Engaging policymakers, experts and civil society in improving collective understanding of the promises, risks, and potential uses of artificial intelligence for democratic processes, to better anticipate opportunities and risks and update relevant policy and normative frameworks accordingly.

Key area 2 – Upgrade democratic institutions to respond to the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation for democracy

Enhance parliamentary engagement and oversight by:

- Leveraging digital technologies and innovations to enhance the representative, legislative and oversight role of parliaments, including to strengthen relations with constituencies, open deliberative processes, and facilitate digital hearings; and
- Strengthening the digital capabilities of institutions responsible for oversight, accountability and integrity of democratic institutions (such as parliamentary committees, audit institutions, anti-corruption bodies, ombudspersons) and leveraging data analytics, artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies.

Strengthen digital capabilities and capacities across the public sector to support citizens' engagement in democratic institutions and protect citizens' rights by:

- Ensuring that civil servants have the digital capacity and competencies necessary to support digital inclusion, as well as awareness of considerations for the trustworthy and ethical use of data and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, while promoting tools and policies to attract and retain diverse digital talents in the civil service;
- Ensuring that public service providers have the necessary capabilities to design and deliver high-quality services in the digital age, including developing a deep understanding of users, their needs, and the relevant technologies best suited to address them;
- Strengthening the digital capabilities of regulatory and enforcement authorities to keep pace with rapidly evolving technologies, both to perform their duties more effectively and to adjust their roles in the digital era, including bolstering their expertise in fields such as data science, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence;
- Ensuring that the institutions that protect citizens' political rights and civil liberties, notably justice systems, are equipped with the necessary digital capacities and tools to facilitate access to justice, perform existing roles and assume new responsibilities in the digital era;
- Guaranteeing the respect of individual and collective political rights and civil liberties, required for democracy to thrive both offline and online by embedding them in policy commitments and declarations related to rights;
- Improving transparency and accountability in the use of emerging technologies in the public sector through open registries and public access to the data and algorithms used to support decision-making and public policies;
- Reducing discretion and improving fairness in access to public services by leveraging digital technologies to involve users in the design and delivery of public services that are human-centric proactive and digital by design;
- Ensuring the responsible and trustworthy use of data and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, in the public sector in line with democratic values, including mitigating risks – e.g. of unauthorised access, data leaks and algorithmic bias – and establishing safeguards, guardrails and means of redress, especially in sensitive policy areas such as fraud prevention, law enforcement, and justice administration; and

- Ensuring citizen engagement in the development, deployment and regulation of artificial intelligence in the public sector.

Key area 3 – Leverage key policy tools to respond to the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation for democracy

- Providing the necessary budgetary resources for the development, maintenance and use of technology-neutral and resilient digital tools for democratic purposes;
- Taking a risk-based, technology-neutral and future-proof approach to the regulation of digital activities that impact the functioning of democracy;
- Designing solutions jointly with international partners to ensure a global level playing field and reduce opportunities for regulatory arbitrage;
- Securing universal access to digital identification, with safeguards for privacy and security, allowing citizens to prove their identity online, claim their civic rights, and exercise their democratic duties; and
- Enhancing civic engagement through increased availability, accessibility, and re-use of relevant data (e.g. on elections, lobbying, budgeting, and procurement) by civil society, independent media, political parties and parliaments.

Working collectively through the OECD:

- In line with the [Action Plan on Public Governance for Combating Mis- and Dis-information](#), engage experts and policymakers through the **OECD Hub on Information Integrity** (previously OECD DIS/MIS Resource Hub) to advance the recommendations of the OECD Report “[Facts not Fakes: Tackling Disinformation, Strengthening Information Integrity](#)”, promoting global impact especially considering the potential influence of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence on public debate and elections.
- In line with the *additional focused Action Plan on Gender Equality* (Box A of [Action Plan on Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life](#)), deepen analysis on the gender aspects of this Action Plan, including the documentation and exchange of good practices to address online harassment, in particular in relation to women candidates, in elections and online democratic debate.
- In collaboration with other OECD committees, explore possible support for OECD Members in the area of digital literacy for democratic participation.
- Encourage global dialogue, foster policy analysis, and share evidence on the impact of civic technologies on democracy and opportunities to embed them in institutional settings through case studies and a global report on civic tech for democracy, leveraging the OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI).
- In collaboration with the OECD Regulatory Policy Committee, develop an initiative focused on **Better Regulation for the Digital Age (BRiDge)** to support countries in ensuring the most effective and efficient regulatory governance for digital activities and bridge the gaps between countries, regions and their governance approaches to digital activities.
- Promote rights-based and people-centred approaches in the design and delivery of public services to foster trust in government through the OECD Recommendation on Human-Centric Public Administrative Services [[OECD/LEGAL/0503](#)], called for by Ministers in the Declaration on Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy [[OECD/LEGAL/0484](#)].

- Foster the exchange of good practices on the digital transformation of justice as a critical public service, the ethical use of emerging technologies in law enforcement and justice administration, and the role of judicial authorities in enforcing rights in the digital era.
- Advance policy analysis, dialogue and guidance on the necessary skills and knowledge of public servants to design and implement initiatives related to digital democracy, building and expanding on recent work on digital skills in the public service.
- Advance policy analysis, dialogue, and guidance on the trustworthy and responsible use of artificial intelligence in the public sector, including on data ethics and algorithmic transparency, in particular in critical and sensitive public governance and electoral domains, in close collaboration with the Working Party on Artificial Intelligence Governance and its OECD AI Observatory, under the Digital Policy Committee (DPC).
- Facilitate knowledge sharing through policy analysis and guidance to advance a common understanding on how political rights and civil liberties should be respected online.
- Analyse, through the work on Governing with AI, opportunities and challenges of the use of generative AI in public governance for democratic outcomes.