



Recommendation of the Council on
Information and Communication
Technologies and the
Environment

**OECD Legal
Instruments**

This document is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. It reproduces an OECD Legal Instrument and may contain additional material. The opinions expressed and arguments employed in the additional material do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD Member countries.

This document, as well as any data and any map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

For access to the official and up-to-date texts of OECD Legal Instruments, as well as other related information, please consult the Compendium of OECD Legal Instruments at <http://legalinstruments.oecd.org>.

Please cite this document as:

OECD, *Recommendation of the Council on Information and Communication Technologies and the Environment*, OECD/LEGAL/0380

Series: OECD Legal Instruments

© OECD 2018

This document is provided free of charge. It may be reproduced and distributed free of charge without requiring any further permissions, as long as it is not altered in any way. It may not be sold.

This document is available in the two OECD official languages (English and French). It may be translated into other languages, as long as the translation is labelled "unofficial translation" and includes the following disclaimer: *"This translation has been prepared by [NAME OF TRANSLATION AUTHOR] for informational purpose only and its accuracy cannot be guaranteed by the OECD. The only official versions are the English and French texts available on the OECD website <http://legalinstruments.oecd.org>"*

Date(s)

Adopted on 08/04/2010

Background Information

The Recommendation on Information and Communication Technologies and the Environment was adopted by the OECD Council on 8 April 2010 on the proposal of the Committee for Information, Computer and Communications Policy (now called Committee on Digital Economy Policy). The Recommendation aims to support national efforts to establish, improve and review policies on information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the environment. The Recommendation focuses on policies to increase public awareness, change consumer behaviour and improve business performance, and takes into account the Recommendation of the European Commission to mobilise ICTs to facilitate the transition to an energy-efficient, low-carbon economy.

THE COUNCIL

HAVING REGARD to Article 5 b) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14 December 1960;

HAVING REGARD to the Seoul Declaration for the Future of the Internet Economy [C(2008)99], the Recommendation of the Council on Resource Productivity [C(2008)40], the Recommendation of the Council for Enhanced Access and More Effective Use of Public Sector Information [C(2008)36], the Recommendation of the Council on Improving the Environmental Performance of Public Procurement [C(2002)3], and the Recommendation of the Council on Environmental Information [C(98)67];

HAVING REGARD to the OECD aim to build a “stronger, cleaner, fairer world economy”, and the need to strengthen efforts to pursue green growth strategies as outlined in the Ministerial Declaration on Green Growth, which considered that “international co-operation will be crucial in areas such as the ... application of green ICT for raising energy efficiency” and recognised “that special efforts need to be made at the international level for co-operation on developing clean technology, including by reinforcing green ICT activities” [C/MIN(2009)5/ADD1/FINAL];

CONSIDERING that better use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is a major factor in improving environmental performance and addressing climate change and that they have key roles in increasing energy efficiency, managing scarce resources, combating climate change, and tackling other environmental challenges including protection of biodiversity, directly, in other sectors, or by underpinning systemic behavioural change;

AIMING to support national efforts to establish, improve and review policies on ICTs and the environment;

RECOGNISING that this Recommendation focuses on government policy and environmental performance, including policies to increase public awareness, change consumer behaviour and improve business performance.

On the proposal of the Committee for Information, Computer and Communications Policy:

I. **RECOMMENDS** that, in establishing or reviewing their policies for information and communication technologies and the environment, Members take due account of and implement the following principles, which provide a general framework for enhancing the contribution of information and communication technologies to improving environmental performance:

Co-ordinating ICT, Climate, Environment and Energy Policies

1. Members should coordinate ICT policies and climate, environment and energy policies to improve environmental performance, tackle climate change, enhance energy efficiency and improve sustainable resource management. They should aim to bridge the gap between ICT, climate, environment and energy experts, policy makers and stakeholders and extend understanding among these groups of: i) the direct effects of ICTs themselves on the environment, ii) the enabling effects of ICT applications in other sectors, and iii) the systemic effects to change social and cultural behaviour through the use of ICTs.

Adopting Life Cycle Perspectives

2. Members should encourage the adoption of life cycle perspectives in ICT and ICT-enabled applications for sustainable management of natural resources and materials in production, use and end-of-life phases. They should, to the extent possible, promote coherent environment-friendly and sustainable R&D, design, production, use and disposal of ICTs, and extend their working life wherever environmentally efficient. Members should also encourage the development of methodologies and indicators to measure and monitor impacts over the life cycles of ICT goods and services and “smart” ICT-enabled applications in buildings, transport and energy systems, including developing baseline measures of embedded and actual green-house gas emissions.

Supporting Research and Innovation in Green Technologies and Services

3. Members should support long-term basic research, and where possible stimulate research and development in resource-efficient ICTs and “smart” applications for example through technology-neutral tax incentives or carbon offset mechanisms, and encourage user-driven innovation. They should encourage development of ICT applications for measuring and monitoring environmental challenges and promote co-operation and knowledge exchange between ICT and non-ICT firms, research institutions, governments, and other stakeholders. Finally they should use flagship demonstration projects to diffuse promising “smart” ICT-enabled applications.

Developing Green ICT Skills

4. Members should promote green ICT related education, training and skill development to meet demand for environmental skills and expertise at all levels and in all industries. They should also encourage interdisciplinary co-operation in developing green ICT education and training.

Increasing Public Awareness of the Role of ICTs in Improving Environmental Performance

5. Members should increase public and consumer awareness of environmental implications of using ICTs and their potential to improve environmental performance. They should promote widespread development and adoption of clear standards and eco-labels based on life cycle approaches to production, use and disposal of ICT goods and ICT-enabled applications. This includes spreading awareness of the direct effects of ICTs, enabling effects of ICT applications in buildings, transport and energy, and the potential of ICTs to have systemic effects on social and cultural behaviour.

Encouraging Best Practices

6. Members should encourage the wide sharing of best practices to maximise the diffusion of green ICTs and “smart” ICT-enabled applications in the public and private sector, including governments, businesses, civil society and regional and international organisations. They should exchange information and good practices on how to ensure data protection, security and privacy in “smart” ICT-enabled applications. They should themselves share good practices in measuring economic and social environmental impacts of ICTs and ICT-enabled applications. Finally, they should use these principles to review and collect information on national policies and initiatives and exchange information on policy development.

Governments Leading by Example

7. Members should minimise the environmental impact of ICTs in public administration through green ICT approaches, applications and services. To the extent possible, they should maximise resource efficiency of public facilities by using “smart” ICT applications in lighting, heating and cooling, and building control, including enhancing process efficiency and organisational change in public administration through teleworking and videoconferencing to reduce commuting and travelling. They should also minimise ICT-related disposal through reduce, reuse, and recycle policies.

Improving Public Procurement

8. Members should take greater account of environmental criteria in public procurement of ICT goods and services and increasing environmental innovation among suppliers. This includes providing an appropriate policy framework that incorporates environmental price and performance criteria in public procurement, where it is economic to do so, including total life cycle costs of ICT goods and services, and providing information, training and technical assistance to officials in the ICT public procurement and use chain.

Encouraging Measurement

9. Members should encourage development of comparable measures of the environmental impacts of ICT goods and services and ICT-enabled applications and among similar products. They should also increase understanding of the effects of government policies (information, incentives, regulations) on improving measurement tools and increasing public awareness.

Setting Policy Targets and Increasing Evaluation

10. Members should set transparent policy objectives and targets to measure and improve government green ICT strategies, including ICT-enabled applications across the economy. They should monitoring compliance with policies on a regular basis to set clear responsibilities and improve accountability. Where appropriate, they should apply voluntary approaches where self-monitoring and self-reporting can be effective and where tough but achievable voluntary targets can be met. Finally, they should encourage the adoption of appropriate national legislation that sets the ground for implementation of green ICT strategies.

II. INVITES:

1. Members to disseminate this Recommendation throughout the public and private sectors, including governments, businesses, civil society and other international and regional organisations to encourage all relevant participants to take the necessary steps to better harness information and communication technologies to tackle environmental challenges and to improve the environmental performance of information and communication technologies;
2. Non-members to adhere to this Recommendation and collaborate with Members in its implementation.

III. INSTRUCTS the Committee for Information, Computer and Communications Policy to promote the implementation of this Recommendation and review such implementation after three years, and as required subsequently, to enhance the positive effects of information and communication technologies on the environment.

Adherents*

OECD Members

Australia
Austria
Belgium
Canada
Chile
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Japan
Korea
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Mexico
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Turkey
United Kingdom

Non-Members

Peru

* Additional information and statements are available in the Compendium of OECD Legal Instruments:
<http://legalinstruments.oecd.org>

About the OECD

The OECD is a unique forum where governments work together to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalisation. The OECD is also at the forefront of efforts to understand and to help governments respond to new developments and concerns, such as corporate governance, the information economy and the challenges of an ageing population. The Organisation provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and work to co-ordinate domestic and international policies.

The OECD Member countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. The European Union takes part in the work of the OECD.

OECD Legal Instruments

Since the creation of the OECD in 1961, around 450 substantive legal instruments have been developed within its framework. These include OECD Acts (i.e. the Decisions and Recommendations adopted by the OECD Council in accordance with the OECD Convention) and other legal instruments developed within the OECD framework (e.g. Declarations, international agreements).

All substantive OECD legal instruments, whether in force or abrogated, are listed in the online Compendium of OECD Legal Instruments. They are presented in five categories:

- **Decisions:** OECD legal instruments which are legally binding on all Members except those which abstain at the time of adoption. While they are not international treaties, they entail the same kind of legal obligations. Adherents are obliged to implement Decisions and must take the measures necessary for such implementation.
- **Recommendations:** OECD legal instruments which are not legally binding but practice accords them great moral force as representing the political will of Adherents. There is an expectation that Adherents will do their utmost to fully implement a Recommendation. Thus, Members which do not intend to do so usually abstain when a Recommendation is adopted, although this is not required in legal terms.
- **Declarations:** OECD legal instruments which are prepared within the Organisation, generally within a subsidiary body. They usually set general principles or long-term goals, have a solemn character and are usually adopted at Ministerial meetings of the Council or of committees of the Organisation.
- **International Agreements:** OECD legal instruments negotiated and concluded within the framework of the Organisation. They are legally binding on the Parties.
- **Arrangement, Understanding and Others:** several ad hoc substantive legal instruments have been developed within the OECD framework over time, such as the Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits, the International Understanding on Maritime Transport Principles and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendations.