Agenda

7th annual meeting of the OECD Expert Group on Open Government Data

14-15 JUNE 2021 (VIRTUAL)
From the outset, the access to and sharing of high-quality and timely data has been critical in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD and ODC, forthcoming). Opening up government data can facilitate the free flow of data to enhance scientific research, enable social and economic recovery, and improve public sector responsiveness, accountability and integrity [1]. It allows decision makers and the scientific and academic communities to analyse, compare, and test new hypotheses related to the virus. It also empowers watchdogs to better scrutinize government decisions, including in terms of emergency expenditure.

The 6th Meeting of the OECD Expert Group on Open Government Data (11 – 12 June, 2020) discussed how the initial uses of open data to tackle COVID-19 [2] largely focused on situational analysis to enable a collective response to the pandemic. For instance, evidence from the OECD-Govlab joint analytical work (OECD and Govlab, 2021) shows how governments’ early policy responses prioritised access to open data and the development of data visualisation platforms to increase awareness of the pandemic’s development. More recently, national and local governments publish as open data information on the progress of vaccination campaigns as open data (e.g. France, Peru and State of California) [3]. However, the full potential of open data remains untapped. It could be an important tool for countering dis- and mis-information, for example, and for improving service design and delivery.
Open government data and the fight against misinformation

The access to and sharing of trusted data can produce reliable information and insights to inform decision-making, including by individuals. Yet, information and data overload, often exacerbated by social media, can affect individuals’ ability to discern between accurate and inaccurate data, and between trustworthy and misleading data sources.

In 2020, the World Health Organisation identified a global “infodemic”, defined as an overabundance of both accurate and false information that makes it difficult to identify trustworthy sources (WHO, 2020). The United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) have both also underlined the risks misinformation poses to policy responses to fight COVID-19 [see United Nations (2020) & NATO (2020)]. These challenges can reduce individuals’ trust in official information and data sources and their ability to make well-informed decisions.

The spread of dis- and misinformation can lead individuals to put personal health and safety at risk. Misinformation about COVID-19 has been named the “biggest pandemic risk” for public health (Larson, 2018), as evidence shows that false or inaccurate information can discourage citizens from following health guidance and taking proactive measures, negatively affect willingness to get vaccinated, and undermine confidence in science, health systems and workers, and government institutions (Pomeranz and Schwid, 2021). For instance, data from the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that 36% of people in that country believe that the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccination could be worse than the disease itself and another 22% believe rumours on the potential impact of vaccination on fertility (OAG, 2021).

Furthermore, with the increasing use of data-driven technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the availability of meaningless and irrelevant data (noisy data) (Gupta and Gupta, 2019) can affect the accuracy and precision of the insights and subsequent decisions supported by AI systems, including by governments. As a result, the growing use of AI by public sector organisations (e.g. to improve the quality of public policies) entails responsibility and accountability, including in the selection of data used to inform algorithms (OECD, 2021).

In light of the above, the identification of trusted COVID-19 data sources is crucial to help individuals navigate information overload and access reliable information (Lima, Lopes and Brito, 2020), and enable trustworthy decision making. Opening up government data enables governments to communicate and fill data vacuums (as discussed in the forthcoming OECD Good Practice Principles on public communication responses to countering mis- and disinformation), allow fact checking and fight misinformation [4]. It is also critical for increasing trust in decision-making processes, in particular those relying on the access to and sharing of data and the use of data-driven technologies, such as AI.
Open government data as an enabler of people-driven services

While earlier OECD work on open government data has stressed its potential in the design and delivery of services that respond to people’s needs (OECD, 2018), user-driven [5] services built on open government data have not materialised as expected.

Since April 2020, the benefits of OGD were evident in sharing timely and essential information such as on health services (e.g. hospital occupancy rates, location). Large quantities of open government data have been made available and accessible via repositories, portals, and data visualisation tools. The publication of OGD has focused on responding to the broader public interest and societal demands (e.g. emergency expenditure, social monitoring of COVID-19 spread) associated with the pandemic, rather than on creating services individuals can use in their day-to-day life. There was limited evidence of dedicated services or innovations created from the re-use of this data to meet the individual needs of citizens when dealing with the pandemic.

Evidence from the joint OECD-Govlab work on open data and COVID-19 shows a missed opportunity to use OGD for more sophisticated products or services to help individuals cope with the disease (OECD and Govlab, 2021).

OECD member countries, like Korea, a global leader on OGD, offer an insight into how open government data and collaboration with private sector companies could be used to design services providing information on face mask pricing, stores’ location and masks’ availability. Nevertheless, scaling up efforts such as these requires access to additional types of structured, disaggregated, accurate and updated data (e.g. location and stores with available oxygen tanks, and public and private health service providers providing access to tests and vaccines, including their pricing) to facilitate the development of personalised services.
Common policy priorities and the OECD work for the years to come

Pursuing digital maturity and data competency in the public sector will remain critical in the years to come. Making sure that digital tools and data can be used to increase governments’ preparedness and capability to respond to emergencies and tackle global challenges, requires solid digital and data governance foundations and a stronger strategic focus on data re-use, including to fight misinformation and develop people-driven services.

Multilateral policy dialogue, including through the OECD, can help promote sustainable investments in digital government, data and open data strategies, that can deliver better impact and value to societies and economies. OECD standard setting, analytical and measurement work on data will support the identification and tackling of common policy priorities by national governments in the medium and long term.

This includes the OECD work on:

- Data access and sharing [COM/DSTI/CDEP/STP/GOV/PGC(2020)1/REV2];
- Data-driven public sector [including on data governance & data ethics in the public sector [see OECD (2019) and (2021)]
- Open government data [including the OECD Open, Useful, and Re-usable data, OURdata Index]; and,
- The OECD Digital Government Policy Framework and the OECD Digital Government Index [see OECD (2020[a]) and OECD (2020[b])].
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CLOSED SESSION

Online registration
12h45 - 13h00

Session 4. OECD Open government data survey & OURData Index 2022
13h00 - 14h00

Session 5. Looking forward: Identifying policy priorities
14h00 - 14h30
Program Flow - Day 1

Online registration 12h45 - 13h00

- Delegates are expected to join 15 minutes before the meeting starts using the Zoom link sent by email after registration.

- Please use the following name format to connect to the meeting: COUNTRY – Name, LASTNAME or ORGANISATION – Name, LASTNAME.

Opening remarks 13h00 - 13h10

- Elsa Pilichowski, Director, Directorate for Public Governance, OECD

Session 1. One Year after the First Wave of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Tacking stock of lessons-learnt 13h10 - 14h00

- This session will provide the opportunity to report back on lessons learned one year after the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 meeting of the Expert Group. The session will introduce the key findings from OECD work in this area to promote discussion of the challenges ahead and awareness amongst decision-makers from OECD member and non-member countries of the need to use open government data as a driver of performance, trust and well-being.

- Delegates are invited to share their experiences and thoughts on what went well and what they would do differently to foster mutual learning and identify opportunities for collective efforts in the coming year.

Break 14h00 - 14h05
### Program Flow - Day 1

#### Session 2. Tacking COVID-19 misinformation through open government data 14h05 - 15h00

- This session will look at how governments use data to communicate effectively with the public and explore the relationship between open data policies and the fight against misinformation. Discussions will cover the use of data to foster collaboration, including among centres of government, national statistical offices, health ministries and digital government bodies, to increase trust in official sources and counterbalance unreliable data and their sources. The session will also address the challenges that misinformation poses to data-driven decision-making models and the actions governments can take to address these risks, including good practices related to public communication.

- Delegates are invited to share their views on how the access to and sharing of open data sources, including OGD, and the use of digital tools in public communications, can help in fighting misinformation, and to discuss OGD as a tool for checking facts and as a source of trustworthy information about COVID-19.

#### Break 15h00 - 15h05

#### Session 3. Open government data and public services: Facilitating people's journeys throughout the crisis 15h05 - 16h00

- This session will reflect on the role and potential of open data for the design and delivery of people-driven public services, and how these can help individuals better cope with the pandemic and its aftermath. It will discuss the main trends observed across governments when it comes to data publication and will explore how open government data could be used to further address the needs of individuals by building services that rely on it.

- Delegates are invited to share their experiences and the challenges they faced in using open government data as an enabler of sustainable user-driven services. From this perspective, delegates are invited to share their views in relation to the need to generate and share additional types of structured, disaggregated, accurate and timely OGD, and the role of public-private partnerships in enabling open data access and sharing for emergency response and service design and delivery.
Session 4. OECD Open government data survey and OURdata Index 2022  

This session will provide an opportunity for the OECD Secretariat to share the latest developments concerning the OECD Open Government Data Survey and the Open, Useful and Re-usable data (OURdata) Index, allowing delegates to provide final comments on the revised survey and its piloting in the second half of 2021.

Session 5. Looking forward: Identifying policy priorities  

Drawing upon Day 1 and Day 2, and the lessons learned so far from the use of open data in the fight against COVID-19 and the gaps it unveiled, this session will allow delegates to identify their policy priorities for the following biennium. This will provide the basis for discussing the potential role of the OECD and exploring possible areas of work in this regard in connection with the preparation of the Programme of Work and Budget for 2022-23.
REFERENCES


OECD and ODC (forthcoming), [Policy+] Rebooting open government data infrastructures to manage health emergencies.


REFERENCES


NOTES


