

## Public governance

### AN EFFECTIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE PUBLIC SECTOR AT NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

- ▶ Portugal has shown a strong commitment towards a more effective and efficient public sector. The current cross-cutting Simplex+ programme is a clear example.
- ▶ However, the country is not yet sufficiently using data as a strategic asset to build strong citizen-driven public governance policies.
- ▶ Portugal should deepen its efforts to digitally transform its public sector by ensuring that data is used to build public sector intelligence as well as identifying and developing the current and future skills for a digitally-agile civil service.

#### What's the issue?

Portugal has undertaken important reforms to make the public sector more efficient and effective. The cross-cutting Simplex+ programme, which brings together the reform agenda on digital government, public sector innovation and strategic human resources management, is a good example. The improvements achieved in the last decade are clear, placing Portugal among the European frontrunners in terms of digital government development.

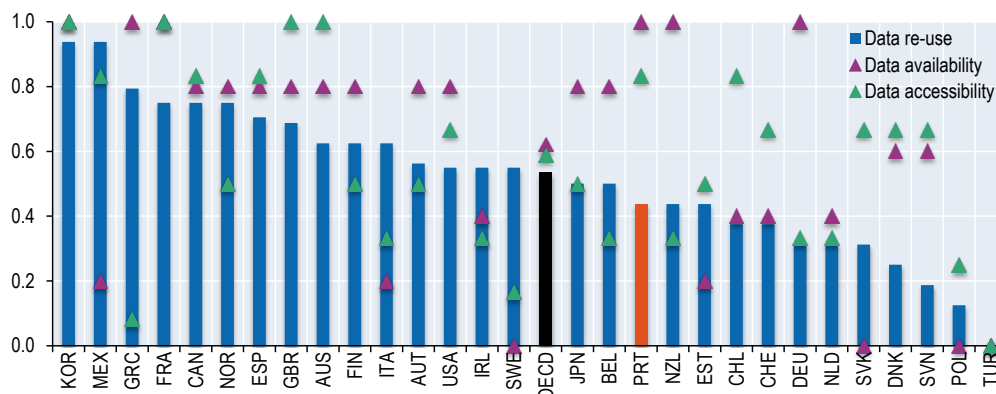
But despite these achievements, the public sector efficiency and effectiveness remains an ongoing issue. Today's demanding citizens and companies expect sustainable, inclusive and tailored public services. While Portugal ranks among the top OECD countries on the availability and accessibility of government data, it lags behind its peers in terms of data re-use (see Figure). Portugal needs to take the full benefit of data as a strategic asset to better serve

citizens and companies. Portugal's digital transformation is also creating new challenges for the civil service by raising skills needs for the civil service and defying traditional performance management systems. The country therefore needs to put in place strategic human resources policies to ensure that civil servants are ready for a data-driven and digitally-agile civil service.

Especially at the regional and city level, data-driven value creation implies data re-use at all levels of government. This is particularly true at the regional and city level where data re-use is more likely to produce direct impact on people's lives. Portugal's move towards a data-driven public sector is therefore challenged by the still unbalanced decentralization framework, which is characterized by unclear responsibilities allocated to subnational governments and lack of instruments facilitating inter-

#### Portugal has room to strengthen government support for the re-use of its data

Components of the Open-Useful-Re-Usable Government Data (OURData) Index, from 0 (worst performance) to 1 (best performance)



Source: 2014 OECD Survey on Open Government Data.

municipal cooperation or regional scale investment. The limits of the current governance framework have prompted a wide variety of reforms, notably the 2007 reform of the Local Finance Act and more recently the 2012-13 local government reform, and a new wave of reforms to strengthen the multi-level governance and decentralisation frameworks of the country is currently under discussion. In particular, Portugal needs more effective governance arrangements at the level of the *Comunidades Intermunicipais* (CIM), both in terms of their capacity to provide the relevant services as well as the challenges of inter-municipal cooperation where needed when they cross the boundaries of more than one CIM. These supra-municipal issues are particularly important for metropolitan areas given the higher levels of commuting flows and infrastructure demands. Well-functioning cities serve as growth drivers for their respective regions and the country as a whole.

### Why is this important for Portugal?

Portugal has the opportunity to lead the way and build a truly data-driven public sector, by putting data at the centre of the reform of the public sector agenda and engaging stakeholders from across the public and private sectors, as well as from civil society. Better use of data helps to improve public policies monitoring processes and to strengthen the government forecasting capacities, building the necessary public sector intelligence that can decisively contribute to growth, inclusiveness and wellbeing. Data is also a key strategic asset to open new ways of tailoring public service delivery, allowing for a clearer synchronization with the needs of citizens and business.



### Further reading

Chatry I. and C. Hulbert (2017), *Multi-level Governance Reforms: Overview of OECD Country Experiences*, *OECD Multi-level Governance Studies*, OECD Publishing, forthcoming.

OECD (2016), *Digital Government Toolkit*, OECD Publishing. <http://www.oecd.org/governance/digital-government/toolkit/>

OECD (2016), *Engaging Public Employees for a High-Performing Civil Service*, OECD Publishing. <https://www.oecd.org/publications/engaging-public-employees-for-a-high-performing-civil-service-9789264267190-en.htm>

OECD (2014), *Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies*. <http://www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government/Recommendation-digital-government-strategies.pdf>

OECD (2014), *Recommendation on Effective Public Investment Across Levels of Government*. <http://www.oecd.org/effective-public-investment-toolkit/>

### What should policy makers do?

- ▶ Outline a business case of open data policies by co-creating social, economic and good governance value in collaboration with external stakeholders.
- ▶ Develop a government-wide civil service strategic vision with clear statements about the future requirements of the civil service in terms of skills, performance and leadership.
- ▶ Use employer branding to position the public sector as an employer of choice in order to recruit, retain, and motivate high-quality talent, capable of contributing to a digital and data-rich public workplace.
- ▶ Foster data re-use at all levels of government, particularly at the city level where data re-use is more likely to lead to direct impact on people's lives.
- ▶ Strengthen inter-municipal cooperation and strengthen governance arrangements at the CIM level.
- ▶ Further decentralise some competencies to municipalities, especially in sectors such as transportation, education, healthcare, culture and social assistance.