E-Leaders from 28 OECD member and partner countries took part in the OECD 2016 E-Leaders meeting, in Tallinn, Estonia, along with representatives from civil society, the private sector and international organisations. Discussions over two days focused on how to make data-driven public sectors a reality.

Digital technologies can enable a more strategic management and use of data, and thus a real transformation of the public sector. But are E-Leaders ready to be at the leading edge of this digital transformation?

The meeting allowed delegates to discuss the different ways of fostering "data-driven public sector" and the different implementation challenges of such an approach across different national contexts. Delegates exchanged views and experiences on the concrete actions needed to improve data management and embed data use throughout the policy cycle, as well as in service design and delivery. The ultimate goal of these efforts is to enhance public sector productivity and make decision-making processes more inclusive, for higher overall societal well-being.

In his keynote address to the participants, Dr. Rufus Pollock, President and founder of Open Knowledge International, stressed that the use of data should not be seen as an end in itself. It can be help improve public governance to the extent that we can extract insights for governments to take action upon. Dr. Pollock stressed the need to overcome impediments to the flow and combining of information within government, to promote the use of open government data to save money, and to encourage information sharing and innovation within government as well as outside it. He challenged delegates to embrace open data and open software as a way to reduce lock-in and increase flexibility and agility.

Delegates highlighted the advantages of modelling, data visualisation and data analytics as opportunities to improve foresight, solve old problems in new ways, and improve effectiveness and efficiency through data reuse. Yet, they also acknowledged citizens' complex, evolving views on privacy, which vary across demographics and depend on how data can be reused to create better public services. E-Leaders must be ready to strike a careful and informed balance between service convenience, public sector efficiency and principled use of data as this can have a significant impact on public trust. Delegates explored the strengths of different methods to create consistency in the public sector: through laws, regulations, and collaborative and co-operative models. Improving wider public sector digital and data literacy was considered crucial both to implementing a data-driven public sector, and to creating more inclusive and sustainable governance rather than new forms of digital divide.

Colin MacDonald, Chair of the E-Leaders Working Party, Chief Executive of the Department of Internal Affairs and Chief Information Officer for the Government of New Zealand, said: "Data-driven technology is now central to how governments do business and plan for the

future. It is imperative for all public sector leaders to have a good grasp on technology in order to fully comprehend the opportunities, risks and political consequences of decisions we make and tools we employ. Equally, it is incumbent on specialist technology leaders to align ICT investments closely with the priorities of their governments".

OECD Deputy Secretary General Ms. Mari Kiviniemi highlighted the challenge for government policy makers to move away from the analogue. She encouraged E-Leaders to continue the work to fulfil the promises of a "data-driven public sector" by helping policy makers and politicians across public sectors embed data-driven practices into public policy, and challenged the group to push governments towards a systemic change in how we serve our fellow citizens.

Delegates also welcomed the online publication of the OECD Digital Government Toolkit, which highlights good national practices. Based on the OECD Council Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies, approved in July 2014, the Toolkit assists countries in implementing the 12 principles of the Recommendation. In recognition of the fact that the digital agenda has become a mainstreamed agenda for many OECD governments, the Toolkit is seen as a way to support delegates in their daily endeavour of embedding technology at the core of public sector reforms. The good practices in the Toolkit are open to all, and E-Leaders expressed their commitment to the values of transparency, openness and inclusiveness by agreeing that the Toolkit should remain a living repository of good practices.

Further work will be undertaken in the next year to develop indicators to help countries measure progress against the Recommendation. These will complement and build upon existing measures such as those developed by the European Union. E-Leaders also agreed to establish small topical groups to work together on issues such as digital identity, digital services and ICT procurement.

For more information about the 2016 E-Leaders meeting or the OECD's work on Digital Government issues, please contact: digital.gov@oecd.org.