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Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy – Key Issues Paper

Ministerial Brief

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Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy

Key Issues Paper – Ministerial Brief

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Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy

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Reinforcing Democracy Initiative

INTRO

Introduction: BUILDING TRUST AND REINFORCING DEMOCRACY

The present economic, social, geo-political and environmental context is particularly challenging for democracies. More than a decade after the Great Financial Crisis and its long term consequences on citizens' trust in government, the world is emerging from the worst global pandemic in 100 years.

The COVID-19 pandemic tested the ability of governments to respond to a crisis at speed and scale. For the most part, governments in OECD countries did a remarkable job. Nonetheless, crucial lessons continue to be learned and the economic and social ramifications of the past two years are still playing out. At the same time, Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine has dragged down growth more than anticipated, intensified inflation, which became widespread across countries and consumer items, and heightened the risk of energy disruptions, leaving citizens with a very real cost of living crisis (OECD, 2022[1]). Longer-term global challenges, such as climate change and the ramifications of the digital transformation, also remain a top priority, affecting citizens' trust in government.

In parallel, public satisfaction with the way democracies are functioning across the world has decreased since the mid-1990s, including in a number of OECD countries.
This is playing out differently across countries, including through low voter turnout, greater political polarisation and larger groups dissociating themselves from traditional democratic processes or expressing discontent through new types of protest. Beyond affecting social cohesion in OECD countries, this trend is increasingly hindering policy making and governments' ability to address social and economic challenges.

Against this background, OECD countries have recognised the importance of strengthening their democracies. This includes both deepening mature democratic systems in view of wider societal changes such as digitalisation, increased expectations of democratic participation and representation, as well as newer challenges such as environmental and biodiversity crises, and protecting the democratic governance model from internal and external threats from state and non-state actors. Social and economic factors, such as increased economic and territorial inequalities also play an important role.

The OECD Survey on the Drivers of Trust in Institutions (hereafter "the OECD Trust Survey"), carried out in 22 OECD countries, representing over 50,000 responses from citizens, finds that democratic public institutions are performing fairly well on many measures of trust, such as openness of administrative

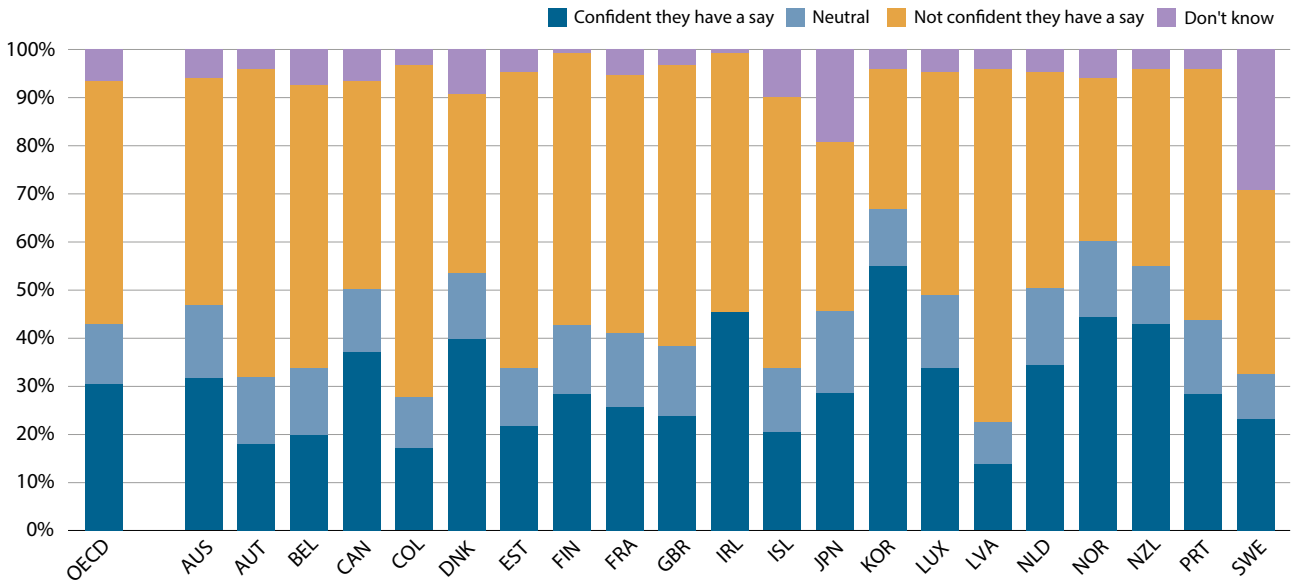
processes and public service provision. Nevertheless, a disconnect exists, driven by governments being seen as falling short of many citizens' expectations for representation in decision-making, and as not responsive enough to people's demands. Indeed, just over one in four respondents (30.2%) report that the political system lets them have a say (Figure 1). The system appears to be working well for some, but not for all, with young people, women and disadvantaged groups having lower levels of trust in institutions. There is also widespread scepticism around the integrity of policy makers. A polarisation of results along partisan lines and scepticism towards the news media suggests that a key component of democracy, access to reliable information, is today a factor of distrust (OECD, 2022[2]).

Investments in reinforcing trust are all the more important in the face of global challenges. Trust will be key to successful government action to address them, but could also be lost if progress is not seen to be made. While 50.4% of respondents to the OECD Trust Survey think governments should be doing more to reduce climate change, only 35.5% are confident that countries will actually succeed in reducing their country's contribution to climate change – and those who think their government will succeed are more likely to trust their government (OECD, 2022[2]).

The 2022 PGC Ministerial meeting represents an important opportunity to take the trust and democracy agenda forward. In spring 2021, the OECD Public Governance Committee launched the Reinforcing Democracy Initiative (hereafter "the Initiative"). With the dual goal of strengthening democratic governance and protecting it from existing and emerging threats, the Initiative addresses three common governance challenges of advanced and mature democracies: i) Combating Mis- and Dis-Information, ii) Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life and iii) Stronger Open Democracies in a Globalised World: Embracing the Global Responsibilities of Governments and Building Resilience to Foreign Influence. In addition, the Initiative incorporates two horizontal themes, looking across all three pillars, on the major challenges of climate and democracy, and digitalisation and democracy. Underpinned by the

FIGURE 1. **Just over one in four respondents say the political system lets them have a say in government decision-making**

Share of respondents reporting different levels of confidence that the political system lets them have a say in government decision-making (0-10 scale), 2021



Note: Figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question "How much would you say the political system in your country allows people like you to have a say in what the government does?" The "Confident" proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; "neutral" is equal to a response of 5; "Not confident" is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and "Don't know" was a separate answer choice. "OECD" presents the unweighted average across countries. Finland's scale ranges from 1-10. In Norway and Finland, the question was formulated in a slightly different way. Norway's question reads "To what extent would you say that the Norwegian political system allows people such as yourself to exercise political influence?" Finland's question reads "How much would you say the political system in Finland allows people like you to have a say in what the government does?" Mexico is excluded from the figure as the data are not available. For more detailed information on the survey questionnaire and processes in specific countries, please find the survey method document at http://oe.cd/trust.

Source: OECD Trust Survey (http://oe.cd/trust)

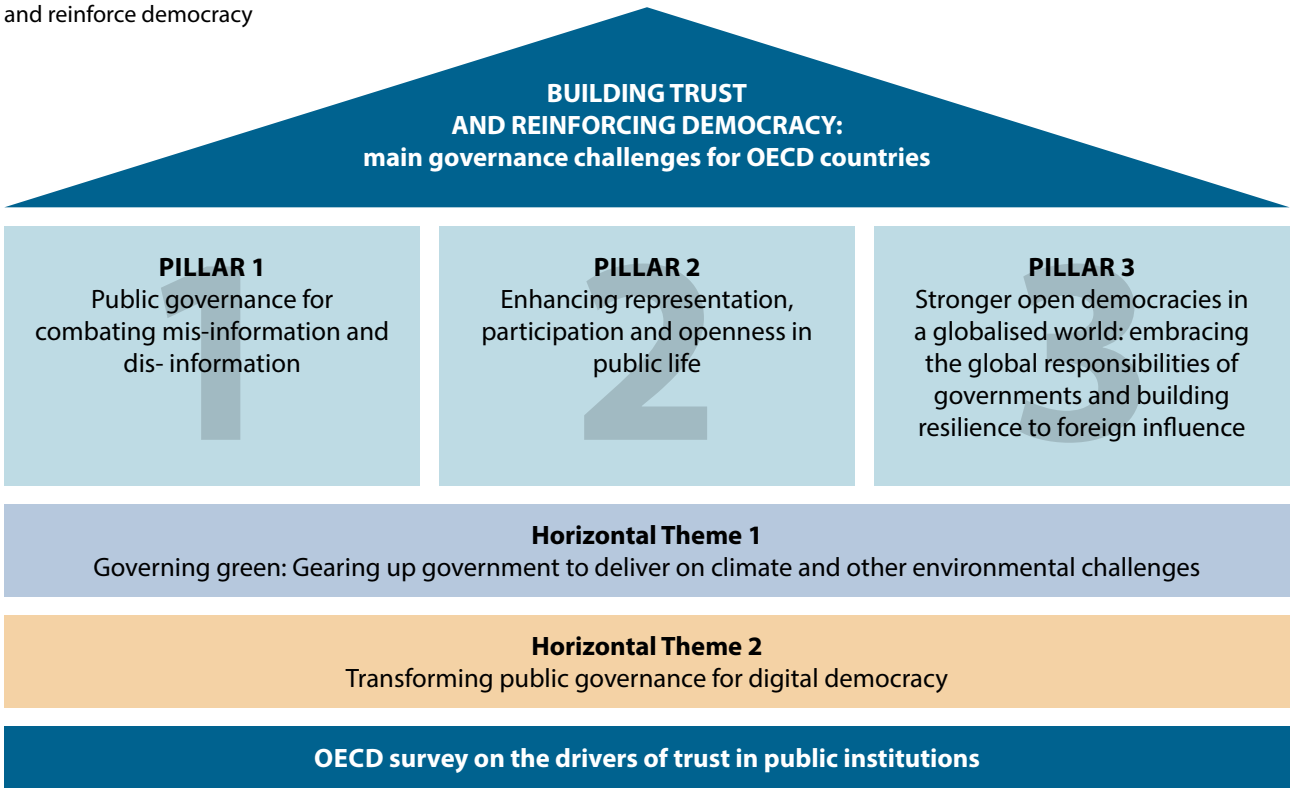
findings of the OECD Trust Survey, these challenges constitute the main components of the Initiative (Figure 2), tying in with the 2021 and 2022 OECD Ministerial Council Statements [C/MIN(2021)25/FINAL; C/MIN(2022)16/FINAL] and the vision for the OECD for the next decade [C/MIN(2021)16/FINAL].

Following a pre-ministerial dinner on Trust in Public Institutions the evening prior, the Ministerial meeting consists of two plenary sessions on Public Governance Responses to Mis- and Dis-information and Upgrading Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life, and Citizen-Focused Services. The Ministerial meeting also provides an opportunity for Ministers to meet in smaller parallel sessions to share their national experiences and challenges on Transforming Public Governance for Digital Democracy, Governing Green: Gearing up Public Sector Capacity to Deliver on Climate Change, and Stronger Open Democracies in a Globalised World: Embracing the Global Responsibilities of Governments and Building Resilience to Foreign Influence.

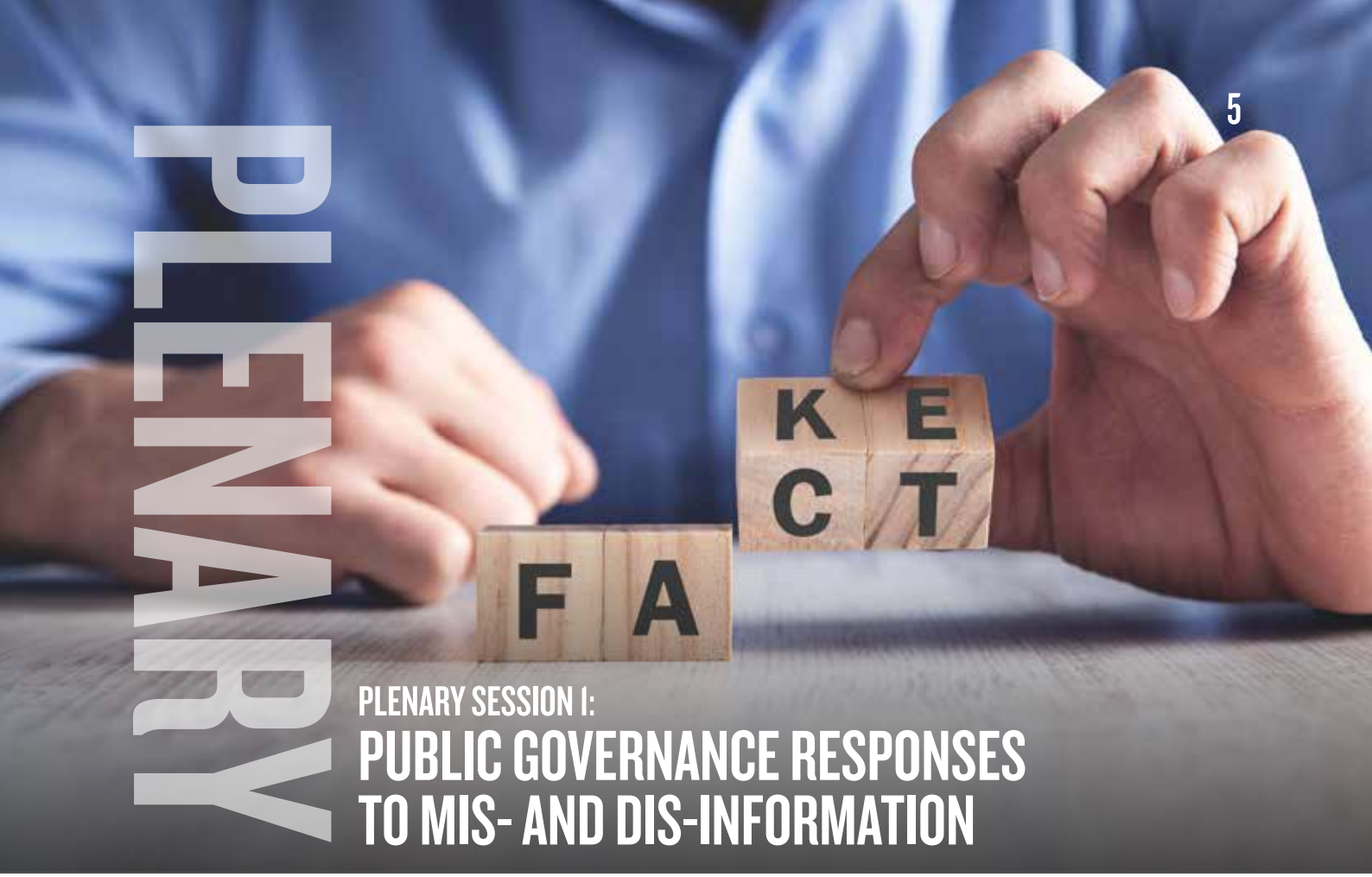
This Key Issues Paper sets the scene for the plenaries and parallel sessions and poses a few questions for each session to help drive the discussion.

FIGURE 2. **The Reinforcing Democracy Initiative**

Addressing the main governance challenges to build trust and reinforce democracy



PLENARY



PLENARY SESSION I:
PUBLIC GOVERNANCE RESPONSES TO MIS- AND DIS-INFORMATION

Fuelled by digital technologies and social media, the spread of mis- and dis-information poses a fundamental threat to the free and fact-based exchange of information that underpins democracy and trust in public institutions. The COVID-19 pandemic, the 6 January 2021 attack on the United States (US) Capitol and Russia's aggression against Ukraine have all demonstrated the potentially detrimental costs of this threat.

Only around four out of ten respondents to the OECD Trust Survey (38.8%) say they trust the news media (Figure 3). Similarly, 76% of respondents to the Edelman Trust Barometer indicated that they worry about false information or fake news being used as a weapon. 67% worry that journalists and reporters are purposely trying to mislead people, and 66% say the same about government and political leaders (Edelman, 2022[3]).

Such concerns underscore the urgency of creating governance systems that ensure societies are resilient to mis- and dis-information. To deliver the changes needed to strengthen the integrity of information eco-systems, build trust and reinforce democracy, efforts will need to be interdisciplinary and emphasise collective action by governments, civil society and the private sector, ensure the full preservation of free speech, strengthen checks and balances, and promote international cooperation.

Building on existing good practices in OECD countries, the Action Plan on Public Governance for Combating Mis- and Dis-information [GOV/PGC(2022)27/REV1] identifies concrete steps governments can take to move forward in this direction.

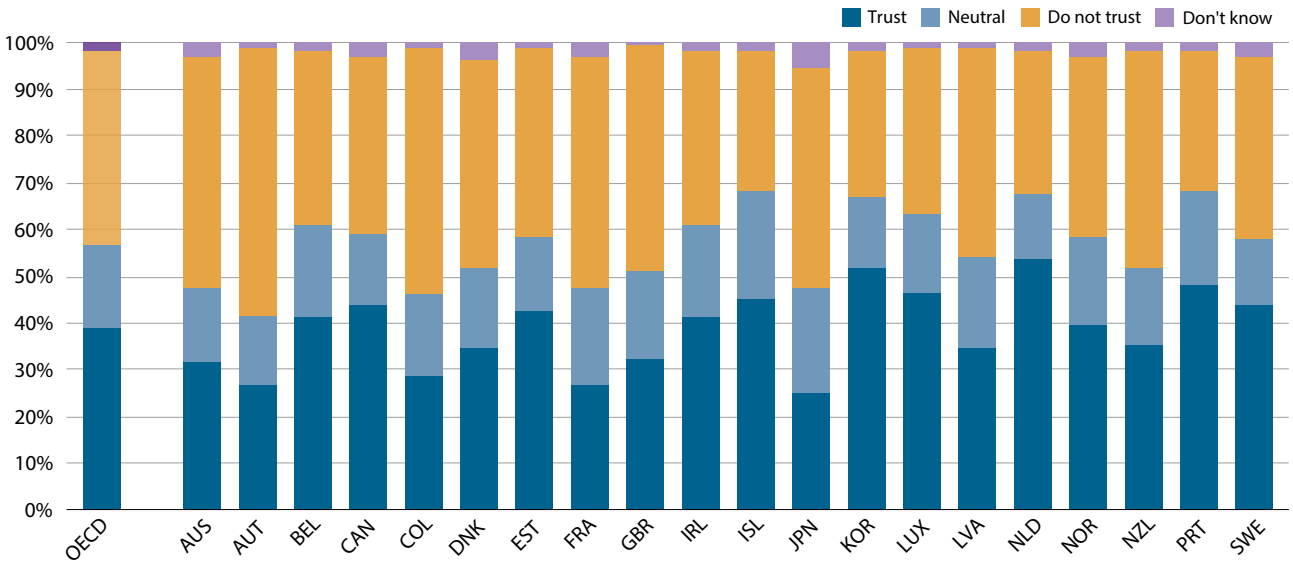
PREPARING SOCIETY TO RESPOND TO THREATS

Recent events have highlighted the need to develop societies' capacity to respond to the spread of false and misleading information, while simultaneously strengthening societies' resilience and preparedness to mis- and dis-information.

In the fight against mis- and dis- information, whole-of-society approaches, and new partnerships across different actors in society, with a central role for independent media and civil society, are key to ensure freedom of expression. Many countries, including Lithuania, Latvia and Finland, or more recently countries such as New Zealand, have recognised this and are engaging with media, civil society organisations, fact-checkers, and social media platforms to monitor, "pre- and debunk", and respond

FIGURE 3. **Only around four out of ten respondents trust the news media**

Share of respondents who indicate different levels of trust in the news media (on a 0-10 scale), 2021



Note: Figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question "On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust the news media?" The "trust" proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; "neutral" is equal to a response of 5; "Do not trust" is the aggregation of responses from 1-4; and "Don't know" was a separate answer choice. Mexico and Finland are excluded from the figure as data are not available. "OECD" presents the unweighted average across countries. For more detailed information on the survey questionnaire and processes in specific countries, please find the survey method document at http://oe.cd/trust.

Source: OECD Trust Survey (http://oe.cd/trust)

to mis- and dis-information; to raise awareness, share knowledge and collect data on effective responses. At the same time, the ability of false information to spread as widely and rapidly as it does requires governments to exchange information, threat analyses and good practices across national borders, e.g. through initiatives like the European Union (EU) *Rapid Alert System* or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) *StratCom Centre of Excellence*, and to collaborate on regulatory responses.

Building the capacity of the public communication function to promote a more informed citizenry and support a healthy information ecosystem can help counteract mis- and dis-information. Towards this end, governments can i) support the governance and institutionalisation of a proactive public communication function; ii) play a complementary role to civil society and media in tracking and reacting to problematic content and monitor the evolution of the public discourse in line with privacy and democratic principles, including freedom of speech and expression; and iii) use audience research, behavioural insights and evaluation to ensure public communication is tailored, relevant and responsive. To ensure accurate information reaches target audiences, governments can support trusted messengers, as shown by the example of the *Community Toolkit for Addressing Health Misinformation* developed by the US Government during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Maintaining freedom of expression and an open internet means that there will always be false and misleading content. Governments should therefore advance research and invest in citizens' media and information literacy to protect society from these threats, while building digital literacy for the public to take advantage of the benefits of online platforms. Media and information literacy efforts should be inclusive of all ages; they can be campaign-based or achieved through civic education, e.g. as part of school and university curricula. An increasing number of countries deploy tools and resources on media and information literacy through genuine partnerships between journalists, technology experts, the research community and educational establishments (Hill, 2022[4]).

INCREASING TRANSPARENCY AND PREVENTION

Given the asymmetry in knowledge between online platforms and governments, as well as wider society about how content spreads and what interventions work, transparency is an essential component to inform policy making.

Enabling access to and sharing of data across sectors, and building knowledge of the origins (domestic or foreign) and pathways of mis- and dis-information is critical for the evidence-based design of policy responses. From a digital

economy perspective, the OECD has presented a typology of different types of untruths that circulate online (Lesher, Pawelec, and Desai, 2022). To facilitate public-private access to and sharing of data, governments may explore legal frameworks or create partnerships with researchers to share and analyse data, while protecting privacy and civil liberties. Governments should also build their own capacity to monitor and understand the data collected. For example, in 2021, the Australian Government announced the introduction of new legislation that would strengthen its ability to collect data on the steps taken to address mis- and dis-information from social media platforms (Minister for Communications, 2022[5]).

Establishing an effective transparency framework around content moderation is another important consideration. Such efforts could include requiring platforms to establish opportunities for users to challenge platforms' content moderation decisions, as well as mandating transparency measures for online platforms that clarify their approach and decisions. Such measures (among others) have been proposed in the European Commission's Digital Services Act (DSA). In addition, governments should focus on ensuring its capacity to monitor self-regulatory practices.

Considering the role of algorithms in the spread of mis- and dis-information and the creation of "echo chambers", governments could require online platforms to disclose the parameters of their algorithms, encourage greater accountability, and offer guidance or help build safeguards for algorithm design. Such transparency is at the core of some existing initiatives, like the United Kingdom's (UK) draft Online Safety Bill (Minister of State for Digital and Culture, 2021[6]).

To limit the effect of manipulated content and boost authentic activity, governments could also provide guidance on social media platform requirements, work to enhance transparency around beneficial ownership and promote the disclosure of the sponsors of content, as well as metadata related to their activities. In addition, there is scope for governments to increase the disclosure of digitally manipulated and misleading content, such as "deepfakes" or other complex disinformation- or cyber-attacks (e.g. "defacement" attacks, in which malign actors delete or modify the content on a website).

The design and application of measures aimed at transparency and prevention will require governments to partner with media and civil society organisations, as well as the private sector, to ensure utility and public benefit, as well as to safeguard against government interference in the free flow of information.

REDUCING THE ECONOMIC AND STRUCTURAL DRIVERS OF MIS- AND DIS-INFORMATION

Governments can also implement measures that are only indirectly connected to mis- and dis-information, but have significant implications on the underlying enabling structures. **These measures generally focus on structural and economic drivers that affect the spread of such content.**

The market power of major social media companies can potentially lead to anti-competitive conduct that stifles innovation and affects the news and information industry more widely. To address these risks, governments could apply the following competition tools, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to understand impact and assess economic trade-offs: i) require large online platforms to ensure a "fair" remuneration of news media for the use of their content; ii) increase scrutiny of 'killer acquisitions'; and iii) undertake structural reforms to address digital platforms' market power. Countries such as France are already headed in this direction, where in 2020, the competition authority imposed interim measures requiring Google to negotiate in good faith with publishers and news agencies

the remuneration due to them under the law (Autorité de la concurrence, 2020[7]). A more coherent global approach to identifying and implementing relevant regulation would further enhance the effectiveness of such efforts (OECD, Forthcoming[8]).

Similar to other areas of engineering and design where technical standards include safety and quality requirements, such requirements – for instance on the protection of user privacy – could also be applied to online platforms to mitigate mis- and dis-information risks. Regulatory measures need to involve non-governmental stakeholders to ensure they keep pace with and encourage innovation and meet broader democratic needs. The OECD's work on regulatory sandboxes and the Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises [OECD/LEGAL/0144] can help direct efforts to create an enabling policy environment for online platforms that support flexible responses and responsible business conduct.

Governments can also strengthen the press and news media environment by encouraging diversity, editorial independence, and high-quality news provision. This may include: i) fostering fair competition and ensuring transparent and independent financial support for high-quality journalism to address media capture by large tech companies or other special interests; ii) creating an enabling environment for civil society organisations and citizen and community journalism; and iii) ensuring clear and independent oversight of government support to the media sector.

Discussion Questions

- How does your government support whole-of-society efforts to build resilience of media and information ecosystems? What are the specific ways in which governments can co-operate more effectively with media, civil society organisations, social media platforms and others in the fight against mis- and dis-information?
- What are the most promising avenues for creating regulatory frameworks to share and analyse relevant data related to mis- and dis-information, encourage greater understanding of algorithms?
- What public institutions are currently being created or reinforced to address mis- and dis-information?
- What tools, mechanisms or products can the OECD develop to best support Members to identify successful responses to the threats posed by mis- and dis-information?
- How can the OECD collaborate with non-member countries seeking to address threats posed by mis- and dis-information?

1

Parallel Session 1:
TRANSFORMING PUBLIC GOVERNANCE FOR DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

The rapid digitalisation of societies, economies and governments is changing and challenging the traditional institutional mechanisms supporting the functioning of OECD countries. While digital innovations originally expanded civic space, and citizens' participation mechanisms have been made it easier, there are increasing concerns of traditional democratic institutions eroding in this new context. Developed for the analogue world, the institutions of OECD countries are adjusting and adapting to the digital age.

From one perspective, digitalisation has opened new channels for political and public debate and enhanced the promotion of the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups. It has also promoted transparency and openness in government practices and strengthened the accountability of and oversight over public institutions.

From another perspective, digital tools have also brought new risks to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the protection of minorities and vulnerable groups, increased the possibilities of undue influence in policy making (national or foreign), and destabilised information ecosystems and democratic intermediation, further exacerbating the polarisation of societies.

Public governance systems and processes supporting advanced democracies need to be deepened to fully reap the benefits of digital tools and address their challenges. This deepening calls for new forms of governance that make full use of the technology of online platforms, and allow for the co-creation of modules with private sector organisations and civil society to enhance public debate and more inclusive decision making. At the same time, governments still need to upgrade their capacity to establish and enforce regulations addressing newly emerged digital risks to democracy and fight digital inequalities that continue to hamper the future of digital democracy.

ENHANCING RESPECT FOR RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS IN A DIGITAL SOCIETY

Digitalisation has provided a space for the exercise of some rights and freedoms to be expanded and better protected, notably by allowing individuals and groups to more effectively voice concerns about the rights of vulnerable groups. At the same time, it is also creating significant challenges to a number of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic values, such as privacy and the use of personal data, equal

opportunities and fair treatment through biased use of artificial intelligence (AI), or discrimination through the wider possibilities of diffusion of hate speech and harmful racial, gender-based or other stereotypes. There is now recognition of the need to act to better protect citizens from government and non-government actors in the digital space of OECD countries. At the same time, in autocratic regimes, the possibilities for government's use of digital technologies to suppress political freedoms and thwart political dissent have been multiplied.

Governments are thus increasingly taking steps to ensure that the same human rights and fundamental freedoms that people have offline are also protected online. Some countries have developed new regulations, declarations, or charters to reaffirm those human rights and fundamental freedoms in a digital context. Some are also considering new, digital-only rights including in their constitution. Examples include the 2021 *Spanish Charter of Digital Rights and the proposed European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade. The OECD Committee on Digital Economy Policy is currently undertaking comparative work in this area.*

In parallel, international standards are also being developed to ensure a common way forward and a level playing field in terms of values. The European Union, the OECD, and also UN organisations, are notable promoters of these international standards.

REAPING THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL FOR CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE

In OECD countries, participation in elections is an important aspect of participation in public life. Digital tools can be used for voter registration, vote making, vote casting and improving scrutiny of elections. While measures to secure identification and authentication will be crucial to those processes, e-voting has many advantages including greater convenience, and accessibility of citizens, in particular those living in remote rural areas and with certain disabilities. Yet, digital access and literacy remain an obstacle to wider participation of vulnerable groups. To ensure that no one is left behind, greater connectivity, access and affordability, but also sufficient digital skills and trust in digital participatory channels are needed, taking into account the idiosyncrasies of diverse populations. This also means bearing in mind that online channels cannot substitute analogue mechanisms, in order to avoid excluding vulnerable segments of the population.

However, digitalisation also presents a number of risks to the integrity of election campaigns, and thereby elections as a whole. Public debate can be threatened when bots, troll armies or other forms of inauthentic online behaviour are used to manipulate public opinion or artificially inflate the popularity of a candidate or salience of a policy issue, or with micro-targeting and voter manipulation in the era of big data analytics. The scandal surrounding *Cambridge Analytica's* misuse of *Facebook* personal data has prompted a number of countries to seek clear rules for, and greater transparency of, targeting of online political advertising and micro targeting for political purposes. Digitalisation is also raising challenges for political financing which is largely unregulated online, and poses particular challenges when political campaigns are run from abroad.

Online platforms, digital channels and tools are also enabling alternative spaces for consultation, discussion and deliberation on public policies. In 2020, 85% of OECD countries had government-wide participation portals as 'one stop shops' for citizens to learn about past, current and future opportunities for participation (OECD, 2021[9]). Portugal has developed *Participa Portugal* to promote public consultations. Digital technologies are also contributing to modernise legislative processes, increase transparency of parliamentary practices and enhance constituency relations. In the United Kingdom, *mySociety*, a civic tech previously named UK Citizens Online Democracy, has developed open-source digital democracy tools such as *TheyWorkForYou* (releasing voting records) and *WriteToThem* (a website which allows citizens to contact their elected representatives).

Digitalisation is also creating specific challenges for democratic debate and public life, in the way people form and express their political opinions. The governance of information ecosystemshas also been shaken by the advent of far-reaching individual opinion postings and information sharing through social media, as well as powerful unregulated undue influence in policy making (from domestic or foreign actors). The impact of mis- and dis-information, fake news and polarising effects on public opinion and public debate need to be understood, acknowledged and addressed. For the digital space to serve democracy well, be sufficiently protected from undue influence, and ensure that all citizens have a voice, it needs to be shaped through new rules, mediations and partnerships between government, civil society and the media.

REINFORCING OPENNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In a direct way, digital government services contribute to standardise and equalise citizens' access to public services, thereby increasing fairness and equal treatment. By reducing discretion of public officials, the digitalisation of government services from the national to the local levels also reduces corruption risks and generates important integrity benefits by cutting red-tape and increasing transparency in government services and transfers. More indirectly, digitalisation offers a wealth of opportunities for greater government transparency, accountability and integrity. From the proactive provision of open data, AI-powered auditing and data analytics, through to live streaming of government and parliamentary debate, the opportunities are vast.

The opening up of fiscal, budget, procurement and justice data has considerably contributed to increasing citizens' oversight capabilities. The availability of civic technologies re-using open data has reduced information asymmetries between citizens and governments, and enhanced citizen engagement in several policy spaces, including public integrity and anti-corruption. For example, online reporting and disclosure systems on political financing allow citizens to see donations to political parties and their annual financial reports, and to campaign for finance reporting both for parties and candidates. Likewise, mobile applications provide whistle-blowers with a safe and anonymous channel to communicate unlawful and unethical activity they encounter at their work place. Other examples of civic technologies and platforms to promote the assessment of transparency and integrity of democratic institutions and representatives include the *Vouli Watch* in Greece or *Parlameter* in Slovenia.

In recent years, civic organisations and oversight agencies have teamed-up with *civictech* and *govtech* start-ups as newfound allies to mine a wealth and diversity of data to uncover trends and raise red-flags. Increasingly, tech-based, data-powered start-ups are seeking social impact partnering with civil society to leverage data against corruption. For example, the French start-up *Linkurious* and the Swedish *Neo Technology* helped the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists make sense of the data leaked from the law firm *Mossack Fonseca* that led to the so-called Panama Papers scandal. The rise of civic-tech is a promising trend in the tech for integrity space.

REFITTING PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS FOR DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

Digital democracy requires upgraded and transformed government institutions to steer a digital transformation, that advances and strengthens democracy. OECD countries have put in place different institutional set-ups and governance arrangements in response to this challenge. Across OECD countries, 47% of centres of government play a critical role in setting a national digital strategy and driving its implementation across government (Gierten and Lesher, 2022[10]). Often, centres of government are tasked with focusing on specific technologies or policy concerns, such as AI or data governance. France, for example, coordinates AI policy implementation from within the Prime Minister's Office, while Colombia set up an AI Task Force in the Presidency.

The digital transformation has also required countries to establish new public institutions and governance arrangements. Some countries have created dedicated ministries for digitalisation (Luxembourg and Poland) while others have established or strengthened autonomous government agencies responsible for digital transformation. The need for platforms to strengthen synergies and foster whole-of-government approaches to digitalisation has also resulted in the establishment of inter-ministerial coordination committees to ensure coherence across policy areas.

Examples abound of newly created positions, including 'digital champions', such as tech ambassadors, chief digital and data ethics officers. The United Kingdom has created a Head of Data Ethics under the Central Digital and Data Office1, while Spain is establishing a dedicated government agency to oversee the ethical and responsible use of AI in the public sector.

For policies to meet their desired objectives and overcome the challenges of the digital transition, regulatory bodies need to be fit to implement and enforce them through laws and regulations. Ensuring effective regulations in the digital sphere raises critical issues in terms of the mandate and powers of regulatory agencies, their capacity to deliver their functions, and well as how they co-ordinate with other public authorities. Countries have put in place different arrangements in response to these issues, with many countries opting for statutory law over self-regulation. When it comes to digital platforms, in a number of countries, existing independent regulatory authorities, communication and broadcasting regulators are responsible for the delivery of policy objectives relevant to digital democratic governance. Some countries have merged those authorities to exploit synergies. For example, France merged the Supreme Authority for the Distribution and Protection of Intellectual Property on the Internet and the Audio-Visual Council in order to create the Audio-Visual and Digital Communications

1. https://dataingovernment.blog.gov.uk/2021/09/07/what-skills-do-you-need-for-working-in-data-ethics/

Regulatory Authority. Other countries are considering the establishment of a new type of regulatory body to tackle digital issues in a holistic manner. This reform, in turn, raises questions on how the new body would interact with existing regulators with overlapping responsibilities, for instance, on content moderation. Institutions with oversight responsibilities have also been transformed to make them fitter for the digital age monitoring of government digitalisation and the protection of citizen rights. Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) play an important role, for instance, in enforcing compliance with rules on the use digital innovations and artificial intelligence by public agencies.

Importantly, governments are also exploring more formalised cross-sectoral and cross-border co-operation structures to avoid regulatory fragmentation and ensure regulatory effectiveness by preventing regulatory arbitrage or avoidance. This is critical to the success of policy responses as that digitalisation cuts across not only borders but also regulatory regimes, including communications, data, content, financial services, consumer protection and competition (OECD, 2022[11]). Notable examples include the UK's Digital Regulation Co-operation Forum and the Dutch Digital Regulation Co-operation Platform. Such structures go beyond mere information sharing and can include pooling of expertise and resources, reporting on results and mutual support to enforcement procedures.

Preliminary indications of areas for a future Action Plan

- Protecting electoral processes and the integrity of electoral campaigns.
- Harnessing digital technology for public participation and debate.
- Protecting the civic space online and taking action against polarisation.
- Harnessing digital technology for greater government transparency and citizen oversight.
- Getting specialised public institutions right for digital democracy.

Discussion questions

- What examples can you provide of digital initiatives strengthening public participation and government transparency in your country?
- What are the most effective means to reduce polarisation of public debate in the digital space?
- How to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms are protected in the digital space?
- How can the OECD better support it Members in ensuring that public institutions and governance arrangements strengthen and deepen democracy in the digital era?

2

Parallel Session 2:

GOVERNING GREEN: Gearing up government to deliver on climate and other environmental challenges

The demand and urgency for ambitious global action on climate and the environment continues to grow. Despite the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, countries continue to send strong signals on the need to advance environmental ambitions, including through the Glasgow Climate Pact at COP26 and the recent *UN Environment Assembly Resolution* stepping up global efforts to end plastic pollution.

Addressing global, systemic environmental challenges requires comprehensive and long term efforts on all fronts and from all actors – yet there are critical tasks that can be carried out only by government. While success in avoiding the worst impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss will involve action from the public and private sectors, international organisations, civil society groups and individual citizens, achieving the ambitious changes required necessarily depends on government steering and implementing policies, both at home and internationally. All branches and all levels of government have an important role to play in this area.

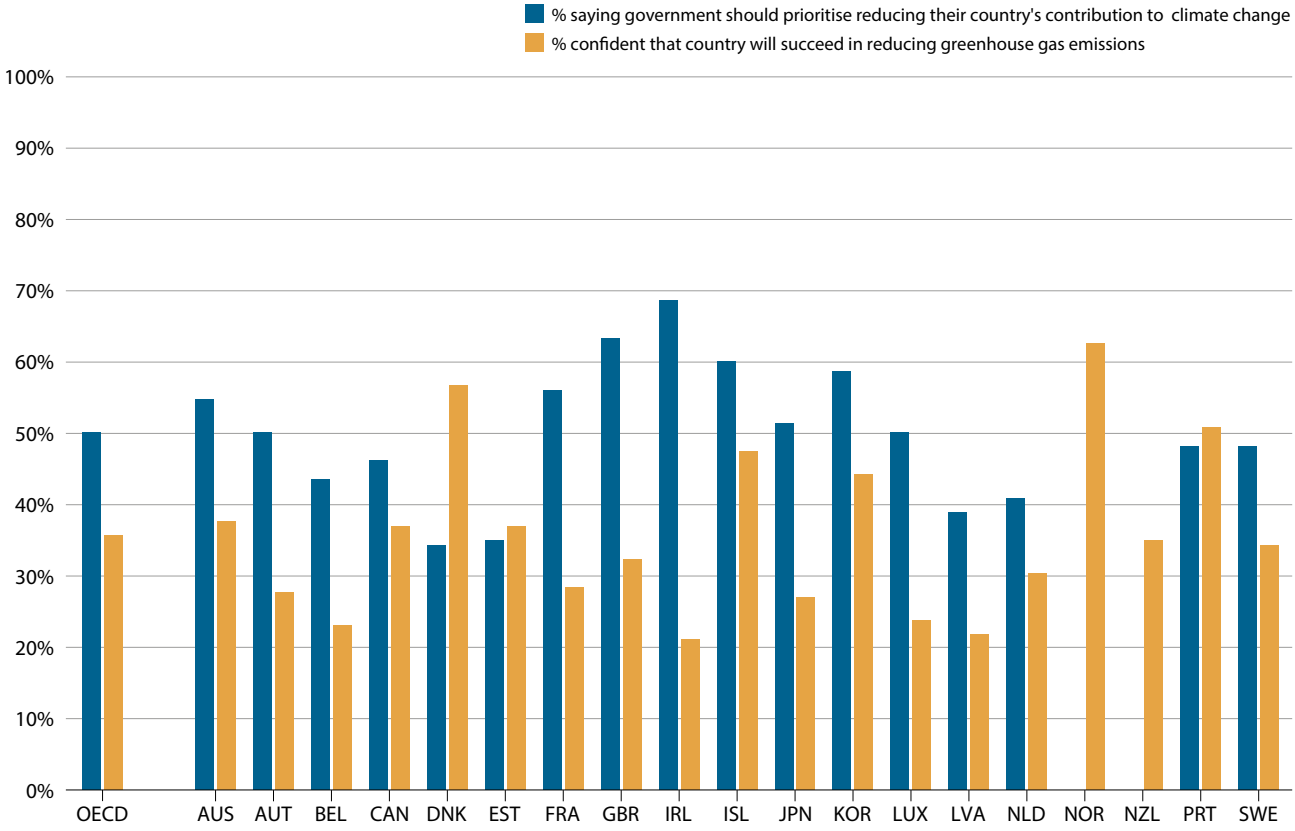
Yet, governments face the challenges of forging long term consensus on urgent climate and other environmental measures against a backdrop of declining trust in public institutions and increasing discontent with democracy. While 50.4% of respondents to the OECD Trust Survey think governments should be doing more to reduce climate change, only 35.5% are confident that countries will actually meet their targets (Figure 4).

The fates of democratic governance, and climate and broader environmental action are interconnected. Democratic governments need to show that they are the best fit to handle complex and interconnected policy problems that involve long-term consideration, such as environmental challenges, and manage difficult trade-offs required. At the same time, the success of climate and environmental policies will rest on the effectiveness and efficiency of public governance. Setting the overall direction and long-term priorities, ensuring coherent decisions on trade-offs, and establishing co-ordinated and coherent approaches across sectors, levels and branches of government to address these challenges is a difficulty facing governments across the board.

A genuine transformation of governance is required to successfully respond to environmental pressures, in particular the existential climate threat. **The Action Plan on Governing Green [GOV/PGC(2022)27] sets out concrete steps governments can take individually and collectively to move in this direction.**

FIGURE 4. **Half of respondents think the government should prioritise actions to fight climate change, but only one third of respondents have confidence in the country's ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions**

Share of respondents who say government should prioritise more country's contribution to reduce climate change and share of respondents who have confidence in their country's ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, 2021



Note: Figure presents the average share of respondents to the questions "On reducing your country contribution to climate change, do you think the government should be prioritising a lot more, more, about the same, less, or a lot less?". The "more" share in the figure is the aggregation of the responses choices "a lot more" and "more". Respondents were asked "How confident are you that your country will succeed in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the next 10 years?" The "confident" share is the aggregation of response choices "somewhat confident" and "very confident". Finland and Mexico are excluded are excluded from this figure due to missing data. Norway and New Zealand did not included the question on government prioritising. For more detailed information on the survey questionnaire and processes in specific countries, please find the survey method document at http://oe.cd/trust.

Source: OECD Trust Survey (http://oe.cd/trust)

STEERING AND BUILDING CONSENSUS AND TRUST FOR DELIVERING GREEN IN THE NEXT DECADE

To steer societies towards optimal environmental results, governments need to build trust and consensus for action. The OECD Trust Survey finds that people's confidence that their country will succeed in reducing greenhouse gas emissions is strongly associated with trust. Investing in public governance to deliver more effective policies to fight climate change may also pay off in securing more credibility and trust in government (OECD, 2022[2]). Measuring people's trust in climate policies can help inform decision making and strengthen public support and acceptability for green reforms.

Ensuring stakeholder participation, citizen dialogue and integrity and transparency in climate and environmental governance is crucial to secure trust and buy-in for green policies. The scale of the transformations required to act on climate and other environmental issues call on governments to revamp stakeholder's dialogue and citizen participation. In the past years, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg and Spain have set in place deliberative processes addressing climate-related issues aiming to secure legitimacy of climate-related policies. **Governments should also pay particular attention to strengthening integrity standards in public institutions involved in the design and implementation of climate and environmental policies, including independent advisory bodies and expert groups.** These policies need to also be robust enough to withstand to lobbying and other influence practices that can mislead the public, governments and investors, and hinder effective green policy action.

Delivering on green will also require governments to revamp public communication to inform and engage with the public, while preventing and reacting to the spread of mis- and dis-information. Some countries are taking steps in this direction. Scotland's *Turning the Tide* campaign and the EU Council's *Taking the Lead on Climate Change campaign* provide good examples.

USING THE RIGHT GOVERNANCE TOOLS FOR CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

Ramping up public governance tools is critical to achieve the ambitious changes needed for climate and environmental action. Green budgeting, regulations, infrastructure planning procedures and public procurement need to be unlocked to align government policies, public investment, consumption and taxation with environmental objectives at the national and local levels. The systematic use of these governance tools can also help reinforce trust in climate action by strengthening the climate governance framework and demonstrating commitment.

OECD countries are steadily progressing in using public governance tools to align with environmental objectives – but there is room for growth. For example, OECD countries and the European Union increasingly require consideration of potential environmental impacts when designing rules. In 2021, 14 out of 38 OECD countries (37%) reported practising green budgeting (OECD, 2022[12]). More and more regional and subnational governments are also launching green budgeting exercises (OECD, 2022[13])Countries are also gradually developing responsible public procurement frameworks that account for environmental considerations, alongside social considerations to ensure that public investments work for people, planet and society, along global supply chains.

Linking major infrastructure decisions and plans with climate and environmental objectives is critical to shape a green transition. Governments face challenges to tie infrastructure planning to climate objectives. This includes putting in place criteria for selecting infrastructure projects in line with these objectives and delivering, operating, maintaining, upgrading or retiring infrastructure assets in ways that accelerate the reduction of carbon emissions. Governments should develop long-term strategic infrastructure plans that align with commitments on environmental protection and climate change mitigation. Further, countries can mobilise greater amounts of private financing for sustainable quality infrastructure by adapting regulatory frameworks, strengthening procurement systems and adopting infrastructure certifications.

Innovative governance approaches can help ensure the effectiveness of green policies. Mission-oriented

Discussion questions

- How is your government addressing the urgent need to build trust and secure buy-in and consensus for the ambitious policy reforms needed to address climate change and other environmental threats?
- In what ways could governments further ramp-up public governance tools to deliver in this decade for action?
- How can the OECD continue to support your country's efforts in transforming the public sector to achieve climate and environmental goals?

innovation and anticipatory governance mechanisms can be used to inform climate and environmental decision-making and policies. Uses of strategic foresight in environmental policy are underway in the European Environment Agency, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, and the UK, among others. Behavioural insights (BI) can also help governments to better design and implement green policies through approaches that consider behavioural barriers and biases. Canada's Privy Council's Impact and Innovation Unit is using BI in a survey to measure and promote acceptability and uptake in climate action and green policies among Canadians.[2]

LEADING BY EXAMPLE – A GREENER AND MORE RESILIENT PUBLIC SECTOR

Green action and adaptation is a shared responsibility – and one where government can play a major role leading by example. To promote green change, governments need to lead by example on promoting green change in their operations, taking assertive measures to transform itself to face environmental challenges. To effectively act on these issues, governments need to have detailed information on the environmental impacts of their work across agencies, levels of government and types of operations.

2. https://impact.canada.ca/en/behavioural-science/parca

3

Parallel Session 3:
STRONGER OPEN DEMOCRACIES IN A GLOBALISED WORLD: Embracing the Global Responsibilities of Governments and Building Resilience to Foreign Undue Influence

Democracies have, for many years, been at the forefront of global policy and international co-operation. The rules-based international order founded on the back of the Second World War was built on the basis of the principles of human equality (freedom, rule of law and human rights) and the promotion of liberal democracy. Advanced democracies, in particular, have played a critical role in driving international co-operation to secure global financial stability and promote economic growth and development.

Nonetheless, delivering in the face of the growing number of global challenges has not got any easier for democracies. The COVID-19 crisis has been a case in point. While many OECD countries demonstrated their ability to respond at speed and scale to the challenges of a global pandemic, the crisis also exposed a number of weaknesses in national and global governance. In many cases, democracies have been working in competition with narratives promoted globally by non-democracies about their capacity to address the situation.

In open democracies, citizens' trust in government matters for governments to be able to respond effectively to global challenges. This was very clearly demonstrated during the deployment of the various COVID-19 measures, such as lockdowns and social distancing. Evidence abounds also on the nexus between climate change and trust (Parallel session 2 – Governing Green). There are therefore clear incentives for governments to embrace a more global perspective in their leadership, institutions and public governance tools, with a view to addressing these challenges in a way that can be better understood and appreciated by citizens and ensure more effective global outcomes.

At the same time, in order to reinforce democracy in a globalised world, it is also necessary to build resilience to foreign undue influence. One of the most significant challenges that democracies must face in a globalised world is the destabilising impacts of foreign non-democratic influences on democracy. This includes, amongst many others, the spread of foreign-born mis- and dis-information (Plenary session 1) or interference in elections and democratic governments by opaque means. In the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it has become clear that OECD countries need to do more on this front. Strong public governance responses to such interference, in particular, could play a significant role in reinforcing democracy.

There are two main lenses through which governments can consider how to reinforce democracy in a globalised world: first, by building their public governance capacities to ensure that they are fit to address global challenges; second, by drawing on public governance solutions to build resilience to foreign undue influence.

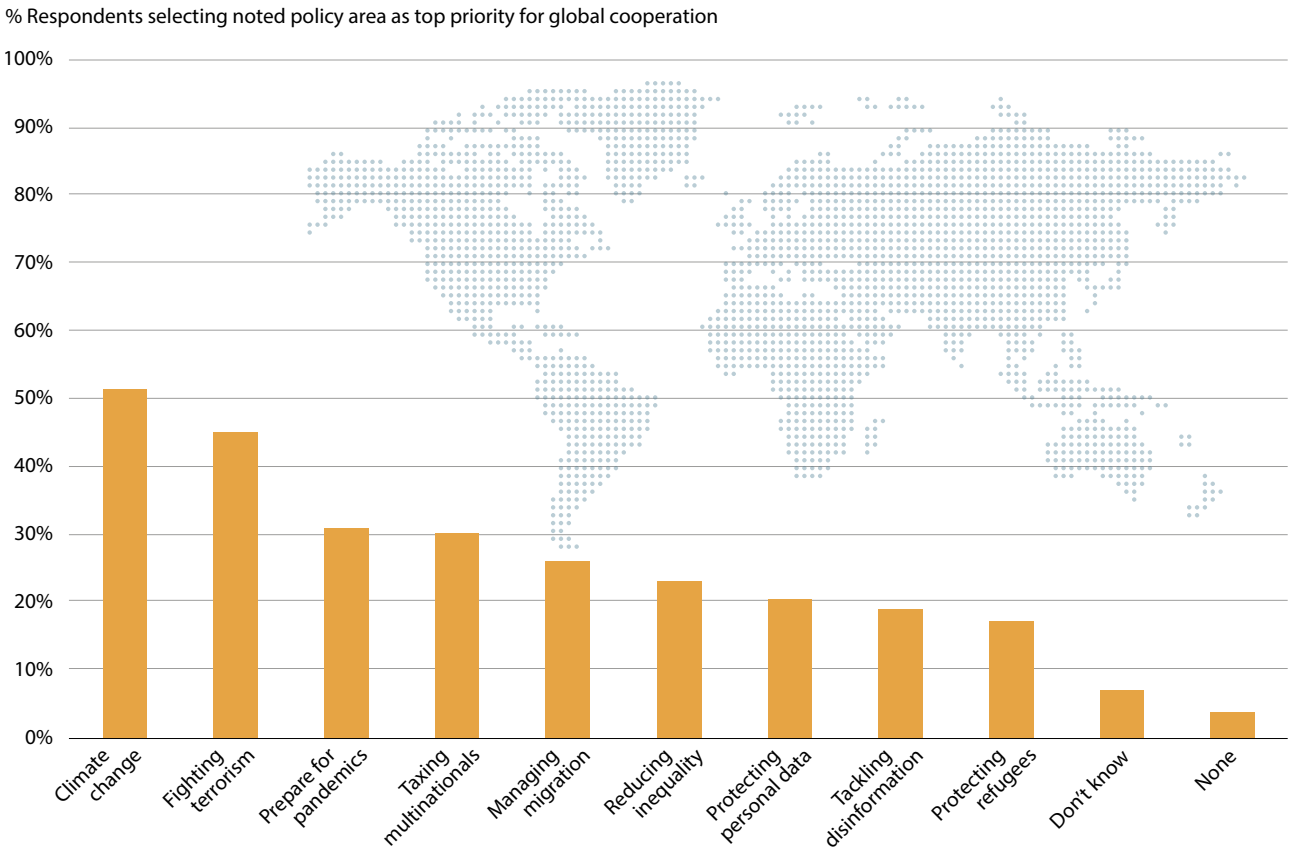
BUILDING PUBLIC GOVERNANCE CAPACITIES TO ENSURE GOVERNMENTS ARE FIT TO ADDRESS GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Democracies face difficulties in securing trust in government to address global challenges. Results from the OECD Trust Survey highlight that on average across countries, citizens' highest priorities for global cooperation are climate change, terrorism, pandemic preparation and taxing multinationals (Figure 5). Yet, overall public support for global cooperation to tackle these issues is limited, with for example, only about half of respondents calling on governments to work together to address climate change (OECD, 2022[2]).

Bringing citizens on board with addressing global challenges is key. As highlighted in the section on governing green, addressing any global challenge therefore requires first and foremost setting an agenda and engaging stakeholders. This requires strong leadership from the centre of government. Outlining a clear, long-term strategic vision to define what the issue is and establishing a clear agenda are critical first steps for national leadership. Such a shared vision can serve as a roadmap for all involved stakeholders, particularly when it translates into economic and social decisions and behaviours at an individual, institutional, and societal levels. For some countries, the process of outlining a clear strategic vision and establishing an

FIGURE 5. **Respondents most likely to support global cooperation to resolve challenges like climate change, terrorism and pandemic preparation**

Share of respondents picking each of the following options as one of their top priorities for global cooperation, OECD unweighted average, 2021



Note: Figure presents the unweighted OECD average share of responses to the question "Which of the following issues do you think are best addressed by working with other countries than by your country alone? Please choose your top three issues for global cooperation." Response choices options are indicated in the x-axis. For more detailed information on the survey questionnaire and processes in specific countries, please find the survey method document at http://oe.cd/trust.

Source: OECD Trust Survey (http://oe.cd/trust)

agenda on the topic also offers an opportunity to champion certain agendas and policy issues in the international arena, for instance the UK on anti-corruption, Estonia on digitalisation, and a number of Scandinavian countries on climate action.

However, setting the vision is only the first step. Involving citizens and wider stakeholders in the policy cycle in a meaningful way helps to demonstrate that global co-ordination can lead to better domestic outcomes for citizens and other stakeholders. From consulting with civil society organisations ahead of international summits, to more innovative citizen deliberative mechanisms, there is a range of options available. For example, the COP26 Global Citizens' Assembly was a first of a kind initiative aimed to give everyone a seat at the table on the course of global climate action at the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow. Engaging the private sector is also key to ensure optimal economic outcomes and inform private investment. However, this must be done in a transparent and well-governed way to foster public trust and avoid undue influence by special interests.

Institutions themselves can evolve to better address global challenges. While global affairs remain most often the prerogative of foreign ministries, most national institutions nowadays engage themselves in international affairs in some capacity. Driving progress on global challenges requires co-ordinated action both horizontally across government institutions, and vertically from the national leadership to delivery partners at local levels**.** Institutional mechanisms can also be developed to strengthen international influence on important global issues. A prime example is the Danish Tech Ambassador, which is designed to bring questions or concerns on behalf of Danish authorities in direct dialogue with tech companies, with the aim of influencing the direction of technology, including on strengthening democracy, and improving the preparedness of government on digital issues.[3] In addition, investing in the global competencies of the public workforce has become increasingly important for government to play a meaningful role on global issues.

At the same time, governments can mobilise various public governance tools in their existing toolkits to gear up in addressing global challenges.
Classic governance tools such as budgeting, regulation, or public procurement can usefully contribute to strategic global objectives, send the relevant signals on the global stage, and encourage other countries to take action. This can include, for example, green budgeting to align national expenditure and revenue processes with climate and other environmental goals or the strategic use of public procurement to ensure that global value chains deliver for people, planet and society. Governments can influence supplier standards by obliging businesses to incorporate responsible business conduct standards in their business models when they are applying for public contracts (OECD, 2022[14]). In 2021, Germany adopted a law regulating supply chains with a focus on human rights. From 2023, the law obliges larger German companies to identify, mitigate and prevent risks associated with their own activities and those of their suppliers. Companies that are found to violate this obligation are excluded from government contracts (Kusch and Saller, 2021[15]). A range of other innovative tools can be used to deliver on global challenges. For example, there are a growing number of examples from governments adopting mission-oriented innovation as a vehicle (for instance, mission-driven green research and innovation partnerships launched by the Innovation Fund Denmark).

3. https://techamb.um.dk/the-techplomacy-approach

However, tackling global challenges also requires the development of governance tools and mechanisms at the international level. International Regulatory Cooperation is one such example. By applying a stronger, more systematic international lens in their rulemaking practices, governments will be better equipped to learn from each other, and when needed, articulate co-ordinated and consistent regulatory responses while preserving their national prerogatives.

BUILDING RESILIENCE TO FOREIGN UNDUE INFLUENCE

One of the most significant global challenges that open democracies must address in order to reinforce democracy is the destabilising impacts of foreign non-democratic influences on democracy. This includes, for example: the spread of foreign-born mis- and dis-information (Plenary session 1); influencing democratic governments by opaque means, such as capitalising on loopholes in political finance frameworks using in-kind donations, social media campaigning, intermediaries to court favoured donors, policy-makers and parties, opaque corporate structures to obscure the origin of donations, as well as cryptocurrencies and cashless cards; influencing civic institutions by pressuring academic institutions to change programmes or targeting and recruiting staff and students to further a foreign actor's interests; undermining the enabling environment for media and civil society; and abusing Residence-by-Investment and Citizenship-by-Investment schemes to hide or facilitate financial and economic crimes, including corruption, tax evasion and money-laundering.

In the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it has become clear that OECD countries need to take further steps to enhance their global capacities to more effectively respond to this growing challenge. For example, Russian propaganda is potentially exacerbating polarisation, even in the most mature democracies. Research conducted by IFOP (*Institut D'études Opinion et Marketing en France et à L'international*) shows that about half of French people believe that at least one Russian theory about the war is true, with those voting on the extreme right and extreme left being significantly more likely to adhere to Russian propaganda on the origins of the Ukraine crisis (IFOP, 2022[16]). Although it is too early to advance any type of conclusion, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has shed a light on some structural weaknesses of democracies, both internal and external.

Maintaining the openness of democracies requires investments in further protecting them from foreign destabilisation of their own model. This could include efforts to better steer and set the agenda to tackle this issue through clear engagement and messaging on what kind of foreign influence is and isn't acceptable and ensuring that the government itself does not only "talk the talk", but also "walks the walk". Governments can also seek to strengthen their public institutions to protect against such influences, including through the training of public sector officials at all levels of government and by developing targeted strategies and assigning responsibilities to key institutions for identifying, responding to, and building resilience against foreign interference. Finally, they can leverage governance tools, such as closing regulatory loopholes on lobbying and undue influence, beneficial ownership and political finance.

Preliminary indications of areas for a future Action Plan

- Setting a clear vision and agenda for tackling global challenges
- Engaging citizens and key stakeholders in tackling global challenges, while upholding integrity and transparency
- Upgrading public institutions and public sector skills for the global context
- Mobilising governance tools and strengthening international governance tools to tackle global challenges
- Addressing loopholes allowing destabilising non-democratic influence in democracies

Discussion questions

- What challenges do OECD countries face in engaging citizens in addressing global challenges?
- What have OECD countries learned from the COVID-19 pandemic about the structures, competencies and tools needed to address global challenges at the domestic and international levels?
- What are the most important loopholes that allow destabilising non-democratic influence in OECD democracies?
- What can the OECD do to support governments in strengthening their capacity to effectively address global challenges and respond to foreign influence?

PLENARY

PLENARY SESSION 2:
UPGRADING REPRESENTATION, PARTICIPATION AND OPENNESS IN PUBLIC LIFE, AND CITIZEN-FOCUSED SERVICES

The OECD Trust Survey finds a widespread sense of lack of opportunities to exercise effective political voice. Less than one third of people (30.2%), say the political system in their country lets them have a say. In fact, more than four in ten respondents (42.8%) say it is unlikely that government would adopt opinions expressed in a public consultation (Figure 6). There is also a widespread sense that democratic government is working well for some, but not well enough for all (OECD, 2022[2]).

The youth and the most vulnerable in society consistently report lower levels of trust and satisfaction with government. On average in 22 OECD countries, the OECD Trust Survey finds that 37.0% of people aged 18 to 29 tend to trust their government, while the rate is 45.9% for those aged 50 and over. The gap in trust between those who consider themselves to have a relatively higher social status and those with a low social status is around 22.9 percentage points (OECD, 2022[2]).

In this context, governments need to take a close look at how they are meeting the increased expectations of citizens for public participation and democratic representation. **The Action Plan on Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life [GOV/PGC(2022)27] identifies concrete steps governments can take to enhance participation and representation in public life, including a special focus on gender equality.**

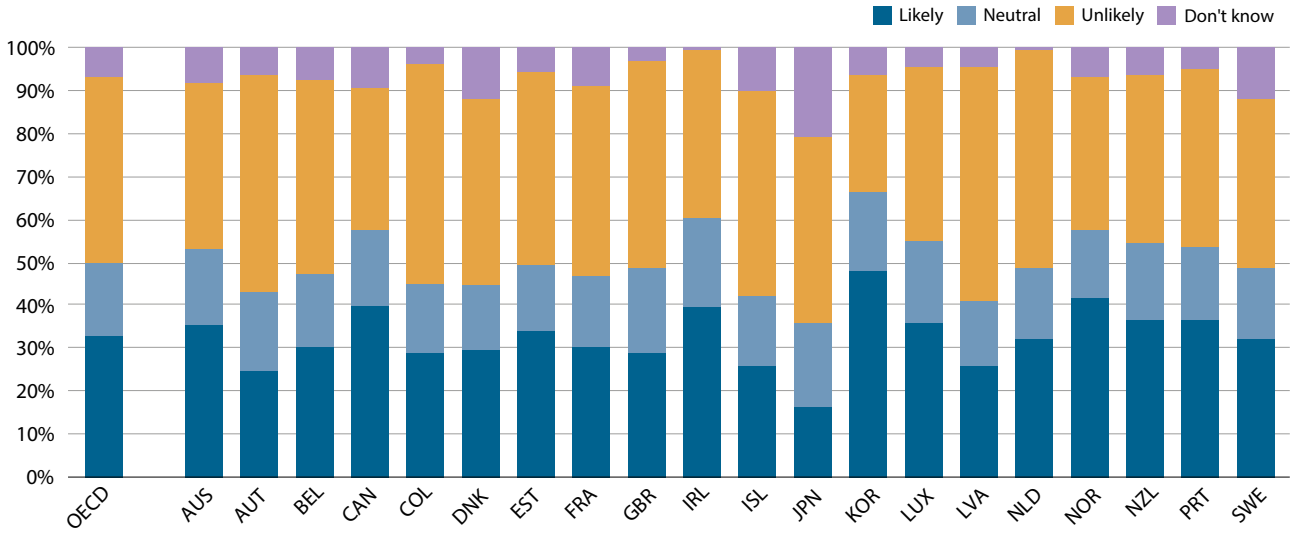
CREATING MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCLUSIVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Enhancing public participation - the involvement of citizens in politics, public policies and decision-making, public service design and delivery – will allow citizens and stakeholders to further influence activities and decisions of public authorities at different stages of the policy cycle.

A first priority in strengthening public participation is promoting a vibrant civic space, i.e. the legal, political and social environment that allows people to engage in public debate and to influence politics and society. This includes ensuring respect for fundamental civic freedoms, rule of law and non-discrimination; and creating an enabling environment for civil society. In OECD countries where civic space, on average and relatively, is well protected, it is often not a straightforward picture, with a backslide in certain

FIGURE 6. **Very few think that the government would adopt views expressed in a public consultation**

Share of respondents who indicate different levels of perceived likelihood that a government would adopt opinions expressed in a public consultation (on a 0-10 scale), 2021



Note: Figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question "If you participate in a public consultation on reforming a major policy area (e.g. taxation, healthcare, environmental protection), how likely or unlikely do you think it is that the government would adopt the opinions expressed in the public consultation?" The "likely" proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; "neutral" is equal to a response of 5; "unlikely" is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and "Don't know" was a separate answer choice. "OECD" presents the unweighted average across countries. In Mexico, the question was formulated in a slightly different way. In Mexico, the question reads "If a public consultation were to be held to lower or raise taxes, how likely is it that your opinion would be taken into account?" Finland and Norway are excluded from the figure as the data are not available. For more detailed information on the survey questionnaire and processes in specific countries, please find the survey method document at http://oe.cd/trust.

Source: OECD Trust Survey (http://oe.cd/trust)

areas and a revival in others. For example, the share of OECD countries where the situation is regarded as favourable for journalism has halved in the space of six years, while 46% of OECD countries now have public institutions that specialise in addressing discrimination and promoting equality (OECD, 2022[17]).

In addition, the further engagement of citizens and stakeholders in policy making is key, as the ability to exercise political voice is strongly associated with levels of trust in government (OECD, 2022[2]). Most OECD countries have adopted stakeholder engagement practices. For example, 84% have a government-wide online portal to involve citizens and stakeholders, and good practices can be found across the OECD membership, such as Portugal's national participatory budget or Mexico City's consultation on its constitution. Yet, basic stakeholder consultation still tends to happen late in the decision-making process, focusses on public opinion rather than judgement, or only reaches a small proportion of the population (OECD, 2022[18]).

Participatory policy making and service design and delivery offer further opportunity to bring citizens even closer to the policy making process and have extended to public governance tools such as budgeting and public procurement. New forms of deliberative processes, such as civic lotteries, citizens' assemblies and juries, and permanent citizens' councils broaden participation to a wider, more diverse group of people, guard against outsized influence of lobbies and create the conditions for everyday people to exercise public judgement, thereby complementing representative

democratic institutions. For example, an advisory group composed of 12 members aged 14 to 18 advises the New Zealand Ministry of Education on the impact of education measures and shares insights about education policies (OECD, 2020[19]).

Future scenarios of participatory democracy should include both resilient physical and digital public spaces as core features, transforming how governments deliver for their citizens, how citizens elect and interact with their representatives, and how they participate in the public debate and decision-making. Given the proximity of local government to citizens, local participatory practices can effectively shape, strengthen and deepen inclusive public participation; while yielding insights through citizens' feedback that can improve service performance and delivery.

Democracy requires people to have the capacity and capability to actively participate in the democratic system. Civic and citizenship education is instrumental in this regard. It is an important element of the mission of schools in OECD countries (OECD, 2017[20]) and of social economy actors, such as social enterprises and associations. As governments make increasing use of digital tools for democratic participation and service delivery, they need to invest in digital literacy to address digital divides, and reduce harms caused by social media, while strengthening the broader media and information ecosystem. For example, on the interactive platform *Gwanghwamoon 1st Street,* Korean citizens can suggest policy and service ideas, generate social discussions and monitor how their suggestions have shaped public policies.

ENSURING THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF INTEGRITY OF ELECTORAL PROCESSES AND PUBLIC DECISION MAKING

To ensure democratically stable outcomes, electoral processes must uphold the highest levels of integrity and transparency. This must include, but also look beyond financial reporting by political parties. Incidents such as the 2018 *Cambridge Analytica* scandal have revealed the need for stronger ethical standards for the use of voters' data, digital technologies and platforms during electoral campaigns, as well as strengthened legal frameworks and capacities for dispute resolution.

At the same time, addressing the potential for undue influence and striving for higher integrity in public-decision making processes must be a top priority.

On average in 22 OECD countries, the OECD Trust Survey finds that 47.8% of respondents say that it is likely that a high-level political official would grant a political favour in exchange for the offer or the prospect of a well-paid job in the private sector (OECD, 2022[2]). This, in turn, and in addition to undue private gain, may bias officials' decision making away from most people's interests and lead to inefficient policy outcomes. Moreover, while lobbying is a legitimate and important part of democratic processes, unbalanced, misleading and opaque practices can lead to policy outcomes that are in the interest of just a few. While 22 OECD countries use tools such as registries to enhance transparency in lobbying, there is scope to strengthen effective public scrutiny about who is lobbied, what decisions are targeted and how (OECD, 2021[21]). Frameworks need to keep pace with the ever more complex landscape of lobbying actors and practices and require clear guidelines for lobbyists to engage with public officials, as recognised in the forthcoming revised OECD Recommendation on Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying.

Given the growing concern of democracies related to foreign interference (Parallel session 3) in electoral processes and public decision making, the US, Australia, the UK and the EU have established frameworks to increase transparency of foreign government influence in domestic politics and elections through, for example, campaign financing, lobbying and public relations.

STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION

Certain demographics and societal groups tend to remain underrepresented in elected bodies, thus limiting credible and effective representation. For instance, while 20-39 year-olds make up 34% of the voting age population in OECD countries, they represent only 22% of members of parliament [GOV/PGC(2021)21/REV2]. Lack of time and funding, limited opportunities and persistent stereotypes are seen as the most common barriers to young people's access to elected office (OECD, 2020[19]). Similarly, women's representation in parliament rates at 31.6% and in ministerial positions at 34% on average in OECD countries (OECD, 2019[22]).

Younger people and women, people with low levels of education or income consistently report lower levels of trust in government. Similarly, only 34.6% of people with financial concerns trust their government, compared to 51.2% of people with fewer financial worries (OECD, 2022[2]). Such gaps in trust illustrate that progress can be made in enhancing participation and representation for all, including most importantly all underrepresented groups. Participatory processes can increase inclusion in public decision making by setting up dedicated mechanisms to address the needs of "the silent majority" and traditionally excluded groups. They can also help empower indigenous populations, as demonstrated for instance by New Zealand, which has been exploring governance models at local and national levels that distribute decision-making between iwi (or other Māori groups) and the Crown.

A diverse, representative and responsive civil service can also contribute to strengthened representation. While many OECD countries have adopted human resources practices to attract and retain talent from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds in line with the OECD Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability, they continue to face challenges in ensuring a representative civil service (OECD, 2021[23]). For instance, while on average across the OECD, women make up 58% of the public sector workforce, they fill only 37% of senior management positions (OECD, 2019[24]). To improve diversity and better representation of all underrepresented groups, governments can review their recruitment and evaluation culture and practices to eradicate biases in hiring and promotion. Disaggregated workforce data, as collected by Australia, Austria and Colombia, can help identify barriers to inclusion and understand the complexities of diversity challenges, and to set concrete targets and monitor progress in turn.

Discussion questions

- What are the main opportunities and challenges OECD countries face in maintaining and increasing a healthy civic space? What are the most promising practices to emerging challenges, including those brought by online public debate?
- What are promising avenues related to deliberative democracy? How to enhance participation from underrepresented groups in policy making?
- What can the OECD do to support governments in strengthening representation, participation and openness in national policy making and in service design and delivery?

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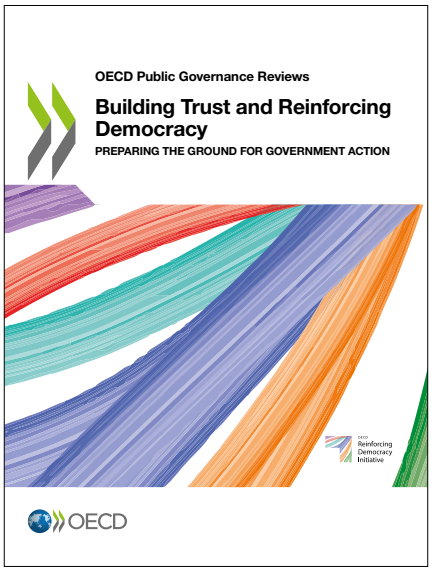
Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy

Key Issues Paper – Ministerial Brief

With the dual goal of strengthening democratic governance and protecting it from existing and emerging threats, the Reinforcing Democracy Initiative addresses three common governance challenges of advanced and mature democracies: i) Combating Mis- and Dis-Information, ii) Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life and iii) Stronger Open Democracies in a Globalised World: Embracing the Global Responsibilities of Governments and Building Resilience to Foreign Influence. In addition, the Initiative incorporates two horizontal themes, looking across all three pillars, on the major challenges of climate and democracy, and digitalisation and democracy. Underpinned by the findings of the OECD Trust Survey, these challenges constitute the main components of the Initiative.



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