

Summary record

7th Meeting of the OECD Expert Group on Open Government Data



14-15 JUNE 2021 (VIRTUAL)

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Open Data for Trust and Well-being: One Year After the First Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The 7th Meeting of the OECD Expert Group on Open Government Data took place virtually on the 14-15 June 2021. The meeting explored the relationship between open government data and misinformation, and how open data can support the development of people-driven services that centre on the needs of individuals towards greater trust and well-being. Given the global context of the COVID-19 health emergency since late 2019, the meeting drew also upon the discussions and lessons learnt since the 6th Meeting of the Expert Group in 2020. The meeting also provided an opportunity for delegates to comment the preliminary adjustments made to the OECD Survey on Open Government Data. The data collected via the survey is used for calculating the OECD Open, Useful, and Re-usable data (OURdata) Index. Delegates from 37 countries¹ and representatives of 12 organisations² attended the meeting.

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¹ OECD member countries: Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. Non-member countries: Argentina, Jamaica, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Myanmar, Panama, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Uruguay and Viet Nam.

² Development Bank of Latin America, Inter-American Development Bank, Latin American Open Data Initiative, Open Contracting Partnership, Open Data Charter, Open Data Institute, Open Government Partnership, Open Knowledge Foundation, Open Ownership, The GovLab, UN Development Programme, and the World Bank.

Key takeaways from the meeting

Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **The governance of open government data should be strengthened.** Many governments still face challenges in co-ordination and consistency across the public sector, especially across levels of government. Different actors across government own different types of data and tools to make the data available, which affects the level of standardisation and centralisation of data publication procedures. Countries are currently making greater efforts to promote the federation of data from regional and local levels of government
- **Collaboration across the open data ecosystem should be encouraged.** When it comes to building up urgent initiatives that rely on open data, different types of stakeholders in the ecosystem need to collaborate to facilitate arrangements.
- **The public needs skills-resources to engage with open data and related initiatives.** To ensure that the public is aware of and positively receptive to open data initiatives, governments could conduct educational programmes.

The use of open government data against COVID-19-related misinformation:

- **Governments understand the importance of working with the private sector** to promote the availability of private sector data that are of public interest as open data. This includes for example data on mobility patterns.
- **Published data needs to be sufficiently disaggregated (e.g. by sex and region) to inform policy responses and support a sound information ecosystem.** This was not always the case in the beginning of the pandemic.
- **Statistical institutions and data producers should invest in understanding who fact checkers are** and why they are important users of official statistics and data.

The use of open government data to build and improve services:

- **To make it easier to access and combine public- and private sector data for developing services governments could take a greater role** by acting as a central platform for the propagation of public and private sector data, and in generating standards for open data.
- **To support the development of data-driven services, there could be a greater focus among countries on user-driven data publication,** but also on data accessibility and collaborating with the private sector.

Future country priorities:

- **Data governance is seen as a priority** among countries as a foundation that enables effective open data arrangements. Moreover, “governing with data” and National Data Strategies that can contribute to coherent and cross-cutting approaches to data-driven public sector are seen as a relevant area for the OECD to continue to explore.
- **Data quality** is high on the agenda as an enabler for open data to feed into AI adoption and automated decision-making within and outside of government.
- **API development** is prioritised as a way to automate the sharing of data both within and outside of government, and there is a call to streamline such development with open data efforts.

Summary of day 1, 14 June 2021

The first day of the meeting focused on discussing with delegates and participants if and how open government data during the pandemic allowed citizens and other stakeholders to stay informed, track government interventions, and feed data into the design and delivery of useful services.

Session 1: One Year after the First Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Taking stock of lessons learned

The first session of the meeting provided the opportunity for delegates and participants to report on any lessons since 2020 in relation to their experience in publishing and re-using open data to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. **Barbara Ubaldi** (Head of Digital Government and Data Unit, Public Governance Directorate, OECD) moderated the session and shared insights gathered by the Secretariat on the subject. Delegates shared their experiences on what went well and what they would do differently to foster mutual learning and identify opportunities for collective efforts in the future.

A key takeaway was the need for strengthening governance around open government data. Many governments still face challenges in co-ordination and coherence across the public sector, especially across levels of government. There is a need for greater vertical and horizontal integration. Another conclusion was the importance of encouraging collaboration across the open data ecosystem. When it comes to building up urgent initiatives that rely on open data, different types of stakeholders in the ecosystem need to collaborate to facilitate arrangements enabling easy access to and sharing of new or updated open data. Finally, there was an agreement on the need for educating the public about open data and related initiatives. In order to ensure that the public is aware of and positively receptive to open data initiatives, the government should conduct educational programmes to help the public have a realistic understanding and expectations.

Natalia Carfi (Interim Executive Director, Open Data Charter) shared the Open Data Charter's experience in collaborating with the OECD on the topic of open data and COVID-19. The Open Data Charter has mapped how 25 countries publishes COVID-19 data, and found a lack of consistency between publication approaches and standards, data prioritisation, and co-ordination problems between different levels of government. Together, the OECD and the Open Data Charter run a series of online meet-ups in 2020-2021 to understand data demand and help governments prioritise data publication. Based on the insights gathered, the OECD and the Open Data Charter will finalise a document with actionable policy proposals on open data with a focus on the management of health emergencies.

Stefaan Verhulst (Co-Founder and Chief Research and Development Officer, The GovLab) shared key findings from the OECD-GovLab report [Open data in action: Initiatives during the initial stage of the COVID-19 pandemic](#). In general, during the first months of the pandemic, governments were active in releasing and re-using open data and it was important for communication efforts. The main focus of the collected open data initiatives was to address the immediate crisis response and public health information needs. The report identified gaps in terms of the lack of development of data products and services that can support individuals directly to cope with the pandemic.

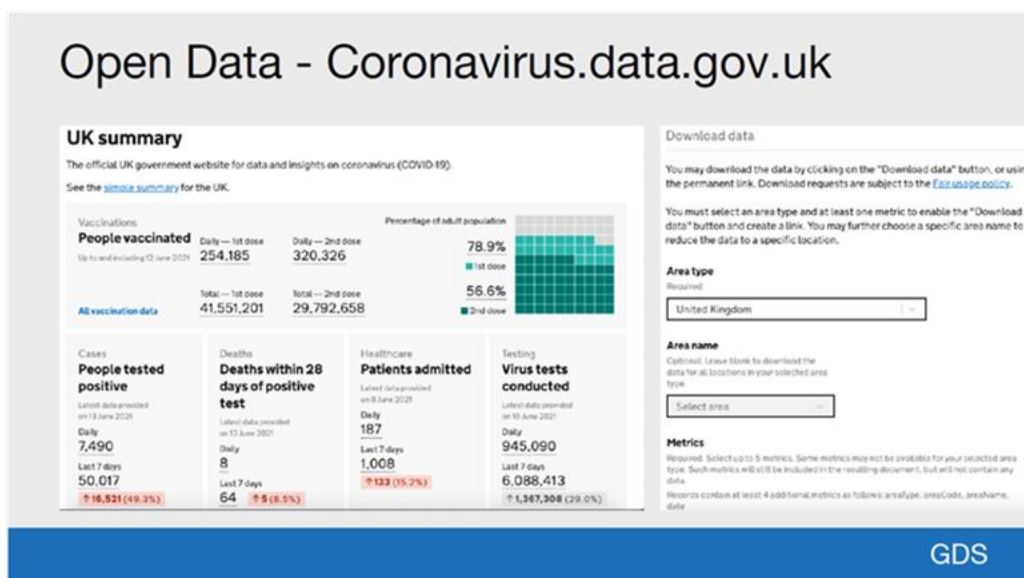
Session 2: Tackling COVID-19 misinformation through open government data

The second session allowed delegates to present their views and experiences about using open government data to tackle misinformation during the COVID-19 crisis. **Arturo Rivera** (Policy Analyst, Public Governance Directorate, OECD) moderated the session and started by sharing the Secretariat's view in terms of the relationship between open government data, misinformation, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sigrīd Siht (Director of Data policy, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Estonia) shared the Estonian government's experience on the topic and stressed the importance of ensuring the availability of supporting information and descriptions together with published open data to avoid misinterpretations. Data should be accompanied by clear definitions and vocabularies to facilitate its understanding. Furthermore, Estonia highlighted the importance of working with the private sector to promote the availability of private sector data of public interest as open data (e.g. data on mobility patterns or data on citizens' attitudes towards COVID-19 policy interventions).

Sam Roberts (Head of Open Government Policy, Cabinet Office, United Kingdom) presented the work of the UK Cabinet Office in developing the coronavirus.data.gov.uk platform to share statistics and reusable, quality open data about the pandemic. Besides data, the scientific evidence informing the UK government's COVID-19 policy response is also made available on the platform. During the meeting, the United Kingdom highlighted the challenge with the governance of open government data during the health emergency, caused by different actors across government owning different types of data and tools to make the data available, affecting the level of standardisation, and centralisation of data publication procedures. For example, while the policy ownership for open data lies within the Cabinet Office, the National Health Service (NHS) owns the COVID-19 data dashboard, which is a different dashboard than that of coronavirus.data.gov.uk.

Figure.1. [Coronavirus.data.gov.uk](https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk), presented by the United Kingdom



Source: Presentation by Sam Roberts, Cabinet Office, the United Kingdom, 7th Meeting of the OECD Expert Group on Open Government Data, 14 June 2021, Paris (virtual meeting).

Craig Matsick (Policy Analyst, Public Governance Directorate, OECD) presented the work of the OECD Open and Innovative Government Division on mis- and dis-information. This includes the upcoming OECD Good Practice Principles on Mis- and Disinformation that will aim to help governments counteract misinformation and support public trust by improving public communication policies and strategies, including the release of open data.

Tinatin Ninua (Deputy Director, Independent Reporting Mechanism, Open Government Partnership) shared the work of the Open Government Partnership related to COVID-19 misinformation and open data. During the beginning of the pandemic, the organisation identified that while data on tests and deaths were quickly published, the data was not sufficiently disaggregated to help inform policy responses (e.g. by

region and sex). The release of disaggregated data was however gradually improved. Another area for improvement identified was the publication of vaccination data. Data such as where vaccines go and who are buying them, and for how much, is currently lacking. Similarly, strategies around vaccination are rarely published, which leaves ground for dis- and misinformation. The OGP recommends governments to be aware of the digital divide, to nominate agents or data stewards, and to make sure to engage diverse actors to counter misinformation campaigns, including media and the civil society.

Fionntán O'Donnell (Senior Data Technologist, Open Data Institute) shared the Open Data Institute's project to support fact checker organisations in the UK. The project - funded by Google AI for Social Impact Challenge - includes how to use AI techniques to scan media and TV news pieces, and using AI to collect statistics from governmental and national agencies and crosscheck the two. For that, machine-readable, open government data is necessary. During the project, the Open Data Institute has talked to existing fact checkers to understand how they use national statistics data. The main conclusion was the importance of statistical institutions understanding who fact checkers are and why they are important users of statistics, as well as to enhance the data analytical skills of the fact checkers.

Session 3: Open government data and public services - facilitating people's journey through the crisis

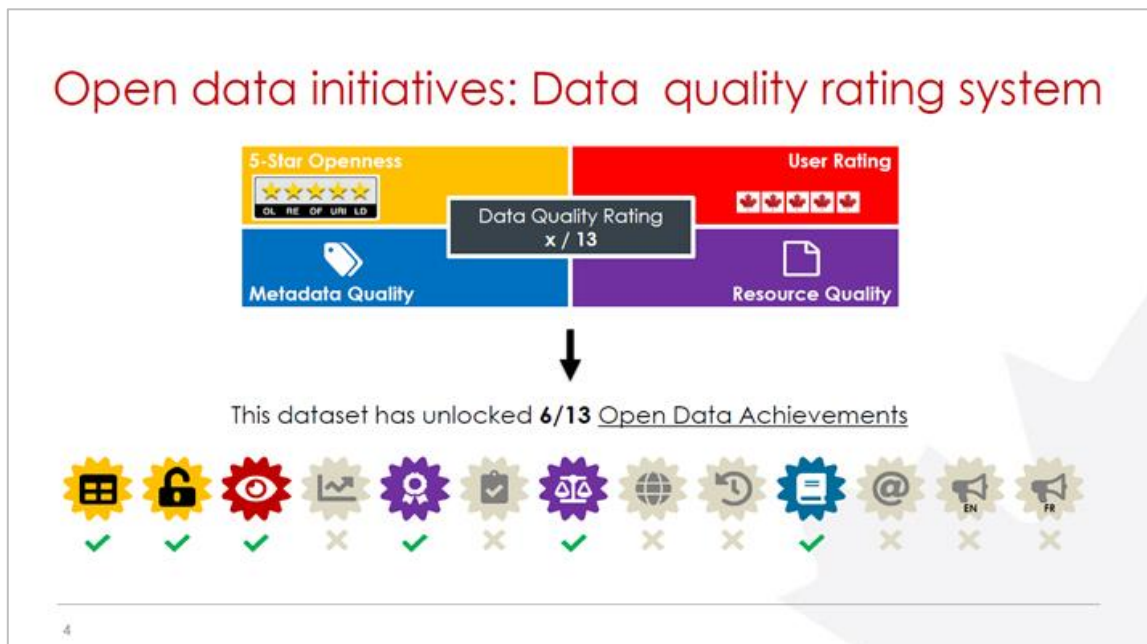
The final session of the first day centred on the role of open government data in the design and delivery of useful services during the pandemic. **Barbara Ubaldi** (Head of Digital Government and Data Unit, Public Governance Directorate, OECD) moderated the session and provided an introduction to the OECD Secretariat's view on public service design and delivery in the digital age.

Mélanie Roberts (Executive Director of the Open Government and Portals Office of the ADM, Digital and Services Policy, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Canada), presented the work of the Canadian federal government in embedding indicators for promoting open data as a service; in ensuring the necessary data infrastructure to connect with public services; and in reinforcing the role of government as an enabler for open government data-based services by prioritising high-value datasets from the outset.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the Canadian government decided to provide all COVID-19 information in one central location. It was thus imperative to explain to public sector organisations why open data is different and why it should be made available on a separate open data website. There was an evident challenge to understand what high-value datasets should be prioritised for release during the crisis, and then encouraging stakeholders to share these data. In order to allow citizens to be more involved in the data prioritisation process, the government developed a 'suggest dataset' feature and has been working on various ways for citizens to be able to track when datasets are made available.

Another priority for the Canadian government during the COVID-19 crisis has been to accelerate the federation of data from provinces to boost analytics capacities, and in developing new indicators for data quality and use. The data quality rating system (see Figure 0.4) is an achievement-based reward for attaining various data quality ratings on the federal open data platform.

Figure 2. Data quality rating system of published data, presented by Canada

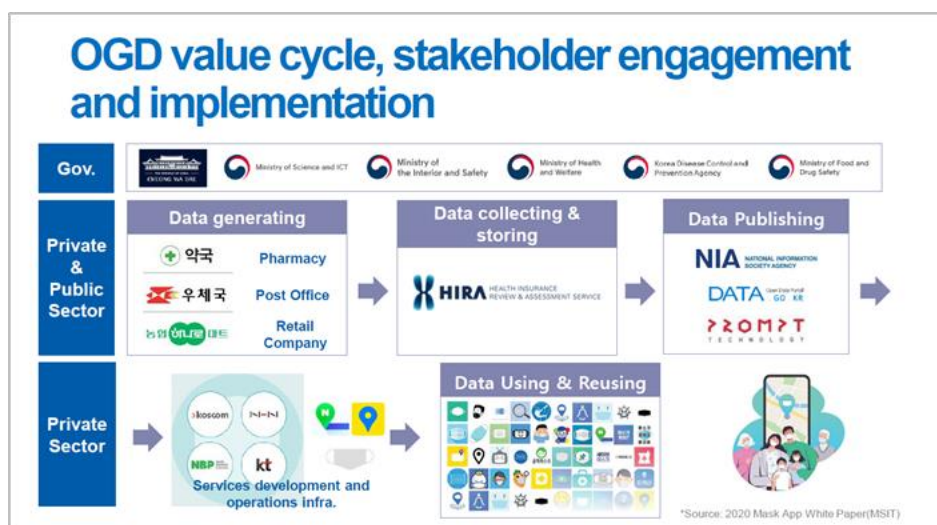


Source: Presentation by Mélanie Robert, Treasury Board Canada, Canada, 7th annual meeting of the OECD Expert Group on Open Government Data, 14 June 2021, Paris Virtual meeting.

During the same session, **Jeni Tennison** (Vice President and Chief Strategy Adviser, Open Data Institute) shared the ODI's work on open data and services, and their opinion on how open data can be an enabler of user-driven services across the public- and private sector. Jeni Tennison stressed the importance of providing support on the ground, and of seeing open data as part of the broader digital infrastructure and not a separate subject or policy area. Information is data that activates and enables users to do something different, which requires data to be disaggregated and granular. In addition, the value of private sector data demonstrates the urgency for governments to show that the opening up of private sector-held data provide benefits that will come back to the private sector. In this sense, governments should not just act as data stewards, but could take a more holistic role in generating standards for open data, and in acting as a central platform for the propagation of public and private sector data.

Jieun Oh (Senior Manager of Open Data Planning, National Information Society Agency, Korea) shared the experience of the Korean government in releasing open data to facilitate the journey of citizens and businesses throughout the crisis. In the beginning of the pandemic, the Korean government received proposals from citizens to establish a joint public-private open data response. This proposal resulted in a collaboration to support the generation and collection of valuable data from pharmacies, post offices and retail companies, which were stored by the Health Insurance Review & Assessment Service and then provided to the central government for publication.

Figure 3. OGD value cycle, stakeholder engagement and implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic, presented by Korea



Source: Presentation by Jieun Oh, National Information Society Agency, Korea, 7th annual meeting of the OECD Expert Group on Open Government Data, 14 June 2021, Paris Virtual meeting.

According to Korea, important lessons from this work include the need to prioritise user-driven data publication, improve data accessibility, and to exchange expertise and resources between the public- and private sector to develop more comprehensive policy responses. Korea's future plans for open data include the release of high-value data related to COVID-19, establishing a common foundation for Open APIs, and establishing a data-driven crisis response and public-private partnership support system.

Summary of day 2, 15 June 2021

Session 4: OECD Open government data survey and OURdata Index 2022

The fourth session saw the Secretariat present the preliminary adjusted version of the OECD Survey on Open Government Data 5.0 and OURdata Index methodology. Since June 2020, the Secretariat has worked together with the OURdata Index taskforce to allow delegates to closely monitor and provide necessary recommendations and feedback to the revision process. Moreover it is important to ensure that the Index and survey takes into account the trends and challenges experienced by countries when designing and implementing open data policies. The revision process began in July 2020. After seven consecutive meetings, the taskforce had its final meeting in December 2020. During the period after, the Secretariat revised the survey based on the discussions with the taskforce.

The Secretariat guided delegates through the main adjustments made to the survey and Index. First, questions were re-formulated to reduce the likelihood of subjective responses. Secondly, where relevant, changes were made to avoid the assessment of formal requirements and instead focus on practices. Third, some questions were removed to reduce the risk of double scoring. When it comes to assessing the implementation of data availability and accessibility, the Index has been adjusted to also consider the availability and accessibility of data that are not available on a central/federal open data portal. Furthermore, instead of assessing data quality as the percentage of data quality on the portal, each data category in the survey will have its own data quality assessment, which will feed into the Index assessment. Another important change is the removal of the focus on data quantity in the Index assessment.

The Secretariat invited delegates to send their written comments to the pilot survey, the revised Index structure, and the survey glossary. Furthermore, the Secretariat shared the plans of launching a regional LAC OURdata Index in 2022, and invited non-OECD member countries from the LAC region to share their interest in joining the data collection exercise. The final LAC OURdata Index would be published in the OECD publication *Government at a Glance Latin America and the Caribbean 2023*.

Session 5: Looking forward - identifying policy priorities

The final session of the meeting aimed at discussing with delegates the priorities for the Secretariat's work on open data in the upcoming year.

Belgium thanked the OECD Secretariat for their work on open data and expressed the value of this work for providing a good methodology on how to work with open data. Belgium further expressed the need for working more on improving data governance as critical to support the release of high value datasets as open data. At the moment, open data is less prioritised as governments are focusing on improving the governance, quality and effective use of the data inside the administration before making it available. Moreover, Belgium requests further assistance from the OECD on how to move from data governance to "govern with data". During the pandemic, the government has noted that a lot of open data are not being used, which costs a lot in terms of resources and decisions that could be informed by these data.

Finland expressed the priority to focus on data quality. Many countries are currently working on data quality, which is largely driven by the ability to adopt AI but also other analytical methods such as automated decision-making. In Finland, the government is more often re-using the same data for different purposes, and while the data quality might fit for the primary purpose, it might not be suitable for secondary use. Finland proposes that the Secretariat should develop an OECD data quality model to support the development of data quality across member countries.

Turkey noted that the OECD Open Government Data survey is valuable and will contribute to benchmarking the Turkish government's performance in open data. The Turkish open data portal is still in a testing phase and the OURdata Index will allow the government to identify and address any gaps. Turkey further requests access to resources and guides that can help the government publish data while preventing re-identification of sensitive data.

Israel asked for more guidance on how to align open data with the development of an API ecosystem. Israel is working on different mechanisms to improve data governance and data quality with regards to APIs, mainly for re-using data within the government. Yet, this work leaves open data on the side as more part of an agenda for transparency and accountability and the more traditional aspects of open government. Israel asked for guidance on how to streamline both efforts across the open data agenda and API frameworks.

The Secretariat closed the session and invited delegates to share any further ideas in an upcoming short survey to be sent out by the Secretariat.