



**United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development
(UN CSTD)**

Working Group on Data Governance

SURVEY RESPONSE*

**Track 4 – Options to Facilitate Safe, Secure and Trusted Data Flows,
including Cross-Border Data Flows as Relevant for Development**

Submitted by:

SWITZERLAND

(Member)

22 August 2025

1. What domestic, regional and international measures currently support cross-border data flows?

At the domestic level, Switzerland has established governance frameworks such as the Verhaltenskodex für vertrauenswürdige Datenräume, which promotes interoperability and trust in data exchange. Regionally, the European Union's Data Governance Act and Data Act provide the legal foundation for cross-border data flows within the EU and associated partners. Internationally, initiatives such as the International Data Spaces Association (IDSA) reference model and Gaia-X promote federated, trusted infrastructures for data sharing. Switzerland's alignment with these frameworks ensures compatibility while preserving its sovereignty.

2. What challenges do countries, in particular developing countries, face regarding cross-border data flows?

Many countries face the challenge of balancing data sovereignty with the need for openness. Developing countries in particular often lack the technical and institutional capacity to implement secure data infrastructures. They may also struggle with compliance costs for international standards, which can create new inequalities in participation. Additional challenges include uneven legal protections for privacy, risks of dependency on foreign cloud providers, and the difficulty of negotiating fair terms for data access and benefit-sharing in cross-border arrangements.

Moreover, the digital divide in infrastructure and skills reduces the ability of developing countries to benefit from data-driven innovation and global trade.

* This survey was designed by Ms. Daniela García (Ecuador) and Dame Wendy Hall (University of Southampton), Co-facilitators of Track 4 on options to facilitate safe, secure and trusted data flows, including cross-border data flows as relevant for development. The survey supports the work of the UN CSTD Working Group on Data Governance (WGDG), established by the United Nations General Assembly ([A/RES/79/1](#)).

3. What mechanisms, including data intermediaries, as well as regulations, and international standards exist to promote safe, secure, and trusted data sharing, and how do they interact with developmental benefits?

Several mechanisms exist to promote safe and trusted data flows. Data intermediaries play a central role by ensuring neutrality, compliance, and fair access. Regulatory frameworks such as GDPR, the EU's Data Governance Act, and Switzerland's own codes of conduct safeguard privacy and establish conditions for data use. International standards, including those developed by ISO and the IDSA, set technical and semantic rules that make cross-border flows possible. These mechanisms foster developmental benefits by creating an environment of trust in which actors from different sectors, including developing countries, can participate in data-driven innovation while protecting their citizens and interests.

Internationally, Switzerland contributes to ISO/IEC standards on data security, follows OECD and Council of Europe frameworks, and exchanges climate and disaster data under the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). These mechanisms reduce transaction costs, enhance trust, and create opportunities for smaller economies to participate in global value chains, thus linking data governance to development.

4. How do these mechanisms ensure safe and trusted data sharing in critical areas like healthcare, emerging technologies, and disaster prevention?

In healthcare, governance mechanisms require strong safeguards for sensitive personal data, including explicit consent management and anonymisation techniques. In emerging technologies, trusted frameworks like Gaia-X and IDSA promote transparency, accountability, and security-by-design to prevent misuse of data. For disaster prevention and climate resilience, cross-border standards enable rapid and secure sharing of environmental and geospatial data while ensuring sovereignty and trustworthiness. In all these sectors, mechanisms combine legal frameworks, technical standards, and trusted intermediaries to guarantee that the benefits of data sharing can be realised without compromising rights, security, or sovereignty.

In emerging technologies, Switzerland promotes responsible AI and digital governance in line with OECD principles and close cooperation with European partners, ensuring that innovation remains ethical and human-centric. In disaster prevention and climate monitoring, MeteoSwiss provides open government data and exchanges information via the WMO, while Alertswiss delivers secure emergency communications to the public. Across these areas, Switzerland relies on transparency obligations, independent oversight by the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner (FDPIC), and international alignment to maintain trust, safeguard privacy, and maximize the developmental benefits of data sharing.

5. Are there any other points, ideas, or issues you would like to raise that were not addressed in this survey?

No response provided.

.....

Contacts

UN CSTD Secretariat
cstd-datagov@un.org