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Contribution by Portugal
to the CSTD 2026-2027 priority theme on
“Data Governance for Development: From Asymmetry to Equitable Stewardship”

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1. Can you share challenges that your country face in building and leveraging data capacities, including issues related to infrastructure, ownership and stewardship, free and trusted cross border flows, and benefit-sharing? (Please provide examples and, where possible, quantitative evidence or indicators of these challenges and their impacts)

One of the significant challenges is ensuring the quality and standardization of data across various public sector entities that hinder the effective use and reuse of open data. Another challenge is Data literacy, many public sector employees and citizens may not have the knowledge or skills necessary to understand and effectively use open data. And lastly, the lack of qualified human resources.

2. How are inequalities embedded in the processes through which data is generated, collected and used in your country? In particular, how do biases in data collection and use, such as gender data gap, affect policymaking, service delivery and development outcomes? (Please provide examples, evidence and any measures being taken to address these disparities)

Portugal's experience shows that data inequality is not only a technical issue; it is a governance issue. Biases emerge when datasets do not capture unpaid work, care responsibilities, gendered labour market trajectories, local realities, digital exclusion or intersecting vulnerabilities. These biases can affect which problems are prioritised, which groups are targeted, how public services are designed, and how outcomes are evaluated. Portugal is addressing these gaps through gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, gender impact assessment, sex-disaggregated administrative and survey data, the Statistics Portugal Gender Dossier, CIG's statistical publications, and the modernization of open data infrastructure through Dados.gov.pt. However, evidence from UN Women Data Hub, Statistics Portugal and CIG indicates that further work is still needed in areas such as time use, unpaid care, gender and poverty, harassment, environment, local political participation, digital inclusion and the systematic measurement of open data reuse and impact.

3. Has your country implemented national strategies, regulatory frameworks or policy instruments to promote equitable and interoperable data governance? What are the lessons learned? (Please describe any specific challenges, failures or successes encountered during implementation)
 - I. RCM No. 91/2012 approves the National Digital Interoperability Regulation (<https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/resolucao-conselho-ministros/91-2012-19186>).
 - II. The National Data Strategy has strengthened national initiatives related to open data and the reuse of public sector information, whose general principles are approved in Law No. 68/2021 (already rectified by Rectification Declaration No. 31/2021), which in turn transposes Directive (EU) 2019/1024 of 20 June 2019 into national law. This vector of the strategy has been materialized by the open data initiative promoted by the Agency for Administrative Modernization, IP (AMA), through the Portaldados.gov website, which already provides a wide range of data from various public bodies that can be accessed openly, with the very clear intention that they be an engine for economic, societal and environmental development.

- III. The Action Plan for 2026-2027 of the National Digital Strategy (<https://digital.gov.pt/en/documentos/estrategia-digital-nacional-plano-de-acao-2026-2027>) foresees the revision of the National Data Policy which is in its final stage of development by a dedicated team. However, there is no publicly available information to share yet.

The Action Plan 2026-2027 is operationalised through a set of concrete measures, among which:

- National Data Policy (Action 8) will revise the unified approach to data under the National Digital Strategy, considering data as a strategic national asset and establishing a coherent framework for its governance, access, and reuse across the public sector.
- New legal regime for interoperability (Action 7), ensuring secure, standardised, and efficient data exchange between public administration entities.
- A particularly relevant element of the Action Plan is Action 8.4 – Approve legislation to implement the Data Act and review implementing legislation for the Data Governance Act, ensuring a coherent, simple, and harmonised regulatory framework for data, fully aligned with the strategic vision for digital regulation and with the National Data Policy.

- IV. Until the revised Open Data Strategy is released it is not possible to provide more information. In any case it is worth highlighting the following:

- In August 2025, the Portuguese Agency for Administrative Modernisation (AMA) was restructured and transformed into ARTE – the Agency for the Technological Reform of the State (Agência para a Reforma Tecnológica do Estado), which assumed responsibility for the State's digital transformation and technological reform agenda.
- the President of ARTE is currently the Chief Technological Officer (CTO) of the State;
- in the newly approved Network for the State Simplification and Technologies (Law-Decree 85/2026 of 13 April - <https://bo.digital.gov.pt/api/assets/etic/7554f8d8-8788-4ce1-8497-06cea1d976a8/>), data is a priority for the Commission of Coordination of the Digital Strategy (article 5, paragraph j): "To promote the implementation of the reviewed national data policy, as well as the measures defined by the technical groups as necessary to increase the quality of data available in the Public Administration");
- in the recently published AI National Agenda (ANIA), approved by the Council of Ministers' Resolution 2/2026 (<https://digital.gov.pt/pt/documentos/resolucao-do-conselho-de-ministros-2-2026>), it is reinforced the need to promote availability of quality data and the commitment to finalise the National Plan for Data Centres (<https://bo.digital.gov.pt/api/assets/etic/f29cb51f-86dd-4e8d-9380-c76fa509e5ff/>)
- with the Sovereign Cloud, the commitment with the control and security of data is also emphasised (<https://www.arte.gov.pt/governo-digital/>).

4. Can you share your country's experience in reducing asymmetries and promoting more equitable data stewardship in development sectors such as public services, education, health and agriculture? (Please provide examples, lessons learned and remaining challenges where possible)

It is estimated that a high proportion of public bodies at local and regional level have open data publication plans in place, particularly through the development of Local and Regional Action Plans under the National Smart Territories Strategy (ENTI).

At municipal level, 254 out of 297 municipalities (approximately 85%) have developed Local Action Plans, which typically include elements related to data governance, data availability, and open data publication. At regional level, intermunicipal entities have also developed Regional Action Plans.

While these plans are not always explicitly labelled as "open data publication plans", they systematically incorporate actions and measures that support the publication, management, and reuse of data, in alignment with national open data policies and EU priorities.

Several of these strategic documents have been formally approved by Municipal Assemblies and made publicly available, reinforcing their institutional validity, political endorsement, and accountability at local level. These plans typically include key elements such as:

- Strategic objectives for data governance and digital transformation
- Actions to enhance data availability and interoperability
- Initiatives promoting open data publication and reuse
- Alignment with national frameworks and European data policies

5. What mechanisms or institutional arrangements are in place in your country to foster collaboration around data governance for development among different stakeholders (e.g., university-industry, private-public, or multi-stakeholder initiatives)?

The newly approved Network for the State Simplification and Technologies (Law-Decree 85/2026 of 13 April - <https://bo.digital.gov.pt/api/assets/etic/7554f8d8-8788-4ce1-8497-06cea1d976a8/> - is tasked with ensuring coordination between Public Administration entities and civil society. This collaboration is intended to help fulfil the government's goals regarding administrative simplification and digitalization. The network will be steered by the recently created Digital Strategy Coordination Commission which created different technical working groups, among which is the Data and Interoperability Group (<https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/despacho/6176-2026-1123283201>) aimed at coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the actions foreseen in the Digital Strategy.

6. What major bilateral, regional, or international partnership has your country engaged in to foster equitable and interoperable data governance? (Please describe the benefits of participating in these partnerships, as well as any challenges related to coordination, capacity, trust, interoperability or benefit-sharing).

Open data policy implementation at regional and local level is supported through dedicated methodological guidance aligned with the National Smart Territories Strategy (ENTI). This guidance provides a structured framework for the development of Local and Regional Action Plans, defining a common vision, strategic axes, and measurable initiatives to be implemented until 2030.

The methodological framework supporting these plans is publicly available here:

<https://doc.territoriosinteligentes.gov.pt/api/assets/d5bd57fd-afa8-424a-a1ae-a7aab91132e1>.

Local Action Plans have been developed by municipalities (254 Local Action Plans have been developed out of 308 municipalities) and intermunicipal entities (7 Regional Action Plans out of 26 intermunicipal entities) based on this framework, where the entities' data ecosystem is identified. Among these, the most consolidated plans have already been approved by municipal assemblies and made publicly available.

Additional cross-sectional, cross-departmental and inter-governmental efforts will be fostered by the recently created Digital Strategy Coordination Commission. This Commission has the mandate of, amongst other things, to "promote the implementation of the national data policy, as well as the measures defined by the technical groups as necessary to increase the quality of data available in the Public Administration" (article 5, paragraph j) of Law-Decree 85/2026 of 13 April (establishes the Network for the State Simplification and Technologies -

<https://bo.digital.gov.pt/api/assets/etic/7554f8d8-8788-4ce1-8497-06cea1d976a8/>). Additional incentives to open data at the regional and local levels shall be made available after the implementation of the revised National Data Policy.

Additionally, the National Strategy for Smart Territories (ENTI) has advanced as a key policy instrument to promote data-driven decision-making at local and regional level. ENTI supports municipalities with digital tools, fosters interoperability, and encourages the use of open data and AI to improve public services, sustainability, and territorial governance. (<https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/resolucao-conselho-ministros/119-2024-886514231>).

7. How can international cooperation strengthen equitable and interoperable data governance to ensure that data contributes to shared prosperity and sustainable development? In what ways can the UN CSTD contribute to this effort?

International cooperation is essential when data flows increasingly assume cross-border importance, which means no country alone can take advantage of the full potential of data. That is why international cooperation can contribute to promote the adoption of common frameworks, technical standards, and governance principles that enable data interoperability across countries and sectors. Harmonized approaches to data quality, metadata, data sharing protocols, privacy protection, and cross-border data flows reduce fragmentation and lower barriers to innovation and research. Common standards are particularly important for emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, digital public infrastructure, health data, climate data, and smart cities, where data must be exchanged across organizations and jurisdictions.

Also, when shared norms on privacy, security, transparency, accountability, and ethical data use are established trust increases. Common safeguards increase confidence among governments, businesses, and citizens, encouraging responsible data sharing while protecting fundamental rights. This is especially important in contexts involving sensitive personal data, public sector data, and cross-border digital services.

The CSTD assumes a pivotal role as a neutral forum where governments, international organizations, academia, civil society, technical communities, and the private sector discuss emerging challenges and identify policy solutions related to data governance. Such dialogue can help bridge differences between national approaches and promote consensus around shared principles.