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Contribution by Latvia

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

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Q) 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)

A) Latvia's data ecosystem is quite fragmented, as there is no single institution responsible for governing public sector data. As a consequence of this decentralized data ownership model, we also face challenges related to metadata. In particular, we have not yet established a mandatory set of metadata standards that apply consistently across the entire public sector. From an infrastructure perspective, one of our biggest challenges is the transition to cloud-compatible solutions. Several key information systems are still operating on physical infrastructure, which limits their scalability, flexibility, and long-term sustainability. When it comes to ownership and stewardship, we face two main challenges. First, data owners apply different approaches to data governance, resulting in inconsistent practices, increased administrative burden, and frustration among data users. Second, from a stewardship perspective, our greatest challenge is fostering a cultural shift in how data is perceived. Data should no longer be treated as a byproduct of public sector functions and services, but rather as a strategic business resource that must be properly governed, described, managed, and shared.

Lastly, we would like to emphasize that the challenges outlined above are being addressed through the National Data Governance Strategy for 2026–2030, which is currently in the process of approval. The strategy aims to establish a more coherent approach to data governance, strengthen metadata management, modernize data infrastructure, and promote a culture in which data is recognized and managed as a strategic public sector asset.

Q) 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)

A) When it comes to public sector data, it is generally collected in accordance with sector-specific laws and regulations. This contributes to the previously mentioned challenge of non-standardized metadata across institutions. In practice, this can create additional administrative burden and hinder the implementation of the once-only principle, as the same information may need to be collected or processed multiple times. To address this issue, Latvia has amended the State Administration Structure Law, enabling the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia to create synthetic datasets by combining information from different institutions. This approach aims to reduce administrative burden, improve the reuse of existing data, and support more efficient data-driven policymaking while maintaining appropriate data protection requirements.

Referring to the answer provided to the first question, a more long-term and sustainable solution to this challenge will be achieved through the implementation of the National Data Governance Strategy for 2026–2030. The strategy aims to establish a more coherent data governance framework across the public sector, including common data standards, improved metadata management, and strengthened

coordination between institutions. These measures will help reduce administrative burden, improve data interoperability, and support the effective implementation of the once-only principle.

Q) 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)

A) At present, the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development is developing Latvia's first National Data Governance Strategy for 2026–2030. The strategy aims to establish a comprehensive data governance framework and ensure that data is recognized and managed as a valuable strategic resource within the public sector.

The implementation of the strategy is expected to address several existing challenges, including fragmented data governance practices, inconsistent data standards, administrative burden, and interoperability issues between information systems. It will promote a more coordinated approach to data management, improve data quality and accessibility, and strengthen the ability of public institutions to reuse and share data effectively.

The strategy will provide a long-term and sustainable solution by establishing common principles and responsibilities for data governance across the public sector, supporting a shift towards data-driven public administration.

The document (project) is available online: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/41f77003-2702-41a9-ac4b-e41c22948c31

Q) 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)

A) One of the key initiatives in the field of data governance in recent years has been the development and scaling of the Data Governance and Dissemination Platform (DAGR). The platform provides a one-stop-shop approach to government data by centrally connecting data from multiple trusted public sector sources in essence a data lake.

DAGR is a cloud-based platform that allows data users to access data from different institutions through a single connection, while ensuring that data ownership and control remain with the respective data providers. All data transactions within the platform are governed by smart contracts, allowing data owners to define and manage access conditions.

We are also pleased to highlight that the DAGR platform has received recognition at the European level - European Public Sector Award (EPSA) 2025–2026. This recognition demonstrates the value of Latvia's approach to building modern, interoperable, and user-oriented public sector data infrastructure.

Q) 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)?

A) Within the context of the National Data Governance Strategy for 2026–2030, Latvia plans to establish a National Data Board that will bring together representatives from public sector institutions and non-governmental organizations to strengthen coordination and cooperation on data governance matters. A similar multi-stakeholder cooperation model is also planned in the field of open data, with the involvement of private sector representatives to encourage data sharing, reuse, and innovation. As mentioned in previous answers, Latvia is also strengthening the role of the Central Statistical Bureau, including its ability to support the creation and use of combined and synthetic datasets. These developments aim to improve collaboration between stakeholders, promote responsible data use, and strengthen evidence-based policymaking. A big role is also played by the Data Governance and Dissemination Platform (DAGR) as it provides a one-stop shop for all government data.

Q) 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)

A) Latvia is actively participating in international and regional cooperation initiatives on data governance. As a partner in the “NoBaReg” initiative, Latvia contributes to the Nordic-Baltic cooperation model focused on advancing data governance practices and sharing experience among participating countries. We also maintain close cooperation with our neighboring countries, Estonia and Lithuania, on digital and data-related initiatives, while actively participating in relevant European Union cooperation frameworks to exchange knowledge, align approaches, and contribute to the development of common data governance practices.

Q) 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?

A) The biggest gain from the CSTD will be information sharing and best practice.