

Assessment and recommendations

Governing the digital transformation of the Argentinian public sector

- The Argentinian administration is headed by President Mauricio Macri, who was elected on 10 December 2015 and has a four-year term with the possibility for re-election. Previous central administrations did little to construct the necessary structures and systems to support the digital transformation. Throughout government, there is a sense of urgency to ensure a sustainable path to government reform by the end of this term, regardless of the outcome of the next election.
- Argentina is taking a portfolio approach to public sector reform, aiming to build a national public policy framework across many management and policy domains to achieve country-wide priorities and objectives. Digital government is one pillar of a broader reform context that also includes open government, public sector integrity and regulatory policy reform; and it has been signalled as one of the President's top priorities. The OECD has worked with the government of Argentina to carry out near-simultaneous reviews of all of these areas. These reform efforts and reviews have been carried out, in part, to support Argentina's intention to become a member country of the OECD.
- When the President took office in 2015, he created the Ministry of Modernisation (MoM), with a mission to co-ordinate a whole-of-government modernisation framework. The MoM was charged with catalysing digital government by developing cross-cutting technologies and government-wide policies. It housed a new digital services team and an innovation lab (LABgobar) and was staffed with proven experts in relevant digital fields, many of whom led successful digital transformation efforts for the city of Buenos Aires. In September 2018, in order to promote horizontality and reduce fragmentation, the President reorganised the government, placing the MoM at the centre of government and renaming it the Government Secretariat of Modernisation (Secretaría de Gobierno de Modernización, SGM). The SGM (and its predecessor, the MoM) has earned the respect and support of ministries and other public sector organisations across government.
- Argentina has a federated government structure, in which provinces and local governments have significant independence and autonomy. Several federal councils have been created to provide support to, and enable co-ordination and collaboration with, subnational levels of government. For digital government issues, this is done through the Federal Council on Modernisation and Innovation for the Public Administration (COFEMOD). However, ensuring alignment across levels of government is a challenge.

Moving forward together: Establishing a common, strategic and inclusive narrative

Strategic vision and goals

- The key guiding document for Argentina's digital government efforts is its Digital Agenda, which was formally implemented in December 2018 after a development process secured through the participation and support of all relevant ministries. It provides a government-wide project and principles-based vision for the digital transformation of the public sector.
- Across government, there is near-universal awareness of and support for the Digital Agenda.
- The SGM is responsible for overseeing government-wide progress in implementing the Digital Agenda, as well as ensuring it is kept up-to-date.
- The Digital Agenda is an important umbrella policy document and represents a significant step forward in establishing a common vision and goals. It moves Argentina closer to meeting the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies; however, it does not constitute a full digital government strategy in itself.
- The Digital Agenda was developed through a process that was inclusive within government. Bringing all relevant government actors to the table is helpful in ensuring goals are aligned and common ownership. However, opportunities were missed to be inclusive with the broader ecosystem of non-governmental actors, including the public.
- Meetings were held with select private sector companies and civil society organisations, but there was not a broad invitation for input and the agenda did not undergo a public consultation. There is an increased need for inclusiveness for future strategy, policy and service development.
- Going forward, a comprehensive and dedicated digital government strategy, developed through an inclusive process, with explicit strategic-level goals and objectives and an action plan and articulated road map for achieving them, could strengthen Argentina's digital government efforts in many ways. For instance, such a strategy could help rally everyone in government to work together towards common goals and advance cultural change to support the sustainability of reform efforts.
- Efforts to implement the Digital Agenda may not be sufficient to trigger the major, broad cultural shift needed ensure long-term sustainability. Interview and workshop participants cited that the public sector is in need of a broad culture shift, and surveys reflect uncertainty that current momentum in digital government would be sustained after a change of administration.

Proposals for action

In light of the above, the government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy action:

Recommendation 1. Develop a dedicated digital government strategy defining a comprehensive and integrated set of strategic goals and providing a road map for a collaborative, open and inclusive implementation.

- Such a strategy should seek to ensure underlying practices and people across government are aligned under a common vision, fostering a deeper culture shift to help permanently embed the principles and efforts made under the current administration.
- The digital government strategy should be designed with the idea of affecting a cultural shift to help ensure the current administration's practices and approaches are sustainable over the long term, such as through institutionalising frameworks and building formal networks to facilitate implementation.
- Development of the strategy and all related and resulting policies and initiatives should be done in an open and inclusive manner, both inside government and with the broader digital ecosystem, including the public. This includes conducting public consultations for the strategy itself, as well as policies and services that are created in its implementation.
- The strategy should be complemented by an action plan, or roadmap for implementation and a system of indicators to monitor progress and achievement of results.

Coherent implementation and communications

- Previous administrations had done little to co-ordinate ICT across ministries at the central level of government, creating a potential risk for duplicative, fragmented and overlapping processes and programmes.
- Argentina is increasingly shifting to using numerous channels for external communication, which is a positive change. It has increasingly focused on external communications and storytelling, but opportunities for improvement exist here as well. Documentation and communications challenges exacerbate problems related to fragmented operations and cross-government learning, as well as external storytelling to build citizen trust and support. This can have a negative effect on how the government is perceived by the public (e.g. trust and confidence in government).
- Nevertheless, the government is inconsistent in documenting processes, decisions, plans, progress and problems. This has a negative effect on its ability to share knowledge and lessons learnt, develop and work towards achieving strategies.
- One of the biggest needs for the country is widespread knowledge on what has already been done and sharing good practices and lessons learnt. There is a need to secure that citizens are generally aware of existing government initiatives and progress.

Proposals for action

In light of the above, the government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy action:

Recommendation 2. Reinforce the National Office of Information Technologies (Oficina Nacional de Tecnologías de la Información, ONTI)’s role in developing common documentation standards and its ability to collect and disseminate best practices, lessons learnt, progress and challenges, both internally and externally.

- ONTI’s work in documenting and sharing best practices is relatively recent. This practice is a positive step forward, and the government should reinforce its position in doing so.
- ONTI should be empowered to not only collect and share this information on its own, but to also enforce standards for documentation across government.
- Such standards should also consider external communication with the public, with the goal to increase awareness of digital government progress and services.
- Such reinforcement could be directed towards achieving the objectives of the Digital Agenda and an eventual digital government strategy.

Strengthening roles, responsibilities and structures

- Argentina has reached a level of maturity where ministries and other public sector organisations seek cross-governmental solutions and guidance, rather than taking all decisions from their own organisational perspective. This makes a clear governance structure and roles critical.
- The roles and responsibilities of the SGM (and its predecessor, the MoM) were strengthened since the creation of the MoM in 2015. In workshops, clear central leadership through the SGM was the most frequently raised positive factor of Argentina’s digital transformation efforts. Interviews indicate a strong willingness to work and collaborate with the SGM.
- The SGM’s position and authority for policy making and oversight are broadly recognised and respected. In interviews and workshops, there was near consensus regarding the major positive impacts and improvements that have come about over the last few years, which have been led by the SGM.
- However, key roles seen in most other governments do not exist in Argentina, or their existence is scattered and inconsistent. This lack of consistent clear roles and responsibilities contributes to siloed approaches, duplication of efforts and collaboration challenges.
- There is no government chief information officer (GCIO) or equivalent, which in other countries has become the most common way to co-ordinate digital government activities.
- The SGM is dedicating significant time and energy to conduct hands-on implementation support for ministries that could be better spent on central co-ordination and oversight.

- Digital governance at the ministry level is inconsistent, with some ministries having CIOs and Chief Data Officers (CDOs) with a positive effect, while others do not. The state of digital governance at the ministry level is siloed, with little ability to understand the authority and scope of other organisations.

Proposals for action

In light of the above, the government of Argentina may consider implementing the following policy action:

Recommendation 3. Clarify and formalise the governance framework for digital government at the central government and organisational levels. This could include the identification of a main position with strategic and co-ordination powers (e.g. GCIO or digital transformation officer) with a corresponding role within public sector organisations (e.g. ministries).

- In formalising governance, Argentina can clarify roles and responsibilities to minimise both gaps and excesses, while also providing clear points of interaction and accountability.
- More clearly formalising the SGM's leadership role and mission would allow it to focus more on central co-ordination, policy making and oversight rather than direct implementation.
- Strengthening digital governance at the level of ministries and other public sector organisations would allow these organisations to be able to better implement on their own the directives and policies put forth by the SGM.
- Creating uniform digital leadership roles at the centre of government and at the organisational level would strengthen the effectiveness of the institutional set-up and related responsibilities within the governance framework.

Connecting the dots: Leveraging a systems approach to achieve strategic goals

- Fostering a systems approach would help to further institutionalise Argentina's Digital Agenda by facilitating the alignment of priorities and actions across the whole administration.
- The SGM has demonstrated leadership in connecting with ministries, but the focus has largely been on bilateral co-operation on a ministry-by-ministry basis, not on bringing all of the relevant players together as a whole.
- Argentina has made progress on building conditions for a systems approach, such as the SGM's co-ordination of an executive board that guides the Digital Agenda, as well as topic-specific points of contact for a variety of digital and non-digital initiatives (e.g. open government, Mi Argentina website content).
- While progress has been made, opportunities exist to further co-ordinate government activities in a holistic, horizontal and joined-up way. Few believe that current inter-institutional co-operation and collaboration are sufficient.

- Although improving, general co-operation and co-ordination across ministries, other public sector organisations and levels of government is often fragmented, not systematic. Co-ordination occurs mainly on specific projects, not around strategic goals.
- For many ICT issues, there is no formal body for co-ordination and co-operation. Such co-ordination issues were frequently raised as challenges in workshops organised by the OECD.
- Beyond the central government, significant challenges remain in considering and involving provincial and local governments in systems approaches.
- The federated nature of the government of Argentina gives sub-national governments significant autonomy in setting their own ICT policies, services and products. Yet, the federal government has few levers to collaborate with subnational governments.
- The SGM relies on its co-ordination with the provinces through COFEMOD, but its decisions are non-binding, and officials are often unaware of COFEMOD. Also, while COFEMOD has had an impact, it may be worth exploring whether other opportunities exist to further align levels of governments, such as through funding incentives or conditions.
- Significant challenges exist in aligning subnational actions with national digital goals and ensuring interoperability and seamless services across levels of government.

Proposals for action

In light of the above, the government of Argentina may consider implementing the following policy actions:

Recommendation 4. Foster existing or create new connection points to promote horizontal (across central government) and transversal (across levels of government) co-ordination, co-operation, collaboration, knowledge sharing and collective action for digital transformation efforts.

- To the extent possible, such connection points should be aimed more towards cross-cutting strategic objectives, and less towards specific projects.
- These connection points should be promoted and heavily marketed, as many challenges are related to a lack of awareness regarding which conduits exist and what they can be used for.

Recommendation 5. Explore methods to further incentivise provincial alignment, such as through funding incentives or conditions for receiving federal funds, to support the achievement of outcomes of multi-level governance policies such as País Digital.

- While provinces have autonomy in setting their own policies and processes, it may be possible to provide incentives to help ensure that their ICT decisions are aligned with national goals and actions.
- In addition, provinces and other subnational governments often receive federal funding for ICT projects. It may be possible to secure alignment through funding conditions tied to the receipt of federal money.

Enabling success with the legal and regulatory framework and funding

Legal and regulatory framework

- The main driver of recent digital efforts has been presidential decrees, which have been successful for kick-starting transformation, but may be challenging for long-term sustainability as they are vulnerable to changes in future political priorities.
- The SGM is universally recognised as the leader in co-ordinating and overseeing digital efforts under the legal and regulatory framework. Argentina’s framework provides the SGM with strong authority for making policies, conducting oversight, and co-ordinating the design and delivery of digital services.
- The State Modernisation Plan provides the blueprint for modernising the government. Major components of the plan are directly related to digital transformation, helping to provide a structure and signalling strong intent and priority from the top. The SGM is responsible for its co-ordination and execution.
- Although Argentina has a solid legal and regulatory framework for central leadership of digital government, opportunities exist to modernise the framework and strengthen it to ensure long-term sustainability.
- The SGM is pushing for a new modernisation law, which has been drafted with COFEMOD.
- Some laws and regulations appear outdated, and 91% of survey respondents stated that there is potential for improving the regulatory framework.
- Some areas in Argentina have recently undergone reviews of existing laws and policies in order to eliminate fragmented and unneeded regulations. This helps to understand the landscape of rules and clearing “deadwood”. However, it is not clear that this was a comprehensive or horizontal effort, and it is not continuous.
- Few formal oversight mechanisms have been developed to ensure compliance with ICT rules, which hinders implementation and systems approaches.
- Significant and well-crafted guidance from the SGM remains in draft non-binding form, contributing to inconsistent implementation across government.
- Ministries are ready for stronger central guidance and oversight from the SGM.

Proposals for action

In light of the above, the government of Argentina may consider implementing the following policy actions:

Recommendation 6. Build and maintain a digital baseline of all relevant digital laws, policies, decrees and other rules.

- This would help everyone understand all the requirements, and would help to identify how different rules interact.
- This would identify: 1) policy gaps where resources and energy can be prioritised; 2) policy excesses that may hinder efforts and could be targeted through policy or legislative change; 3) areas that are not technology “neutral” and may become quickly outdated.

Recommendation 7. Continue to push for legislative change and develop legislative proposals and draft legal language for consideration by the legislative branch.

- Argentina's efforts to push for legislative change (e.g. the draft modernisation bill) are commendable and should continue. The government should consider dedicating additional resources to this task.
- In seeking legislative change, Argentina will need to ensure laws do not lock in requirements that may become outdated.

Funding the digital transformation

- The funding for the SGM itself is clear: it is financed with funds provided by the National Treasury, supplemented with international loans from the World Bank and the Plata Basin Financial Development Fund.
- The funding model for digital government at the ministry level is a fairly traditional one. Each ministry makes its own ICT budget based on the funding it is allocated from the legislative branch. Each ministry then executes its projects according to the objectives established for that one organisation.
- There are no provisions for funding outside of this siloed structure, limiting the potential for horizontal systems approaches and developing common solutions.
- Each organisation is driven by the mandates of its own mission, with little consideration of potential synergies or commonalities with other organisations.
- A number of countries have developed centralised funding to augment the traditional process, which Argentina could learn from.

Proposals for action

In light of the above, the government of Argentina may consider implementing the following policy action:

Recommendation 8. Consider the establishment of centralised funds to finance strategic ICT projects.

- Competitive centralised funds provide incentives for public institutions to comply with new standards and guidelines, and to align their efforts with the government's strategic objectives.
- Such a fund would not need to replace the traditional process, but rather would supplement it.

ICT procurement and commissioning for coherent policy implementation

Planning and approval of ICT projects

- The current central administration has made an effort to bring some order to how ICT projects are planned and approved at the central level.
- ONTI, under the Secretariat for Digital Government and Innovation Technology, within the SGM, leads these initiatives, focusing mainly on the ICT project planning and approval stages.
- ONTI's activities aim to bring further order and standardisation to the planning and development stages of ICT projects, with a focus on their long-term sustainability.
- ONTI has developed soft law instruments, such as the *Decálogo Tecnológico*, as means to provide greater coherence to the ICT project planning and development process. The *Decálogo* sets ten principles that public sector organisations can follow to better design their ICT project proposals in order to submit them for ONTI's certification in line with ONTI's guidelines.
- Other tools for ICT project planning include the Technological Standards for the National Public Administration (*Estándares Tecnológicos para la Administración Pública Nacional*, ETAP), the Standardised Technical Requirements (*Requerimientos Técnicos Estándar*, RTE), and, the Complex Technical Requirements (*Requerimientos Técnicos Complejos*, RTC).
- These tools intend to promote the adoption of common frameworks to enhance ICT projects' integration, standardise business case models for ICT projects with different levels of complexity, and align ICT project proposals with ONTI's guidelines by providing a non-binding certification, known as the *dictamen técnico*, once business cases are revised and approved by ONTI. The aim is also to promote transparency, improve the management of public funds and optimise economic procedures.
- While ONTI's initiatives have been successful in bringing further coherence and alignment to the ICT project planning and approval stages, its efforts have been greatly focused on the alignment and standardisation of ICT projects, the adoption of technology, and the approval process itself; focusing greatly on compliance with the *Decálogo's* principles. These principles, rather than on control, focus on alignment with standards for public sector data and digital services (see sections on public services and data-driven public sector), and the overall benefits of ICT projects for citizens (e.g. in terms of public service delivery).
- It is mandatory for public sector institutions to follow ONTI's certification process (through the use of the Standardised Technical Requirements and the Complex Technical Requirements business case models), but the final certification or *dictamen* stands more as a recommendation as it is not of mandatory observance. Also, the central government does not use ICT project budget thresholds to structure the governance process related to the approval of these projects. This is in contrast to OECD practices where data for 2014 show that 80% of OECD countries at the time were using these instruments to better govern ICT projects across the broader public sector.

- Scalability is also missing in terms of how ICT projects are expected to contribute to the overall goals of the Digital Agenda and benefits for citizens. The current focus on the adoption of technology and compliance with ONTI's guidelines misses the value ICT projects can bring to the public sector, businesses and the society as a whole.
- The current ICT project planning and development process ignores the value of involving key actors within the public sector (such as those in charge of digital service design and public sector data standards) early in the development and approval of ICT projects. This would help to ensure alignment of strategic ICT projects with those standards by decreasing the need for implementing corrective measures once projects have been advanced and/or deployed.
- Argentina faces the challenge of involving stakeholders from outside of the public sector in the development of business cases for ICT projects. Doing so would bring further clarity on the expected benefits those projects would have for citizens.

Proposals for action

In light of the above, the government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy actions:

Recommendation 9. Bring further order, alignment and control to the overall ICT procurement process from earlier stages of the ICT project planning process. This would require setting clear budget thresholds to:

- clearly define when ONTI's recommendations should be mandatory for the approval of digital projects
- make explicit the intervention of the SGM, or its relevant internal bodies, in the approval of mission-critical ICT projects, thus leveraging the location of the SGM in the Cabinet Office (see section on governance).

Recommendation 10. Consider the use of conditional funding models as policy levers to enforce alignment with whole-of-government ICT project standards.

- This may help ensure the alignment of ICT projects with digital government services, public sector data and ONTI's standards such as the Decálogo Tecnológico, the Standards for Digital Services, and those standards for public sector data quality developed by the National Direction of Public Data and Public Information (Dirección Nacional de Datos e Información Pública, DPDI).

Recommendation 11. Involve stakeholders inside and outside the public sector in the development and approval of business cases for ICT projects.

- Moving from a focus on outputs (the adoption of technology) to one that prioritises outcomes (the expected benefits for citizens and the public sector) is crucial to deliver policy results and contribute to the goals of the Digital Agenda. The involvement of all relevant stakeholders can help in this respect.
- This would also help to align digital projects with digital government and data standards (see sections on public service design and delivery and data-driven public sector).

Procurement and management of ICT projects

- ONTI's role starts at the project design and approval stage and stops once the *dictamen* is issued; thus the mandate for the government's public procurement system is the responsibility of the National Contracting Office (Oficina Nacional de Contrataciones, ONC), which is in charge of ensuring that the government's procurement processes comply with national procurement regulations.
- The ONC is also in charge of the management of the Argentinian public procurement platform COMPR.AR (*comprar.gob.ar*). All public procurement projects (including ICT projects) must be published on this public procurement platform. Yet, there is lack of causality tracking that would allow ICT projects to be tracked from the earlier conception stages to their procurement, management, monitoring and finalisation.
- As of March 2019 ONTI was in the process of developing a framework agreement in the context of the use of the cloud in the public sector. Yet, results from the survey carried out for the purpose of this review show the need for scaling up these efforts and following a government-as-one-client approach in regard to the commissioning of other ICT products and services.
- Survey results show that open tenders are the most used method for the procurement of ICT goods and services among those organisations that provided a response to the questionnaire. This evidence is supported by the workshops organised in the context of this review, when stakeholders also expressed the need for “identifying common digital resources and tools to follow a government-as-one client approach for procurement”, and to “enable global procurement” through the use of framework agreements that can benefit transversal projects.
- Lack of clarity in relation to the management, monitoring and control of digital project throughout the whole ICT project commissioning cycle (from *ex ante* approval to finalisation). Indeed, there is no standardised model for the management of ICT projects at the central government level.¹
- The opportunity at this stage is not only related to the further adoption of ICT project management practices in the public sector, but in terms of avoiding adopting and/or duplicating practices that might become obsolete in the medium or long term (e.g. waterfall management).
- The need for a “flexible procurement and management model” (e.g. agile and use of DevOps methods) is as an area of opportunity identified during the OECD workshop organised in Buenos Aires in December 2018.

Proposals for action

In light of the above, the government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy action

Recommendation 12. Sustain efforts to develop framework agreements for ICT procurement.

- This would help to enable the implementation of a general government-as-one-client approach in relation to the commissioning of ICT products and services,

reducing costs in the procurement of ICT products and services, and enhancing control over ICT expenditures in compliance with central standards.

Recommendation 13. Move towards ICT commissioning in the public sector. This would imply the adoption of:

- A holistic ICT agile project management model for the public sector with a focus on delivery and the adoption of inclusive agile management models to enable greater project accountability and control in a more simplified, efficient and agile fashion.
- A digital marketplace for the public sector to streamline the supplier selection process, open business opportunities for small actors (such as small and medium-sized enterprises), and incentivise a more dynamic market environment.

Control and evaluation of ICT project expenditures

- The absence of a holistic strategy on ICT procurement (or commissioning) also has an impact on how ICT projects are controlled and how results are assessed, if done, by the relevant bodies.
- ONTI's efforts aimed to implement a focus on the sustainability and life cycle of ICT projects, but there is no clear evidence that there are relevant accountability mechanisms in place to control project development and evaluate expectations vs. real results in an iterative fashion. In general terms, project evaluation can take place at the ministerial level, but this does not seem to be the common practice in terms of ICT projects.

Proposals for action

In light of the above, the government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy action:

Recommendation 14. Support the adoption of a formal and iterative reporting mechanism to reinforce monitoring and control across the whole ICT commissioning process.

- Argentina needs to explore and decide on the level of central control that is needed to ensure the accountability of ICT projects at the operational level and their contribution to the overall digital agenda in the country.
- The role and intervention of actors such as ONTI, the SGM and the Ministry of Finance can be determined based on a project's relevance and value in relation to the objectives of the Digital Agenda.
- At this evaluation stage, it would be necessary, however, to differentiate between minor-scale ICT commissioning projects and those of more strategic value as the accountability and evaluation mechanisms in place and the levels of central control and monitoring would differ based on the strategic value of ICT projects. However, control and alignment with the broader digital government policy is required in both cases.

Building and attracting talent for the digital transformation of the public sector

The recommendations included in this section should be understood in the context of public sector employment and cultural transformation reforms in Argentina in place since December 2015. These reforms include policy measures addressing organisational restructuring, behavioural change, public employment processes, training and development, among other interventions.

Digital transformational competencies and digital skills: Employment data and competency frameworks

- Developing the public sector's competencies is a priority of the current administration, drawing upon the value of such competencies as enablers of a stronger organisational culture within the public sector.
- These efforts are often led by two key players: 1) the Secretariat of Public Employment (Secretaría de Empleo Público, SEP); and 2) the National Institute of Public Administration (Instituto Nacional de la Administración Pública, INAP).
- The SEP, a body within the SGM, has made great strides to enable a culture of change in the public sector by developing a competency framework for the public sector.
- Skill development programmes like *Líderes en Acción* (focused on young officials), *Construyendo Nuestro Futuro* (focused on high-level public managers) and *Protagonistas de Recursos Humanos* (focused on human resource management officials) illustrate the multi-faceted nature of the efforts implemented by the SEP.
- Yet, there is a lack of clarity in terms of how the SEP's competency framework describes what hard and soft digital skills are needed to enable digital transformational change across the whole government. There is a need to define clear digital profiles which can standardise shared roles across the public sector, and describe what hard and soft skills are needed in each specific role, including the need of building a more empathic and citizen-oriented culture.
- The heritage of inaccurate data on public sector employment stresses the need for (re)constructing the basics in terms of good-quality data in this realm, which would be useful for taking evidence-based policy decisions.
- As a result, in 2019 the SEP launched the Integrated Public Employment Database (*Base Integrada de Empleo Público*, BIEP) initiative with the goal of unifying and improving the quality of information and data sources on public sector employment to support decision making, and to avoid duplication of tasks and data inconsistencies. The project consists of the development of software solutions that can serve as an interface to share public sector employment information, and inform other human capital management systems.
- INAP stands as a long-term government ally in terms of building public sector capability, and it benefits from support and credibility from other government institutions and external actors.
- INAP, together with LABgobar, has also been a key ally in the development of data and innovation skills in the public sector (see section on data-driven public sector). But it is necessary to focus the training strategy on those skills that are more in

demand by public officials, instead of sustaining the current “ready-made” top-down approach that does not meet the actual needs or interests of public officials.

Proposals for action

In light of the above, the government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy actions:

Recommendation 15. Sustain and scale up capacity-building activities related to digital and public sector innovation skills in the public sector, namely those implemented by the SEP, INAP and the innovation lab, LABgobar.

Recommendation 16. Sustain the development and deployment of the BIEP initiative drawing on its value as a source of good-quality and trustworthy employment data.

- The BIEP is and will remain mission-critical to tackle the deficit in terms of the production, sharing and reuse of employment data. Its long-term value should therefore not be ignored, particularly in light of its contribution to informed policy making.

Recommendation 17. Update the SEP’s competency framework and job profiles for the public sector.

- This would clarify what hard and soft digital skills are needed in the Argentinian public sector, bring coherence to the talent commissioning process (see Recommendation 21) through standardised and updated job descriptions, and guide capacity-building efforts not led by the current lead bodies.
- The revised competency framework and job descriptions could benefit from crowdsourcing ideas from all relevant actors in the public sector, including those actors not actively working on open government, digital government or public sector innovation.

Recommendation 18. Underline the value of multi-faceted teams, shared knowledge, communities of practice and demand-driven training activities.

- This will be crucial to build intrinsic motivation, enable a digital- and innovation-prone public sector culture, motivate public officials to engage in training activities, and move towards greater maturity in terms of digital competence within the public sector.

The challenge of sustainability: Retaining and attracting talent

- As in many other countries, the Argentinian public sector is not fully protected from political transitions, and faces sustainability challenges in terms of attracting external talent and retaining internal talent. Political changes have a direct implication on the permanence of public officials in high-level positions.
- This context also poses a particular policy challenge considering the fact that in Argentina, several key initiatives are conceived at the director, or top management, level and specific skill-building programmes (such as the SEP’s *Construyendo Nuestro Futuro* and the Design Academy of Public Policy’s executive programmes) are directed to these managerial levels or above.

- In this light, the long-term value of capacity-building efforts requires taking action to further build up public sector digital competence, and reinforce the civil service skill base in the broad public sector. INAP has already started addressing this challenge by developing a specific programme to build digital competencies within the public sector that will cover areas such as management, communication and innovation.
- Retaining talent is one of the most relevant challenges in the current public sector context. Key bodies within the SGM in charge of digital and innovation have faced employee turnover as job opportunities and salaries in the private sector² (together with a more agile and innovation-driven mindset and culture) are simply more attractive to skilled employees – a context which is not endemic to the Argentinian case.
- This reinforces the need to secure and retain an adequately skilled public sector workforce at all levels in order to address instability and human capital turnover, decrease the negative impact of political transitions, increase organisational resilience, and build up long-term public sector collective knowledge.

Proposals for action

In light of the above, the government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy actions:

Recommendation 19. Stress the value of INAP’s initiatives is key to building a digital state that relies on a strong knowledge-based public sector.

- While other leading bodies such as the SEP and LABgobar implement key capacity-building programmes, the sustainability of these initiatives can be linked to the permanence of those public officials behind them. Professionalising hard and soft digital skills can reduce the impact of political transitions by detaching digitalisation efforts from specific political administrations.

Recommendation 20. Enabling the right culture, including public sector employment development and mobility, can help to reduce the turnover of digital talent.

- Cultural factors (such as the possibility of working in agile environments) can also determine the willingness of staff to stay.
- Retaining and attracting skilled human capital to the public sector requires moving from monetary incentives to creating the needed environment and culture to retain and attract talent to the administration (e.g. harnessing civic passion, working environment, public sector challenges).
- Defining clear career development paths and horizontal mobility programmes can motivate and incentivise people to stay in the public service.
- In the short and medium term, a strategy focused on building and retaining internal talent could help to deliver sustained value in light of the current restrictions in place for the recruitment of new staff between July 2018 and December 2019, defined by Presidential Decree 632/2018.3

Balancing public and private partnerships

- The challenges faced by the Argentinian public sector in terms of retaining, recruiting and attracting talent, and the salary gap between the public and private sectors, has led the government to opt for temporary employment models that provide higher compensation when compared to market costs.
- This opens a window of opportunity to streamline government, in line with the current austerity measures, making it more agile by increasing collaboration with the private sector, and defining dynamic talent commissioning models that are appealing to external talent.
- During the workshops organised by the OECD Secretariat in July and December 2018, stakeholders expressed the need for creating stronger bridges, partnerships and synergies between the public and private sectors, creating a digital community, and enabling the exchange of knowledge. Stakeholders also expressed their concerns in terms of the slow and cumbersome processes in place for the commissioning of external talent.

Proposals for action

In light of the above, the government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy action:

Recommendation 21. Implement an agile talent-commissioning model.

- This would help to attract external talent to work on a project and ad hoc basis, lever the value of proven external talent, and streamline cumbersome hiring processes.
- This approach can also benefit from the definition of pre-approved pools, integrated by talent within and outside the public sector.

Skills for public sector innovation

- The SGM's leadership in terms of public sector innovation was widely acknowledged by public sector organisations during the peer review missions to Buenos Aires and the data collected through the institutional survey.
- The creation of LABgobar – a multi-disciplinary team which depends on the Undersecretariat of Public Innovation and Open Government of the SGM – has been successful in terms of providing project-specific assistance to ministries, provinces, decentralised agencies and municipalities centring on the use of tools that can help foster innovation and bolster a culture of experimentation.
- The Lab's Design Academy of Public Policy – managed in co-ordination with INAP – provides a learning environment to establish and scale up innovation skills and tools in order to drive and grow an innovation-prone culture in public sector organisations.
- There is a missed opportunity in terms of scaling up the activities of the lab. So far, it seems that the lab has been successful at developing innovation skills at the technical level, but challenges remain in relation to connecting the value of public

sector innovation with other policy areas in a broader sense, like, for instance, mainstreaming the use of agile practices for ICT commissioning.

- Results from the institutional survey also point to the fact public sector organisations struggle to make a clear distinction between digital public sector innovation and more traditional modernisation efforts (e.g. e-procurement, the digitisation of formalities, paperless government).

Proposals for action

In light of the above, the government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy action:

Recommendation 22. Scale up and mainstream the activities of the LABgobar to make explicit the value of public sector innovation to specific policy sectors at the strategic level.

- There is a need for conceiving public sector innovation, including digital innovation, as an activity or mindset exclusive of technicians or mid-level managers.
- Greater collaboration and mutual learning at the top level can help to better influence policy making and the activities of line ministries and other relevant public bodies with innovative ways of designing, implementing and delivering public policy.

Public service design and delivery

- Building a paperless government, improving digital public service delivery and streamlining the government-citizen relationship have been priorities for the central government in Argentina since 2015. Most of these initiatives have been built in a short period of time, from the ground up, at least at the central level.
- While policy achievements are clear, Argentina will face the challenge of ensuring the sustainability of these efforts in the long term, making clear that foundational initiatives supporting the digitisation of processes would eventually leave more room for the digitalisation and transformation of the public sector in the broader sense.

Building a paperless government

- The Electronic Document Management Platform (*Plataforma de Gestión Documental Electrónica*, GDE) did not exist prior to 2015 at the central level and it has undoubtedly generated efficiencies and positive benefits and value for the public sector.
- By March, 2018, 100% of organisational procedures within central ministries had been digitised by the central government. This results from a combination of clear policy goals and political will, and provides a platform to further advance interoperability and modernisation efforts in the public sector.

- The GDE provides a system to communicate, produce official documents and manage document files within the public sector; enables the use of electronic and digital signature within the central government; and provides an underlying platform for the development of government-citizen interaction websites such as the Remote Formalities Platform (*Trámites a Distancia*, TAD).
- The Secretariat of Administrative Modernization gives priority to the digitisation of procedures, leaving re-engineering for a later stage. This approach intends to deliver quick policy results under the argument that re-engineering is easier and resistance to change is lower once processes are digitised.
- Findings of other OECD peer reviews (see the *OECD Review of Regulatory Policy in Argentina*) support this finding. This points to the fact that “while there was a clear improvement and simplification of processes in the conversion from physical procedures to paperless systems, Argentina did not actively seek the re-engineering of processes”.
- Yet, there seems to be a conflicting understanding among public officials in relation to whether the abovementioned approach is the way to follow in relation to public sector modernisation. For instance, During the workshops that were organised in Buenos Aires (July 2018), stakeholders expressed that there was a tendency in the public sector to focus on digitising processes first and then re-engineering them later, instead of reconceiving and simplifying processes before building new digital structures on them.

Proposals for action

In line with the analysis and recommendations of the OECD Review of Regulatory Policy in Argentina, the government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy action:

Recommendation 23. Ensure that modernisation and administrative simplification efforts consider the re-engineering of internal processes whenever needed prior to the adoption and implementation of ICTs.

- Argentina risks creating a public sector infrastructure that replicates the approach followed by the most advanced OECD countries years ago, which are currently struggling to overcome legacy challenges towards the digitalisation of the public sector.
- There is a need for reaching a common ground within the public sector, and the relevant teams involved, to find the best approach that fits the immediate needs of the Argentinian public sector in the short term without compromising digital transformation in the long term.

Key enablers, standards and shared services

- Argentina has made some progress to consolidate the foundations for a digital government.
- The 2016 Register Simplification Decree and Resolution 19/2018, which created the interoperability module INTEROPER.AR, added to advancing interoperability efforts in the public sector and reinforced previous initiatives in place since 2008.
- Some base registers are also available at the central level, including the National Population Register (RENAPER), the National Recidivism Register, the Social Security Register (ANSES) and the Federal Administration of Public Revenues (*Administración Federal de Ingresos Públicos*, AFIP).
- The National Direction of Digital Services (NDDS), within the SGM, has established a series of standards for the development of digital public services.⁴ These instruments provide a set of standards for the use of application programming interfaces (APIs) and the development of websites (e.g. the *Poncho* framework)⁵ and mobile applications.
- The NDDS has drafted a series of principles that guide the development of digital services. Among other relevant points, these principles highlight the need for prioritising user needs, using data as evidence, and considering multi-channel approaches for public service delivery and access.
- Yet, a hard governance for digital government and greater central control might be required to ensure these guiding frameworks and standards are indeed observed by public sector organisations when developing public services. Control and enforcement from the centre might be needed to ensure that digital government tools and platforms are adopted in a coherent way and in line with central guidelines.
- In July 2018, the SGM launched the Digital Identity System, drawing upon the widespread use of the National Identity Document and the data available on RENAPER. The underlying Biometric Identification System is intended to work using the biometric face recognition information that RENAPER has collected for every Argentinian citizen.
- The development of the citizens' wallet within the Mi Argentina web-based and mobile platforms provides an example of the current use of digital identity applications. The Digital Driver's Licence is already available in the wallet and other credentials, such as the ID card, disability certificate, vaccination certificate and vehicle insurance documents, are expected to be available in the near future.
- The Argentinian government will face two key challenges to the widespread use of one single eID tool: 1) avoiding the proliferation of other digital identification tools in the medium and long term; and 2) ensuring the adoption of one single tool by other public sector organisations, particularly those with identification and/or authentication systems already in place.
- In 2017, Decree 892/2017⁶ gave birth to the Platform for Remote Digital Signature. It seems, however, that the uptake of this tool (which allows citizens to sign digital documents in their interactions with public sector organisations) is not widespread across the public sector, and its main use centres on the interaction and signature of official documents among public sector organisations.

Proposals for action

The government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy actions:

Recommendation 24. Involve the National Direction of Public Services and the National Direction of Public Data and Public Information in the development of business cases for ICT projects.

- This would help to support the alignment of ICT projects with digital services and data standards, the adoption of common components such as eID tools, and highlight how priority projects may contribute to the overall goals of the Digital Agenda.

Recommendation 25. Sustain efforts to promote the adoption of a central eID system as a priority tool in citizens' interaction with public sector organisations.

- This would help to ensure the interconnection of public sector digital services, avoid the proliferation of digital identification systems and streamline government-citizen interactions.
- The availability, uptake and promotion of the use of one single digital identification tool for the public sector would reduce the complexity and streamline government-citizen interactions, unless the whole-of-government solution does not meet the specific business needs of the public sector organisation.
- Transparency and consent in terms of the use and sharing of citizens' biometric information would be needed to build public trust for the implementation of this tool in the public sector.

Public service design

Once-only and integrated services

- The real-world implementation of the once-only principle (the right of citizens to provide the same information only once to governments) is also debatable.
- The NDDS' ability to move forward a "once-only" approach in public service design is limited, as often this body does not own these services (i.e. other bodies deliver them).
- The strategic publication of APIs could help to further integrate data, processes and services in the public sector, and allow greater data exchange with external actors.
- It is not clear how the interaction between the TAD platform, focused on offering formalities (English for *trámites*), and Mi Argentina, focused on digital services *stricto sensu*, works. Currently, the delivery of and access to online formalities and digital services is fragmented.

Proposals for action

The government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy actions:

Recommendation 26. Advance the integration of Mi Argentina (see section on digital service delivery) with other platforms such as TAD.

- This can reduce the fragmentation of public service delivery and support the implementation of the once-only principle, drawing on the greater integration and interoperability of these platforms in the back end.
- The broader goal should be to simplify users' experience when carrying out any type of interaction with the Argentinian public sector.

Recommendation 27. Scale up efforts in terms of the publication and adoption of public sector APIs and open source software can help to further integrate data, processes and services in the public sector, and allow greater data exchange with external actors.

Citizen-driven services and engagement

- The principles and initiatives developed and implemented by the NDDS are clear in terms of putting the citizen at the centre of public service design and understanding citizens' needs. This body also developed other principles to usher the government-citizen relationship (*Principios de Atención al Ciudadano*). These principles highlight “empathy with the citizen” as a guiding principle to improve the understanding of users' needs. In practice, the digital services team runs usability studies and has set up different tools for users to evaluate their products (e.g. Mi Argentina).⁷
- However, in general terms, while understanding citizens' needs is at the core of the principles guiding the design of digital public services, the focus is more on ensuring the usefulness of public services rather than investing resources on user engagement from early stages. For instance, during the design stage of public services, service designers assume citizens' needs. These assumptions are later tested once the service is already in the alpha or beta version design stages.

Proposals for action

In line with the joint recommendations on digital government and open government provided as part of the *OECD Open Government Review of Argentina*, the government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy action:

Recommendation 28. Support the comprehensive implementation of user-driven approaches in the design and delivery of public services.

- The Argentinian government is undergoing a crucial learning process, led by the SGM and its relevant bodies, in relation to moving forward a digital agenda in the country. The outcomes of this process will inform how digital government goals are operationalised and will guide digital government initiatives in the coming years.

- The SGM needs to lead by example and ensure that policy guidelines and standards are fully understood, adopted and implemented by service designers and owners across the public sector.
- The adoption of user-driven principles requires moving from a moderate approach to engaging users to an in-depth and immersive application of those principles. Along these lines, the Argentinian government would benefit from involving and promoting users at an earlier stage in the design of public services.

Cross-border services

- Cross-border interoperability efforts are not new to Latin American countries. Recently, the creation of a Digital Agenda Group in the context of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), which is comprised of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay as active members,⁸ reflects the relevance that cross-border co-operation has in the context of a shared digital agenda for the region.
- In April 2018, the Digital Agenda Group defined the interoperability of digital public services as one of the potential priority areas of work for the group.⁹ In June 2018, MERCOSUR leaders agreed on the development of an action plan for the region¹⁰ and it is currently (April 2019) working on identifying public services that could be delivered across borders.
- Cross-border approaches appear to be a policy priority, as reported by the SGM, but it is not clear in terms of policy implementation if action is being taken by public sector organisations to move forward in this respect.

Proposals for action

The government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy actions:

Recommendation 29. Move forward in the definition and implementation of cross-border public services and data sharing with other economies in the region.

- The decisions and outcomes of the Digital Agenda Group of MERCOSUR will aim to guide regional policy in the years to come. Argentina can tap into this opportunity, drawing on the current achievements in the design and delivery of public services (such as the Digital Driver's License).
- Going forward in the definition of cross-border services may require updating the data protection legislation (see section on data-driven public sector), and defining stronger cross-border data governance frameworks that can help to build a trustworthy data-sharing environment in the region.

Public service delivery and access

- Achievements are clear in relation to the delivery of digital public services. Argentina.gov.ar and Mi Argentina are the key pillars of the National Public Sector Digital Platform. These services have been created since 2015.
- Argentina.gov.ar and Mi Argentina are both the responsibility of the NDDS. Argentina.gov.ar enabled the front-end consolidation of scattered government websites into one single platform while MiArgentina streamlined and facilitated the

government-citizen relationship by re-engineering processes and using digital tools to facilitate delivery through online and mobile channels.

- As of October 2018, 1.5 million users had registered on Mi Argentina. Services include advanced booking (*turnos*) for document certification (*apostillamiento*), vaccination appointments and online certifications from ANSES. Recent developments include the Digital Driver's Licence.
- Digital inclusion is a high priority for the central government. Efforts to increase digital inclusion and connectivity include initiatives such as the National Plan of Digital Inclusion (*Plan Nacional de Inclusión Digital*) and *País Digital*.
- The National Plan of Digital Inclusion was launched in March 2017 with the objective of developing the digital literacy and digital skills of the population across the country. It is being implemented in 24 provinces and 152 municipalities and responds to the priorities of the National Digital Agenda in terms of digital inclusion.¹¹ By March 2019, the Argentinian government had trained 255 000 people under the plan.
- Other initiatives include the Ministry of Education's "*Plan Aprender Conectados*" and "*Núcleos de Aprendizaje*" (both seeking to build the population's digital skills over the long term), and the "+ Simple" (which aims to increase the elderly population's access to digital devices such as tablets).
- Challenges and untapped opportunities remain in terms of digital connectivity and inclusion. In Argentina, less educated households face greater issues to access basic digital tools such as computers or the Internet. However, according to data on mobile phone access for households with no educational background, there is a window of opportunity for investing more resources in the delivery of mobile-based public services (e.g. through the Mi Argentina mobile app). This underlines the importance of continuing to invest in mobile-based solutions while maintaining multi-channel access to public services.

Proposals for action

The government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy action:

Recommendation 30. Sustain the efforts implemented by the SGM in terms of digital inclusion and connectivity.

- Digital inclusion and connectivity should remain a priority for the current and future administrations in Argentina in order to deliver results in line with the goals of the Digital Agenda, and to promote a civic, government and business innovation that do not create greater social and economic disparities.
- Ensuring multi-channel accessibility to public services can help to democratise policy benefits to all sectors of the population while ensuring progress in relation to the digitalisation of service design and delivery.

Data-driven public sector

The state of data governance in the Argentinian public sector

- In Argentina, a group of public sector organisations has responsibility for defining and implementing different policy elements related to data governance.
- The SGM is in charge of advancing data interoperability and open data efforts in the public sector. Within the SGM, the National Direction of Public Data and Public Information (Dirección Nacional de Datos e Información Pública, DPDI) leads these initiatives.
- The Access to Information Agency (Agencia de Acceso a la Información Pública) is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the 2017 Freedom of Information Act¹² and the 2000 Data Protection Act.
- Other public bodies also hold important responsibilities in the definition or implementation of key data-related initiatives, such as the management of data registers. These include the National Institute for Statistics and Census (INDEC), the National Geographic Institute, the central tax authority (AFIP), the social security agency (ANSES), and the Ministry of Social Development.
- The National Direction of Public Data and Public Information has acted as a *de facto* chief data officer for the government. First, it focused on the publication of open government data. Second, it brought further control to the data management process and addressed legacy issues related to public sector data integrity and quality.
- The DPDI has taken a “soft” approach to implementation, learning first and regulating second – an approach levered by the need of delivering results fast in the context of four-year political cycles at the central level. While this approach may have contributed to faster, more flexible responses in a changing implementation environment, three years down the road it is now apparent that there is a need to move towards a more solid, institutionalised policy framework.
- While the DPDI has made progress to identify contact points across public sector organisations in the context of open data efforts, evidence suggests the need to scale up this network from a purely technical and operational perspective to include a more comprehensive strategic vision and roles. Yet, Argentina, like many OECD countries, lacks an explicit formal requirement to appoint institutional chief data officers for central/federal line ministries and agencies.¹³ When appointed, these roles have mostly focused on complying with data publication regulations.
- Evidence suggests that between 2016 and 2018, Argentina invested heavily in raising awareness and building data-related skills within the public sector, with INAP and the SGM (through different bodies) as the leading public sector organisations in this regard (see section on digital talent).
- Within the DPDI, the Direction of Analytical Services (Dirección de Servicios Analíticos) promotes and assists public sector organisations in the development of evidence-based public policies and services through the use of data science and behavioural economics methodologies, tools and techniques.
- Altogether, these capacity-building exercises target stages of the data value chain *de facto* (e.g. data and information management, data protection and privacy, open

data, and data analytics) and show the willingness of the Argentinian government to address deficits within the public sector related to data competencies in the long term.

Proposals for action

The government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy actions to reinforce data governance in the public sector:

Recommendation 31. Consider the development of a data strategy/action plan for the public sector. The data strategy:

- Should be understood as a sub-element of a potential digital government strategy. This would imply linking the data strategy with the goals of the Digital Agenda (including public service delivery, the digital economy, business innovation and civic technology), and its contribution to the activities of line ministries (e.g. social development, justice).
- Could help to consolidate scattered data efforts under one single policy umbrella, provide greater coherence to scattered data governance instruments, and inter-connect data policy elements, including data protection, cross-border data sharing and data interoperability efforts.
- Would benefit from the contributions of internal and external actors, and clarify responsibilities, thus avoiding risks in terms of accountability.

Recommendation 32. Formalise a clear and stronger leadership for data in the public sector.

- This leadership role may take the form of one person, or a group of leading front-runner organisations leading data efforts in the public sector, beyond those bodies within the SGM.
- The new location of the SGM within the Cabinet Office (which also oversees data privacy) is an opportunity to better lead and connect different public sector initiatives under a common leadership role with stronger political leverage.

Recommendation 33. Define a formal network of institutional chief data officers/data stewards in line ministries to facilitate the coherent and strategic implementation of data efforts and enhance, or enforce, horizontal collaboration.

- Argentina may benefit from the formalisation of these networks by ensuring that these roles respond to strategic data governance matters instead of mere technical data-related issues. Yet, co-ordination and collaboration is needed at all levels, from strategic to operational layers.

Recommendation 34. Include data skills and competences as part of updated public sector competency frameworks (see section on building and attracting digital talent).

- Argentina would benefit from further clarifying competency and skill frameworks for the public sector, including data profession descriptions.

- Clarity is needed in terms of what skills and competences are required in each different stage of the data value chain (from data interoperability to data openness, science and analytics).

Data protection: Balancing openness by default and privacy

- The state of data protection in Argentina shows clear signs of evolving towards greater maturity. Indeed, privacy and data protection emerged as recurrent issues during the peer review mission and the workshops organised by the OECD in July and December 2018.
- In September 2017, the former Access to Public Information Agency became the Data Protection Authority (DPA). As a result, the DPA gained autonomy – a key element for the protection of personal data according to international standards. The DPA was also granted its own annual budget.
- The DPA is moving forward to better map and control personal data registries across the public sector, and to update the National Direction of Personal Data Protection's (Dirección Nacional de Protección de Datos Personales) Register of Databases.¹⁴
- On 25 February 2019, Argentina became the 54th Party to the Convention for the protection of individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data and its additional Protocol (“Convention 108”), the only existing legally binding international treaty with global relevance in this field.
- Argentina is also an adherent to the 2017 Personal Data Protection Standards developed in the context of the Data Protection Ibero-American Network (Red Iberoamericana de Protección de Datos). These standards, which stand more as a set of common principles, incorporate cross-border data flows and data portability,¹⁵ hence the need of reflecting these principles in national law and clear policy actions.
- Efforts to update the Data Protection Law are already underway under the leadership of the Access to Information Agency and its National Direction of Personal Data Protection.¹⁶
- On 19 September 2018, the executive sent a proposed bill to change the current data protection law to the Congress. The draft bill is intended to provide a high level of protection of personal data, adapting to the new international standards on the matter and, at the same time, bring new possibilities for innovation and investment in Argentina.

Proposals for action

The government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy action to reinforce data governance in the public sector:

Recommendation 35. Sustain efforts to update the 2000 Data Protection Law in order to emphasise relevant principles such as citizens' consent, data anonymisation and cross-border data flows.

- The role of the Access to Information Agency, and its close collaboration with the SGM and its relevant sub-bodies, will be crucial to ensure that data protection is rightly balanced with data sharing and data openness practices in the public sector.

Data federation: Enabling greater data sharing and interoperability

- Data sharing and interoperability emerged as one of the most voiced concerns raised by stakeholders during the peer review mission and the workshops organised in July 2018.
- The current administration inherited legacy challenges in terms of data integrity (e.g. in relation to official statistics) and the availability of critical data for a well-functioning public sector (e.g. data on public sector employment). As a result, the production, sharing and interoperability of good-quality public sector data are at the core of the activities of the Argentinian government.
- The DPDI's vision to address these issues is based on a Data as a Service (DaaS) approach. The DaaS follows a quality-from-the-source principle for the production of public sector data. It was designed to ensure that government data can be produced as good quality and interoperable data by design prior to their publication and sharing within and outside the public sector.
- The DaaS facilitates data publishing and data consumption through the development of APIs (web services), based on 100% open data, designed in the open, and to be easily deployed by third-party organisations.
- The Time Series API (*API de Series de Tiempo*), the API for Location Services (*API del Servicio de Normalización de Datos Geográficos de Argentina*), and the Guide for the Identification and Use of Interoperable [data] Entities are clear examples of real-world implementation of the DaaS approach. Together these initiatives support the generation, sharing and reuse of good-quality government data by internal and external data users, and facilitate data analysis practices for informed policies.
- Nevertheless, opportunities remain in different areas, including the wider adoption of technical data standards in public sector organisations (particularly those that might be mission-critical to deliver public value) and ensuring the scalability and flexibility of data federation and interoperability platforms.
- Other areas of opportunity include the replication of data mapping efforts to assess data assets within the public sector (as done by the DPA), and the use of cloud-based services for better data management and sharing, and, consequently, for the design and delivery of services.

Proposals for action

The government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy actions to reinforce data governance in the public sector:

Recommendation 36. Sustain and scale up data federation, quality, sharing and interoperability efforts in the public sector.

- The greater adoption and promotion of the DaaS approach across the broad public sector, and the scalability of the Data Interoperability Platform, can help to deliver value in terms of policy making, public service design and delivery, as well as public sector efficiency.

Recommendation 37. From a technical perspective, the construction of a data-driven public sector in Argentina can benefit from the long-term sustainability of the following actions:

- Enforcing the implementation of data quality and interoperability standards by ensuring the participation of the DPA and the National Direction of Public Data in the revision and design stages of relevant public sector initiatives that can benefit from data-driven approaches.
- The further deployment of API-driven data-sharing models for the integration of data, services and processes.
- The discoverability of public sector data through mapping and categorisation exercises. This can help to identify data assets and gaps to inform the next steps in terms of a data strategy for the public sector.
- Promote the use of cloud technologies (e.g. through ARSAT cloud services) for data storage, management and analysis in line with data protection and cross-border policy regulations.

In support of the recommendations of the *OECD Integrity Review of Argentina*,

Recommendation 38. Drawing upon the value of current data federation and interoperability platforms, support the collection, discoverability, interoperability, reuse and publication of data for public sector integrity.

- This means connecting key data registers and/or data catalogues (e.g. tax, cadastal registers) across those public sector organisations with a specific role in terms of designing and implementing integrity and anti-corruption initiatives in the public sector (e.g. the Anti-corruption Office, Employment, Treasury Attorney General's Office, Financial Intelligence Unit).

Opening up government data

- The 2016 Decree on Data Opening Plans set the policy basis for the publication of open government data which was then put into practice under the leadership of the then MoM (now the SGM), through the DPDI.
- By 2017, and as part of the DaaS vision, open data efforts had moved from a focus on data publication towards the goal of “cleaning house”.

- In terms of data availability, evidence collected during the OECD mission to Buenos Aires in March 2018 shows that efforts have paid off, with an increasing quantity of good-quality government data being published on the central open data portal Datos.gob.ar.
- The DPDI built an informal network of institutional contact points across public sector organisations (including the Ministries of Energy, Justice, Transport, Agroindustry and Production) as means to increase their interest and willingness to collaborate on open data initiatives.
- The lack of motivation to open up government data was one of the most voiced concerns by stakeholders during the workshop organised in July 2018. Stakeholders also expressed that data publication is not a priority for public sector organisations, stressing the need for providing further incentives.
- The central open data portal is used as a tool to control the quality of government data. Only those datasets that comply with the DDPI's data and metadata standards can then be federated for publication through the central open data portal. Yet, the DPDI also provides the supporting hard and soft infrastructure (e.g. IT infrastructure and guidelines) to help public sector organisations to catalogue and publish their own datasets. Public sector organisations are also responsible for maintaining their own data catalogues.
- The above-mentioned approach has been useful to bring public sector organisations on board and reduce the burden imposed on them in terms of data publication, but it has also led to fragmented data access due to the proliferation of open data portals.
- There is a need to further promote the publication of open data based on the needs of users. The need for running consultations engaging users in demand identification exercises was frequently voiced by stakeholders during the workshops organised in Buenos Aires.
- While in an earlier stage this consultation exercise might fall under the responsibility of the open data leadership (in Argentina, the DPDI), public sector organisations such as line ministries might need to take a more active role in the medium term (if not before).
- Increasing the reuse of those data published on either datos.gob.ar or institutional open data portals is a challenge. During the OECD mission to Buenos Aires in March 2018 and the workshop organised in July 2018, stakeholders expressed that data, while publicly available, were not used.

Proposals for action

The government of Argentina should consider implementing the following policy actions:

Recommendation 39. Reinforce open data impact by focusing on reuse.

- Investing further resources on prioritising data publication based on the needs of the ecosystem, and increased efforts to engage data users in the reuse of open government data should be a priority in the short term.
- The Argentinian government would also benefit from developing an open data infrastructure for the public sector, inclusive of those datasets of high priority for

the achievement of policy goals (e.g. open data for anti-corruption), and those datasets in high demand by the ecosystem.

- Ensuring the integration of fragmented open data platforms can also increase data discoverability and accessibility and facilitate the user's journey in accessing and reusing data.
- Establishing partnerships and building communities of practice in collaboration with key partners such as journalists, universities, researchers and the private sector country-wide will play a determining factor to ensure that open government data delivers widespread real value for all actors within the ecosystem.

Recommendation 40. Sustain efforts to develop a national plan or strategy for Artificial Intelligence in order to support the goals of current and future Digital Agendas.

- This can help to interconnect digital government, AI and data policy initiatives and strengthen the capacities of public sector organisations to exploit data to generate proactive services and evidence-based public policy.

Notes

1. Question 40: Does a standardised model exist for ICT project management at the central/federal government level?
2. Questions 43: What is the most common scenario for ICT and digital government-related employment in your country's public sector? Private sector employees move to the public sector/private sector employees move to the public sector/inter-institutional movement from one public sector institution to another (intra-governmental); and Question 43a: In your view, for option 1 (public officials/government employees move to the private sector), what are the main reasons for this happening? There are more/better job opportunities in the private sector/private sector salaries are more competitive.
3. For more information see: <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/310000-314999/312146/norma.htm>.
4. Question 62: Are there government-wide guidelines on designing user-oriented digital services?
5. The *Poncho* framework provides a series of technical standards and components that public sector organisations may consider when developing front-end services. For more information see: <https://argob.github.io/poncho>.
6. For more information see: <https://www.acraiz.gob.ar/Content/Archivos/Normativa/2017-892-PlataformaFDR.pdf>.
7. Question 50: Which and how deeply are the following overarching principles of digital transformation considered within your ICT projects and initiatives? Option: Citizen-driven by default
8. Venezuela's full MERCOSUR membership has been suspended since August 2017. For more information see: <https://betaweb.mercosur.int/documento/decision-sobre-la-suspension-de-venezuela-en-el-mercosur>.
9. For more information see: <https://www.senatics.gov.py/noticias/acuerdan-acciones-principales-de-agenda-digital-mercosur>.
10. For more information see: www.puntofocal.gov.ar/doc/gmc_02-18.pdf.
11. Question 62: How would you classify the level of priority given to digital inclusion in your country's digital government agenda?
12. For more information see: <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/265000-269999/265949/norma.htm>.
13. Question 88: Does your country have an explicit formal requirement (i.e. written guidance provided in an official government document: laws, directives, regulations, guidelines, action plans, executive order, other) to assign institutional chief data officers for central/federal line ministries and agencies?
14. For more information see: <https://www.diariojudicial.com/public/documentos/000/083/091/000083091.pdf>.
15. For more information see: http://www.jus.gob.ar/media/3234534/est_ndares_de_proteccion_de_datos_para_los_estados_iberoamericanos_es.pdf.
16. For more information see: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/aaip/planificacion2018>.



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