Citizen and stakeholder participation portals

Digital tools can enable citizens and stakeholders to take part in decision making and increase the reach of participation opportunities, especially for those who are unable to attend meetings in person due to time or distance constraints. In particular, participation portals (websites), where government institutions publish consultation and engagement opportunities, can help to facilitate exchanges and collaboration with citizens and stakeholders when designing public policies, and widen the opportunities for collaboration.

All participation opportunities across the central/federal government can be centralised in a government-wide portal. Equally, governments can set up institution-specific portals (where a single institution publishes its participation opportunities), or establish individual portals for specific policy documents (e.g. open government partnership action plans). Government-wide portals have the advantage of providing a "one-stop shop" for citizens to learn about past, current and future opportunities for participation. On the other hand, institution or policy-specific portals are easier to adapt to the specifics of each participation process. Some governments rely solely on one type of portal, while others use a mixed approach combining two or more of them.

In 2020, 27 out of 32 OECD countries (85%) and two other economies (Brazil and Romania) which took part in the Survey on Open Government had government-wide participation portals used by all ministries at the central/federal level of government to publish consultation and engagement opportunities. In total, 12 of the 32 OECD countries (38%) had several government-wide portals, and 15 (47%) had a single government-wide portal. Only two of the surveyed OECD countries (6%) – Turkey and Sweden – had no participation portals of any kind at the central/federal government level (Figure 9.4).

The most common function of government-wide participation portals is providing information about past consultation or engagement opportunities: 25 of the 27 OECD countries (93%) which have such portals, plus Brazil and Romania, offer this functionality. In 22 of the OECD countries (81%) and Brazil and Romania, government-wide portals are used to carry out online consultations or engagement (e.g. allowing people to submit their inputs online) and in 19 (70%) and Brazil and Romania they provide background documents for specific consultation or engagement opportunities. It is less common for government-wide portals to provide feedback to citizens and stakeholders about their inputs and recommendations (e.g. how they were considered when making the final decision): Only 11 (41%) OECD countries and Brazil had portals with this functionality (Table 9.5.).

One of the two government-wide portals of Italy has the widest range of functions (all seven enquired about in the survey), including informing about upcoming consultations and engagement opportunities, and providing information about citizens' and stakeholders' right to participate.

In contrast, Ireland's portal offers only one function: redirecting users towards individual institutional portals.

Seven OECD countries provided information about their institution-specific portals. In six of these (86%), the portals inform about past consultation or engagement opportunities and provide information about upcoming opportunities, while in five (71%) they can be used to carry out online consultations. Six OECD countries reported having other types of portals (e.g. policy-specific), of which three (50%) reported they can be used to carry out consultations.

Methodology and definitions

Data were collected through the Survey on Open Government, which was conducted between November 2020 and March 2021. Thirty-two OECD countries and three other economies (Brazil, Costa Rica and Romania) participated. Respondents were the delegates to the Working Party on Open Government, who co-ordinated the response across their respective governments.

Participation is understood as all the ways in which citizens and stakeholders can be involved in the policy cycle and in service design and delivery. In particular, consultation entails a two-way relationship in which stakeholders provide feedback to the government and *vice versa*. It is based on the prior definition of the issue for which views are being sought and requires the provision of relevant information, in addition to feedback on the outcomes of the process. Engagement refers to a process in which stakeholders are given the opportunity and the necessary resources (e.g. information, data and digital tools) to collaborate during all phases of the policy cycle, and in service design and delivery.

Further reading

OECD (2020), *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave*, OECD Publishing, Paris, *https://doi.org/10.1787/339306da-en*.

OECD (2017), *Recommendation of the Council on Open Government*, OECD, Paris, *https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0438*.

OECD (2016), *Open Government: The Global Context and the Way Forward*, OECD Publishing, Paris, *https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264268104-en*.

Figure notes

Data for France, Hungary, Luxembourg, Switzerland and the United States are not available.

9.5. Sweden and Turkey are excluded because they have no participation portals.

9.4. Availability of government-wide portals to facilitate citizen and stakeholder participation, 2020
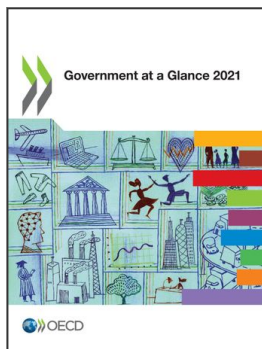

Single government-wide portal 47%

Institution-specific and/or other types of portals only 9%

No participation portal 6%

Several government-wide portals 38%

BRA
CRI
ROU

Source: OECD (2021), *Survey on Open Government*.

StatLink ⟡ *https://doi.org/10.1787/888934258648*

9.5. Functions of participation portals, 2020

Country	Inform about past consultations/ engagement	Carry out online consultations/ engagement	Background documents for consultations/ engagement	Inform about upcoming consultations/ engagement	Inform about rights to participate	Provide feedback on the inputs received during participatory processes	Redirect towards institutional portals
Australia	⊙	⊙	⊙			⊙	❖
Austria	●⊙	●	●	●⊙	●⊙		●⊙
Belgium	●	●	●	●	●		
Canada	●			●			●
Chile	⊙	⊙	⊙		⊙	⊙	
Colombia	●			●		●	●
Czech Republic	❖		❖	❖		❖	
Denmark	●	●	●	●	●		
Estonia	●❖	●❖	⊙	⊙❖	●⊙❖	●❖	⊙
Finland	●	●	●			●	
Germany	●⊙	⊙	⊙	●⊙	●⊙	●	●
Greece	●	●	●	●			
Iceland	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Ireland							●
Israel	●	●	●	●	●		●
Italy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Japan	●	●	●				●
Korea	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Latvia	●	●	●	●			
Lithuania	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Mexico	●	●	●				
Netherlands	●	●					
New Zealand	●❖	●❖	●❖	●			
Norway	●	●	●				
Poland	●		●❖			●	
Portugal	●⊙	●⊙	●⊙	●	●⊙	⊙	
Slovak Republic	●	●❖	●	●		●	
Slovenia	●	●		●	●		
Spain	⊙	●⊙	⊙	⊙	●		●
United Kingdom	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
OECD Total							
● Government-wide	25	22	19	18	14	11	10
⊙ Institution-specific	6	5	6	4	5	3	2
❖ Other portal	3	3	3	2	1	2	1
Brazil	●⊙	●⊙	●⊙	●⊙	⊙	●⊙	
Costa Rica	❖	❖					
Romania	●	●	●	●	●		●

Source: OECD (2021), *Survey on Open Government*.

StatLink ⟡ *https://doi.org/10.1787/888934258667*

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