4th OECD Roundtable on Smart Cities and Inclusive Growth

AGENDA

17 September 2024

OECD

Smart City DIALOG
International Smart Cities Network

SHAPING SMART CITIES OF ALL SIZES

17th September 2024

OECD Headquarters, Paris

Cities of all sizes worldwide are harnessing the power of digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT) and big data to drive growth and well-being.

In particular, AI is opening new avenues to help better manage complex urban systems, boost productivity, and foster societal progress in cities. AI could also contribute to meeting the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

However, not all cities have the same capacity and capability to invest in and benefit from digitalisation. In particular, medium and small-sized cities face specific hurdles, such as funding and financial constraints, inadequate digital infrastructure, digital literacy and skill gaps, and regulatory challenges. Empowering cities of all sizes to embrace digitalisation is critical to help deliver better public services, improve quality of life, tackle climate change, develop a robust digital economy, and enhance urban governance.

This **4th OECD Roundtable on Smart Cities and Inclusive Growth** will bring together key stakeholders from cities, national governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and international organisations to:

- **Understand** the current state and drivers of digitalisation in cities of all sizes,
- **Draw** insights from lessons learned and identify successful cases of digital transformation in cities of all sizes
- **Examine** the role of AI in achieving sustainable urban development, and
- **Explore** policy avenues to guide an effective digital transition in cities of all sizes.

About the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities

The OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities provides comparative statistics, analysis and capacity building for local and national actors to work together to unleash the potential of entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises, promote inclusive and sustainable regions and cities, boost local job creation, and support sound tourism policies.

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PRELIMINARY AGENDA

17th September 2024 | 09:00-19:00 Central European Time

9h00-9h15	**Welcome**
9h15-9h30	**Opening of the Roundtable**
9h30-10h45	**SESSION 1:** **Setting the scene: Understanding the current state and drivers of digitalisation in cities of all sizes**
	Cities across the world are using digital technology solutions to improve the quality of urbanisation, levels of well-being, and ensure a more efficient public service delivery. For example, cities of all sizes use digital technologies to face demographic changes such as shrinking and ageing populations; meet net-zero emission targets as part of the efforts to fight climate change; and make a more efficient use of existing infrastructure. However, the digital transition has not been homogeneous across cities of different sizes, with larger cities often leading the digitalisation curve while smaller cities tend to trail behind. For example, people living in metropolitan regions enjoy, on average, 40% faster Internet than those living in regions far from metropolitan areas across OECD countries, although this digital gap has been narrowing since the COVID-19 pandemic. **Questions for discussion:** • What is the current state of digitalisation in your city/country and what factors are driving the digitalisation of cities of all sizes? • What are the main barriers to achieving an equitable digital transition across large and smaller cities? • Do some digital technologies tend to be more often used in large cities while others prevail in smaller cities?
10h45-11h15	***Family photo and coffee break***
11h15-12h30	**SESSION 2:** **Drawing lessons from digital transition efforts across cities of different sizes**
	Although many cities have adopted a smart city strategy over the past two decades, scaling up smart city projects often remains challenging, due to financing barriers, privacy and cyber security concerns, data quality issues, digital inequalities, and digital skill gaps. Cities of all sizes have taken diverse paths for digital transition. These include investing in digital literacy, expanding access to high-speed internet and building citizen trust in smart city projects. Furthermore, cities have set up governance arrangements to facilitate co-operation within and across levels of government, and ensure access to financing and a talented workforce.

	Questions for discussion: • What lessons have cities learned in promoting digitalisation for sustainable urban development? How can national and regional governments support their digital transition? • What changes in urban governance are needed to stimulate the digital transition in medium and small-sized cities? • What role should educational institutions and the private sector play in advancing the digital transition in medium and small-sized cities?
12h30-14h00	***Lunch break***
14h00-15h30	**SESSION 3:** **Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for sustainable urban development in cities of all sizes**
	As cities grapple with a variety of challenges, ranging from persistent inequalities and a lack of affordable housing to environmental hazards, both national and local governments are seeking innovative and efficient solutions to shape sustainable and resilient cities. Artificial intelligence (AI) can offer powerful tools to optimise infrastructure, public services and resources to tackle some of the most pressing urban challenges and accelerate progress towards the SDGs. For example, generative AI can assist policy-makers by identifying patterns to inform creative problem-solving and by offering ideation support for urban planning, contributing to the emergence of innovative solutions distinct from traditional AI applications such as automation. However, the uptake of AI technology does not automatically contribute to sustainable urban development. Research shows that while AI may act as an enabler for 79% of all SDG targets, it may also have a negative impact on 35% of them, for example through risks of displacing workers, increasing carbon emissions from running large-scale AI models, or amplifying existing digital divides. Moreover, the use of AI into urban policy, notably the rapid uptake of generative AI, is raising ethical issues that are not yet fully addressed, such as privacy and surveillance, bias and discrimination, and the erosion of human judgment. **Questions for discussion:** • What role does AI, and generative AI in particular, play in driving sustainable urban development? • Which Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are most positively and negatively impacted by AI in different urban contexts? • What ethical, policy, and political considerations must cities address to leverage AI effectively for sustainable development?
15h30-16h00	***Coffee break***

16h00-17h15	**SESSION 4:** **From vision to action: how to propel a successful digital transition in cities of all sizes?**
	An effective digital transition in cities requires both foresight and action. A forward-thinking vision that aligns with local needs and leverages technology to enhance infrastructure, services, and quality of life is essential to induce positive change. Moving beyond envisioning, cities worldwide must also transition from planning to implementation. Building on insights from the previous sessions, this session aims to outline the key components of a successful digital transition in cities of all sizes. Acknowledging the diversity of socio-economic contexts in particular, the discussion will unpack how to tailor digital strategies and actions to each city's unique needs. It will explore how to prepare cities for their digital future(s), anticipating potential risks and disruptions. **Questions for discussion:** • What defines success in the digital transition of cities? • To what extent do current digital strategies in cities either facilitate or hamper successful digitalisation? • How can cities anticipate and mitigate social, economic, environmental and political disruptions in their digital journey?
17h15-17h30	**The way forward – closing remarks**
17h30-19h00	**Cocktail**
End of Roundtable	