Sharing and dissemination of environmental information

Country maturity report: Georgia

Executive summary

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This report was produced by PricewaterhouseCoopers as part of the project for developing a roadmap and identify feasible and practical means for integrating environmental information in national e-governance/open data processes and platforms. This action is done in the context of the ENI SEIS II East project 2016-2020. The report was built in 2018 and updated throughout 2019, including a review in March 2019 after the first regional meeting in Kiev, and a second review after the roundtable in November 2019. The report was reviewed by public authorities in Georgia in December 2019.

This report contains information obtained or derived from a variety of publicly available sources described within the report in more detail and does not intend to be a comprehensive analysis of environmental information, open data and e-government in the country but a collection of the main elements shaping the national environmental information landscape.

Executive summary

The methodology followed to prepare this report is based on the 2018 and 2019 European Union reports on open data maturity in Europe, with some adjustments made to accommodate the specific situation of Eastern Partnership countries as well as the focus on environmental information.

The report was prepared and updated between 2018 and 2020 as part of the EU-funded project - Implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System principles and practices in the Eastern Partnership countries (ENI SEIS II East). National input in preparation of the report was ensured through broad dialogue and consultation with various institutions in Georgia, in particular those related to the environment and statistics. In addition, experts across various policy domains, including IT and e-government, have been involved through participation in national and regional events. These activities allowed an exchange of views on the future of e-government and open data in the cross-cutting domain of the environment in Georgia. As a result, the document presents an overview of the national e-government framework, the maturity level of open data and dissemination of environmental information in Georgia. The analysis covered:

- a review of the policy framework to examine the directions and practical arrangements set out for environmental information dissemination using open data and e-government solutions;
- review of the legal framework to determine the existing legal requirements that define the areas of e-government, open data and environmental data and information dissemination;
- assessment of the technological solutions to determine the existing technical capabilities and improvements that need to be implemented in future.

Based on the above, the document proposes a roadmap that includes measures focused on the development of e-government and open data frameworks, which would greatly support the environmental domain. The road map is designed to be a living document throughout the implementation process and a benchmark to assess progress at various stages of development.

E-government

Georgia has made considerable progress in the area of e-government. In 2015, the practical plan for e-government development was introduced by the Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020, which covers a comprehensive conceptual framework for the development of e-government. As the strategic objectives were planned up to 2020, there is a need to evaluate the progress achieved in the area of e-government and, based on existing objectives, introduce the action plan for the period of 2021–2025.

Georgia has developed technological solutions for data exchange between public authorities and security procedures for governmental information systems maintenance. However, not all essential interoperability areas are covered. Thus, additional procedures should be established in order to ensure an effective interoperability framework.

Responsibilities in the area of e-government are spread among various public authorities and sometimes overlap. The Data Exchange Agency and the Public Service Development Agency are the main institutions driving e-government, including the implementation of e-services, adoption of data exchange and description standards, and development of technological solutions. Often, new e-government projects in Georgia are initiated by various institutions responsible for different governmental domains. The implementation of e-government initiatives could be accelerated by greater coordination at the central level.

E-government IT infrastructure was significantly developed in the last decade. One of the examples is the e-service portal (my.gov.ge) that currently provides multiple e-services and has an increasing number of users.

Open data

The existing legal framework in Georgia defines the main principles of access to public information and open data. However, the legislation lacks the enforcement mechanisms and consequently not many public institutions disseminate public information online. The supporting legislation on the procedures for open data preparation, update, quality control and dissemination has yet to be developed.

The establishment of the Open Data Portal has pushed forward the open data initiative. This portal enables public access to open data and allows any interested person or entity to process, use and reuse the data for various purposes. The portal is enriched by metadata describing available datasets, although it does not follow the international metadata standards.

Moreover, open data initiatives are supported by the non-governmental organisations (NGOs). For example, a database of public information was compiled through an NGO initiative, by collecting data and information available from public institutions.

Environmental information sharing and dissemination

Georgia is updating legislation in the area of environmental data and information sharing and dissemination with the main principles being set up in the Law on Environmental Protection. The current legislation covers the distribution of responsibilities and institutional set-up; however, it lacks practical arrangements, introducing procedures based on open data principles as a new way of public information dissemination in the environmental domain.

In recent years (2018–2020), Georgia has enhanced IT infrastructure in the area of the environment and currently provides multiple advanced platforms for environment information – e.g. air and water. These platforms are well developed and provide possibilities to increase environmental information sharing and dissemination in the near future. On the other hand, there is no single web access point, which would allow the public to easily access all web platforms in the area of the environment.

Suggested recommendations

Following the analysis of the current situation, a proposed roadmap outlines key areas for future development in the field of open data and dissemination of environmental information, and

provides concrete measures for improvement. Additionally, to facilitate the implementation of the roadmap, a number of examples and recommendations are provided in the report "Open data and e-government good practices for fostering environmental information sharing and dissemination".

The success and rapid advancement of the country in this challenging domain remain strongly dependent on clear priority-setting, multi-disciplinary teamwork and regular monitoring of progress. Furthermore, once progress is made in one or several areas proposed for consideration, readjustments and amendments of the roadmap will be needed to keep it relevant and focused on key priorities for the country.

The measures recommended for Georgia in the context of the roadmap have been grouped into the following categories: policy-related, legal and technical measures. They cover, in particular, the following issues:

- Policy measures: referring, among others, to the adoption of an e-government strategy and open data policy and supporting practical arrangements for open data collection, updating, quality control and dissemination.
- Legal measures: referring, among others, to the revision of the organisational framework in the area of the environment and adoption of international standards for interoperability and metadata description;
- Technical measures: referring, among others, to the development of an integrated information system and a single access point for environmental information, updating licencing terms and conditions, preparation of metadata description and enhancing the multilingual aspect of web portals and websites in the area of the environment.

For example, in order to practically implement metadata standards, the multi-disciplinary team should be set up to address and oversee the implementation of all of the above-presented measures. This initiative could be launched by technical experts who have substantial expertise in data exchange and interoperability, however, a strong political back up needs to be provided throughout the implementation process. The priority in the implementation could address the following aspects:

- Policy measures, which could cover selecting the international metadata standard as the direction allowing a clear description of the data and information in a unified way, as well as ensuring metadata interoperability;
- Legal measures, which could cover the preparation of legal documents specifying a standard for metadata description and related metadata preparation, updating and quality control procedures;
- Technical measures, which could cover the implementation of the metadata standard into existing information systems, as well as the development of metadata exchange mechanisms.

All the measures need to be seen in strong interaction and interdependence with each other and the impact of their gradual implementation closely monitored, as it might bring systemic changes across the whole data and information chain.