

3 Digital governance

Norway has a strong and collaborative approach to its digital governance, which has been key to driving the progress since under the country's existing digital government strategy.

Leveraging the opportunity of a new minister and dedicated ministry, Norway could enhance its digital governance model to increase coherency, coordination, and make the best use of public resources.

Robust digital governance is key to supporting governments in overcoming challenges, reaping the full benefits of digital government, and enabling holistic digital transformation. Norway has made great progress in its digital governance thanks to the strength of Norway's digitalisation strategy, as well as the collaborative governance model that is in place to drive its successful implementation. However, there is opportunity for Norway to enhance its model for digital governance to drive the successful implementation of the new digitalisation strategy, as well as ensure that the Government continues to meet the needs and expectations of its citizens. It could achieve this by considering how Norway's governance model could be enhanced to bolster the coordination of digital initiatives, integrate greater management of digital investments, evaluate environmental impact, and enhance Norway's legal framework for effective digital government.

Progress to date

Norway has strong maturity in its digital governance according to its results in the 2023 DGI, where it scored 86%, compared to the OECD average of 68%. This is thanks to the strength of Norway's digitalisation strategy, as well as the collaborative governance model that is in place to drive its successful implementation. With the creation of the new Ministry of Digitalisation and Public Governance, there is an opportunity for Norway to build on this progress and renew its digital governance.

Aligned to its broader Digital Agenda, Norway's *Digital strategy for the public sector 2019–2025* (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2019^[1]) demonstrates strong commitment to digital government and a clear vision, objectives, targets, and action plan with defined timeframes, goals, and concrete measures. Developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, it has been a key measure in building consensus and driving progress towards the digitalisation of Norway's public service. (OECD, 2024^[2]) The OECD welcomes indications that the same approach will be taken for the new strategy.

Norway also shows maturity in the way it oversees, coordinates, and consults on the implementation of this strategy. Its collaborative governance model consists of a number of bodies and institutions that play different but important roles in engaging with all sectors and levels of government. They include the:

- **Ministry of Digitalisation and Public Governance (formerly Local Government and Regional Development):** responsible for the policymaking, strategy development, and administration required to set the right vision and environment to enable digitalisation. (Bjørge, 2023^[3])
- **Digitalisation Agency (Digdir):** is the underlying digitalisation agency, which provides dedicated focus to the planning, coordination, and development of digital initiatives. (Digdir, 2023^[4])
- **Skate:** an advisory body of senior digital government officials at the director-level, which provides input to both the minister and agency responsible for digitalisation. (Digdir, 2023^[5])
- **Digitalisation Council:** with representatives from academia, civil society, and the private sector, provide an easily accessible forum where management of government agencies can seek advice in their efforts to provide digital services and for the digital transformation of their agency (Digdir, 2023^[6])

These bodies are comparatively effective in working together to drive the digitalisation of Norway's public sector in the right ways. However, there are still opportunities to enhance its approach. The results in the 2023 DGI indicate that the Government could bolster the role of both the Ministry and Digdir to enable more effective coordination of digital initiatives. This is in line with the findings of Norway's 2017 Digital Government Review, which called for a more structured governance model, with clearly-defined roles, centralised decision-making, a clear mandate, and strong oversight capability. However, this still does need to be balanced with maintaining agility and space for innovation and collaboration within the public sector. (OECD, 2017^[7])

In October 2023, Norway's Prime Minister announced a new Ministry of Digitalisation and Public Governance, recognising the increasingly vital role that technology and digitalisation plays in society, declaring that the new ministry would be "responsible for driving the development of new technological solutions with a clear focus on the users of these solutions." (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[8]) This change also ensures that there is dedicated focus and coordination at the political level to drive a more effective and efficient public sector through digitalisation. (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[8]) With a more centralised focus at both the political and institutional levels, Norway could use this opportunity to renew its approach to digital governance.

Remaining challenges

A renewed model for digital governance could drive the successful implementation of Norway's new digitalisation strategy, as well as ensure that the Government continues to meet the needs and expectations of its citizens. It could achieve this by considering how Norway's new governance model could bolster the coordination of digital initiatives, integrate greater management of digital investments, evaluate environmental impact, and enhance Norway's legal framework for effective digital government.

Bolster coordination of digital initiatives

Working in a decentralised model of service delivery and digital development, the coherent and effective coordination of digital initiatives is key to ensuring that Norway maximises the successful delivery and impact of its digitalisation strategy. The results of the 2023 DGI highlighted opportunities to bolster this coordination at all levels of Norway's digital governance model, including with a:

- **stronger decision-making for digital government investments:** where Norway scored 20% (compared to the OECD average of 28%). The results recognise Digdir's current role in prioritising digital and ICT projects investment across the central/federal government. However, there is an opportunity to bolster Norway's approach to digital government investments (in line with Chapter 4 to enhance decision-making in the value proposition and approval stages for these projects, as well as for securing financial support for them and mandating external reviews. Given the national context in Norway an appropriate model could be envisaged in the through a central body, or at the agency-level with stronger coordination by Digdir. However, under either model, the process and considerations should be standardised (while still leaving space to consider specific agency requirements).
- **more active role for Skate in supporting the coordination of digital initiatives:** digital initiatives: where Norway scored 37% for the responsibilities that Skate plays in coordinating digital initiatives (compared to the OECD average of 57%). This score was based on the work Skate does in horizontal coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Digitalisation Strategy at the national level, as well as its coordination with municipal governments in digital initiatives. However, there could also be opportunity for Skate to use its current mandate to take a more active role in the coordination, prioritisation, and oversight of digital government investments across Norway's public sector (see Chapter 4), including for alignment with digitalisations strategies and the adoption of technical standards. This is also in line with calls from Skate for the Government to adopt more cross-cutting approach to governance to increase opportunities to foster greater interaction and collaboration across the public sector (Digdir, 2023^[9]).
- **close engagement with the Digitalisation Council as the advisory body:** where Norway scored 33% (compared to the OECD average of 43%). The score recognises the Council's role in sharing the latest advancements of the industry in the areas of digital, ICT and data. The results indicated that the Council could have greater input into the digital strategy, but this was because the DGI data was collected before the Council had been invited to provide input into the development of

the new digitalisation strategy. Finally, as part of its role in providing advice to agencies to support their digitalisation efforts, the Council could continue efforts to support successful digital initiatives by sharing insights on digital policies and projects.

Each of these bodies contributes to Norway's effective digital governance, providing layers of coordination and oversight to enable Norway's digital transformation.

Integrating greater management of digital investments

In providing input on the new digitalisation strategy, Skate recommended that the new digitalisation strategy was an opportunity to introduce governance and funding that supports collaboration. To achieve this, the Government could adopt more cross-cutting approach to governance to increase opportunities to foster greater interaction and collaboration across the public sector. It believes this would improve efficiency and maximise the potential for a successful delivery of the strategy. Skate also recommended that any renewed approach to digital governance should be considered alongside the funding mechanisms necessary to facilitate agile product development and collaboration or joint solutions across sectors and across borders. (Digdir, 2023^[9])

These calls are echoed by Digdir, who called for the digitalisation strategy to provide greater budget certainty by incorporating mechanisms in the annual budget process for more long-term funding, mechanisms to fund the development of cross-sector initiatives, and a better way to evaluate the value and impact of digital initiatives in a broader socio-economic context. This would require a more coherent and integrated approach to the governance of digital government investments, which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Evaluating environmental impact

There could be opportunity to better evaluate the environmental impact of Norway's new digitalisation strategy. In the 2023 DGI, Norway scored 75% for the way it evaluates the impacts of its digital strategy on citizens and businesses (compared to the OECD average of 62%), but environment was one area that was missing. The Government could enhance its digital governance by extending its impact evaluations of digitalisation to include its environmental impact, especially as Norway increases its focus on the 'twin transition' of green and digital transformations. This 'twin transition' could be an area where the strategic coordination of digital government initiatives could integrate greater support and oversight advance this agenda. This could be an area that complements calls from Digdir for the Government to pursue greater opportunities for the public sector to share resources, initiatives, and funding to collaborate on key challenges and deliver shared outcomes (Digdir, 2023^[10]).

Enhancing Norway's legal framework

Norway has a strong legal framework, which has reflected many of the key areas of digital required to enable its digitalisation efforts whilst also ensuring the right protections are in place. However, the 2023 DGI shows that there are still some areas where the Government could consider going further, including:

- **digital reflected in laws, regulations, and policies:** where Norway scored 89% (compared to the OECD average of 66%). While this is a strong result, there are opportunities to review these legal instruments and identify opportunities to also include 'green digital' and access to private sector data or information to enable greater value creation.
- **digital rights acknowledged in policy:** where Norway scored 75% (compared to the OECD average of 53%). This is because Norway acknowledges key rights around communication, access, privacy, and autonomy, but there could be more explicit on outlining the right for citizens to choose to interact digitally with the public sector. This is in line with the need for an omnichannel

approach outlines in Chapter 4, which enables citizens to access and interact with services in the most efficient and effective way for them, based on their needs and preferences.

Should the Government choose to review Norway's digital legal framework, it could also consider calls from Skate for the Government to develop frameworks and processes to help the public sector navigate laws and regulations when pursuing digitalisation. This could help the Government adapt this legal framework to ensure it is relevant and workable in a digitalised age. (Digdir, 2023^[11])

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the Government could consider incorporating the strategic objective below into its new digitalisation strategy, which could be achieved by addressing the associated recommendations:

Strategic objective: Digital Governance

Leveraging the opportunity of a new minister and dedicated ministry, Norway could enhance its digital governance model to increase coherency, coordination, and make the best use of public resources.

- **Recommendation 1:**

The Government could bolster its governance of digital initiatives across the investment lifecycle, including standardised decision-making and approval processes, stronger coordination mechanisms, prioritisation, and oversight of digital government investments, and measures to promote greater collaboration, communication, and dedicated funding for shared initiatives.

- **Recommendation 2:**

The Government could evaluate the environmental impact of its digitalisation strategy and consider how the digitalisation of the public sector can support a 'twin transition' alongside a move to a more sustainable and 'green' public sector, including the resources, funding, and collaboration required to support it.

- **Recommendation 3:**

The Government could promote digital-ready legislation to support its digitalisation efforts by addressing 'green digital' and access to private sector data or information to enable greater value creation. It could also adopt legislations covering explicit rights to outline the expectations and protections for citizens when interacting digitally with the public sector.

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