

# Executive summary

Governments, businesses and societies are undergoing digital transformations that are fundamentally changing the traditional roles of various institutions, including national statistical offices (NSOs).

National statistical systems (NSS) and NSOs must adapt to the digitalised world to meet the growing expectations of data users. To support the emerging data ecosystem, NSOs need, in particular, to strengthen their operational processes and develop their digital capabilities. These tasks are particularly challenging for NSOs in low and middle-income countries, which, in many cases, have had limited exposure to digitalisation and yet must identify digital approaches and tools most relevant to their context amid the rapid pace of technological change, as requested by the second strategic area of the Cape Town Global Action Plan<sup>1</sup> (*“Innovation and modernisation of national statistical systems”*).

This report outlines some of the most common barriers and challenges to the digital transformation of NSOs in low and middle-income countries, as well as specific drivers that can facilitate such a transformation. Building on the extensive experience of PARIS21 of working with NSOs around the world, the paper highlights the examples of the NSOs of Cambodia, Colombia, Kenya, Mongolia, the Palestinian Authority and Senegal. The insights shared by representatives of these NSOs about the processes driving their digital transformations and their most prominent success stories and difficulties contributed to a set of evidence-based and actionable recommendations.<sup>2</sup>

This report argues that a digital transformation must be understood and achieved through the prism of its four core dimensions: individuals, technologies, organisation and processes, and the system and/or environment. The central message of this report is that a digital transformation is profoundly intertwined with the way an institution conducts its activities: governance, processes and people are at the core of the business and will, therefore, be at the core of the digital transformation as well. The technologies themselves play an obvious role in this transformation. But it would be a mistake for NSOs to address the technological aspects (e.g. procurement of hardware and software, development of data platforms) independently of their connections to the other three dimensions at play in digital transformations.

There are at least two reasons to avoid a focus solely on technology and instead take a holistic approach to the digital transformation of NSOs:

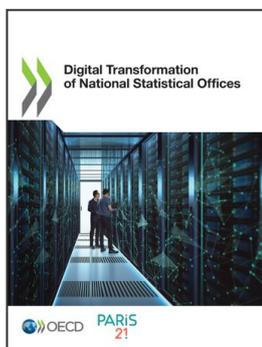
- the foreseeable difficulties of anchoring new technologies in inappropriate or outdated processes
- the missed opportunity to reinvent the NSO’s business model to better fit the data challenges of the 21st century.

In sum, a digital transformation should not be seen as simple digitisation of documents or digitalisation of isolated processes. Rather, it should be an overarching approach to support the core business of the NSO and help define and implement new roles and business models.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cape Town Global Action Plan, <https://paris21.org/Cape-Town-Global-Action-Plan-ctgap>.

<sup>2</sup> Country examples are presented in Annex 1. In the body of this paper, where findings or recommendations are based directly on a case study, this is indicated in brackets: [country examples, Country].



**From:**  
**Digital Transformation of National Statistical Offices**

**Access the complete publication at:**  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/ee4b1b85-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

PARIS21 (2022), "Executive summary", in *Digital Transformation of National Statistical Offices*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/c5490293-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.