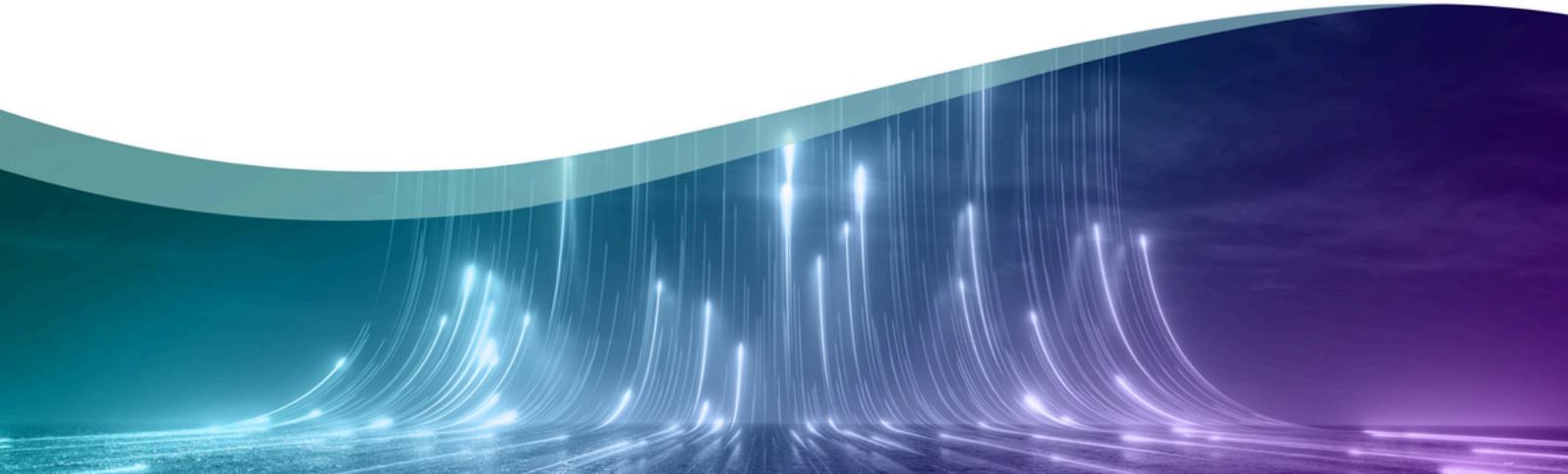


# Municipal and Regional Data Usage

## Policy Brief

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## Part 2: Governance & Implementation

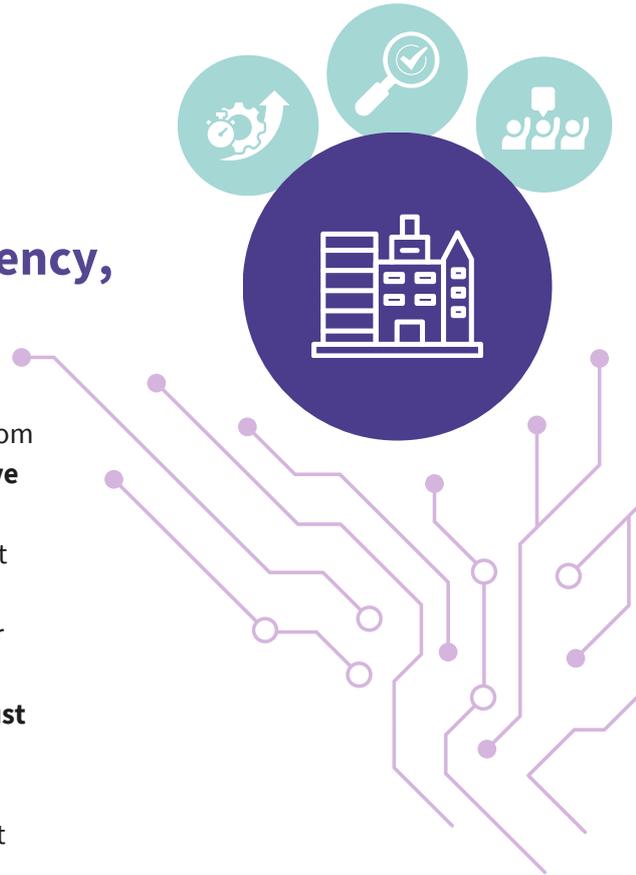


# Governance & Implementation

## Why It Matters

Modern municipal challenges require sophisticated data management approaches that can balance transparency, efficiency, and citizen participation.

Effective data governance enables municipalities to maximize value from digital transformation while building **resilient, community-responsive systems**. Establishing a clear data strategy and data governance framework is essential for enabling operational data management that supports day-to-day municipal functions while maintaining strategic alignment. Community-controlled data stewardship, multistakeholder governance, and regional collaboration provide frameworks for municipalities to harness data effectively while maintaining **public trust and accountability**. These approaches enable municipalities to build sustainable digital capabilities that adapt to changing needs and technologies while ensuring all residents can participate in and benefit from digital innovation.



# Democratic Data Governance

**Digital Infrastructure Maturity Assessment**  
Sources: LORDIMAS Digital Maturity Assessment  
Tool 2024, European Committee of Regions,  
Data Public Observatory

## Data Cooperatives & Community Stewardship

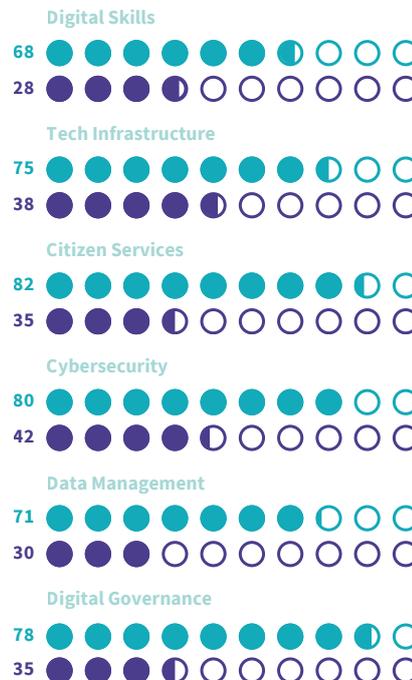
- **Establish municipal data cooperatives:** Create associations where community members collectively steward data in their interests through democratic governance, replacing complex individual consent with trusted community representatives
- **Implement community data trusts:** Deploy entities with fiduciary obligations to represent community interests, enabling pooled data rights with participatory governance structures. This requires ecosystem data governance as multiple stakeholders (citizens, service providers, municipal agencies, and community organizations) are involved and need coordinated decision-making frameworks
- **Five criteria for trustworthy stewardship:** (1) Independence and neutrality, (2) organizational and technical capacity, (3) professional knowledge, (4) control and sanctions mechanisms, (5) meaningful community participation
- **Address the trust paradox:** Bridge gap between citizens' desire to contribute to common good and their mistrust of data sharing by providing both individual control over personal data and genuine community control rather than corporate extraction
- **Long-term community relationships:** Enable ongoing data stewardship decisions rather than requiring individual consent for each use case



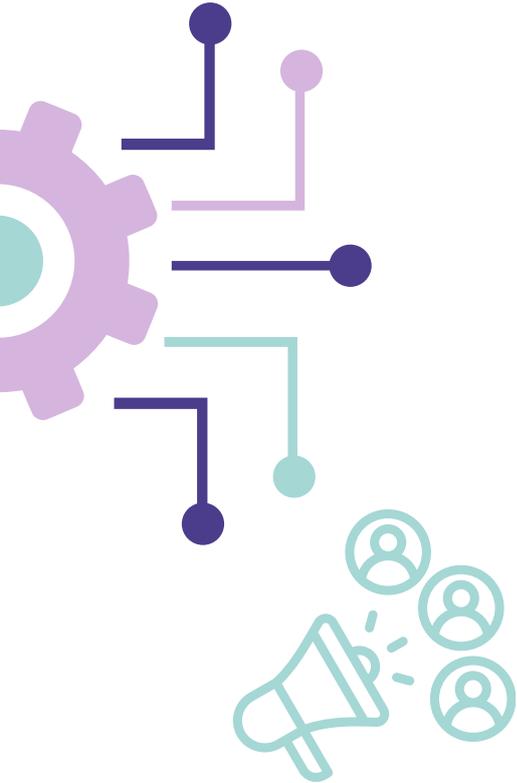
**Large cities**  
score  $\approx$  40 points higher  
than small municipalities!



**Small municipalities**  
score below 42 in all  
dimensions!



# Multistakeholder Implementation Strategy

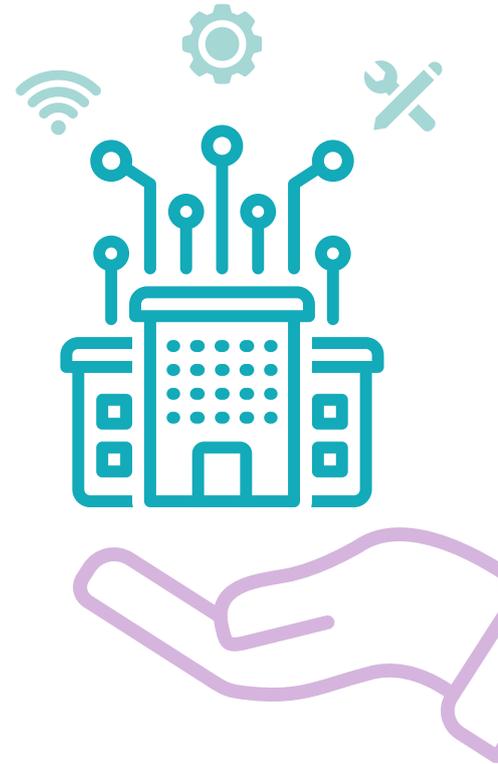


## Stimulate Digital Commons Development

- **Municipal procurement as market creation:** Use coordinated procurement policies with other municipalities to create regional demand for democratic digital alternatives
- **Community education:** Launch awareness campaigns about risks of closed systems and benefits of digital independence with practical guidance
- **Long-term funding:** Provide sustained support for user-friendly, democratically grounded alternatives to commercial platforms
- **Maintain community alignment:** Ensure digital commons initiatives remain aligned with public interests through robust licensing and community ownership structures

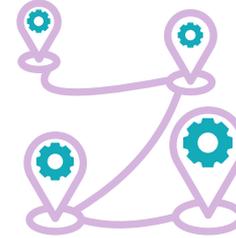
## Adopt Community-Controlled Systems

- **Replace Big Tech dependencies:** Municipal agencies should adopt democratic alternatives like open-source operating systems and community-controlled cloud storage
- **Provide free public internet:** Ensure free Wi-Fi in all municipal buildings, libraries, and community centers as essential public service
- **Skills for economic opportunity:** Focus digital literacy training on local economic opportunities rather than generic computer skills
- **Support institutional transitions:** Provide hands-on guidance and training to help schools, libraries, and municipal services transition to digital commons
- **Data Sovereignty:** Keep citizen data under municipal control through local infrastructure and open standards, preventing dependency on external platforms
- **Develop in-house open-source expertise:** Unlike proprietary software with vendor dependency, open-source requires municipalities to understand and maintain their own systems. This enables customization to local needs, active participation in open-source communities, and genuine technological independence while reducing long-term costs



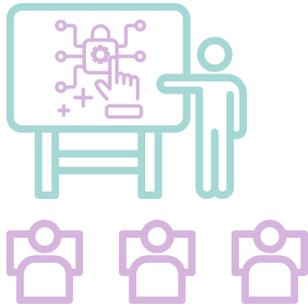
## Regional Collaboration

- **Establish local nodes networks:** Support maintenance, development, and scaling of digital commons for municipal infrastructures
- **Share systems and infrastructures:** Collaborate on shared municipal digital systems rather than developing isolated solutions



## Capacity Building & Skills Development

**Note:** Skills development should follow strategic planning: First establish a data strategy, then implement data governance frameworks, which then reveal specific data literacy requirements that inform targeted training programs.



### Municipal Staff Development

- **Data literacy training:** Provide foundational data concepts training to municipal staff across departments
- **Professional exchange:** Create forums for technical knowledge sharing and best practice development across municipalities
- **Democratic governance skills:** Train staff in collaborative decision-making and community engagement for digital systems

### Capacity Building Priorities

Source: Eurocities Governance Report 2024; EIB Municipalities Survey

61%\*

support a critical need in data literacy programs

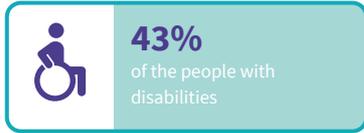
68%\*

support a critical need in technical skills development

\*of the municipalities surveyed

## Digital Divide in Europe: Percentage of people with narrow digital competencies

Source: Eurofound (2025); Data based on EU-SILC & Eurostat Digital Skills Indicators (2023-2024)



## Community Engagement & Democratic Participation

- **Digital rights education:** Implement programs to educate residents about digital rights, data privacy, and online safety.
- **Participatory technology design:** Enable systematic inclusion of diverse community groups in municipal technology decisions
- **Local election protection:** Implement municipal measures addressing deepfakes and AI-generated content in local elections with transparency rules for political advertisements
- **Community content standards:** Create local content moderation standards reflecting community values rather than corporate algorithms
- **Vulnerable group protection:** Apply intersectional analysis to ensure women, minorities, immigrants, and marginalized groups have equal access to digital protection and participation

**Ø27%**

of the total population  
have low/narrow digital  
competencies



## About This Policy Brief

This policy brief was developed through the Data for All project, in partnership with all project partners. The recommendations presented here emerged from the cited sources, academic literature, EU policy frameworks, and hands-on implementation experience across participating municipalities. While grounded in documented research and verified data, these recommendations represent our synthesized understanding of how municipalities can successfully navigate digital transformation while maintaining democratic control, technological sovereignty, and ethical standards in data governance.

### Sources

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- C20 Working Group 7 (2024): "Digitalization & Technology Policy Brief"
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- Gstrein, O.J. (2023): "Data Autonomy: Recalibrating Strategic Autonomy and Digital Sovereignty" (including expert interview, June 2025)
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Interreg  
North Sea



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