

Digital Readiness Framework

Unified benchmark to assess national readiness across digital law, policy & governance

March 2026

Note on terminology

The Digital Readiness Framework was originally launched as the Unified Framework in 2023.

1. PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

The Digital Readiness Framework is a **policy benchmarking tool** that assesses the readiness of **national legal, policy and governance frameworks** for digital transformation. It is designed to support **evidence-based decision-making** by helping countries identify strengths, gaps and reform priorities, and by enabling comparison across countries and peer groups.

The Readiness Framework is intended for:

- **ICT/telecommunications regulators** and relevant ministries
- **Digital economy and transformation agencies**
- **Other government agencies and regulatory authorities** with sectoral and cross-sectoral mandates
- **Regional organizations** and development partners supporting digital reform

2. WHY READINESS MATTERS

Digital transformation requires an enabling environment that supports **both telecom/ICT markets and broader digital ecosystems**, while also enabling digitization across economic and social sectors. Achieving universal meaningful connectivity, trusted digital public services and digital innovation depends on the combined effect of **policy choices, legal instruments, institutional capacity and governance arrangements**.

Without a coherent and capable national framework, countries often face recurring constraints such as fragmented mandates, limited regulatory capacity, inconsistent rules across sectors, weak coordination among institutions and challenges in implementation and enforcement. Readiness assessments help clarify what is in place, what is missing and what should be prioritized.

3. WHAT THE READINESS FRAMEWORK IS AND WHERE IT COMES FROM

The Digital Readiness Framework provides a structured approach to assess national readiness across **digital law, policy and governance**. It integrates and builds on ITU's established tools and datasets, including:

- the **ICT Regulatory Tracker**, and
- the **G5 Benchmark**,

and is supported by ITU policy and regulatory data covering **194 countries** and **500+ indicators** across ICT regulation and the broader digital enabling environment.

The Readiness Framework was first introduced as an analytical tool in the [Global Digital Regulation Outlook 2023](#) and has since been applied in benchmarking exercises to support evidence-based decision-making in a number of countries and at the regional level.

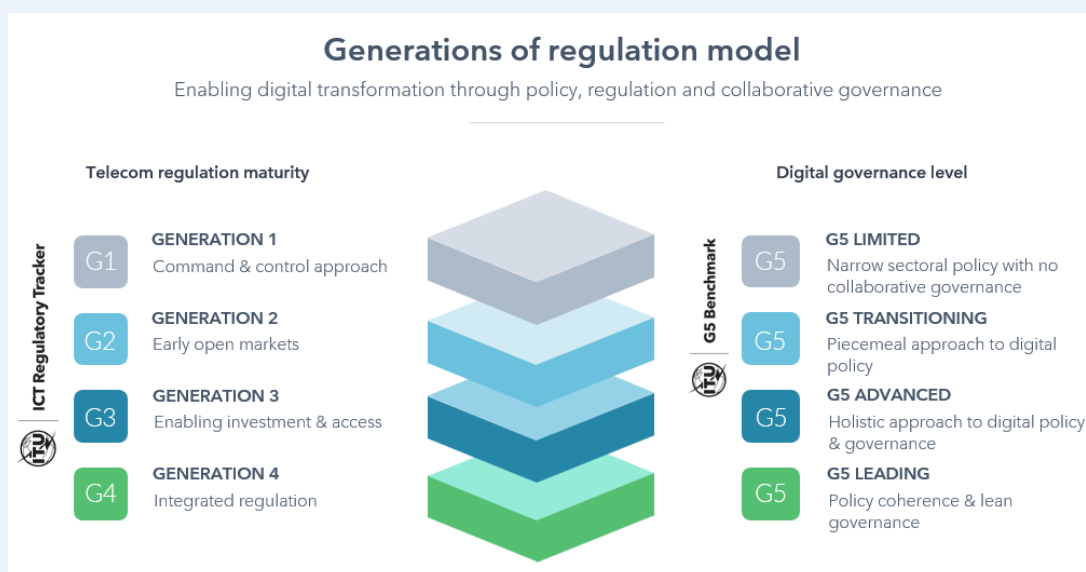
Conceptual foundation: Generations of Regulation (G1–G5)

The Readiness Framework is designed based on ITU's **Generations of Regulation model**. The model describes how regulatory frameworks evolve – from foundational rule-setting and market oversight toward more adaptive, collaborative, innovation-enabling approaches suited to fast-changing digital ecosystems.

Generations of Regulation model

The five generations of regulation provide a high-level conceptual framework to understand trends and track progress in the development of telecom, ICT and digital policy, legal and governance frameworks. Generations 1 through 4 track the maturity of telecom markets. Generation 5 (Gen 5) encompasses the evolution of national digital markets, from limited to transitioning and advanced to leading.

The 'generations of regulation' model sets out, at a glance and across five clearly differentiated generations, how policy and regulation have evolved over recent decades – from a narrow focus on telecom, to the broader perspective on ICTs and then onto the gold standard for collaborative digital governance. The model has been built with the global community of ICT regulators – annually tuned and enhanced since 2003 by the [Global Symposium for Regulators](#) (GSR). The gold standard for digital regulation, Gen 5, embodies the guidance of this expert, high-level community and is framed under the premise 'collaboration across sectors, cooperation across borders, and engagement across the board'.



Source: ITU

The model is strategic and practical, enabling analysis of and planning for the evolution of national digital governance capacity and regulation.

Digital Readiness Framework high-level structure

Two associated tools – the ICT Regulatory Tracker and the G5 Benchmark – underwrite the model in assessing the state of maturity of national legal frameworks and their governance and tracking their progress over time. The Digital Readiness Framework integrates the two main tracks of reforms – the sectoral ICT-focused essentials and the cross-sectoral digital foundations – into a unified benchmark to assess national readiness across digital law, policy & governance. The Readiness Framework thus provides a consolidated, practical structure for analysis and reform.



Source: ITU

4. SCOPE OF THE READINESS FRAMEWORK

The Readiness Framework assesses readiness across three related dimensions:

- 1. ICT & Digital law**

The presence and design of legal and regulatory instruments and rules affecting ICT/telecom markets and digital ecosystems, including how legal tools enable competition, investment, innovation, safety and trust.

- 2. Digital policy**

The existence and coherence of national digital policy agendas and enabling strategies, including how policy objectives are translated into implementable frameworks.

- 3. Digital governance**

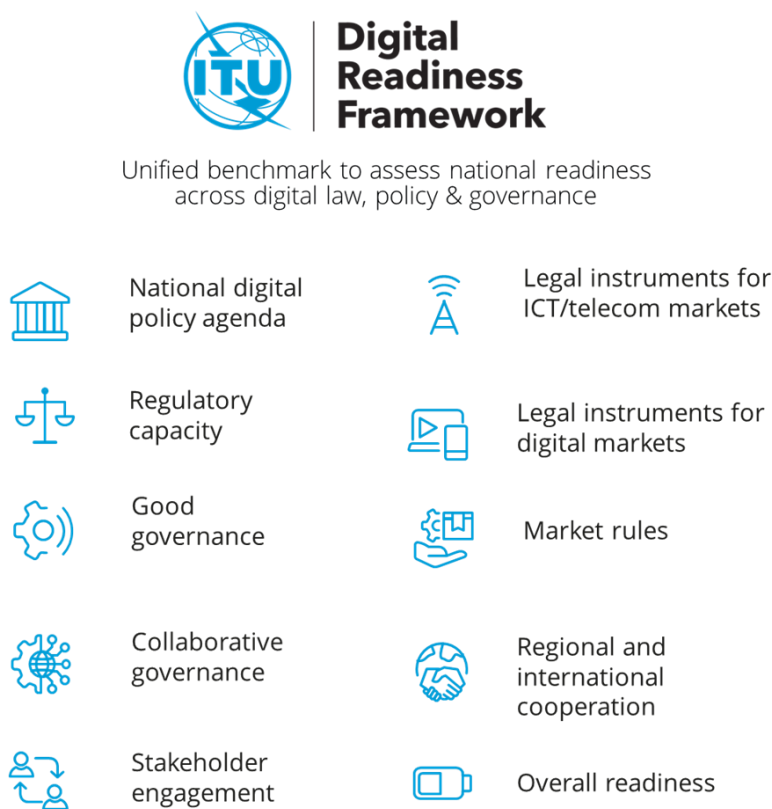
The institutional capacity, governance practices and coordination mechanisms that enable policy implementation, regulatory effectiveness, accountability, stakeholder participation, and regional and international cooperation.

Boundaries: What the Readiness Framework does not measure

The Readiness Framework is designed to assess the **enabling environment** – and not to measure outcomes directly. While the Framework provides an overview of the policy, legal, institutional and governance foundations that shape digital transformation across economic sectors, scores should not be interpreted as direct measures of economic performance, investment levels, infrastructure deployment, adoption rates, service quality, or economic impact.

5. STRUCTURE: NINE THEMATIC BENCHMARKS

The Readiness Framework is composed of **nine thematic benchmarks**.



Benchmark 1: National digital policy agenda

Assesses whether national digital priorities are defined, coherent and operationalized through strategies, plans and coordinating mechanisms, including for target groups.

Benchmark 2: Regulatory capacity

Assesses the mandate, resources, skills and tools of institutions responsible for ICT and digital regulation.

Benchmark 3: Good governance

Assesses governance practices that support regulatory quality, accountability, transparency, predictability and integrity, and that enable evidence-based decision-making.

Benchmark 4: Collaborative governance

Assesses whole-of-government and cross-institution coordination mechanisms needed for digital transformation (including shared mandates and joint implementation).

Benchmark 5: Stakeholder engagement

Assesses consultation practices and mechanisms for engaging industry and other stakeholders, including approaches to policy experimentation and self-regulatory arrangements.

Benchmark 6: Legal instruments for ICT/telecom markets

Assesses legal and regulatory instruments shaping telecom/ICT markets, including licensing, authorizations, access frameworks, and other core regulatory tools.

Benchmark 7: Legal instruments for digital markets

Assesses legal and regulatory instruments shaping digital markets and services, including rules that support safety, trust and innovation in digital ecosystem development.

Benchmark 8: Market rules

Assesses market-facing rules and enforcement mechanisms that enable effective competition and predictable conditions for innovation and investment.

Benchmark 9: Regional and international cooperation

Assesses participation in regional and international cooperation and harmonization efforts.

6. COMPOSITION, SCORING AND READINESS TIERS**Composition**

The nine thematic benchmarks group 117 indicators or ‘targets’ relevant to each focus area. Each set of indicators reflects what ITU’s longstanding experience and international good practice recognize as foundational instruments and core institutional and governance arrangements for effective legal and regulatory frameworks. The indicators are not exhaustive, and not all may be applicable in every national context. However, the Readiness Framework’s robust methodology and its careful selection of the most relevant and comparable indicators for each area make the benchmarks a powerful and highly reliable analytical tool.

Digital Readiness Framework benchmarks and indicators

Benchmark	Number of indicators/targets
National digital policy agenda	13
Regulatory capacity	17
Good governance	11
Collaborative governance	16
Stakeholder engagement	5
Legal instruments for the ICT/telecom sector	17
Legal instruments for digital markets	16
Market rules	17
Regional and international cooperation	5
Overall	117

Source: ITU

Aggregation method

The Readiness Framework produces a readiness score for each of the nine thematic benchmarks, as well as an overall score across all nine. Each benchmark score – and the overall score – corresponds to the percentage of targets achieved (in other words, the percentage of indicators met fully or partially).

For ease of interpretation, the overall score can be read as the country's level of readiness across digital law, policy, and governance on a scale from 1 to 10. For example, a country achieving 63% of the Readiness Framework's targets would have a readiness score of 6 out of 10.

Weighting

No weights are applied to the benchmarks or indicators. This is a deliberate methodological choice: it allows strengths in one area to offset weaknesses in another in the overall scoring, and it recognizes that countries may pursue different, equally valid pathways in the development of their digital legal, policy, and governance frameworks.

Missing data values

Missing responses in country questionnaires are treated, by default, as an implicit negative (i.e., the relevant policy instrument, arrangement, or condition is not in place). Accordingly, the corresponding indicator is coded as not met and treated as a zero for scoring and aggregation purposes, while the indicator value is left blank in the country profile to distinguish non-response from a confirmed zero. This treatment follows the rationale applied in comparable ITU benchmarking exercises (e.g., for the ICT Regulatory Tracker and the G5 benchmark), where non-response may reflect a preference to leave fields blank rather than explicitly reporting non-adoption, and where the absence of evidence is therefore operationalized as non-compliance with the indicator's best-practice condition.

This default rule is applied alongside a structured validation and triangulation process. During validation and targeted desk research, missing values are reviewed against publicly available sources and other relevant documentation. If no corroborating evidence is identified, the indicator remains coded as not verified for the country and no score is attributed.

For the multi-year dataset, a carry-forward rule is applied to support longitudinal consistency. Where an indicator value is missing in the current edition but was reported in the previous edition, the last available value is carried forward by default, unless new evidence indicates a change. This approach reflects the reasonable assumption that, absent updated information, the underlying condition has likely remained stable and provides more consistent results than leaving values missing.

Readiness tiers

Based on overall performance, countries fall into one of four readiness tiers: **Low**, **Intermediate**, **High** and **Very High**.

<i>Readiness tier</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Tier descriptors</i>
Low	0 < 40	Countries in this tier have limited policy and regulatory foundations in place to support a coherent digital policy environment. Key institutional arrangements, governance practices, and regulatory instruments are absent, fragmented, or at an early stage of development. Policy frameworks may be incomplete or outdated, coordination mechanisms weak, and implementation capacity constrained. In many cases, core enabling instruments – such as comprehensive digital strategies, modern regulatory frameworks, or structured stakeholder engagement mechanisms – are still under development.
Intermediate	40 < 70	Countries in this tier have established some core policy and regulatory instruments, but the overall framework remains partial or uneven across key areas. Foundational strategies, governance arrangements, or regulatory mechanisms may exist, yet coverage, implementation initiatives, or institutional coordination is still developing. For example, countries may have adopted sectoral strategies or modernized parts of their regulatory framework, while gaps remain in areas such as regulatory governance, policy experimentation tools, or cross-sector coordination.
High	70 < 90	Countries in this tier demonstrate a well-established and broadly coherent digital policy environment. Most key institutional arrangements, governance practices, and regulatory instruments are in place and operational. Regulatory authorities typically have clear mandates, structured consultation mechanisms, and evidence-based decision-making practices, and policy frameworks address multiple dimensions of the digital ecosystem. Remaining gaps tend to relate to specific instruments, implementation initiatives, or the adoption of more advanced governance practices.
Very high	90 ≤ 100	Countries in this tier have mature, comprehensive and well-coordinated digital policy frameworks supported by strong governance and institutional capacity. Policy and regulatory instruments are systematically designed and up to date, aligned across institutions and policy domains and supported by implementation initiatives. Authorities demonstrate advanced regulatory practices, such as structured policy experimentation, evidence-based decision-making, regulatory oversight, and sustained stakeholder engagement, while maintaining mechanisms to adapt governance approaches as technologies and markets evolve.

Scoring methodology

The [detailed scoring methodology](#) of the Readiness Framework provides the full list of indicators, indicator definitions, scoring rationale and data sources for each indicator.

How to interpret scores

Beyond the overall score, the Readiness Framework provides a **diagnostic view** of the enabling environment. Results are intended to:

- identify strengths and gaps across benchmarks,
- support prioritization and sequencing of reforms, and
- enable comparison over time and across peer groups.

Indicator results should be interpreted alongside benchmark-level scores and the national context. Countries may perform strongly in some benchmarks while facing constraints in others. A low score on an individual indicator may reflect a genuine gap, limited implementation capacity, a deliberate policy choice, or a structural constraint. It should therefore be treated as a signal for further analysis – not an automatic reform priority – and assessed against national objectives and policy intent.

7. PRODUCTS AND ACCESS

The Digital Readiness Framework, the ICT Regulatory Tracker and the G5 Benchmark tools are hosted on the **G5 Accelerator platform**, which provides:

- country profiles on ICT regulatory maturity, digital governance and digital transformation readiness,
- interactive analytics and overview maps, and
- annual/biennial data releases highlighting global and regional trends shaping ICT and broader digital enabling environments.

8. HOW TO USE THE READINESS FRAMEWORK: FROM BENCHMARK TO ROADMAP

The Readiness Framework supports a practical reform workflow by enabling countries to compare results across key thematic areas and benchmark progress against peers and over time.

Suggested use flow

1. **Review the country profile and benchmark breakdown to understand the readiness baseline.** Consult the methodology to ensure a good understanding of the structure of the Readiness Framework and the choice and definition of individual indicators.
2. **Compare with peers and regional and global trends** to contextualize strengths and identify areas of relative underperformance.
3. **Interrogate areas of low performance to distinguish reform-relevant gaps from structural constraints or deliberate policy choices**, focusing on the indicators most material to national objectives.
4. **Translate the resulting priorities into a sequenced reform agenda** – breaking down priorities into short-, medium- and long-term targets, addressing feasible gaps related to foundational reforms first, and reflecting the logical order in which reforms need to be implemented, while noting constraints that require longer-term measures or that are not priorities under the current policy intent.
5. **Track progress over time** using subsequent annual releases and targeted national monitoring.

National blueprints

National blueprints developed using the Readiness Framework can support the design of **regulatory roadmaps** and **customized digital governance improvement strategies**. A national blueprint translates the Readiness Framework's benchmark results into an operational reform plan that reflects national objectives, institutional realities and implementation capacity. It is designed to be practical: it identifies what should change, who should lead, how reforms should be sequenced and how progress will be tracked.

To ensure relevance and implementability, we recommend that such roadmaps and improvement strategies be developed through a blend of **benchmark-informed and co-creation approaches**. In practice, this means using benchmark results as the evidence base, while applying structured co-creation and policy design thinking frameworks to integrate **national context and broader development priorities, institutional dynamics and constraints, and stakeholder perspectives** (including government, industry, civil society and academia). This helps distinguish reform priorities from structural constraints or deliberate policy choices, builds ownership across institutions, and improves the feasibility of sequencing and implementation.

A national blueprint typically includes, at minimum:

- **Baseline diagnosis:** a concise summary of overall and benchmark-level results, highlighting strengths, gaps and areas requiring further analysis.
- **Priorities and reform objectives:** a limited set of reform objectives explicitly linked to national digital priorities and policy intent.
- **Reform measures and sequencing:** short- and medium-term measures, distinguishing quick wins from reforms requiring longer timelines, legal changes or multi-stakeholder coordination.
- **Institutional responsibilities and coordination:** clear assignment of lead and supporting institutions, including coordination mechanisms and decision pathways.
- **Capacity and resourcing needs:** identified capacity-building requirements (skills, data, tools, procedures) and, where relevant, resourcing implications.
- **Monitoring framework:** a small set of measurable indicators aligned with the Readiness Framework, with milestones and an approach to periodic review.

Illustrative uses of national blueprints (examples)

- **Updating rules for digital markets:** A country with mature telecom regulation but weaker readiness for digital markets uses the blueprint to prioritize targeted legal instruments (e.g., digital market competition provisions, cybersecurity and data protection rules), establish coordination between the ICT regulator and relevant authorities, and sequence reforms to manage implementation capacity while maintaining regulatory certainty.
- **Strengthening regulatory capacity:** A country with strong legal instruments but low scores on regulatory capacity and governance benchmarks uses the blueprint to define a capacity-building programme (e.g., analytical tools, consultation procedures, enforcement practices), clarify the regulator's mandate, and introduce internal performance and transparency mechanisms.

9. DATA CYCLE, QUALITY AND LIMITATIONS

Data cycle

The Readiness Framework draws on ITU policy and regulatory data and is updated through periodic data releases that enable trend analysis and comparative assessment across countries. The Readiness Framework's underlying indicator sets are refreshed on a rolling basis; ICT Regulatory Tracker indicators are updated one year, followed by G5 Benchmark indicators the next.

Data sources and validation

The Digital Readiness Framework is based on self-reported information gathered via official ITU surveys to Member States institutions, datasets compiled by international organizations as well as desktop research based on official government sources and direct outreach to national telecom/ICT regulatory authorities. Self-reported data received from Member States through official channels has been verified to the extent reasonably feasible.

Limitations

Indicator-based benchmarking provides structured comparability but does not capture all national context or implementation nuance. Scores reflect the evidence available at the time of data collection; reforms introduced after the cut-off date will be reflected in subsequent updates.

10. Comparability

The Framework dataset is designed to be comparable over time, across countries, and across regions. Comparability is achieved through a standardized indicator set, consistent definitions, and a common scoring logic applied to all economies, using the same evidence requirements and quality assurance steps. This enables reliable peer comparisons and trend analysis, while keeping results grounded in verifiable, documented information.

The dataset is also aligned with internationally recognized concepts and good practices in digital and ICT governance. Indicators are framed in technology-neutral terms and focus on policy, legal, institutional and governance arrangements that can be assessed consistently across different national contexts. As with any benchmark, results should be interpreted with attention to national circumstances and reform trajectories, but the underlying measurement approach remains consistent to support fair comparison.

11. PROCESS FOR UPDATING COUNTRY PROFILES OF ITU ADMINISTRATIONS

A review of a country profile may be requested at any time, following the steps below:

- **Submission of a request:** ITU Member State Administrations and national ICT regulators may submit a request for review by email, indicating the rationale for the request and providing any new elements to be considered.
- **Review by the ITU Secretariat:** The ITU Secretariat will assess the new elements within **45 days** of receiving the request. The Secretariat may request additional references, documentation, or clarification as needed to complete the review. The review may result in (i) revisions to individual

indicators and their corresponding scores (either upward or downward), or (ii) confirmation of the existing country profile (no change).

- **Finalization:** A response addressing the points raised is shared with the country for information and is considered final until the next regular update of the Readiness Framework dataset.
- **Publication of updates:** Where changes are made to indicators and scores, they will be reflected online no later than **one month** after completion of the review.

For the purposes of the review, new elements should meet the following requirements:

- **Methodological alignment:** They must correspond to the definitions of the relevant indicators and targets, in line with the established methodology.
- **In-force status:** They must refer to legal instruments, policies, institutional arrangements, or initiatives that are already in force as of the date of the latest available dataset (i.e., excluding draft measures or instruments pending approval), providing relevant evidence (e.g., urls).
- **Accessibility and format:** They must be accessible online or, alternatively, submitted to the Secretariat in full as searchable PDF or Microsoft Word documents (no scanned or incomplete documents). Where documents are not intended for public distribution, this should be clearly indicated; such documents will be used solely by the Secretariat for the purposes of the review and will not be disclosed to third parties.

If you are an ITU Member State Administration and you wish to provide recent or historic data for your country's ICT and digital law, policy and governance landscape or request a review, please contact us at treg@itu.int.

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