



# 2024 OECD Global Roundtable on Equal Access to Justice

## Building trust through people-centred justice

### *Concept Note*

The **2024 OECD Global Roundtable on Equal Access to Justice** will take place on 9 - 10 October 2024 in Ottawa, hosted by the Department of Justice of Canada and supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

As part of the [OECD Reinforcing Democracy Initiative](#), the Roundtable seeks to advance people-centred justice, strengthen democracy and public trust, foster prosperity and contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.3 on promoting the rule of law and ensuring equal access to justice for all.

Building on the momentum of the 2023 Roundtable, this event will delve deeper into the future of justice, focusing on the response of the justice sector to global challenges, innovative strategies for the prevention of justice problems, enhancing the measurement of access to justice and implementing inclusive justice strategies. The Roundtable supports the implementation of the [2023 OECD Recommendation on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems](#) and its core components - building a people-centred purpose and culture in the justice sector; designing and delivering people-centred justice services; establishing an enabling governance infrastructure; empowering people to be informed and to participate; and committing to evidence-based planning, monitoring, evaluation and accountability.

Justice is pivotal in countering pressures on democracy around the world, including low trust in public institutions, the spread of mis- and disinformation, and threats to the rule of law. The justice sector also has an important role to play in responding to global challenges, including in relation to the impact of and transitions related to climate change and digitalisation, including artificial intelligence (AI). This calls for a pivot to people-centred justice - adapting our systems, our institutions, our services, and how they shape the relationship between people, communities, and the State.

The exchanges at the Roundtable will help to consolidate our understanding of a new approach to justice as a cornerstone of democracy, a more effective and agile one that helps people prevent and resolve their legal and justice problems and enables them to participate fully in society and the economy. This will inform OECD's forthcoming global report on Democracy, Rule of Law and People-centred Justice.

Outcomes of the Roundtable will feed into the [2024 OECD Global Forum on Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy](#), to be held in Italy on 21 and 22 October and which will feature a dedicated session on "The new frontier for the Rule of Law and Access to Justice". Insights from the discussions will also inform other global convenings, including the 2025 UN's High-Level Political Forum, the Summit for Democracy process, and the work of the Justice Action Coalition.

## Objectives

The 2024 Roundtable aims to:

- Advance the understanding of the role that people-centred justice can play in addressing pressures on democracies, improving levels of public trust, narrowing the growing justice gap and tackling a decline in the rule of law.
- Discuss the contribution of a variety of actors in the justice sector in supporting government action on global challenges - as a key driver of public trust - including addressing climate change and managing the digital transition, notably AI.
- Support progress and share best practices in implementing the 2023 OECD Recommendation on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems (OECD/LEGAL/0498).
- Discuss new country data and the latest research on people-centred justice, as well as tools and indicators to measure and report on progress in advancing SDG 16 and equal justice for all.
- Discuss experiences with inclusive justice strategies, community-based approaches and other innovations to support, participation, representation, and just outcomes for all, including marginalised and underserved populations.
- Envision justice systems that offer responsive justice services, work on prevention, and embrace integrity, transparency and accountability to enhance legitimacy and trust.
- Facilitate international cooperation and dialogue among stakeholders to promote inclusive, responsive and effective services and institutions that put people at the centre of justice.

## Format

The Roundtable will feature a high-level dialogue, plenary discussions, expert policy discussions and interactive working sessions over two days. The meeting will be held in-person in the beautiful Château Laurier in Ottawa, Canada.

The High-level dialogue will bring together senior officials from OECD Member and other countries as well as select civil society leaders, to exchange experiences and views, present new country data and evidence and share updates on their implementation of the OECD Recommendation on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems.

The plenary discussions, expert policy discussions and interactive working sessions, will cover a range of topics and engage a diverse group of stakeholders, including (senior) officials from OECD member and partner countries, representatives from civil society, academia, professional organisations, think tanks, the private sector, and international organisations.

In connection with the Roundtable several technical workshops will be organized in collaboration with Justice Canada, IDRC and other partners.

## **Thematic focus**

### **High-level dialogue**

#### **People-centred justice and the rule of law to reinforce democracy and build trust**

In today's world, we see significant challenges to democracy and decreasing levels of public trust, while the justice gap is growing, and the rule of law is under threat. These phenomena are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. The growing justice gap means that our systems and institutions have come to be seen as multipliers of inequality, working only for the few. Many people feel excluded from society and left behind in the economy, grievances which can lead to disengagement from democratic processes, which in turn may limit civic space, undermine the rule of law and threaten our democracies.

Our countries are also confronted with global challenges that profoundly impact our daily lives and that no single government, or sector, can address on their own. As the effects of climate change are becoming more tangible, the urgency of addressing environmental justice increases, raising complicated questions of procedural and distributive fairness, and of individual rights in the context of collective solutions. Ongoing digitalisation of our societies and economies, and the astonishing acceleration in the use of AI, are changing the nature of access to justice. With the potential of increasing access to justice services, these developments also raise concerns around privacy, availability of effective remedies and the risk of biases being hardwired into public decision-making and service delivery.

To address these global challenges, actors in the justice sector are employing a range of strategies, including bringing justice services closer to people, enhancing the capacity of the justice sector to effectively respond to societal change and economic transformations, strengthening legal empowerment for a more responsive rule of law, and increasing transparency, integrity and accountability of justice for fair outcomes.

This session offers high-level insights on the evolving landscape of justice, emphasising the critical role of the justice sector in reinforcing democracy and the rule of law, and promoting individual and community well-being. High-level speakers from governments and civil society, are invited to present new data, evidence and country experiences, related to democracy, rule of law and people-centred justice and/or to the response of the justice sector to global challenges, including climate change and digitalisation and AI.

### **Plenary discussions**

#### **Making justice more responsive and preventative**

The justice sector needs to develop more responsive and personalised justice services, where technology and people-centred principles converge to ensure fairness and access to justice for all. Transcending conventional reactive attitudes, justice systems of the future will need to focus on prevention of justice problems, empower individuals within the justice process, and adopt a comprehensive approach to well-being. This requires tackling the root causes of common legal and

justice problems encountered by people, which can mitigate the burden on justice institutions while fostering social well-being.

### **Inclusive justice strategies to leave no one behind**

Several countries are developing strategies to engage with groups for whom it is harder to access justice, including women, children, black and indigenous populations, and other historically marginalised communities. Efforts are made to empower people so that they can participate in the shaping and delivery of justice a meaningful way, to foster a deeper understanding of the justice they want and need, and to improve their experience of justice. Community-based and restorative justice approaches play a critical role in making justice more equitable, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of all people and communities.

### **Open Justice to support stronger institutions and democracy**

The principles of integrity, transparency, accountability, and openness are foundational for the credibility and effectiveness of justice institutions. Innovative reforms and practices reinforce these values, ensuring justice systems are trustworthy and seen as legitimate. Openness and transparency can generate data and evidence that spark learning and create productive feedback loops for continuous improvement, enhancing the sector's ability to adapt to longer terms transformations as well as immediate crises in society and the economy.

## **Expert policy discussions**

### **Country experiences with the OECD Recommendation on Access to Justice and people-centred justice systems**

The 2023 Recommendation has as its core components: a people-centred purpose and culture in the justice sector; people-centred justice services; an enabling governance infrastructure; empowering people; and committing to evidence-based planning, monitoring, evaluation and accountability. This session will showcase country experiences in implementing the recommendation and spotlight existing gaps. It will include a collaborative dialogue on overcoming obstacles and leveraging opportunities for reform, ultimately making justice systems more people-centred and increase their ability to effectively resolve and prevent justice problems.

### **Measuring people-centred justice: The latest in justice data and research**

Methods and approaches in legal needs surveys and access to justice research are rapidly evolving and the insights generated by this research are increasingly relevant for policy makers in the justice sector who are committed to data-driven and evidence-based working. More and better people-centred justice data is also critical to report progress on SDG indicator 16.3.3 on access to civil justice. This session will present the latest developments in justice data and legal needs surveys, new data collected in different countries and the key insights gained from these efforts. It will showcase how countries have used data and insights in their policy making and discuss the shared research agenda for people-centred justice.

## Interactive working sessions

### Designing people-centred justice services

This session will discuss specific examples of justice services, such as courts and mediation, which are implementing people-centred design approaches, as well as justice houses as community-based integrated service models. Highlighting successful global models and innovative practices, it seeks to provide actionable insights for reforming justice services – based on people-centred justice data - to meet diverse needs. Participants will discuss methodologies for user-driven service improvements and strategies to enhance the accessibility of justice services, aiming to improve outcomes for all.

### Promoting a people-centred justice approach to climate change

Climate change is the defining global challenge of our time and the justice sector has a critical role to play in responding. Climate change's impacts are felt most acutely by vulnerable and marginalized populations and further risk exacerbating existing inequalities. A people-centred approach to climate change and environmental justice provides a pivotal role to support populations to cope with multiple scales of transition that are anticipated as countries around the world identify strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change's impacts.

A people-centred approach to climate and environmental justice is rooted in the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment (as recognized by the [United Nations General Assembly in 2022](#)), and promotes participatory and inclusive environmental and climate decision-making. To this end, this interactive session will explore the interlinkages between SDG 16 (peaceful, just and inclusive societies) and the 2030 Agenda's environmental goals, including SDG 13 (climate action), recognizing the important enabling role of SDG 16 in the realization of sustainable development more globally.

Indicative topics include the role that the justice sector and people-centred justice approaches can play in supporting efforts of communities and national governments to address climate change and inequalities, such as implementing large-scale green energy projects, carbon markets and green finance mechanisms, as well as disaster response. A spotlight will be placed on justice strategies to support communities and individuals, particularly vulnerable and marginalized communities, including national- and global-level collaboration among governments, private sectors, civil society organizations and community leaders.

### Developing a toolkit and indicator framework for people-centred justice

This session will present the preliminary elements of the toolkit to support countries in aligning their justice sector with the 2023 OECD Recommendation on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems. This includes discussion of people-centred justice indicators that measure resolution of justice problems, legal empowerment, and fairness of outcomes, as well as methodologies for collecting and analysing relevant data. The discussion will focus on developing an indicator framework that reflects the principles of people-centred justice and helps generate internationally comparable data, including to enable countries to report on SDG16.3.3.

## Technical workshops

A number of technical workshops will be organized in collaboration with partner organisations, which may be scheduled before, after or parallel to the Global Roundtable from Monday 7 through Friday 11 October. Further details will be provided in the coming months. Technical workshops are foreseen on the following topics:

- Democracy, rule of law and people-centred justice;
- A people-centred approach to administrative justice;
- Access to justice for children and effective remedies: General Comment 27 of the Committee on children's rights to access to justice and effective remedies;
- A shared agenda to build evidence for access to justice.