



EDITION IN BRIEF

Who Decides What Government Automates?

Five recent publications examine the choices behind public artificial intelligence (AI): which services deserve investment, who scrutinises adoption, how sensitive data travel and whose account of progress reaches the public record.

The five publications were released from 6 to 8 October 2026. None featured in an earlier edition.

Parliamentary scrutiny

United Nations Development Programme: legislators need the expertise to scrutinise artificial intelligence, spending and executive decisions.

African AI adoption

World Bank: affordable applications depend on reliable electricity, connectivity, skills and usable data.

AI in health services

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: health systems need local evidence before expanding an AI application.

Sensitive data and secondary use

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: medical-device review and later uses of sensitive data raise different questions.

Participation and the public record

United Nations Development Programme: 36 national reviews show frequent consultation but much less parliamentary engagement.



**THE GOVERNING QUESTION**

Who can still change the proposal?

This week's publications put the right to judge technology beside the capacity to use it. Sovereignty has an institutional dimension: public bodies need sufficient knowledge and authority to choose an application, set its terms and decide whether it deserves to continue. A locally hosted system does not settle those questions by itself.

The evidence also exposes different objects of scrutiny. Legislators examine authority and spending. Health teams test service performance. Regulators follow data uses and product risks. Citizens and their representatives question the official account. These roles can reinforce one another only if each receives information that is useful for its own decision.

The practical discipline is to make the consequential choices visible before they become expensive to reverse, and to preserve the evidence needed to revisit them.

Which decision remains open?

Before committing funds, can the institution explain the problem, compare an AI proposal with other solutions and identify who may reject or change it?

Who can examine the evidence?

Do legislators, service staff, regulators and affected people have the information and expertise needed to judge the aspects for which each is responsible?

What would justify continuation?

Which results, costs or harms would trigger renewal, modification or withdrawal, and how will the public record show that the institution acted?

Scope of the evidence

A regional economic assessment, a parliamentary practice paper, conference proceedings, company evidence and national reporting illuminate different public decisions. None establishes that an AI programme improved public services.

[Read the latest edition and source list](#)

