

The Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy

Journal homepage: https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jsdlp

ISSN: 2467-8406
Online ISSN: 2467-8392
Volume 17, Issue 4
Thuy, Lieu,
& Tuan 2026

ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY IN VIETNAM'S DIGITAL GOVERNMENT: ADAPTING THE EU PRINCIPLE OF GOOD ADMINISTRATION

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Article Information:

Article Type:
Research Article

Manuscript Received:
26 May 2026

Final Revision Received:
26 June 2026

Published Online:
15 September 2026

Keywords:
administrative accountability; digital governance; EU principles; public administration; transparency

Digital governance has become a central strategy for enhancing public sector efficiency, transparency, and accountability worldwide. In Vietnam, the rapid adoption of e-government systems presents both opportunities and challenges in aligning administrative practices with citizen expectations and global standards. This study investigates the integration of European Union (EU) principles of good administration – transparency, impartiality, legal certainty, and the right to redress – into Vietnam's digital governance framework, with the aim of strengthening administrative accountability, citizen participation, and public trust. A qualitative case study research design was employed, drawing on provincial governance performance reports, policy documents, and interviews with administrative officials. Thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's framework to identify patterns in institutional practices, technological implementation, and citizen engagement. Results indicate that provinces with well-developed digital platforms exhibit higher transparency, greater procedural impartiality, and enhanced citizen satisfaction. Legal certainty and accessible redress mechanisms were found to be unevenly implemented, with institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, and inter-agency coordination acting as critical mediating factors. Furthermore, citizen participation emerged as a significant determinant of trust, providing oversight and feedback that reinforce administrative compliance and performance. The study concludes that the systematic adaptation of EU governance principles can improve procedural consistency, equitable service delivery, and public confidence in Vietnam's digital government. Strategic investment in institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, participatory mechanisms, and monitoring systems is necessary to sustain these reforms. The findings provide actionable insights for policymakers seeking to align national digital governance practices with international standards while addressing local socio-technical and institutional challenges.

Cite this article: Nguyen Thi Thuy, Tran Kim Lieu, and Vu, Van Tuan (2026). Administrative Accountability In Vietnam's Digital Government: Adapting the EU Principle of Good Administration**.** The Journal of Sustainable Development, Law and Policy. Vol. 17:4. 486-520. DOI: 10.4314/jsdlp.v17i4.16

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Publisher: Institute for Oil, Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development (OGEES Institute), Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has become a central driver for improving efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement in public administration globally. Governments are increasingly employing information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance service delivery, streamline administrative procedures, and foster public trust.[1] Beyond technical modernization, digital governance is also increasingly connected to sustainable development because it can promote inclusive access to public services, institutional transparency, participatory decision-making, efficient administrative performance, and rights-based accountability. In this sense, sustainable digital governance should not be understood merely as the use of digital tools in government, but as a governance model that uses technology to advance equitable, transparent, accountable, and citizen-centered public administration. In Vietnam, the government has identified digital administration as a strategic priority to modernize public services and support sustainable socioeconomic development. Recently, the Prime Minister's Decision No. 749/QĐ-TTg[2] and Decision No. 942/QĐ-TTg[3] outline the national digital transformation program, aiming to create an integrated e-government system capable of delivering citizen-centered services by 2025. These policies emphasize not only the deployment of technological infrastructure but also the enhancement of administrative capacity and accountability mechanisms. However, despite significant investments and institutional reforms, administrative accountability remains inconsistent across provinces, and principles of procedural fairness, transparency, and responsiveness are not fully

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1 A Ferreira and C Santos, 'Digital Transformation in Public Sector' in *IGI Global eBooks* (2025) 265, 288.; A P Manoharan, J Melitski and M Holzer, 'Digital Governance: An Assessment of Performance and Best Practices' (2022) (23) 1 *Public Organization Review* 265, 283.

2 Prime Minister of Viet Nam. *Decision No. 749/QĐ-TTg approving the National Digital Transformation Program to 2025, with orientations toward 2030*. (2020). <https://datafiles.chinhphu.vn/cpp/files/vbpq/2020/06/749.signed.pdf>Accessed May 20, 2026

3 Prime Minister of Viet Nam, *Decision No 942/QĐ-TTg Approving the E-Government Development Strategy towards Digital Government in 2021–2025, with Vision to 2030* (2020)<https://datafiles.chinhphu.vn/cpp/files/vbpq/2021/06/942.signed.pdf>Accessed May 20, 2026.

operationalized in all government units.[4] This uneven implementation highlights the need to evaluate the effectiveness of Vietnam's digital governance framework in promoting administrative accountability and protecting citizen rights, and contributing to sustainable development objectives through more inclusive and accountable public service delivery.

Administrative accountability in digital governance refers to the ability of public agencies to execute services in compliance with legal standards, ethical norms, and citizen expectations. It reflects the structural organization of governance institutions and the daily conduct of public officials in executing administrative responsibilities.[5] A growing body of research has demonstrated that digitizing administrative processes alone does not guarantee accountability. Without comprehensive legal safeguards, institutional oversight, and effective feedback mechanisms, digital systems may inadvertently exacerbate existing deficits in transparency, fairness, and responsiveness.[6] These risks are particularly significant from a sustainable development perspective, because weak accountability in digital administration may deepen inequality, reduce public trust, and limit citizens' effective access to public services. In this regard, the European Union provides an instructive benchmark through its codified principles of good administration, which emphasize transparency, impartiality, proportionality, and effective remedies for citizens.[7] The EU framework integrates robust accountability

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4 T T M Nguyen, 'Digital Transformation in Public Administration in Vietnam: Current Status, Challenges, and Policy Implications' (2025) (41) 3 *VNU Journal of Science Policy and Management Studies* 70, 83.; T K T Pham, 'Government Administrative Capacity, E-government Performance and Citizen's E-government Adoption: Evidence From a Transition Country' (2023) (17) 3 *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy* 443, 458.

5 A P Manoharan, J Melitski and M Holzer, (2022), *supra* note 1.; U B U Roehl and M B Hansen, 'Automated, Administrative Decision-making and Good Governance: Synergies, Trade-offs, and Limits' (2024) (84) 6 *Public Administration Review* 1184, 1199.

6 K Aldiabat, Y Harb and M Gharaibeh, 'The Impact of E-Government Dimensions on Trust in Government: Transparency as a Mediator' (2025) (26) 205 *Quality Access to Success* 144, 152.; H Gaffar, 'Implications of Digitalization and AI in the Justice System: A Glance at the Socio-legal Angle' (2024) (10) 3 *Law and World* 154, 177.

7 European Commission, *Code of Good Administrative Behaviour for Staff of the European Commission in Their Relations with the Public*

mechanisms, which are closely monitored by independent bodies and reinforced through legal instruments, ensuring that administrative actions remain aligned with citizen rights. Drawing from these principles, this study conceptualizes sustainable digital governance as a framework built on transparency, impartiality, legal certainty, citizen participation, accessibility, data protection, institutional capacity, and effective redress. On the contrary, while Vietnam has adopted partial transparency measures and citizen feedback systems, it lacks a unified legal framework guaranteeing procedural fairness across all digital services. Surveys of public satisfaction suggest that this gap in accountability continues to limit the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of digital government initiatives, especially in regions with limited institutional capacity.[8]

The implementation of digital governance in Vietnam faces structural and institutional challenges. Provincial administrative units exhibit considerable variation in their capacity to deploy ICT-driven services, resulting in uneven service quality and divergent levels of citizen engagement.[9] Furthermore, the legal and regulatory frameworks often lag behind rapid technological advancements, creating ambiguities regarding

(2024).<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2024/3083/oj> Accessed on May 20, 2026.; European Commission, '*Right to Good Administration*' (nd). <https://commission.europa.eu/topics/human-rights/your-fundamental-rights-eu/know-your-rights/citizens-rights/right-good-administration_en,> Accessed on May 20, 2026.

8 B C Nguyen and N N Thanh, 'The Impact of Good Governance on the People's Satisfaction With Public Administrative Services in Vietnam' (2022) (12) 1 *Administrative Sciences* 35.; T T H Pham, E Thalassinos and H Le, 'The Impact of Quality of Public Administration on Local Economic Growth in Vietnam' (2022) (15) 4 *Journal of Risk and Financial Management* 158.

9 Institute for Vietnam Initiatives and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam, '*The Research Report on Enhancing the Index on Performance in Serving Citizens and Businesses & the Mechanism for Updating Progress of Administrative Procedures*' (2023).<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-04/eng_enhancing-the-index-on-performance-in-serving-citizens-and-businesses-the-mechanism-for-updating-progress-of-administrative-procedures-final.pdf> Accessed on May 20, 2026.; National Assembly of Viet Nam, *Law No 91/2025/QH15 on Personal Data Protection* (2025).<https://datafiles.chinhphu.vn/cpp/files/vbpq/2025/7/91qh.signed.pdf> Accessed on May 20, 2026.

citizen rights, administrative obligations, and oversight responsibilities.[10] These deficiencies are particularly consequential in the context of automated decision-making systems, where the absence of procedural safeguards can undermine fairness, generate administrative errors, and potentially erode public trust.[11] Empirical studies indicate that citizen trust is significantly higher in administrative units that provide clear guidance, timely responses, and structured mechanisms for lodging complaints.[12] Such evidence demonstrates that administrative accountability is not merely a matter of legal compliance but also a socio-technical challenge that requires the integration of legal, institutional, and technological frameworks to ensure effective digital service delivery. Therefore, building sustainable digital governance in Vietnam requires not only stronger digital infrastructure, but also legal reforms, institutional capacity-building, inclusive access, and reliable mechanisms for citizen participation and redress.

Despite a growing body of research on e-government adoption, transparency, and citizen satisfaction, there is a notable scarcity of studies that examine the adaptation of EU good administration principles in the Vietnamese context. Most studies assess digital government performance or citizen engagement but rarely evaluate procedural fairness, accountability, and rights protection within a comparative, normative framework.[13] This research addresses this gap by examining how EU principles of good administration can inform the development of

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10 Institute for Vietnam Initiatives and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam, (2023), *supra* note 9.

11 U B U Roehl and M B Hansen, (2024), *supra* note 5.; A Sanchez-Graells, 'Resh(AI)Ping Good Administration: Addressing the Mass Effects of Public Sector Digitalisation' (2024) (13) 1 *Laws* 9.

12 S Afiyah, 'The Impact of E-Government Services, Citizen Participation, and Transparency on Public Trust in Government' (2024) (2) 6 *Global International Journal of Innovative Researc*h 1246, 1261.; K Aldiabat, Y Harb and M Gharaibeh, (2025), *supra* note 6.; P H Diniz, L P Reis and H L Cardoso, 'E-Government Systems to Improve Citizen-to-Public Administration Communication: A Literature Review' (2025) (6) 4 *Digital Government Research and Practice* 1, 26.

13 P N Trung, 'Providing Public Services in the Context of Digital Transformation From the Theory of the Citizen-centered Local Governance Model' (2024) (5) 3 *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation* 19, 26.; B C Nguyen and N N Thanh, (2022), *supra* note 8.

sustainable digital governance in Vietnam. The central argument of the study is that Vietnam's digital government reforms will be more effective and sustainable if they move beyond technology-driven modernization toward a rights-based, accountable, and citizen-centered governance model. This study addresses this gap by investigating structural, legal, and operational constraints in Vietnam's digital government while identifying potential mechanisms to align national policies with international best practices. The research employs a combination of normative legal analysis, empirical case study data, and comparative evaluation to assess the operationalization of EU good administration principles.[14] The study provides evidence-based recommendations for enhancing transparency, procedural fairness, and citizen-centered public service delivery. Its contribution lies in advancing scholarly understanding of administrative accountability in transitional digital governance contexts and in informing practical policy interventions that support more effective, equitable, and accountable e-government systems.

This study proceeds in five sections. After this introduction, Section II unpacks the linkages between effective digital governance and sustainable development, highlighting the nature, scope, and core elements of sustainable digital governance. Section III provides a legal and institutional assessment of emerging approaches to digital governance in Vietnam, focusing on current legal, policy, capacity, and implementation gaps. Section IV offers legal and policy recommendations for Vietnam, drawing comparative lessons from the EU experience and linking each recommendation to the gaps identified in the preceding section. Section V concludes by summarizing the key findings and identifying areas for further research.

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[14] T N D Nguyen, 'Impact of E-Government Development, Economic Growth and Government Management Efficiency on Financial Performance of Commercial Banks in ASEAN Countries' (2025) (9) 3 *Asian Journal of Economics and Banking* 395, 417.; P Xanthopoulou, I Antoniadis and S Triantari, 'Managing Public Sector in the Digital Reform Era: Organizational Factors and Their Impact on the Digital Transformation at the Greek Public Administration' in N Tsounis and A Vlachvei (eds), *Advances in Empirical Economic Research* (2023) 947, 962.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study research design, guided by the methodological framework proposed by Yin.[15] The case study approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex governance phenomena within their real-life context. It is particularly suitable for examining administrative accountability in digital government, where multiple institutional, legal, and technological factors interact. The research focuses on representative provincial administrative units in Vietnam, selected to capture diversity in digital government implementation and institutional capacity. The cases were chosen based on the level of e-government maturity, citizen engagement metrics, and availability of public administrative data, ensuring relevance and comparability.

2.2 Data Collection

Data were collected from multiple sources to ensure methodological triangulation and enhance the validity of findings. Primary data consisted of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including provincial government officials, policymakers, IT managers, and citizens who actively engage with digital public services. Interview questions were designed to capture perceptions of administrative accountability, transparency, procedural fairness, and responsiveness in the digital governance context. Secondary data included official government reports, policy documents, e-government service usage statistics, and existing literature on Vietnamese and EU governance frameworks.[16] Online public

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15 R K Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th edn, 2018) Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

16 CECODES, RTA and UNDP, '*2024 Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) Report*' (2025).<https://www.undp.org/vietnam/publications/2024-provincial-governance-and-public-administration-performance-index-papi-report> Accessed May 20, 2026.; European Union, *Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council* (2024).<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj> Accessed on May 20, 2026.; Prime Minister of Viet Nam. (2020), *supra* note 2.

service portals were also examined to evaluate accessibility, user-friendliness, and the presence of complaint or feedback mechanisms. The combination of qualitative interviews and documentary analysis provided a robust foundation for understanding institutional practices and citizen experiences.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data Analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, following the six-phase approach described by Braun and Clarke.[17] Initially, all interview transcripts and relevant documents were read multiple times to ensure familiarity with the content. Codes were then generated to identify recurring concepts related to transparency, procedural fairness, citizen engagement, and administrative accountability. These codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes, reflecting the structural, legal, and operational dimensions of digital governance. The themes were iteratively refined through constant comparison and cross-case analysis, ensuring that patterns were representative across the selected provinces. Thematic analysis enabled the identification of strengths and gaps in the application of EU principles of good administration within Vietnam's digital government framework.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Strengthening Administrative Accountability in Vietnam's E-Government and Digital Governance

Administrative accountability is a cornerstone of effective governance and a critical determinant of public trust in Vietnam's rapidly evolving digital administration. It encompasses the responsibility of public authorities to ensure that their decisions, actions, and service delivery comply with regulatory standards as well as with ethical norms and citizen expectations.[18] From a sustainable digital governance perspective,

[17] V Braun and V Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide* (2022) London: SAGE.

[18] U B U Roehl and M B Hansen, (2024), *supra* note 5.; A Sanchez-Graells, (2024), *supra* note 11.

administrative accountability is also essential for ensuring that digital transformation promotes transparency, inclusion, procedural fairness, and rights-based public service delivery. The Vietnamese state has established strategic frameworks through the National Digital Transformation Program and formal policies such as Decision No. 749/QĐ-TTg and Decision No. 942/QĐ-TTg,[19] aimed at modernizing public administration and integrating citizen-centered e-government services. Altogether, these policies articulate an ambitious agenda to enhance efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness. Nevertheless, the realization of administrative accountability in practice is uneven, with significant variation across provinces. Differences in institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, civil service expertise, and administrative culture lead to inconsistent operationalization of transparency, procedural fairness, and citizen responsiveness.[20] Consequently, an analytical approach is necessary to understand how these multiple dimensions interact to produce or constrain accountability within Vietnam's digital governance system.

Institutional design and capacity strongly influence the efficacy of accountability mechanisms. Provinces with advanced ICT infrastructure, integrated service portals, and automated workflows tend to achieve higher compliance with procedural standards.[21] The presence of real-time monitoring systems and structured feedback channels enhances administrative oversight, allowing authorities to track service delivery and respond proactively to inefficiencies. These capacities are considered as technical and organizational. Thus, effective interdepartmental coordination, clear reporting lines, and institutionalized standard operating procedures support the consistent application of accountability norms. Otherwise, provinces with limited technological capacity rely on partially digitized or manual processes, resulting in inefficiencies,

19 Prime Minister of Viet Nam. (2020), *supra* note 2.; Prime Minister of Viet Nam. (2020), *supra* note 3.

20 Institute for Vietnam Initiatives and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam, (2023), *supra* note 9.; CECODES, RTA and UNDP, (2025), *supra* note 16.

21 Institute for Vietnam Initiatives and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam, (2023), *supra* note 9.

inconsistent service quality, and increased potential for errors.[22] As a result, human resource factors, such as the availability of adequately trained personnel and the presence of ongoing professional development programs, are equally critical. Analytical evaluation suggests that digital systems alone cannot ensure accountability; they require capable human actors who can interpret data, enforce standards, and engage with citizens effectively.

Performance monitoring frameworks, including the Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI), provide quantitative indicators of service efficiency, transparency, and citizen satisfaction.[23] These metrics offer important insights into provincial variations in accountability. Nonetheless, their effectiveness depends on institutional capacity to analyze, interpret, and respond to performance data. Provinces that actively use PAPI findings to adjust workflows, identify gaps, and implement corrective actions demonstrate more consistent and meaningful accountability outcomes.[24] Conversely, provinces that collect performance data without corresponding analytical or operational action fail to leverage these tools to enhance governance quality. The interaction between institutional capacity and monitoring frameworks highlights that accountability is a structural and functional outcome, dependent on the coordinated implementation of multiple mechanisms.

Legal and regulatory frameworks play a decisive role in shaping administrative accountability. Vietnam has enacted laws to guarantee citizen rights concerning access to services, transparency, and complaint mechanisms.[25] Nevertheless, there is no overarching statutory instrument

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22 A Hamdy, A Diab and A M Eissa, 'Digital Transformation and the Quality of Accounting Information Systems in the Public Sector: Evidence From Developing Countries' (2025) (13) 1 *International Journal of Financial Studies* 30.

23 CECODES, RTA and UNDP, (2025), *supra* note 16.

24 J Hochstetter, F Vásquez, M Diéguez, A Bustamante and J Arango-López, 'Transparency and E-Government in Electronic Public Procurement as Sustainable Development' (2023) (15) 5 *Sustainability* 4672.

25 National Assembly of Viet Nam, *Law on Handling of Administrative Violations No 90/VBHN-VPQH*

that standardizes procedural fairness across all e-government platforms. This remains a central legal gap in Vietnam's current approach to sustainable digital governance. Legal ambiguities become especially problematic in contexts involving automated decision-making or algorithmic workflows, where inconsistencies may generate arbitrary outcomes, undermine procedural equity, and reduce public trust.[26] Comparative evidence from the European Union underscores the importance of codified principles of good administration that explicitly articulate citizen rights, define procedural obligations for authorities, and incorporate independent oversight mechanisms.[27] In Vietnam, administrative oversight is largely internal and relies on hierarchical discretion, which varies in rigor and application. Regulatory uncertainty, coupled with differences in institutional enforcement capacity, creates gaps in procedural fairness and challenges the consistent operationalization of accountability standards. The analysis suggests that strengthening legal frameworks to provide uniform, enforceable standards is essential for achieving effective administrative accountability in digital governance.

Citizen engagement is a measure and a determinant of accountability. In this respect, evidence indicates that transparent processes, timely service delivery, and accessible complaint and feedback channels significantly influence public perceptions of government integrity and trustworthiness.[28] For that reason, provinces that maintain user-friendly, interactive digital platforms report higher citizen satisfaction and stronger perceptions of procedural fairness.[29] In contrast, regions with poorly

(2025).<https://vanban.chinhphu.vn/?pageid=27160&docid=217377&classid=2629> Accessed May 20, 2026.

26 U B U Roehl and M B Hansen, (2024), *supra* note 5.; A Sanchez-Graells, (2024), *supra* note 11.

27 European Commission, (2024), *supra* note 7.; European Union, (2024) *Regulation (EU) 2024/1689, supra* note 16.

28 S Afiyah, (2024), *supra* note 12.; K Aldiabat, Y Harb and M Gharaibeh, (2025), *supra* note 6.; P H Diniz, L P Reis and H L Cardoso, (2025), *supra* note 12.

29 T D Nguyen and L H Luu, 'From E-Government to Digital Government: The Role of Quality Management Systems in Public Administrative Agencies – Evidence from Hanoi' (2025) (8) 5 *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Analysis* 2409, 2418.; J R Vasconcelos, C Dener, H Nii-Aponsah, C V Blanco, A J Immonen, P

designed or technically challenging portals experience lower trust levels and increased perceptions of administrative arbitrariness. These findings indicate that accountability cannot be fully assessed through institutional rules or technology alone.[30] Socio-technical factors, including digital literacy, interface usability, and accessibility, mediate the extent to which citizens can participate meaningfully in governance processes. Effective integration of citizen feedback into administrative workflows enhances the perception and reality of accountability, reinforcing the legitimacy of digital governance systems.

The operationalization of administrative accountability emerges from the complex interplay among institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and citizen engagement. Provinces that combine sophisticated ICT systems, well-trained personnel, and clearly articulated procedural guidelines tend to demonstrate higher adherence to accountability standards and more consistent service delivery.[31] Nevertheless, achieving uniformity across provinces remains challenging, particularly in contexts that require coordination among multiple agencies or involve automated decision-making without robust oversight. The European Union's codified principles of good administration provide a normative benchmark emphasizing transparency, impartiality, procedural fairness, and mechanisms for citizen redress.[32] Evidence from Vietnam suggests that aligning institutional support, regulatory clarity, technological readiness, and citizen-focused service design significantly enhances accountability and strengthens public trust. Where these dimensions converge, administrative procedures become

Nordlund, F Siregar and Y Song, *GovTech Maturity Index 2025: Tracking Public Sector Digital Transformation Worldwide* (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, nd).

30 H Gaffar, (2024), *supra* note 6.; M E Munajat and I Irawati, 'Digital Sociocracy: Navigating Governance Challenges in Southeast Asia' (2025) (9) 1 *Policy & Governance Review* 93.

31 T N D Nguyen, (2025), *supra* note 14.; U B U Roehl, 'Automated Decision-making and Good Administration: Views From Inside the Government Machinery' (2023) (40) 4 *Government Information Quarterly* 101864.

32 European Commission, (2024), *supra* note 7.; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *The Principles of Public Administration* (2023) Paris: OECD Publishing.

more transparent, predictable, and equitable, resulting in improved performance and positive citizen perceptions.

Sustaining effective accountability in Vietnam's digital government requires continuous evaluation and adaptive governance mechanisms. Rapid technological advancement, increasing reliance on artificial intelligence, and evolving citizen expectations necessitate dynamic approaches to compliance with legal, ethical, and procedural standards.[33] Effective accountability depends on the integration of clear legal frameworks, strengthened institutional capacity, ongoing professional development for civil servants, and the design of citizen-centered digital platforms. The interaction of these dimensions shapes the consistency, fairness, and responsiveness of administrative actions. Accountability in Vietnam's digital government is, therefore, not static; it is a dynamic outcome produced through coordinated institutional, regulatory, technological, and socio-technical processes.[34] Long-term improvements require sustained reforms that integrate these factors to foster a transparent, responsive, and citizen-centered public administration capable of supporting sustainable digital governance.

3.2 Enhancing Citizen Participation and Public Trust in Digital Government Services

Citizen participation is a fundamental pillar of administrative accountability and a central determinant of the effectiveness and legitimacy of digital governance systems. It encompasses the active engagement of citizens in monitoring service delivery, providing feedback, and influencing policy decisions, ensuring that government actions align with public expectations.[35] In the context of sustainable digital governance, participation is not merely a procedural formality; it is a mechanism through which citizens help ensure that digital public services remain

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33 H Gaffar, (2024), *supra* note 6.; H B Dang, T T Q Pham, V P Nguyen and V H Nguyen, 'Regulatory Impact of a Governmental Approach for Artificial Intelligence Technology Implementation in Vietnam' (2024) (8) 11 *Journal of Infrastructure Policy and Development* 6631.

34 T T M Nguyen, (2025), *supra* note 4.; T T H Pham, E Thalassinos and H Le, (2022), *supra* note 8.

35 P N Trung, (2024), *supra* note 13.; S Afiyah, (2024), *supra* note 12.

transparent, inclusive, responsive, and accountable. A digital government system can contribute to sustainable development only when citizens are able to access services equitably, understand administrative procedures, communicate concerns, and influence improvements in public administration. In Vietnam, digital government initiatives increasingly aim to facilitate participation through online portals, mobile applications, e-feedback mechanisms, and structured complaint systems.[36] The operational effectiveness of these platforms is not solely measured by the number of users but by the extent to which citizen input meaningfully informs administrative decisions, influences service improvement, and contributes to institutional learning. Empirical studies indicate that citizens are more likely to engage with digital governance platforms when they perceive that their contributions have tangible impacts on policy and administrative outcomes.[37] Consequently, citizen participation should be conceptualized as a dynamic mechanism that reflects and reinforces institutional accountability and procedural fairness. This reveals an important practical gap in Vietnam's digital governance system: technological availability does not automatically produce meaningful participation unless platforms are designed around citizens' actual needs and capacities.

The design and usability of digital platforms are critical determinants of citizen engagement and perceived trust in government services. Provinces that supply user-friendly, accessible, and interactive interfaces consistently report higher levels of participation and satisfaction.[38] Real-time updates on service requests, stepwise guidance for application procedures, and integrated feedback mechanisms enhance transparency and empower citizens to monitor and evaluate administrative processes. By contrast, provinces with limited functionalities, poorly designed

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36 T D Nguyen and L H Luu, (2025) *supra* note 29.; J R Vasconcelos, C Dener, H Nii-Aponsah, C V Blanco, A J Immonen, P Nordlund, F Siregar and Y Song, (nd), *supra* note 29.

37 K Aldiabat, Y Harb and M Gharaibeh, (2025), *supra* note 6.; P H Diniz, L P Reis and H L Cardoso, (2025), *supra* note 12.

38 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), (2023), *supra* note 32.; Institute for Vietnam Initiatives and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam, (2023), *supra* note 9.

portals, or complex navigation exhibit lower participation levels and weaker perceptions of procedural fairness.[39] Socio-technical factors, including digital literacy, access to devices, and reliable internet connectivity, influence engagement significantly. Citizens in under-resourced regions may face barriers to effective participation, thereby limiting oversight and reducing the perceived legitimacy of administrative decisions. Analytical evaluation suggests that technological capacity must be complemented by targeted educational initiatives, inclusive platform design, and proactive citizen outreach to ensure equitable participation across diverse socio-economic groups.[40]

Citizen trust operates as a prerequisite for and a result of effective participation. Trust emerges when administrative processes are transparent, consistent, and responsive, and when citizens perceive that digital services respect legal and ethical norms.[41] Provinces with well-developed, interactive digital platforms report higher levels of citizen satisfaction, stronger perceptions of procedural fairness, and increased confidence in administrative institutions.[42] Contrariwise, regions with underdeveloped platforms, opaque processes, or delayed responses demonstrate lower trust and heightened perceptions of arbitrariness. Trust is closely linked to the quality of user experience, responsiveness to feedback, and the consistency of administrative outcomes. These findings indicate that participation alone cannot sustain accountability without the simultaneous cultivation of public confidence in governance institutions. Trust functions as a reinforcing mechanism, motivating citizens to engage

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39 O R Lobonț, C Criste, C Bovary, A D Moț and S Vătavu, 'Goals and Pathways of Public Governance Contribution to Achieve Progress in the Quality of Life' (2024) (16) 17 *Sustainability* 7860.; E Martynova, 'Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law: A Commentary' in L Belli and W B Gaspar (eds), *Council of Europe Treaty Series* - No 225 (1st edn, 2026) 81, 89.

40 S Afiyah, (2024), *supra* note 12.; T P T Hoang and M Bakucz, 'Good Governance and Tourism Development in Vietnam: Looking Back at the Past Three Decades (1990–2023)' (2024) (11) 1 *Cogent Business & Management* 2407048.

41 M E Munajat and I Irawati, (2025), *supra* note 30.; A Sanchez-Graells, (2024), *supra* note 11.

42 T D Nguyen and L H Luu, (2025) *supra* note 29.; J R Vasconcelos, C Dener, H Nii-Aponsah, C V Blanco, A J Immonen, P Nordlund, F Siregar and Y Song, (nd), *supra* note 29.

actively, monitor service quality, and comply with administrative requirements. Legal and institutional frameworks are, in essence, critical in shaping participation and trust. Vietnamese law guarantees certain citizen rights related to transparency, access to services, and complaint mechanisms.[43] However, formalized procedures to ensure consistent engagement and oversight across digital platforms remain incomplete. Comparative analysis with EU governance frameworks highlights the importance of codified citizen rights, structured feedback processes, and independent monitoring to reinforce participation and accountability.[44] In Vietnam, oversight mechanisms are largely internal and rely on discretionary hierarchies that vary in enforcement rigor, producing disparities in responsiveness and effectiveness. These regulatory and institutional gaps undermine public trust and limit the capacity of participatory mechanisms to enhance governance outcomes.

The relationship between participation and administrative performance is mutually reinforcing. Active citizen engagement enables feedback that identifies inefficiencies, highlights service gaps, and informs procedural improvements, thereby improving responsiveness and reducing administrative errors.[45] Provinces with higher participation levels demonstrate measurable improvements in processing times, service accuracy, and overall citizen satisfaction. Quite differently, provinces with low engagement levels tend to exhibit lower transparency, inconsistent procedures, and reduced trust.[46] Analytical interpretation suggests that participation functions not merely as an evaluative metric but as a mechanism that strengthens governance quality through iterative feedback loops. When feedback is systematically analyzed and integrated into institutional reform, public agencies can improve processing times, service accuracy, responsiveness, and overall citizen satisfaction. However, when

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43 The National Assembly of Viet Nam. No. 90/VBHN-VPQH. (2025), *supra* note 25.; The National Assembly of Viet Nam. *Law No. 91/2025/QH15*. (2025), *supra* note 9.

44 European Commission, (2024), *supra* note 7.; European Union, (2024) *Regulation (EU) 2024/1689, supra* note 16.

45 A Aarab, A El Marzouki, O Boubker and B El Moutaqi, 'Integrating AI in Public Governance: A Systematic Review' (2025) (5) 4 *Digital* 59.; K Aldiabat, Y Harb and M Gharaibeh, (2025), *supra* note 6.; P H Diniz, L P Reis and H L Cardoso, (2025), *supra* note 12.

46 T P T Hoang and M Bakucz, (2024), *supra* note 40.

feedback is ignored or handled inconsistently, citizen participation may decline and public trust may weaken.

Institutional capacity mediates the effectiveness of citizen participation and trust. Provinces with well-trained staff, clear procedural guidelines, and coordinated interdepartmental processes are better able to translate citizen input into meaningful administrative improvements.[47] Continuous professional development ensures that civil servants can interpret feedback, manage digital systems effectively, and respond to citizen concerns promptly. In provinces lacking such capacity, citizen engagement is often underutilized, and feedback may remain unaddressed, weakening accountability and eroding trust. This demonstrates that technological systems alone are insufficient to sustain engagement; they must be embedded within capable institutional frameworks that can respond to and act upon citizen input. Thus, technological infrastructure supports effective participation and trust by providing transparency, accessibility, and procedural consistency. Platforms equipped with automated service tracking, structured feedback channels, and real-time reporting capabilities enhance citizens' ability to monitor administrative processes.[48] Such infrastructure enables administrators to evaluate service delivery, detect bottlenecks, and implement process improvements. The equitable distribution of technological resources is essential to prevent participation gaps between urban and rural regions. Provinces that address digital inequities through inclusive infrastructure and capacity-building initiatives promote broader engagement and more consistent citizen trust, ensuring that digital governance achieves equitable accountability outcomes.

Socio-technical factors significantly influence the quality of citizen engagement and trust. Digital literacy, usability of interfaces, accessibility, and the clarity of procedural information determine whether citizens can engage meaningfully with digital governance platforms.[49] Populations

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47 T T M Nguyen, (2025), *supra* note 4.; U B U Roehl, (2023), *supra* note 31.; P Xanthopoulou, I Antoniadis and S Triantari, (2023), *supra* note 14.

48 T D Nguyen and L H Luu, (2025) *supra* note 29.; Institute for Vietnam Initiatives and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam, (2023), *supra* note 9.

49 S Afiyah, (2024), *supra* note 12.; T P T Hoang and M Bakucz, (2024), *supra* note 40.

with lower digital literacy or restricted access may be unable to participate effectively, which reduces oversight and limits the accountability benefits of citizen engagement. Administrative strategies that integrate educational programs, inclusive design, and support mechanisms can bridge these gaps, enabling all citizens to contribute effectively to governance oversight and reinforcing the legitimacy of administrative processes. As such, the interplay among institutional, legal, technological, and socio-technical dimensions determines the sustainability of citizen participation and trust.[50] Provinces that effectively integrate professional personnel, accessible and usable platforms, clear procedural guidelines, legal clarity, and proactive outreach achieve the highest levels of participation and confidence. Ongoing monitoring, structured feedback, and dynamic adaptation to technological innovations ensure that engagement remains effective over time.[51] Provinces failing to coordinate these factors experience weaker engagement, lower trust, and diminished governance legitimacy, highlighting the importance of multi-dimensional strategies to institutionalize participation and sustain public confidence.

Citizen participation and trust function as interdependent mechanisms that are essential for ensuring the legitimacy and effectiveness of digital governance in Vietnam. Participation enhances procedural oversight, fosters administrative responsiveness, and generates continuous feedback that informs the refinement and improvement of service delivery.[52] Trust, in turn, motivates citizens to engage proactively with digital platforms, monitor administrative actions, and comply with established procedures, creating a reciprocal relationship that reinforces governance quality. This reciprocal relationship is essential for sustainable digital governance because it connects technological modernization with institutional legitimacy and citizen-centered public administration. Sustaining these improvements requires the coordinated integration of multiple dimensions, including institutional capacity, clearly defined legal and

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50 N Novianto, 'Systematic Literature Review: Models of Digital Transformation in the Public Sector' (2023) (7) 2 *Policy & Governance Review* 170.

51 A Aarab, A El Marzouki, O Boubker and B El Moutaqi, (2025), *supra* note 45.; H B Dang, T T Q Pham, V P Nguyen and V H Nguyen, (2024), *supra* note 33.

52 A Hamdy, A Diab and A M Eissa, (2025), *supra* note 22.; M E Munajat and I Irawati, (2025), *supra* note 30.

regulatory frameworks, robust technological infrastructure, and inclusive socio-technical design that accommodates diverse citizen needs. In its essence, provinces that successfully align these components demonstrate higher levels of engagement, stronger public confidence, and more accountable governance practices.[53] Analytical evaluation indicates that citizen participation and trust should not be understood solely as outcomes of effective administration but as dynamic, reinforcing processes that actively shape institutional performance and service quality. The sustained development of these mechanisms strengthens procedural legitimacy and operational effectiveness, ensuring that digital governance is transparent, responsive, and equitable. This is why the capacity of Vietnam's digital government to deliver consistent, high-quality services depends on maintaining a balanced and integrated approach, where institutional structures, technological systems, and citizen-centered practices function collectively to support accountability and public trust at all levels of administration.

3.3 Analyzing Legal Frameworks and Institutional Constraints in Digital Governance

Legal and institutional constraints constitute a critical dimension shaping the performance, legitimacy, and public perception of Vietnam's digital governance. These constraints influence the ability of administrative agencies to implement policies consistently, adhere to procedural standards, and respond to citizen expectations. From a sustainable digital governance perspective, they also determine whether digital transformation can promote transparency, inclusion, accountability, legal certainty, and rights protection. The clarity, coherence, and enforceability of legal frameworks directly determine the accountability mechanisms available to administrators and the extent to which citizens can monitor government activities.[54] Although Vietnam has enacted legislation aimed at enhancing transparency, regulating public service delivery, and establishing digital governance standards, the practical application and

[53] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), (2023), *supra* note 32.; European Commission, (n.d.) *supra* note 7.

[54] T T H Pham, E Thalassinos and H Le, (2022), *supra* note 8.

enforcement of these laws differ substantially across provinces.[55] Variability in enforcement produces gaps between the formal stipulations of law and the lived realities of administrative processes, resulting in uneven governance outcomes.[56] Understanding the operational impact of these constraints requires an analytical focus on the interrelation between legal frameworks, institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, and socio-technical factors.

The national legal framework provides foundational guidance for administrative processes. Key legislative instruments, including the Personal Data Protection Act,[57] the Law on Handling Administrative Violations,[58] and directives under the National Digital Transformation Program,[59] establish principles governing citizen rights, administrative obligations, and procedural norms. Although these laws codify broad governance principles, they often lack detailed operational guidelines, leaving considerable discretion to local administrators. This reveals a legal gap in the current framework: Vietnam has not yet developed a unified legal principle or statutory framework for sustainable digital governance that integrates efficiency with procedural fairness, inclusion, accountability, and effective remedies. This discretion contributes to variations in enforcement, inconsistencies in service quality, and disparities in the application of accountability standards across provinces. Analytical evaluation reveals that legal provisions alone are insufficient to ensure accountability; their effectiveness depends on the ability of institutions to interpret, implement, and monitor compliance. Institutional constraints further complicate governance outcomes. Provinces vary widely in technological infrastructure, human resource capacity, organizational

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55 The National Assembly of Viet Nam. *No. 90/VBHN-VPQH*. (2025), *supra* note 25.; The National Assembly of Viet Nam. *Law No. 91/2025/QH15*. (2025), *supra* note 9.; Prime Minister of Viet Nam. (2020), *supra* note 3.

56 T D Nguyen and L H Luu, (2025) *supra* note 29.; U B U Roehl, (2023), *supra* note 31.

57 The National Assembly of Viet Nam. *Law No. 91/2025/QH15*. (2025), *supra* note 9.

58 The National Assembly of Viet Nam. *No. 90/VBHN-VPQH*. (2025), *supra* note 25.

59 Prime Minister of Viet Nam. (2020), *supra* note 2.; Prime Minister of Viet Nam. (2020), *supra* note 3.; The National Assembly of Viet Nam. *No. 90/VBHN-VPQH*. (2025), *supra* note 25.

culture, and administrative expertise.[60] Provinces with advanced ICT systems, integrated service portals, and trained personnel tend to implement laws and policies more effectively, ensuring higher levels of procedural compliance, transparency, and responsiveness.[61] In contrast, provinces with fragmented structures, limited resources, or insufficiently trained staff struggle to operationalize laws consistently, leading to inefficiencies, service delays, and diminished citizen trust. Administrative hierarchies and local cultures influence how national directives are interpreted and applied, creating variability in oversight rigor and enforcement. Analytical evaluation indicates that strong institutional capacity is critical for converting formal legal rights into tangible governance outcomes.

A major challenge arises from the lack of comprehensive regulation for emerging technologies in administrative processes. Vietnam's legal framework does not yet provide clear standards for automated decision-making, algorithmic governance, or artificial intelligence in public administration.[62] This absence of codified standards creates uncertainty regarding accountability, ethical compliance, and procedural fairness. Without explicit regulations, discretionary interpretation by local authorities may result in inconsistent outcomes, bias, or errors, particularly when algorithms are employed in service allocation, eligibility assessment, or decision validation. Citizens may also lack clear rights to receive explanations, request human review, correct inaccurate data, or challenge automated administrative outcomes. Comparative analysis of EU governance models, such as the EU AI Act[63] and codified principles of good administration, demonstrates the benefits of explicit obligations, independent oversight, and mechanisms for citizen redress.[64] These examples provide a benchmark for Vietnam, suggesting that codified

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60 Institute for Vietnam Initiatives and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam, (2023), *supra* note 9.

61 T T M Nguyen, (2025), *supra* note 4.; J R Vasconcelos, C Dener, H Nii-Aponsah, C V Blanco, A J Immonen, P Nordlund, F Siregar and Y Song, (nd), *supra* note 29.

62 A Aarab, A El Marzouki, O Boubker and B El Moutaqi, (2025), *supra* note 45.; H B Dang, T T Q Pham, V P Nguyen and V H Nguyen, (2024), *supra* note 33.

63 European Union, *The EU AI Act. Document 32024R1689*. 2024.

64 European Commission, (2024), *supra* note 7.; European Commission, (n.d.) *supra* note 7.

standards for emerging technologies could enhance consistency, fairness, and trust in digital governance. Resource limitations represent another critical institutional constraint. Many provinces face shortages in ICT infrastructure, financial resources, and qualified personnel necessary to implement digital governance initiatives fully.[65] Insufficient resources impede the enforcement of legal standards, the development and maintenance of digital platforms, and the monitoring of administrative processes. Provinces with constrained resources often experience service delays, reduced oversight, and weaker compliance with accountability standards. These resource gaps may also widen inequalities between urban and rural localities, thereby limiting the inclusive character of sustainable digital governance. The analytical implication is that institutional capacity is inseparable from resource allocation; effective governance depends on adequate investment in human, technological, and organizational resources.

Inter-agency coordination influences the impact of legal and institutional constraints. Effective digital governance requires collaboration across departments and administrative levels to ensure coherent service delivery.[66] In practice, unclear roles, overlapping responsibilities, and weak communication channels produce inefficiencies, duplicated efforts, and inconsistent interpretations of laws. Fragmented databases and limited interoperability among administrative systems further weaken citizen-centered service delivery. Provinces that establish clear inter-agency protocols demonstrate stronger compliance with legal standards and more consistent accountability, whereas those without structured coordination encounter fragmented processes, delayed services, and diminished public trust.[67] Analytical evaluation indicates that improving inter-agency collaboration is essential to transforming formal legal frameworks into effective administrative practices. Citizen engagement is closely linked to legal and institutional constraints. When laws are clear, institutional capacities are strong, and inter-agency

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65 Institute for Vietnam Initiatives and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam, (2023), *supra* note 9.

66 U B U Roehl, (2023), *supra* note 31.; P Xanthopoulou, I Antoniadis and S Triantari, (2023), *supra* note 14.

67 N Novianto, (2023), *supra* note 50.

coordination is effective, citizens are more likely to participate meaningfully in digital governance and perceive administrative actions as legitimate.[68] On the other hand, ambiguity in law, weaknesses in institutions, and fragmented enforcement reduce public confidence and limit the effectiveness of participatory mechanisms. Provinces that harmonize legal clarity, institutional capacity, and technological readiness report higher citizen engagement, stronger procedural compliance, and more trustworthy service delivery.[69] Analytical discussion suggests that citizen engagement functions as an outcome and a reinforcing mechanism for institutional accountability.

Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are critical for mitigating legal and institutional constraints. Performance monitoring frameworks, such as the PAPI, provide measures of service efficiency, transparency, and citizen satisfaction.[70] However, the effectiveness of these tools depends on institutional capacity to interpret performance data and implement corrective measures. Provinces that integrate performance monitoring with operational protocols, inter-agency coordination, and resource allocation demonstrate higher compliance and accountability.[71] Inversely, provinces that rely solely on monitoring metrics without institutional capacity for interpretation achieve limited improvements, highlighting the interplay between institutional structures and the operationalization of accountability. Besides, emerging technologies introduce additional legal and institutional challenges. The absence of clear standards for algorithmic decision-making, data privacy, and ethical oversight generates risks of bias, inconsistency, and errors.[72] EU governance frameworks illustrate the benefits of codified obligations, independent oversight, and redress mechanisms for citizens.[73] Vietnam has yet to fully incorporate such mechanisms, limiting its ability to implement advanced digital governance

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68 B C Nguyen and N N Thanh, (2022), *supra* note 8.; T T H Pham, E Thalassinos and H Le, (2022), *supra* note 8.

69 J Hochstetter, F Vásquez, M Diéguez, A Bustamante and J Arango-López, (2023), *supra* note 24.

70 CECODES, RTA and UNDP, (2025), *supra* note 16.

71 European Commission, (n.d.) *supra* note 7.

72 A Aarab, A El Marzouki, O Boubker and B El Moutaqi, (2025), *supra* note 45.; H B Dang, T T Q Pham, V P Nguyen and V H Nguyen, (2024), *supra* note 33.

73 European Union, (2024) *Regulation (EU) 2024/1689, supra* note 16.

consistently and equitably. Analytical assessment indicates that legal clarity, institutional capacity, and technological regulation must advance together to mitigate these risks. A further gap concerns the constitutional and rights-based foundation of digital governance. While broad constitutional principles recognize citizen rights, state responsibility, and public participation, these principles have not yet been fully translated into specific procedural rights for citizens using digital public services. Sustainable digital governance requires citizens to be treated not merely as users of online platforms, but as rights-holders entitled to transparency, accessibility, data protection, participation, and effective redress.

The cumulative effect of legal ambiguities, institutional heterogeneity, resource limitations, and coordination gaps underscores the complexity of achieving consistent and accountable digital governance in Vietnam.[74] Provinces that align clear legal frameworks with robust institutional procedures, sufficient resources, effective coordination, and citizen-centered digital design achieve higher transparency, procedural fairness, and public trust. Sustained reforms addressing these dimensions are necessary to strengthen the legitimacy, responsiveness, and effectiveness of Vietnam's digital government.[75] Analytical evaluation demonstrates that legal and institutional constraints are not merely structural barriers but dynamic factors that interact with technological and citizen-centered dimensions to shape governance outcomes.[76] Additionally, dynamic adaptation is essential to address the evolving challenges posed by technological advancement, administrative complexity, and changing citizen expectations. This is because effective governance requires continuous updates to legal frameworks, capacity-building initiatives, technological infrastructure, and participatory mechanisms. As a consequence, provinces that successfully integrate these dimensions demonstrate improved compliance, enhanced procedural fairness, and stronger citizen trust, whereas failure to coordinate these factors

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74 T K T Pham, (2023), *supra* note 4.

75 T T M Nguyen, (2025), *supra* note 4.

76 A Androniceanu and I Georgescu, 'Public Administration Digitalization and Government Effectiveness in EU Countries' (2023) (21) 1 *Central European Public Administration Review* 7, 30.

exacerbates disparities, reduces transparency, and undermines legitimacy.[77] Sustained improvements in accountability depend on a comprehensive approach that integrates legal clarity, institutional capacity, technological readiness, and socio-technical inclusivity, rights-based safeguards, independent oversight, and effective remedies.

3.4 Integrating EU Governance Principles into Vietnam's Digital Administration

The integration of EU principles of good administration into Vietnam's digital governance framework presents significant opportunity and a complex challenge. EU principles – including transparency, impartiality, legal certainty, procedural fairness, and the right to redress – serve as normative benchmarks for accountable and effective governance.[78] These principles emphasize the need for consistent application of legal and ethical norms that safeguard citizens' rights during promoting equitable, responsive, and transparent public services. Vietnam's digital government initiatives, while extensive, face variability in institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, regulatory clarity, and socio-technical engagement.[79] Understanding how EU principles can be operationalized in this context requires detailed analytical evaluation of these interacting factors and their influence on accountability, citizen trust, procedural legitimacy, and sustainable digital governance.

Transparency constitutes a foundational EU principle that is critical to operationalizing accountability in digital governance. Transparency requires that administrative procedures, decision-making criteria, and service outcomes are publicly accessible, understandable, and communicated in a timely manner.[80] In the Vietnamese context, operationalizing transparency entails digital documentation of service

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77 M Lips, 'Digital Transformation in the Public Sector' in *Edward Elgar Publishing eBooks* (2024) 13, 30.

78 European Union, (2024) *Regulation (EU) 2024/1689, supra* note 16.; European Commission, (2024), *supra* note 7.

79 Institute for Vietnam Initiatives and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam, (2023), *supra* note 9.; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), (2023), *supra* note 32.

80 European Commission, (n.d.) *supra* note 7.; U B U Roehl, (2023), *supra* note 31.

processes, systematic publication of procedural guidelines, and the deployment of online dashboards that allow citizens to track the status of their requests in real time. Analytical assessment indicates that transparency is effective only when supported by institutional capacity to verify, enforce, and communicate procedural standards consistently.[81] Provinces that invest in technological infrastructure, standard operating procedures, and staff training are more capable of delivering transparent services. Whereas provinces with limited resources, fragmented digital platforms, or insufficient personnel often demonstrate uneven transparency, which undermines public trust and citizen engagement. Furthermore, transparency interacts with citizen participation, as accessible information enables meaningful oversight, promotes accountability, and strengthens the feedback loop between the public and administrative institutions. In this sense, transparency is also an essential element of sustainable digital governance because it enables citizens to monitor public administration and helps prevent exclusion, arbitrariness, and administrative abuse.

Impartiality complements transparency by ensuring that administrative decisions are applied fairly, consistently, and in accordance with established legal and procedural norms.[82] Digital platforms can operationalize impartiality through standardized eligibility criteria, automated workflows, and comprehensive audit trails. Analytical evaluation reveals that impartiality strengthens procedural fairness, mitigates discretionary bias, and fosters citizen trust. Effective implementation depends on robust institutional mechanisms capable of detecting and correcting deviations from standardized procedures.[83] Remarkably, provinces that consistently implement impartial decision-making processes demonstrate greater public confidence, whereas inconsistent application of administrative rules fosters perceptions of arbitrariness, favoritism, and inequity. Impartiality is especially crucial in contexts where algorithmic or automated decision-making systems are deployed, as errors or bias in these systems can have systemic effects on

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81 A Hamdy, A Diab and A M Eissa, (2025), *supra* note 22.

82 European Commission, (2024), *supra* note 7.; European Commission, (n.d.) *supra* note 7.

83 P Xanthopoulou, I Antoniadis and S Triantari, (2023), *supra* note 14.

service delivery and citizen perceptions. For Vietnam, this requires stronger safeguards to ensure that digital systems do not reproduce inequality or discretionary bias under the appearance of technological neutrality.

Legal certainty is another central EU principle, emphasizing the predictability, clarity, and enforceability of administrative procedures.[84] Codified rules enable citizens to understand their rights and obligations and provide administrators with a consistent framework for decision-making. In Vietnam, legal certainty can be promoted by articulating detailed operational standards for digital services, defining procedures for automated decision-making systems, and ensuring accessible communication of citizens' rights through digital platforms.[85] Analytical evaluation indicates that legal certainty is closely intertwined with institutional capacity and technological infrastructure. Clear regulations alone are insufficient; their effectiveness depends on consistent enforcement, training for civil servants, and mechanisms for monitoring compliance. Provinces that maintain coherent legal frameworks combined with institutional capacity demonstrate higher levels of compliance and stronger citizen trust, whereas regions with ambiguous rules experience procedural inconsistency, lower accountability, and reduced public confidence. Strengthening legal certainty is therefore necessary for building a sustainable digital governance framework in which citizens can predict administrative outcomes and effectively claim their rights.

The right to redress reinforces transparency, impartiality, and legal certainty by providing citizens with mechanisms to contest administrative decisions and seek remedies when processes fail.[86] In Vietnam, operationalizing redress involves implementing online complaint systems, tracking grievances systematically, and establishing independent review mechanisms to resolve disputes impartially. Analytical assessment indicates that effective redress mechanisms function as citizen empowerment tools and as feedback channels that inform administrative

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84 European Commission, (2024), *supra* note 7.; CECODES, RTA and UNDP, (2025), *supra* note 16.

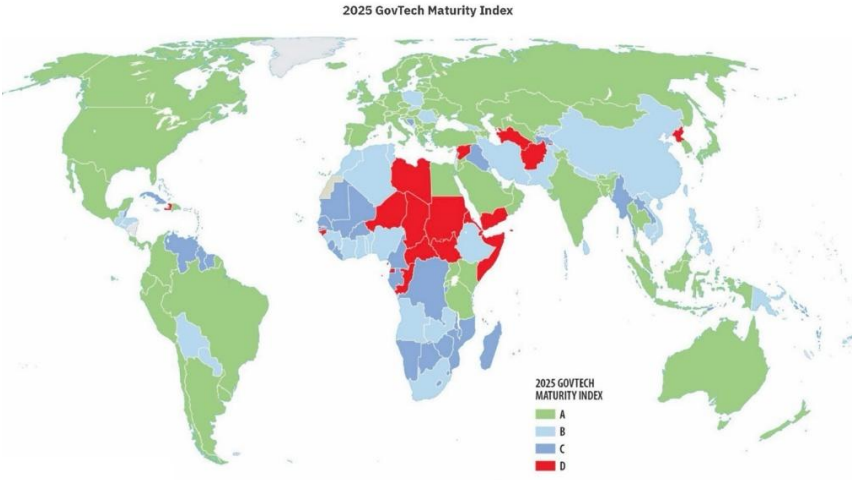
85 T K T Pham, (2023), *supra* note 4.; P N Trung, (2024), *supra* note 13.

86 European Union, (2024) *Regulation (EU) 2024/1689, supra* note 16.

learning and process improvement. Provinces that integrate redress mechanisms into their digital governance frameworks achieve higher procedural compliance, improved service quality, and enhanced trust.[87] Conversely, limited or inaccessible redress procedures reduce citizen confidence, weaken accountability, and diminish the perceived legitimacy of administrative systems. Moreover, institutional capacity is a key determinant of the successful integration of EU principles. EU frameworks emphasize professionalized public administration, continuous personnel training, and robust management systems.[88] Analytical evaluation indicates that provinces with greater institutional capacity – defined by trained personnel, interdepartmental coordination, and systematic monitoring – are better able to implement transparency, impartiality, legal certainty, and redress mechanisms effectively. Meanwhile, provinces with limited institutional capacity struggle to operationalize these principles consistently, resulting in uneven service delivery, lower procedural compliance, and diminished public trust. So, institutional strengthening, including professional development programs, standardized procedures, and capacity-building initiatives, is therefore essential for translating EU principles into operational outcomes. Without such capacity, the incorporation of EU principles may remain formal rather than practical, limiting their contribution to sustainable administrative reform.

87 A Hamdy, A Diab and A M Eissa, (2025), *supra* note 22.
88 E Martynova, (2026), *supra* note 39.; A Sanchez-Graells, (2024), *supra* note 11.

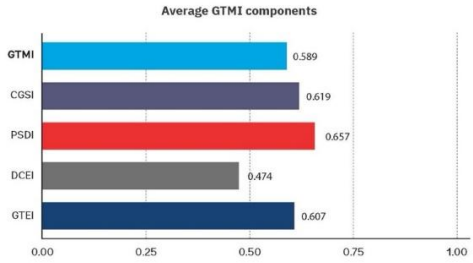
Figure 1. *State of GovTech Around the World, by GTMI Groups, 2025 (Source: World Bank, 2025)*



GTMI	# of Economies	
A	80	41%
B	42	21%
C	47	24%
D	28	14%
	197	

A Extensive GovTech Maturity
B Significant GovTech Maturity
C Medium GovTech Maturity
D Low GovTech Maturity

Source: World Bank data (197 economies).



Technological infrastructure plays a pivotal role in operationalizing EU principles within digital governance. Reliable ICT systems, secure data management platforms, integrated service portals, and resilient networks facilitate the consistent application of transparency, impartiality, and

accountability standards.[89] Analytical evaluation reveals that dashboards, automated eligibility verification, and blockchain-enabled audit trails enable real-time monitoring and reinforce procedural fairness. Technological infrastructure supports equitable access to digital services across diverse socio-economic and geographic populations. Provinces that invest in scalable, secure, and user-friendly platforms demonstrate greater adherence to EU principles, though regions with fragmented or underdeveloped systems experience inconsistent procedural compliance, reduced transparency, and diminished trust.[90] Figure 1 illustrates the global distribution of GovTech maturity across 197 economies in 2025, highlighting variations in digital governance capacity and providing context for Vietnam's relative position within international benchmarks. The figure reveals that even though many developed countries exhibit high levels of GovTech maturity, significant disparities persist among transitional economies, particularly in regions with limited institutional capacity and technological infrastructure. Vietnam's positioning, as indicated in the figure, suggests moderate GovTech maturity, signaling both progress in e-government adoption and areas requiring targeted improvements in digital infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and citizen engagement mechanisms. This comparative perspective underscores the importance of integrating international best practices, including EU principles of transparency, impartiality, and legal certainty, to strengthen Vietnam's digital governance and align domestic standards with global benchmarks.

Citizen engagement is integral to reinforcing the application of EU principles. Participation allows citizens to monitor administrative processes, provide feedback, and validate the fairness of service delivery.[91] Analytical assessment shows that provinces with interactive digital platforms and structured feedback mechanisms demonstrate higher compliance, stronger procedural legitimacy, and greater public confidence.

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89 T N D Nguyen, (2025), *supra* note 14.; J R Vasconcelos, C Dener, H Nii-Aponsah, C V Blanco, A J Immonen, P Nordlund, F Siregar and Y Song, (nd), *supra* note 29.

90 J Hochstetter, F Vásquez, M Diéguez, A Bustamante and J Arango-López, (2023), *supra* note 24.; O R Lobonț, C Criste, C Bovary, A D Moț and S Vătavu, (2024), *supra* note 39.

91 B C Nguyen and N N Thanh, (2022), *supra* note 8.; P N Trung, (2024), *supra* note 13.

Engagement acts as a corrective mechanism, enabling administrators to identify inefficiencies, improve workflows, and institutionalize lessons learned. Yet, limited citizen engagement reduces the efficacy of transparency, redress, and impartiality measures, undermining the perceived legitimacy of digital governance systems. Inter-agency coordination ensures consistent application of EU principles across decentralized administrative structures. Analytical evaluation indicates that clear delineation of responsibilities, standardized operating procedures, and interoperable information systems are critical to achieving uniform compliance.[92] Provinces that implement coordinated administrative structures demonstrate higher service quality, equitable access, and greater citizen trust. In a different manner, fragmented coordination produces procedural inconsistencies, inefficiencies, and weakened accountability. Effective coordination is particularly important for automated and cross-departmental digital workflows, where errors or misalignment can cascade and impact service outcomes. This coordination gap must be addressed if EU principles are to support a coherent and sustainable digital governance model across Vietnam's provinces.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential for sustaining the operationalization of EU principles. Performance metrics, internal audits, and citizen feedback systems provide evidence for adherence to transparency, impartiality, legal certainty, and redress standards.[93] Analytical assessment shows that provinces integrating monitoring with institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, and citizen engagement achieve more reliable governance outcomes. Continuous evaluation allows early detection of deviations, informs corrective action, and supports organizational learning, enhancing compliance and reinforcing trust. In addition, the integration of EU principles is inherently dynamic, requiring ongoing adaptation to technological, institutional, and societal changes. Advances in artificial intelligence, the increasing complexity of digital services, and evolving citizen expectations necessitate continuous updates to legal frameworks, operational procedures, and platform

[92] European Commission, (2024), *supra* note 7.; European Commission, (n.d.) *supra* note 7.

[93] A Ferreira and C Santos, (2025), *supra* note 1.; U B U Roehl and M B Hansen, (2024), *supra* note 5.

functionalities.[94] Provinces that harmonize legal clarity, institutional capacity, technological readiness, and citizen engagement demonstrate higher compliance, stronger trust, and more effective service delivery. Analytical discussion highlights that EU principles should be applied iteratively, with continuous feedback informing platform design, institutional practices, and regulatory updates to sustain governance legitimacy.

Operationalizing EU principles in Vietnam provides broader insights into the transferability of international governance standards to transitional administrative contexts. Analytical evaluation indicates that provinces capable of integrating these principles demonstrate enhanced procedural fairness, equitable service delivery, and higher citizen trust, whereas provinces that fail to integrate these dimensions experience weaker compliance, lower engagement, and reduced legitimacy.[95] This analysis underscores that the adaptation of international norms requires not only institutional and technological adjustments but also cultural and socio-political alignment, ensuring that citizens recognize, accept, and engage with these governance standards. Thus, sustained integration of EU principles requires strategic alignment of legal frameworks, institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, and citizen engagement.[96] Provinces that coordinate these factors successfully provide a model for effective, accountable, and citizen-centered digital governance. Analytical discussion reveals that the interaction among these dimensions is critical; the absence or weakness of any component reduces overall effectiveness, while synergistic alignment enhances transparency, responsiveness, and legitimacy. Iterative evaluation, capacity-building programs, and technological adaptation are essential for maintaining these standards over time. Accordingly, the EU principle of good administration can assist Vietnam in moving from a primarily technology-centered approach to a sustainability-oriented model of digital governance

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94 A Aarab, A El Marzouki, O Boubker and B El Moutaqi, (2025), *supra* note 45.; A Ferreira and C Santos (2025), *supra* note 1.

95 O R Lobonț, C Criste, C Bovary, A D Moț and S Vătavu, (2024), *supra* note 39.; T T H Pham, E Thalassinos and H Le, (2022), *supra* note 8.

96 A Androniceanu and I Georgescu, (2023), *supra* note 76.; A P Manoharan, J Melitski and M Holzer, (2022), *supra* note 1.

grounded in transparency, fairness, participation, accountability, and effective remedies.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has investigated the potential for integrating EU principles of good administration into Vietnam's digital governance framework, highlighting opportunities to enhance transparency, accountability, and citizen trust. EU principles, encompassing transparency, impartiality, legal certainty, and the right to redress, offer a normative benchmark for administrative design and operational procedures. The analysis demonstrates that Vietnam's current digital governance system contains strengths and limitations in applying these principles, and that careful adaptation can significantly strengthen administrative performance and public confidence. By examining transparency mechanisms, impartial procedures, legal frameworks, and redress structures, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how EU standards can be operationalized in a Vietnamese context in terms of addressing local socio-technical and institutional realities. Likewise, transparency emerges as a critical component of this integration. Clear, accessible, and timely information regarding administrative procedures and service outcomes improves citizen understanding and facilitates oversight. Provinces that implement interactive digital platforms report higher citizen satisfaction, whereas regions with limited access or inconsistent information disclosure face challenges in maintaining public confidence. Mechanisms such as systematic publication of procedural guidelines, real-time tracking of citizen requests, and open-access performance reports increase visibility and create feedback loops that allow for identification and correction of administrative inefficiencies. Besides, impartiality and legal certainty reinforce transparency by ensuring consistency and predictability in administrative actions. Standardized procedures, algorithmic decision-making, and audit trails reduce bias, ensure fair treatment, and mitigate discretionary errors. Clear rules, codified operational standards, and transparent communication of citizens' rights enable individuals to anticipate administrative outcomes while guiding officials in applying procedures uniformly across decentralized governance structures. Provinces that implement these principles experience higher efficiency,

procedural consistency, and citizen satisfaction, reflecting the importance of integrating these norms into daily operations.

The right to redress complements these principles by providing formal avenues for citizens to challenge administrative decisions. Structured complaint systems, grievance tracking, and independent review bodies strengthen accountability and provide critical feedback for administrative improvement. Ensuring access to redress is particularly important in digital governance, where automated systems are increasingly used, as it safeguards fairness and reinforces procedural legitimacy. Notably, institutional capacity and technological infrastructure are essential for operationalizing EU principles effectively. Training programs, professionalization of administrative staff, and standardized operational procedures improve local authorities' ability to implement transparency, impartiality, legal certainty, and redress mechanisms. Secure, interoperable, and user-friendly digital platforms enable real-time monitoring, accurate recordkeeping, and equitable participation. Provinces that successfully integrate these dimensions demonstrate more consistent governance outcomes, higher efficiency, and greater public trust, whereas gaps in capacity or technology undermine procedural fairness and citizen confidence. Moreover, citizen participation is crucial for reinforcing governance principles. Interactive platforms, participatory monitoring, and real-time feedback channels allow citizens to evaluate service delivery, hold administrators accountable, and contribute to institutional learning. Active engagement strengthens procedural compliance, enhances service quality, and consolidates trust in digital governance systems. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms further sustain these outcomes by providing continuous oversight, identifying deviations, supporting corrective actions, and institutionalizing lessons learned. In general, the integration of EU principles into Vietnam's digital governance establishes a replicable model for transitional or emerging administrative systems. Coordinated reforms across legal, institutional, technological, and participatory dimensions are necessary to consolidate gains, mitigate implementation gaps, and foster resilience. These efforts demonstrate that normative governance benchmarks can be operationalized effectively to achieve accountable, efficient, and equitable

service delivery, reinforcing institutional legitimacy and public trust across diverse administrative contexts.