Digital Transformation of Public Sector Services

An Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform event

5 June 2024
Vilnius, Lithuania
https://www.interregeurope.eu/event/digital-transformation-public-sector

Summary: The thematic workshop, co-designed by Interreg Europe and the European Commission (DG DIGIT and JRC), and co-hosted by the Lithuanian Innovation Centre, focused on the digital transformation of public authorities. It featured distinguished speakers and interactive sessions, exploring interoperability, GovTech and other relevant topics. The event provided hands-on knowledge exchange, showcasing examples from Interreg Europe projects.

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1.Highlights

The workshop on digital transformation of public sector services, held in Vilnius on 5th June 2024, provided comprehensive insights into the advancements and challenges in leveraging technology to enhance public administration. The sessions emphasised the importance of data-driven services, interoperability, and GovTech innovations. Key themes included the adoption of AI (Artificial Intelligence) to improve policy and service delivery, the role of European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) in supporting digital transformation, and the significance of upskilling public sector employees to harness AI effectively.

Interoperability

- Interoperability emerged as a central theme, underscoring its critical role in the digital transformation of public sector services. The panel featuring **Alina Brenebel**, Programme Manager at DG DIGIT highlighted the need for seamless data exchange across borders to enhance the efficiency and accessibility of public services. The Interoperable Europe Act was a focal point, emphasising mandatory interoperability assessments and the development of reusable solutions. By promoting standardised digital frameworks, the Act aims to facilitate better collaboration between EU member states, ensuring that digital public services are user-centric and inclusive.

GovTech

- The GovTech session, led by **Marina Manzoni** from the Joint Research Centre, highlighted the transformative potential of technology in modernising public sector services. Key topics included the development of a unified GovTech market, fostering cross-border interoperability, and addressing the challenges of scalability and reusability of digital solutions, presenting lighthouse initiatives such as GovTech Connect. Her intervention emphasised the importance of public sector innovation, showcasing successful case studies where GovTech initiatives have led to more efficient and citizen-centric services. Additionally, the role of regulatory sandboxes and experimentation spaces was explored, providing a controlled environment for testing new technologies and policies.

Artificial Intelligence

- **Margaret Quinn**'s presentation on AI emphasised the pivotal role of AI in driving the digital transformation of public services. She introduced the ENAIBLER project, which aims to enable regional and local governments to lead AI-driven policies, thereby supporting the digital transformation of their territories. Key aspects of her presentation included the need to upskill public sector employees to effectively utilise AI and the importance of building capacity to implement AI ethically and transparently. Margaret also highlighted various AI use cases such as pothole identification, guides for the visually impaired, and chatbots for recycling, demonstrating the practical applications of AI in improving public service delivery.

MeetUp with innovative GovTech Start Ups and GovTech Lab Lithuania

- At the end of the workshop, participants met two innovative startups, based in Lithuania, Vilantis and NEUROtechnology, and attended a presentation by GovTechLab Lithuania. Vilantis specialises in developing custom software and AI solutions, helping businesses with digital transformation through IT consulting and cloud infrastructure maintenance. NEUROtechnology focuses on biometric and AI technologies, offering advanced solutions for facial and fingerprint recognition. **Kamila Gasinska** from GovTechLab Lithuania highlighted their role in fostering public sector innovation by developing and testing new GovTech solutions, through the GovTech Challenge Series, AI Sandbox, GovTech Academy, and various community-building activities, fostering collaboration between the public sector and tech innovators.

The event involved a diverse range of organisations, including the European Commission, the Joint Research Centre, start-ups, regional authorities, and national-level organisations... Notably, this was likely the first physical thematic workshop that saw **broad on-site representation from new partner states** such as Ukraine, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This marked a significant step in fostering broader collaboration.

2. Good practices and examples from projects

The following section highlights the good practices and other examples presented during the workshop, derived from the Interreg Europe projects. By sharing these proven methods and outstanding initiatives the workshop aimed to equip participants with practical tools and approaches.

Enhancing AI skills of public servants

ENAIBLER – AI Foundation Certificate for Public Servants

- The AI Foundation Certificate for Public Servants is a 12-week training program launched by Ireland's Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, aimed at equipping public sector employees with foundational AI knowledge. This initiative has successfully trained 61 civil and public servants, fostering innovation and ethical AI deployment in public services, such as managing healthcare waiting lists and enhancing medical training.

Digital apps to drive local development and enhance tourist experience

BEAI TTER

- **Silvana Perazzo**, from the City of Genoa, Italy, presented how through the interregional cooperation journey undertaken during the BETTER project, focusing on Service Design methodology, the City achieved policy improvement and developed a new citizen-oriented digital solution. The Play Phygital app in Genoa merges physical and digital experiences to promote local development. It features virtual tours, gamified challenges, and real-time information about local attractions and events, enhancing visitor engagement and supporting the city's digital transformation efforts.

Integrating Open Data in regional digital strategies

OD4GROWTH

- During the workshop, **Roberto Sandrini** from Veneto Region presented its integration of open data into their digital strategy, demonstrating both quantitative and qualitative impacts. Quantitatively, they established 234 Digital Facilitation Centers and trained 138,000 citizens, fostering widespread digital literacy. Qualitatively, they created Innovation Labs and Digital Gyms, serving as hubs for co-designing digital services and promoting data-driven social innovation. Practical examples include using open data for developing new public services, such as improving healthcare delivery and urban planning, enhancing both efficiency and transparency in public administration.

Leveraging EDIH for public services

BESTDIH

- In his presentation, **Álvaro Gil**, from Galicia Innovation Agency highlighted the role of EDIHs in enhancing public services. EDIHs act as one-stop shops, assisting public administrations in adopting digital innovations through services such as testing, investment support, skills training, and networking. Notable examples include HealthHub Finland, which focuses on digital solutions for health and wellbeing, and ER2Digit in Emilia-Romagna, supporting digital solutions for public services.

3. Next steps

Thematic recommendations for participants:

Based on the outcomes of the workshop, including the highlights from the two working groups, where participants were actively involved in brainstorming discussions, the following thematic recommendations were formulated. These recommendations aim to provide actionable insights for boosting the digital transformation of public services.

A) Digital skills for public administrations

- Focus on continuous training and capacity-building for public sector employees to effectively utilise digital tools. Several courses are already available on online platforms such as MOOC.
- Address resistance to change challenges among public servants, focusing on bridging the age gap.
- Communicate effectively on the advantage of AI for improving and accelerating working procedures.
- Conduct a self-assessment of IT literacy within your organisation to identify needs that can be addressed by external consultants or trainers.
- Facilitate data sharing between departments and with external partners to create more integrated and effective public services.
- To overcome budget constraints, seek out external funding sources and programs.
- Prioritise digital upskilling as a key component of your HR strategy.

B) Policy experimentation of digital solutions

- Encourage the adoption of interoperable digital solutions to ensure seamless data exchange and collaboration across different regions and sectors.
- Leverage the resources and expertise of European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) to drive digital transformation in public services.
- Make data publicly available (Open Data) and easily accessible to foster transparency, innovation, and citizen engagement, and tackle issues of trust linked to data sharing and cyber security.
- Initiate pilot projects to explore AI applications in various public service domains, such as healthcare, transportation, and urban planning.
- Collaborate with GovTech startups to co-develop advanced public service solutions and enhance public procurement processes
- The environment thematic (floods, climate mitigation, waste etc) represents an interesting area for developing cooperative and pilot projects with the use of digital tools

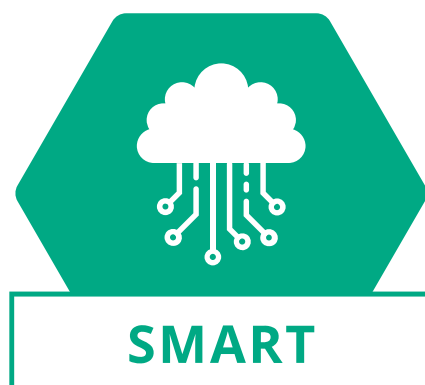**Stay tuned! Calendar of forthcoming Policy Learning Platform activities:**

- Thematic workshop: University-industry collaboration for stronger innovation ecosystems

- Policy briefs: Interregional Complementarities - regional innovation valleys

- Story: Service design/Design thinking for policy-making

Policy Learning Platform Policy briefs and articles:

- Digital transformation of public services
- Innovation procurement
- Open Data: spotlight on Veneto Region
- Satellite data for enhanced regional governance
- Embracing the future: the EU AI Act

- [Bridging rural communities through digitalisation](#)

Please visit the [conclusions page of the event](#) for photos, attendee lists, presentations, and more. Additionally, check out our brand-new Collection on [Digitalisation in the public sector](#).

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Vilnius, Lithuania – 5 June 2024

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Thematic workshop – Digital Transformation of the public sector services