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digital government

A thematic collection of innovative EU-funded research results

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Co-creating innovative public services for citizens and businesses



Research and Innovation

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Editorial

Co-creating innovative public services for citizens and businesses

Efficient and transparent public services have a direct impact on the quality of our lives. When used to their full potential, digital tools to support the modernisation of public administrations can facilitate efficient and user-centric administrative processes, improve the quality of services through flexible and personalised interactions and increase public sector efficiency. This updated CORDIS Results Pack showcases 15 EU-funded projects, 10 original and five entirely new additions, that have pioneered innovative digital solutions and processes to fully launch Europe's public services into the digital realm.

As the EU's eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 states: "Digital public services reduce administrative burdens on businesses and citizens by making their interactions with public administrations faster and efficient, more convenient and transparent, and less costly." The EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 and the 2017 Tallinn Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment provide a vision for the development of modern public services, namely services that are: digital, cross-border and interoperable by default; inclusive and accessible; open and transparent; trustworthy and secure; and require users to supply information only once. However, existing challenges for achieving this vision include the required change in approach when it comes to replacing paper-based processes by online interactions, better understanding the pros and cons of different digitalisation strategies, as well as the benefits of engaging citizens in collaborative public service design and delivery. Another important consideration is the sheer technical complexity involved in guaranteeing interoperability across borders, sectors and services.

On the users' side, following the Tallinn Declaration, citizens and businesses are increasingly expecting better, more personalised public service delivery, burden reduction, transparency, participation and citizen engagement in the creation of public services. Citizens generally prefer not to have to supply the same information multiple times, so data needs to be shared and reused among public administrations, in full compliance with data protection rules. This is known as the 'once-only principle' and is one of the underlying principles of the eGovernment Action Plan.

The benefits of efficient, user-friendly digital public services extend beyond the convenience of, for example, paying your taxes online: there is also the opportunity to create real value by enhancing the efficiency of the EU Single Market and giving citizens more freedom and control over how they engage with public authorities. The EU's Digital Single Market (DSM) Strategy for Europe incorporates the eGovernment Action Plan, as the efficient functioning of the Single Market depends on removing digital barriers.

Turning a vision and an 'action plan' into action

Delivering innovative eGovernment solutions and applying the principles put forward in the eGovernment Action Plan and Tallinn Declaration are some of the goals of the projects supported by the EU. By funding research, whether it is putting in place technical solutions or encouraging citizen participation, the EU is bringing down the barriers that currently prevent us from exploiting digital technologies to their full potential.

Smart urbanisation and the sensors involved, the devices in our pockets, connectivity and cloud services are all powering open, innovative governance that enables people to access services when they need them and how they need them. But the notion of the public as 'clients' is also shifting. By harnessing digital tools to their full capacity, the public can become a true partner and, in cooperation with public administrations, can co-create the services that suit them.

In this context, European public administrations are interesting showcases for experimenting with new technologies, taking into account privacy, security and ethical concerns. This pack outlines some of the research and innovation actions helping public administrations across Europe to maximise the full potential of Digital Government.

New tools, new approaches

All projects featured in this updated Results Pack are working to bring eGovernment closer to the citizen. The Pack comprises the original 10 articles published in 2019 and five entirely new project articles for 2020, with three of the original 10 also receiving revisions to include exciting new developments since the original publication.

Dos and don'ts of data-driven policymaking

Public administrations and the private sector are not equally equipped to adopt new technologies. The Big Policy Canvas project has identified possible pathways to even out the odds.



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Slowly evolving legal frameworks and significant inertia have been hindering innovative approaches to administrative processes for a long time now. In this context, Big Data could easily look like an insurmountable challenge. So how do we move on from there?

Big Policy Canvas (Big Policy Canvas – Needs, Trends and ICT Tools for Advanced Data-Driven Public Sector) may be holding the keys to data-enlightened decisions overcoming societal challenges. Over 2 years, the project strove to provide the public sector with every bit of information it would need to turn itself into an effective, efficient, precise, consistent and evidence-based policymaking structure. "As a Coordination and Support Action, we put forward the different research and innovation directions that should be followed," says Ricard Munné, coordinator of Big Policy Canvas and project manager at Atos Research and Innovation.

Guiding future research and decision-making

Over 2 years, the project developed a set of tools to that effect. The first is the 'Needs and trends assessment framework'. It is compiled from desk research, interviews with experts and a quantitative analysis of online science databases and Twitter. The framework provides a methodology to map the needs of public administrations and the trends that may impact their policymaking process in application domains (agriculture, urban planning, health, etc.). It also assesses these needs and trends based on criticality and intensity. By following this framework, public administrations can prioritise application domains of greater interest, importance, urgency and capability.

As a Coordination and Support Action, we put forward the different research and innovation directions that should be followed.

The second tool is the Knowledge Base – an online repository compiling all knowledge produced by Big Policy Canvas. The content is structured around needs, trends and assets, with cross-linking between elements influencing or interconnected with each other. Say, for instance, that an administration is facing the need to protect the environment. Using the knowledge base, it will be able to download valuable open data, get recommendations and find out which tools should be used (nudging, Internet of Things, social media, etc.).

The remaining two tools are the 'Roadmap for Future Research Directions in Data-Driven Policy Making' and the 'Research Directions and Recommendations'. Whilst the former lists research and innovation directions highlighted by the project team, the latter aims to accelerate the roadmap's take-up.

Our efforts led to the identification of six 'challenge clusters'," Munné explains. "These are: privacy, transparency and trust; the creation of a public governance framework for data-driven structures; data acquisition, cleaning and representativeness; data storage, clustering and integration; modelling and analysis with Big Data; and data visualisation. We accompany these with a set of research directions and recommendations for all stakeholders."

The project is now completed, but Munné is confident that the Roadmap and the Research Directions and Recommendations will continue to enable the adoption of data-driven policymaking over the coming years. The Big Data Value Association intends to incorporate Big Policy Canvas' main results into their Roadmap White Paper, while the Horizon 2020 Co-VAL project will maintain and strengthen the community it created. Various other projects such as Big Data Stack and PolicyCLOUD also use Big Policy Canvas' results and input to develop their solutions. "We definitely want our community to keep on growing," Munné concludes.

PROJECT
Big Policy Canvas – Needs, Trends and ICT Tools for Advanced Data-Driven Public Sector

COORDINATED BY
Atos in Spain

FUNDED UNDER
H2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/769623

PROJECT WEBSITE
bigpolicycanvas.eu

Making digital public services more efficient, more accessible – and even safer

A group of EU researchers has designed methods and tools to help public administrations across Europe shift their public services into the digital realm.

Public administrations across Europe have been investing in digital public services for some time now. But with the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for social distancing, this transition has taken on a new sense of urgency.



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"COVID-19 is forcing both government institutions and citizens to quickly rethink the delivery of public services," says Leire Orue-Echevarria, coordinator of the EU-funded CITADEL (Empowering Citizens to TrAnsform European PubLic Administrations) project. "Most major public service providers have either closed or significantly limited client service centres and are encouraging the use of digital public services instead."

CITADEL's suite of methods and tools are particularly well-suited to help with this transition. "All of our tools are designed to provide public administrations with practical solutions for improving their digital services," adds Orue-Echevarria.

All of the project's solutions are freely available via the CITADEL website and the project's GitLab public repository.

From evaluation to co-creation and implementation

At the heart of the CITADEL suite is DIGIMAT, an innovative tool for evaluating the overall maturity level of a government's digital services. "This evaluation is the first step in leveraging the CITADEL toolbox," explains Orue-Echevarria. "Based on the evaluation of available services, CITADEL can help public administrators personalise citizen services, create user-friendly experiences, implement relevant KPIs, and comply with applicable rules and regulations."

For example, while CITADEL's co-creation methodology provides public administrations with step-by-step guidance through the entire co-creation process, the co-creation tool customises the method for a given service or context. It also supports the public administration in each step of the process, providing recommendations as to which tool, technique or method to use.

Once implemented, the innovation platform comes into play, providing citizens with the means to generate, vote on and select ideas for improving a certain service.

Defining public services for a post-pandemic world

The CITADEL suite of services is currently being used by several European public administrations. For example, in Latvia, VARAM, the organisation responsible for the delivery of public services at the national level, has integrated CITADEL's solutions into its everyday processes and planning.

Using CITADEL's co-creation methodology, the organisation says it has seen a steady increase in available digital public services. "Across Latvia, more and more public services are being made available digitally," remarks Inese Viktorija Grospine, CITADEL project director at VARAM. "This is a direct result of our participation in the project."

Based on the evaluation of available services, CITADEL can help public administrators personalise citizen services, create user-friendly experiences, implement relevant KPIs, and comply with applicable rules and regulations.

When COVID-19 struck, many municipalities immediately shut down their public services centres. Luckily, thanks in part to its work with CITADEL, Latvia was ready. "Our ability to offer digital services not only allowed us to keep serving the public, but, more importantly, allowed us to reduce face-to-face contact, enforce social distancing and help save lives," adds Grospine.

Even with lockdowns generally easing across Europe, many municipalities have opted to continue offering most of their services digitally. "As many institutions continue to prefer digital service delivery over physical services, the CITADEL suite of solutions will play a big role in defining public services in a post-pandemic world," concludes Orue-Echevarria.

PROJECT
CITADEL – Empowering Citizens to TrAnsform European PubLic Administrations

COORDINATED BY
Tecnalia Research & Innovation in Spain

FUNDED UNDER
H2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/726755

PROJECT WEBSITE
citadel-h2020.eu

A transparent misinformation tracker for your web browser

Ever been in doubt about the legitimacy of information shared on social media? The truth is, you should probably always ask yourself this question before contributing to its spreading, and to assist you the Co-Inform project has created a tool that will help you identify misinformation.

We've never been so connected to each other, yet we all live in a bubble. When John Scruggs, a lobbyist for Philip Morris, first described the concept of an echo chamber back in 1998, he probably didn't expect social media to produce these bubbles. Now, these information bubbles threaten the very foundations of our democracies.



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In 2020, debate on social media – and increasingly in the real world, too – can be depicted as a wide network of increasingly heated communities wearing blinkers, pointing at each other without ever really listening to anyone else other than those with the same opinion. The direct consequence of this trend? Thriving misinformation. As Vasilis Koulolias, director of Stockholm University's eGovlab, puts it, "AI-curated feeds create echo chambers and filter bubbles in which individuals might never see any counter-arguments."

The Co-Inform (Co-Creating Misinformation-Resilient Societies) project takes this reality as a direct threat to the integrity of elections and, ultimately, democracy. To the looming disappearance of well-informed choices, it opposes what it calls a 'decentralised, transparent and community-driven misinformation linking system'. The project can be described as a misinformation detection system, but with a twist: it provides the general public with evidence as to why their content is tagged as misinformation.

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"Just like misinformation detection, misinformation linking is based on automated algorithms which predict whether a given content is misinformative. It finds existing credibility signals online (reviews by reputable fact checkers, reputation ratings), evaluates previous posts from the same source, and estimates the accuracy of content based on social media reactions. By adding an extra layer of transparency, we allow users to verify our rating. We also encourage them to consider some credibility signals they might have missed," Koulolias explains.

The project is also decentralised. In addition to its algorithms, it integrates an extension to Schema.org and ClaimReview to allow anyone to assess the credibility of content and share it online. The only requirement is to provide evidence. Likewise, users can provide feedback on credibility assessments.

The Co-Inform system has been tested extensively already reaching impressive accuracy rates. "We could demonstrate how online behaviour could be nudged by the system and found that human values also had an impact on whether someone is inclined to believe a piece of information," Koulolias notes.

Co-Inform can be installed either as a browser extension for the general public or as a dashboard for policymakers and journalists. The dashboard version allows users to filter tweets or articles by topic and labels them as credible or not credible.

"We are developing some additional features thanks to our collaboration with SOMA – a project building collaborative tools for journalists. For instance, a claim made by a user on our Twitter plugin will automatically be sent to SOMA's platform for assessment," says Koulolias.

Tests with journalists are foreseen in the autumn of 2020, along with policy recommendations for the European Commission. Koulolias hopes that Co-Inform's tools will contribute to critical thinking amongst social media users.

As misinformation becomes more and more difficult to identify, they will need all the tools they can get not to fall into the 'fake news' trap, and Co-Inform provides at least part of the solution. "Of course, tackling misinformation will require more than fact checks debunking false claims. Critical thinking and information literacy campaigns are crucial, and we need a real interdisciplinary method going forward," Koulolias concludes.

PROJECT
Co-Inform – Co-Creating Misinformation-Resilient Societies

COORDINATED BY
University of Stockholm in Sweden

FUNDED UNDER
H2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/770302

PROJECT WEBSITE
coinform.eu

A guide for enabling co-creation in public administrations



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The future of public administrations is not top-down. Meeting societal challenges calls for innovation, and more specifically value co-creation where end users and administrations can collaborate to devise better services. Co-VAL answers this need with policy recommendations and examples of best practices.

Participative democracy has become a fashionable concept. But what's citizen participation in public services worth if it doesn't actually generate value? According to Anna Triantafillou, coordinator of the EU-funded project Co-VAL (Understanding value co-creation in public services for transforming European public administrations), mere participation is not enough. What the public services of the future really require is co-creation. "Value co-creation is often defined as the involvement of citizens in the initiation and/or design of public services. But it goes even further. It impacts the value generated at the end of the production process and encompasses new practices to better meet social demands and tackle societal challenges," she explains.

Co-VAL was built around the observation that public administrations' old ways – usually based on top-down policy assessments – do not meet citizens' expectations anymore. It seeks a full-blown paradigm shift where citizens would be seen as value co-creators.

Beyond state of the art

"Our project advances the state of the art," says Luis Rubalcaba Bermejo, Co-VAL scientific coordinator. "It tackles the main barriers to enabling solutions such as Open Government. These include a lack of knowledge and expertise, resource constraints, cultural barriers, scale and complexity of the service, existing routines and practices, and difficulties in aligning the goals of the different actors involved."

Concretely, the Co-VAL team started its work by conducting theoretical and empirical research. They monitored transformative innovations and co-creation in the public sector, identified best practices in current and previous experience, and developed a system monitoring co-creation and the take-up of digital services at Member State and city level.

For its empirical case studies, the project focused on four public service-related co-creation areas. These are: digital transformation; service design and blueprinting; innovation and living labs; and innovative structural relationships between the innovation networks of the public-private-third sectors and social innovation in public services.

"With all this work, we wanted to contribute to theoretical knowledge while also generating a sustainable impact in public administration policy and practice," adds Co-VAL policy coordinator Francesco Mureddu. "This implies continued collaboration with stakeholders in European public administrations, policy recommendations based on research outcomes and the implementation of policy tools for scaling up best practices."

Measuring success with the Co-VAL dashboard

The project team developed a series of policy briefs to this end. These notably include indicators to monitor and evaluate existing initiatives to support public service transformation. The project team also created the Co-VAL dashboard, which showcases how local and national governments perform against project recommendations.

In Italy for instance, the city of Milan tested the Co-VAL dashboard and has a representative on the Co-VAL stakeholder panel. It also co-organised two events on the occasion of Milano Digital Week during which Co-VAL policy briefs were presented. Likewise, the Italian Government's Digital Team provided feedback and now represent the Minister of Innovation Paola Pisano within the Co-VAL stakeholder panel.

We wanted to contribute to theoretical knowledge while also generating a sustainable impact in public administration policy and practice.

Over the next few months, the Co-VAL team will finalise the data analysis of their large-scale European survey on the use of co-creation in public administration. They also intend to enrich their policy recommendations based on the latest results as well as provide more interesting empirical cases and increase stakeholder engagement.

"Co-creation and service innovation are two still marginal but particularly dynamic fields of research that will be connected in the future due to the Co-VAL approach," says Rubalcaba Bermejo, while Mureddu stresses how public sector innovation and Open Government are central pieces of the EU strategy for the coming years. What is certain is that Co-VAL is set to raise awareness of co-creation and how to best implement it amongst policymakers and practitioners.

PROJECT
Co-VAL – Understanding value co-creation in public services for transforming European public administrations

COORDINATED BY
Athens Technology Center in Greece

FUNDED UNDER
H2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/770356

PROJECT WEBSITE
co-val.eu

Big Data for better decision-making on coastal urban development

Waterfront cities have always aimed to make the most of the rivers, seas and lakes in their vicinity. As the rest of society prepares to tap into Big Data to shape its future, they can't afford to miss the boat. The CUTLER project has developed a data analytics platform to improve their decision-making process.

Most ancient cities were built close to water. Some by the sea, some close to rivers, but always for the same reasons: to access the water itself, its resources and its convenience for long-distance trade. Water also makes for beautiful cities with important touristic appeal.

Despite all the advantages, developing a city close to a water source seriously complexifies decision-making processes. "Water brings economic growth, but also social and environmental stresses like potential floods. It's difficult to estimate the impact and consequences of public action. And that's not even considering multilevel decision processes adopted by public administrations, a history of decision-making driven by intuition rather than data (until the last decade or so), and the fact that decision makers often struggle to properly use available data," says Filareti Tsalakanidou, research associate at ITI-CERTH and one of the coordinators of the CUTLER (Coastal Urban developmenT through the LEnses of Resiliency) project.

According to Tsalakanidou, what waterfront cities really need is to incorporate Big Data and data science into their policymaking process. By creating a platform to that effect, she hopes these cities will finally be able to live up to their full potential.

"We've recently seen an explosion in the amount of data generated by cities every day. So why not put it to good use? Our proposal consists in combining real-time data from hardwired sensors, user-contributed content (from social media for instance), official statistical data and GIS data. By doing so, we can considerably improve policymaking," she adds.

CUTLER's main innovation is a decision-support platform based on an innovative methodological approach for policy development. The platform compiles data from all sources mentioned above and uses Big Data analytics methods to measure economic activity, assess environmental impact and evaluate the social consequences of examined policies. The resulting evidence can then be used to support the decision-making process.



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Concretely, the CUTLER platform relieves decision makers of considerable burden. First, it enables access to data from public administrations, the private sector, academia and research institutions while providing a robust legal framework for the use of this data. It offers a holistic view of policy problems by presenting relevant data, modelling the impact and consequences of decision-making, and capturing citizen feedback. Last but not least, it modernises public administrations. It does so by bridging the gap between Big Data and existing policy-development routines while smoothly introducing new IT applications into their daily routine.

We've recently seen an explosion in the amount of data generated by cities every day. So why not put it to good use?

Five cities, different water bodies and urban development policies

The CUTLER platform is being extensively tested in five cities: Thessaloniki (Greece), Antalya (Turkey), Antwerp (Belgium), Cork (Ireland) and Vicenza (Italy). In Antwerp, the pilot focuses on climate change impact and adaptation scenarios, examining measures such as 'garden streets' to reduce flooding. In Cork, the team focused on enabling visitor access to Camden Fort Meagher – a fort built in the 16th century in Cork Harbour – by creating new access points and facilities.

"We've also been working with the authorities of Antalya to increase visitor numbers at the Düden Waterfall area while implementing measures to maintain the water level throughout the year," notes Tsalakanidou. "Meanwhile in Vicenza, we've been examining possible defensive measures against flooding of the Bacchiglione River. Finally, in Thessaloniki, we focused on optimising a controlled parking system near the Thermaikos Bay."

With the different software components and theoretical methodologies now refined, the team will begin producing the final versions of the pilot-specific dashboards, as well as disseminating the project's outcomes. "Our platform will hopefully lead to more balanced, precise, resilient, legitimate and effective decisions," Tsalakanidou concludes.

PROJECT
CUTLER – Coastal Urban developmenT through the LEnses of Resiliency

COORDINATED BY
ITI-CERTH in Greece

FUNDED UNDER
H2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/770469

PROJECT WEBSITE
cutler-h2020.eu

Adventures in collaborative policymaking

The EU-funded ENLARGE project uses gamification to help public administrations better leverage the full potential of collaborative policymaking.

To improve citizen engagement, countries around the world are turning towards collaborative policymaking. Such processes as co-design, co-production and co-evaluation all aim to invigorate public administrations by integrating the viewpoints of politicians and bureaucrats with those of civil society and citizens.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of practical evidence on the effectiveness and sustainability of these processes, many public administrations fail to leverage the full potential of collaborative policymaking. The EU-funded ENLARGE (ENergies for Local Administrations: Renovate Governance in Europe) project aims to remedy this.

"By engaging in a comprehensive literature review and intense dialogues with policymakers, experts and civil society actors, the ENLARGE project aimed to shed some light on 'how and why' co-design, co-production and co-evaluation contribute to better policymaking," says Erica Melloni, director of the ENLARGE project.



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"We also set out to gain a better understanding of what favours – or hampers – the success of these collaborative processes within the policymaking domain," adds Cristina Vasilescu, ENLARGE project coordinator.

Choose your own adventure

Knowing that the success of any collaborative process depends largely on context, project researchers decided to forgo the traditional report and recommendations in favour of a practical, collaborative tool. The result is the ENLARGE Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) gamebook on participatory processes in the field of sustainable energy.

Through gamification, we are able to provide public administrators the opportunity to get hands-on experience with collaborative policymaking.

"The CYOA gamebook is intended to be a living tool for all communities wanting to boost participatory governance and achieve better results in collaborative processes," explains Vasilescu.

The interactive, online CYOA gamebook places users within a municipality working to implement a sustainable energy policy in collaboration with stakeholders. Users must analyse the specific context, understand all points of view and, based on this, choose the most relevant collaborative process to achieve results.

"Through gamification, we are able to provide public administrators the opportunity to get hands-on experience with collaborative policymaking," says Melloni. "Through trial-and-error, users gain the confidence they need to implement successful collaborative processes within their own real-world departments."

Valuable tools for Europe

The ENLARGE project has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the effectiveness of collaborative tools within policymaking. "As our gamebook makes abundantly clear, behind every successful collaborative practice there are numerous design and management choices," says Melloni. "Each of these choices deserves careful consideration and reflection to understand which implications derive from what sequences of choices and interactions within specific contexts."

According to the European Commission, the ENLARGE project's findings may have a big impact on policymakers working in public administrations and for all stakeholders involved in formulating and implementing public policies.

"The project's results are valuable tools capable of supporting the uptake of innovative co-creation and co-production initiatives at the EU level," adds Vasilescu. "Specifically, our knowledge map on collaborative processes and the CYOA gamebook are well-positioned to support the implementation of the European eGovernment Action Plan and other relevant European strategies aimed at modernising the public sector via collaborative approaches to policymaking."

PROJECT
ENLARGE – ENergies for Local Administrations: Renovate Governance in Europe

COORDINATED BY
Institute for Social Research (IRS) in Italy

FUNDED UNDER
H2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/727124

PROJECT WEBSITE
enlarge-project.eu

Effective use of open government data to transform the lives of Europe's elderly citizens

Public services across the EU are increasingly online only. However, with less internet access than their younger counterparts and higher levels of computer illiteracy, older citizens' needs aren't always taken into account. The Mobile-Age project helped public administrators develop services to better suit their specific needs.



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Senior citizens are predicted to make up 28 % of Europe's population by 2020. But when it comes to technological innovation, Europe's senior citizens are often marginalised. The result is a higher risk of isolation from society, for swathes of the population, both physically and socially. The Mobile-Age project sought to tackle this growing issue by providing a basis for the development of digital services focused on Europe's elderly residents and designed with their help, too.

This approach contrasts with the long-established approaches that focus on training older adults to 'catch up'.

The app platform lets public service providers understand and create innovative new experiences for elder members of society, and third-party software developers design new information services and integrate them into the local communities. Feedback has been positive from the case studies, and the Mobile-Age team hopes the results will feed into respective national policies regarding public services and the elderly.

The end goal of the project was to develop a transferable model, one that could be easily implemented and built upon in cities across the European Union. Pilots of digital services took place in four locations, deemed already innovative in their approach to integrating senior citizens into the development of urban services: Bremen (Germany), South Lakeland (United Kingdom), Thessaloniki (Greece) and Zaragoza (Spain).

Co-designing success

By including senior citizens in the process, the project aimed to develop services that older Europeans will truly benefit from. "This approach contrasts with the long-established approaches that focus on training older adults to 'catch up'," says Niall Hayes, a professor from the University of Lancaster, and Mobile-Age project coordinator.

The pilots explored issues important to elderly residents in each specific location, and included those related to social inclusion, independent living, urban safety and accessibility, and personal health management.

In Bremen, for example, the older adult co-creators provided detailed information, new walking routes, new locations, photos and video clips. "This is a good example of how data that is identified as being especially meaningful by the local community can be opened up and can play an important role in community-making," explains Hayes.

Sharing the knowledge

The project led to the development of the Mobile-Age app, which offers services tailored to the needs of senior citizens and is already available in several languages. Furthermore, the project website is now an invaluable platform for app developers to access relevant data efficiently and create their own services. "All of the resources and technological components are open," adds Hayes.

The Mobile-Age apps that have been developed in each country unleash the potential of open data to support local authorities in delivering public services. In increasingly 'smart' cities, open data allow different services to be linked up and provide users with personalised, location-based information. This makes the whole process more efficient, benefitting cities and citizens alike. What's more, as all members of society become more included in civic participation, and see the benefits of more open, transparent governments, the project believes trust in public institutions will also increase.

"The Mobile-Age Development Environment represents a key innovation, enabling the efficient development of apps specifically for older adults. We'll continue to work with our SME, government and third-sector partners to expand these services and to shape policy at regional, national and European levels," concludes Hayes.

PROJECT
Mobile-Age

COORDINATED BY
Lancaster University in the United Kingdom

FUNDED UNDER
H2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/693319

PROJECT WEBSITE
mobile-age.eu

More effective data use improves public services

From solutions administrations can use to help them better serve jobseekers, to technologies that enable people to track pollution, one EU-supported project is exploring how data can be aggregated to build practical tools for public administrators and citizens alike.

Public administrations (PAs) routinely collect vast amounts of data. For privacy reasons, much of this cannot be shared. This wealth of data can however be aggregated and anonymised to generate useful statistics, such as economic and social indicators, for more informed decision-making by PAs and citizens.



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Linked Open Statistical Data (LOSD) – a method for modelling data – was used to good effect by the EU-funded OpenGovIntelligence (Fostering Innovation and Creativity in Europe through Public Administration Modernization towards Supplying and Exploiting Linked Open Statistical Data) project in Flanders, where a pilot converted 7 years of reporting by companies, on their emissions and waste, to the LOSD format.

By linking this information to other datasets covering enterprise information, economical activities, geographical administrative data, chemical substances and others, people could use a web application, specially designed by the project, to track pollution by location.

Seeing the potential, the Flemish Government's Environment Department (Omgeving) integrated OpenGovIntelligence's modelling approaches, components, software, guidelines and best practices into its own computer systems. In practice, this means that all the new incoming raw data produced by the department will be transformed into LOSD, with some data further transformed into alternative formats as required.

By involving the people, who would ultimately use the system, at every stage of development, we helped ensure that the solution actually met their needs.

The project also piloted with Trafford Council, part of the United Kingdom's Greater Manchester Combined Authority, which was running a 'Skills, Employment & Worklessness' programme. Here, the team worked with the relevant stakeholders to develop a platform which could access data to support staff in their efforts to help people find employment.

The platform contained: a dashboard, summarising local unemployment data; a scan application which visualised spatial distribution of unemployment; and an interactive mapping app (Signpost) that identified local unemployment resources.

"By involving the people, who would ultimately use the system, at every stage of development, we helped ensure that the solution actually met their needs," says project coordinator, Konstantinos Tarabanis.

Building the data toolkit

At the beginning of the project, the OpenGovIntelligence team realised that in order to combine datasets, and to help the web developers (who were not LOSD experts), they would have to first create middleware. This bridged front-end functionalities, used by the operators, to the back-end LOSD, which held the data. Consequently, a range of software tools for the publishing, linking and reusing of LOSD was developed, and including Table2qb and the CubiQL API.

Not only did all the OpenGovIntelligence tools adopt the data modelling standard known as the 'RDF Data Cube vocabulary' which enables datasets of differing provenance to be combined, but the team also helped improve the standard itself, as well as establishing best practices for LOSD manipulation.

Looking to the future, the team is exploring the adoption of LOSD in Artificial Intelligence (AI) scenarios. "With AI, problems and patterns could be detected faster, reducing costs and administrative burdens. Taking the Flanders example, quickly trawling through the available data, AI could more easily prioritise hotspots for inspection, improving compliance with environmental regulations and the quality of life for citizens," says Tarabanis.

PROJECT
OpenGovIntelligence – Fostering Innovation and Creativity in Europe through Public Administration Modernization towards Supplying and Exploiting Linked Open Statistical Data

COORDINATED BY
Centre for Research & Technology – Hellas in Greece

FUNDED UNDER
H2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/693849

PROJECT WEBSITE
opengovintelligence.eu

Big Data-enabled transport policies for our cities

Handling traffic is one of the biggest nightmares for cities. Every little decision can backfire into a major snowball effect, so authorities need accurate data and prediction tools to make sure they make the right decision. PoliVisu provides just the tools.



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It's never easy to let go of your old ways. This applies to almost everything: from the first time your grandparents used a smartphone, to the reaction of public administrations when they first heard of Big Data.

Let's take a concrete example: car accidents. Traditionally, policymakers would receive complaints from residents or civil society, and then investigate. With Big Data however, they have an opportunity to access interactive maps using police data to provide a dynamic overview of road accidents across the city. Here lies the difference between slow, out-of-touch policymaking and timely and effective decisions.

"Many decision makers are still rooted in the traditional way of doing things. They make policy decisions based on static models of consultation and closed planning meetings over the time frame of a year or more. Their action is often siloed and slow, providing outdated solutions by the time it is ready to be implemented," says Lieven Raes, coordinator of PoliVisu (Policy Development based on Advanced Geospatial Data Analytics and Visualisation).

From interactive maps to better policy

PoliVisu aims to challenge these old ways by improving data literacy and providing access to advanced technology. Its policy visualisation tools rely on interactive maps to display data and enable exploration down to the tiniest detail.

The project specifically focused on transport and mobility. As Raes notes: "It's an area with lots of potential datasets to use. Mobility forms the backbone of any city, and it's a great topic to experiment with in locations of different sizes and with different states of advancement with regards to the use of Big Data."

Besides road accidents, the project team focused on a traffic modeller and a tool to increase safety on streets with a school. Whilst the former provides real-time data on traffic flows and allows for simulating the likes of crises or road maintenance, the latter provides sensors for neighbouring citizens to place on their windows. The sensors measure traffic and provide collected data to administrations so they can decide, for instance, which road should be closed in the morning.

"We initially ran three pilots in three cities," Raes explains. "In Issy-les-Moulineaux (France), we looked for a solution to high congestion. In Ghent (Belgium), authorities didn't know where the student population was concentrated and could therefore not deliver relevant services in the optimal locations. We experimented with multiple data sources to find the information they needed. Finally, we provided traffic predictions for road constructions foreseen in Pilsen (Czechia), to avoid any negative impact."

The project team created a total of 15 policy visualisations. A book and an online course on data for policy will also be launched soon to educate people on the benefits of data visualisations for better policymaking.

Access to data wasn't always easy, but it was definitely worth the team's while. The three initial pilot cities keep using PoliVisu's tools to this day. "Often the data needed didn't exist or it may be owned by someone else who would like a large sum of money for you to use it. In Ghent for instance, there wasn't a single source of data available. We had to gather it from multiple sources like anonymised university records and Proximus telecoms. Now, they have a good idea of where their students are throughout the week and weekends," adds Raes.

The three initial pilot cities keep using PoliVisu's tools to this day.

By the time the project comes to an end, the team will provide a toolbox of data processing and visualisation tools to interested cities. The toolbox will be coupled with a structured and tailorable methodology, as well as real-life case studies as sources of inspiration to introduce open (geo) data into the policymaking life cycle.

PROJECT
PoliVisu – Policy Development based on Advanced Geospatial Data Analytics and Visualisation

COORDINATED BY
Flemish Region in Belgium

FUNDED UNDER
H2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/769608

PROJECT WEBSITE
polivisu.eu

Improved CAP compliance with publicly available and user-generated data

A policy is often only as good as its monitoring mechanism. When it comes to the Common Agricultural Policy, the RECAP e-public service platform combines open Earth Observation data with user-generated data, providing a manual/fully automatic hybrid solution for enhanced compliance.

Implementation of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) seeks, amongst other ambitions, to ensure sustainability in the agricultural sector while supporting farmers. It relies on effectively monitoring compliance with its standards. This has, in the past, been conducted through field visits and other options. Owing to the complexity and diversity of the data, these options can be time-consuming and costly for both public administrations and farmers.

To ease this burden, the EU-supported project RECAP (Personalised public services in support of the implementation of the CAP) developed a Software as a Service (SaaS) commercial platform to help with compliance monitoring. This cloud-based solution makes use of large volumes of publicly available data generated by remote satellite sensing, combined with data provided by farmers themselves through mobile devices.

RECAP contributes to wider EC policies to deliver tools for enhanced e-public services that help streamline the workloads of public administrations. According to project coordinator, Machi Symeonidou: "The participating public administrations declared that the RECAP platform made compliance monitoring more transparent and efficient. This was achieved by making every step of the monitoring process visible to all involved parties, and also by remotely monitoring farmers' compliance thereby reducing the number of on-the-spot checks."

Co-designed and co-created

The current, somewhat cumbersome system for monitoring CAP compliance has led to misunderstandings, resulting in non-compliance and so avoidable penalties. To make the workflow more user-friendly and intuitive, the team co-designed and co-created the RECAP compliance platform.

"By putting end users and service providers at the heart of platform development and taking account of their feedback, we were able to identify obstacles early and so deliver a platform adapted to the real needs of target users," says Symeonidou.

By exploiting open access satellite data from the Sentinel missions alongside other geoinformation data, the RECAP team developed a platform which provided farmers with personalised services. Catering to individual needs and farm characteristics, these services include alerts for time-bound CAP obligations that are automatically added to individual calendars, along with guidance on meeting the standards required. The platform can also store documentation about CAP rules, along with compliance application documents and supporting assets such as geo-referenced and time-stamped satellite photos.

The platform was also intended to stimulate the development of new added value services offered by agricultural consultants and developers, giving them access to design tools for the creation of platform 'add-ons', as well as access to the open public data (subject to security and privacy policies).



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More user-centric e-public services

RECAP has been applied and validated in five operational environments (Greece, Lithuania, Serbia, Spain and the United Kingdom) engaging more than 750 farmers and 470 consultants. In total, 455 inspections, both remote and on-site, have been undertaken by authorised public administration personnel using the platform.

The participating public administrations declared that the RECAP platform made compliance monitoring more transparent and efficient.

The information gathered and generated through the RECAP platform was found to be accurate and representative, while reducing both the time needed to validate compliance and the associated administrative costs.

The open source RECAP platform is currently available under the GNU General Public License. The remote sensing components are also market-ready. Both can be hosted either on project partners' servers or on the client's own servers.

PROJECT
RECAP – Personalised public services in support of the implementation of the CAP

COORDINATED BY
Draxis Environmental in Greece

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H2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/693171

PROJECT WEBSITE
recap-h2020.eu

Say goodbye to burdensome administrative processes

By 2023, all citizens should be able to put the dark days of administrative burden in some frequently needed interactions with public authorities behind them. The SCOOP4C project has been showing the way forward, through in-depth reviews of existing once-only principle implementations.



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It's not unusual for EU citizens to use a day of their paid leave for the sole purpose of carrying around documents from one branch of the administration to another. Frustrating, right?

Luckily enough, the EU set out to change that in 2018 with the Single Digital Gateway regulation. By the end of 2023, important information shall be provided only once. Registering a car, changing your address or claiming pension benefits will be done from a single online platform that all branches of the administration can tap into. It's the once-only principle (OOP).

A key example of successful OOP implementation in the social protection domain is the Austrian child registration and family allowance (ALF). "When a child is born, parents have to go only once to the citizen service of their municipality. They bring their personal ID and that's it: No other documents are necessary for the registration process and its accompanying procedures. Furthermore, the child's healthcare card and the application for child benefit are issued automatically. This case dramatically reduces the burden and efforts for the parents, and the public administrations also benefit from smarter procedures and higher quality of data," says Maria Wimmer, coordinator of SCOOP4C (Stakeholder community for once-only principle: Reducing administrative burden for citizens) and chair of the research group eGovernment at the Institute for Information Systems Research, University of Koblenz-Landau.

When a child is born, parents have to go only once to the citizen service of their municipality. They bring their personal ID and that's it: No other documents are necessary for the registration process and its accompanying procedures.

SCOOP4C is one of two cornerstones of the once-only infrastructure, along with the TOOP project. While the latter explores and demonstrates OOP principles across Europe, the former makes an inventory of existing solutions, identifies best practices and provides political recommendations.

"SCOOP4C has developed ideal scenarios for OOP across borders. It demonstrates how the OOP can be realised in domains such as health, education, taxation, change of address and social protection. It also highlights its benefits for both citizens and administrations," says Wimmer.

The project essentially revolved around the identification of OOP cases – public service provisioning cases where citizen data is shared and reused between public administrations – and OOP enablers.

"OOP enablers refer to crucial building blocks supporting the implementation of OOP cases in different policy domains. Examples include: central infrastructure for sharing and reusing data; semantic and technical architecture; solutions building blocks; as well as organisational, legal and political enablers," Wimmer explains.

The project, which brought together a community of 810 stakeholders, successfully identified 56 OOP cases and 35 enablers before making them accessible via a knowledge base. But SCOOP4C also provides important insights into the current state of OOP in Europe. It notably presents evidence that whilst OOP solutions are not widespread, their realisation brings considerable benefits to citizens and administrations. These include less time and effort invested by public services, higher quality of data, faster and easier service provisioning, considerable reduction in the administrative burden, and greater citizen satisfaction.

Besides its knowledge base, the project's most important outcomes include five cross-border scenarios for specific domains, roadmaps for achieving the OOP, a stakeholder engagement plan and nine key policy recommendations.

Whilst SCOOP4C is now completed, project partners intend to use their expertise to guide future OOP implementation. The knowledge base will be maintained, while dissemination and communication plans around the roadmaps and policy recommendations will continue.

PROJECT
SCOOP4C – Stakeholder community for once-only principle: Reducing administrative burden for citizens

COORDINATED BY
University of Koblenz-Landau in Germany

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H2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/737492

PROJECT WEBSITE
scoop4c.eu

eGovernment made smart and easy

Imagine an eGovernment service that can learn from how you interact with it and simplify your experience accordingly. This solution now exists and can act as a model for all existing systems.

The digitalisation of public administrations is moving forward. Its purpose? Leaving burdensome paperwork behind and replacing it with easy-to-use, web-based platforms. But the truth is, for eGovernment to be a success it needs to be more than a mere transposition of paper-based forms to digital equivalents. And this is where public administrations have been struggling so far.



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"The idea behind online services is to hide all complexity from the user, but we can't do that by replicating the traditional processes of public administration," says Marco Pistore, senior researcher at FBK-IRST.

The SIMPATICO (SIMplifying the interaction with Public Administration Through Information technology for Citizens and cOmpanies) project was born from the realisation that, wherever it's happening, the potential of eGovernment services is not fully exploited. E-services are typically designed from the sole perspective of public administrations, which is particularly problematic for users with poor computer literacy, low familiarity with administrative procedures, and/or limited knowledge of legal and technical jargon.

"We believe in the digitalisation of services as an opportunity to provide citizens and businesses with easier, more personalised interaction mechanisms. These should expose only the layer complexity required by a specific user for the service s/he is interested in," Pistore explains.

Information in a form you can understand

The project team has developed a new platform based on language processing and machine learning. Rather than complex and ill-adapted interfaces, SIMPATICO proposes to adapt the interaction process to the characteristics of each user. It simplifies texts and documents, enables feedback, and engages all stakeholders to integrate their knowledge in the system. This is what Pistore refers to as the 'wisdom of the crowd'.

We can simplify the texts embedded in the form based on linguistic skills and biases of a specific citizen.

"We gather user input in two ways: explicitly – for instance through queries that people submit while using online services – and implicitly. In this second case, we collect data on user interaction to identify general usage patterns and specific user profiles. We can identify those parts of the form that are perceived as more complex or ambiguous by users, while at the same time gathering information such as users' nationality and mother tongue. Thanks to this information, we can simplify the texts embedded in the form based on linguistic skills and biases of a specific citizen," Pistore explains.

This is perhaps one of the project's greatest achievements: a simplification of texts that considers specific user skills.

If you are working in a public administration, there is no need to worry about the hassle of switching to an entirely different platform either. As Pistore points out: "What makes SIMPATICO particularly interesting is the fact that we build on top of existing tools. It's an overlay that, for any existing system, has the double advantage of reducing customisation effort and keeping back-office processes unchanged."

Among the system's extensive list of features are automatic field compilation, dynamic walkthroughs, text simplification, online query answering and other techniques that adapt to the specific characteristics and skills of users. Three pilots engaging citizens and civil servants were successfully tested in the city of Trento (Italy), the region of Galicia (Spain), and the city of Sheffield (United Kingdom). In all cases, users were actively involved.

SIMPATICO can be applied to all kinds of online services offered by public administrations, from child enrolment in kindergarten to services for vulnerable groups (foreigners, elders, disabled citizens, etc.). The municipality of Trento has already decided to adopt the system for all their online services, and other cities have already expressed interest.

PROJECT
SIMPATICO – SIMplifying the interaction with Public Administration Through Information technology for Citizens and cOmpanies

COORDINATED BY
Bruno Kessler Foundation in Italy

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H2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/692819

PROJECT WEBSITE
simpatico-project.eu

The ultimate citizen engagement tool for local projects?

There are two major sources of frustration for engaged urban citizens: not having a say in authorities' plans, and not being able to see, first-hand, how these plans will impact their neighbourhood. Smarticipate addresses both needs with a dedicated platform.

Wondering what the future holds for our cities? There is one thing we can be fairly sure of: Almost 70 % of the world's population will live in urban environments by 2050, according to the UN. What urban planners still need to figure out, however, is how to ensure the well-being of these increasingly urban citizens. This calls for open governance, where citizens feel part of a greater project.



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"Citizens are growing tired of voting on decisions that have already been taken. They want to actively contribute and share ideas," explains Veneta Ivanova, project manager at the Fraunhofer Institute for Computer Graphics Research IGD and coordinator of the smarticipate (smart services for calculated impact assessment in open governance) project together with her colleague Joachim Rix.

This need has already given rise to various online tools enabling participative democracy. Yet, these usually lack a solution allowing citizens to get a preview of proposed projects. Smarticipate fills this gap while enabling participative democracy within a single platform. Citizens, NGOs, businesses and public administrations can suggest projects, provide 2D and 3D models, and enable instigators to share their views and receive feedback in real time.

"Say you're an active cyclist for instance. You can propose locking stations that are secure at places that lack them. You can also suggest charging spots for both e-bikes and e-cars or put new cycle lanes up for debate. Other interested citizens will comment or vote for a concrete project, and the initiative can be linked with a crowdfunding initiative," Ivanova adds.

From deliberated plans to action

Besides commenting on ongoing plans, these other citizens can also make their own proposals and see them come to life in 2D or 3D. From there on, the system provides real-time feedback on proposals' feasibility and fosters transparency.

Users such as public authorities and innovation hubs have extensively tested the tool and found it very useful and easy to use. Smarticipate's highest value resides in its capacity to prevent situations where a public administration would bring a project to fruition only to see it dismissed and challenged by local inhabitants. The latter can make proposals based on participatory planning scenarios (urban stories) and provide feedback. From thereon, public administrations can decide on the feasibility of the proposal.

Pilots for the topics of urban gardening, 3D building planning and tree planting have been developed for Rome, London and Hamburg. The consortium has been working with the three cities to include smarticipate in their own plans for participative democracy.

Now that the project has been completed, Fraunhofer IGD and other consortium members have been focusing on the commercialisation of a final and redesigned system. A spin-off company will be created by the end of 2020. "Detailed market analysis is currently taking place," says Ivanova.

Smarticipate will be offered as a generic platform – including a test version of the three topics already developed – with the option of further licensing. Customers can either implement one of these apps, adjust them and adapt the user interface, or create a new app or topic altogether. Version 1.0 of the platform will be available by the end of September 2020, along with a hackathon to encourage new ideas and further use cases.

Citizens are growing tired of voting on decisions that have already been taken. They want to actively contribute and share ideas.

"Our goal is to contribute to a greener, better, modern and convenient infrastructure in our direct neighbourhood by supporting policymakers in their investment decisions. Smarticipate offers a marketplace where citizen participation apps can be easily created and shared, and where participation campaigns are managed. Users can create their own apps, for instance to plan e-mobility charging stations, without the need for programming experts," Ivanova concludes.

PROJECT
smarticipate – smart services for calculated impact assessment in open governance

COORDINATED BY
Fraunhofer in Germany

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CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/693729

PROJECT WEBSITE
smarticipate.eu

Cutting the bureaucratic red tape using the once-only principle

Using the once-only principle, a team of EU researchers is working to help the public sector transition into the digital realm.



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Nobody likes red tape. For many, the hassle of having to repeatedly go to the local public administration office and provide one's identity and such basic information as certifications and contact information makes doing business across EU Member States challenging.

As we move into the project's final stages, we are working to ensure the sustainability of our outcomes as well as provide a supporting environment that enables the piloting, enhancement and uptake of the new technologies developed by the project.

To reduce this administrative burden, the EU has funded a number of initiatives, including TOOP (The Once Only Principle Project). These projects aim to facilitate the digitalisation of the public sector by simplifying processes. Now, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for social distancing, making this transition has become essential.

According to Robert Krimmer, a professor at the Tallinn University of Technology and TOOP project coordinator, the pandemic has clearly increased the need for digital public services. "COVID-19 is seen as a major driver for the digital transformation of our society," he says. "Having fully-enabled digital societies will allow us to better cope with emergency situations in the future."

The once-only principle

To create such digitally enabled societies, TOOP is applying the once-only principle (OOP). OOP focuses on reducing the administrative burden for individuals and businesses by reorganising public sector internal processes, as opposed to making citizens and businesses adjust to existing procedures.

"Applied to the field of public sector digitalisation, citizens and businesses only have to provide public administrations with data once," explains Krimmer. "The public administration then takes actions internally to share and reuse this data – even across borders – and always in compliance with relevant rules and regulations."

Simplifying procedures

To help facilitate the sharing and reuse of data between public administrations, the TOOP project developed a federated technical architecture. "Using already existing systems and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) building blocks, we connected registries and eGovernment architectures in close to 20 countries across Europe," adds Krimmer.

Working in close collaboration with public administrations, researchers conducted several pilot programmes to demonstrate how the OOP can be used to simplify procedures for sharing business-related data in the areas of general business mobility (GBM), e-procurement and maritime. To test the TOOP cross-border connection, the pilot programmes used an innovative procedure called 'connectathons' – conference calls between data consumers and data providers.

A total of 10 Member States participated in the successful GBM pilots. Following delays related to COVID-19, the e-procurement and maritime pilots began in the summer of 2020. "The lack of face-to-face meetings and slowdowns in administrative processes have had a negative impact on our research," remarks Krimmer. "Thus, we have received a 4-month extension, with our work expected to conclude at the end of January 2021."

Advancing the once-only principle

According to Krimmer, the project's overall legacy will be the contribution of the TOOP technical architecture and components to the implementation of the EU's new Single Digital Gateway. As a result, businesses and administrations alike will benefit from the solutions being developed by TOOP.

"As we move into the project's final stages, we are working to ensure the sustainability of our outcomes as well as provide a supporting environment that enables the piloting, enhancement and uptake of the new technologies developed by the project," concludes Krimmer.

PROJECT
TOOP – The Once Only Principle Project

COORDINATED BY
Tallinn University of Technology in Estonia

FUNDED UNDER
H2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/737460

PROJECT WEBSITE
toop.eu

Collective, participative approaches to local policy challenges

The EU-funded WeGovNow project developed and piloted a new type of civic engagement platform that supports communication and collaboration between citizens, civil society and public administrations.



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Across Europe, eGovernment is in a state of transformation. Whereas public administrations have traditionally viewed the end users of these online services as mere customers, they are now seeing them as partners.

To help facilitate this transition from eGovernment to 'We-Government', the EU-funded WeGovNow (Towards We-Government: Collective and participative approaches for addressing local policy challenges) project developed and piloted an innovative platform of services for addressing local policy challenges through civic engagement.

The platform proved to be an excellent means for reaching out to and engaging with a large number of participants – many of whom would typically not participate in traditional citizen forums like town hall meetings.

Unlike the single-purpose tools typically used for civic engagement, such as online citizen surveys and petition systems, WeGovNow is positioned as a comprehensive online eco-system. Using the platform, public administrations, citizens, civil society and businesses can come together to co-create practical solutions to local policy challenges. Within the platform, there are tools geared towards: community networking and self-organisation; identifying and tracking problems; democratic decision-making; crowd-sourcing ideas; and promoting volunteer opportunities.

"Practically speaking, WeGovNow provides an integrated 'toolbox' that enables flexible support for diverse stakeholder participation process designs rather than a single, predefined participation 'workflow'," says Lutz Kubitschke, project coordinator and executive at empirica, the project's lead partner.

Engaging with citizens in Turin

The WeGovNow project was piloted in several cities, with the goal of utilising the project platform to address real-world policy challenges. In Turin, Italy, city administrators leveraged the platform to better involve non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and citizens in various decisions about cultural projects. For example, residents, stakeholders and public administrators used the platform to share ideas, collaborate and co-develop a section of the city's Dora Park.

According to Kubitschke, with the help of WeGovNow, the City of Turin has gained better access to citizen ideas and needs. "The platform proved to be an excellent means for reaching out to and engaging with a large number of participants – many of whom would typically not participate in traditional citizen forums like town hall meetings," Kubitschke says. "Citizens also benefit by having the power to exert an influence over public policymaking."

Solutions available to all public administrations

Across all three pilot municipalities, nearly 10 000 users have registered on the platform – proving that WeGovNow is scalable to a large number of users.

Based on the success of the pilots, researchers have now made WeGovNow support services available to other public administrations via the project's software partners. Furthermore, various software components developed or extended within the project can be downloaded as open source solutions. Finally, information is also available to assist those interested in implementing and/or further developing any of the WeGovNow components. This information provides interested users with a detailed overview of the solutions' current levels of maturity and sustainability, but crucially also provides insights into how they can be successfully taken forward, thus cementing the project's legacy for later innovations.

PROJECT
WeGovNow – Towards We-Government: Collective and participative approaches for addressing local policy challenges

COORDINATED BY
empirica in Germany

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RESEARCH*EU MAGAZINE ISSUE 95

SPEAKING IN TONGUES: CELEBRATING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

This issue of Research*eu celebrates Europe's vast number of languages and meets seven EU-funded projects that are playing their part in helping to preserve and/or enhance European linguistic diversity.



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