



Stimulating public sector innovation through digital technology and measuring the impact of digital government*

Summary

Stimulating public sector innovation through digital technology remains a critical and complex issue with implications for all parts of government, including operational agencies, regulatory authorities, and oversight bodies. Hybrid approaches to public service delivery are required that reflect people's needs and aspirations while addressing digital capacity deficits. National digital strategies could be useful to ensure they are building digital trust, bridging divides, and respecting human rights online, alongside continuous efforts to anticipate and respond to the impact of technological advances on government and society. The development of end-to-end technologies should be supported, and their deployment accelerated, given their impact on structural changes in the economy, the creation of new industries and businesses and the development of technologically advanced and innovative information and communications technology production and services.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends that the Council encourage Governments to further promote professionalization of the public sector workforce, invest in digital skills, update competency frameworks for implementation of the 2030 Agenda, address inequalities that exist within the public sector workforce, and take steps to address social inequities in the design and delivery of public services. (Paragraph 18)

The Committee recommends that the Council encourage Governments to manage digitalization of public services in an inclusive, fair, ethical and people-centred manner, while accelerating efforts to bridge digital divides, inter alia through hybrid models of public service delivery. (Paragraph 19)

► See [ECOSOC resolution 2023/28](#)

* Excerpt from Committee of Experts on Public Administration, Report on the twenty-second session. See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2022, Supplement No. 24 ([E/2023/44-E/C.16/2023/9](#))

Discussion

Hybrid approaches to public service delivery

The Committee reiterates that the COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the digitalization of the public sector. At the same time, the pandemic has also underscored the merits of achieving a harmonious balance between virtual and in-person public service delivery and political communication. In view of rapidly emerging technology trends and associated risks, digital technology regulations and

policies should be reviewed, revised, or developed. It is important to develop fit-for-purpose regulation, balancing between full and self-regulation, incentives and punishments and other forms of smart regulation. One consideration is to adopt a life cycle approach to regulating technologies. It is also noted that there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Addressing digital capacity deficits

There is a wide range of digital capacity deficits among public servants and political leaders. While they do not need to be experts in digital technologies, it is important for them to have an understanding of the related opportunities and risks for effective policymaking. The regulatory capacity of the public sector is to be expanded to ensure optimal use of new technologies. At the same time, it would be helpful to dismantle institutional silos and barriers that hamper the use of existing digital skills in the public sector workforce. Digital brain drain remains a concern, especially in middle- and low-income countries.

The Committee recommends building public digital literacy across all age groups, including young people. School curricula should offer courses on gaining not only know-how about digital technology but also an understanding of the technology and its direct and indirect impacts, including with regard to ethics and human rights. Schools of public administration and government training institutes are well positioned to support continuous digital learning.

Review of national digital strategies and end-to-end technologies

National digital strategies should take a holistic and integrated approach, focusing on concrete results, closing digital divides, and enhancing lives and well-being. They should be fit-for-purpose and balance opportunities and risks, reinforcing a people-centric approach and respect for human rights. It is necessary to further consultations and engagement with the public in order to understand its wishes and needs regarding digital public service delivery.

National digital strategies should be aimed at fostering the development and purchase of

domestic technologies and software products that could make States more digitally empowered. The development of end-to-end technologies should be supported, and their deployment accelerated, given their impact on structural changes in the economy, the creation of new industries and businesses and the development of technologically advanced and innovative information and communications technology production and services. Digital public goods and infrastructure could foster digital inclusion, including though last mile approaches

reaching the most vulnerable. Effective digital service delivery is affected by the availability and effective management of datasets, including data on and for the Goals. The Committee stresses that the

transfer and sharing of technologies among countries, especially between developed and developing countries, should be accelerated.

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