

# Rethinking Public Services: Strategies for Achieving Digital Transformation Goals

WORKSHOP REPORT

13 MARCH 2023



## **ABOUT THE EVENT**

The Workshop on "Rethinking Public Services: Strategies for Achieving Digital Transformation Goals" was organized as a side event to the WSIS 2023 (World Summit on the Information Society) in Geneva. The workshop took place on March 13, 2023, from 10:00 to 12:00 UCT+1. It was organized by the ITU (International Telecommunication Union) Office for Europe, within the framework of the ITU Regional Initiative for Europe on a digital transformation for resilience.

The WSIS Forum serves as a platform for exchanging information, sharing best practices, and fostering partnerships to advance the evolving Information and Knowledge Societies. The workshop on "Rethinking Public Services" complemented these discussions by showcasing the wealth of knowledge offered by countries candidates for membership of the European Union and potential candidate countries. It aimed to facilitate constructive dialogue among key stakeholders involved in digital transformation united by similar goals, aspirations, and development vector.

The workshop provided participants with an opportunity to address existing challenges, share valuable lessons learned, and explore strategies for leveraging emerging opportunities. By highlighting the successes of regional leaders who have taken bold actions to build effective and cost-efficient digital government services, the workshop aimed to inspire other countries to follow suit.

This event focused on offering practical insights into the front-end, back-end, and infrastructure aspects of public services. Through collaborative dialogue, participants gained a comprehensive understanding of the various components involved in delivering exceptional public services that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of citizens. The aim was to encourage key stakeholders to take bold action in creating a truly omnichannel, fully digital, and personalized experience for citizens.

The workshop brought together experts, policymakers, government officials, industry leaders, and other stakeholders interested in digital transformation in the public sector from Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Turkey, and Ukraine. Through engaging presentations, panel discussions, and interactive sessions, the workshop fostered an environment of knowledge exchange and collaboration, driving forward the collective effort towards achieving digital transformation goals in public services.

## **PARTICIPATION & DOCUMENTATION**

The Workshop on "Rethinking Public Services: Strategies for Achieving Digital Transformation Goals" was followed and attended by experts from the European non-EU member states

online as well as in person at the International Conference Centre Geneva. It set the tone for the following WSIS session “**GovTech 4 Impact: Executive experience sharing on digital public service development in Europe**”, on a higher-level and deeper delving into the subject, as well as other GovStack panels held as part of WSIS 2023.

Relevant documentation was made available in electronic form on the event web page [here](#). The session was supported with English captioning and presentations delivered during the event and this outcome report are also available on the [event website](#). Details about the agenda and speakers can also be found on the event’s website.



## OPENING SEGMENT

### *Jaroslav Ponder, Head, ITU Office for Europe*

In his opening remarks, Mr. Jaroslav Ponder, the Head of the ITU Office for Europe, emphasized the significance of this workshop on "Rethinking Public Services: Strategies for Achieving Digital Transformation Goals", which serves as a side event to the WSIS Session on [“The GovTech 4 Impact: Executive experience sharing on digital public service development in Europe”](#).

This workshop aimed to bring together key stakeholders from European Union candidate and potential candidate countries, aiming to foster harmonization in government digital services

development. Mr. Ponder highlighted the workshop as an opportunity for countries to align themselves with the *acquis communautaires* and harness technology for efficient, open, and transparent governance. He acknowledged the progress made by European Union countries and highlighted the crucial role of candidate and potential candidate countries in shaping the region's digital governance future.

In the context of ITU's strategic focus on sustainable digital transformation, this workshop promoted collaboration and the exchange of best practices, thus offers an overview of the region's innovation capacity, equipping countries with tools for their digital transformation. Mr. Ponder expressed gratitude to the distinguished speakers and anticipated a fruitful event, facilitating learning, valuable insights, and meaningful connections among participants.

## **PART ONE: STREAMLINING COUNTRIES DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH GOVSTACK**



**Focus:** Presenting the multiple ways in which the ITU can support countries through the GovStack initiative in their digital transformation.

**Speaker:** Valentina Stadnic, GovStack Regional Coordinator, ITU Office for Europe

### **Key points:**

- It is important for the ITU to support countries in their journey towards digital transformation and that is the exact aim of the **GovStack** initiative.
- European countries are diverse but share the same goals and aspirations and the ITU wants service delivery to be faster, more efficient, seamless, and consistent. This is the common ground of all parties involved. These goals are common to the EU and all parties of the workshop, thus constituting the starting point in our understanding of all future actions.

- Despite all common efforts, governments are still struggling with the silos in terms of investments and duplicative efforts, the financial, procurement and scaling up challenges require actions between different authorities and the interoperability of services in Europe.
- GovStack's aim is to facilitate services development with a set of layers and **building blocks** all available in the sandbox which offers governments the possibility to test and use it as a playground for future service development.
- This initiative works towards matching real products to the building box specifications and establishing compliance to extend the pool of solutions available for governments to use and implement. It provides the building block products in your market space, making these tools accessible in the same sandbox environment and available for governments' testing grounds.
- Furthermore, another of its aims is country implementations, as it supports countries in adopting the building blocks and establishing their own engagement into the building block and specification development.
- By strengthening countries' capacity to adopt and absorb the knowledge GovStack accumulated from its worldwide interactions, the initiative also targets communities of practice to create dynamic interactions not only on the technical level but on the governance level.
- Regarding our **GovStack Implementation Playbook**, it encompasses a lot of knowledge from the policy perspective and the most recent trends in service delivery and overall step-by-step guidance.
- When it comes to experience sharing, we invite you to the next **GovStack CIO Leaders Forum**, with an edition focused on AI-enabled services.
- Lastly, we invite you to join our GovStack initiative as we look for countries to pilot digital government use cases. We wish to strengthen your country-building capacity and would love to have you on board in communities of practices and support you in the development of your government strategies.

## **PART TWO: RETHINKING PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY: UKRAINE'S PERSPECTIVE ON WAYS OF HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SERVICES**



**Focus:** Ukraine's successful digital transformation, highlighting the development of the "Diia" platform of registries that integrates multiple government services and documents, and Ukraine's proposal to share this platform with other countries.

**Moderator:** Valentina Stadnic

**Speaker:** Maksym Shkilov, Adviser to the Vice-prime-minister - Minister of Digital Transformation of Ukraine

**Key points:**

- Ukraine's digital transformation is a team effort, and its developed structure has allowed for new services development. Despite full scale war, the country's digital infrastructure is fully operating with the help of their stop shop "Diia", an application that encompasses multiple government services and documents.
- IT systems all over the country allow for the well-functioning of the platform of registries. Indeed, digital transformation relies on separate digital registries and separate portals for the different ministries as well as the state agencies. It used to have no interoperability and no complete accessibility guaranteed, but its shift has changed the state of the Ukraine's digital services.
- In 2019, the transformation process began with *Diia's* simple services related to all existing systems, but the backend work was very significant. Thus, establishing interoperability was life-changing to ensure the development of the platform of registries.
- Regarding the platform of registries, the government created a pack of technologies to create a database to orchestrate all the business processes to create the interfaces for public servants.
- The idea behind this platform is "security by design, rapidity, and cost-efficient creation of digital public services".
- Ukraine is thus officially proposing to share their platform of registries with other countries to create services.
- Finally, regarding the donors in the development phases, it was initially only funded by the State's budget but, currently, with the help of donors, Ukraine is ready to share its tools with other countries and translations of the platforms in other languages and GovStack is also collaborating to ensure compliance.
- This functionality will be made available to all interested countries in the GovStack's sandbox.

**PART THREE: HARNESSING THE POWER OF FRONT-END, BACK-END, AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO DESIGN AND DELIVER SEAMLESS EXPERIENCES**

**Focus:** This moderated discussion provided a platform for government executives to share their experiences, lessons learned, and insights on ways to design seamless front-end experiences, enhance the back end, and build future-ready digital infrastructure.



**Moderator:** Valentina Stadnic, GovStack Regional Coordinator, ITU Office for Europe

**Speakers:**

- Mr. Maksym Shkilov, Adviser to the Vice-prime-minister - Minister of Digital Transformation of Ukraine
- Mr. Igor Bercu: Senior Digital Platforms Manager, Moldova E-Governance Agency
- Mr. Dejan Buha, Project Manager, UNDP, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Mr. Şaban Taşkın, Chief ICT Expert, BTK, Turkey
- Mr. Dimitri Gugunava, representative from the Digital Governance Agency, Georgia
- Ms. Milica Vučinić, Independent adviser in Directorate of infrastructure, cyber security, digitalization, and e-services, Montenegro
- Ms. Nevila Repishti, Director of the Governmental Services, National Agency for Information Technology, Albania
- Mr. Dario Peric, Head of the Service for maintenance and development of electronic business and "e-government", Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Key points:**

**ALBANIA**

- The country started their digitalization efforts in 2013 and has applied this transformative process to their public services to change citizens and businesses' mindsets regarding technology in government spaces.

- Albania's platform encompasses 95% of electronic public services exclusively online and established a single digital gateway to provide access to information, procedure and assistance in problem solving services.
- The pro-digital agenda consists of strategies to set goals for the upcoming years to follow modern data platforms and digital technologies for the citizens' needs.
- To overcome the lack of resources, Albania recognizes the need to further advance the digitalization of government services. Thus, the cross-cutting strategy of the digital agenda traces the path to stimulate investment in the key areas of advanced computing and data handling (AI, cybersecurity) and advanced digital skills necessary.
- The pillars of this endeavor are the continuous focus on ICT, including coding skills and critical thinking in education and an action plan that encompasses projects related to the improvement of ICT infrastructure and electronic systems of public institutions.

### **MOLDOVA**

- The digital transformation in Moldova started in 2010, ever since using obsolete post-Soviet platforms, however, for the last two years, Moldova adopted a single interface platform which is a collection of components allowing them to use the same user experience.
- The service is mostly used by citizens in the context of official documents creation, and an app's development is currently underway.
- In line with all the GovStack principles, Moldova aims to digitalize all their services by the end of the year 2023.
- Moldova has taken on a new stream based on data exchange and events about records being changed. This proactive service approach aims to guide citizens with dedicated notifications to keep the population informed about their records and documents.
- With data exchange and the help of AI, most services can be facilitated despite the difficult back-office environment and the work it requires.

### **MONTENEGRO**

- Montenegro's level of portal users is stagnant, and this trend does not reflect the growing interest in the technological concept and the digitalization of public administration. Even Covid-19 did not increase the number of government services used.
  - One of the reasons is that the technical warranty of the portal expired and that very few innovations in terms of functionalities of user experience have been made.
  - Thus, various institutions have decided to build their own electronic portals.
- Regarding donations, the EU delegation and the UNDP have contributed to the implementation of activities and projects relating to the country's digital



infrastructure, aiming to accelerate the digital transformation of public administration in Montenegro with the development of a new and upgraded system of software.

- One of the priority activities is the establishment of an efficient and sustainable integrated system of simplified electronic procedures at the highest level of sophistication.
- The digital transformation strategy of Montenegro is based on the improvement of public services and user experience training with digital skills to reduce the digital divide and enable digital transformation and efficiency management.
- The country's platform for single information system for electronic data exchange operates to provide communications between existing systems and faster exchange of information between the government and its citizens.
- Enabling the provision of electronic services and automated exchange, the state can function with interoperability and provide institutions with a single communication platform.

## **GEORGIA**

- Since 2012, Georgia has followed the trend, having a single window portal for all public services. Throughout the years, the number of users has steadily increased.
- Georgia is currently working on reducing the number of public services by merging the ones already existent and cancelling superfluous ones.
- The country's digital governance agency ensures the interconnection and interoperability of different public agencies and the 3G infrastructure is fully integrated to allow every citizen to publicly address any Georgian governmental agency.
- Georgia's vision is that "the more channels you have for the citizens and business to access public services, the better it is". One stop shop should be available to access all the services.
- Georgia's portal ([my.gov.ge](http://my.gov.ge)) offers not only informational and transaction services but also access to online case handling and procedures.
- Regarding Georgia's mobile application, it is a platform for other public service developers to follow the strict organizational, technical and privacy regulations standards put in place by the government.
- Georgia promotes constant monitoring of the service usage, processing as much data as possible while considering strict privacy regulations. These core goals are accompanied by implementations of strategies to ensure the scalability of systems and services to meet the needs of citizens and governments.
- The use of open-source technologies is also prioritized to allow for more flexibility and the implementation of new technologies and functions.

## **Bosnia Herzegovina**

- There are very few transactional and electronic services in the country, the biggest challenge is currently the integration of different authority levels and ensuring capabilities and capacities as well as the question of registries.
- In the case of Bosnia Herzegovina, the strategy is to adopt a bottom-up approach and opt for multiple platforms for services, the current main goal being to provide services for citizens.
- Governance-wise, the strategic planning of digital transformation is very decentralized, with the EU perspective acting as a connecting tissue. Thus, public administration provides the overall rules and overlaps with EU laws and guidance.
- The UNDP has developed a readiness assessment and action planning methodology to give detailed screenings and recommendations to face the current challenges. The back-end structures, however, are still in progress.

## **TURKEY**

- Turkey has chosen a government gateway as a single user thread to ensure all public institutions' services, however, for the time being, it has not been tested to cover the entirety of the institutions.
- Regarding the scalability of services for citizens, data is instantly monitored by mobile operators with the help of AI.
- Turkey recognizes the critical importance of cybersecurity in delivering seamless digital experiences to its citizens. They emphasize the need for continuous investment in robust cybersecurity measures to safeguard sensitive data and protect against potential cyber threats. Their ongoing efforts are focused on establishing a comprehensive cybersecurity framework that ensures the safety and privacy of citizens' information in the digital realm.

### **Final Query to Conclude the Discussion:**

To close this thrilling knowledge and best practice exchange, a final question was posed to the esteemed speakers:

***What infrastructure is in place to support the delivery of digital public services, such as servers, networks, and cloud computing platforms? Is this infrastructure public or private?***

**Moldova's** representative shared that there exists a public cloud computing infrastructure they use in addition to the macro services platform for e-payment, e-signing etc. They indeed developed the services based on this architecture and framework.

**Albania**, on the other side answered that the main ICT agency in Albania manages its own data center and the government network fully supports the multiple implementations. This

hybrid environment in collaboration with Microsoft relies on a private-public partnership based on a government agreement.

**Georgia**, finally, put forth that the law of Georgia states that the institutions are responsible for establishing a cloud platform that is fully public. However, there are plans to build public-private partnerships in this domain, this hybrid approach will allow the country to leverage advantages from both fields and provide efficient digital services.

#### **TAKEAWAYS**

- Following a productive discussion that generated numerous synergies, there is anticipation for ongoing dialogues. The ITU Europe team remained open to joining other significant events on the topic and scheduling further meetings aiming to ensure the countries involvement in the GovStack initiative.
- The conversation extended into the "GovTech 4 Impact: Executive Experience Sharing on Digital Public Service Development in Europe" WSIS Session, setting the tone for a higher-level exchange.

## GovTech 4 Impact: Executive experience sharing on digital public service development in Europe

The event, "[GovTech 4 Impact: Executive Experience Sharing on Digital Public Service Development in Europe](#)," took place on the 13th of March 2023. This engaging session unfolded between 15:00 and 15:45 (UTC+01:00) within the dynamic setting of the Innovate Stage, located on the 2nd floor of CICG. Hosted by the ITU Office for Europe, the event brought together influential figures in the field of digital public service development, fostering insightful discussions and actionable plans for a digitalized future.



### SUMMARY

The "GovTech 4 Impact" session provided a platform for high-level government representatives from various European countries to share their experiences and insights on digital public service development. The event emphasized the transformative potential of GovTech solutions in promoting sustainable development, improving public service delivery, and enhancing citizen participation and engagement. The ITU's initiatives to promote digital transformation in European countries, with a focus on the GovStack approach, were introduced. Best practices and lessons learned by government representatives from Estonia, France, Israel, Moldova, and Ukraine were shared.

### MODERATOR & SPEAKERS

- Ms. Valentina STADNIC, Digital service expert, ITU Office for Europe, International Telecommunication Union (**Moderator**)
- H.E. Ms. Meirav EILON SHAHAR, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva
- H.E. Mr. Henri VERDIER, Ambassador for Digital Affairs, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, France

- H.E. Dr. Nele LEOSK, Ambassador-at-Large for Digital Affairs, Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estonia
- Mr. Jaroslaw K. PONDER, Head of the ITU Office for Europe, ITU
- Mr. Maksym SHKILOV, Adviser to the Vice-prime-minister - Minister of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Ukraine
- Ms. Olga TUMURUC, Head of Moldova E-Governance Agency, Moldova

## KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED

This insightful session and the complementary exchanges between our speakers:

- Highlighted the transformative potential of GovTech solutions in promoting sustainable development, improving public service delivery, and enhancing citizen participation and engagement.
- Introduced the ITU's initiatives to promote digital transformation in countries throughout Europe, with a focus on the GovStack approach.
- Shared best practices and lessons learned by government representatives from Estonia, France, Israel, Moldova, and Ukraine.
- Emphasized the need for responsible and ethical deployment of emerging technologies, ensuring digital inclusion, accessibility, and protecting citizen rights and privacy in GovTech solution design and deployment.
- Called for increased collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders to develop and deploy effective GovTech solutions for complex societal challenges.

With dynamic and enriching conversations between our expert speakers, we witnessed a discussion under the flag of synergy and collaboration. To conclude, our speakers shared the following takeaway messages which were then disseminated through social media channels:





## ACTIONABLE PLAN

1. Strengthen collaboration between ITU and countries in the region to accelerate public sector transformation, increase engagement in ITU initiatives like GovStack, and explore opportunities for joint projects and initiatives.
2. Facilitate the establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships within and beyond the region to collaboratively design and deploy effective GovTech solutions for societal challenges like climate change and social inequality.
3. Expand efforts to disseminate best practices and lessons learned by digital transformation leaders from the region to other countries and regions seeking to implement GovTech solutions.