



WeGovNow

Newsletter #3 February 2018

Towards WeGovernment:

Collective and participative approaches
for addressing local policy challenges

Dear Reader,

With the release of the third version of its prototype platform, the WeGovNow project has achieved another important milestone. To make this happen, the project consortium's software developers and the three pilot municipalities - Turin, San Donà di Piave and Southwark - have closely collaborated over the last months. Useful lessons could be derived from a series of local events that were held at the pilot sites with a view to involving municipal staff, citizens and other civil society stakeholders in an iterative platform development process.

The input received so far concerns a variety of themes ranging from technology related issues, e.g. desired platform functionalities, up to wider human issues such as a perceived need for a cultural change within public administrations. All in all, there was much enthusiasm about the positive potentials provided by the project for addressing local policy challenges in a collective and participatory manner. Beyond this, the awarding of a national innovation prize to San Donà di Piave, one of the project's pilot municipalities, has encouraged the entire WeGovNow consortium to further follow its path.

During the final project year, our work will focus on piloting the WeGovNow prototype platform as it has been developed so far under day-to-day conditions in the three pilot municipalities, thereby taking account of local circumstances and policy priorities prevailing at each site. This is hoped to deliver a useful evidence base for the further deployment of WeGovNow beyond the project duration.

In the meantime, you may also be interested in reading about some recent EU-level developments in the field of eGovernment.

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The WeGovNow Team

The WeGovNow prototype platform is now ready for being piloted under day-to-day conditions in Turin, London and San Donà di Piave

Technically speaking, WeGovNow strives for integrating a set of innovative software applications into a unified citizen engagement platform. To this end, a number of civic engagement applications which existed already prior to the project have now been successfully integrated into a single **online platform** together with software components that were newly developed by the project. The capabilities generally provided by the integrated WeGovNow prototype platform as it currently stands go well beyond those provided by its individual components. In other words: the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

To arrive at this stage, feedback on early prototype versions by municipal staff, citizens and other civil society stakeholders was sought at various occasions and by means of different event formats. According to the project's maxim "*call for people where they stand and live*" demonstration events were for instance organised in various settings, such as a **library**, a **theatre** and a consumer **fair**. Moreover, a series of WeGovNow Labs was and still is being held in the pilot municipalities to enable a more individualised hands-on experience of WeGovNow by the participants and the collection of feedback respectively. Not at least, the prototype platform was assessed by experts internal to the WeGovNow consortium in relation to its accessibility for people with disabilities in particular and its interface usability more generally.

"Stakeholder workshop at the Canada Water Library", London Borough of Southwark



Photo credits: Adriano Savoca

"Fiera del Rosario" San Donà di Piave



Photo credits: Giulio Antonini

During the final project year, the WeGovNow platform will be piloted under day-to-day conditions in Turin, Southwark and San Donà di Piave. In fact, the three WeGovNow pilot municipalities differ in many regards, not just in terms of size. It may thus not come as a surprise that they have yet developed different **use case scenarios** for piloting purposes, and we are eager to see how WeGovNow will be supporting everyday practices in the different municipality respectively. Also, we are looking forward to learning how the citizens and other local stakeholders will take advantage of WeGovNow under day-to-day conditions, rather than in "laboratory" settings as it has hitherto been the case. Almost by definition, the structural diversity of the WeGovNow pilot sites required developing a solution that is flexible enough to take governments and citizens from where they are at rather than providing a one-size-fits-all solution. The architecture of the WeGovNow prototype platform therefore enables straight forward configuration according to local framework conditions.

Italian SMAU award scheme appreciates holistic innovation approach pursued by WeGovNow

The inputs hitherto received by the diverse stakeholders have touched upon a variety of aspects. Partly, they concerned technology related issues in a narrow sense, e.g. how to access the technical infrastructure or ideas on particular technical features the new platform might offer. Other inputs primarily addressed organisational aspects, e.g. how to guarantee an effective synergy between offline and online public services. Still other remarks touched upon wider human issues such as a perceived need for a cultural change if the benefits potentially provided by WeGovNow are indeed to be realised beyond the project duration.



All in all, the feedback received so far suggests that the general promise held by innovative civic participation solutions such as WeGovNow requires municipalities to pursue a multi-pronged innovation approach, one that simultaneously pays attention to the particular working models of different administrative units to be involved and to the technology to be employed. From the perspective of the three cities participating in the project, this has highlighted the need that technology innovation and organisational process innovation must be pursued at the same time. The **awarding of the national innovation prize SMAU 2017 to our pilot municipality San Donà di Piave** for its holistic innovation strategy has encouraged the entire WeGovNow consortium to further follow this path.

The European picture - recent trends in the context of eGovernment

1. Urban Agenda for the European Union Partnership on Digital Transition

Digitalisation is shaping the future of our cities and the potentials of eGovernment are increasingly recognised among government institutions, international organizations and businesses. By enhancing information flows and encouraging active participation of citizens, eGovernment is not only considered a valuable means to make administrative processes more efficient but also bears the potential of building trust and improving the overall relationship between governments and citizens.



Against this background, the **Urban Agenda for EU** has approved a new **Partnership on Digital Transition** as one of its twelve priorities. The agenda is a new working method adopted by the European

Commission that *“aims to promote cooperation between member states, municipalities, the European Commission and other stakeholders, in order to stimulate growth, innovation and the quality of life in the cities of Europe”*. With digitalisation of public services being a strategic goal of governments and smart cities for years, the Partnership on Digital Transition will work towards improving the provision of public services to citizens and strives to create business opportunities accelerating urban growth. eGovernment, future health and social care services, urban planning, learning and skills development as well as key enabling technologies represent some of the core focuses the partnership has set. This way, the European Commission, eight cities, six EU countries, and four European organisations (EUROCITIES, URBACT, CEMR, CoR) work together to provide more efficient public services and a better knowledge exchange.

2. Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment

On October 6 2017 all EU Member States and EFTA countries met in Tallinn and signed the Ministerial **Declaration on eGovernment**. This marks a new political commitment at EU level on ensuring high quality and user-centred digital services to all citizens.

The eGovernment Declaration succeeds the **Malmö Declaration** that has been signed in 2009, and the launch of the **eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020**. Since then several key milestones have been achieved, including eProcurement and electronic identification (eID) services, which are to be complemented by the Tallinn Declaration adopted in last autumn. The 2017 declaration includes concrete lines of policy actions to be undertaken by the signatory states in the upcoming five years. These range from following a digital- and interoperability-by-default agenda, promoting open source and data reuse, towards enabling seamless cross-border service for businesses. Moreover, in signing the declaration, the European countries committed themselves to ensuring inclusive and accessible digital public services and to guarantee the security and transparency of data when designing public service and public administration information and communication technologies.

As such, the Tallinn Declaration constitutes an important driving force for Member States and the Commission, *“both collectively and individually, to continue to invest in accelerating the modernisation of the public sector”*.



This is a free e-newsletter published by WeGovNow, a project co-funded by the European Commission. It is implemented by a consortium led by Empirica GmbH, in cooperation with: Città di Torino, Comune di San Donà di Piave, Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini, Funka Nu AB, Infalia PC, LiquidFeedback, London Borough of Southwark, Mapping for Change, Universität Heidelberg, University College London, Università degli Studi di Torino.

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No 693514.

