

5th e-Governance Conference 2019 21-22 May in Tallinn, Estonia

Overview of the conference “Same Goals, Different Roadmaps” Compiled by Radu Serrano, Anu Vahtra-Hellat

5th annual international e-Governance Conference on 21–22 May in Tallinn, Estonia focused on digital transformation roadmaps and presented case studies from Armenia, Aruba, Bangladesh, Canada, Cape Verde, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Georgia, Japan, Kurdistan, Mauritius, Rwanda and Ukraine.

400+ ATTENDEES

All in all, over 400 participants representing 110 countries participated in the conference. Eight countries were represented at the ministerial level: Armenia, Aruba, Bangladesh, Brunei, Ghana, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Mauritius and Rwanda. Conference participants from the most distant countries came from Aruba, Vanuatu and the Netherlands Antilles. The largest delegations were from Ukraine, Mauritius and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, 23 ambassadors of the United Nations also joined the conference.



PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

The conference was organised by the e-Governance Academy in cooperation with the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, VFS Global and Tallinn City. Supporters of the conference included Open Estonia Foundation, Intel, Rockefeller Foundation, the Government of Sweden, and IDEMIA.



EXPO

Some 20 exhibitors were present at the conference EXPO, including 10 IT-companies, VFS Global, Tallinn City, the Estonian ICT cluster, Startup Estonia, the ISA² Programme of the European Commission, the State Agency for e-Governance of Ukraine, TalTech and the e-Governance Academy.



PARTNER OF THE YEAR

The eGA award “Partner of the Year 2019” went to the **Electronic Interoperability Centre of Kyrgyzstan** for the most persistent implementation and promotion of the data exchange platform Tunduk at the government level in Kyrgyzstan. Mr Arvo Ott, Executive Director and Hannes Astok, Development Director of e-Governance Academy, handed the prize to Ms **Nuria Kutnaeva**, Director of the Electronic Interoperability Centre of Kyrgyzstan at the e-Governance Conference dinner reception at the Tallinn Creative Hub.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CONFERENCE

The two-day conference featured more than **40 experts** and leaders in the area of digital government developments. The conference included **24 sessions**, which were grouped into three larger tracks: **Visions track, Actions track, and e-Estonia track.**

KEYNOTES PROMOTED COLLABORATION

We were very fortunate to have President of Estonia **Ms Kersti Kaljulaid**, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr **Fabrizio Hochschild**, European Commission Vice-President Mr **Andrus Ansip** promoting cross-border cooperation on digital transformation in order to spread innovation and reshape daily governance, and through that, people's lives.

Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of Estonia, pointed out that digital ID is the key to digital transformation. "Should done region globally be able to establish common digital ID and common service backbone for a high number of countries, they would see economic interlinks developing at the speed never been seen before," said the President.

Referring to her own experience, using digital signature provides an opportunity to manage daily tasks remotely and results in less need to travel. The latter helps to lower greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the environmental footprint caused by travelling.

In her speech, she also highlighted that local culture should be considered when finding ways how digital technologies could help us to achieve sustainable development goals, because countries vary in their legislative and institutional setup. In creating e-governments, she said, the culture of running the state must prevail, not functionalities of software. "Therefore, we also need to consider local culture when we want to digitise our services and create tailor-made solutions," said Ms Kersti Kaljulaid, President of Estonia.

According to the Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid, learning to cooperate while ensuring the integrity of national digital roadmaps is a true challenge. "European Union can serve a great lesson from the last decade of attempts on harmonizing the digital policies and practices.

The full speech of the Estonian President is available [on this link](#).



Mr **Fabrizio Hochschild**, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, admitted that global cooperation is not widespread enough nowadays, with new threats emerging and contentious topics being discussed, such as privacy in the digital age.

"The need for international cooperation is evident, and much more necessary than before, because all models involve multiple stakeholders, governments cannot do it alone by themselves, and the tech evolves faster than policy-making," said Mr Fabrizio Hochschild.

Mr Hochschild welcomed the renewed cooperation with Estonia to support effective, efficient and transparent digital public service development globally and to raise awareness within the UN in the digital domain. "First, the UN need to increase the level of digital understanding internally. Afterwards we can help member states build capacities nationally and at a regional level. Finally, threats of the cyber domain must also be better understood," said Hochschild.

Mr **Andrus Ansip**, European Commission Vice-President, highlighted the need to collaborate between countries and regions and shared the experience of digital single market development in EU. „The cost of barriers of digital market was more than 415 billion euros per year in the European Union and roaming fees differed per country. Yet, the EU is moving ahead with Digital Single Market and is ready to share its experience with the world," said Mr Andrus Ansip.

In his keynote presentation on smart society, Mr **Ravi Shankar Chaturvedi** presented the Digital Evolution Index, a tool developed by the Fletcher School at Tufts University to identify where in the world the digital economy is moving the fastest. The Smart Society Benchmark was used to present how Estonia, Israel, New Zealand, South Korea and United Kingdom perform and at which level Mexico, India and Nigeria are with respect to Estonia. He pointed out that Mexico is the closest to be the next "Estonia" regarding digital society development. The full Digital Planet Report [is available here](#).

CIO of Estonia, Mr **Siim Sikkut** spoke about e-society development in Estonia and about the role of governance in the digital age. He stated that governments need to experiment and take risks. "Transformation means that change must be managed, and taking risks is the way forward," said Sikkut. He referenced Estonia's e-residency programme as an example of experimentation.

Mr Siim Sikkut explained that Estonia is digital because it invested and built capacities, but the country also accomplished these capacity-building efforts because it is digital.

It is a never-ending cycle to try to build things in the most secure way possible, because the risks will always be there, being 100% un-hackable is impossible, but the benefits of being digital are priceless. "I'm a stern believer that the wheel must not be reinvented, and that there is a lot to learn from each other. Information should be shared, policies should be reused and adapted. Estonia is open to both teach and learn from others," said Siim Sikkut.

VISIONS TRACK

The visions track contained a lot of examples of digital transformation and roadmaps development. Examples were presented from Canada, Rwanda, Armenia, Bangladesh, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and Mauritius. Moreover, challenges and opportunities of cross-border cooperation were discussed. Mr **Lacina Koné**, CEO of Smart Africa, pointed out that collaboration among the region is valuable for all participants. One of the main priorities of Smart Africa is to create a joint African network and move forward together.



Mr **Kevin O'Neil** from the Rockefeller Foundation emphasised the importance of involving both government and private sector in digitisation and data protection.

Cities have always been laboratories of innovation. Mr **Tak Nagumo**, Managing Executive at Mitsubishi UFH research and Consulting, presented Japan's point of view on digital transformation driven by cities. According to Mr Nagumo, the reality is not as simple and a double approach is needed: top-down and bottom-up. Japan is working toward Society 5.0 (i.e. a super smart society). The challenges are weak trust in technology, lack of digital transformation capacity and complex regulations.

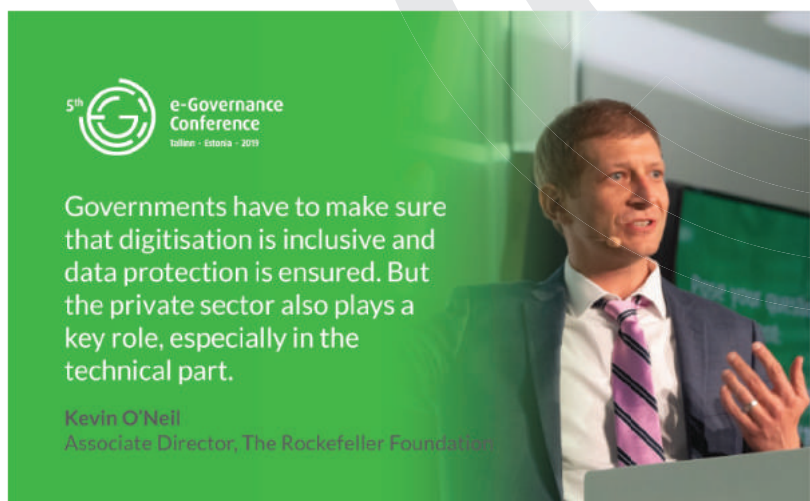
Finally, Mr Nagumo presented the case study of Aizuwakamatsu City in Fukushima, where after the devastating earthquake, measures were taken for its revitalisation through a Smart City Plan of 8 steps. Additional efforts included the creation of a Partnership between TalTech and Aizu University, an open government consortium, and the creation of Aizu Data Valley.

Marko Turpeinen from EIT Digital presented the case study of Helsinki City that proves that cities can also be digital frontrunners. He also promoted Mydata.org - a solution for data portability under the control of the user.

Talking about innovations that fuel digital transformation and development of a common culture and cooperation, Ms **Natalia Aristimuño Pérez**, Head of Interoperability Unit at DG Informatics at the European Commission, said that interoperability was one of the bases for digital public services embracing innovation.

Mr **Côme Berbain**, French State CTO, pointed out that we need to update regulations to support innovations. For example, France has been inventing regulations concerning illegal content such as hate speech in cooperation with Facebook. Also, when innovating, the users should be kept in mind.

Mr **Erkki Karo** from TalTech said that digital transformation expects a change in mindsets and habits. "We are approaching an era where IT knowledge will not only be important for the support department but a requirement for every public servant," said Mr Erkki Karo.



ACTIONS TRACK

The Actions Track was focused on practical case studies of how countries have developed their digital roadmaps, cybersecurity strategies, and are preparing for the provision of efficient e-services. Examples were showcased from large countries such as **Ukraine** to small ones such as **Cape Verde**. Public-private partnership examples were also presented, as a reminder of the enablers of successful digital transformation.

There were presented two tools for digital transformation and cybersecurity strategy development.

Ms **Minerva Novero**, Policy Specialist at the UNDP and Ms **Marit Lani**, Project Manager at eGA, presented a digital transformation tool, which countries can use to assist the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. In the near future, the tool will allow the creation of personalised digital transformation roadmaps for individual countries.

Mr **Kimmo Rousku**, General Secretary of the Finnish Public Sector Digital Security Management Board (VAHTI) and Ms **Epp Maaten**, Programme Director of National Cyber Security at eGA, showcased the use of the NCSI index for national cybersecurity strategy development. Find out more about the National Cyber Security Index, which includes more than 130 countries at ncsi.ega.ee.

Most people think that accelerator programs are for start-ups, but Mr **Ravi Shankar Chaturvedi**, Co-investigator & Head of Digital Planet at the Fletcher School, Tufts University and Linnar Viik, Programme Director of Smart Governance at eGA, demonstrated a brand-new method that could accelerate digital transformation at the state level. In conclusion, the urgency for the Digital Transformation Accelerator for governments, utilising the experience of the agile, cohort driven development of start-ups and scale-up companies was recognised.

Two special sessions were dedicated to small countries. The sessions addressed sustainable data collection and storage, and options to optimise the costs of digital solutions. The **Faroe Islands** presented their experience in implementing basic components of e-government architecture and shed light on their challenges and motivations.



It is important for a country to have a good balance between their digital development level and their cyber security capacities.

Kimmo Rousku
VAHTI General Secretary



The government needs a framework to deal with cyber threats - it is not an issue for individual institutions, it concerns the whole society and needs wider cooperation.

Epp Maaten
Programme Director of National Cyber Security,
e-Governance Academy



Governments could learn a lot from startups: create smaller projects and teams, give them some funding, let them test and learn.

Ravi Shankar Chaturvedi
Co-investigator & Head, Digital Planet
at The Fletcher School, Tufts University



E-governance is essential for building a modern state. eGA is helping to create a digital roadmap for Aruba to further support its tourism sector and investments.

Evelyn C. Wever-Croes
Prime Minister of Aruba



The case study on the challenges of public services provision in a large country came from Ukraine. In Ukraine, the State Agency for e-Governance and eGA are running IT developments at the municipality level (information system Vulyk) and at the government level (data exchange system Trembita), which benefits the decentralisation process in Ukraine as well as raises the speed and effectiveness of service provision tenfold.

The newest trends of GIS and good practice examples from Chile, Kenya and Mauritius we also presented in the Actions track.

E-ESTONIA TRACK

At the conference, a special track was dedicated to the most interesting and forward-looking developments taking place in Estonia: Artificial Intelligence in governance, a roadmap for proactive government development, predictive public services at national and local level, data-based governance, e-health system, i-voting costs and diffusion of i-voters.

In the e-Estonia track, Mr **Mart Mägi**, CEO of Statistics Estonia shed light on the current challenges with data governance, which could be summarised as Gather, Guard, Grow and Give. At the end, Mr Mägi stated that e-governance 2.0 might bring about new public services and open the possibility for new businesses, however, the main concern, its centre, must always be the citizen.

In the i-voting session, **Prof Robert Krimmer** pointed out that the decline of voter turnout is evident throughout the world and i-voting could be seen as one of the options to increase voters' convenience through introducing different voting schedules and methods. Prof Krimmer stated that new voting technology can be applied in many ways, but they still have to fulfil existing commitments and standards. Trust in them needs to be established by maximum transparency.

On the other hand, Dr **Mihkel Solvak** stated that in Estonia all age groups are using i-voting, trust in i-voting has stayed at an average of 70% over the last 14 years, whereas levels of PC literacy, education and income are not affecting the diffusion of i-voting. As a fun fact, the median speed of i-voting is 90 seconds. As a practical example, Mr **Hannes Astok** did a live demonstration of i-voting at the end of the conference, where he cast an i-vote for the European Parliamentary elections.

This year's conference ended with a final keynote from **Liselotte Lyngsø** from Future Navigator who reminded us that human contact is still important also in the digital world. She affirmed that becoming a futurist is a cooperation effort. Becoming curious, open-minded and an explorer are keys to engaging future opportunities.



TAKE-AWAYS IN BRIEF

- Global trends show the continuous increase in the dissemination of digital technologies, making digital transformation a real opportunity for any country or society wanting to achieve their development goals. Most of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) benefit from the application of digital solutions and countries that have higher digital adoption rates also perform well on their SDGs;
- Digital transformation of a country is not an option, but rather a necessity when the goal is to improve the country's competitiveness and attractiveness for foreign investors;
- Leadership at the highest level of government plays a crucial role in successful digital transformation;
- Countries and governments have different priorities. Therefore, digital transformation roadmaps should be made locally relevant and responsive for the country's unique development needs;
- Collaboration between all levels of government, sectors, and also across borders is an important enabler for successful digital transformation and a key for innovations. Do not re-invent the wheel, re-use the knowledge and policies;
- Public-private partnership is a possibility to obtain funding not depending on government and should be actively sought after in the process of digital transformation;
- Public-private partnership and outsourcing of service provision helps governments to raise the quality of the service and convenience to obtain the service for their citizens very quickly, as was pointed out in the presentation of VFS Global;
- Investing in smart people and capacity-building is absolutely essential to respond to all challenges that come with digital transformation.

Thank you for making it happen!

The organisers would like to thank all speakers for their insightful and enriching presentations and for sharing their unique experiences. Also, we thank all attendees for their active participation in discussions and networking! Thank you for coming and see you again at e-Governance Conference 2020!

