GovTech

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Transforming Government, Together

GovTech forum 24

28th February 2024

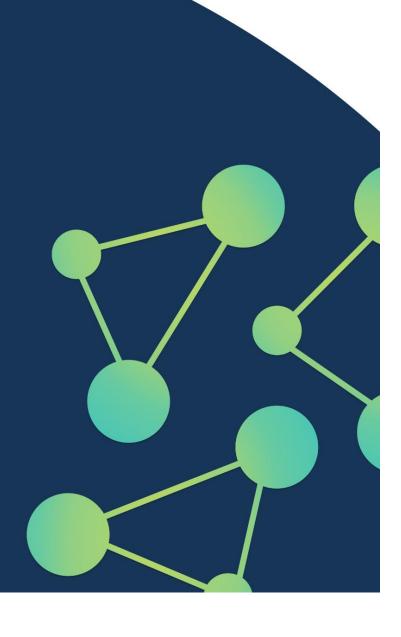Post event report

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GovTech forum 24

Event and Organizers overview

GovTech forum 2024: GovTech for the prosperity of countries
https://www.govtechforum.io/

Organized by **.feel**, *operational think tank on public purpose, innovation in the public system and GovTech*
https://www.feel.community/

The inaugural **GovTech Forum 24, organized by .feel** and held in Milan on February 28th, provided a unique opportunity to explore how **Italy can harness the power of GovTech to modernize public services and drive national prosperity**. The event gathered over 300 stakeholders (3 continents, 8 countries), including experts, public administration officials, policymakers, elected representatives, international NGOs, decision-makers from state-owned enterprises, GovTech startups, corporates, and media personalities. It was a day filled with **collaboration, innovation, and forward-thinking discussions, setting the stage for continued progress in the GovTech arena.**

Workshops

The event commenced with three policy workshops, serving as a **collaborative platform for designing GovTech policies** and **experimenting with innovative methodologies within the Italian context**. Discussions included an introduction to policy problems, stakeholder identification, missed opportunities, and expected impacts. Subsequently, participants explored policy solutions and engaged in discussions concerning priority intervention areas and innovative policy solutions.

In particular, the workshop **"Developing GovTech Ecosystems: Tech, Capitals, and Enablers"** featured insights from experts and practitioners, including Lorenzo Maternini from the AI Committee at the Prime Minister's Office, who emphasized the necessity of **legal support for public sector experimentation**. Other experts, such as Laila Pavone, from Milan Municipality, suggested measures to **make procurement processes more startup-friendly**. The discussion moreover highlighted that in Italy, there is not only a lack of political narrative on this topic but also a deficit in ownership and national-level governance, requiring a **coordinated effort among ministries**. It emerged also a recognized need for a **centralized platform**, managed by a digital innovation team, to gather and **disseminate Italian best practices**.

The main takeaways underscored that in Italy, the **venture capital and private equity sectors lack awareness and attention towards GovTech as a viable investment area within the digital startup realm**. Moreover, one of the major barriers to GovTech diffusion

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in Italy is the **challenge faced by entities in adopting agile experimentation frameworks**.

Therefore, to foster the development of innovative GovTech ecosystems supported by adequate investments, a policy framework was proposed, articulated around the following pillars:

1. **National strategies for GovTech ecosystems**,
2. **Regulatory sandboxes** for strategic GovTech areas, including at the local level, such as the example of the city of Valencia,
3. **Engagement of qualified investors towards the GovTech theme**.

Keynote Speeches

The event continued with two compelling keynote speeches focused on **Smart Cities.** Hubert Beroche, Founder of **Urban AI** (https://urbanai.fr/about-us/), provided an overview of European startup innovations in Smart Cities, and presented Urban AI's innovative work, based on a new approach to data collection based on the pillars: building trust through visibility; materialising info to the people and sensible interfaces (for more info: https://chaire-eti.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Notebooks-of-the-chair-2-cities-and-IA.pdf).

Bas Boorsma, former Chief Digital Officer of Rotterdam and founder di Urban Innovators Global (https://www.urbaninnovators.global/), emphasized that GovTech transcends mere modernization of the public sector; it encompasses the **broader goal of enhancing cities as cohesive entities**. GovTech, according to Boorsma, is instrumental in **driving transformation through digital solutions**. During his presentation, Boorsma showcased various smart city facilitator organizations, including Urbanitarian, UNL://, and BABLE, underscoring the pivotal role of **collaborative platforms in advancing urban innovation**.

On another note, **Marcello Coppa's** intervention added a fascinating perspective to the discussion, focusing on the concept of **GovTech for prosperity**. He reframed prosperity not solely in terms of economic growth but rather as **sustainable, shared** and **inclusive development**. This entails delivering services to citizens that **prioritize public value** and exploring **innovative methods of risk-reward allocation** between the public and private sectors. Coppa's insights highlighted the potential of GovTech to foster inclusive growth and societal well-being through collaborative and forward-thinking approaches.

Panel discussions

The **Panel "GovTech in the Global Agenda,"** moderated by **Chiara Carlini (PUBLIC)**, featured insights from a diverse range of experts including **Giovanna Galasso (Intellera Consulting), Stefanos Kotoglou (European Commission DG DIGIT), Roby Senderowitsch (The World Bank), Gianluca Galletto (DG Advisors, Former Advisor to the Mayor of New York City), and Julian Olsen (OECD - OCDE)**. The discussion yielded

several notable takeaways. From a procurement standpoint, the panelists highlighted a **prevalent bias within government towards favoring known entities**, underscoring the necessity to provide startups with **specific opportunities to enter the market**. They emphasized the importance of **balancing innovation with the efficient use of public resources** and advocated for creating visibility on the available opportunities for public sector officials. Additionally, they stressed the **crucial role of technology in delivering policy outcomes while safeguarding public interests**, necessitating the creation of a protected space to prevent financial losses. The panel recognized the need for **capacity building in startups to navigate procurement processes effectively**, often through partnerships with larger companies. While discussions on digitalization have traditionally centered on medium-large corporations, GovTech startups offer innovative perspectives that can enrich the landscape. The **collaboration between startups and corporates enhances the impact of GovTech**, with startups bringing disruptive solutions that complement existing offerings. Despite the challenges of aligning smaller startups with larger companies due to rigid requirements, **GovTech accelerator programs, such as GovTech Connect and SPIN4EIC, play a crucial role in supporting startups and fostering collaboration.**

The Panel **"GovTech is now" on the Italian landscape**, moderated by Giacomo Biraghi and featuring **Greta Nasi from Bocconi University, Gloriana Cimmino from PagoPA Spa, Guido Arnone from the Municipality of Milan, Serafino Sorrenti from the Prime Minister's Office, and Vincenzo Severino from Cassa Depositi e Prestiti**, provided a complementary focus on Italy following the preceding panel discussion. From the Italian perspective, it became evident that the pandemic left no alternative but to embrace digital services, as trust in them was lacking previously. The citizens' viewpoint shifted after COVID-19, emphasizing the **need to maintain this momentum by fostering an ecosystem approach**. The focus should be on the process rather than mere adoption, requiring a diverse portfolio of engagement methods with the public.

Conclusion

The GovTech Forum 24 offered profound insights into GovTech policy design, innovation, and collaboration. Key outcomes emphasized the **necessity of robust policy frameworks, startup-friendly procurement measures, and sustained momentum in digital transformation efforts.** The event underscored the pivotal role of GovTech in driving sustainable development and enhancing public service delivery. Moving forward, continued collaboration and innovation will be essential in fostering resilient and inclusive GovTech ecosystems.

What's next for .feel? In the coming weeks, .feel will present **three policy papers** along with supporting initiatives. The think thank has outlined its action lines for 2024/2025, focusing on **research, capacity building, and advocacy**. It was also announced that in March 2025, it will be hosted the **second "GovTech Forum for the Prosperity of Countries!"**