GovTech
Connect

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GovTech Connect
Challenge Definition Workshop for
Boot Camp 3 & 4– Western & Eastern
Europe

31 January 2024, 11:00–12:00 CET

With the support of:

European Commission

intellera
consulting

PUBLIC

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DIPARTIMENTO DI DESIGN

Workshop 3 & 4– Challenge Definition for Western & Eastern Europe on Reimagining Cities: Pioneering Smart Solutions for a Sustainable Future

January 31st 2024, 11:00– 12:00 (CET)

Objectives

As part of GovTech Connect, we run a series of boot camps for startups aimed at identifying innovative solutions across European regions that address challenges regarding digital infrastructure, net-zero, health technology, and smart cities.

To define innovation challenges to be worked on in each GovTech Connect Boot Camp, we host Challenge Definition Workshops for each of the four regions. These virtual and interactive workshops are a gathering of GovTech experts, EDIHs, and public officials from across the region, supported by collaboration tools to focus on identifying problem areas that could potentially benefit from tech-enabled, innovative solutions.

In January 2024, we hosted a GovTech Connect Workshop to define the objectives and the challenge statements for the 2024 GovTech Connect boot camps. **Workshop 3: "Reimagining Cities: Pioneering Smart Solutions for a Sustainable Future" (Western and Eastern Europe) was hosted on January 31st 2024 online via Zoom.**

The goal of this workshop was to **produce a set of concrete challenge statements** considering smart cities in Western and Eastern Europe to which startups could apply to afterwards. The workshop brought together >15 attendees from government organisations, GovTech labs and private sector organisations.

Workshop Approach

The Challenge Definition Workshop convened stakeholders from diverse backgrounds across Europe, including public sector officials, startups, and other relevant entities, to explore themes central to smart cities. Throughout the discussions, it became evident that prioritising smart infrastructure within smart city frameworks is crucial for fostering sustainable urban development. Participants emphasised the need for resilient, adaptable infrastructure that can support the integration of innovative technologies and address evolving urban challenges.

In addition to infrastructure, there was a strong emphasis on fostering cross-border innovation and collaboration to maximise the impact of smart city initiatives. Participants recognised the value of sharing best practices, expertise, and resources across borders to accelerate progress towards common goals. The importance of forming partnerships and networks at the European level to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration was highlighted as a key enabler of success.

Ethical considerations surrounding emerging technologies within smart city agendas emerged as a significant focal point of discussion. Participants stressed the importance of ensuring transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in the development and deployment of technologies to safeguard citizens' rights and privacy. There was also recognition of the need for robust governance frameworks to address ethical concerns and guide responsible innovation in smart city projects.

Notably, consensus was reached on the formulated challenge statements and smart city themes, with particular resonance observed in the domains of smart energy and wildcard categories. Insights gleaned from the workshop informed the refinement of challenge statements, notably in areas such as smart energy, where concepts like gamification for behavioural change to promote energy monitoring among citizens gained prominence. Discussions also highlighted the imperative of ensuring trustworthy data usage in healthcare information within the smart wellbeing domain.

Additionally, suggestions were made to foster collaboration between cities to enhance the scalability of innovative solutions and to consider the implications of upcoming legislation, such as the AI Act, in smart engagement initiatives. Potential avenues for exploration in themes such as smart leisure, smart business, and smart culture, as well as the integration of digital twins, were also acknowledged for further consideration in shaping future smart city initiatives.

These insights collectively contribute to the foundation for advancing smarter, more sustainable urban environments in line with European Union priorities. By addressing key challenges and opportunities identified during the workshop, stakeholders can work collaboratively to drive positive change and create inclusive, resilient cities for future generations.

These insights proved invaluable in gaining a deeper understanding of the smart cities landscape from the perspective of industry professionals, and they played a crucial role in shaping the formulation of the challenge statements.

Proposed challenge statements

SMART ENERGY

1. How can technology make infrastructure smarter and greener, promoting active energy optimisation in buildings and roads?

2. How can technology enhance the integration of renewable energy sources into existing urban infrastructure, considering scalability and adaptability?

SMART MOBILITY

1. How can technology improve the accessibility of public transportation systems for individuals with diverse needs, considering physical and digital inclusivity?

2. How can technology optimise traffic flow and reduce congestion through innovative solutions, taking into account environmental sustainability?

SMART WELLBEING

1. How can technology be employed to facilitate real-time monitoring that ensures the well-being of residents by proactively improving health and preventing illness?

2. How can technology design community-driven digital platforms that foster social connections and facilitate neighbourhood collaboration for improved well-being?

SMART ENGAGEMENT

1. How can technology design intuitive citizen engagement platforms that allow residents to easily access and provide feedback on public services, enhancing overall interaction with local authorities?

2. How can technology effectively address inclusion barriers and enhance the inclusivity of diverse urban populations, ensuring equitable service delivery through more accessible public services?

WILDCARD

How can technology catalyse transformative citizen behaviour change to foster smart cities and promote sustainable public sector services.
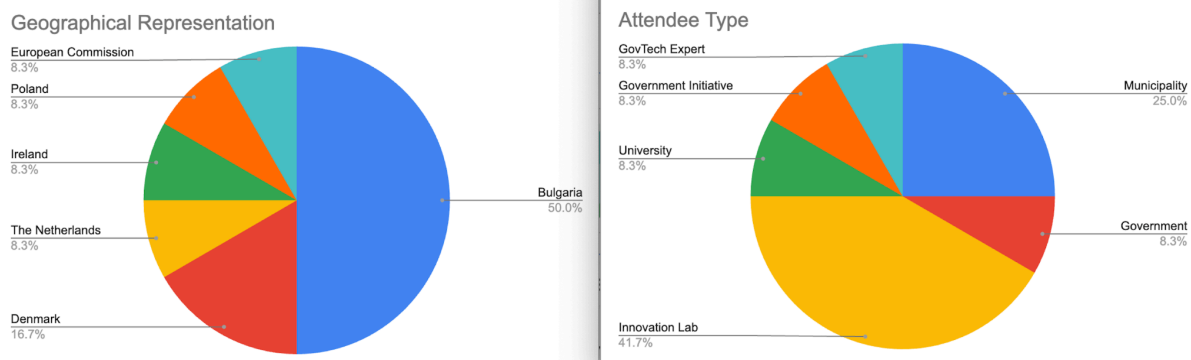
Agenda

11:00-11:05 Introduction to GovTech Connect: An overview of the project (5 min)
Delivered by Intellera (Consortium lead)

11:05-11:10 Introduction to the GovTech Connect bootcamps and overview of the regional GovTech ecosystem (10 min)
Delivered by PUBLIC Boot Camp Lead

11:10-11:55 Challenge and opportunity identification (40 min)
Participants will be guided through an interactive discussion on:
- Key opportunity areas for Government startup collaboration in Smart Cities
- Identifying key ecosystem actors and relevant Smart Cities/GovTech initiatives

11:55-12:00 Conclusions (5 min)

Major Outcomes

Attendee demographics

The event brought together >15 attendees from government organisations, GovTech labs and private sector organisations. Additionally, we were grateful for the representation from the European Commission.

Geographical Representation

European Commission 8.3%
Poland 8.3%
Ireland 8.3%
The Netherlands 8.3%
Denmark 16.7%
Bulgaria 50.0%

Attendee Type

GovTech Expert 8.3%
Government Initiative 8.3%
University 8.3%
Innovation Lab 41.7%
Municipality 25.0%
Government 8.3%

Workshop results

The workshop produced a range of findings, with key takeaways emphasising the importance of prioritising smart infrastructure within smart city themes. Discussions also underscored the significance of cross-border innovation and collaboration, along with ethical considerations related to emerging technologies within the smart cities agenda. Notably, there was general agreement regarding the formulated challenge statements and smart cities themes. These insights were instrumental in shaping the challenge statements, particularly for the smart energy and wildcard categories.

Next Steps

The selected challenge statements informed the upcoming project activities. The open call for the 2024 boot camps was officially launched on February 8th and the challenge areas were published in the Boot Camp microsite for startups to apply.

Companies were invited to apply through social media channels and via direct outreach. To support their application process, a live Q&A session for each region was hosted. The session for this took place on February 22nd 2024.

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