

GovTech Connect

Transforming Government, Together

Theory of Change Workshops

17th June and 22nd July, 2024

14:30–16:30

Microsoft Teams and MIRO

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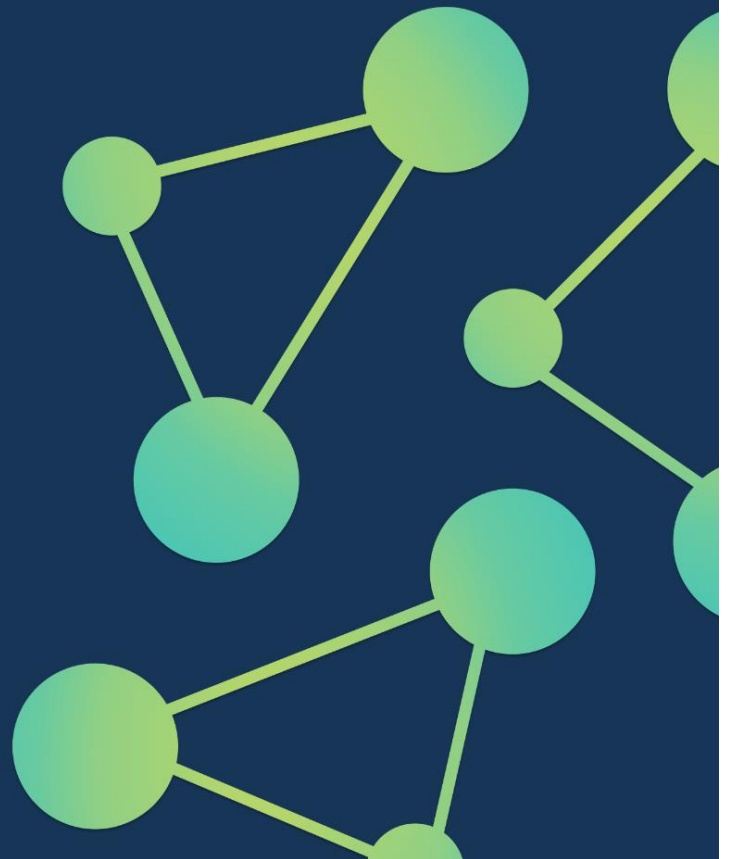
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A Theory of Change for GovTech ecosystem transformation

Introduction

The GovTech Connect project hosted two online workshops on June 17th and July 22nd, 2024, as part of its workplan towards shaping the future GovTech ecosystem in Europe. GovTech refers to innovative technologies leveraged by public authorities or organisations working with the public sector. These technologies are usually developed by start-ups, with scalability and open-source capacities being desirable traits, and destined to public administration, for the improvement of the quality and impacts of their digital service supply to businesses and citizens.

The two workshops on “A Theory of Change for GovTech ecosystem transformation” were key milestones along the way of finalising the Foresight Study, which is the main output of the GovTech Connect project, consisting in a roadmap until 2050 and a set of policy recommendations to guide the digital transformation of public administration in the EU. The workshops were set up in compliance with the provisions of the project’s 1.1b deliverable, issued in November 2023, which outlined an initial Theory of Change for the transformation of the EU GovTech ecosystem. They engaged experts from diverse extractions (*see the attached document including the full participants list*), including academia, public administration, private industry, and civil society. Their purpose was to validate the initial Theory of Change, as presented in D1.1b, with a special focus – in the second workshop – for the role of public procurement as game changer.

The Theory of Change was presented as a chained collection of statements, starting with the long-term outcome (the vision of transformation), followed by three main areas for policy action (supply side, demand side and ecosystemic), each associated with a number of suitable strategies, in turn described as determined by a number of key levers of transformation and influenced by a number of risks/barriers to implementation. Goal of the exercise was to identify one or more “intervention logics” – i.e. pathways connecting levers of transformation and strategic policy actions aimed at approaching the stated/visionary long term outcome.

This report synthesizes the outcomes and insights gained from the two workshops, highlighting the discussions, key takeaways, and implications that emerged from the collaborative sessions, which were carried out on parallel Teams rooms using specially configured Miro boards.

Objectives

- **June 17th, 2024:** The first workshop focused on the initial Theory of Change as described in the Introduction.

Key objectives for the GovTech project team were to:

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- Test the feasibility of a novel approach – based on specially configured Miro boards – to validate the project's Theory of Change
- Identify one or more "intervention logics", connecting the components of the proposed Theory of Change meaningfully.
- **July 22nd, 2024:** The second workshop narrowed the focus on the role of Public Procurement in the context of the proposed Theory of Change.

Key Objectives for the GovTech project team were to:

- Further test the feasibility of the previous workshop's approach – based on specially configured Miro boards
- Identify one or more "intervention logics", with specific reference to the strategic role of Public Procurement.

Agenda

The two events were held from 14:30 to 16:30 CEST on June 17th and July 22nd, 2024:

June 17 th , 2024	
14:30-14:40	Welcome to participants Lisbon Council team
14:40-14:50	Purpose of the workshop and why a Theory of Change Besiana Balla & Francesco Molinari, Lisbon Council
14:50-15:40	Theory of Change Co-Validation Exercise Break-out rooms on MIRO
15:40-15:50	Break
15:50-16:20	Discussion of results
16:20-16:30	Concluding remarks
16:30	End

July 22 nd , 2024	
14:30-14:40	Welcome to participants Lisbon Council team
14:40-14:50	Purpose of the workshop and why a Theory of Change Francesco Molinari, Lisbon Council
14:50-15:40	Theory of Change Co-Validation Exercise Break-out rooms on MIRO
15:40-15:50	Break
15:50-16:20	Discussion of results
16:20-16:30	Concluding remarks
16:30	End

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Organisation

June 17th Workshop: Theory of Change validation

After a short introduction to the GovTech project and the workshop aims and purposes, participants were split up into three distinct break-out rooms, focused on how public policies could address the transformation of the EU GovTech industry, seen as an ecosystem. The reason for creating three distinct rooms was that previous work in the Study had identified three groups of strategies (or collections of policy measures) respectively acting on the demand side, on the supply side, and at the ecosystemic level. For each group of strategies, a distinct set of potential “intervention logics” was identified by a desk analysis, now needing expert validation. To that end, participants in each break-out room were asked to prioritise the measures composing the specific group via a simple voting mechanism. Then for the most voted measure, participants were invited to highlight the most significant factors to be controlled for in order to implement the strategy effectively. Again, previous work in the Study had identified a number of so-called levers of transformation, which were voted during the session. Finally, for the most voted lever of transformation, participants were asked to point at some of the barriers and risks that could be relevant to consider in that context. Starting from an initial categorisation done the Study team, participants were enabled to discuss and vote what they considered the most significant cluster of barriers and risks. The results of each break-out room activity were presented to the plenary.

July 22nd Workshop: Focus on Public Procurement

The second workshop focused on the possibilities offered by the strategic use of Public Procurement – especially Public Procurement of Innovation – to stimulate and consolidate the growth of emerging GovTech players in the EU context. Strategic procurement – as distinct from tactical procurement – is often defined as the use of public demand to achieve social, environmental, or economic goals. In this sense, the role of the public sector as a ‘smart buyer’ transcends the mere adoption and implementation of technology and becomes itself an instrument of policy. After a short introduction to the GovTech project and the workshop aims and purposes, participants were asked to repeat the same experience as their predecessors at the June 17th edition. This time there was no strict necessity to multiply the number of break-out rooms, as there was a single group of strategies to be discussed and prioritised by all attendees to the workshop. However, the advantage of small group interaction among the participants was grasped and the rooms were anyway created. The results of each break-out activity were presented to the plenary.

Major outcomes

Above and beyond the specific feedback gathered from the workshop attendees – in terms of the most voted “intervention logics” in each break-out room and therefore for each group of proposed measures/strategies – the Study team got precious information in three directions, which also influenced future work in the GovTech project:

- Methodologically, the feasibility of externally validating and prioritising the alternative policy options contained in the proposed Theory of Change by a very simple approach was confirmed – with full satisfaction from both participants

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and organisers – so the Study team decided to launch a EU-wide Survey based on the same approach used in the workshops.

- Thematically, the centrality of a strategic use of Public Procurement was confirmed, up to the point that it became one of the two relevant dimensions (the other being Cross-border Interoperability) for the Foresight Scenarios developed in the next project phase.
- Additionally, a new replicable format was invented for the participatory testing of Theory of Change drafts – based on the combination of Miro boards and small group discussions online – which will certainly be adopted on future occasions by selected GovTech consortium members.

Next steps for GovTech Connect

Based on the positive experience of the workshops, the Study team confirmed the validity of the drafted Theory of Change for GovTech ecosystem transformation, and decided to carry out an extra validation step on a larger scale than the two workshops, based on a EU-wide Survey, the results of which will inspire and support the mainstream Foresight process of the forthcoming months and be fed into the final deliverable 1.1c of the project.

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