

Digitalisation of Public Services



Atlantic Social Lab

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Digitalisation

Digitalisation has become an essential tool for driving social innovation. A vibrant movement of entrepreneurs and technology innovators is creating innovative digital solutions to address social problems in civil society. Among these are social networks for people with chronic diseases, online platforms for citizen engagement in policy-making, and the use of open data to reveal public spending.

As a result of the Covid-19, digital technologies have gained widespread attention, accelerating the adoption of digital tools to pool expertise, ideas, and capacities to generate solutions to the pandemic's short and long-term impacts.

Following the progress of the digital competitiveness of European countries, according to the Digital Economy and Society Index, there are four key dimensions that must be taken into consideration: (1) Human Capital; (2) Connectivity; (3) Digital Technology Integration; and (4) Digital Public Services.

Recently, the Atlantic Social Lab project was extended to address gaps and weaknesses in social inclusion and protection policies highlighted by the emergence of Covid-19. The ASL project partners implemented the following pilot actions.

“Youth Compass” in Toulouse, France

The CRIJ Occitanie Pyrénées Méditerranée aims to empower young people and better integrate them into society. The CRIJ pilot action extends and disseminates an ongoing initiative to enhance the social inclusion of young people - Youth Compass, a digital platform connecting young people with local experts. Some of the areas are legal advice, drug addiction, job search, and vocational accompaniment. The following activities were developed: distribution of promotional materials and (regional) activities regarding Youth Compass in the Occitanie region; spread QR codes so that young people can explore the help mechanisms



and contact the supplying entities; web marketing; social media campaigns; and website optimization.

No Lo Pierdas, es tu Derecho in Avilés, Spain

To achieve social cohesion, the municipal welfare services provide a wide range of services, from citizen participation to housing and employment. In this pilot action, Avilés municipality used different media formats to communicate directly to citizens the services available. Therefore, they have developed a major campaign to promote social services – “no lo pierdas es tu derecho” (don't miss it, it's your right) - to show the population what is available, their rights, and where they can access them.

Another step involved focusing more on one of the vulnerable groups in Avilés, the elderly people. They focused on the Age Friendly People networking platform, spread to over 42 countries, encouraging older people to participate in the city life.

Improve the communication policy of the social services in Gijón, Spain

Gijón is notable for its willingness to offer numerous programs to citizens to address a variety of social circumstances. Through digital tools, Gijón's social services pilot action provides better access to social

action services for the most vulnerable. In this regard, a specialised Department of Social Services Communication is established to develop a plan to improve social services. Several activities were implemented, such as the distribution of over 100 cards with the necessary information (according to types of needs and support); redesign of the website to be more accessible, as well as direct access to the cards not only from the website, but also from Google searches; supply accessible communication channels, such as radio, local newspapers, and social media; and an e-inclusion strategy based on a co-creation methodology to bridge the digital gap for vulnerable groups.



Community Wealth Building in Northwest, Northern Ireland, UK

Enterprise North West provides enterprise support programmes to small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), and social enterprise and social innovation support to cooperatives and community groups. As part of the ENW pilot action, a community called NW - Community Wealth Building (CWB) was established and developed. The goal was to create a society that is fairer and more equitable. This action is: building a stronger local economic ecosystem; developing agreed plans and initiatives to develop CWBs;

developing a local social economy; creating cooperative infrastructure; and working with statutory agencies. The CWB is a Community Anchor Organisation that fosters collaboration between the public and private sectors to enhance people's lives while supporting and leveraging inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

The Art of Straw in Vale do Ave, Portugal

This action pilot was implemented by CIM Ave, a supramunicipal body for the coordination of municipalities in Ave region. Tradition and innovation are combined in the art of working straw. In order to create employment and/or additional income for participants throughout the various stages of straw production, a social entrepreneurship initiative focused on the economic exploitation of this art. Through the Atlantic Social Lab project, the Strategic Plan for Social Innovation in the Ave region 2021-2023 identified this action as a good practice, mainly implemented in the Municipality of Fafe. It includes the following main activities: supporting the incubation of this initiative, creating marketing channels, and supporting digital product promotion created, it is a social entrepreneurship initiative focused on the economic exploitation of straw art.



Conclusion

Health emergencies and confinement measures from COVID-19 led to the development of distance learning and telecommuting. The need for ubiquitous connectivity became evident. Organisations have had to adapt to a broader model of remote working and public service delivery through broadband connectivity locations. In turn, individuals with poor digital literacy and digital access are struggling with this transition. To solve the digital divide, it becomes imperative to have new public policies and cooperative initiatives to promote digital skills and also to promote accessible and secure digital social services platforms for all. Hence, these platforms should be disseminated in face-to-face workshops to ensure that people are aware of them.

In the European Union, many countries are working to make digital accessible, taking into consideration different ages, income levels, and digital proficiency levels, to ensure that everyone has access to the benefits of digitalisation.

The Atlantic Social Innovation Observatory

The Atlantic Social Innovation Observatory is a monitoring tool that aims to act as an action-think tank, gathering relevant research, data, news and skills on social innovation. The observatory is developed and implemented by the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra (Portugal) in the context of the Atlantic Social Lab project.



Partners



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