

Policy Brief

**The State of 'Co-Creation':
How Countries, Cities and Regions are Using
New Thinking to Deliver Better Services**

By Anthony Arundel, Francesco Mureddu and David Osimo

Public Service
Design
Digital Government
Co-Creation
Digital
Design Thinking
Public Service

About the Understanding Value Co-Creation in Public Services for Transforming European Public Administrations (Co-VAL) project



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The 12 partner organisations are University of Alcalá (UAH), Athens Technology Center S.A., SDA Bocconi School of Management (Bocconi University), Corvinus University of Budapest, the University of Edinburgh, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences-INN University, the University of Konstanz, the University of Lille, The Lisbon Council, PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory S.p.A., Roskilde University and the United Nations University-Maastricht Economic and Social Research and Training Centre on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT).

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By Anthony Arundel, Francesco Mureddu and David Osimo



The Co-VAL consortium meets at INN University in Lillehammer, Norway

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The views expressed in this policy brief are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily represent the view of the members of the Co-VAL consortium, the European Commission or any of their associates.

Digital government has long promised better services for European citizens, but citizens sometimes seem not to have noticed.¹ Only one in three Europeans use the available online public services at their full potential.² This should not come as a surprise to anyone who has actually tried to use digital government services in some European countries. They are often accessible only through a clunky user interface filled with technical jargon and are a far cry from the intuitive commercial services citizens use online on a daily basis.³

But reality does not have to be that way, and indeed, it is not. In Estonia, 71 % of the population uses online public services – more than they use e-commerce.⁴ Denmark has gone so far as making online the default option for government services, reaching a 73 % adoption rate.⁵ By delivering excellent online services, the United Kingdom government managed to save £4.1 billion [€5.6 billion] from the budget over a four-year period.⁶ These experiences share a common feature:

government agencies that succeeded all placed the user at the centre and designed services around their needs, involving users in a systematic manner from the early stage of development and re-iterating based on how they interacted with the service. In other words, they co-created the services.

And governments all over Europe – and the world – have started to take notice. In 2017, 32 European Union and European Free Trade Area ministers signed **The 2017 Tallinn Ministerial Declaration**, a comprehensive pact in which ministers pledged to make faster progress on digital government and to build future initiatives around “user-centricity principles,” a process described in some detail in a two-page annex.⁷ Later, 11 governments – all of them Tallinn Declaration signatories – included “co-creation” initiatives in their digital-government work programmes. The European Commission, for its part, has also committed to “co-creation” in the procedures for managing the online services it provides.⁸

1 This policy brief builds on the research conducted by the Understanding Value Co-Creation in Public Services for Transforming European Public Administrations project, or Co-VAL, a 12-partner research consortium, co-funded by the European Union. For more on the consortium, see the list of partners on the back cover. Thanks to Nordine Es-Sadki and Jones Hayden and to the cities of Amsterdam, Athens, Madrid, Milan and Turin.

2 Eurostat, *Individuals Using the Internet for Interaction with Public Authorities by Type of Interaction*, January 2020 update.

3 Ibid., *Individuals Using the Internet for Ordering Goods or Services*, January 2020 update.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Andrew Bennett and Chris Yiu, *Transforming Government for the 21st Century* (London: Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2019). The pound-euro exchange rate is from 2015, the reference year in the statistic.

7 Council of the European Union and European Economic Area, *The 2017 Tallinn Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment*, 06 October 2017.

8 European Commission, *European Commission Digital Strategy*, 21 November 2018.

'Government agencies that succeed all place the user at the centre and design services around their needs.'

And all four keynote speakers at a 2019 minister-level Presidency of the Council of the European Union digital government conference in Helsinki, Finland exhorted ministers to place co-creation at the heart of future public-service reform.⁹

But what does this interest at the policy level mean in practice? How common is co-creation among public bodies, how is it actually done and does it yield the promised benefits?

To address these questions, the Co-VAL consortium launched two important data-gathering initiatives: 1) A first-of-its-kind survey of public administrations in six European countries,¹⁰ and 2) an interactive dashboard that compiles and maps co-creation initiatives in all 27 EU member states (plus the United Kingdom) – and in five leading cities.¹¹

An Eight-Point Programme

This policy brief is based on field research, and in particular on a first-of-its-kind survey of government agencies on the use of co-creation and a data-driven dashboard which tracks the evolution of co-creation in 27 European Union member states (plus the United Kingdom and four leading European cities). The research does not delve into questions of causality or motivation. But it is suggestive of several areas – weak spots as well as strong – where progress might usefully be made and policy initiatives launched. The result is an eight-point programme for delivering co-creation at scale – iterated from a thoughtful read of the survey evidence – which is presented beginning on page 28. The recommendations are summarised below.

- 1) **Provide cross-departmental operational guidelines;**
- 2) **Build in-house competence;**
- 3) **Deliver at scale;**
- 4) **Measure adoption rates and compliance;**
- 5) **Use real-time data (and set standards for gathering it);**
- 6) **Support local adoption;**
- 7) **Empower a cross-government digital transformation agency or team;**
- 8) **Be consistent.**

9 The conference took place in Helsinki, Finland on 22 October 2019. For more, visit <https://eu2019.fi/en/events/2019-10-22/digital-government-conference>.

10 The six countries are France, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom. The survey was led by the United Nations University-Maastricht Economic and Social Research and Training Centre on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT). It produced more than 1000 responses. For full results and methodological information, see Anthony Arundel and Nordine Es-Sadki, "Preliminary Survey Results," *Co-VAL Deliverable 2.7*. All results reported in this policy brief are statistically significant.

11 The five cities are Amsterdam, Athens, Madrid, Milan and Turin. Visit <http://www.co-val.eu/dashboard/>.

‘The vast majority of public-administration respondents say they get their innovative ideas mostly from internal sources. Fewer than 10% say they get their innovative ideas from citizens, business or civil society.’

Among the key findings:

- 1) Governments are more and more aware of “co-creation” as a policy area in which they should be active and where they might be drawing more benefit. More than 80% of public administrations in Europe say they have important, viable co-creation projects underway.
- 2) But there is a lot of confusion over what co-creation actually is. Where it has been adopted, most governments typically employ very traditional methods, such as interviews with citizens, population-data studies or brainstorming sessions. Advanced methods such as “design thinking,” “prototyping” or setting up “digital transformation teams” are still the exception, accounting for fewer than half of all existing co-creation pilots and projects.¹²
- 3) Most new ideas still come from civil servants talking to civil servants. Citizens or businesses were the sources of ideas for innovation in fewer than 10% of the administrations surveyed. By contrast, 68% say they get their new ideas from government employees.
- 4) Governments that adopt the largest variety of co-creating methods – such as design thinking, data analytics and prototyping – show the most benefits. There is a clear “critical-mass” effect. Or, put differently, governments that are the least committed show the fewest results.
- 5) Co-creation techniques are being applied across a wide variety of areas. The three most popular and frequently found applications are: 1) developing new services, 2) building government “service-designer” communities, and 3) creating laboratories for experimentation.
- 6) Many governments have issued guidelines and toolkits for making co-creation happen. But there are few metrics or compliance-measuring processes by which the actual adoption rate can be assessed. Two exceptions are **Poland** and the **United Kingdom**. In Poland, public administrations must provide comprehensive metrics on user adoption in order to join the digital Poland operations programme (POPC). In the United Kingdom, the government digital service (GDS) kept strong centralised control over information- and communication-technology (ICT) procurement and reporting metrics, including co-creation. The metrics reported in these places provided a continual feedback loop where the process can be constantly evaluated and improved. Transparency drives performance.
- 7) Many EU member states invest in training digital skills, but training in co-creation methods is almost absent. This is despite the fact that co-creation and design thinking both have widely-recognised, robust and well-codified methodologies which are imminently usable for training and training programmes.

¹² See the lexicography on key concepts on page 13 for definitions.

'Many EU member states invest in training digital skills, but training in co-creation methods is almost absent.'

- 8) Many EU member states are hiring workers with advanced digital skills and experience with working in new ways. But these teams do not always have a sufficiently important place in the administration to make a visible difference.
- 9) EU member states are increasingly focusing their digital-government reporting on adoption rates rather than supply and using data automatically generated by web services rather than through surveys, which are both very positive developments. However, the available indicators are not comparable across countries, which impedes cross-border assessment and benchmarking.
- 10) Municipalities have been slower than national governments to move. Some large municipalities, such as Amsterdam and Madrid, are leading, but overall adoption in the co-creation field is low at the local level. Of the five key practices that governments could adopt, survey respondents from national governments report adopting on average 2.47 methods; by contrast, large municipalities adopt 2.31 methods on average and small municipalities 2.05. National governments are also more likely to develop and use prototyping techniques. 48.7% of survey respondents from national governments said they use prototyping, while 39.6% of large municipalities and only 31.8% of small municipalities do.
- 11) One reason may be a lack of support tools for municipalities that want to adopt co-creation, as well as a near total absence of indicators to understand local-government performance. This represents a double disadvantage: it removes a powerful incentive to innovate and it hinders the possibility to learn from the best performers.

The rest of this policy brief is divided into four parts. Part I will look at the main findings of the Co-VAL survey in greater detail. Part II will explore the way EU member states have adopted co-creation in policy and practice, drawing on the evidence compiled in the Co-VAL Dashboard. Part III will look at how cities are making use of co-creation. And Part IV will present an eight-point programme for reaping the benefits of co-creation at scale.

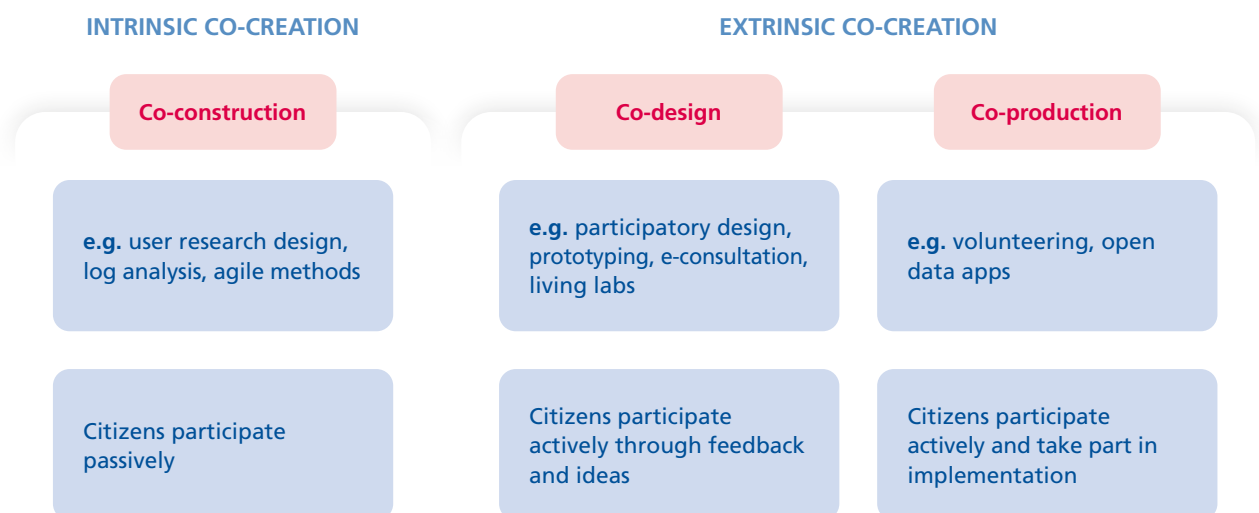
I. Survey Results: Who is Co-Creating? And What Exactly are They Doing?

At its most simple level, co-creation is defined as “the involvement of citizens in the initiation and/or design of public services.”¹³

Crucially, the term covers a variety of degrees of involvement of users – from the almost invisible form in which city administrators leverage data analytics and statistics to understand how services are being used, to the more visible form in which citizens take an active role in designing and delivering the services they access. Technically, it is possible to distinguish between two types of co-creation: “intrinsic” co-creation, in which the participation of citizens in the process is passive (i.e. the individual is not aware of her or his role), and “extrinsic” co-creation, in which citizen participation is active.

Intrinsic co-creation can be as limited as the study of user behaviour based on log data from online services. Extrinsic co-creation, by contrast, means citizens are actively involved in improving existing services, in innovating new forms of public-service delivery and in actually collaborating on the management and delivery of those services. Methods include co-creation workshops, prototypes for co-design, volunteering and developing open data apps for co-production. A schematic representation is provided in Table 1 below and an explanation of terms – including a description of the core principles involved in several types of co-creation – in the box on page 13.

Table 1. Classifying Co-Creation



Source: Osborne, Radnor and Strokosch

¹³ See William Voorberg, Victor Bekkers, Sophie Flemig, Krista Timeus, Piret Tõnurist and Lars Tummars, “Does Co-Creation Impact Public Service Delivery? The Importance of State and Governance Traditions,” *Public Money and Management*, 2017.

‘Technology makes it possible to follow citizen needs in something like real time, drawing on data to make speedy changes to programmes that are not working and improve on other programmes that are.’

In the United Kingdom, the GDS – perhaps Europe’s most successful digital government agency – provides a good example of making the most of **intrinsic** co-creation. One of the 10 design principles it puts forward is “design with data,” which looks at how existing services are used. Concretely, GDS designers use a full range of data: web analytics about how users interact with the services, search logs to understand what they are looking for, contact forms and social media to detect unexpected problems and “a/b testing” to see how users behave when confronted with different design options including video-recording evaluations of how users behave in front of the service. Specialised user researchers help bring these data together in a consistent manner. Using the evidence of user preferences to drive change, GDS managed to consolidate the UK government’s entire online service offering into one easy-to-use web site (<https://www.gov.uk/>). And the results are clearly visible. Today, 51% of UK citizens use public services entirely online, up from 23% in 2011. The average EU adoption rate is 38%, up from 21% in the same period.¹⁴

Denmark is a good example of what **extrinsic** methods can achieve. This 5.6-million-citizen Scandinavian stronghold has a long tradition of leading on “design thinking” in public administration, dating back to 2002, when

MindLab, the first public-sector service-design bureau, was founded.¹⁵ Today, co-creation permeates the entire Danish public-service culture, including very technical projects such as NemID, Denmark’s electronic identification system (soon to be renamed MitID). NemID was developed through extensive co-creation workshops involving citizens directly, but also private suppliers, stakeholder representatives and public-sector agents. By bringing users, agencies and the private sector together from the very early stage of the design, Danish citizens can now access a wide range of public administration services, as well as online banking, simply by entering an individual user name, password and code. Today, NemID is one of the most used identification services in Europe. In 2017, it passed four billion transactions and was used by approximately 4.7 million Danish citizens for all public and more than 400 private services, leading to an estimated yearly savings of around €134 million.¹⁶

In the Co-VAL survey, public administrations were asked to report which of the following five types of co-creation they practice:

- 1) Data analytics covering past user experience
- 2) Real-time analytics for user experience of prototyped service
- 3) One-on-one interviews with users
- 4) Focus groups with users
- 5) Brainstorming workshops with users

14 Eurostat, *Individuals Using the Internet for Interaction with Public Authorities by Type of Interaction*, January 2020 update.

15 Denmark’s ministries of business and growth, employment and children and education teamed up to form MindLab in 2002. It was given one of the first mandates to become a “public-sector service-design group.” Visit <https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/MindLab> for more.

16 See Rony Medaglia, Jonas Hedman and Ben Eaton, “Public-Private Collaboration in the Emergence of a National Electronic Identification Policy: The Case of NemID in Denmark,” *Paper at the 50th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, 2017.

‘All EU member states have initiatives in place to make local base registries accessible to other public administrations within their country and across borders.’

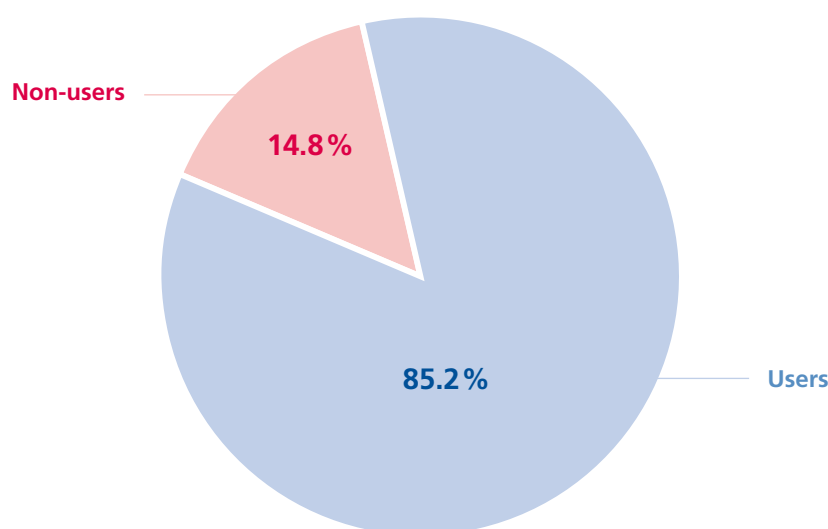
The survey results show that 85.2% of eligible respondents reported the use of at least one of the five co-creation methods, while 14.8% reported none. See Chart 1 below.

But detailed analysis of the responses also shows a distinct bias towards older, safer forms of co-creation. Around 50% of responding public administrations say they use some data analytics to help design services (though it is striking that roughly 50% also say they do not). But the poor cousin of the five co-creation methods surveyed is clearly the study of real-time experience of prototyped new services. This represents the cutting edge of co-creation – the area where public administrations are slowest to adopt. Technology makes it possible to follow citizen needs in something like real time, drawing on data to make speedy changes of programmes

that are not working and to improve on other programmes that are. To be sure, it is a difficult area, requiring technical proficiency and a supportive citizenry. But it is also an area where governments can do most to show they are genuinely responsive, dealing with problems in the same “real-time” context in which people lead their lives. See Table 2 on page 11.

The survey also looked at innovation methods used in the government innovation process beyond pure co-creation. Once again, methods used in design thinking, such as “conducting research to identify different types of users for this innovation” and “development of a prototype,” were the least commonly used methods. See Chart 2 on page 11.

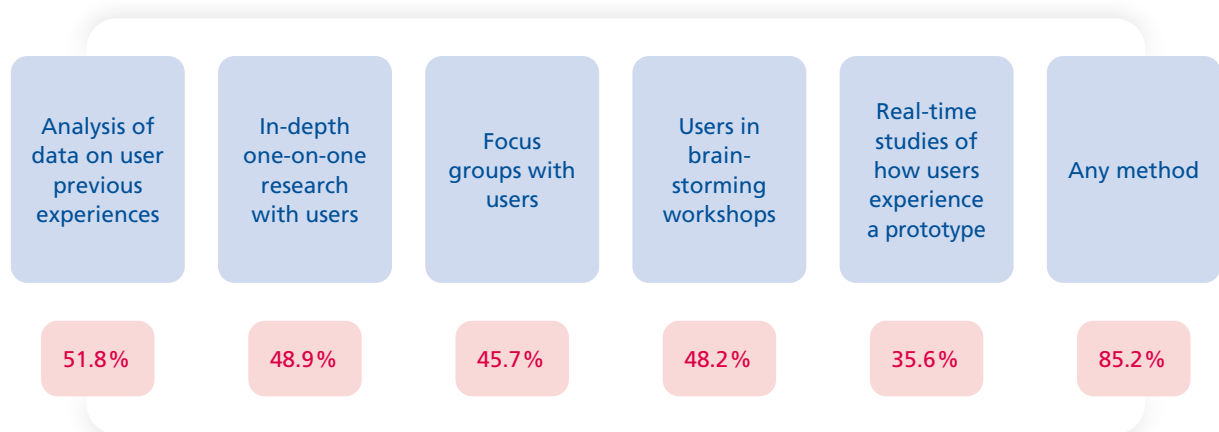
Chart 1. Percentage of Public Administrations Using At Least One Co-Creation Method



Source: Arundel and Es-Sadki

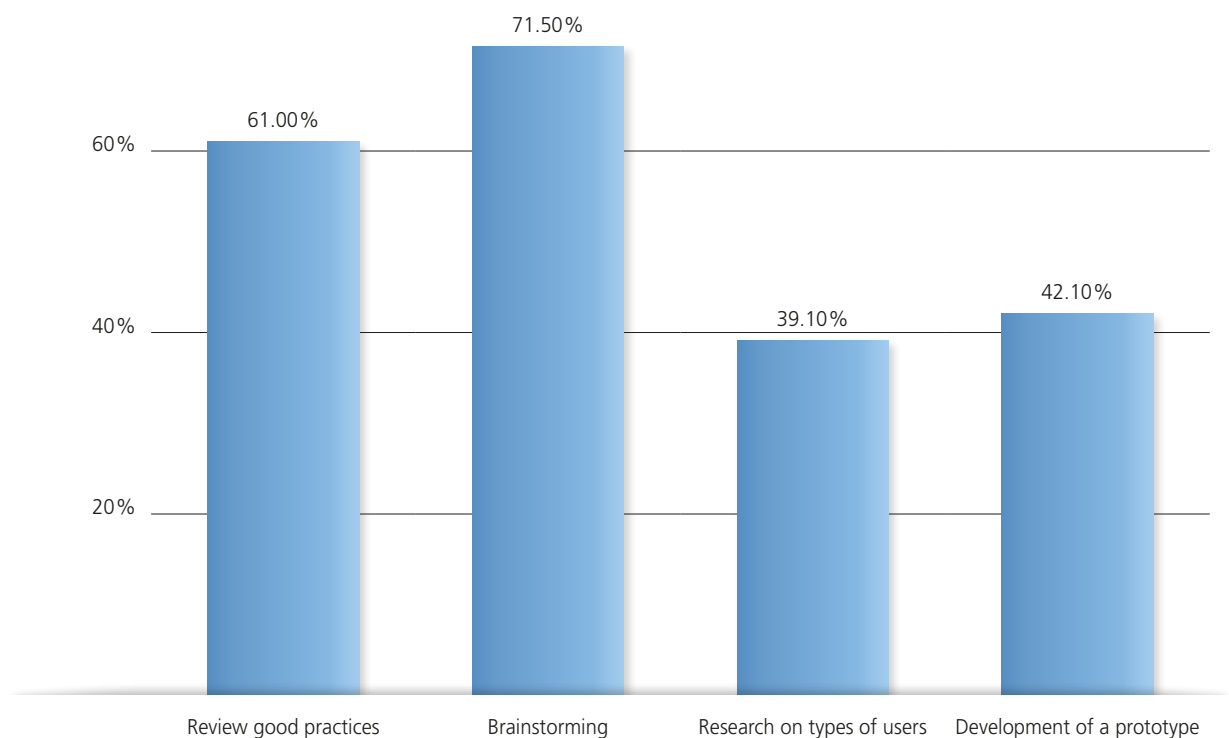
‘Governments that adopt the largest variety of co-creating methods – such as design thinking, data analytics and prototyping – show the most benefits.’

Table 2. Which Co-Creation Methods Do Agencies Use?



Source: Arundel and Es-Sadki

Chart 2. Traditional Methods v. Design Thinking



Source: Arundel and Es-Sadki

‘For reasons that have yet to be fully explained, national governments have shown a greater interest in embracing co-creation than local ones.’

Another indication of this reluctance to embrace full co-creation comes from data gathered about where civil services get their innovative ideas. The vast majority of public-administration respondents say they get their innovative ideas

mostly from internal sources. Fewer than 10% say they get their innovative ideas from citizens, business or civil society. See Table 3 below.

Table 3. Source of Innovative Ideas

TYPE	SOURCE	
Internal	Yourself or colleagues	68.4%
	Senior managers	39.4%
	Staff at lower job levels	37.1%
Semi-external	Other government organisations	22.8%
	Elected politicians	19.1%
External	Citizens or residents	9.6%
	Businesses	8.8%
	Community/ non-profits	8.3%
Other	Other	6.8%

Source: Arundel and Es-Sadki

‘Co-creation permeates the entire Danish public service culture, including very hard technical projects such as NemID, Denmark’s electronic identification system.’

Key Concepts in Co-Creation

Co-creation is a fairly complicated field. Its key elements – “design thinking,” “prototyping” and “laboratories” – can sound like little more than over-used buzzwords or meaningless management consultant speak. But the reality is that a host of very real processes exist behind all elements of co-creation. Here’s a check list of key concepts.

- **Co-Creation.** “The involvement of citizens in the initiation and/or design of public services” (Voorberg et al). Techniques can range from the traditional and nearly invisible – such as the use of population surveys and data analytics in designing government services – to the deep and full-fledged, such as small group co-design workshops and advanced prototyping. Co-creation methods are by now well-defined and elaborated. A sampling of the rich academic literature describing the theory and practice of co-creation can be found in the bibliography and further reading section, which begins on page 32.
- **Design Thinking.** Design is what links creativity and innovation. It shapes ideas to become practical and attractive propositions for users and customers. It is a modern non-linear approach to problem solving, which recognizes that user requirements can’t be clearly known *ex ante* but can only be truly understood through an iterative process that extends to the interaction with the product or service. Design thinkers seek to challenge their own assumptions, to understand users, and to define and redefine problems to identify new strategies and solutions that might work better. Success comes from observing users’ behavior, from immersing oneself in real-world practice and from pro-actively identifying things that could be improved. Drawing on observed behaviour, design thinkers come up with ideas which are turned into prototypes. Design thinkers then test, draw conclusions, adjust and iterate a process until end users’ needs are fulfilled.
- **Prototyping.** This practice – common in design-thinking methodologies – involves producing an early, inexpensive and scaled down version of a product or service. The prototype is then deployed and the outcomes studied, analysed and processed. In effective design thinking models, the prototype will be “iterated” and “re-iterated” many times as new knowledge is generated. Applying prototyping to public service innovation goes well beyond the traditional notion of “piloting.” It sets a higher standard for constructively evaluating user input and rethinking the traditional user/provider hierarchy.
- **Government Innovation Laboratories.** Labs are built to disentangle the dominant bureaucratic culture informing the public sector and create free spaces where new behaviour can emerge. They facilitate the adoption of new patterns by governments (the latter being too big to re-think themselves fundamentally). Innovation labs seek to accelerate the cycle of collecting evidence, diagnosing problems, brainstorming solutions and designing new policies and services. The establishment of dedicated, cross-cutting organisational structures has the potential to neutralise vested interests, power plays and organisational infighting. Labs do so by being permanent structures within government with a mission to temporarily unfreeze embedded organisational practices. A growing number of government innovation labs have been set up as government initiatives – to date mostly in advanced economies but increasingly also in developing ones.

For more, see Voorberg et al, “A Systematic Review of Co-Creation and Co-Production,” *Public Management Review*, 2015; George Cox, *The Cox Review of Creativity in Business* (London: HM Treasury, 2005) and Lorenzo Allio, *Design Thinking for Public Service Excellence* (Singapore: UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, 2014).

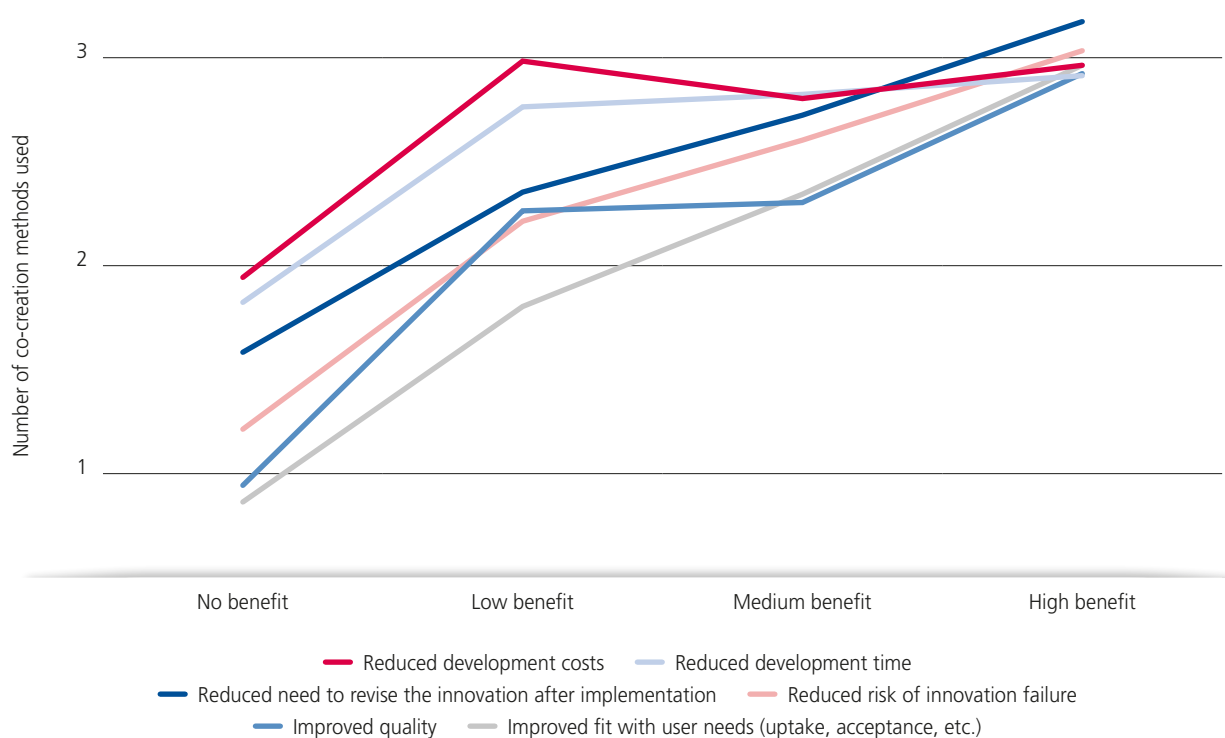
‘Besides the creation of dedicated teams, many European Union member states are increasingly active in deliberate community and ecosystem building.’

After the launch of a new service, users’ involvement remains important to adapt and tweak the service based on users’ behaviour. Respondents were asked about the involvement of users on post-implementation evaluation of innovation. In total, less than half of respondents (46.5%) reported that the innovation had been evaluated *ex post*. Out of these, 86.2% involved users in the evaluation and 62.1% implemented changes following the users’ evaluation.

So it is clear that some co-creation methods are widely used, at least in their basic form. But do those methods deliver the promised benefits?

Respondents were asked how important was the contribution of users to the development of their own most important innovation for six outcomes: three outcomes affecting the innovation process (reduced development costs, reduced development time and reduced need to revise after implementation); and three outcomes covering post-implementation effects (improved fit with user needs, improved quality and reduced risk of innovation failure). See Chart 3 below for a graphic representation.

Chart 3. Correlation between Usage Intensity and Benefits



Source: Arundel and Es-Sadki

‘In several countries, governments have set up and maintained dedicated digital service teams – many of them set up along the lines of the pioneering government digital services in the United Kingdom.’

Respondents gave the highest importance to “improved fit with user needs” (50.2%), followed by “improved quality” (47.0%) and “reduced risk of innovation failure” (30.9%) while the least impact was reported for a reduction in development costs (6.5%). The effects were also influenced by the intensity with which users were involved in co-creation, measured by the number of co-creation methods used in developing the new service or innovation. Specifically, there is a positive correlation between the number of co-creation methods used for all six effects, with the mean co-creation intensity increasing as the contribution of users increases from “none” to “high.” For example, the mean co-creation intensity for “reduced risk of innovation failure” was 1.29 for “none,” 2.21 for “low,” 2.60 for “medium” and 3.03 for “high” levels of benefit from user involvement.

Of course, it is not possible to prove that more intensive adoption of co-creation methods delivers higher benefits. Those who enjoy high benefits could be simply encouraged to use these methods more. Future research from the

Co-VAL consortium will include more advanced regression analysis to ascertain causality. But these findings support what we have learned from the real-world experience of leaders such as the UK government and others: in order to achieve tangible benefits, co-creation needs to be deployed at scale. There is a need for a critical mass to achieve impact. Guidelines and principles matter only if they are adopted at scale. Trying out design methods in a lab, without the ability to enforce large-scale deployment across government, is unlikely to provide the benefits that consumers desire and civil servants would like to deliver.¹⁷

¹⁷ Andrew Greenway, Ben Terrett, Mike Bracken and Tom Loosemore, *Digital Transformation at Scale: Why the Strategy is Delivery* (London: London Publishing Partnership, 2018).

II. The Co-VAL Dashboard: Co-Creation at the National and Local Level

The broad survey provides a robust, high-level overview of co-creation practices being implemented across Europe. But how does this play out concretely on the ground? To answer that question, we created **The Co-VAL Dashboard**, an online tool for collating and mapping key initiatives across EU member states and municipalities. Interested readers are invited to visit the dashboard online at <http://www.co-val.eu/dashboard/>, where the results are displayed in full and constantly updated.¹⁸ Public administrations that would like to contribute data or be involved in the project are invited to contact Co-VAL researchers directly at dashboard@co-val.eu.

The dashboard evaluates progress and adoption rates in five areas.

- 1) **Collaboration.** This tracks the involvement of users in the creation and design of services, as well as the acceptance of what are known as “trust services” for using the services provided by public administrations.
- 2) **Interoperability/Re-Use.** This follows the ability of public administrations to share information and knowledge with other administrations by means of the exchange of data between ICT systems, including the re-use of software and service components.
- 3) **Policy.** This refers to the priority attributed to co-creation and interoperability in government plans and procedures.
- 4) **Skills.** This tracks the level of co-creation skills in public administration. It measures civil servant training, the recruitment of private sector managers with co-creation experience and several other human-resource factors.
- 5) **Monitoring.** This deals with the supervisory activities implemented by public administration through key performance indicators and qualitative information, such as best practice examples.

Co-Creation Across the European Union

Eleven EU member states have launched **co-creation initiatives in their national digital plans and strategies**. Specifically, the most ambitious appears to be **Estonia**, where the government’s digital agenda 2020 seeks “to support the development and cooperative creation of services.” The same goes for **Austria**, where co-creation is applied in all current projects with a citizen-interface component.

In **France**, co-creation is at the heart of the development of the digital-transformation pillar (piloted by the directorates-general of all ministries) and includes an open and collaborative dashboard, where citizens are called on to inform the central administration which services have not been digitalised yet.

¹⁸ The data used in this analysis was accessed on 01 February 2020. More recent data can be found at <http://www.co-val.eu/dashboard/>.

'One important aspect of developing user-centric services is the capacity to collaborate between different public administrations.'

In **Greece**, the government's national digital policy 2016-2021 introduced a participatory approach for the co-creation of all digital public services in the "DigiGov" service design initiative.

In **Portugal**, the *estratégia TIC 2020* specifies that "we need to work in co-creation with users to make sure that the new services meet their expectations. And we need a common, much more collaborative strategy so that we can respond sustainably to these citizens' expectations while respecting the financial balance and the constraints arising from it." **Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Slovenia, Spain** and **Sweden** have similar initiatives, though they are put forward under the term "user-centricity."

Member states are also increasingly carrying out **co-creation exercises** into the process of designing public services. In **Finland**, an "ecosystem forum operating model" has been implemented in order to speed up the development of digital ecosystems serving citizens' and companies' needs. Between August 2017 and March 2018, six co-creation workshops were organised to find solutions, including for utilisation of wellbeing data, for developing the national growth programme for the transport sector and to define the national information policy in general.¹⁹

In **Portugal**, the iSIMPLEX programme aims to co-create new online public services, optimise existing ones and de-bureaucratise the relationship between public institutions and civil society.²⁰ The development of this national de-bureaucratisation programme encompasses a public consultation devised to involve citizens, businesses and public administration in the co-creation of simplification measures. As for **Sweden**, five innovation partnership programmes seek to build co-creation among key players, including government bodies, businesses and academia, in the areas of travel and transport, smart cities, circular and bio-based economy, life science and new materials.²¹

In **Slovenia**, the ministry of public administration has recently launched *Inovativen.si* under the slogan "you are innovative" with the aim of getting better quality solutions and services more tailored to users and in partnership between public administrations, citizens, civil society and the private sector. Citizens choose the ideas that will be addressed to them by different stakeholders and look for solutions through the production of prototypes and the active involvement of users in the design from the very beginning.

19 Visit https://valtioneuvosto.fi/artikkeli/-/asset_publisher/10616/uusi-toimintamalli-vauhdittamaan-digitalisaatiota for more.

20 Visit <https://simplex.gov.pt/> for more.

21 Visit <https://www.government.se/articles/2016/07/innovation-partnership-programmes--mobilising-new-ways-to-meet-societal-challenges/> for more.

‘Many European Union member states introduced measures to support experimentation in public services.’

Austria has undertaken several initiatives to involve users in the design of services, especially for what concerns citizen services and entrepreneurial services. More than 100 co-creation exercises have been carried out in the last five years. **Belgium** is a unique case. Due to the complexity of its government, policymakers sometimes have more difficulty including citizens in co-creation. The public is involved in the testing phase, providing feedback on the prototypes proposed. Some user involvement initiatives have to do with citizens’ feedback only. The directorate-general for digital transformation (DG DT) includes two departments (“transformation” and “innovation”) where civil servants use service-design, co-creation methods and other techniques to create new services with their “customers,” who are essentially civil servants in other departments.

Beside actual co-creation, the provision of **design guidelines** and **principles** is increasingly present, following the inspiration of GDS in the **United Kingdom**. In the **Czech Republic**, civil servants use co-design methods for the publication of the ministry of interior’s design system guidelines, which aim to ensure consistency among the administration’s websites. The guidelines were prepared in collaboration with UX/UI designers.²²

In **Hungary**, the *Digitalisation Methodology for Public Administration Services* has a chapter on user-centricity which refers to the basic principles, international best practices and key factors on user-centricity that are expected to be met by new services. The digital team in **Italy** has developed guidelines and an operational toolkit for service design, including usability testing, web development kits and design methods such as personas. What is less clear is how such principles and guidelines are being implemented across government. As opposed to the experience of the United Kingdom’s GDS, these principles are generally voluntary in Italy and there are no metrics on adoption. One interesting exception is **Poland**, where in order to apply for the digital Poland operational programme (POPC), applicants must explain the research and design process and present data on the scale of users’ involvement in co-creating the e-service.

Many member states also introduced measures to support **experimentation** in public services. In **Finland**, an “experimental team” was created to support service design to ensure agile developments of solutions, and the government programme 2018-2019 includes a pillar on the culture of experimenting.²³ An example of involving users in the design of services is the two-year universal basic income trial.²⁴

22 UX is the acronym for user experience, while UI stands for user interface.

23 Clara Young, “Experimental Finland,” *OECD Observer*, March 2019.

24 For more, visit <https://www.demoshelsinki.fi/en/2016/04/19/inside-finlands-basic-income-hackaton/>.

‘In the coming year, the survey data will be further analysed to identify additional critical factors and the Co-VAL Dashboard will be updated on a regular basis with data provided by countries and municipalities.’

The idea for the trial came out of a government-sponsored hackathon on the topic of basic income, where coders, researchers, politicians, communications specialists, graphic designers, activists and information designers worked together to brainstorm.

In **Sweden**, the programme “with citizens at the centre” is the government’s strategy for a digitally collaborative state administration. In addition, the eGovlab initiative, supported by the innovation agency and the European Commission, supports inclusive governance.²⁵ Similarly, in **Portugal**, the agency for administrative modernisation has established LabX, an experimentation laboratory for public administration, with the aim of experimenting with new solutions to improve public services and the daily lives of citizens and businesses.²⁶

Public consultation platforms are also popular. In **Ireland**, the digital public consultation aims to understand the digital needs of Irish citizens.

Part of this consultation is to understand if there are any opportunities to enhance the digital transformation journey by making services more modern and easier to use. In **Estonia**, through the citizen participation portal, the public can submit ideas and proposals to the government, collect signatures to support one’s idea, express an opinion on the drafts in preparation and look for legislation or documents.²⁷ **Luxembourg** operates <http://www.vosidees.lu>, a platform where citizens can share their ideas to improve public services and to contribute to state modernisation. The platform is part of the *Einfach Lëtzebuerg* programme aimed at simplifying public administration.²⁸ In **Belgium**, the administrative simplification agency operates the <http://www.kafka.be> website, which allows citizens and companies to give feedback and flag issues in the delivery of public services. In other domains, the e-health platform and the crossroad bank for social security have been co-created with health and social security professionals.

25 eGovlab delivers projects across a range of sectors from decision support systems and geospatial information systems to solutions aiming at mobile inclusiveness, democracy and smart communities. For more, visit <https://www.egovlab.eu/index.php/en/about-us>.

26 For more, visit <https://labx.gov.pt/>.

27 Visit www.osale.ee.

28 Visit <https://digital.gouvernement.lu/fr/le-ministere/einfachletzebuerg.html>.

‘We propose an eight-point programme based on the implications of the data compiled here and the learnings we amassed from analysing this research.’

Interoperability/Re-Use

One important aspect of developing user-centric services is the capacity to collaborate between different public administrations, notably by adopting interoperable standards and reusing existing software components and data.

At the heart of this effort are “base registries,” the public administration-controlled data bases where basic citizen data is held – covering population, business registration, land registries and the like.²⁹ All EU member states have initiatives in place to make local base registries accessible to other public administrations within their country and across borders with varying numbers of application programming interfaces provided to other administrations as well as to private companies. Countries such as **Denmark**, **Estonia**, **Netherlands** and the **United Kingdom** use base registries widely. Countries such as **Estonia**, **Italy** and **Spain** provide data on the degree to which all public administrations have access to local base registries – a key metric if your goal is to provide services to citizens without citizens having to provide their data multiple times. Several countries also provide access to public sector datasets through application programming interfaces (APIs). However, the data on uptake and re-use is scarce.

For instance, in **Denmark**, through the basic data programme, base registries, such as the civil registration system, the central business register and the building and dwelling register, are standardised so that the data can be combined and used coherently. Local authorities’ services are accessible via NemID, the official digital signature for public digital services. In **The Netherlands**, the basic registration of persons law that came into force in 2014 has improved the quality of the personal records registration, both for citizens and governments. Furthermore, the Dutch open data portal <https://data.overheid.nl/> provides access to national datasets.

The x-road data-exchange system in **Estonia** is a technical and organisational environment that enables secure Internet-based data exchange between the state’s information systems, including base registries. X-road allows the nation’s various public and private sector e-service information systems to link up and function in harmony. Today, there are around 650 institutions and enterprises connected to x-road. 52,000 organisations use x-road services directly or indirectly and the system fields nearly one billion queries annually.³⁰ Base registries in the **United Kingdom** are grounded in separate pieces of legislation, pertaining explicitly to the activities of each base registry. The <http://www.gov.uk> registries provide structured datasets of government information to help users build services on a high-quality data infrastructure.

29 For a definition and analysis of base registries and their importance, see European Commission, *European Interoperability Framework: Implementation Strategy* (Brussels: European Commission, 2017).

30 For more, visit <https://e-estonia.com/solutions/interoperability-services/x-road/>.

‘Increasingly, European Union member states are keen on measuring not only supply but also the adoption of online services.’

In **Italy**, the Italian digital team has launched IO, an app where base registries can be accessed by authorised public administrations.³¹ Further, the digital team tracks the take up of electronic invoicing, digital security (CERT-PA), e-ID (SPID) and the system of public administration electronic payments, as well as the number of data sets open and available.³² Furthermore, the centre for semantic interoperability in **Spain** allows information interchange among public administrations and between citizens. It is accessible for all public administrations and anyone working in the interoperability area. Base registries interconnected via the intermediation platform use a service-oriented architecture (SOA)-based transmission protocol. The software libraries developed by the platform can be used as part of the integration software to facilitate the connection of base registries to the platform. An API that allows queries in the <http://datos.gob.es> database provides access to information from the data catalogue in various formats.

Considering the availability of information in open data portals, most EU member states are quite advanced. In **Ireland**, the open data portal provides 10,044 datasets from 113 publishers in open, free and reusable formats.³³ Life events such as birth, death and marriage can be registered

at any of the 26 local registrar’s offices throughout the country and the general register office. The information entered in the local registries is then made available through the general registry. Furthermore, there is an automatic exchange of relevant information which can be exemplified through the fact that the details of birth registrations are forwarded by the general registry office to the department of social protection to automatically generate child benefit claims on behalf of parents.

In **Austria**, the open data Austria initiative allows base registries to be accessible to other public administrations. Over 27,000 data sets have been provided to other administrations or entities, with 1,191 organisations providing data sets and 498 applications included. Federal registries are widely used in applications by local authorities, and a federal ID service is utilised for all relevant governmental applications.³⁴ Similarly, in **Finland**, <http://www.suomi.fi>, the open data portal, provides access to 1,639 datasets from 791 organisations.³⁵ Messages sent on the platform are a secure way to communicate with public administration and other organisations using the service, including public registries.³⁶

31 Visit <https://io.italia.it/>.

32 For an overview, visit <https://avanzamentodigitale.italia.it/it>.

33 Visit <https://data.gov.ie>.

34 Visit <https://www.data.gv.at/>.

35 Visit <https://www.avoindata.fi/en>.

36 Visit <https://www.suomi.fi/messages>.

'The irony is, municipalities are at least as innovative as national bodies. And they focus on issues that would particularly suit co-creation techniques.'

In **Portugal**, the national open data portal for public administration aggregates, references and hosts open data from different organisations and sectors of public administration. This portal allows citizens and businesses to access, study and re-use the data produced by the state. At the moment, 2,242 datasets are available.³⁷

In **France**, the FranceConnect portal is intended to provide access to all e-government services. At the moment, just over 20 e-government services are available via the accessible with eID service portal. The first developed API serves the directorate-general for public finance and allows service providers to gather fiscal data.³⁸

In **Sweden**, the Swedish innovation agency provides a catalogue of Swedish APIs with 310 available from 32 organisations.³⁹ "My messages" is run by the Swedish tax agency on behalf of the agency for digital government. It enables authorities and municipalities to send secure digital communications. More than three million Swedes use the service.⁴⁰ **Luxembourg** is another interesting case. Its data platform, which includes 1,021 datasets from 144 organisations, provides data on re-use and take up: re-use has occurred 123 times and 1,067 users are active.⁴¹

Skills and Governance: Building Structures and Teams that Deliver

In several countries, governments have set up and maintained dedicated **digital service teams** – many of them set up along the lines of the pioneering GDS in the **United Kingdom**. These have emerged as an important third space of ICT governance, sitting between central and decentralized chief information officer offices. They can be described as "organisational structures that are focusing on the redesign of services and processes with the goal to provide digital government services faster and in a more user-centric way than existing e-government efforts."⁴²

In **Estonia**, the chief information office was established in 2004 to implement large-scale digital government projects funded mainly by EU structural funds. The core working principles of the team include the centralisation of public-administration data on a shared data platform, facilitation of the "once-only principle" (the rule that governments should only ask citizens for their data once) and expansion of collaboration between the private and public sectors. The signature projects are the Estonian eID and e-residency programmes, the x-road infrastructure, electronic voting, an online tax system and the establishment of digital embassies.

37 Visit <https://dados.gov.pt/pt/datasets/>.

38 Visit <https://franceconnect.gouv.fr/nos-services>.

39 The catalogue is called APIKatalogen and is consultable at <http://apikatalogen.se/>.

40 Visit <https://www.minameddelanden.se/>.

41 Visit <https://data.public.lu/fr/dashboard/>.

42 Ines Mergel, "Digital Service Teams in Government," *Government Information Quarterly*, 36. 4 (2019): 101389.

'Future research from the Co-VAL consortium will include more advanced regression analysis to ascertain causality.'

In **Denmark**, the agency for digitisation was funded in 2011 with an investment of 12 billion kroner [€1.6 billion] with the aim to improve public services.⁴³ Their signature projects include scaling up by building shared infrastructure and the establishment of a digital ID (ECID) and e-invoicing systems.

In **Italy**, the *team digitale* was established in 2016 with an investment of €31 million for the setup year, followed by €9 million for 2017-2018 coming from the 2014/2020 structural funds. The aims and principles of the team are to evaluate existing technological assets, to provide direct support to local public administration, to establish a data analytics framework and to set up a mobile first approach.

Finally, in **Finland**, an agency was established in 2016 with an endowment of €100 million to boost the digitisation of government services, support digital transformation from a human-centred cultural change standpoint, as well as to accelerate the reform of government services so they become customer-focussed services that utilise digitalisation.⁴⁴

Besides the creation of dedicated teams, member states are increasingly active in deliberate **community and ecosystem building**.

In **Finland**, an “ecosystem forum operating model” has been implemented in order to speed up the development of digital ecosystems serving citizens’ and companies’ needs. In **The Netherlands**, the ministry of the interior is the main sponsor of the “user needs first” programme, a community of government UX professionals, aimed at developing digital services based on citizen and business needs. In **Italy**, the *team digitale* has launched several communities, notably one for designers, to foster the adoption of design guidelines.⁴⁵

Most EU member states have made provisions for **digital skills training** for civil servants in their national digital skills strategy, with **Belgium** and **Finland** being the leaders. In 2015, the Belgian Minister for the Digital Agenda Alexander de Croo launched “digital minds for Belgium,” a group of experts in the digital world, including Internet entrepreneurs, CEOs of technology companies, venture capitalists and academics, with the task of supporting the development of the digital agenda in Belgium.⁴⁶ The Belgian *institut de formation de l’administration fédérale* provides ICT training for all levels to be followed alone or in groups.⁴⁷ Finland has a state-owned company – HAUS Finnish institute of public management – that is tasked with providing personnel-training services for the entire central government administration.

43 The krone-euro exchange rate is for 2011, the reference year.

44 The agency, D9, was discontinued in 2019. The relevant design specialists were reassigned to existing agencies.

45 Visit <https://designers.italia.it/>.

46 Visit <http://digitalbelgium.be/en/digital-minds/>.

47 Visit <https://www.ofoifa.belgium.be/fr/training/50452956>.

'Eleven EU member states have launched co-creation initiatives in their national digital plans and strategies.'

Few EU member states offer dedicated **training on design methods**. One exception is **Poland**, where the state school for public administration offers a course on designing public services to teach civil servants how to use service design tools. In **The Netherlands**, the ministry of infrastructure and environment made a pledge to the open government partnership to train civil servants on public participation in the design of services. In **Slovenia**, at least 1,200 government employees will be provided various training including the design of services.⁴⁸

Key Performance Indicators

Monitoring has always been important in shaping digital government policy, beginning with the early “benchmarking eEurope” indicators of 2001.⁴⁹ Member states are increasingly keen on measuring not only supply but also the **adoption of online services**. Moreover, they increasingly do so through **public dashboards**. Concerning the key performance indicators on uptake of digital services, **Belgium** monitors digital government through the digital dashboard.⁵⁰ Interestingly, the key performance indicators are machine-generated and include a “citizen usage index,” which reflects the degree of digitisation of interaction between citizens and the government,

such as the number of times people log onto MyBelgium; the “company usage index,” which reflects the degree of digitisation of the interaction between companies and the government such as through the “biztax” programme; and the “government use index,” which reflects the degree of digitisation of public administration, i.e., the average values of indicators such as the number of requests sent through the federal service bus (FSB) portal.

Similarly, **France** monitors digital government through the digital public services dashboard, which measures usage and satisfaction.⁵¹ Specifically, France tracks the prevalence of paperless administrative procedures and the evolution of their rate of use compared to other channels.

In **Estonia**, the digital agenda 2020 includes several key performance indicators, such as the percentage of the population who are aware of public e-services and satisfaction with the quality of public e-services, as well as the adoption rate for online-services, a key indicator.

In 2018, 10 million customer contacts were made online with the revenue commissioners (67% of the total) in **Ireland**; 77% of the 131,500 applications were processed under the

48 Visit <https://ksap.gov.pl/ksap/szkolenia/najblizsze-szkolenia/projektowanie-uslug-publicznych-service-design-2>.

49 For an overview of the assets and limitations of benchmarking, see Cristiano Codagnone and Trond Arne Undheim, “Benchmarking eGovernment: Tools, Theory and Practice,” *European Journal of ePractice* 4 (2008).

50 The data is available in real-time at <https://digitaldashboard.belgium.be/en>.

51 Visit <https://www.modernisation.gouv.fr/home/tableau-de-bord-des-services-publics-numeriques-edition-2017>.

'Local government is more innovative than national – or so they say.'

basic payment scheme; 70% of the five million motor tax transactions were made online, and more than eight million land-registry transactions were online. Key performance indicators used in the digital public services pillar include e-government users, number of pre-filled forms, online service completion, digital public services for businesses, open data, e-health services, medical data exchange, e-prescriptions and adoption rates of online services.

In **Portugal**, the agency for the modernisation of the administration releases an annual evaluation and accountability report. It includes indicators such as the number of SIMPLEX+ measures implemented, as well as the number of authentications via the digital mobile key. Key performance indicators include e-government users, number of pre-filled forms, online service completion, digital public services for businesses, open data, e-health services, medical data exchange and e-prescriptions.

In **Germany**, with the e-government monitor, one can follow the percentage of Germans who have used an e-government service in the past 12 months.⁵² In **Poland**, key performance indicators on digital government include shortening the time for handling a given life event (from the user's point of view) or

servicing the process on the organisation's side; reducing the number of steps a user must take; reducing the number of people or departments involved in the process; reducing the number of documents required; increasing the number of volumes, individual data, and automatically downloaded files without user or clerks; reducing the costs of the process (on the user or institution side).

Few countries include performance **indicators on users' co-creation**. **Austria** reports that more than 100 co-creation exercises have been carried out in the last five years. In **Sweden**, more than 80% of public administrations involve users in co-creation exercises. **Greece** collects information on the number of projects aimed at enhancing citizen participation as well as on the number of projects to enhance information and citizen participation.⁵³

In a nutshell, most governments are increasingly keen to gather and publish user-centric metrics, much of it automatically generated, on adoption of digital services, though few countries offer co-creation metrics. And even then, the metrics are highly heterogeneous and not readily comparable.

52 74% of the population did so in 2018, up from 67% in 2012.

53 The data comes from the integrated monitoring system for indicators 2014-2020 of the national strategic reference framework, which provides the number of projects aimed at enhancing citizen participation. Visit https://www.espa.gr/elibrary/Metarrythmisi_Dimosiou_2014GR05M2OP001_1_2_el.pdf and https://www.espa.gr/elibrary/Eniaio_Systema_Parakolouthisis_Deiktwn_2014-2020_July2017.pdf.

III. The Local Dimension: Cities and Municipalities

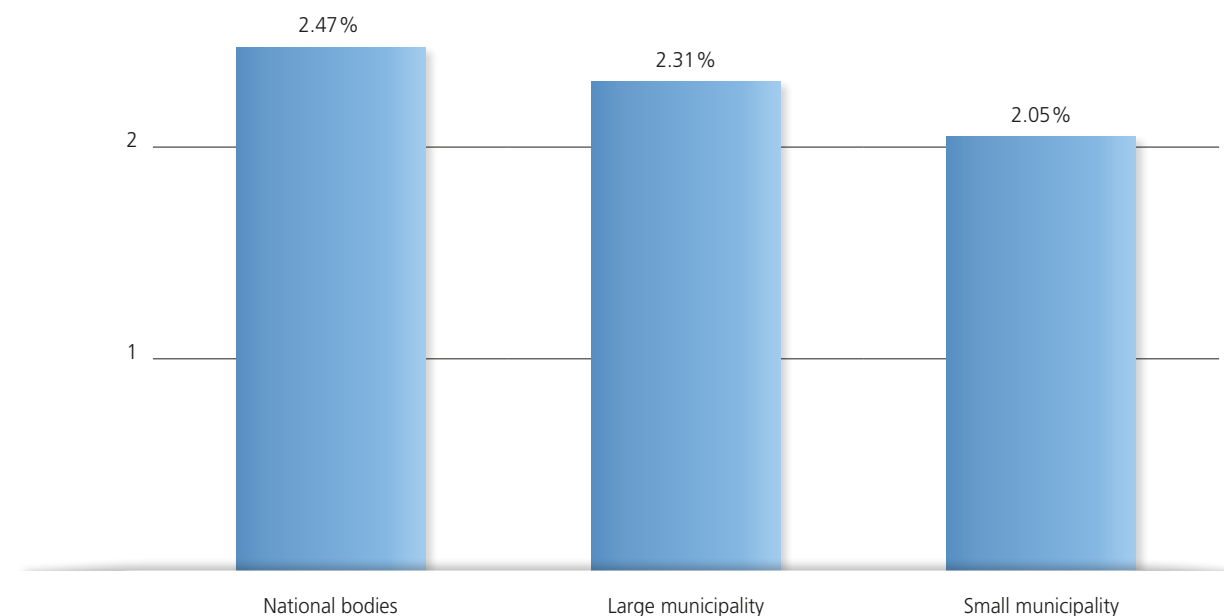
Perhaps not surprisingly, local government is more innovative than national – or so they say. In the Co-VAL Survey, 88.2% of respondents from large municipalities report that they have introduced an innovative service or process in the last 12 months; compared to 83.4% of respondents from small municipalities.⁵⁴ For national governments, the percentage is 80.2%.

But the situation is exactly reversed when it comes to co-creation. For reasons that have yet to be fully explained, national governments have shown a greater interest in embracing co-creation than local ones. Of the five most basic co-creation methods, respondents from national bodies report that they have adopted

on average 2.47 methods; for large and small municipalities, the figure is 2.31 and 2.05, respectively. See Chart 4 below for a graphic representation. This difference might seem irrelevant, but the data presented elsewhere in this policy brief also shows that the intensity of use of co-creation methods is strongly correlated with the benefits achieved. So any adoption gap has a higher impact in reality.

This is also confirmed when looking at the use of specific co-creation methods. Respondents from national governments (48.7%) are more likely to adopt advanced design methods such as developing prototypes than large municipalities (39.6%) or small municipalities (31.8%).

Chart 4. Mean Number of Five Co-Creation Methods Used



Source: Arundel and Es-Sadki

⁵⁴ Arundel and Es-Sadki, *op. cit.*

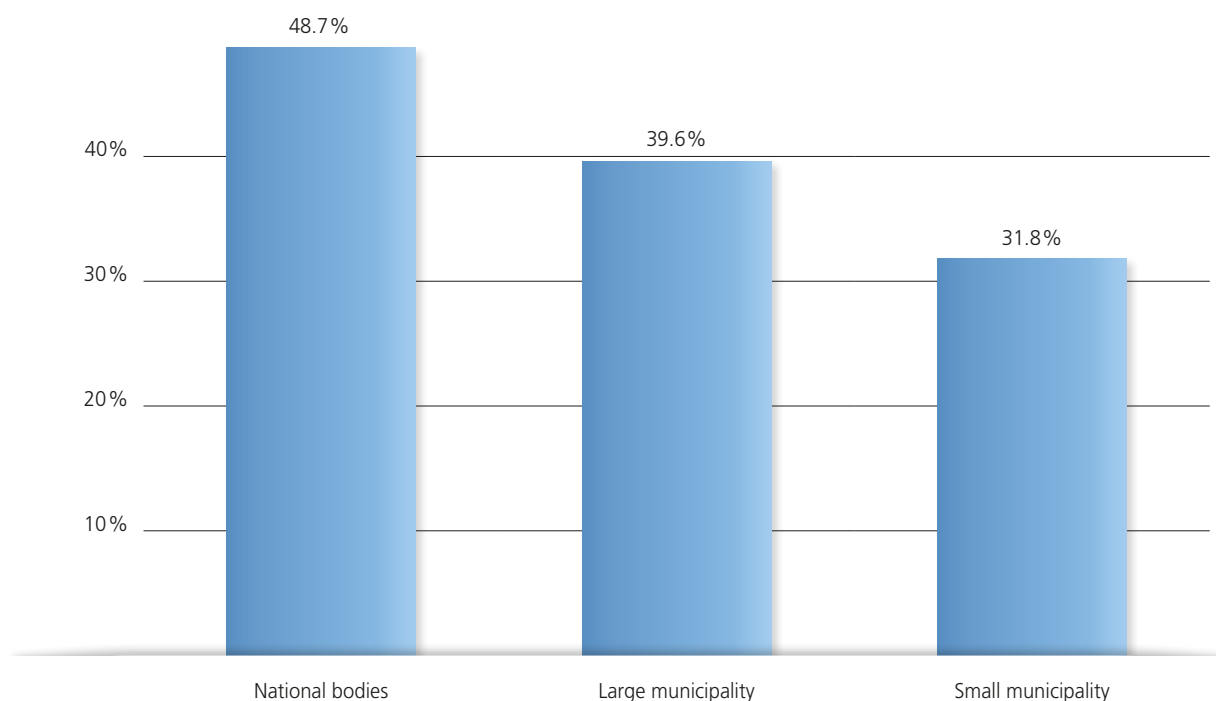
‘Some co-creation methods are widely used – but not the most advanced ones such as prototypes.’

They are more likely to conduct “one-to-one in-depth conversations with users to identify challenges or unmet needs” (55.5% versus an average of 42% for municipalities). In contrast, small municipalities are more likely to use less expensive methods, such as including users in brainstorming or idea generation workshops, than units in large municipalities or national governments (61.4% versus an average of 48.5%). In general, large units are more likely to obtain “data on the experiences of users with previous or similar innovations” and use “real-time studies of how users experience or use a prototype of [an] innovation.” See Chart 5 below.

For an analysis of co-creation in five leading European cities, see the box on page 28.

The irony is, municipalities are at least as innovative as national bodies. And they focus on issues that would particularly suit co-creation techniques. One possible interpretation of these findings is that the larger the population of users, the more organisations need to adopt design techniques in order to understand users. But it could also be a matter of amassing the right skills sets or developing proper understanding of the opportunities for co-creation. Further research will shed light on these issues.

Chart 5. Use Rate of Prototypes



Source: Arundel and Es-Sadki

IV. Co-Creation at Scale: An Eight-Point Programme

The data collected in this policy brief is rich, and contains within it much information which policymakers could apply to their own work. What are the users of co-creation telling us? How can we use design-thinking principles to create a better policy framework for improved digital government-service delivery? And how can we roll it out now?

The data is not definitive when it comes to policy. But there are some hints. We propose an eight-point programme based on the implications of the data compiled here and the learnings we amassed from analysing this research.

Co-Creation in Leading Cities: Amsterdam, Athens, Madrid, Milan and Turin

The Co-VAL Dashboard looks at co-creation in 27 EU member states plus the United Kingdom. Obviously, co-creation can and must take place at more than just the national level. To get a better understanding of how co-creation was working at the local level, we asked five leading cities – **Amsterdam, Athens, Madrid, Milan and Turin** – to provide us with data in a questionnaire similar to the one we had prepared for national governments. The results were fascinating. All five cities are among Europe’s most innovative. But each of them also reports that they only introduce “design techniques when possible,” an indication of reluctance to move too far from tried and tested methods of delivering government services. Amsterdam reports the inclusion of co-creation in *I-visie Amsterdam*, their digital government strategy. While Madrid includes user-centred service in their strategic plan. Madrid and Turin even use the same open-source platform, Consul, to involve citizens in decision making. Co-creation is becoming increasingly used, as well. Milan and Athens report 10 co-creation exercises per year, all on new projects. Amsterdam and Turin equally report repeated usage. Labs have been set up in Amsterdam, Athens, Madrid and Turin. Driven at least partly by the wide-spread use of advanced design techniques, online services encounter high adoption rates in these places. Milan passed the threshold of 50% of transactions performed online in 2018. All five cities accept electronic identifications, and in Milan, 16% of citizens use it. Amsterdam, Madrid, Milan and Turin provide application programming interfaces (APIs) to public or private bodies. Milan provides 160 APIs, most of which have prompted heavy usage, with around 1,800,000 access calls per month. Amsterdam and Madrid focus their API mainly on open data. All five cities are active in interoperability initiatives with national and European bodies. Amsterdam, Milan and Turin offer access to base registries to other public administrations, and they use software modules provided by national entities, namely related to identification and payment. Amsterdam and Milan also provide training to their staff and use key performance indicators (KPI) to monitor progress. Milan uses the adoption rate of digital services as a KPI. However, these KPI do not extend to co-creation practices. Overall, the data paints a picture of increasing adoption of co-creation practices on a large scale, but it also shows the need for more systematic and strategic approaches to development, deployment and monitoring across all services. For more, visit <http://www.co-val.eu/dashboard/municipalities>.

‘It is important to start creating more sustainable mechanisms, using the same principles embedded in design thinking to evaluate the use and uptake of design thinking itself.’

- 1) **Provide Cross-Departmental Operational Guidelines.** Many government agencies show awareness of the potential for co-creation to help them provide better digital services to citizens, and most administrations claim to be applying some version of it already. But there is much ambiguity about the concept, and many public administrations sincerely believe that they are using co-creation just by looking at usage data or having a couple of brainstorming sessions with users. While the principles laid out in **The 2017 Tallinn Declaration** are a good starting point, they need to be complemented by concrete operational guidelines available at all levels of government. Co-creation methods should be clearly spelled out. The discussion needs to move from principles to techniques.
- 2) **Build In-House Competence.** Service design capabilities cannot be completely outsourced, and some basic elements should be present in all public administrations. This requires new, more flexible recruitment mechanisms that allow attracting new profiles in government. And it requires mainstreaming service design methods across all training modules for civil servants involved in service delivery.
- 3) **Deliver at Scale.** Many countries are keen to develop co-creation principles, guidelines and laboratories, but they are less keen to ensure widespread compliance. Data shows

that the benefits of co-creation are visible only when deployed systematically across government. It is time to move the yardstick towards the implementation of those principles, as the example of **Poland** and the **United Kingdom** have shown. It is necessary to deploy stronger enforcement mechanisms: user research should be a pre-requirement for accessing public funding by, for instance, applying conditionality in the context of structural funds. Appropriate *ex-post* reporting mechanisms should be in place too.

- 4) **Measure Adoption Rates and Compliance.** This policy brief – and the ongoing research Co-VAL is leading – was developed to elaborate the first robust framework for measuring and monitoring co-creation across countries and jurisdictions. But future efforts must be more systematic and institutionalised. In the short term, *ad hoc* surveys such as the one led by Co-VAL will remain necessary, but it is important to start creating more sustainable mechanisms, using the same principles embedded in design thinking to evaluate the use and uptake of design thinking itself. Adoption and compliance should be integrated with administrative reporting mechanisms as proposed in Recommendation No. 3. One sure way of doing that is to link public funding to a common measurement framework – for instance, in the context of the structural funds.

'Local government is the front-end of government services.'

- 5) **Use Real-Time Data (and Set Standards for Gathering It).** Digital government metrics should draw as much as possible on automatically generated data. Many EU member states gather and publish data that has been automatically generated by their systems. But this data is incomparable across borders. With relatively little effort, it should be possible to develop harmonised, comparable, low-cost and high validity adoption metrics – metrics that would drive adoption, allow cross-country comparison and the development of best practice.
- 6) **Support Local Adoption.** Local government is the front-end of government services. While several large cities are pioneers in co-creation, in general local government lags behind in the adoption of these methods. There is a need to set up mechanisms to share the learnings of the pioneering cities more widely and to provide concrete guidelines and support to local authorities on the use of co-creation. The EU's designated digital innovation hubs for public services should be specifically oriented towards local authorities and equipped with a sufficiently trained workforce.
- 7) **Empower a Cross-Government Digital Transformation Agency or a Strong Team Within One.** The history of co-creation tells one important story. Governments that empower a talented team of people – giving them a wide mandate to pursue policy and demonstrate success to early adopters – are the ones that reap the benefits of this new way of developing and delivering services. The governance structure needs to be clear; someone should be in charge. And the broader bureaucracy and administration need to see the benefits – and the necessity – of joining in.
- 8) **Be Consistent.** There are many useful efforts underway to drive co-creation, such as the creation of dedicated teams, the provision of guidelines and the development of safe spaces for innovation in many EU member states. But the policies are themselves sometimes too temporary and one-off. Teams are created and dismantled, guidelines and principles are not fully implemented and experiments are not sufficiently evaluated or translated into services. Co-creation needs to be given a better, stronger mandate – something that agencies know will live beyond the rise or fall of the elected government that gave birth to it. National and local authorities also need a streamlined space for sharing experiences and lessons learned.

‘Co-creation needs to be given a better, stronger mandate – something that agencies know will live beyond the rise or fall of the elected government that gave birth to it.’

Last but not least, more research is needed on the benefits and drivers of co-creation as a way to better serve citizens. The Co-VAL survey described here shows a clear correlation between the level of adoption and benefits, but causal inference will only be addressed with further research (which is ongoing at Co-VAL). In the coming year, the survey data will be further analysed to identify additional critical factors and the dashboard will be updated on a regular basis with data provided by countries and municipalities.

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About the Understanding Value Co-Creation in Public Services for Transforming European Public Administrations (Co-VAL) Consortium

Co-VAL is a 12-partner consortium co-financed by the European Union. The project aims to find new ways of examining the co-creation of value in public services in order to transform public administrations and processes. Alongside new tools and broadly-based citizen surveys, it will produce cutting-edge research which describes the challenge of public administrative reform in Europe and explores the cutting edge of unique "value co-creation" models for delivering better public services and improving citizen-state relations.

For more, visit <http://www.co-val.eu/> or follow the consortium on twitter at https://twitter.com/CoVAL_eu.



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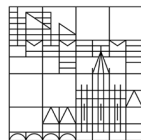


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