



## The 2021 Digital Government Summit

### Creating Services Together

How 'Co-Creation,' Design Thinking and 'User-Centric' Reforms are Making Public Services Friendlier and More Effective for Citizens

Wednesday, 21 April 2021

Yesterday the COGOV research project was able to share its findings on co-creation at a high-level EU conference. The Digital Government Summit drew an invited audience of senior representatives from the EU institutions, universities, public administrations at city, region and governmental levels, tech industries, international consultancies, the OECD, World Bank and not-for-profit foundations.

The summit also saw the launch of '**The 2021 Co-Creation Compass\***', a high-level policy brief coordinated by the Lisbon Council Think Tank and featuring contributions from COGOV and the other four projects funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 programme on Transforming Public Administrations (COVAL; TROPICO; ENLARGE; and CITADEL).

Opening the event, David Osimo of the Lisbon Council stressed that despite the rise in interest in co-creation it was important to regard it as a tool, not an end itself and that while digitalisation and co-creation can be usefully linked, the latter 'is not a digital tool, it is a governance tool.'. Crucially, it should be an instrument to improve public services, placing the user at the centre.

Other contributions from project leaders covered the sections of the policy brief that identified some of the 'do's' and 'don'ts' when introducing co-creation; how co-creation can help the implementation of the EU Green Deal; wider, more systematic, policy lessons on how to both ensure that those who are already motivated are able to implement co-creation by strengthening capacities, and to stimulate the willingness of reluctant agencies to adopt co-creation by providing incentives.

In the final presentation by the project leads, Professor Keith Shaw, Coordinator of COGOV, argued that a number of questions on co-creation have yet to be addressed for it to be

effectively deployed more widely, or scaled-up. In particular, because of the *social* nature of co-creation, a strong research effort is still needed to understand co-creation from 'the bottom-up' in order to ensure its effectiveness and impact. Given that the initial theoretical ground-clearing exercise has largely been undertaken, it was also argued that building the empirical base further should be a key priority. This is particularly in relation to; comparative case-study based work which moves across sectors and jurisdictions, more longitudinally orientated case study work, and large-scale quantitative research allowing for international benchmarking. In short, while developments in co-creation are promising, it has not as yet fully achieved its transformative impact. Further research is required to help bring co-creation to maturity

The second half of the session shifted the focus from the researchers to the decision makers and featured contributions from leading figures in public sector renewal. Johannes Hahn, (EU Commissioner for Budget and Administration) stressed the importance of digitalisation, but for it to be done in 'the European way' – to increase openness and participation. Sandy Speicher (Global Design Firm IDEO) joined in from the USA and focused attention on the role of the designer in facilitating co-creation. She referred to improvements to the voting system in LA and to the design of schools in Peru, pointing out how services can be better designed by engaging people in the process as users and designers. Kyriakios Pierrakakis (Greek Minister of State and Digital Governance) described how the covid pandemic had forced the pace and the importance of measures to improve public services using digitisation in his own country.

\* The 2021 Co-Creation Compass is now available on: [The Co-Creation Compass: From Research to Action - The Lisbon Council](#).