



Current Trends in Innovating Public Administration

Cristina PĂTRAȘCU*

Abstract: *Today, more than ever before, public administration around the world seems to understand that its future development(s) rests on collaborations and innovative co-creation, with enterprises, civil society, and citizens. The fundamental principle of delivering accessible, inclusive, and high-quality public services remains essentially a top priority in an era of radical and fast evolving phenomena. To achieve this goal, public administration's methods of delivering valuable public services are changing dramatically, with professionals in public administration using a mix of interagency cooperation, innovation and political commitment to transformation.*

Keywords: *co-creation; innovation; public service*

1. Introduction

Dynamic ecosystems where value co-creation is crucial to the success or failure of public interventions are gradually emerging to replace traditional compartmentalized structures as technology advances and societal issues become more complicated and linked. Traditional lines between governmental levels – local, regional, national and supranational – are fading away in today's world which becomes more connected each day. The compelling contemporary aspirations for integrated, user-centric service delivery and effective resource use represent the main drivers of this change. To accomplish common goals and deliver prompt,

* Senior Lecturer, PhD, Faculty of Law and Administrative Science, "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati, Romania, Corresponding author: cristina.patrascu@ugal.ro.



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors.
Open access publication under the terms and conditions of the
Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

effective public services, governments are transitioning from compartmentalized operations to a whole-of-government strategy.

Innovation, created through partnership reuniting various stakeholders, from both corporations and civil society, as opposed to separate administrative bodies, seems to be an essential choice to ensure a better future for public administration and its citizens. While the core tenet of offering accessible, inclusive, and high-quality public services has not changed in an era of rapid digital innovation, public administrations' methods for adding value for their citizens have undergone a significant evolution.

Compared to earlier times, public administrations of today encounter a greater variety of difficulties that require greater collaboration under various forms. One of these forms is referred to as co-creation and co-production. Although these two terms are used sometimes interchangeably, specialty literature in the field of innovation calls attention to their differentiated shades of meaning. In recent years, co-creation seems to be the preferred term especially when there is a strong connection with innovation or social innovation applied in the process of transformation of public services.

The connection between public service improvement as a significant part of public administration reform and various forms of innovation, particularly "community-based innovation" has been documented by various researchers (Denters, 2023; Bedi, Kansal, and Mukheibir, 2023; Pătrașcu, 2023). In close association with this theme, an interesting stream of research focuses on the newest trends that innovation develops in the domain of public service reform, understood as a constant adjustment to the needs of society. Some of the major innovation trends (OECD 2024a, Capgemini, 2025) in public administration over the last year are the widespread use of artificial intelligence (AI) for tasks like data analysis and service delivery, an emphasis on digital transformation and modernizing digital infrastructure, as well as the development of more citizen-centric services through personalization and public participation. Strengthening cybersecurity, putting agile governance principles into place and enhancing data management for better decision-making are some other noteworthy themes. The present article focuses on exploring what are these new trends of innovation in public administration, as we start from the premise that innovation is significant for all areas of government, and even more so for the activities of public service delivery.

2. Digitalization and New Technologies as Tools for Enhanced Public Service Delivery

The process of modernizing public services is greatly impacted by digital transformation. Administrative systems are being redesigned by governments all around the world to improve interoperability, provide seamless services across separate structures and speed up administrative procedures. These efforts aim first of all at transforming the ways public services are designed, delivered and evaluated.

Public services have undergone significant modernization and the transition to digital-era government has accelerated as a result of the extended use of new information technologies. Governments all around the world have resorted to technology to enhance the provision of public services and make them more user-friendly and accessible. The goal of this move to e-government was to improve public services' responsiveness, transparency, and efficiency (OECD, 2024, p.11; Dunleavy, 2005). However, during the last decades, unprecedented difficulties have made clear the interdependence of political, economic, and social institutions on a global scale. These difficulties brought to light the intricacy, unpredictability, and instability of contemporary government. These features have been brought to light by two major events, namely the 2008 financial crisis and the pandemic. Despite being hurled "into uncharted territory" (OECD, 2024, p. 11), public administrations have learned from these events and have capitalized on the experience.

Understanding the necessity to balance the human resource and the technological tools in the sphere of public service, public administration has gradually started to test and introduce artificial intelligence and machine learning to improve human decision-making, automate internal procedures (such as procurement) and offer individualized citizen services. Strong AI governance is being prioritized in order to guarantee its ethical, secure, and open application. Concurrently, real-time and non-traditional data sources, such as IoT sensors and AI simulations, are being used by public administrations more frequently to inform policy elaboration, enhance resource distribution and anticipate future difficulties. To guarantee data confidentiality, integrity, and secure use of data across administrative compartments and services, data management platforms are crucial.

To ensure that technology supports the corpus of civil servants and all other employees of the public service, rather than replacing them, the global trend highlights AI as a facilitator rather than a replacement. For example, common questions are handled by AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants, freeing up real

employees to work on more sophisticated, valuable jobs (García-Mellado, Guzman, Trigales, 2025). By automating repetitive processes, boosting decision-making, and increasing citizen participation, artificial intelligence in public administration, especially generative AI, is transforming public services. Leading countries in e-Government, like Estonia, have set the standard for efficiency and accessibility in the world by pioneering fully digital public services, such as digital IDs and online voting.

Even though digital technologies have been extensively used to transform public services, quick digitalization by itself does not guarantee better or more durable results, as the 2023 OECD Digital Government Index (DGI) demonstrates (OECD, 2024b; OECD, 2024a, p.11). Governments must use innovative methods to fully benefit from the digital transformation in public services while reducing the risks it presents. Among these new approaches, the most significant ones refer to the necessity of developing new skills within the public sector workforce, of elaborating clear and appropriate policies and strategies and of encouraging and consolidating stakeholder cooperation and participation. Additionally, governments, at all governance levels, have to pay attention to their citizens' needs, to protect human rights, and foresee potential changes and threats. At the same time, as mentioned in the G7 Toolkit for Artificial Intelligence in the Public Sector (OECD/UNESCO, 2024), sustainability concerns and ethical guidelines must be taken into account and integrated within all policies and procedures. The 2023 Digital Government Index, elaborated by OECD, shows that public administrations have built strong foundations for the digital transformation of their public services. The report also specifically emphasizes that it is essential to perform increasingly structured user interaction in the design and in the evaluation of digital public services to guarantee that objectives are met and that the solutions put in place satisfy users' expectations (OECD, 2023)

An example of good practice may be that of Ireland who sought to expand on its Our Public Service 2020 plan (Better Public Service Strategy 2030) to offer more inclusive, superior, and integrated public services. To this aim, Ireland developed Better Public Services, a whole-of-government strategy for delivering future public services. It is based on three pillars: Workforce and Organization of the Future, and Evidence-Informed Policies; Digital and Innovation at Scale; and Services Designed for and with our Public. It is implemented throughout the government and within organizations like public services. A cross-sectoral working group is in charge of each of these three strategy pillars, and the Public Service Leadership Board, which is made up of top officials from several government departments and public service

organizations, is in charge of the strategy as a whole (OECD 2024, p.14; Better Public Service Strategy 2030).

3. Citizen-centric Services and the Interoperability Approach

One of the most striking changes in public administration's mode of organization is a perceived blurring of rigid boundaries between all levels of government: local, regional, state, supranational. This change is caused by the pressing need for integrated, citizen-centric service delivery and by an equally pressing urge to find more effective ways to create and use resources. The concept of "open government" is gaining more relevance. In implementing this type of government, co-creation of public services becomes an inherent element in the process of creating and delivering citizen-centric or user-centric services.

Co-creation indicates that citizens use their agency to set their own objectives in order to address problems that they deem significant. According to a definition co-creation is "a collaborative activity that reduces power imbalances and aims to enrich and enhance the value in public service offerings" (Fox et al, 2021, p. 8). A variety of modalities and tools with varying degrees of user interaction are included in co-creation and lower levels of user involvement are just as significant. Several categories of co-creation may be citizen to citizen (C2C), government to citizen (G2C), government to government (G2G) or government to business (G2B) (Dixon, Melloni, Echevarria et al, 2021, p. 5). These types imply various ways of citizens' involvement and other stakeholders' participation.

Governments can develop more robust and progressive public services by using co-creation and adopting a multifaceted perspective. The OECD Recommendation on Human-Centred Public Administrative Services emphasizes how crucial it is for governments to anticipate future opportunities and problems and to actively adapt to a rapidly changing environment (OECD, 2024; OECD, 2024a, p. 15). Developing anticipatory strategies and structured ways of citizens' and other stakeholders' cooperation and participation may contribute to an improved design and implementation of services that are prepared for both the present and the future.

The way governments create and provide services is being redefined by a paradigm shift towards citizen-centricity. Administrations are streamlining user journeys by grouping services around life events (birth, marriage, retirement), going beyond bureaucratic silos. "Omnichannel services" (García-Mellado, Guzman, Trigales, 2025) can offer access for everyone, especially vulnerable groups, by combining

phone lines, digital platforms, and in-person assistance. Clear communication and multilingual services are emerging as worldwide best practices. To provide residents with individualized and proactive services, countries like Singapore and Denmark have demonstrated excellence in developing user-friendly digital government portals (García-Mellado, Guzman, Trigales, 2025).

Enhanced transparency and participatory governance must be essential elements of current public governance and public service delivery. More inclusive and democratic decision-making processes are made possible by cutting-edge tools like online consultations, policy laboratories, and digital participation platforms. Furthermore, maintaining public access to information and controlling lobbying efforts continue to be top global issues. Examples of how technology promotes citizen participation and policy co-creation are Finland's "AuroraAI" and Canada's "Open Government Portal" (García-Mellado, Guzman, Trigales, 2025).

Highly significant for the integration of a citizen-centric "logic" at the center of public service delivery is the principle of interoperability which was created by the European Union as a tool to transform the way public services are understood and created. EU Member states are giving interoperability principles highest priority to promote cooperation between agencies, industries, and even across national borders. Interoperability is conceived as a strong framework that tackles organizational, legal, semantic, and technical issues with the goal to facilitate the smooth exchange of data, systems, and procedures. As the last decade has been marked by a lot of societal issues that go beyond national or local borders, coordinated, cross-border interoperability initiatives are necessary to address challenges posed by phenomena like migration and displacement, cybersecurity concerns, public health emergencies, fast urbanization, and climate change.

Within this context, several interoperability frameworks have been elaborated and set in place to support public administrations in the EU states. The first European Interoperability Framework (EIF) was established in 2010. Several years later, a new one was initiated by the European Commission that adopted Communication (COM(2017)134), on March, 2017. The new framework emphasizes the practical application of interoperability models and principles. There is a greater focus on openness and information management, data portability, interoperability governance, and integrated service delivery. To make its implementation easier, EIF provides detailed instructions that outline the measures and actions to be carried out to initiate the transformation of public services into digital public services that are interoperable. The 2017 EIF provides public administrations with 47 specific recommendations on how to strengthen the governance of their interoperability

initiatives, build relationships across organizational boundaries, simplify procedures supporting end-to-end digital services, and make sure that interoperability efforts are not hindered by new or existing laws.

The new EIF is implemented in close connection with the European Commission's efforts to establish a Digital Single Market in Europe. In the Digital Single Market, the public sector, (which employs more than a quarter of all workers and contributes roughly fifth of the EU's GDP through public procurement) plays a crucial role as an employer and service provider. The necessity of boosting European interoperability through cooperation has been emphasized by EU member states. This urgency is attested to, among other things, by the ministerial declarations signed in Berlin in 2020 and Tallinn in 2017. The appeal to promote cross-border interoperability was also voiced by EU people attending the Conference on the Future of Europe in 2022. Furthermore, the EIF is implemented through the European Interoperability Reference Architecture (EIRA). EIRA is a crucial tool that fosters interoperability across different industries in addition to software and an organized method for creating and executing interoperable digital public services. EIRA assists public administrations in analyzing requirements and creating solutions that facilitate data interchange and collaboration by providing a uniform framework and set of guidelines. By facilitating the development of integrated services that can function across borders and industries, this design improves user satisfaction and efficiency. Organizations can reap many advantages by utilizing interoperability solutions, such as improved user happiness, lower costs, and increased productivity.

An important step toward enhancing interoperability in the public sector was taken on April 11, 2024, when the Interoperable Europe Act came into effect. The Act preserves administrations' sovereignty at all levels of government while facilitating collaboration and ensuring public services run smoothly across organizational, sectoral, and territorial boundaries. As businesses and citizens throughout the EU demand public services that are of a high-quality from their governments, data must frequently be transferred between various governmental agencies prior to the final transmission to the end-user. This is the reason why seamless interoperability is necessary because this interaction takes place mostly at the local level but also significantly at the regional, national, and European levels. Some obstacles to the digitalization and interoperability of public services throughout Europe have persisted despite previous efforts. One of the main issues is that new public services are not currently integrating interoperability considerations very well. Additionally, it is still too common for digital issues to be addressed too late in the policy-making

process. The negative consequence is that the administrative burden continues to be expensive and time-consuming for governments, individuals, and businesses. The Interoperable Europe Act endeavors to solve these shortcomings. The need to develop a stronger and more strategic interoperability policy with more collaboration between the Member States and the EU Institutions on public sector interoperability has been demonstrated by the continuing challenges in the implementation of interoperability.

Addressing and enhancing the aspects that are necessary for the establishment of the Digital Single Market requires facilitating public sector interoperability. When public administrations collaborate across boundaries, they contribute to the consolidation of interoperability which generates significant positive results in terms of economic expansion, customer satisfaction, public sector efficiency, and innovation. Numerous case studies also demonstrate how interoperability enhances other public values, one of them being the citizens' increased confidence in their governments.

4. Paths towards Re-Imagining the Ways Public Administration Addresses Challenges

Public services have been created and delivered by public administration to address steady, predictable, and growing public needs. To predict future demands, public administrative authorities frequently used available data and the specific trends manifesting within that specific time. As a result, traditional ways of coping with challenging issues might no longer be appropriate to handle uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. Hence the need for "strategic foresight" which "does not view the future as a single, objective, knowable entity. ... Multiple ideas about the future require dialogue for a learning process with useful implications for action" (Polchar, 2020, p. 7). This fact points to the necessity of building public administration's capacity to better anticipate and adjust its actions and tools to the current changes manifesting in its environment.

Public administrations of the EU are currently attempting to make their public services more robust and sustainable by refining their ability to foresee and prepare for uncertainty. One way of achieving this is by elaborating forward-thinking strategies, such as strategic foresight. Governments can investigate possibilities and challenges, discover and predict solutions for various scenarios, and ultimately co-create strategies or solutions by utilizing a range of anticipatory innovation governance processes. According to contemporary scholars, "anticipation"

represents the “emerging practice around anticipatory innovation governance as a broad-based capacity governments can use to spur on innovations (defined as novel to the context, implemented and value shifting products, services and processes) connected to uncertain futures in the hopes of shaping the former through the innovative practice” (Tönurist, Hanson, 2020, p. 2). Along the same lines, other scholars sustain that “to help governments become more proactive and prospective, strategic foresight needs to be framed through a systemic governance approach. (...). Bridging the strategic foresight impact gap – i.e. the distance separating foresight expertise and its actual implementation to target policy goals – involves mobilising and embedding strategic foresight into government functions and mechanisms” (Monteiro and Dal Borgo, 2023, p. 3). An example of good practice in this sense, may be Norway, where it was developed the “New in Norway” portal (OPSI/OECD, 2025), which introduced foresight strategies to guarantee integration services are effectively satisfying the present and future requirements of various user groups.

Another path adopted by public administration is to include a variety of stakeholders in the development of public services through open and participatory citizen engagement. Public administration authorities are requesting information sharing and assistance in service development from citizens, companies, organizations, and other stakeholders. In this way, these authorities can make more inclusive decisions, find solutions, and get a deeper understanding of real-world facts and experiences with the aid of this collective intelligence.

5. References

- Better Public Services – Public Service Transformation 2030 Strategy. Ireland. <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-public-expenditure-infrastructure-public-service-reform-and-digitalisation/publications/better-public-services-public-service-transformation-2030-strategy/>.
- Bedi, C., Kansal, A., Mukheibir, P. (2023). A conceptual framework for the assessment of and the transition to liveable, sustainable and equitable cities. In: *Environmental Science & Policy*, 140, 134–145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2022.11.018>.
- Capgemini/ Arunachalam, R., Botticini, S., Hanania, P-A., Prinsen, S. (2025). Trends in 2025 for public Administration. <https://www.capgemini.com/fi-en/insights/expert-perspectives/trends-in-2025-for-public-administration/>.
- Denters, B. (2023). Do participants consider community initiatives as successful, and if so why?. In: *Cities*, Volume 137, 104288. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2023.104288>.

Dixon, J., Melloni, E., Echevarria, L. O., Osimo, D., Rykkja, L. H., Shaw, K., Sørdsal, L. M., Triantafillou, A. and Vasilescu, C. (2021). The Co-Creation Compass. Interactive Policy Brief. Creating Public Value Together: From Research to Action. Issue 27/2021. The Lisbon Council, Brussels, Belgium. <https://lisboncouncil.net/publications/the-co-creation-compass-from-research-to-action/>.

Dunleavy, P. (2005). New Public Management Is Dead--Long Live Digital-Era Governance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol. 16/3, pp. 467-494. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mui057>.

European Interoperability Reference Architecture, <https://interoperable-europe.ec.europa.eu/collection/european-interoperability-reference-architecture-eira/interoperability-architecture-guidelines>.

Fox, C., Baines, S., Wilson, R., Martin, M., Jalonen, H., Aflaki, I., Prandini, R., Bassi, A. and Ganugi, G. (2021). *A New Agenda for Co- Creating Public Services*, Turku University of Applied Sciences, <http://julkai.sut.turku.amk.fi/isbn9789522167842.pdf>

García-Mellado, E., Guzman, C. G., Trigales, R. (2025). Trends in Public Administration: Modernizing Public Services. <https://vasscompany.com/en/insights/blogs-articles/trends-public-administration/>

Interoperable Europe Act, <https://interoperable-europe.ec.europa.eu/interoperable-europe/interoperable-europe-act>

Monteiro, B. and R. Dal Borgo (2023), "Supporting decision making with strategic foresight: An emerging framework for proactive and prospective governments.", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 63, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1d78c791-en>.

OECD (2024a). *Global Trends in Government Innovation 2024: Fostering Human-Centred Public Services*. OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/c1bc19c3-en>.

OECD (2024b), "2023 OECD Digital Government Index: Results and key findings", *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No. 44, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1a89ed5e-en>.

OECD/UNESCO (2024). *G7 Toolkit for Artificial Intelligence in the Public Sector*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/421c1244-en>.

OECD (2023), *Civic Space Review of Portugal: Towards People-Centred, Rights-Based Public Services*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/8241c5e3-en>.

OPSI/OECD (2025), New In Norway Portal, <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/being-new-in-norway/>.

Pătrașcu, C. (2023). The Many Facets of Social Innovation. *Public Administration and Regional Studies*, 16(2). Galati University Press, ISSN 2065-1759.

Polchar, J. (2020), *Unboxing the Future - Finding the futures in plain sight*, European Union, Institute for Security Studies, pp. 1-8, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2019%20Foresight.pdf>.

The New European Interoperability Framework, /isa2/file/eifjpeg-0_eneif.jpeg

Tönurist, P. and A. Hanson (2020), "Anticipatory innovation governance: Shaping the future through proactive policy making", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 44, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/cce14d80-en>.