

E-GOV OWL CEE Edition

JUNE 2023 - JUNE 2024



EU TECH
LOOP

EDITOR'S LETTER

Welcome to the first "E-GOV OWL: CEE edition" issue!

In this issue, we explore the digital transformation journeys of eleven EU Member States, highlighting the most important institutional and legislative changes over the recent year. We also showcase the most innovative campaigns that aid digital transformation in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Slovenia.

Why did we launch this initiative?

- We believe in fast, brave digital transformation journeys that are focused on tangibly improving citizens' lives while cutting red tape whenever possible.
- Digital transformation should not mean merely digitizing old and rigid bureaucracy. Instead, countries should seize digital transformation as an opportunity to simplify processes for both citizens and public service - offline and online.
- We support a rules-based international order and believe digital transformation should not compromise security by relying on high-risk vendors.
- Democratizing the digital agenda debate is important. We firmly believe that knowledge exchange should be more inclusive and accessible.
- Despite past successes, many Central Eastern European countries lag behind the European Union average in various digital transformation parameters—and learning from each other's experiences is key.
- Central Eastern Europe's digital transformation experience is easily applicable in other regions of the world. Therefore, good (and bad) practices in digital transformation should be shared freely.

This bulletin is launched by 'EU Tech Loop' - a techreg blog powered by the Consumer Choice Center Europe.

We hope you enjoy this issue and we are open to your suggestions for the next one,

Egle Markeviciute

KEY TERMS EXPLAINED

The first issue combines official databases, newspapers, and private reports to examine digital transformations in eleven Central Eastern European countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Slovenia) for the period from June 2023 to June 2024.

The end result is a comprehensive guide full of the latest information for consumers, businesses, and policymakers interested in or working in the field of digital policy and practice.

We detailed the most important recent events in each state along a key set of terms :

AI: short for Artificial Intelligence, this term encompasses policies that aim to incorporate both general and specific AI into existing roles.

CLOUD: short for cloud computing, which involves remote servers designed to store, manage, process, transfer, and exchange data. Both infrastructure as a service (IaaS) and software as a service (SaaS) are included. Policies under this category extend cloud coverage, create new governance rules, or establish new cloud services.

COMBATTING DISINFORMATION: policy plans and efforts to limit online disinformation, which is content that wittingly or unwittingly misleads users.

CONCEPTS: the most recent written digital transformation strategy or grand vision communicated by a country.

CRYPTO: new regulations and limits on cryptocurrency.

CUTTING RED TAPE: removing barriers to entry in the digital industry for private actors or streamlining bureaucratic procedures for public institutions, thereby reducing operational and transaction costs and enhancing consumer access.

CYBER: cybersecurity, focusing primarily on defensive measures such as enhancing capabilities and improving infrastructure along the 4 Ds (detection, deterrence, defense, defeat).

DATA MANAGEMENT: new policies, rules, and institutions established for the purpose of storing, classifying, and processing public data.

E-GOV: the presence of and changes in public e-services.

EU COMPLIANCE: harmonization with the EU's regulations, such as the Digital Services Act (DSA), the Network and Information Systems Security Directive (NIS2), the EU's Data Governance Act, the Artificial Intelligence Act, and others.

OPEN DATA: policies and measures designed to enhance public access to state-owned data.

INNOVATION: new technology and techniques developed for existing technology, new markets (linking consumers and suppliers previously unaware of each other), or other entrepreneurial solutions for digital problems.

SECURITY ONLINE: the civil sector dimension of online safety, distinct from the military and international aspects of cybersecurity.

SKILLS: government strategies to enhance citizens' skills needed to use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information.

SUCCESS STORIES: notable positive news that does not fit into other categories.

TALENT: the enlargement of the labor pool via immigration, reskilling or the support for skilled employees, essential for the digital industry.

5G: measures taken to enhance 5G coverage, which is the percentage of country-wide private households, businesses, and government entities connected to at least one 5G mobile network."

Three key indexes we look at:

EU E-government benchmark 2023 (E-GOV Benchmark 2023) - the annual report published by the European Commission that assesses the availability and quality of online public services across EU member states. Key areas assessed are user-centricity, transparency, cross-border mobility, and key enablers (such as electronic identification and electronic documents).

OECD Digital Government Index 2023 (OECD DGI 2023) - assesses countries' digital government by looking at the comprehensiveness of strategies and initiatives in place to be able to leverage data and technology to deliver a whole-of-government and human-centric digital transformation of the public sector. The assessment is based on the six dimensions of the OECD Digital Government Policy Framework: 1) digital by design, 2) data driven

public sector, 3) government as a platform, 4) open by default, 5) user-driven, and 6) proactiveness.

2023 OECD Open, Useful and Re-usable data (OURdata) Index (OECD OURdata 2023)- Open, Useful and Re-usable data (OURdata) Index benchmarks efforts made by governments to design and implement national open government data policies

Combining the quantitative and qualitative aspects, the report produces an easy-to-read profile of the eleven EU members based on:

1. Dates for the incumbent government (a variable controlling for political change in the comparisons)
2. Indices rankings
3. The extensive discussion of important developments.

In the case of 3., we chose only to represent recent developments, meaning those from June 2023 to June 2024. As such, no entry contains all categories, noting only the latest significant news for perusal.

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Government in office:
April 2023 - now

Rankings

- E-GOV benchmark 2023 - 2nd highest score - 92 pts (EU avg. - 70)
- OECD DGI 2023 - 6th place
- OECD OURdata 2023 - 4th place

Recent developments

CONCEPTS

FROM 'DIGITAL STATE' TO 'PERSONAL STATE'

February 2024

Estonia adopted the "Personal State" concept in 2024, outlining the vision and steps for the next phase of the country's digital society development. The goal is to advance from its current "digiriik" (digital state) to a "personaalne riik" (personal state), emphasizing human-centered, accessible, proactive, reliable, and value-adding public services.

CUTTING RED TAPE

PRECIOUS METAL PRODUCT NAME TAG E-REGISTER

April 2024

The Estonian Parliament adopted amendments to simplify the registration process for precious metal product name tags. Manufacturers and importers of gold and silver products must no longer submit a physical sample of the name tag every year. Instead, an e-register will be created, and its validity will be extended from one year to ten years.

PAPER INVOICES AND PAPER PURCHASE RECEIPTS WAIVED

October 2023

The Estonian Parliament has introduced a proposal to permit traders to discontinue the issuance of paper purchase receipts when a customer card is used, enabling the retrieval of purchase history electronically. Additionally, traders in Estonia will be allowed to cease sending paper invoices by post if consumers opt for e-invoices and do not explicitly request the continuation of paper invoices.

E-GOV

PUBLIC SECTOR'S DATA UNITY OPERATION AND MATURITY WILL BE MEASURED

February 2024

Estonia is set to develop a data unit operation and maturity model tailored for the Estonian public sector. These models will assist organizations in understanding what data they possess, how to best utilize it, and what competencies, management tools, or technologies need further development.

NEW RULES FOR E-VOTING

May 2024

Estonia has amended the law to clarify and enhance the transparency of e-voting rules. The new regulations will allow future voting from smart devices and using Smart-ID alongside existing electronic personal identification tools. These changes will take effect in October 2024, except for provisions requiring a longer implementation period.

EU COMPLIANCE

ESTONIA IMPLEMENTS THE DSA

February 2024

To enhance online safety and user rights, Estonia has approved amendments to prevent illegal online content better, protect user freedom of speech, and align with the EU Digital Services Regulation (DSA) requirements. While aligning with the DSA requirements, micro and small enterprises with fewer than 50 employees and less than 10 million euros in turnover are exempt from these obligations. Approximately 10 medium-sized digital platforms in Estonia will be subject to the DSA's more extensive obligations. These changes aim to create a safer online environment while protecting freedom of speech.

SUCCESS STORIES

E-RESIDENCY PAYING OFF: OVER 200 MILLION EUROS TO THE ESTONIAN TREASURY

December 2023

Estonia reports that its 9-year-old e-residency program has contributed over 200 million euros to the Estonian treasury. As the program approaches its jubilee year, it is poised for significant innovations, such as eliminating the physical digital ID plastic card in favor of a remote identification solution.

Government in office:
September 2023 - now

Rankings

- E-GOV benchmark 2023 - 7th highest score - 82 pts (EU avg. - 70)
- OECD DGI 2023 - 17th place
- OECD OURdata 2023 - 27th place

Recent developments

E-GOV

SMART-ID CAN NOW BE USED TO ACCESS E-SERVICES

November 2023

Latvia's Digital Security Committee has officially recognized Smart-ID, provided by SK ID Solutions, as a qualified electronic identification service. This recognition allows citizens and companies to use Smart-ID to access government e-services, including official electronic addresses on the Latvija.gov.lv portal.

TERRITORY PLANNING PORTAL UPDATED

May 2024

Latvia has launched an updated version of its territory planning website, Ģeoportāls, featuring an improved design to meet modern requirements. The renovated portal enhances user experience by emphasizing key functionalities such as geoproducts and territory planning. Ģeoportāls serves as a single access point for Latvian geospatial information and services, consolidating data from various geospatial data holders nationwide for public access.

NEW DATA MANAGEMENT PLATFORM WILL SIMPLIFY STATE DATA ACCESS

October 2023

The Cabinet of Ministers has approved regulations for the Data Distribution and Management Platform, which aims to streamline state data distribution. This platform will enable ministries and institutions to focus on management and quality issues by providing a centralized hub for easy data access and reducing technical concerns. The new platform will significantly reduce administrative burdens and facilitate faster data exchanges, offering all relevant state data in one place.

NEW RULES TO IMPROVE STATE ICT MANAGEMENT

February 2024

The Latvian Cabinet of Ministers has approved regulations to improve state information and communication technology (ICT) management. The new rules, part of the "State Information Resource, System, and Cooperation Information System Rules" (VIRSIS), aim to centralize and streamline the management of state and local government information systems and data.

VIRSIS will introduce electronic data use permits, simplifying and standardizing data exchange agreements between institutions. This will reduce administrative burdens and expedite data access. Additionally, the regulations incorporate an "electronic agreement" function, enabling state and local institutions to share data electronically through the Data Distribution and Management Platform (DAGR).

CYBER

WORK ON NATIONAL-LEVEL QUANTUM COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE & NETWORK STARTED

September 2023

Latvia has embarked on a scientifically significant project to create a national-level quantum communication infrastructure and network. This initiative is being implemented by the Latvian State Radio and Television Center (LVRTC) in cooperation with the University of Latvia's Mathematics and Informatics Institute, SIA "TET," and VAS "Elektroniskie sakari" (VAS ES).

The consortium aims to establish a working network of quantum key distribution (QKD) between the three project partners. This network will enable the secure exchange of encryption keys, resistant to attacks, by integrating these cutting-edge technologies into the existing infrastructure. Additionally, the project will enhance competencies and facilitate the development of new services within the quantum communication domain.

EU COMPLIANCE

TOWARDS NIS2: NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY LAW APPROVED

March 2024

The Latvian Cabinet of Ministers has approved the National Cyber Security Law to enhance cybersecurity and align with the EU's updated Network and Information Systems Security Directive (NIS2). Public and private sector organizations must register by April 1, 2025, and appoint a cybersecurity manager by July 1, 2025.

The law requires meeting minimum cybersecurity standards, reporting incidents, developing risk management and business continuity plans, and submitting annual self-assessment reports. The National Cyber Security Center will monitor service providers and inspect ICT infrastructure, while the Office for the Protection of the Constitution will oversee critical ICT infrastructure.

Government in office:
December 2020 - now

Rankings

- E-GOV benchmark 2023 - joint 5th score (equalling the Netherlands and Denmark) - 85 pts (EU avg. - 70)
- OECD DGI 2023 - 15th place
- OECD OURData 2023 - 10th place

Recent developments

E-GOV

STATE INFORMATION RESOURCES MANAGEMENT LAW MODERNIZED

December 2023

Lithuania has adopted amendments to the State Information Resources Management Law, setting mandatory goals for state information systems and data governance. The updated law promotes using public cloud services for AI, data management, blockchain, and collaborative work solutions. It encourages the creation of shared information systems and centralized IT services, emphasizing simplified data sharing and security.

Policy oversight is now consolidated under the Ministry of Economy and Innovation, advised by the State Information Resources Management Council and the Data Governance Committee. Each ministry will appoint a Chief Digital Officer to oversee digitalization and data management. Institutions must prepare IT development plans, monitor implementation, and conduct regular IT management audits. The Information Society Development Committee (IVPK) will have increased authority to accredit information systems and oversee IT project financing and implementation.

E-ID OVERSIGHT WILL BE DONE BY THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND INNOVATION

November 2023

Starting in 2024, the Ministry of Economy and Innovation will manage the electronic identification and transaction reliability services policy previously overseen by the Ministry of Interior and Transport.

This change aims to bolster Lithuania's status as a digital services leader in Europe and enhance business opportunities in the e-identification and transactions market.

5G**5G DEVELOPMENT RECOGNIZED AS A PROJECT OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE**

June 2023

The Lithuanian government has officially recognized the development of 5G mobile networks as a project of national importance. This status will facilitate the sustainable development of electronic communications infrastructure, enabling quicker and more efficient planning and implementation of communication solutions.

AMENDMENTS ENABLING THE UNROLLING OF 5G

June 2023

The Lithuanian government has approved legal amendments to support uninterrupted 5G connectivity on major highways like "Via Baltica" and other national roads. The amendments will allow the construction of communication towers along roads and establish easements for electronic communications infrastructure on state or municipal properties. These changes are expected to improve traffic management, enhance safety, and provide a seamless experience for road users.

EU COMPLIANCE

IMPLEMENTATION OF EU DATA GOVERNANCE ACT

May 2024

The Lithuanian Government has approved amendments to implement the EU Data Governance Act, which will now be submitted to Parliament for approval. The act is expected to increase data availability for businesses and residents, enhancing data access and governance across Lithuania.

LITHUANIA ADOPTS AMENDMENTS TO IMPLEMENT EU DIGITAL SERVICES ACT OF 5G

November 2023

The Lithuanian Government has amended the Information Society Services Law to implement the EU Digital Services Act (DSA). The Communications Regulatory Authority will oversee the enforcement of these measures, collaborating with other institutions to address risks posed by large online platforms and ensure consumer protection.

TOWARDS NIS2: NEW CYBERSECURITY LAW APPROVED

June 2024

The Lithuanian government has approved a new Cybersecurity Law in alignment with the EU's NIS2. The Lithuanian parliament has approved a new Cybersecurity Law in alignment with the EU's NIS2 directive, aimed at strengthening national cybersecurity regulation and integrating cybersecurity measures into organizational structures for enhanced resilience.

The law focuses on increasing the resilience of both the public and private sectors to cyber threats, mitigating their impacts, and improving response capabilities to major incidents. It mandates collaboration between the state and private sectors, requires the reporting of cyber incidents, and holds organizational leaders accountable for cybersecurity compliance.

OPEN DATA

LEGAL PUSH FOR STATE-OWNED COMPANIES TO OPEN DATA

May 2024

The Lithuanian Parliament has amended the “Rights to Information and Data Reuse Act.” Effective from November 1, 2024, this law mandates that all 274 closed joint-stock companies and joint-stock companies managed by the state or municipalities inventory and publish their open data on the Lithuanian open data portal.

CYBER

RAPID HARMFUL WEBSITE BLOCKING SYSTEM LAUNCHED

May 2024

Lithuania’s National Cyber Security Center (NKSC) has launched the “VASARIS” system to block harmful internet domains within 15 minutes, a significant improvement over previous delays of days or weeks.

The system allows seven authorized Lithuanian institutions and all internet service providers to quickly and automatically share information and block harmful websites. “VASARIS” enhances transparency by showing which ISPs block domains and how many.

STUDY ON RECOGNIZING CHINA CYBER THREATS

March 2024

The Regional Cyber Defense Center (RCDC), in partnership with member countries and allies from India and Pacific nations, has released a study titled “How To Recognize China Cyber Threats.”

The study aims to equip cybersecurity professionals with practical knowledge about cyber threats from China, offering recommendations for their detection and prevention. It focuses on the tactics, techniques, and procedures of Chinese Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) groups, comparing them with those of other nations and highlighting unique characteristics specific to Chinese groups.

CYBER DEFENSE BOARD ESTABLISHED IN LITHUANIAN ARMED FORCES

April 2024

The Ministry of National Defense is set to establish a Cyber Defense Board within the Lithuanian Armed Forces, a project supported by the State Defense Council that is currently under government review.

The board will ensure the integration and interaction of communication and information systems at strategic and

CYBER HYGIENE PLATFORM FOR PUBLIC SECTOR LAUNCHED

January 2024

The National Cyber Security Center (NKSC) has launched a free online Cyber Hygiene Training platform to strengthen the cyber resilience of Lithuanian organizations and their employees.

The platform addresses human error, a major factor in 80-90% of cyber incidents, by offering nine training topics on safe digital practices and common cyber threats. Participants will learn about secure passwords, mobile device security, safe remote work, and various phishing and ransomware attacks.

Government in office:
December 2023 - now

Rankings

- E-GOV benchmark 2023 - joint 19th position (with Slovakia) - 62 pts (EU avg. - 70)
- OECD DGI 2023 - 21st place
- OECD OURdata 2023 - 3rd place

Recent developments

E-GOV

E-GOV APP MOBYWATEL 2.0 LAUNCHED

July 2023

Poland has launched a new version of their e-gov app, "m0bywateł" ('M-citizen'), featuring a new interface and enhanced functionalities. The m0bywateł 2.0 app allows users to have their documents always on hand, making official matters quick and convenient, thus saving time and money.

Users no longer need to carry a physical ID card; the mID can be used in various situations, such as in offices or when renting items. The app also offers local digital services and discounts, along with features for anonymously reporting violations using geolocation.

MANDATORY IMPLEMENTATION OF E-DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR PUBLIC ENTITIES

June 2023

Public entities are now required to implement the e-delivery system, which ensures safe and convenient electronic deliveries equivalent to registered mail. This system mandates institutions to have an electronic delivery address (ADE) and handle all correspondence through e-delivery.

NEW IT SYSTEM: CATALOG OF PUBLIC ENTITIES

December 2023

Poland launched a new IT system, The Catalog of Public Entities (KPP), which centralizes and provides high-quality data on Polish public service providers.

By integrating existing systems and registers, the KPP is a reliable resource for businesses and public administration, enhancing e-services. It includes information on electronic correspondence and utilizes the National Node for secure authentication. Integrated with biznes.gov.pl and dane.gov.pl, the KPP offers entrepreneurs and citizens easier access to essential data.

FUNDING SECURED FOR NATIONAL DATA PROCESSING CENTER

February 2023

The Digital Poland Project Center and the Ministry of Digitization have secured nearly PLN 830 million to establish the National Data Processing Center (KCPD), which aims to bolster the security of public administration resources.

The project will start by selecting a design office, contract engineer, and general contractor to create three energy-efficient data centers in collaboration with the National Research Institute and the Central Information Technology Center.

CUTTING RED TAPE

CENTRAL REGISTER OF EMISSIONS OF BUILDINGS LAUNCHED

December 2024

The Central Register of Emissions of Buildings (CEEB) has been launched to aid local governments in Poland by enabling efficient data collection for Air Protection Programs.

Unlike previous regulations, CEEB supports local government units without imposing additional obligations. It standardizes the process of collecting, verifying, and monitoring data on building heating and fuel combustion sources, reducing costs and allowing for better data comparison at regional and national levels.

From December 7, 2023, building owners can independently conduct their inventories, enhancing municipal efficiency and providing valuable insights for managing energy efficiency and heating costs.

NO NEED TO REPORT THE PURCHASE OF A VEHICLE

June 2023

The Ministry of Digitization and the Ministry of Infrastructure have replaced the vehicle purchase reporting requirement with a re-registration mandate to streamline the process and reduce inconvenience.

Vehicle owners now have 30 days to re-register after purchase, while businesses involved in vehicle trading have 90 days.

This change is part of a broader effort to modernize and simplify administrative procedures, making it easier for vehicle owners and businesses to comply with regulations. It is expected to significantly reduce administrative burdens and improve the efficiency of the vehicle registration process.

DRAFT REGULATIONS PROPOSE EASIER PUBLIC PROCUREMENT APPLICATIONS

June 2023

The draft regulations propose easier public procurement applications, greater openness, and faster procedures through contractor certification. As part of the State Purchasing Policy, the optional certification simplifies the process by allowing contractors to present a single document confirming eligibility.

This initiative aims to save time and money, enhance professionalism and transparency, and increase SME participation in tenders. It is expected to significantly streamline public procurement processes, benefiting contractors and public entities.

SECURITY ONLINE

MOBILE OPERATORS AND REGULATORS AGREE TO COMBAT CALLER ID FALSIFICATION

February 2024

Poland's four largest mobile operators have agreed to combat caller ID spoofing by introducing the "safe bay" solution to verify incoming calls.

Spoofed calls will be rejected or connected without displaying the caller's number, significantly reducing impersonation and extortion. This measure aims to enhance user safety and protect against fraudulent calls.

The operators will implement the "safe bay" solution by September 2024. This solution involves advanced verification technology to ensure the authenticity of incoming calls.

NEW SYSTEM ENHANCES CITIZEN DATA SECURITY AGAINST IDENTITY THEFT

November 2023

A new system to protect against identity theft will integrate with financial institutions, notaries, and courts, with full implementation by June 1, 2024.

Financial institutions must check a register before granting loans or signing notarial deeds to ensure the applicant's identity is not compromised. Identity theft victims will no longer be liable for fraudulent debts.

Citizens can restrict their PESEL number online or at the commune office with real-time updates. This initiative is expected to significantly reduce identity theft cases and protect citizens from financial fraud.

NEW REGULATIONS TO ENHANCE SAFETY OF APP-ORDERED TAXI SERVICES

September 2023

New regulations mandate comprehensive verification of in-app taxi drivers, including their identity, driving license, and criminal record.

Companies must ensure drivers conducting trips are employed by them, addressing repeated reports of sexual assaults. By October 1, 2023, companies had to verify all drivers, including those hired before the new regulations.

From June 17, 2024, all drivers must have a Polish driving license. Companies will store drivers' facial images and perform random checks to confirm driver identity, with penalties of up to PLN 1 million for non-compliance.

NEW ACT ON COMBATING ABUSE IN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

August 2023

The Act on Combating Abuse in Electronic Communications was signed with the aim to reduce fake calls, texts, and internet domains, significantly enhancing electronic communication security.

The act mandates telecom companies to block malicious SMS messages and calls, requires email providers to implement anti-fraud authentication, and enforces automatic blocking of access to fake internet domains. NASK (The National Research Institute) will oversee internet domain security, UKE will regulate telecom practices, and CBZC will coordinate fraud detection efforts.

ADVANCED MOBILE LOCATION SERVICE TO LAUNCH IN POLAND

March 2024

The Ministry of Digitization and the Office of Electronic Communications have launched the Advanced Mobile Location (AML) service in Poland to enhance emergency response times.

AML automatically sends precise location data to emergency services during emergency calls, enabling responders to reach the scene quickly. This technology, compatible with various operating systems and mobile networks, significantly shortens response times.

COMBATTING DISINFORMATION

NASK'S NEW STRATEGY TO FIGHT DISINFORMATION

March 2024

The new defense strategy against disinformation, issued by NASK, emphasizes threat awareness and an effective defense plan, especially before critical elections. Key principles:

1. Political independence: NASK will handle political content analysis independently.
2. Expert team: an interdisciplinary team, modeled after France's VIGINUM, will include fact-checkers, geopolitics experts, OSINT analysts, and more.
3. Behavioral pattern analysis: focus will shift to behavioral patterns, studying data sources and manipulative techniques.
4. OSINT techniques: OSINT methods will detect disinformation campaigns using frameworks like FIMI, DISARM, and STIX.
5. Rapid alert system: the system will expand to include more platforms, analyzing metadata to trace disinformation origins.
6. External disinformation: analysis will target Russian and Chinese propaganda, examining government communications and social media misuse.
7. Internal disinformation: enhanced analysis of domestic disinformation will identify key channels and targets.
8. Information sharing: information sharing and analysis centers (ISACS) will support voluntary exchange mechanisms.
9. AI-related threats: tools for detecting deepfakes will verify multimedia authenticity on social media.
10. Education: public education on disinformation recognition will be increased, focusing on seniors, youth, officials, and police.
11. Platform contact: to support public figures against unlawful image use, fast-track communication with major social media platforms will be established.

CAMPAIGN: CHECK BEFORE YOU SHARE

November 2024

NASK, the Ministry of Digitization, and the British Government Communications Service International have launched the “Check Before You Share” campaign to combat online disinformation, reduce the spread of fake news, and build resilience against harmful content.

This campaign educates the public on identifying false information using a seven-step CHECK method.

CAMPAIGN: HAS YOUR DATA BEEN COMPROMISED?

May 2023

A new website, www.bezpiecznedane.gov.pl, allows users to check if their data has been compromised by entering their email addresses or logins. This pilot project aims to enhance data security and is part of broader efforts by CERT Polska, which has notified over a million users about the breach.

CYBER**DRAFT ACT TO STRENGTHEN THE NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY SYSTEM**

July 2023

The Polish government has introduced a draft act to improve the national cybersecurity system and standardize incident reporting procedures.

Adopted by the Council of Ministers, the act proposes creating a strategic security network operator (OSSB) to support key service operators and enhance cooperation between Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRT) and security operational centers (SOC).

It addresses gaps in threat analysis, secures hardware and software supply chains, and establishes a National Cybersecurity Certification System.

NEW PROGRAM BOOSTS CYBERSECURITY FOR POLISH SMES

July 2024

The “Digitally Secure Company” program was launched by NASK and the Ministry of Digitization.

The program aims to boost cybersecurity for Polish SMEs. It focuses on digital skills, network protection, and new cybersecurity standards through a three-stage process: diagnosis, education, and improvement, leading to certification.

Participation is free, offering SMEs a prestigious Polish certificate confirming their security and digital capabilities.

INNOVATION

INTEL SEMICONDUCTOR PLANT IN POLAND: UPDATES

February 2024

The Ministry of Digitization has pre-notified the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection about public aid for Intel's semiconductor factory near Wrocław.

Intel has informed the Polish Investment and Trade Agency (PAIH) and will apply for state aid, pending initial acceptance. The Minister of Digitization will seek opinions from relevant authorities before requesting the Council of Ministers' consent. This aid, part of one of Poland's largest foreign investments, is subject to European Commission approval. Intel plans to invest nearly PLN 20 billion, creating 2,000 well-paid jobs, marking Poland's largest foreign direct investment.

POLAND'S QUANTUM AMBITION (CONTINUED)

March 2023

Poland is advancing quantum technologies to revolutionize secure communications, computing, healthcare, and space sectors.

The European Declaration on Quantum Technologies was signed by Polish ministers for digitalization and science, aligning Poland with the European quantum ecosystem.

Poland is already engaged in initiatives like the European High-Performance Computing project and the European Quantum Communication Infrastructure, and it plans to build quantum computers in Poznań and Ostrava.

Poland aims to become a key player in the quantum field, contributing to the EuroQCI project, developing national quantum communication networks, supporting scientific teams, and enhancing cybersecurity.

PILOT PROGRAM FOR DATA CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE LAUNCHED

October 2023

In 2023, the University of Warmia and Mazury signed a letter of intent to establish a network of Data Centers of Excellence in Poland.

These centers will collect and process scientific, research, and public data. This initiative will enhance data quality, transparency, and interoperability, fostering scientific and commercial innovation.

The National Center of Excellence at NASK will coordinate efforts to ensure compliance with EU data standards.

3 POLISH IPCEI PROJECTS APPROVED

December 2023

After a two-year selection process coordinated by the Ministry of Digitization, the European Commission approved public support for 19 projects under the IPCEI cloud infrastructure and services (IPCEI-CIS), including three from Polish companies: CloudFerro, Oktawave, and Atende Industries. These projects showcase Poland's innovation in cloud services and contribute to the EU's digital policy by promoting sustainable cloud technologies.

The projects, funded by Poland's National Reconstruction Plan, will start early next year and focus on advanced cloud services, cryptographic security, and a distributed NoSQL database.

CLOUD

HELPING BUSINESSES ADOPT CLOUD

May 2024

The Central Information Technology Center created a guide for entrepreneurs, "Cloud for Entrepreneurs," which supports digital transformation in businesses.

This manual offers advice, examples, and essential information on using cloud technologies for beginners and advanced users. It covers seven chapters and addresses cloud technology basics, advanced topics, legal aspects, and cybersecurity.

CENTRALIZED PUBLIC PROCUREMENT FOR CLOUD SERVICES, INCLUDING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

June 2023

Last year, the Polish Ministry of Digitization launched a one-year framework agreement with three cloud vendors, which allows a centralized procurement process for all public administration units, including local governments.

A year-long agreement simplifies procurement, saves time and costs, and ensures data security. To extend these benefits, further tenders for cloud services (IaaS and SaaS) are planned.

EU COMPLIANCE

NIS2: CONSULTATIONS BEGIN ON DRAFT ACT FOR NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY SYSTEM

April 2024

The Ministry of Digitization has proposed a new National Cybersecurity System law to enhance protection against cyber threats and comply with the EU NIS2 directive.

The updated regulations aim to strengthen ICT security and ensure uninterrupted key digital services.

Key changes include new rules for digital service providers and public entities, mandatory information security management systems, and improved cooperation between public and private sectors.

The law also introduces self-identification for entities to register in the system, better regulation of high-risk vendors and security commands, mandates regular security audits and expands Poland's Cybersecurity Strategy with a new incident and crisis response plan.

CONSULTATIONS ON AI ACT'S IMPLEMENTATION

May 2024

The Ministry of Digitization in Poland conducted pre-consultations on implementing the EU's new Artificial Intelligence Act.

The discussions involved 50 entities, focusing on establishing a new market surveillance authority for AI systems.

There was strong support for creating a specialized AI oversight body, as current institutions lack the necessary expertise.

Communication about the new regulations will target AI entrepreneurs, public administration, scientists, students, consumers, creators, financial sector institutions, and healthcare representatives.

Government in office:
December 2021 - now

Rankings

- E-GOV benchmark 2023 - 17th place - 64 pts (EU avg. - 70)
- OECD DGI 2023 - 18th place
- OECD OURdata 2023 - 15th place

Recent developments

E-GOV

REAL-TIME TRACKING ON DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

May, 2024

The Digital and Information Agency (DIA) now allows real-time tracking of government and ministry compliance with the Czech Act on the Right to Digital Services, which aims to digitize all government services by February 1, 2025 fully.

The DIA website describes service catalogs, electronic forms, and process histories. The DIA coordinates the law, offers practical assistance to authorities and ministries, and evaluates data management and compliance. Services to be digitized include applications for contributions, residence changes, unemployment services, business matters, and medical documentation. Non-digital "paper" versions will remain available.

CUTTING RED TAPE

23 MEASURES TO REDUCE BUREAUCRATIC BURDENS FOR ENTREPRENEURS

May 2024

The Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade (MPO) has proposed 23 measures to reduce bureaucratic burdens for entrepreneurs by mid-2025.

These measures aim to create a more business-friendly environment and boost business operations, employment, environmental policies, and tax administration productivity.

Key proposals include eliminating the need to provide a delivery address when reporting a business, allowing wage payments in euros, introducing digital receipts, and simplifying vacation scheduling.

The MPO also plans to create a comprehensive database of information obligations and improve the Business Portal. These proposals will undergo interdepartmental review before final government approval.

SEARCH ENGINE LAUNCHED TO SUPPORT ENTREPRENEURS

September 2023

The Ministry of Industry and Trade launched www.podporapodniku.cz, a website where entrepreneurs can find a search engine to identify suitable business support.

Users can find tailored assistance by inputting the business age, size, project location, and area of support. The site also displays a complete list of support options, with structured information on each program, including descriptions, eligible expenses, support amounts, and direct contact details for consulting project plans.

CZECH CYBERSECURITY BILL REVAMPED FOR CLARITY AND BUSINESS FRIENDLINESS

May 2024

The Czech Republic's National Office for Cyber and Information Security (NÚKIB) has resubmitted a revised cybersecurity bill after addressing government feedback.

The revisions aim to clarify the bill for medium-sized businesses and security managers while maintaining the core goals of strengthening national cybersecurity.

Key changes include more precise definitions of key terms, a streamlined self-identification and registration process for regulated services, and clarification on how the new law interacts with existing public contract award regulations. A significant change involves shifting the authority to temporarily ban executives from critical infrastructure providers from NÚKIB to the courts. The revised bill is publicly available for further review before potentially being recommended to the government for approval.

CLOUD

CZECH CLOUD COMPUTING RULES NOW COMPLETE

July 2023

The final cloud computing regulation, the Decree on Security Rules, took effect on July 1, 2023, completing NÚKIB's cloud computing framework in the Czech Republic.

This new decree sets requirements for public authorities using cloud services. NÚKIB plans to simplify regulations by transferring aspects from the Cybersecurity Act to the Public Administration Information Systems Act, aiming for a single law governing cloud services.

LIST OF CLOUD SERVICES EXEMPT FROM DATA STORAGE RULES

February 2024

The Czech National Office for Cyber and Information Security (NÚKIB) has listed cloud services exempt from EU/EFTA data storage requirements.

These exemptions apply to services that don't meet certain security regulations.

Providers can apply for this exemption, and eligible services are marked on the NÚKIB website and in the cloud computing catalog.

TALENT

NEW ECONOMIC MIGRATION PROGRAMS FOR DIGITAL NOMADS

June 2023

The Czech government has approved two new economic migration programs.

The first program targets highly qualified IT workers or digital nomads and allows them to apply for residence permits. It will initially be available to citizens from Australia, Japan, Canada, South Korea, New Zealand, the UK, the US, and Taiwan.

The second program permits 300 students from select Indonesian polytechnic schools to work in the Czech Republic for two years in the industrial sector, addressing labor shortages in roles like welders and mechanics.

GOVERNMENT APPROVES AN INCREASE IN QUOTAS FOR FOREIGN WORKERS

October 2023

The government approved measures to support the arrival of up to 20,000 qualified workers per year for IT companies, hospitals, and construction firms.

Quotas for the Key and Scientific Personnel Program and the Highly Qualified Employee Program will increase by 1,500 applications annually, targeting IT specialists, software developers, engineers, doctors, and nurses.

The Qualified Employee Program will also allocate 11,000 employment card applications for Ukrainian workers with temporary protection in other EU states or those legally traveling from Ukraine.

NEW SERVICE AIDS CZECH FIRMS IN ATTRACTING SKILLED WORKERS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES

May 2024

The Ministry of Industry and Trade (MPO) and CzechTrade have launched "Support for Economic Migration" to help Czech companies address labor shortages by securing qualified workers from third countries, such as Georgia, Armenia, Serbia, and Montenegro.

Starting May 1, 2024, the service simplifies the process by collaborating with verified foreign agencies to find skilled workers, focusing on professions like drivers, welders, electricians, and agricultural workers. Czech firms can contact CzechTrade's export consultants for more information and support.

SECURITY ONLINE

NEW CZECH REGULATIONS AIM TO LIMIT SPOOFING CALLS

April 2024

The Czech Telecommunication Office (ČTÚ) has issued new regulations to limit fraudulent spoofing calls.

Starting July 1st, calls from abroad with a Czech prefix (+420) will be blocked. From June 1st, operators must include a real, callable phone number in the signaling message.

These measures aim to prevent misleading caller information. ČTÚ expects mobile operators to implement similar self-regulatory measures.

CZECH BANKS LAUNCH ANTI-FRAUD CAMPAIGN WITH AI

September 2023

Cyberattacks on Czech bank clients are increasing, and scammers are using social media and phone calls. The Czech Banking Association is relaunching the #nePINdej! campaign to educate the public, featuring an online test (<https://www.kybertest.cz/>) and AI tools.

The campaign targets teenagers, adults, and seniors, helping them recognize and avoid cyberattacks. Partners include the Czech police, cybersecurity office, and major banks.

SECURITY ONLINE

IMPLEMENTING THE DSA

August 2023

The Ministry of Industry and Trade approved a concept to appoint the Czech Telecommunications Office (CTU) as the Digital Services Coordinator, in line with the EU's Digital Services Act.

The CTU will oversee compliance with the Digital Services Act, the Data Governance Act, and the Data Act, leveraging its expertise in electronic communications. The CTU will engage with service providers and raise awareness about new regulations, providing legal certainty and protection for users, consumers, and businesses.



Government in office:
October 2023 - now

Rankings

- E-GOV benchmark 2023 - joint 19th (with Poland) - 62 pts (EU avg. - 70)
- OECD DGI 2023 - 6th place
- OECD OURdata 2023 - 18th place

Recent developments

E-GOV

STATE-OWNED IT COMPANY SHUT DOWN

April 2024

According to the Slovakian government, Slovakia's IT company, 'Slovakia IT,' is shutting down due to mismanagement and financial losses exceeding €7 million.

Slovakia IT was criticized for awarding contracts non-conceptually and failing to deliver projects, including a crucial e-forms project for public procurement.

The government will seek additional funding to finalize ongoing projects and compensate employees. The total cost to taxpayers is estimated at €10 million.

16 LIFE SITUATIONS DIGITIZED

Slovakia's Ministry of Investment, Regional Development, and Informatization (MIRRI SR) has signed contracts with the Ministry of Labor and the Social Insurance Agency to enhance electronic services for citizens.

16 additional life situations, such as job search, marriage, retirement, relocation, and healthcare, will be digitized. An interactive guide will link related services across different portals, reducing bureaucracy and minimizing in-person visits to government offices.

The project will be implemented in phases, starting with "Loss of Job and Job Search," and will eventually involve 12 additional institutions.

CUTTING RED TAPE

NEW PARTNERSHIP MAP TO SIMPLIFY ACCESS TO EUROPEAN FUNDS

May 2024

Slovakia's Ministry of Investment launched a "Partnership Map" to streamline municipalities' and other eligible applicants' access to European funds and the national recovery plan.

Previously, information on available programs was scattered and confusing. The new map, located at <https://mirri.gov.sk/mapa-stranok/>, offers clear and easy-to-access details on funding opportunities.

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PROCESSES SIMPLIFIED

March 2024

With public procurements under €300,000 currently taking about 169 days, Slovak government approved amendments to simplify and expedite public procurement. The amendment increases the threshold for purchases outside the Public Procurement Act from €10,000 to €50,000 and raises the limit for construction sub-limit contracts from €800,000 to €1.5 million. It also removes the unnecessary "request for correction" stage.

TALENT

SLOVAKIA INTRODUCES CYBERSECURITY AS A NEW FIELD OF EXPERTISE

June 2023

Slovakia is officially recognized as a distinct field to address a critical shortage of specialists. Tasks like risk analysis and vulnerability assessment will now be handled by certified cybersecurity experts.

The amendment by the Ministry of Justice established cybersecurity as a new branch within electrical engineering, enhancing Slovakia's ability to handle cyber threats and enforce computer crime laws.

SKILLS

SLOVAKIA'S 'DIGITAL SENIORS' PROJECT CONTINUES

October 2023

Slovakia's Ministry of Investment is continuing its "Digital Seniors" project to help seniors aged 65 and over improve their digital literacy.

Following a successful pilot phase, the project offers free training sessions across Slovakia, where seniors will learn practical skills like using tablets, internet safety, online communication, and searching for information online.

Cherry on top - participants will receive a free tablet upon completing the five-week course. The goal is to train over 100,000 seniors by mid-2026.

'CYBERARENA' WILL PREPARE EXPERTS TO FIGHT CYBER THREATS

February 2024

Slovakia launched a "CyberArena" training center to hone public officials' cybersecurity skills.

This unique facility simulates cyberattacks, allowing trainees to develop practical defenses against real-world threats.

INNOVATION

GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON ADAPTIVE AI GOVERNANCE LAUNCHED

November 2023

Slovakia's Ministry of Investment (MIRRI SR) partnered with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) to launch the Adaptive Artificial Intelligence Governance (AAIG) initiative.

AAIG aims to create a platform for governments to share best practices and develop new tools for governing AI. The initiative focuses on knowledge sharing, policy prototyping, collaboration, and adaptability.

The initiative will build a platform for public authorities to exchange knowledge and expertise in AI governance; will develop and test new policies for managing AI in the public sector; will foster cooperation between governments, industry, academia, and civil society on AI governance; and address the evolving nature of AI and related technologies with flexible approaches.

Government in office:

May 2022 - now

Rankings

- E-GOV benchmark 2023 - 11th place - 65 pts (EU avg. - 70)

Recent developments

E-GOV

INTEGRATED DKÜ PORTAL SYSTEM (IDPR)

March 2024

Hungarian Digital Governance Agency DKÜ announced the launch of the Integrated DKÜ Portal System (IDPR), which aims to make the procurement process more efficient and transparent for all stakeholders.

This new system will simplify the management of government IT procurement by consolidating various modules into a single, user-friendly interface.

NEW E-GOV APP INCOMING

May 2024

The Digital Citizenship Program (DÁP) now has a dedicated website that details the program's schedule and the forthcoming mobile application.

The site outlines the initial features of the DÁP app, expected developments, and registration conditions. The DÁP central mobile app's test operation begins in the summer of 2024, with the first functions available from September 1.

Starting this autumn, the DÁP app will allow identity verification, login to state websites without usernames or passwords, and access to personal and vehicle data. Users can share selected data electronically, eliminating the need to scan official documents.

The app, which will also offer a qualified electronic signature, will allow users to request Hungary's first digital moral certificate.

CRYPTO

HUNGARY PROPOSES NEW CRYPTO REGULATION FRAMEWORK

March 2024

Hungary introduced a comprehensive regulatory framework for cryptocurrency services to integrate these services with traditional financial institutions.

This draft law, crafted by the Ministry of National Economy, permits local banks to offer cryptocurrencies directly, with the Hungarian National Bank overseeing domestic crypto trading.

5G

DEEPENING TIES WITH CHINESE BUSINESS

October 2023

Hungary's Economic Development Minister Márton Nagy signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Huawei to deepen strategic cooperation.

The partnership focuses on advancing Hungary's digital transformation, particularly in 5G, AI, and electric vehicle infrastructure.

TALENT

PARLIAMENT PASSES RESTRICTIVE LAW ON GUEST WORKERS

December 2023

The Hungarian parliament has adopted a new law regulating the entry and stay of third-country citizens, with 141 votes in favor and 49 against. The law limits guest workers to the number of job vacancies and restricts their stay to a maximum of three years.

Short-term visas allow for 90-day stays within six months, long-term visas permit stays between 90 and 180 days, and permanent visas have no time limit. The law excludes guest workers from family unification and requires employers to seek Hungarian workers first. The economic development minister determines the number of permits issued annually, with no more than 25% of permits going to nationals from any single country.

EU COMPLIANCE

IN PREPARATION FOR NIS2: NATIONAL CYBER SECURITY LAW

March 2024

New National Cyber Security Law, aligning with the EU's NIS2 directive, was adopted. It aims to enhance the national cybersecurity framework and integrate cybersecurity into organizational structures.

It mandates that both public and private sector entities meet minimum cybersecurity standards and report incidents, thereby improving resilience against cyber threats.

UNINTENDED DSA EFFECT IN HUNGARY: MEPs QUESTIONS THE IMPLEMENTATION

February 2024

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have raised concerns about the independence of Hungary's authority - National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH) - appointed to enforce the EU's new Digital Services Act (DSA).

36 MEPs argued that NMHH's appointment could violate the DSA's independence requirements, as NMHH has been seen as a tool of government propaganda thus far.

IMPLEMENTING DGA: A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL DATA ASSETS LAW

January 2024

The Hungarian parliament has enacted a new law establishing a framework for the management and utilization of national data assets. The law replaces previous legislation and will be implemented gradually, with full effect, by January 1, 2026.

It aims to align domestic regulations with the EU Data Governance Act and enhance the transparency and usability of national data assets. The law introduces a range of data utilization support services, including centralized and registered services, and designates the National Data Asset Agency (NAVÜ) as the central coordinating body.

Government in office:
June 2023 - now

Rankings

- E-GOV benchmark 2023 - joint 16th place - 65 pts (EU avg. - 70)

Recent developments

CONCEPTS

NATIONAL AI STRATEGY UPDATED

February 2024

The Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digitalization (MCID) has released the updated version of the National AI Strategy for 2024-2027 for public consultation. This strategy, accompanied by a draft Government Decision and an explanatory note, aims to protect Romanian citizens' rights online and integrates feedback from the public and the Romanian AI Committee since September 2023.

Key recommendations include investing in AI research and development, promoting a digital ecosystem, creating a supportive policy environment, enhancing human capacity, and fostering international cooperation for trustworthy AI.

E-GOV

SINGLE-POINT ACCESS IS CHANGED BY ANOTHER ONE

March 2024

Romania started working on a single-point access to e-services - 'Unique Digital Portal (PDUro)'. This project aims to streamline citizen interactions with public institutions through a single digital interface. The portal will replace the Single Electronic Contact Point (PCUe) and align with European standards for the Single Digital Gateway, allowing access to over 21 online procedures both in Romania and across the EU. The system will enable automated cross-border exchanges of administrative documents and support electronic identification for seamless public service access.

CYBER

NEW CYBERSECURITY AND DEFENSE LEGISLATION

January 2024

The Romanian Government has approved amendments to cybersecurity legislation, initiated by the Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digitalization (MCID). The government passed a decision to approve the methodological norms for requesting and communicating data and information under Article 25(1) of Law 58/2023, which pertains to Romania's cybersecurity and defense. The updated legislation mandates rapid response times for cybersecurity service providers to address requests for data related to cyber incidents, threats, risks, or vulnerabilities. The goal is to ensure the resilience and protection of networks and IT systems supporting defense, national security, public order, and governance functions.

CUTTING RED TAPE

SIMPLIFIED PROCUREMENT FOR IT

September 2023

The Romanian Government approved a new decision to simplify public procurement in the IT sector, aiming to reduce bureaucracy and accelerate IT&C project implementation.

The updated regulation enhances the composition of the Technical-Economic Committee (CTE) by including new institutions such as the Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digitalization and the National Cybersecurity Directorate.

The decision also simplifies the feasibility study process for IT projects and raises the threshold for requiring CTE approval from 2,000,000 lei to 5,000,000 lei. This move is expected to facilitate the absorption of European funds and improve the efficiency of public administration in implementing significant ICT projects.

COMBATING DISINFORMATION

#NOFAKE PLATFORM TO COMBAT DEEPPFAKE CONTENT LAUNCHED

May 2024

Romania launched the #NoFake platform to enable citizens to report inappropriate content on social media. Accessible via the Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digitalization website, the platform analyzes digital falsehoods, defamatory content, misinformation, and online manipulation.

OPEN DATA

C. 345,000 ONLINE CRIMINAL RECORDS ISSUED FOR FREE IN ROMANIA

February 2024

One year after launching online criminal records issuance, over 345,000 Romanians have downloaded their records for free via Ghişeu.ro. These electronic records are legally equivalent to physical documents. In January 2024, Ghişeu.ro processed over 740,000 transactions totaling 280 million lei, a 15% increase from the previous year, with 86,000 new users and 25 new institutions joining the platform.

G-CLOUD

PARTNERSHIP WITH EIB CONTINUED TO IMPLEMENT G-CLOUD

June 2023

The partnership with EIB moved into the second phase, focusing on migrating IT applications and systems from central institutions to the Government Cloud. A consultancy agreement with the World Bank, signed in May, supports this phase by assessing applications for cloud suitability. The support services agreement (PASSA) with the EIB is expected to be finalized by late September or mid-October, providing expert advisory services for the project.

Government in office:

April 2024 - now

Rankings

- E-GOV benchmark 2023 - joint 18th place (with Croatia) - 63 pts (EU avg. - 70)

Recent developments

E-GOV

6 NEW E-SERVICES LAUNCHED

April 2024

The Ministry of Electronic Government has launched six new services on the e-gov portal for the June 9, 2024 elections.

These services include enrolling in the electoral roll at the current address, voting with a mobile ballot box, entering into the electoral roll, correcting errors in the roll, and exclusion from the list of deleted persons, including those voting abroad.

UNIFIED PORTAL FOR SOCIAL SECURITY SERVICES LAUNCHED

March 2024

The National Social Security Institute (NSSI) has launched the Single Portal for Electronic Services (SPES), consolidating various administrative platforms related to social benefits, pensions, and claims.

The portal simplifies access to services through multiple electronic identification methods, including the Personal Identification Code (PIC) and e-signatures.

DEBATE OVER MACHINE VOTING AMID CYBERSECURITY CONCERNS

May 2024

Bulgarian society is engaged in a debate over the use of machine voting in its elections. e-Government Minister expressed confidence in the process before the EP elections, noting that certification of the voting machines is underway with ample time for preparation, unlike previous elections.

However, controversy erupted last year when the Central Election Commission (CIK) decided to cancel machine voting just hours before the recent local elections, following allegations from five political parties that electronic voting could be manipulated. This decision led to chaos, protests, and a substantial number of invalid ballots, with 15.5% of ballots cast for municipal councilors deemed invalid.

A BAN ON GAMBLING ADVERTISING PROPOSED

April 2024

A new bill submitted by several Bulgarian parties aims to ban almost all forms of gambling advertising.

The bill seeks to amend the Law on Gambling to prohibit ads online, on TV, radio, print media, and buildings. Advertising would only be allowed on billboards more than 100 meters from schools and on gaming halls and casino buildings.

The bill also proposes measures against illegal gambling sites and stricter regulations for slot machines, limiting them to areas with populations over 5,000.

CUTTING RED TAPE

LOCAL TAXES AND FEES CAN BE PAID VIA E-GOV PORTAL

March 2024

Local taxes and fees can now be paid electronically through the Ministry of Electronic Government (MEG) service portal at E-GOV website. This service allows individuals and businesses to settle obligations to most municipalities without additional fees.

The features include real-time obligation checks, various identification methods (qualified electronic signature, mobile KEP, PIK from NRA or NOI), and convenient payment options with debit or credit cards. The service is available to both residents and Bulgarian citizens abroad.

AI

BULGARIA PARTNERS WITH HUAWEI IN DEVELOPING ADVANCED BIOMETRIC AI ACCESS SYSTEM FOR MASS EVENTS

May 2024

A Bulgarian research team is developing a cutting-edge biometric access system powered by AI, aimed at enhancing security and efficiency at public events. This new system will replace traditional access methods like tickets or wristbands, allowing event-goers to register their biometrics, such as fingerprints or facial recognition, in advance.

The project, named 'Rock 2,' involves a significant investment, with a total value of €7.38 million, and aims to integrate enhanced security features, including masked face recognition and behavioral analytics.

CYBER

NEW CYBER DEFENSE CENTER LAUNCHED

September 2024

The center will provide advanced cyber-defense training and operations for Bulgarian military personnel, enhancing their ability to counter cyber threats. The launch marks a significant milestone in U.S.-Bulgaria defense cooperation, aimed at bolstering Bulgaria's cyber defense capabilities.

SUCCESS STORY

HOW DIGITAL HELPED COMBAT ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE: DIGITAL PRESCRIPTIONS SLASH ANTIBIOTIC SALES BY 35%

October 2023

The sale of antibiotics in Bulgaria decreased by nearly 35% following the introduction of digital prescriptions aimed at combating antibiotic resistance and off-label use of diabetes drugs. The shift to digital prescriptions marks a crucial step in regulating antibiotic sales and reducing self-medication via 'under-the-counter' antibiotic sales.



Croatia

Government in office:

May 2024 - now

Rankings

- E-GOV benchmark 2023 - joint 18th place (with Bulgaria) - 63 pts (EU avg. - 70)

Recent developments

CONCEPTS

PROPOSAL TO LAUNCH A MINISTRY OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

May 2024

The American Chamber of Commerce in Croatia has raised concerns about the country's fragmented approach to its digital agenda, arguing that it is hindering Croatia's digital transformation. According to AmCham, the current institutional landscape lacks cohesion, making it difficult to implement digital initiatives effectively.

AmCham recommends establishing a dedicated Ministry for Digital Transformation, believing that having a centralized ministry would provide better leadership, strategic alignment, and more efficient execution of digital projects.

E-GOV

LAND REGISTERS FOR CONSTRUCTION LAND TO BE CREATED WITHIN THE NEXT DECADE

July 2023

Croatia plans to survey all construction land and create a comprehensive land register within the next ten years, fully financed by the state.

CENTRAL POPULATION REGISTER TO BE LAUNCHED IN 2026

February 2024

The establishment of the Central Population Register, aimed at streamlining and integrating existing household data for better social policy implementation, has been announced. The Register will become operational on June 1, 2026, providing comprehensive real-time data and replacing the decennial population censuses.

It will include diverse information such as demographics, education, employment, and housing, sourced from existing records to facilitate administrative relief and prevent system abuse.

NEW OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS PORTAL LAUNCHED

November 2023

The Central State Office for Digital Society Development has launched a new portal for the Central Catalog of Official Documents of Croatia.

It offers a modernized user interface, a new semantic search engine, and the ability for registered users to submit requests or download documents. Public authorities can now submit official copies via a user mailbox.

The portal also provides access to directories of public institutions and foreign representatives in Croatia.

CYBER

NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY COORDINATION CENTRE BEGINS OPERATIONS

January 2024

The National Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology, and Research Coordination Centre (NCS) held its first Steering Committee session, with key government and agency representatives in attendance.

The NCS, part of the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre (ECCC), aims to enhance and coordinate cybersecurity investments across the EU. The Centre will also manage EU funding for cybersecurity, develop education programs, and raise public awareness.

OSINT CENTER OF EXCELLENCE ESTABLISHED

June 2023

The establishment of the Center of Excellence for collecting, processing, and analyzing open-source data to enhance security risk identification has been announced.

The Center will improve the identification of security threats through advanced doctrines and models. It will focus on enhancing Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) with standardized procedures and advanced tools to detect fake news and disinformation.

The Center will collaborate internationally, with negotiations underway with five partner countries to sign a Memorandum of Cooperation. Although not part of the security intelligence community, it aims to address the negative impacts of artificial intelligence on public content.

SKILLS

CHINESE SOFT DIGITAL POWER: PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS CONTINUES

October 2023

Huawei's Seeds for the Future program took place in Croatia for the fifth consecutive year, with students from the University of Rijeka and the University of Zagreb participating. The program focuses on nurturing local ICT talents and promoting digital community development. During the eight-day event, students learned about advanced technologies like 5G, AI, and cloud computing. Exceptional students will compete in the global Tech4Good competition for a chance to win \$100,000 to support their startups.

INNOVATION

NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY CENTRE LAUNCHED

October 2023

The Croatian Government has established the National Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology, and Research Coordination Centre, designating the Croatian Academic and Research Network (CARNET) to manage its activities.

This decision addresses the increasing dependence on digital technologies and the associated rise in cyber threats.

The Centre aims to consolidate expertise and enhance defense capabilities against cyber attacks. Its objectives include promoting cybersecurity, advancing key technologies, and encouraging the involvement of the economy—particularly startups and SMEs—as well as academic and research communities in national and EU-funded cross-border cybersecurity projects.

CROATIA UNVEILS HRVOJKA PORTAL FOR LANGUAGE TECHNOLOGIES

June 2023

The Central State Office for the Development of the Digital Society and the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Zagreb have launched the national language technology portal, Hrvojka.

Hrvojka introduces AI-based language technologies into state administration, offering multilingual access to public content and services. The portal is based on Latvia's hugo.lv platform and expands upon the 2020 CEF project "Translator for the Presidency of the Council of the European Union."

Hrvojka provides secure machine translation, integration with CAT tools, and plugins for instant translation of foreign language web pages.

QUANTUM COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT STARTS

May 2024

Croatian quantum communication infrastructure project “CroQCI” aims to establish an advanced quantum communication network in Croatia, part of the EU’s strategic initiatives. The project focuses on developing a secure experimental network and key communication devices. The CroQCI consortium includes national research institutions, universities, and public enterprises working together to build a secure quantum communication infrastructure.



Government in office:
June 2022 - now

Rankings

- E-GOV benchmark 2023 - 15th place - 69 pts (EU avg. - 70)
- OECD DGI 2023 - 30th place
- OECD OURdata 2023 - 7th place

Recent developments

E-GOV

DIGITAL MODEL AWARD - DIGI VZORNIK October 2023

DigiVzornik.si, awarded by the Ministry of Digital Transformation, recognizes outstanding contributions to the digital transformation of Slovenian society and the economy.

Recipients can be individuals, organizations, or projects that have significantly advanced digital innovation and inclusion. Participation requires showcasing exemplary practices aligned with the Digital Slovenia 2030 strategy or the National Strategic Time Plan for the Digital Decade.

An expert commission evaluates candidates based on criteria such as innovation, impact on citizens, sustainability, and cooperation, selecting those with the highest scores for recognition.

PUBLIC ALERT SYSTEM FINALLY LAUNCHED July 2023

Amendments to the Electronic Communications Act have been adopted, allowing for establishing a public mobile alert system.

The system will fulfill a European Union directive requiring member states to enable public warnings via mobile phones.

SKILLS

DIGIPOINTS

October 2023

The Slovenian Ministry of Digital Transformation launched a pilot project to establish Digi Info Points, guiding residents in accessing digital public services.

The project focuses on promoting digital inclusion and efficiency, streamlining interactions with the public sector, and optimizing administrative processes. The initiative empowers users and simplifies administrative procedures by offering support in areas like electronic identification and access to government portals.

FREE COMPUTERS

March 2024

The National Assembly approved the Act on Amendments and Supplements to the Act on the Promotion of Digital Inclusion, aiming to improve access to computer equipment.

The law introduces MIRO, a system to help those who cannot afford equipment, bridging the digital divide. The amendments prioritize socially vulnerable families, ensuring computer access for those in the first-income class with children in primary education.

The Slovenian Ministry of Digital Transformation announced earlier that 13,000 laptops will be distributed to families with children in primary education.

COMBATTING DISINFORMATION

CAMPAIGN: 'STOP DISINFORMATION - READ, THINK, CHECK'

May 2024

The "Stop Disinformation - READ, THINK, CHECK" campaign aims to empower individuals with the tools to discern fact from fiction. By strategically disseminating educational materials across social media, podcasts, and other platforms, the government seeks to strengthen public resilience against manipulation and foreign interference.

Collaborating with European partners, these efforts emphasize a collective commitment to upholding the integrity of democratic processes and safeguarding public trust in information dissemination.

INNOVATION

SLOVENIAN SUPERCOMPUTER GAINS MORE FUNDING

June 2024

Slovenia is steadily advancing its supercomputing industry. The Vega supercomputer, located at the Institute of Information Science (IZUM) in Maribor, boasts a performance of 6.9 petaflops, capable of executing 6.9 million billion operations per second. Vega, which cost €17.2 million, is part of a European initiative to establish eight high-performance computing centers.

The Prime Minister announced successful negotiations with the European Commission, securing €50 million in grants for the Maribor-based supercomputer project. This is matched by an additional €50 million from Slovenia, bringing the total investment to over €100 million. This funding aims to establish one of Europe's most powerful supercomputers, integrated with a new data center to advance artificial intelligence and various applications.

EU COMPLIANCE

IMPLEMENTING THE DSA

March 2024

The National Assembly has adopted the Act of Implementing the Digital Services Act (DSA), aligning national legislation with the European Union's DSA.

The Agency for Communication Networks and Services of Slovenia (AKOS) is designated as the digital services coordinator, ensuring its institutional independence.