CITADEL — Result In Brief

Project ID: 726755
Funded under: H2020-EU.3.6.3.
Coordinated in: Spain

Understanding and transforming Europe’s digital public services

The EU-funded CITADEL project is developing a suite of services aimed at helping European public administrations offer more citizen-centric digital services.

Over the course of the past several decades, public administrations across Europe have invested heavily in digital public services. Although these services aim to make life easier for citizens, perhaps surprisingly, citizens have been reluctant to use them.

“There are several reasons for this, including poor internet coverage, lack of digital skills, fear of making a mistake when performing a transaction, or a poorly designed digital public service,” explains Ms Leire Orue-Echevarria, project coordinator of the EU-funded CITADEL (Empowering Citizens to TrAnsform European PubLic Administrations) project.

To improve the uptake of these services, the CITADEL project has developed a set of methods and tools to help public administrations improve the digital public services they offer. For example, TECNALIA, a research centre and the project’s lead partner, created DIGIMAT, an innovative tool that evaluates the overall maturity level of a government’s digital services.

Based on this evaluation, public administrators can leverage the CITADEL toolbox to personalise citizen services, create user-friendly experiences and comply with applicable rules and regulations. “All of these tools are designed to provide public administrations with practical solutions for improving their digital services,” says Orue-Echevarria.

As many of these services will be developed in partnership with third-party providers, the project also developed a generic co-creation methodology, a co-creation supporting tool and an innovation platform. Whereas the co-creation methodology provides public administrations with step-by-step guidance through the entire co-creation process, the co-creation supporting tool customises the method for a given service or context. It also supports the public administration in each step of the process, providing recommendations as to which tool, technique or method to use. Once implemented, the innovation platform comes into play, providing citizens with the means to generate, vote on and select ideas for improving a certain service.

CITADEL in action

The CITADEL suite of services is currently being piloted in several European cities. For example, in Antwerp, Belgium, project researchers are working with public administrators to improve citizen use of its E-loket digital platform regarding pregnancy and registering a new-born. By centralising all routine document requests, appointment scheduling, and basic administrative information, the platform aims to create a one-stop-online-shop for all public administration matters related to giving birth.

However, its uptake has been slow, with many citizens still calling the central phone number or travelling all the way to City
Hall to get the required information.

“We are working with the City of Antwerp, NGOs and other stakeholders to understand why citizens are having difficulty using the digital service,” explains Orue-Echevarria. “From there, we will work to make the digital service more citizen-centric, more efficient, more accessible and more user-friendly.”

**An eagerness to engage**

Although the project remains a work in progress, Orue-Echevarria notes that she is happy with the results achieved thus far: “We’re seeing an eagerness from public officials to better engage with citizens, not only in administrative matters, but also in participatory decision-making too. The tools we’re developing in the CITADEL project are well-positioned to help bridge this gap between public administration and citizens.”

The project’s results and tools are available via the CITADEL website and the project’s GitLab public repository.

**Keywords**

CITADEL, public administrations, digital public services, Tecnalia

**Last updated on** 2019-09-05  
**Retrieved on** 2019-10-13


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