GovLabAustria 2017–2023

Insights into the Past and
the Future of the Innovation Lab
in Austria's Public Sector

GOV LAB AUSTRIA

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction

The terms real-world laboratories, innovation labs, GovLabs and Policy Innovation Labs (PILs) are often used as synonyms. Although united by their desire to find innovative solutions to complex social problems and to support their implementation or to drive them forward, they often ultimately pursue different approaches and focuses. For this reason, it is important for this report to clarify these terms.

Although there are often overlaps, and a precise distinction is not always possible, we can draw a clear distinction between real-world laboratories on the one hand and innovation labs, GovLabs and Policy Innovation Labs (PILs) on the other.

The Council of the European Union and the EU Commission has an official definition of real-world laboratories.[1] This definition identifies real-world laboratories as a structure for experimentation to test innovative technologies, products, services or approaches in a real-world environment. These experiments are set up for a limited period of time, or within a limited part of a sector or area, and are conducted under regulatory supervision and with appropriate safeguards. The relevant authorities play a part by accompanying the tests carried out by the real-world laboratory, as well as frequently authorising carefully monitored exceptions to legal requirements. In this way, real-world laboratories make it possible to identify the opportunities and risks of an innovation at an early stage. The results obtained in the real-world laboratory can form the basis for changes to the legal framework at a later stage.[2] The focus of real-world laboratories is on the "regulatory interest in knowledge". The central question is how better laws can be created. "Real-world laboratories can only lead to better laws if they are linked to a regulatory learning process."[3] Real-world laboratories serve as test environments in which new ideas can be tried out and validated before being introduced more widely.

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1   Council oft he European Union (2020): Schlussfolgerungen des Rates zu Reallaboren und Experimentierklauseln als Instrumente für einen innovationsfreundlichen, zukunftssicheren und resilienten Rechtsrahmen zur Bewältigung disruptiver Herausforderungen im digitalen Zeitalter. In: https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13026-2020-INIT/de/pdf.
2   Cf. Deutsches Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz (2023). Grünbuch Reallabore Konsultation für ein Reallabore-Gesetz und ergänzende Maßnahmen. In: https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/DE/Downloads/G/gruenbuch-reallabore.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=10, S.2.
3   Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action of Germany (2019): Freiräume für Innovationen. Das Handbuch für Reallabore. In: https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Digitale-Welt/handbuch-fuer-reallabore.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1, S.7.

Example: RealLab Hamburg

The real-world laboratory "RealLab Hamburg" experimented with new digital mobility concepts. The project was divided into 10 sub-projects with 32 project partners, the contents of which were regularly discussed with citizens through participation and dialogue events.

Over the course of the project, various innovations were tested by the laboratory. Examples include the creation of an independent mobility platform, and the development of protective measures for particularly vulnerable road users. The real-world laboratory made it possible to examine the opportunities and risks of mobility innovations and to come up with concrete recommendations for legislation based on the results. The project was led by Hamburger Hochbahn AG and had a budget of € 29.5 million. The Federal Ministry for Digital Affairs and Transport also funded the real-world laboratory. The project ran from April 1, 2020 to December 31, 2021.[4]

Innovation labs, GovLabs, Policy Innovation Labs and Government Innovation Labs are different from real-world laboratories. They provide a space to come up with creative ideas, test new approaches and develop innovative proposals for the administration or relevant public sector actors. This often involves working with different interest groups and stakeholders to develop solutions that enjoy broad support and can be effectively implemented. Innovation labs can include teams or organisations specifically set up for innovative activities in public policy-making, as well as physical spaces for workshops or other stakeholder activities. Innovation labs vary considerably in their proximity to the executive: Some are located within the executive branch; others are located between several government agencies and departments; while still others function as non-governmental organisations tasked with working on innovations in the public sector.[5]

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4   Cf. Bundesministerium für Digitales und Verkehr (2021): RealLabHH – Reallabor Digitale Mobilität. In: https://www.bmdv.bund.de/SharedDocs/DE/Artikel/DG/AVF-projekte/reallabhh.html.
5   Cf. Michael McGann, Emma Blomkamp und Jenny M. Lewis (2018): The rise of public sector innovation labs: experiments in design thinking for policy. Policy Sciences. 51. 10.1007/s11077-018-9315-7. In: https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/13026/1/MM-Innovation-2018.pdf.

There are around 450 innovation laboratories and similar facilities worldwide. Despite their differences, they have three main characteristics:[6]

- First, they use one, several or all elements of the design thinking method. To tackle complex problems through a creative approach, they usually focus on networking, stakeholder engagement and co-creation. They enable governments to explore and test alternative approaches and creative solutions to overcome risk aversion and resistance to change.[7]

- Second, innovation labs place a strong focus on proactively addressing specific problems and generating innovations through experimental approaches as well as scientific methods. This allows the effectiveness of political measures (policies) and programs to be measured. Experiments are often carried out as pilot projects or prototypes to support evidence-based decisions.[8]

- And third, innovation labs are geared towards specific challenges and pursue a user-centered approach in which the target groups are actively involved in the process. This ensures that the solutions developed meet the actual needs and requirements of the target group, making them more effective and helping them to achieve greater acceptance.[9]

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6   Cf. Wellstead, Gofen & Carter (2021): Policy innovation lab scholarship: past, present, and the future – Introduction to the special issue on policy innovation labs, Policy Design and Practice, 4:2, 193-211, In: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25741292.2021.1940700.
7   Cf. Monteiro, Kumpf (2023): Innovation labs through the looking glass: Experiences across the globe. In: https://oecd-opsi.org/blog/innovation-labs-through-the-looking-glass/.
8   Cf. Monteiro, Kumpf (2023): Innovation labs through the looking glass: Experiences across the globe. In: https://oecd-opsi.org/blog/innovation-labs-through-the-looking-glass/.
9   Cf. Wellstead, Gofen & Carter (2021): Policy innovation lab scholarship: past, present, and the future – Introduction to the special issue on policy innovation labs, Policy Design and Practice, 4:2, 193-211, In: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25741292.2021.1940700.

Example: GovLab Arnsberg

Founded by the Arnsberg district government in Germany, the innovation laboratory "GovLab Arnsberg" develops new solutions jointly with stakeholders and interest groups in order to improve processes in the administration.

To develop the proposals, experts work in interdisciplinary teams using the design thinking method. The proposals developed are presented to the administrative bodies as suggestions for improvement. In terms of content, various fields are addressed, from schools to e-mobility.[10]

In summary, innovation labs are organizations that bring people together in open formats to develop, design and prototype innovative solutions to existing challenges.[11] The main difference from real-world labs is that while the former focus on the practical testing of innovations and regulatory insights, innovation labs, GovLabs and PILs instead focus on developing and designing innovative solutions.

Based on this classification, GovLabAustria is an innovation laboratory that provides a framework and space for tackling social and technological challenges. The focus on the implementation of projects, the bringing together of interest groups and stakeholders using modern methods (e.g. design thinking) and formats for the joint development of solutions, and the aim of disseminating the knowledge gained are typical of innovation laboratories.[12]

10 Cf. Bezirksregierung Arnsberg (2024): GovLab Arnsberg. In: https://www.bra.nrw.de/govlab

11 Cf. Gryszkiewicz, L., Lykourentzou, I., & Toivonen, T. (2016). Innovation Labs: 10 Defining Features. Stanford Social Innovation Review. In: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/innovation_labs_10_defining_features.

12 Cf. GovLab Austria (2017) In: https://www.govlabaustria.gv.at/.

About GovLabAustria

GovLabAustria emerged in 2017 as part of a partnership between the University of Continuing Education Krems and the Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport. To this day, the partnership and GovLabAustria's methods remain a pioneering approach to solving challenges in the public sector.

GovLabAustria is a central platform for the development and testing of new administrative approaches and technological innovations in the Austrian public sector. The innovation laboratory not only serves as a meeting and exchange space among relevant stakeholders, but also as a laboratory for the implementation of projects in the field of administrative innovation. By integrating modern, scientific methods and promoting interdisciplinary cooperation across geographical and organisational boundaries, GovLabAustria aims to develop practical solutions for use in the public sector.

Another important feature of GovLabAustria is its integration into an international network, as well as its ongoing transfer of insights to the entire public sector in Austria. To this end, this organisation uses its position as a national and international hub for innovation laboratories. It is important to note that this is not only about collecting and disseminating best practices, but also about actively promoting the international exchange of expertise and resources.

In terms of method, GovLabAustria uses a variety of innovative approaches such as co-creation and agile management to develop flexible solutions. This also make it possible to react quickly to changes and implement solutions that are both effective and sustainable.

Finally, one of GovLabAustria's main focuses is the promotion of training and continuing education measures. The corresponding offers are not only aimed at public sector employees, but are also open to citizens.

Example Projects

GovLabAustria's field of work includes a commitment to supporting and implementing innovative projects. The broad involvement of relevant stakeholders and cooperation with experts from administrations as well as from the fields of science, business and civil society have always been cornerstones of its approach. This approach ensures that their work is informed by a comprehensive range of perspectives on the challenges and solutions.

To provide insights into the working methods and methods of the innovation laboratory, a selection of GovLabAustria projects are briefly described below.

Transparency and Participation in Law-Making

Starting Point

Expertise from science, business and civil society has great potential to improve Austrian administrative and government work. In Austria, for example, 236,000 people are employed in non-profit organisations, and 28 percent of the population is involved in some form of voluntary work. These organisations work on issues affecting society as a whole and develop innovative solutions for current and future challenges. There is a wealth of experience and knowledge, particularly in the social, health, environmental, cultural and human rights sectors, which public administration can draw on for its own work.

Goals

The project aimed to use IT tools to bring together expertise from different areas such as politics, administration, science, business and civil society and to incorporate it into the law-making process. The idea was to support public administration by exploiting this expertise in a systematised was to create transparent, participatory and evidence-based legislation.

Method

At the beginning of the project, the lab worked with the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU) to identify needs of civil society and the public sector in Austria on the subject of transparency and participation in lawmaking. The results were then discussed at an event with representatives from politics, administration and civil society. Participants included Gisela Erler (State Councillor for Civil Society and Citizen Participation, Baden-Württemberg), Thomas Drozda (former Federal Minister for Art and Culture) and Harald Mahrer (former Federal Minister for Science, Research and Economy).

Following the event, a workshop was held with experts from science, government administration and other practitioners to devise participation success factors and to collect initial ideas for participation processes. In addition, international best practices for digital platforms for citizen participation in political decision-making processes were identified, and the open-source software Decidim was tested by the Non-Profit Organizations Interest Group (IGO) for its suitability for lawmaking processes in Austria. This test was funded by the Internet Foundation netidee.

Based on the project findings, a hybrid process featuring both digital and offline elements was implemented using the Decidim platform. Recommendations for action from the NPO & SE Competence Center were put up for discussion and evaluated. Volunteers and the coordinators of organisations were also able to contribute their own ideas. The results of the vote and all ideas submitted were summarised in a report.

Image 1: Civil society in conversation 2017 (© IGO)

Results & Impact

This report was used by the Ministry of Social Affairs to amend the volunteering act. A total of 305 people took part in the project on the Decidim platform. In addition, almost 250 people took part in workshops and events.

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Project partner organisations

Decidim[13], Internet Stiftung netidee[14], Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien[15]

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13 See website: https://decidim.org/
14 See website: https://www.internetstiftung.at/
15 See website: https://www.wu.ac.at/

Innovation Compass / Inno-Recorder

Starting Point

We are faced with an increasing range of complex challenges, such as adapting to climate change, establishing a circular economy, and the ethical use of data and new technologies. They are sometimes referred to as "wicked problems", and require fundamental changes to our social systems. The adaptability of public institutions is crucial to these transformations. Especially at a time when European governments are striving for evidence-based, impact-oriented and forward-looking government action and should support initiatives such as eGovernment and Open Government Partnership, there are many hurdles to the implementation of these projects and to the promotion of new public infrastructures. This requires institutions that help to restore trust, proactively enable changes that benefit the common good, invest resources in the long term, create attractive working environments, and realise an intersectoral culture of cooperation.

Goals

The Innovation Compass project set out to gain an overview of the innovative power of the administrations in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, with a view to establishing a regular learning cycles on the topic. The focus was on recording the social and economic impacts of public innovations and the self-assessment of the authorities involved. The aim is to strengthen the willingness and ability to innovate in the public sector and to promote developments that benefit the common good.

Image 2: Visualising the Innovation Compass 2019 (© Politics for Tomorrow)

Method

The project was based on experiences in Scandinavia, and was developed in exchange with the Danish Centre for Public Innovation (CO-PI). The survey instrument combined a statistical survey (70 %) with a reflexive self-assessment (30 %). This enabled a comprehensive analysis of the innovation capacity of the public sector in German-speaking countries while also ensuring international comparability.

- Conception and adaptation: The survey instrument was adapted in co-creative workshops and further developed in online consultations.
- Cooperation and network building: Committed people from various administrative levels cooperated with academia and civil society.
- Pilot phase and pre-tests: The innovation compass was tested with various public administrations and adapted to specific contexts.
- Dissemination: Prototype funding offers are now available for dissemination and further development. The findings have been incorporated into the Copenhagen Manual.

Learning is of the utmost importance for innovation. The project supports individual, organisational and systemic development processes across federal borders, in a way that is needs-oriented and efficient. By promoting innovation networks, teams and individuals, the cultural change in the public sector can be accelerated and sustained.[16]

Results & Impact

The Innovation Compass promotes the implementation of the OECD Declaration on Public Sector Innovation, which has been signed by 44 countries. Regular surveys enable a comprehensive and representative assessment of the public sector's ability to innovate. This helps to achieve political goals, increasing their effectiveness and thereby improving trust in democratic processes. It also helps to ensure good governance and increase the innovation capacity of organisations. The Innovation Compass supports the development of a public innovation culture by systematically collecting and presenting in-depth knowledge about the value and impact of innovations in an understandable way. In the long term, this learning-centered approach supports the adaptability of public systems and strengthens the ability of society to act as a whole.

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16 Cf. Politics for Tomorrow (2018): Innovationskompass. In: www.innovationskompass.net.

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Project Partner Organisations

The project was initiated by Politics for Tomorrow[17] and the Competence Center for Public IT[18], in cooperation with the GovLabAustria of the Federal Ministry of Public Service, the Swiss State Laboratory[19] and Destatis[20], accompanied by the Danish Center for Public-Private Innovation (COPI).

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17 See website: https://www.politicsfortomorrow.de/

18 See website: https://www.oeffentliche-it.de/

19 See website: https://www.staatslabor.ch/de

20 See website: https://www.destatis.de/DE/Home/_inhalt.html

The Future of Work – Reallabor

Starting Point

The world of work is in a constant process of transformation. In mainstream social discourse, these changes are associated with numerous keywords such as flexibility, freedom, independence, responsibility, error and learning culture, agility, diversity, meaning and transparency. What unites this wealth of ideas, concepts and practices is the idea of creating an even more productive, collaboration-oriented and fulfilling work environment for employees. This means adapting work to people and their needs, and not the other way around. The concept of "new work" is primarily understood as a new way to think about work and working methods. Against the backdrop of a complex, dynamic and increasingly digital society, not only are the state's areas of responsibility changing – the way administrative employees carry out their tasks is evolving, too.

Since 2022, the "Future of Work – Reallabor" has been dealing with the necessary technical, organisational and personnel policy issues necessary to become a modern and attractive employer, to be able to continue to offer services efficiently, effectively and sustainably, and to encourage employees to stay motivated and committed in the long term.

Goals

The aim of the project was to identify which key social trends are contributing to the change in the organisation of work at the federal administration; to what extent technical interventions can be implemented in organisations of the federal administration; to what extent formats with a focus on employees can be used meaningfully in the design of work organisation; what expectations young employees have of a modern employer; to what extent the measurement and collection of performance can be designed in organisational units of the federal administration; what hurdles and challenges innovative procurement processes bring with them; to what extent the technical and organisational design of collaboration spaces can be designed; and how agile project management methods and workshop designs can be implemented and used meaningfully for these organisations.

Method

At the end of 2020, the "Future of Work" real-world laboratory was created as an experimental and reflection space with the purpose of exploring and defining findings, guidelines and requirements for precisely these complex issues. In cooperation with numerous scientific, economic, civil society and administrative actors, the real-world laboratory has since been dealing with key issues of the future of work in the Austrian federal ministries in numerous project strands. Real-world laboratories represent experimental spaces limited in time, space and organisation in which complex issues are worked through in an interdisciplinary and participatory manner.

As part of the "Future of Work – Real-world laboratory", numerous scientific studies, workshops, interviews and experiments were carried out in this regard, generating insights into the implementation, execution and effects of new forms of work in the organisational units of the central administration (ministries). In a highly multidisciplinary approach, insights were generated within the framework of the real-world laboratory "Future of Work meets Section III" through the structural and recurring involvement of Section III employees (approx. 105 people) from science, software and hardware companies, consulting companies, other organisational units of the administration and their existing strategies; as well as at numerous international events and critical discussions. In the logic of a real-world laboratory, answers to complex but essential questions were identified in intensive and recurring, iterative processes together with employees, managers and external stakeholders.

The main focus here was on (1) task fulfilment, reflection and awareness-raising, (2) seeking help, guidance and support, and (3) the creation and maturation of collective knowledge. In addition, by opening up the problem space to other stakeholders (IT consulting, software and hardware manufacturers, science, discussion with other stakeholders in the administration), attempts were made to unite the heterogeneous knowledge and overcome the divisions between silos. As part of the project, an example process was designed to support organisational units in the structural development of their work organisation within the framework of a real laboratory:

Vorbereitung
(ca. 3 Monate)

Durchführung
(ca. 9 Monate)

M4 Endbericht
Ergebnisse
Entscheidungs-
grundlage

M1 Projektauftrag

Kick-off

M2 Ausgangsbericht
Ist-Stand Arbeitsorganisation

Planung der Intervention(en)

Implementierung Intervention(en)

Reflexionsformate mit Führungskräften & Mitarbeiter:innen

Ziele & Strategie

Erhebung I

Mind. 3 Monate

Erhebung II

Mind. 6 Monate

Erhebung III

Operationalisierung

Auswertung I

Auswertung II

Auswertung III

Wir sind hier

Operationalisierte
Erhebungsinstrumente

M3 Zwischenbericht
Erste Erkenntnisse & etwaige
notwendige Adaptionen
der Intervention

Beginn der
Umsetzung d.
Intervention

Aufwand für die operative Organisationseinheit
- Zwei bis drei Workshops mit allen Mitarbeiter:innen und unmittelbaren Führungskräften
- Beantwortung des Fragebogens sowie qualititiver Einzelinterviews (3 x 30 Min á Mitarbeiter:in)
- Bereitschaft zur aktiven Reflexion der eigenen Arbeitsumgebung und Offenheit für Neues

Output seitens der Sektion III
- Erstellung von min. zwei wissenschaftlichen Analysen zur Arbeitsorganisation ihrer Organisationseinheit
- Vorbereitung, Durchführung & Evaluation von mind. zwei zukunftsorientierten an die Bedürfnisse der Organisationseinheit angepassten Workshopformate
- Gemeinsame Erstellung einer an ihre Strategien, Ziele und Bedürfnisse angepassten lebendigen governance
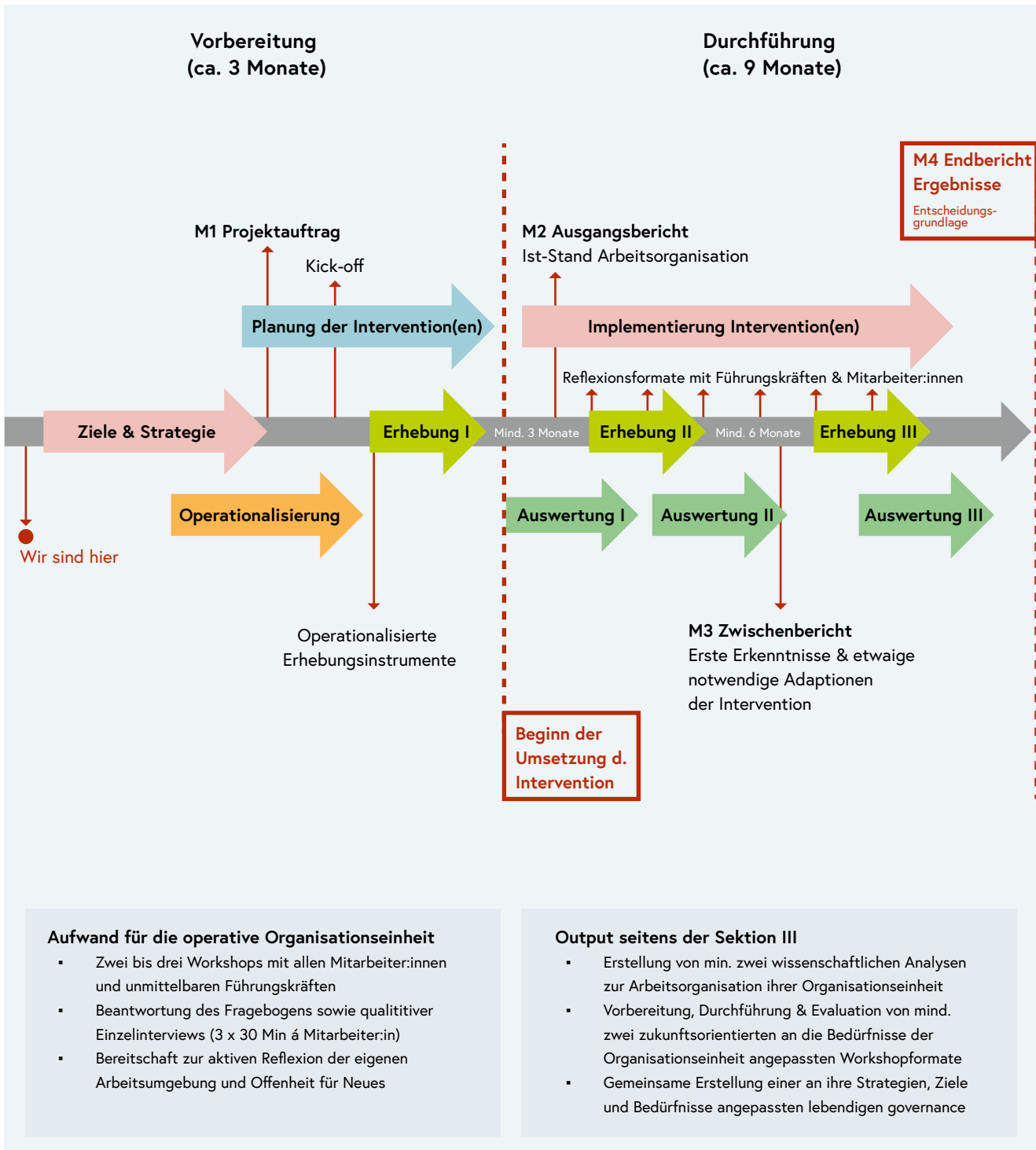
Image 3: Example process in the "Future of Work" project (© BMKÖS)

Results & Impact

During the implementation of the real-world laboratory, it quickly became clear that taking a holistic view of the work organisation of employees seemed the most promising approach. In addition to performance, it is also necessary to consider the existing legal framework and working social capital, health aspects of the employees and an adequate work-life balance. Only by taking this holistic perspective can we adequately analyse the work organisation of the ministries. The most suitable way to redesign work is therefore characterised above all by the transition from an economic input orientation to an effective and efficient outcome orientation, based on employee-centric standards.

As part of the change processes in the work organisation, framework regulations should be identified that can be adapted to the needs of both the employees and the organisation. The success or failure of these changes must in turn be measured against a variety of standards.

The "Future of Work Project" gave rise to numerous objectives that have since contributed to significant change processes. Following the process, changes have been made to the infrastructure (creation of a workshop room); to the in-house governance (work processes, collaboration and reflection formats, new indicators for the company's own work areas); and also to the implementation of improved health-promoting measures. Looking ahead, there are currently no plans to roll out real-world laboratories to the entire Austrian administration, as the implementation of a real-world laboratory entails a great deal of effort. Nevertheless, selected pilot studies increase transparency, initiate change processes and lead to important findings that could be of increased relevance for the Federal Administration and its work culture. They offer the organisation the opportunity to try something new, to design and test processes, to promote collaboration and to develop new tasks, processes and structures. In addition, the real-world laboratory project cannot be considered to be completed yet, as questions from a wide variety of stakeholders keep cropping up, with requests for new tests in the real-world laboratory format. In addition, numerous experiences and insights were gained that could also be of relevance for other organisational units in the (re)design of their working environment.

The following table lists nine exemplary subject areas and associated experiences and insights from the course of the project that can support the redesign of your work environment.

Topic	Experience	Learnings
Changes in work as a change of attitude	The Future of Work as a cultural change process supported by digitalisation	Changes in the work environment and structural habits are key starting points for organisational development
"Be a Copy Cat"	A large number of institutions, companies and organisations are already dealing with the topic – "see what works there"	Networking, exchanging experiences and collecting ideas can save time and resources in organisational development projects and lead to creative solutions.
Find a common language	The transition from scientific findings to practice-oriented measures can be conflict-laden and complicated (different logics)	Clear communication, regular exchange, agile approaches and constant reflection are valuable components of a transdisciplinary project structure.
Difference paces	The heterogeneity of the federal administration is also reflected in its employees. Attitudes towards work, work motivation and digital skills vary.	There is a balancing act to be struck between "leaving no one behind" and an appropriate learning curve. Different formats for different target groups could make sense.
"Flow of Information"	Efficient, effective and sustainable work requires a clearly defined task and sufficient information about the function of the activity.	Clearly structured, coordinated communication processes form the backbone of effective, efficient and sustainable service provision.
Data protection and awareness as a central determining factor	The ability to work remotely is strongly influenced by the possibilities for access to data and information.	A widely deployed mobile working strategy requires a coherent strategy for data management and IT security architecture
Trust and transparency	The design of work as a coordination process between individual needs and the requirements of the position.	Transparent decision-making processes and open handling of "problems" create a culture of trust and cooperation.
Change requires resources	Changes in infrastructure and familiar settings can contribute to a changed mindset.	Breaking away from business as usual is a time-consuming and resource-intensive process. The advantages of new work processes need time and space to develop.
A clear vision and goals	A change in work organisation can only be successful if the employees are willing. Since adapting "unfamiliar" working patterns is experienced as additional work, the meaning and purpose of an intervention must be clear.	For the coherent transformation of a work culture, a structured mission statement is needed with which employees can identify.

Real-world laboratories like the "Future of Work Real-world laboratory" can provide an essential building block for the modernisation of administration and work organisation. Overall, the real-world laboratory continues to make a significant contribution to reflecting the work of the Austrian federal ministries and to optimising and continuously improving it in accordance with the ideas of their customers, the population of the Republic of Austria, and their employees.

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Horizon 2020: Inclusive Governance Models and ICT Tools

Starting Point

The public sector is under pressure to deliver high-quality public services with ever fewer resources. The use, reuse and interoperability of digital services play an important role, but current strategies, guidelines and roadmaps cannot keep up with today's complexity. Centralised strategies such as the European Interoperability Framework (EIF) or the European Interoperability Reference Architecture (EIRA) could only be effective if a single public authority managed all data and services needed to deliver integrated public services. Public administrations need to be able to share data and reuse software and solutions, to use principles such as once-only, digital-by-default, interoperability-by-default, etc., but also to collaborate with other interest groups and stakeholders, including other authorities, private sector companies, NGOs, etc. New governance models and roadmaps are needed to enable efficient and effective integrated collaboration in public administration, improve data sharing and system interoperability.

Goals

In terms of research and innovation, the project focused on the development of governance models for Integrated Public Services (IPS) and the use of co-creation to integrate the needs of stakeholders. In terms of society, the project aimed to develop a framework for IPS governance and to derive guidelines and recommendations for IPS governance, possible agreements, stakeholder involvement and implementation. Pilot projects were also planned to verify the applicability and effectiveness of the developed concepts and models. On the technical side, the project included the design of a reference architecture and a modular platform to support the new IPS governance models. This needed to be compatible with existing initiatives and support the new IPS co-creation governance models. In addition, a modular platform for mobile applications and app development based on emerging IT paradigms was to be developed.

Method

The project was divided into 8 work packages. Pilot projects were also carried out with public authorities in Malta, Austria, Greece and Croatia to test co-creation methods, thereby involving stakeholders in the development. The evaluation was carried out in four cycles, developing a detailed methodology to measure the success of the co-creation methods as well as the planning and implementation of the services.

Results and impact

The project improves existing EU solutions, including the European Interoperability Framework (EIF), the European Interoperability Reference Architecture (EIRA) and the Core Vocabularies. The results have also been used to develop a roadmap for the sustainable development of public services using co-creation methods. Furthermore, training courses and online videos have been developed for public administrations, businesses

and citizens to learn how to use the services developed by the inGov project. Practical recommendations and tutorials for public authorities and businesses are available on different aspects of the holistic IPS framework, mobile and ICT tools, and sustainable and ethical co-creation processes.

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TOOP – The Once-Only Principle Project

Starting point

The Single Market is one of the cornerstones of the European Union. The idea of transforming it into a digital single market was outlined several years ago. The EU has launched various initiatives to support this transformation process. One of them was the Horizon 2020 programme, which drove this process forward from a technical point of view. In parallel, initiatives were created to establish a solid legal framework for the digital single market. The Single Digital Access Regulation (SDGR) is a result of these initiatives. The key aspect of the SDGR is the underlying once-only principle (OOP), which states that companies and citizens in contact with public administrations only have to provide data once. This data should then be shared, taking into account the applicable legal framework.

Goals

The main objective of TOOP was to explore and demonstrate OOP on a cross-border, pan-European scale, with a focus on reducing the administrative burden on companies.

Method

TOOP's technical solution has been successfully tested by the project partners in different pilot areas – general corporate mobility, maritime transport and e-procurement. TOOP used an innovative process called "Connectathons" to test the cross-border connections between data provider and data consumer. The TOOP pilot projects have shown that the developed TOOP architecture can be used to enable a better exchange of business-related data with and between public administrations and to reduce the administrative burden for both companies and public administrations.

Results and Impact

The technical architecture and components of TOOP were adopted by CEF (Connecting Europe Facility) and used in the implementation of the Single Digital Gateway (SDG). To ensure the long-term sustainability of the TOOP results, the project launched the ONCE-ONLY.ORG AISBL, an organisation tasked with ensuring the sustainability of the technical artefacts resulting from the TOOP project. It aims to facilitate and promote international collaboration between public and private stakeholders in order to advance and improve OOP and other underlying e-government practices and interoperability solutions.

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Project partner organisations

In total, the consortium included around 50 organisations from 17 EU Member States and two associated countries. Under the coordination of the Tallinn University of Technology (Estonia), public administration organisations, research institutions and private companies from the following countries participated in the project: Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia and Switzerland.

Collective Mind

Starting Point

Individuals, organisations and societies are facing increasingly complex challenges that can often only be overcome collaboratively. In this context, the concept of collective intelligence is becoming increasingly important. Groups with collective intelligence are particularly capable of solving problems that require different experiences, skills and knowledge, and clearly outperform other groups in doing so.

Goals

Researchers and organisational experts analysed the influence of two elements on the collective intelligence of groups: the adoption of perspectives, and the existence of a common understanding of the problem based on mental models. The aim was to identify factors influencing the collective intelligence of groups, to develop interventions, and to derive measures and recommendations for improving stakeholder processes.

Method

In order to achieve the goals described above, test procedures were first developed for the underlying influencing factors and intervention methods for stakeholder groups. These were then empirically tested through experiments. The case studies were evaluated, and findings for practice were identified.

Results and Impact

As part of the study, a proposal for an innovation course was developed that is almost entirely based on the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® method. The developed design can be applied in other higher education institutions as well as in in-house seminars.

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Knowledge Transfer & Networking

A core function of GovLabAustria has always been to bring knowledge and experience as well as innovative methods into administration and the public sector. The laboratory used both national and international networks. Central to this was the organisation of its own events and courses as well as participation in events. Practitioners were always actively involved in order to enable a practical transfer of knowledge. At the same time, a focus was always placed on creating opportunities to form new networks among the participants.

Below are three formats that were implemented by GovLabAustria to achieve the above-mentioned goals.

Compact Course on Innovation / GLA Training

Starting point
In a society that is constantly changing, public administration is constantly required to develop the right solutions to meet the needs of citizens. In order to do this, administration employees must be equipped with the necessary tools. The Federal Academy of Administration offers a wide range of training and further education courses. However in the past, there was a lack of further education focusing on the area of administrative innovation.

Goal
The aim is to provide public administration employees with the skills they need to fulfil their responsibilities both now and in the future.

Method
As part of GovLabAustria, the competency development program "GovLabAustria Training" was created together with the Federal Academy of Administration, specifically the compact course on innovation. This compact course enables students to learn new methods in the field of innovation which are then later employed in interactive workshops. The course also acts as a networking platform for innovative individuals working in public administrations. The seminars included in the compact course on innovation can be divided into three groups:

- Compulsory seminars: Seminars from this group are compulsory to attend.
- Elective seminars: Two seminars must be chosen from this group.
- Elective seminars: Seminars from this group are not compulsory and can be attended on a voluntary basis for further in-depth study.

After completing the necessary seminars of the compact course, participants receive a certificate of successful completion.

The Innovation 2024 compact course, for example, offers the opportunity to explore and learn a wide range of topics and methods. These include community building, digitisation and artificial intelligence, open government and real-world laboratories, participation, change management, art of hosting, service design, visualisations, new work and future thinking.

Image 4: Workshop "Visualising" (© Verwaltungsakademie des Bundes)

Results and impact

Since 2019, over 700 participants from public administration have attended the seminars of the compact course on innovation at the Federal Administrative Academy. Not only did they have the opportunity to learn different methods and explore new areas; they were also able to network with other employees in the administration. The seminars of the compact course are continuously updated to ensure that they cover current topics in administrative innovation. Details can be found on the website of the Federal Administrative Academy at www.vab.gv.at.

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I-Lab Symposium / I-Lab Chat

Starting Point

In order to successfully meet the current and future challenges facing society, public administration must rethink the way it works. A shift is necessary away from silo thinking and towards a cross-sectoral discourse. The administration must work more closely with external stakeholders to find answers to the complex issues of our time and to meet the needs of citizens. In particular, the exchange with science, business and civil society must be encouraged. Such a dialogue is very difficult within the existing structures of public administration. Therefore, what is needed first and foremost are spaces in which such cross-organisational exchange is possible.

Goals

The aim of this format is to create a framework and space for an in-depth exchange between decision-makers and experts from administration, science, business and civil society. New initiatives and ideas will be presented and current topics in the field of innovation will be discussed. A special focus will be placed on personal networking.

Method

The Innovation Lab Symposium was launched in 2016 as the central event series of GovLabAustria. GovLabAustria created a framework and space at the Danube University Krems in which participants could exchange ideas on current topics and network with one another.

At the I-Lab Symposium 2016, participants discussed the advantages, limitations, and hurdles for innovation labs both in theory and drawing on concrete examples. At the I-Lab Symposium 2018, current projects on citizen participation as well as other EU-funded research projects in the field of public administration were presented and discussed. In 2019, GovLabAustria's last I-Lab Symposium took place under the motto "Human – Machine – Interface", with a special focus on the topic of artificial intelligence.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the I-Lab Symposium could not be continued in its current form, which is why the I-Lab Chat replaced the symposium for the following two years. The I-Lab Chat meant the event could be held digitally with panel discussions, workshops, and networking opportunities among participants. The theme of the I-Lab Chat 2020 was "Sharing knowledge – developing ideas" and focused in particular on the consequences of the corona pandemic on administration. The online event series came to a conclusion with the I-Lab Chat 2021 "Changing organisations based on evidence – helping to shape the future of administration".

Results & Impact

Both the I-Lab Symposium and the I-Lab Chat enabled an interdisciplinary exchange between decision-makers and experts from administration, science, business and civil society. The space created was used to initiate projects, gather information and network with relevant stakeholders. The experience gained from this in holding events in the field of administrative innovation was also incorporated into Innovate – Conference on Innovation Management in the Public Sector – which is organised once a year by the BMKÖS and other partner organisations.

Image 5: Participants in the 2018 I-Lab Symposiums (© Wolfgang Simlinger)

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GovJam

Starting Point
Administrations often lack the right formats to develop innovative solutions. Due to the structures and their tasks, employees lack opportunities to use their creativity to promote innovative ideas. In addition, exchange with stakeholders from science, business and civil society is rarely possible.

Goals
In order to promote the innovative spirit of administration employees, formats are needed that encourage exchange and provide a framework for creative thinking. GovJam creates this space and enables representatives of relevant stakeholders from various socially relevant areas to participate in an interactive format.

Method
In 2017, a Government Jam ("GovJam") took place for the first time at Impact Hub Vienna. The format was part of an international series of events in which people from politics and administration met in over 80 cities around the world to create innovative solutions for administration in a new format. In 2018 and 2019, a GovJam also took place in Vienna with the participation of GovLabAustria.

During the two-day event in Vienna, user-centered, interdisciplinary and collaborative innovations were created in a practice-oriented workshop format. The focus was on collaboration and the joy of working together. Concrete results in the form of ideas and models for new public services were not explicitly required, but were nonetheless developed by the participants.

Results and Impact
By the end of the GovJam, participants had applied the design thinking method and could incorporate it or elements of it into their everyday work. In addition, the networking nature of the event broke down silos in the public sector and promoted cross-organisational collaboration with stakeholders from science, business and civil society.

Image 6: GovJam 2017 at the Impact Hub Vienna (Photo: © Bundeskanzleramt)

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Project partner organisations

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21   See website: https://www.wonderwerk.com/

Network (National Point of Contact)

Starting Point

Due to the increasingly complex demands on administration and a rapidly changing society, the exchange with different stakeholders inside and outside of public administration has become essential. Above all, the development of networks with relevant organisations and people from science, business, civil society and politics stands in contrast to the silos that the administration has built up over decades. Due to these silos, there tends to be little knowledge about existing or possible innovation projects in other federal ministries, even beyond the ministry boundaries. This also applies to the state and municipal levels as well as the outsourced organisations. The structures in which administration operates make it difficult to create such necessary networks.

Goals

One of the aims of GovLabAustria is to create an opportunity to form networks that go beyond administrative boundaries. This will involve a constant exchange with relevant stakeholders in order to stay up to date on the broad spectrum of topics related to administrative innovation and to make the knowledge gained from this usable for the administration.

Method

With the creation of GovLabAustria in 2017, a step towards the desired goal was already taken by creating an innovation laboratory for the public sector together with the Danube University Krems. The administration is working closely with academia in this endeavour, which is trying to promote cooperation between the sectors beyond administrative boundaries.

Networking with other innovation laboratories in the supranational and international space,is also central. The exchange with other laboratories helps GovLabAustria to implement its own projects more efficiently and to design its own processes more effectively. In doing so, GovLabAustria draws on the experiences of partner organisations around the world, which enable continuous and sustainable learning.

GovLabAustria has also positioned itself as a national contact point for the topic of innovation both within the administration in Austria and beyond. This is intended to enable a collective flow of information from Austria and beyond the country's borders. In particular, cooperation with international organisations such as the OECD and its Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI) was promoted through the creation of GovLabAustria.

Results & Impact

GovLabAustria is part of the international network "The GovLab", which served as a key inspiration for the establishment of its own national innovation laboratory. The exchange with the partner organisations of this network was essential for the further development of GovLabAustria. In the DACH region, LabCamp was also opened to create a network of public innovation laboratories from German-speaking countries, a network to which GovLabAustria belongs.

Through the experiences gained in the course of GovLabAustria's work, other public stakeholders were supported in the development of their innovation laboratories, such as GovLab Arnsberg.

In addition, interviews with scientific institutions were set up in order to share learning experiences about GovLabAustria.

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Success Factors for Innovation Labs

At a time when innovative administrative approaches and solutions are increasingly in demand by both the public and those in charge, GovLabAustria is playing a leading role in shaping future-proof approaches in the Austrian public sector. In addition, there are a large number of innovation labs in other countries and institutions that are successfully making an impact. Learning from them is essential to leading GovLabAustria towards an even more successful future.

To identify the success factors for innovation labs, we took a comprehensive approach. On the one hand, we involved recognised experts who have dealt intensively with this topic in the analysis. This enabled us to incorporate their practical experience and in-depth knowledge into the report. On the other hand, we analysed international best practice examples to identify proven methods and approaches. This analysis not only enabled us to derive relevant success factors, but also to gain valuable insights into international developments that are crucial for innovation labs.

By consolidating the results, we were able to identify the key success factors of innovation labs. Building on this, we were not only able to recognise the successes of GovLabAustria, but also to identify the success factors that will set the direction for the future development of GovLabAustria. These form the basis for GovLabAustria's future strategy to meet the changing requirements of the public sector in Austria. They therefore not only provide direction for GovLabAustria's future work, but also offer other institutions valuable guidance for the implementation and further development of their own innovation structures.

The table below shows the innovation labs that were analysed to derive success factors:

- Founded in 2014, CO-PI is part of the innovation ecosystem in Denmark. Originally established as part of the Ministry of the Interior, this laboratory is now funded by a broad alliance of various actors, including ministries and municipalities. Under the supervision of a board of directors, the 22 employees aim to increase quality and efficiency in the public sector and thus contribute to Denmark's well-being, growth and prosperity.

- The GovLab was founded in 2012 at New York University in the USA. It is funded by a combination of grants and commercial services. Its 39 employees focus on strengthening the capabilities of institutions and people so that they can work more openly, collaboratively, effectively and legitimately. The goal is to improve decision-making and solve societal problems more effectively.

- Since 2016, the State Laboratory in Switzerland has served as a platform that promotes cooperation and exchange between stakeholders in the public sector. The 17 employees work closely with institutions, associations and foundations. Under the supervision of a board of directors, the State Laboratory strives to develop innovative solutions to the challenges in the public sector and thus support the development of a modern and needs-based public sector.

- Since 2023, UNIDO's new initiative and its six staff members have been funded directly from the organisation's core budget, supplemented by internal performance accounting. It acts as a staff unit of the Secretary-General and aims to promote inclusive and sustainable industrial development through innovative approaches.

- Founded in 1999, the EGIZ and its five employees are financed through grants and the provision of commercial services. Their main tasks include technology monitoring and evaluation as well as support and advice in the implementation of digitisation projects for both public administration and private companies. The EGIZ is under the supervision of the General Assembly and a Presidium.

	CO-PI	The Govlab	Staatslabor	UNIDO Innovation Lab	EGIZ
Country	Denmark	USA	Switzerland	Global	Austria
Founded	2014	2012	2016	2023	1999
Team size	22	39	17	6	5
Financing	Part of a ministry, financed by a broad alliance (ministers, municipalities, etc.)	Grants, and the provision of commercial services.	Cooperation with institutions, associations and foundations	Financed from UNIDO's core budget. There is also an internal performance accounting system	Grants, and the provision of commercial services.
Goals	Contribution to greater quality and efficiency in the public sector. Contribution to the well-being, growth and prosperity of society	Strengthening the ability of institutions and people to work more openly, cooperatively, effectively and legitimately in order to make better decisions and solve social problems	Creation of a platform for exchange in the public sector Development of a modern and needs-based public sector	Promoting inclusive and sustainable industrial development through innovation	Technology monitoring and evaluation, support and advice in the implementation of digitalization projects in administration as well as public and private companies
Oversight	Directorate	Northeastern University, NYU	Board of directors	Office of the Secretary-General	General Assembly and Presidium
Website & sources	https://co-pi.dk	https://thegovlab.com	https://www.staatslabor.ch/de	https://www.unido.org/innovation-lab	https://www.a-sit.at/egiz/e-government-innovationszentrum-egiz

In addition to the analysis of the innovation labs described, semi-structured, qualitative interviews were conducted with 15 recognised experts. These were: Rolf Alter (Hertie School), Gerhard Embacher-Köhle (BRZ), Lars Fuglsang (Roskilde University), Alexander Grünwald (gLAB), Robin Heilig (City of Vienna), Ulrike Huemer (City of Linz), Lene Krogh Jeppesen (CO-PI), Jenny Lewis (University of Melbourne), Beth Noveck (The GovLab), Stefan Maier (IÖB), Eva Miklautz (BMASK), Bruno Monteiro (OECD), Piret Tõnurist (OPSI), Sindre Wimberger (City of Vienna) and Rubina Zern-Breuer (University of Stuttgart).

From the analysis of the international success stories and the discussions with the experts, eight success factors for the implementation of innovation labs could be identified:

1. **A clear mandate with defined goals**
    In order to be successful, clear goals must be defined when setting up an innovation lab, including the problem to be solved and the role of the innovation lab in solving the problem. Before the facility starts operations, it must be clear why it was founded in the first place.[22] The vision of what functions and goals the innovation lab should have is essential, as this defines the structure, processes and offerings or activities of the facility. This is particularly important in hierarchical systems, because clear goals ensure that the innovation lab is effectively embedded in the existing structures and thus receives the necessary resources to be successful and effective.

2. **Strategic anchoring among decision-makers**
    Strategic anchoring in the existing decision-making structures helps innovation labs to work effectively and to have the appropriate priority for managers when allocating resources. This anchoring also has a corresponding external impact, as the institution also gains systemic relevance in the corresponding ecosystem. The innovation lab can represent this anchoring either as an independent organisation or as part of an existing structure. Clearly defined supervisory and decision-making processes must therefore be established at an early stage. This strategic, structural and organisational embedding of innovation labs also ensures that the solutions developed can actually be implemented and can create added value in the entire ecosystem.[23]

3. **Leaving room for manoeuvre in the implementation**
    In addition to being integrated into decision-making structures, it is important that innovation labs retain their autonomy if they are to reach their full potential. A balance between autonomy and integration is therefore important for the success of innovation labs. By using design-oriented and experimental methods, innovation labs need space for creative experimentation in which teams can develop new ideas using user-centred methods without fear of failure. It is therefore clear that these institutions must be allowed to make mistakes. Innovation should not

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22 Vgl. Lentsch, Wutzler (2021): Erfolgsfaktoren für Public Innovation Labs. In: https://stm.baden-wuerttemberg.de/fileadmin/redaktion/dateien/PDF/210422_InnoLab_bw_Studie_Public_Innovation_Labs_01.pdf.
23 Monteiro, Kumpf (2023): Innovation labs through the looking glass: Experiences across the globe. In: https://oecd-opsi.org/blog/innovation-labs-through-the-looking-glass/.

be viewed as an isolated process, but as a continuous cycle of experimentation, learning and adaptation. This enables innovation labs to effectively respond to the needs of stakeholders and citizens and develop innovative solutions to complex problems.[24]

4. Interdisciplinary teams with knowledge of administration

The size and composition of an innovation lab's team depend heavily on the mandate it received when it was founded. Regardless of the size of the team, however, it is essential that the teams are interdisciplinary and that a variety of disciplines and perspectives are represented. This diversity not only promotes creative solutions, but also ensures a variety of approaches in daily work. It is also important for employees in innovation labs to have knowledge of the structures and processes of public administration. This enables them to understand the necessary procedures better and faster and to support and manage projects in the public sector more effectively.[25]

5. Legitimation by communicating on successes

Innovation labs face a major challenge: they must achieve rapid success in order to prove their legitimacy to the public, decision-makers and employees in the public sector. At the same time, their innovative approaches often require iterations and a complex and time-consuming approach to implementing projects. Therefore, although impact measurement is often cited as a success factor in the literature, in practice there is a greater focus on communicating the output. These results must be communicated to all stakeholders in order to strengthen the legitimacy of the innovation lab. To do this, it is important to create effective mechanisms and formats for sharing the knowledge generated in innovation labs and to continuously improve them.[26]

24 Monteiro, Kumpf (2023): Innovation labs through the looking glass: Experiences across the globe. In: https://oecd-opsi.org/blog/innovation-labs-through-the-looking-glass/.
25 Cf. Institut für den öffentlichen Sektor e.V (2019): Innovationslabore: Sechs Empfehlungen für GovLabs, Innovation Teams und Co. In: https://publicgovernance.de/media/PolicyPaper_Innovationslabore.pdf.
26 Cf. Ibid.

6. Focus through structured financing

    The financing and resources of an innovation laboratory are not the only decisive factors for its own innovative power. However, they are essential for establishing a certain level of security among those involved and stakeholders. This security is important for building sustainable relationships and partnerships that ensure long-term success and stability.[27]

7. Building and maintaining your own community

    Successful innovation labs are not only characterised by their effective projects, but also by building their own community, which they actively involve in their own work through specially designed formats and events. This strategic approach enables innovation labs not only to report on their own work through their communication channels, but also to share insights and findings with stakeholders. This form of exchange promotes trust in the innovation lab and underlines the relevance of the institutions in the public sector. In addition, their own community also serves to network with current and future decision-makers, which is also important for the institutions in a medium-term perspective. Building such a community is therefore crucial for their own continued existence and the expansion of the services offered.[28]

8. Inter-sectoral networking and collaboration

    The creation of connections and network nodes within relevant networks, both in the public sector and beyond, plays a crucial role in the influence and effectiveness of innovation labs. This includes in particular the exchange across organisational and ideological boundaries as well as the active cultivation of relationships with relevant external stakeholders. In addition, cooperation with other innovation labs at national and international level as well as with organisations from other sectors that support or carry out societal transformation processes is of great importance. This extensive networking promotes the exchange of knowledge across national borders and thus also strengthens the ability of the innovation lab to develop and implement solutions more effectively.[29]

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27 Stühlinger, Wutzler (2021): Key success factors of Government Innovation Labs. In: https://innovationinpolitics.eu/polis-project/blog/the-key-success-factors-of-government-innovation-labs/.

28 Cf. Institut für den öffentlichen Sektor e.V (2019): Innovationslabore: Sechs Empfehlungen für GovLabs, Innovation Teams und Co. In: https://publicgovernance.de/media/PolicyPaper_Innovationslabore.pdf.

29 Cf. Ibid.

In addition to the success factors described, discussions with experts on innovation labs in the public sector revealed five additional key factors that are also crucial for the effectiveness of innovation labs:

- There are no minimum resources (e. g. space, staff, technology, budget) for a successful innovation lab. Rather, the lab's mandate determines the functions and the resources needed to perform them.

- One way to achieve greater impact is to implement existing ideas. To do this, it is important to analyse existing sources such as Court of Auditors reports, idea competitions and surveys, to take up feasible ideas and to transform them into effective solutions.

- Collaboration with academic institutions plays an important role in ensuring the independence of the innovation laboratory and promoting evidence-based working practices. This cooperation does not have to be limited to a single academic institution, but can include several partners.

- An innovation laboratory can also help make the public sector and administration more attractive as employers by introducing new ways of working and new types of organisational culture in the administration.

- In the future, it will be even more important to actively involve all stakeholders and those affected in the way the innovation lab works and in the development and implementation of solutions. This can help to ensure the legitimacy, acceptance and success of the solutions developed.

Insights for a GovLabAustria 2.0

Transferring the findings from the analysis to the future development of GovLabAustria is a complex task. This is due in particular to two reasons[30]: Firstly, innovation labs must always adapt their strategies and working methods to the needs of the stakeholders. Secondly, the benefits of such labs depend heavily on the respective context and on the structure and functioning of the public sector. These factors make it difficult to transfer the findings directly.

The analysis of GovLabAustria's previous activities has nevertheless revealed several key findings for the further development of GovLabAustria. These can help to make this innovation lab even more effective. The following graphic visualises these key levers for the further development of GovLabAustria: 1) Sharpening the mandate, 2) Expanding partner organisations, 3) Expanding networks in the public sector, 4) Increasing communication of the benefits and 5) Sharpening the thematic positioning..

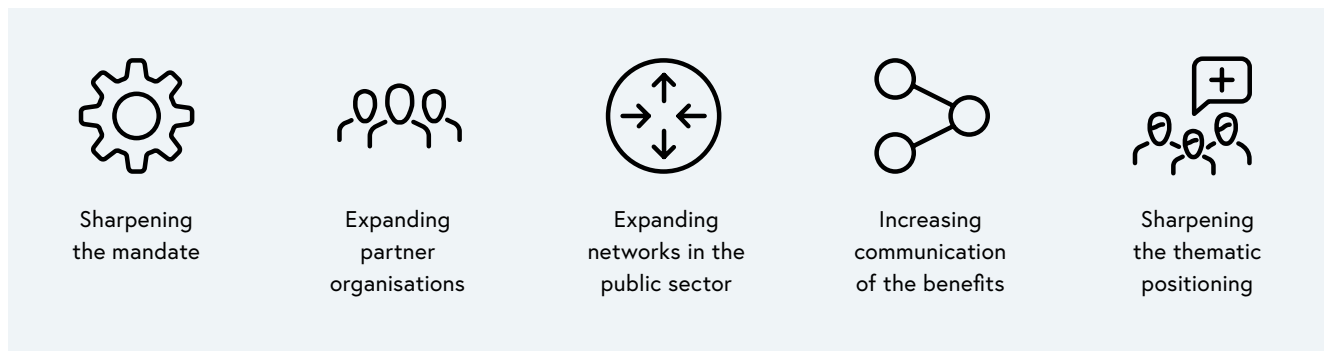| Sharpening the mandate | Expanding partner organisations | Expanding networks in the public sector | Increasing communication of the benefits | Sharpening the thematic positioning |

Image 7: Key insights for the further development of GovLabAustria

The following describes the 5 points that should be considered in the further development or any strategic development of GovLabAustria.

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30 Monteiro, Kumpf (2023): Innovation labs through the looking glass: Experiences across the globe. In: https://oecd-opsi.org/blog/innovation-labs-through-the-looking-glass/.

Refining the mandate

The analysis of the success factors of innovation laboratories in the public sector has shown that a clear mandate is essential. This mandate forms the basis for the allocation of the necessary human, financial, spatial and technical resources. In the case of GovLabAustria, the close cooperation with those responsible in the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Public Service and Sport (BMKÖS) and in particular with the Department for Strategic Performance Management and Administrative Innovation led to valuable synergies. For the further development of GovLabAustria, a more precise demarcation of responsibilities between the department and GovLabAustria would be necessary. A clearer definition of the mandate would also contribute to better planning with regard to the necessary resources.

Bringing more partner organisations on board

As the GovLabAustria projects show, cooperation has so far been limited to a small group of partner organisations. However, experience and evidence show that innovation labs benefit considerably from cooperation with a broader range of partners from administration, business, science and civil society. The further development of GovLabAustria should therefore focus on implementing projects in new constellations with partner organisations from administration and business as well as civil society. In addition, consideration should be given to integrating other academic institutions into the work of GovLabAustria. This would not only strengthen the independence of the laboratory, but would also bring additional perspectives into existing work processes and projects.

Expanding networks in the public sector

Over the past few years, GovLabAustria has built up a wide network in the Austrian sector and in an international context. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects meant that the necessary resources to further maintain and expand this network were lacking, limiting the opportunity to increase its own impact. Despite these challenges, GovLabAustria continues to enjoy a very good reputation, both nationally and internationally, and is seen as a successful project. In future, networking and networking work should be tackled more intensively. The focus here should be on networking innovators, in particular to further strengthen the cross-sectoral innovation capacity of the public sector in Austria.

Increased communication on benefits

The presentation and analysis of GovLabAustria's previous activities has shown that cooperation with other departments and administrative units in Austria has so far been rather limited. Nevertheless, according to the discussions held, there is certainly interest in the institution and a need for its services. For future development, it is therefore important to communicate the benefits and successes of the lab more strongly. In particular, the GovLabAustria network should be emphasised in order to attract more relevant knowledge holders in the public sector to work on their own projects.

Refining the thematic positioning

GovLabAustria benefited from a broad portfolio of content. This helped to build credibility in the public sector. However, this broad focus also meant that GovLabAustria's precise positioning was not clear. This is also reflected in the fact that other administrative units have only made limited use of the institution's expertise in implementing innovation projects. When GovLabAustria's expertise was used, it was on topics that deal with future issues such as artificial intelligence or new work. In the future, a stronger focus should therefore be placed on these and similar topics in the public sector. Relevant topic areas include issues surrounding digitalisation, such as generative AI and data-driven decision-making, as well as social challenges such as skepticism about democracy.

A Possible Model for
the Future

Implementing the recommendations and findings from this report can lead to different models for the future of GovLabAustria. These models differ not only in their positioning, but also in their activities and projects. A possible future model of GovLabAustria is outlined below, which offers an insight into how the institution might function and is intended to provide impetus for further discussions on the further development of this innovation laboratory.

Starting Point

The public sector is confronted with technological developments and societal challenges. Many institutions are already developing or implementing innovative solutions to these challenges. However, the lack of sufficient networking among the relevant stakeholders makes it difficult to share knowledge about innovation across organisational boundaries and to effectively implement existing initiatives.

Positioning

GovLabAustria is actively addressing this issue and is assuming an interface function in the public sector. It systematically analyses existing knowledge, examines its influence and communicates the insights and recommendations to the relevant institutions and organisations. In addition, GovLabAustria curates a hierarchy-free network of innovators in the public sector, in which it organises its own formats for dialogue, networking and the exchange of knowledge and experience.

Anchoring

GovLabAustria, financially supported by the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Public Service and Sport (BMKÖS), acts as a central hub in a wide-ranging network of partnerships. GovLabAustria actively participates in this network. In addition to the University of Continuing Education Krems (UWK), the partners include other academic institutions as well as representatives of public companies and civil society organisations.

Activities

In its work, GovLabAustria fulfils three central functions: 1) curating a network of innovators in the public sector, 2) sharing knowledge from innovation projects in the public sector and 3) a foresight and impact assessment function for public administration.

To fulfil these functions, GovLabAustria regularly organises events such as discussion rounds and symposia. In addition, GovLabAustria creates and disseminates use cases that demonstrate the benefits and transferability of existing innovations in the Austrian public sector. As part of its foresight function, GovLabAustria also systematically analyses (inter)national studies and reports and carries out its own foresight projects with the involvement of national experts and those affected, to keep everyone informed about necessary changes in the administration at an early stage and, if necessary, to carry them out.

Impact

By assuming an interface function and carrying out the activities outlined, GovLabAustria catalyses innovation in the public sector in Austria. It identifies innovation potential, communicates knowledge and experience from best practice projects and distributes the findings in the Austrian innovation landscape. This means that solutions for the needs of citizens are developed and projects in the public sector can be implemented more efficiently. In this way, GovLabAustria makes an important contribution to strengthening the resilience of democratic institutions and thus also promotes trust in democracy.

Summary

Since its founding, GovLabAustria has established itself as an important player in the Austrian innovation landscape. This unique innovation laboratory has not only implemented groundbreaking projects on the future of the public sector and public administration with various partner organisations, but has also promoted knowledge transfer and networking in the public sector. In this way, GovLabAustria's impact was not limited to its direct activities – it also significantly changed the culture in the public sector.

After seven years of effective action, an analysis of its own functioning, successes and initiatives as well as international benchmarking and discussions with recognised international experts show concrete potential for further development. This includes refining its own mandate, broadening its impact by expanding its partner organisations, expanding its networks in the public sector, more intensive communication of its benefits, and refining the content of its offers and activities.

In order to continue to be effective in the coming years, it is now time to discuss the results of this report and the experiences of those responsible for GovLabAustria with decision-makers from politics and administration. A future model should be developed that exploits the full potential of this innovation laboratory while meeting the needs and expectations of key stakeholders. The analysis of best practices shows the need for a clearly defined mandate as a first step. This is the starting point for further increasing the effectiveness of this important institution in the Austrian public sector.

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