10 lessons to boost technological innovation for civic participation

Insights from Portugal, Spain and The Netherlands

About These Insights

This slide deck is an unofficial summary of lessons based on OECD research examining how innovation ecosystems in Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands enable the development of emerging technologies to enhance civic participation.

This research was funded by the European Commission and conducted as part of the OECD's work to support innovation in public governance.

Click here to read full acknowledgements

1. Align Fragmented Efforts Through National Strategy

Efforts to develop, implement and scale approaches for civic participation are often disjointed, leading to wasted resources and energy.

Key Action

Establish a national framework with clear goals and guidance for innovation in civic participation, similar to Portugal's *Guiding Principles for a Human Right Based Approach to Public Services*.

2. Support Local Governments as Innovation Leaders

Local administrations are at the forefront of participatory innovation, providing demand for effective new approaches to engage citizens.

Key Actions

Build and strengthen organisations like the N*etwork of Participative Municipalities (RAP)* in Portugal that facilitates knowledge sharing and gives an annual award for Good Participation Practices.
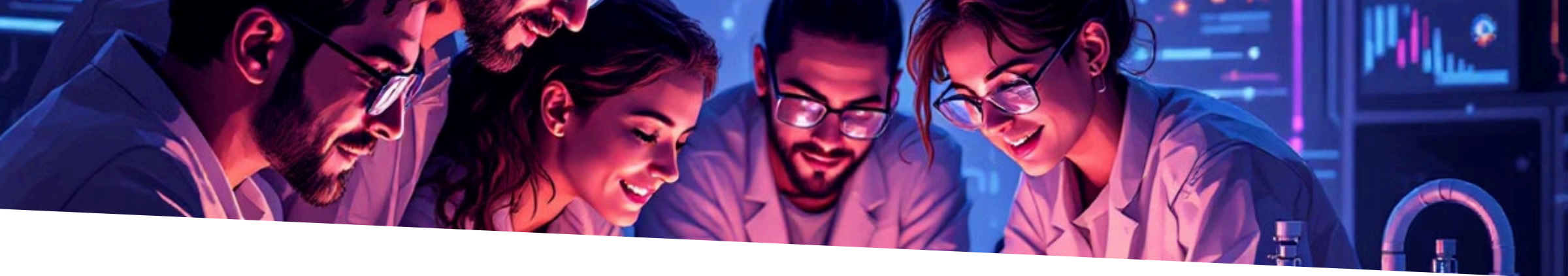
Provide support for local governments to manage and maintain digital participation technologies, learning from *VNG* in the Netherlands.

3. Coordinate Your Ecosystem for Maximum Impact

National coordination of civic participation actors can accelerate innovation, build capabilities and establish good practices.

Key action

Consider models like the Netherlands' *Kennisknooppunt Participatie* to promote best practices, support coordination, and establish shared evaluation frameworks.
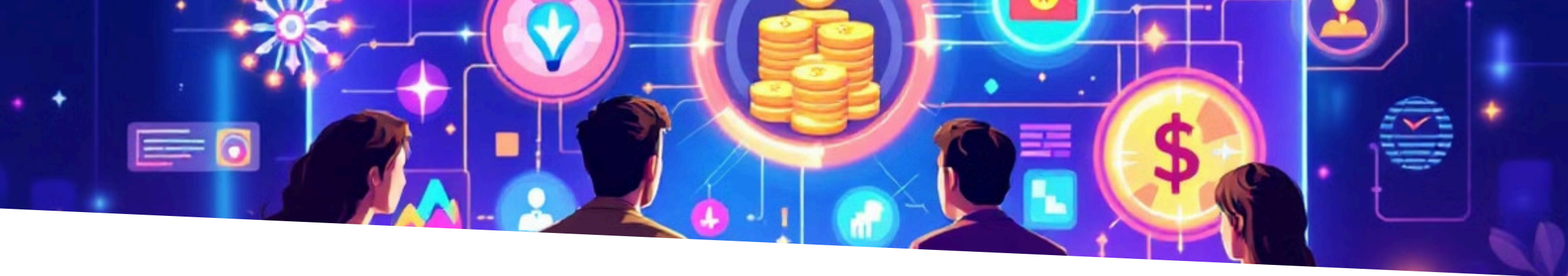
4. Upskill Public Sector Teams to Drive Innovation

Implementation of innovative civic participation is hindered by limited public sector capabilities to facilitate initiatives and apply new technologies.

Key Action

Establish experimentation labs like Portugal's *LabX* and Spain's *HazLab* that conduct pilots, provide training, and develop practical guidelines.

5. Fund for Continuity, Not Just Pilots

Inconsistent funding for citizen participation tools and initiatives creates uncertainty that inhibits collaboration and the continued development of innovations.

Key Action

Implement sustainable funding mechanisms tied to strategic goals to ensure continuous development and iteration of innovative approaches.

6. Standardise and Open-Source to Scale Impact

Shared standards and open-source commitments enable effective collaboration and scaling.

Key Action

Follow the Netherlands' commitment to open source to enhance collaboration, interoperability, and innovation. Learn from Spain's success with the open source *Decidim* and *Consul* tools.

7. Connect Diverse Expertise for Stronger Solutions

Innovation thrives through multi-sectoral collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Key Action

Create networks and initiatives that promote cross-sectoral sharing of perspectives and ideas on citizen participation and emerging technologies.

8. Develop Democratic Technology with Democratic Values

Participation technologies - and initiatives - must be developed inclusively and align with democratic principles.

Key Action

Develop ethical guidelines for AI, blockchain, and other technologies in collaboration with civil society organizations. Follow examples like *AI Portugal 2030*'s ethical approach.

9. Show Citizens Their Impact

Citizens need reassurance that their input influences decisions.

Key Action

Implement clear feedback mechanisms that demonstrate how citizen participation directly affects policy outcomes, addressing a common concern across all studied countries.

10. Connect Internationally to Innovate Locally

International collaboration provides opportunities for knowledge sharing and scaling.

Key Action

Engage with international institutions like the *Open Government Partnership* and *IOPD* while encouraging private sector actors to pursue global engagement for scaling innovative solutions.

Read the report!

OECD Public Governance Reviews

How Innovation Ecosystems Foster Citizen Participation Using Emerging Technologies in Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands

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