

# Digital government report



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## Minister Dara Calleary TD: ‘Digital transformation of businesses is a rare opportunity’

Sometimes the biggest leap for a business can be that first step. Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation, Dara Calleary TD, outlines the opportunity facing Irish businesses embarking on digital transformation journeys.

We are all now aware that digital technologies are changing the world around us at an ever-increasing pace, but when we speak of digital transformation it often can seem like a daunting all-consuming task but that is not necessarily the case.

The marker of success in this phase of innovation is how businesses respond. Those that are open to opportunity and are prepared to seize it have the greatest advantage. It is for this reason that digital transformation is at the very heart of our enterprise policy, and we have strong ambitions for Ireland to remain a digital

frontrunner, a leading country at the very heart of European and global developments.

As a government, we are committed to supporting the digital transition in business and through our enterprise agencies, the Local Enterprise Office and Enterprise Ireland, we are supporting businesses at every stage of their digital journey, because the benefits are clear; the implementation of digital technologies can help to enhance productivity, sustainability, and overall inclusivity.

Digital transformation can be the key to unlocking entirely new areas of innovation

and increasing productivity. It can help to increase a business's reach by enabling access to new markets, or by helping it to better understand and respond to customers' needs, allowing tailored offering to suit their demands.

Digital technologies can also be used to transform many aspects of a business's existing processes and products. The digital transformation of a business might begin with something relatively simple, like using software to automate invoicing process, or something more complex, like changing the way data is stored and analysed so that better, more informed decisions can be made from day to day. That could mean looking to digital innovation to help make a series of incremental improvements or it could mean making fundamental, structural changes to the way a business operates.

Whether steps toward digital transformation are significant changes to a business or building on the digital transformations that have already begun, it helps to view these actions as individual stages in a larger digital journey. The digital transformation of a business is not a single project, it is a long-term process that will help to ensure businesses can be more efficient, more flexible, and more resilient in the face of external shocks.

It is increasingly clear that we are at a turning point; alongside the digital transition, we are also progressing towards a green transition, placing ever more emphasis on improving sustainability and lowering emissions.

## Green transition

Since 2022, we have all become keenly aware of our businesses' energy demands. The implementation of digital technologies can help us to be more energy efficient. That may mean taking advantage of new technologies or by considering new opportunities through improved logistics.

At the same time, through the introduction and widespread drive towards hybrid and remote working, digital technologies can help us to strive for greater sustainability even beyond the

*“We have strong ambitions for Ireland to remain a digital frontrunner.”*

### Dara Calleary TD, Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation

direct impacts of our business themselves, meaning that the day-to-day work-pattern of our businesses contribute to the lowering of emissions overall.

These same technologies and patterns can also have a significant impact on accessibility and inclusiveness, making our businesses more accessible for both employees and customers than they might otherwise have been. We are determined to make Ireland one of the most digitally inclusive states in the EU, as well as one of the most digitally advanced.

The digital transformation of businesses is a rare opportunity to make products and services available to as wide an audience as possible, and to address existing barriers to accessibility. To achieve this, we must keep accessibility to the fore as we work on digital transformation.

In an increasingly digitalised society, we must always be cognisant of the fact that our efforts towards digital progress can introduce new accessibility challenges or may widen an existing digital divide. As such, it is important that, as we seek to benefit from the opportunities of digitalisation, we do so with a view to making our products and services more accessible wherever

possible.

For many businesses, the question is not one of whether to take advantage of digital technologies, but of how to begin, of what should be the first step in that process. Often, the best way is to take a look at the 'pain points' in your own business.

For some, that may mean shifting some of your existing processes into the cloud, for others it may mean opening yourself to online bookings for the first time, or it may be about automating elements of those processes where they are already in place. For others, it may mean using big data or artificial intelligence to further refine and enhance your products, or to recognise new efficiencies.

The truth is that there is no easy answer. There is no sure-fire, one-size-fits-all approach to digitalisation. The pathway to digitalisation of your business will be as individual as your business itself and our enterprise agencies are an important resource, there to support and advise businesses on where to start.

For those willing to take those steps there are significant advantages to be had. Regardless of the approach you take, these transformations will help you move towards a future that is more open, more inclusive, and more responsive to new developments.

# How Irish government bodies can protect their critical services with AWS



Citizens justifiably expect their governments to show resilience in response to serious challenges, whether it is a natural disaster, cyberattack, or geopolitical event, writes Mark Finlay, Head of Public Sector, Ireland, Amazon Web Services.

As part of this, governments must be able to protect and maintain core digital assets and records such as population and property registers, education records, revenue and tax data, benefits systems, and more. To better prepare governments for what might arise, Amazon Web Services (AWS) has created Continuity of Government IT on AWS (CGIT), a comprehensive cloud-based solution that enables governments to protect their digital assets and services during disruptions of any kind.

“CGIT gives public sector bodies the ability to leverage globally distributed IT

infrastructure to underpin their continuity plans. They are no longer constrained by localised backup solutions or expensive and vulnerable third-party on-premises facilities,” says Liam Maxwell, Director of Government Transformation for AWS. “This means they can focus on the operational aspects of maintaining key government services using the range of continuity options AWS provides. By leveraging these best practices, governments can be more prepared now than before.”

## Real-life use cases

CGIT is being used to support Ukraine

during the war with Russia. To date, AWS has safely migrated over 10 petabytes of essential data from 42 Ukrainian ministries, 24 universities, a remote learning K-12 school serving thousands of displaced children and dozens of private sector companies. In addition, AWS created a centralised tool to help officials from the Ukrainian Ministry of Health and other public health agencies request and track incoming supplies and monitor the capacity of nearby hospitals to better treat the wounded.

Within Ireland, an example of CGIT in practice is the Department of Health’s

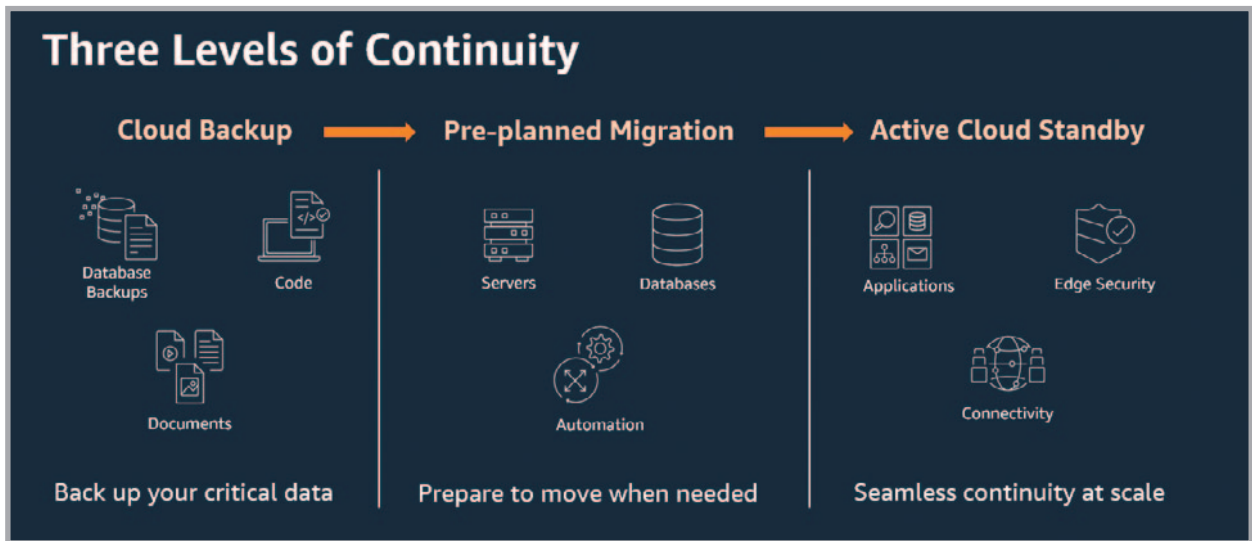


Figure 1. The three levels of continuity classification in the CGIT solution: cloud backup, pre-planned migration, and active cloud standby.

response to the Covid-19 pandemic as it unfolded. In three short weeks, the Department built a multi-channel digital Covid-19 call centre service in the AWS Cloud to deal with citizen queries. Designed for flexibility and scalability, the call centre seamlessly handled 400,000 calls versus the 60,000 expected in its first week of operation.

Regardless of how it is used, CGIT provides flexible, resilient, and secure infrastructure that can withstand challenging events. That is because the AWS Cloud has been designed to meet the needs of militaries, global banks, and other highly sensitive organisations.

### A closer look at the CGIT process

The CGIT journey begins with situational awareness. AWS Professional Services or an AWS partner works with government IT leaders to assess their current continuity and reliability posture and map potential challenges and opportunities that can be addressed using the AWS Cloud.

Because continuity can have a different meaning for services with different criticality, complexity, or context, CGIT classifies the approach for continuity into three levels:

- **Level 1: Cloud backup.** At this level, the AWS Cloud is used to securely store critical datasets in the Ireland AWS Region, within which there are three availability zones. Level 1 CGIT engagements help determine the best strategy for

“CGIT gives public sector bodies the ability to leverage globally distributed IT infrastructure to underpin their continuity plans.”

building a secure landing zone, implementing control and governance mechanisms to secure data, and establishing an architecture for continuous backup and uncomplicated restore.

- **Level 2: Pre-planned migration.** CGIT prepares government services to be migrated to or recovered in the cloud at a moment’s notice. As resources are often limited in a crisis, CGIT activities focus on preparing plans and procedures for service migration and recovery, with a preference for fully automated and frequently verified actions.
- **Level 3: Active cloud standby.** Essential services for emergency response, public safety or national security can be designed to allow the smooth shift of operations between on-premises and the cloud.

### Learn more or get started with CGIT

Continuity of Government IT on AWS is available to both local and central government in Ireland. The CGIT team will work with you and AWS Partner Network members of your choice to establish the best path towards your continuity goals. To learn more or obtain the Continuity of Government IT on AWS solution guide, email us.

E: [aws-publicsector-ireland@amazon.com](mailto:aws-publicsector-ireland@amazon.com)  
W: [www.aws.amazon.com](http://www.aws.amazon.com)





# Digital services: Supporting life events

Head of Digital Services in the Office of Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), Tony Shannon, discusses the evolution of a user-centric approach to public sector design and delivery, in an important decade.

In March 2022, the OGCI0, under the auspices of the renamed Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDPDR), published its decade-long vision to digitise public services in the form of *Connecting Government 2030: A Digital and ICT Strategy for Ireland's Public Service*.

Much of the focus of that strategy, explains Shannon, is on the delivery of digitalised systems and services to support citizens through the delivery of more efficient 'cradle to the grave' services.

The Head of Digital Services believes that in a time when the public in Ireland is facing multiple crises ranging from the Covid-19 pandemic to housing, health, and refugee crises, now more than ever, the efficient delivery of public services is critical. However, he is also aware that the requirement of fundamental change to the organisational structure of public services in Ireland is a major challenge.

The *Civil Service Renewal 2030* strategy, published in May 2021, set out the Government's intention to deliver 'digital first' services, progress under which can already be seen through existing work by the OGCI0, such as the evolution of gov.ie, the information platform aimed at citizens, or the Build to Share applications – tools developed for civil servants delivering services.

Shannon explains that the pandemic, and the subsequent public service response, highlighted the ability of public services to not only roll out specific services, but also deliver them at a speed which has set an expectation benchmark for mobilisation.

“Building on these lessons we have learned in recent years, we are now trying to line up with governments around the world to address the effective delivery of digital public services for citizens’ life events, which are essentially the major moments of interaction between government and the people we serve,” says Shannon.

“In designing these services digitally, we are taking a user-centred design approach. Essentially, this is the public service catching up with the rest of industry in saying when you design a service, the first and central building block is the user.”

DPENDPDR is leading an initiative to support public service organisations to deliver user-centric services that are accessible, effective, and efficient in line with Actions 12, 13, and 14 of the Civil Service Renewal Action Plan 2024. The first phase of this initiative was to develop and launch *Designing Our Public Services*, the first prototype set of design principles for public services in Ireland.

“We are now in a position to talk about design principles, which line up with good international practice. These begin by putting the citizen at the centre of how we design our services, and not, as historically might have been the case, the organisational structure.”

Highlighting an iterative approach, rather than the traditional ‘waterfall’ approach to service design, Shannon says that OGCI is building upon progress under Build to Share, where a service is built once and shared across the public sector.

“We are building on from that in terms of a much more open approach and embracing issues like open architecture, open APIs, open source and tacking to what is now known as the GovStack approach,” he explains.

GovStack is a thought-leading approach to designing and delivering public services internationally, led by the UN, whereby a set of building blocks can be re-used. Shannon outlines the seven building blocks which Ireland are trying



*“We are now trying to line up with governments around the world to address the effective delivery of digital public service for citizens’ life events...”*

### **Tony Shannon, Head of Digital Services, Office of Government Chief Information Officer**

to line up against as:

1. Digital identity
2. Content management
3. Data collection – e forms
4. Case management – eCase
5. Messaging
6. Credential-Wallet
7. Information mediator

Setting out a move to steer the direction of gov.ie towards being more than an informational service for citizens, the first step will be citizen log in via MyGovID, the digital identity building block needed to ensure users are authenticated.

Developed in conjunction with An Garda Síochána and the HSE, the e forms solution is the development of a generic forms tool which can be re-used for multiple purposes for capture of information in electronic form.

The eCase solution is a case management software which allows the public servant to take a generic application and run a workflow around, for example, approving, assigning, or re-assigning a citizen’s application for services.

The digital post box, which is already operational and serving the needs of a

variety of departments, allows for secure digital messaging between the government and the citizen. While a digital wallet is expected to be a ubiquitous tool that will allow for a safe store of all credentials issued by the Government.

Shannon highlights that most of this work is either already working in place, or, in the proof-of-concept stage, outlining his belief that the Government is on the cusp of important progress. However, he is equally aware that challenges exist.

“The most implicit challenge is that transformational changes to public services challenge the existing organisational structures, meaning that change will be disruptive and challenging for departments.

“At the same time, this is a tremendous opportunity to co-create the future that our citizens need and whereby the use dictates and informs the design of the services that will support them from the cradle to the grave.”

He concludes: “We are at a moment that matters. Currently, there is a gap, but we are moving towards supporting important events in peoples’ lives with digital services.”

## eInvoicing moves closer to the tipping point



Declan McCormack, the principal officer whose unit has responsibility for the eInvoicing Ireland programme in the Office of Government Procurement (OGP), outlines recent developments in eInvoicing in Ireland and in Europe that are mobilising suppliers to adopt Peppol-based eInvoicing in public procurement.

Electronic invoicing (eInvoicing) is now a requirement for all suppliers awarded public contracts in more than 14 EU member states. In growing numbers, Irish suppliers are looking to meet that requirement, through the Peppol network, in order to do business in the European Single Market.

### Increasing eInvoicing mandate for suppliers across Europe

In March 2023, the final stage of a law came into effect in Luxembourg making it mandatory for suppliers, of all sizes, to send their invoices electronically

(eInvoicing) to the State in the context of public procurement and concession contracts.

In doing so, Luxembourg became the latest of more than 14 EU member states including Italy, France, Spain, and Norway to name but a few, where eInvoicing is mandatory for suppliers for all Business to Government transactions.

A number of factors are fuelling this growing wave of countries where eInvoicing is now mandatory for suppliers. According to McCormack, “the European eInvoicing Directive

(2014/55/EU) established a legal obligation for all public procurement contracting authorities and contracting entities to be able to receive and process electronic invoices. At that time, a number of countries used the opportunity to also introduce mandatory eInvoicing for suppliers in business to government transactions”.

“It has been two years since the Directive came into full effect, and some of those countries where it remained optional for suppliers, now think the time is right to move to a mandate for suppliers in order to utilise the receiving capability that is in place and reap the administrative and environmental benefits of eInvoicing.”

In addition to this, the European Commission has recently proposed a series of measures to modernise and make the EU’s Value-Added Tax (VAT) system work better for businesses and more resilient to fraud by embracing and promoting digitalisation. The initiative is called VAT in the Digital Age (ViDA). Part of the proposals is for member states to move to real-time digital reporting based on eInvoicing for businesses.

The EU’s ViDA proposal would make eInvoicing mandatory for cross-border business and also allow all member states to introduce mandatory eInvoicing for domestic business to business transactions, if they so wish. Suppliers and other interested parties are monitoring this development closely and in some cases exploring how best to prepare for the change.

“These factors have helped to increase awareness among suppliers that eInvoicing is an option in public procurement and, in a growing number of cases, that it is a condition of doing business in the European Single Market. Suppliers are now looking to find out more about eInvoicing, the Peppol network and in particular how they can get connected to send eInvoices as being requested by their clients,” explains McCormack.

## eInvoicing in Ireland

In the context of the EU's public procurement regulations and ViDA proposals, an eInvoice is a structured electronic invoice that complies with the European Standard (EN-16931) for eInvoicing ('the EN'). Ireland has chosen the Peppol network as the eDelivery network through which EN compliant eInvoices should be delivered to public bodies. The Peppol network is widely supported across Europe and internationally. Peppol allows businesses, through one connection, to connect to any and all public administrations and businesses in Ireland and Europe that are also on the network.

In Ireland, eInvoicing in public procurement remains optional for suppliers. Suppliers can still choose to submit invoices in various forms depending on their preference and/or any local trading arrangements they might have.

McCormack believes that with a supplier opt-in approach, we need to communicate a clear message to drive uptake in Ireland: "Support by all public bodies for the European eInvoicing Standard, and the use of the Peppol network for delivery of eInvoices, simplifies the choices for suppliers and helps to reduce or avoid costs when they are considering investing in doing business digitally with public sector clients at home and internationally."

A supplier information sheet is available online at the OGP's eInvoicing Ireland website (See Figure 1).

## Guidance for public bodies

At the end of March 2023, the OGP's Multi Supplier Framework Agreement for the provision of PEPPOL networking and eInvoicing Systems and Services to the Irish Public Sector ('eInvoicing Framework') reached its full term. No new contracts can be entered into off the framework.

There is now greater maturity and understanding of public sector needs in the eInvoicing services and solutions available on the market that will help public bodies meet their legal obligations arising from the European eInvoicing Directive. In many cases, eInvoicing services can now be easily, swiftly and cost effectively procured compliantly by a public sector body (PSB) directly from the market.

## Next steps

Interested suppliers should consider:

- i. the standardised approach to submitting eInvoices to the public sector in Ireland and Europe
- ii. an internal analysis of their own invoice processing environment and transactions and
- iii. an external analysis of their trading partners' capabilities and market solutions to determine the potential opportunities a standardised approach to eInvoicing might present for their business.

For suppliers looking to make the greater use of digital to drive efficiencies, lessen the impact of paper-based processes on the environment and strengthen the resilience of their operations, eInvoicing is now a real and widespread option in public procurement.

eInvoicing Ireland is providing tools and information to support public bodies in reaching compliance.

Keep an eye on [www.ogp.gov.ie/einvoicing](http://www.ogp.gov.ie/einvoicing) for further updates and information

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The following information is available to assist public bodies in that regard:

- In line with the national approach, eInvoicing solutions should support the delivery of supplier invoices via the Peppol eDelivery network. A list of certified Peppol service providers is available on the official Peppol website.
- General eInvoicing information is available on the gov.ie website.
- Public procurement guidelines for goods and services are available here on the gov.ie website.

*For queries please contact the [einvoicing@ogp.gov.ie](mailto:einvoicing@ogp.gov.ie)*



**An Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí**  
**Sheachadadh PFN agus Athchóirithe**  
Department of Public Expenditure  
NDP Delivery and Reform



**Oifig um Sholáthar Rialtais**  
**Office of Government Procurement**

# Progress made on *Harnessing Digital* dimensions



Amidst progress being made “across all” dimensions of the national digital strategy, *Harnessing Digital*, Ireland retained fifth place in the EU’s 2022 Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) while pressing forward with initiative such as the €85 million Digital Transition Fund, a government progress report states.

The Government published its progress report in December 2022, stating that *Harnessing Digital* “re-enforces our commitment to a modern, cohesive, well-resourced network of regulators to effectively oversee and enforce digital regulations”. Noting the State’s retention of fifth spot in the 2022 DESI rankings, the Government states that this is “increasingly important given the significant challenges, and economic headwinds currently facing businesses and households, including the technology sector”.

Mentioned among the “significant progress” made under the strategy are the establishment of a new Enterprise Digital Advisory Forum with representatives from domestic and multinational business, along with the €85 million Digital Transition Fund, available to 2026 and designed to “support companies at all stages of their journey”, which involves a digital training scheme for SMEs.

Also cited as progress is the Government’s revised statement on the role of data centres, published in July 2022, in which the Government pledged not to ban the development of new data centres, but instead proposed tighter regulations in an effort to “align the twin transitions, which are both digital and green”. Ireland’s first ever AI Ambassador, Patricia Scanlon, was also appointed to the role in May 2022, to lead “a national conversation on the role of AI in our lives, and Ireland’s commitment to an ethical approach”.

In terms of strategies and frameworks, progress has been made across various attempts to digitalise the state by 2030 since the inauguration of the *Harnessing Digital* strategy in February 2022. The Digital Strategy for Schools and the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy are both currently progressing, while a new Digital Connectivity Strategy sets

out the State’s ambition for connectivity to 2030 and the enablers for the achievement of such targets. The strategy follows four principles: encouraging commercial investment in energy efficient solutions, network integrity and security, and supporting the modernisation of networks and the transition to gigabit and 5G; ensuring the regulatory framework encourages investment in emerging technologies; intervening where the market fails to deliver; and promoting the adoption of digital technologies through pilot initiatives and research programmes.

*Connecting Government 2030* continues to be implemented, with new eGov measures such as key life events for MyGovID profiles being developed, as well as the National Cyber Security Strategy 2019-2024, a mid-term review of which was opened for consultation in December 2022 and closed in February 2023. Work to strengthen the National Cyber Security Centre is “ongoing”. Also ongoing is the development of the Digital Healthcare Framework 2023-2027, which will “consider how best to develop a roadmap for electronic health record systems”.

From a legislative perspective, the Government has named the new media commission, Coimisiún na Meán, as Ireland’s digital services coordinator, a requirement under the European Digital Services Act and “work is ongoing to give operational and legislative effect to that decision”. Coimisiún na Meán came into being in March 2023 as part of amendments made to the Broadcasting Act 2009 by the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022. The Government also agreed to appoint two new commissioners to support the needs of the Data Protection Commission (DPC) in July 2022, although no appointments have been made as yet and are not expected until current commissioner Helen Dixon’s role comes to an end at the end of 2023. The DPC budget has also been increased to €26.2 million for 2023, allowing the further expansion of the organisation beyond the 200 staff it currently employs.

### Progress made under *Harnessing Digital – The Digital Ireland Framework*

**€85 million** Digital Transition Fund to 2026, including **€16 million** in 2023

**€2.7 billion** National Broadband Plan to cover **1.1 million** people by 2027, **569,000** premises connected and over **750** broadband connection points rolled out thus far

**€200 million** capital investment for Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027

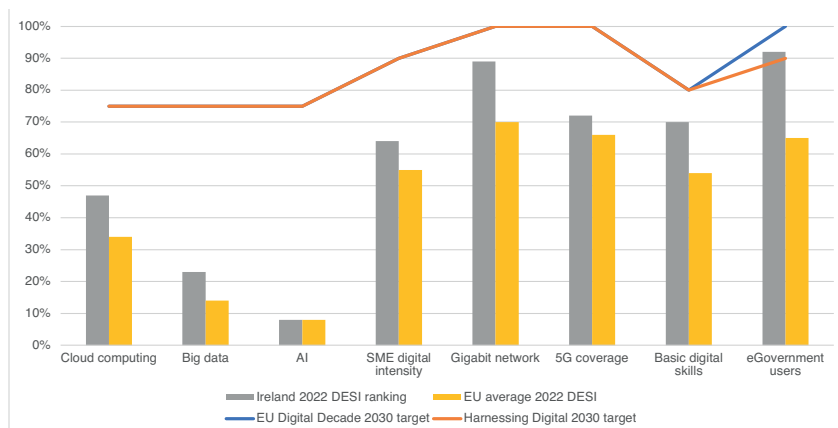
**70%** of people have at least basic digital skills, compared to EU average of **54%**

**100+** ICT civil service apprenticeships in software development, cybersecurity, and networking engineering in 2023

Information on over **1,100** datasets across almost **100** public bodies shared under the Public Service Data Catalogue

**48%** of population have a MyGovID account (over **1.8 million** people)

### Progress against targets, as measured under DESI 2022



Source: *Harnessing Digital 2022 Progress Report*

# Defining 'digital' and prioritising human experience



Martin Ryan, Managing Director of Fexco Managed and Advisory Service.

Martin Ryan, Managing Director of Fexco Managed and Advisory Services talks to *eolas Magazine* about digital, and how human experience is the key design consideration when implementing the Government's Digital and ICT Strategy.

There is no one definition or description of the word "digital".

In the past 50 years, the word "digital" has become synonymous with progress and innovation. The main goal of digital technology is to improve user experiences and optimise processes, making it crucial for the Irish Government to prioritise human experience in its Digital and ICT Strategy.

Ireland continues to effectively modernise its public services through a human-centric lens, apparent across a wide range of public services such as an efficient tax system, and progress in vital economic contributors like the tourism

sector, which benefits from government support such as the *Digital That Delivers* programme and ongoing efforts by organisations like Fáilte Ireland.

As an operator of services on behalf of both the public and private sector that interacts with millions of individuals and businesses in Ireland on an annual basis, Fexco has a clear view on what makes a good user experience, and we have defined our own definition and framework of what digital is which may help when designing public services.

Focusing on digital and user experience is crucial today, as public service consumers' demands and expectations

are at an all-time high, both in addressing challenges like the housing crisis and promoting economic prosperity in areas like tourism.

## Digitising the tourist experience and maintaining famous Irish human experience

Tourism, accounting for 3 per cent of Ireland's GDP and 10.3 per cent of employment, thrives with support from organisations like Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland. To sustain success and compete globally, a customer-centric focus is vital. In 2021, Fáilte Ireland's €6 million *Digital That Delivers* programme aimed to digitalise attractions, as only 15 per cent had adequate online booking. Digitalisation and improved experiences will strengthen Ireland's appeal post-Covid.

What sample measures can the tourism industry take to accelerate and fulfil this ambition keeping Fexco's **D.I.G.I.T.A.L framework** in mind.

- **Personalise experiences:** Design personalised experiences at scale by offering tailored recommendations for tourists based on their persona, location, and past activities.
- **Make it easy:** Tourists expect digital interactions with attractions and experiences. Supporting the *Digital That Delivers* programme helps businesses enhance online booking, visitor management, and revenue.
- **Make it different:** Ireland's unique history, arts, culture, climate, and welcoming people differentiate it as a tourist destination. Combining digital and physical experiences will enhance memory creation, further setting Ireland apart for tourists.

## Using technology and customer experience to help address aspects of the housing challenge

The complex Irish housing crisis is not solved by digital and customer experience alone, but improved experiences can alleviate some challenges for those seeking housing

## Fexco's D.I.G.I.T.A.L Framework

*Design for personalised experience, at scale.*

- Segment the user base into logical personas or groupings.
- Design services to ensure a positive, personal experience per segment.
- Integrate services and data to personalise the experience to the individual.

*Involve and learn from your users.*

- Hold user focus groups during design and use customer feedback to improve continuously.
- Regularly map the customer journey and be open to adjusting business processes for better experiences.

*Gather and use data to determine what is possible in the future but harnessing the power of the past.*

- Record and analyse user behaviour to define the optimal journey.
- Track channel shifts to identify broken journeys gather and act on user feedback and insights.
- Use predictive analytics models for future experience requirements.

*Integrate and share systems and data.*

- Design all new services to share relevant data.
- Seek and integrate relevant systems and data to enhance the user experience and supporting a personalised experience.
- Continuously challenge and remove barriers to sharing.

*Try new things.*

- As the world around us evolves, so too will the tools and technology around us. AI, IoT, quantum computing are examples of current disruptors, but will be accompanied by many more advancements in the future.
- Embrace the change and try the new, focusing on identifying real improvements for the user experience.

*Automate.*

- Seek opportunities to automate processes that will improve a user experience, either in an assisted or unassisted capacity.
- Automate user interactions that are trusted and provide certainty to customers, but design to allow for human interaction if required.

*Learn and adapt in an agile manner.*

- Continuously review and learn from the past to help shape the future.
- Leverage learning from other industries to shape your own.
- Be curious and challenge the status quo.
- Be agile and change fast if the need arises.

support. Digital tools can provide clarity and certainty for tenants, buyers, landlords, and sellers. A large portion of the population relies on the private rental sector, regulated by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). In this highly regulated environment, continued investment in digital offerings to support the critical B2B and B2C operations that the RTB provides is necessary to continuously improve private rental sector conditions and available supports.

### What sample measures are available to the housing industry to accelerate and fulfil this ambition keeping Fexco's D.I.G.I.T.A.L framework in mind?

- **Make it clear:** Clear guidance is needed for the complex and evolving rules in the rental sector. Information sources such as the RTB Information

Hub serve as a great source of information. In the near term, this can be further strengthened by increased, cost effective omnichannel capabilities, including intelligent automation, giving stakeholders more options to interact with the RTB.

- **Make it easy:** As housing demands rise, integrating systems and data across agencies and stakeholders through a centralised digital platform can improve access to housing-related public services, including rental assistance and affordable projects. The platform should be user-friendly, easily navigable, and regularly updated for accuracy.
- **Make it efficient:** Efficiency is vital for those impacted by the housing crisis, and swift access to information and guidance is crucial. Leveraging rich CRM features for managing unstructured communication like email and post can significantly improve the speed of access to information. A clear customer service strategy underpinned by present and future customer journey mapping and a "digital first" approach is required.

### Public private partnerships

Fexco partners with digital transformation experts TEKenable to co-invest in Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Salesforce Cloud Solutions, improving customer experiences in the Irish and UK markets.

This partnership broadens Fexco's offerings, including for the public sector, as digital priorities shift. Fexco's Managed and Advisory Services, along with their partner network, offer expertise in operational delivery, CX transformation, process optimisation, customer journey mapping, data and MI services, and function-specific advisory services to help clients enhance their customer experiences.

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# Scottish local government: Connecting with citizens



Martyn Wallace, Chief Digital Officer for Scottish Local Government outlines the use of the ACE (assets, citizens, and employees) formula in enabling digital transformation at local government level.

Wallace believes that ensuring data is securely stored, and overcoming poor broadband connectivity will circumvent the main obstacles preventing digital transformation taking place in a more timely manner. Reaching the rural population, Wallace believes, is a difficulty faced by Scottish local government and is analogous to challenges faced in Ireland.

“Cloud is not necessarily seen as an enabler but a disabler because we need a faster connection speed. There are in-fill programmes in Scotland with our 100 for Broadband and superfast schemes for premises, but that is still to be fully rolled out across the whole of Scotland, which means that we have to find different ways of competing and different ways of delivering services.”



## Assets

Outlining the importance of optimising an organisation's assets, Wallace explains: "It is necessary to look at the service components of buying, paying, filling a form in, fixed penalty notices, as well as breaking down the business components in terms of what your business is serving, what kind of services you have to do, what you have to reinvent, and what gaps need to be filled with digital services."

He further highlights the importance of data processing, whilst additionally calling for a clear set of priorities to establish the technology which can be best utilised for the task in question.

"You have to look at the data: where is the data from, where is it held, and the technology stack. We look at technology and we get wowed by these presentations from all of the big companies. Whilst I love AI, I need to know fundamentally how that is going to affect my business."

Wallace also emphasises the importance of ensuring that digitalisation does not mean a curbing of available services for citizens who cannot be reached online. Instead, he outlines that online users' services can be made more efficient, which has the knock-on effect of freeing up the organisation's workers to serve those users who are not online.

"Not everybody has access to the technology to access public services online. We have to look at the physical/online assets conundrum, which is getting as many of our services online as possible so that we can reinvest back into the offline services which serve the people who need them the most in our vulnerable society."

## Citizens

Wallace outlines his strong belief that all digital enablement and transformation must be underpinned with the recognition that devices and services must be equipped to serve regardless of their access to digital services, and that there

*"You have to build your transformation around the user. It is human-by-default technology and data-by-design, not the other way around."*

**Martyn Wallace, Chief Digital Officer, Scottish Local Government**

must be an element of digital enablement. However, he believes this is a lesser priority than using technology to streamline services wherever possible.

"Fundamentally, service design is key in all of this; designing the right thing and designing it the right way is important. It is about discussing, finding, and understanding the customers' needs, looking at what assets you have got, the different components, and build what they want. You then need to deconstruct your existing devices and build them again, tailored to the individual user."

Asserting that there is "no correct answer" as how to define service design, Wallace adds: "Service design is something which is user central, it is user design creative, and a little bit uncomfortable like sharing your mobile phone with somebody else.

"You have to build your transformation around the user. It is human-by-default technology and data-by-design, not the other way around."

## Employees

Digital transformation was a key enabler of the working culture shift which took place during the Covid-19 lockdowns, according to Wallace.

"With the new development of hybrid work, we are still seeing businesses looking through the lens of going 'back to normal'. People are going back to an office to sit for eight hours on Microsoft Teams meetings. I cannot think of anything worse. We have to look at this as a culture change and enable and support that.

"We need staff to have easy access to apps and models for remote learning."

Wallace concludes by addressing widely-held concerns about the potential for jobs to be eliminated with the rise of AI and continued automation.

"Fundamentally this technology is here and it can open so many opportunities for a better work-life balance, but also improve the quality of our services for so many of our citizens as well."



# Digitising the courts



Technology enabled courtroom, Courtroom 2, Limerick Courthouse.

Two years into its 10-year Modernisation Programme, the Courts Service provide an update on progress so far.

As documented previously across these pages the Courts Service has embarked on a 10-year Modernisation Programme of transformational change which will bring greater efficiencies and modernise how we administer the courts and provide support services to the judiciary and information to the public. From a digital and IT perspective, this means we are focusing on firstly playing catch-up – bringing our systems up to date and secondly rolling out an ambitious IT strategy that will digitise our operations and provide digital options for the services we offer. In 2022, we reached the end of the Transition Phase, the first two years of the Modernisation Programme, as we embark upon the next phase, the Transform Phase with the half-way point in sight, we reflect on

what we have achieved so far and the way forward.

In order to achieve our digital ambitions, we needed to start with the basics and last year we transitioned our 1,200 staff to a new digital desktop solution. Our new solution provides the latest Microsoft cloud products to users via laptops and mobile phones – Office, Outlook, Teams, OneDrive, etc. Not only does this solution provide security and reliability from an IT risk perspective it also gives staff the tools to work in a much more connected and collaborative way. The next stage of this process is to provide the judiciary with the same tools and transition to the Microsoft platform. This will allow us to build systems to enable seamless integration across all

the work of the courts. This is a carefully managed process and transitioning over 170 judges nationwide will take a number of months.

Equipped with the same standardised and reliable digital tools and technology on a versatile platform such as Microsoft, we can now support consistent digital systems for the future. A longer-term challenge is the modernisation of our case management systems, which over decades have organically grown to over 140 different systems managing various case types, with limited integration. On the Microsoft Power Platform we can now replace our legacy case management systems with a single modern platform capable of offering online services. We have put a lot of work into developing out the building blocks of a unified case management system for the courts and will start deploying this to replace legacy civil systems in the High Court and the family law systems for the Circuit Courts later this year, with others to follow.

Also, the first new process to be built on the new platform is the system which we have developed to support the new procedures introduced with the commencement of the Assisted Decision-Making Capacity Act 2015 and Amended Act 2022 last month. The introduction of this new system, developed for all Circuit Court offices across the country receiving the new 'capacity applications' for the appointment of a decision-making representative, is our first case type to be developed on the unified case management system.

These key projects are the start of our move to a single digital first platform, aimed at improving our staff, judiciary, and court user experience. It will give a coherence to the way we operate and how we gather data to support our decision making. From an end-user perspective, this case management system will be capable of supporting electronic filings, payments, order collection, case tracking, and other related services via an online portal.

## Digital Jury System

Bringing digital options to our users to make life easier for them is at the centre of the Modernisation Programme. We introduced the option for people who receive jury summons to reply online last November. 42 per cent of replies to jury summons are now received online through this new Digital Jury System.

From mobile phones, laptops, or tablets, people across Ireland are using the new Courts Service online portal to answer the jury summons to follow the status of their reply and to catch real time updates on any changes to their jury service details. The platform allows for 24/7 access to those who have received a summons, providing immediate updates on any changes in times, dates, or jury cancellations, and electronic responses to requests for excusals by the citizen. This new online platform reduces the reliance on paper-based processes, offering an improved customer experience that is inclusive, whilst still providing the option to reply via post if they prefer.

## Technology enabled courtrooms

We have increased the number of video technology enabled courtrooms to 123



Technology enabled courtroom, Courtroom 11, Four Courts

over the past two years across the country. The technology supports virtual appearances from litigants, legal professionals, expert witnesses, prisoners, and Gardaí dialling-in from remote locations to a physical courtroom with digital evidence display. The continued success of this technology and the options it offers court users were the principal drivers which led to the funding of an additional 54 courtrooms to 2024.

We plan to integrate our unified case management system with our technology enabled courtrooms so that there is more end-to-end visibility of case journeys through the court. This will also support transparency across simple aspects such as where and when is the hearing for my case, whether virtual or physical, as well as improving operational management of courtroom scheduling utilisation.

## Data

The Courts process a vast amount of data on any given day. A unified case management system is part of the solution to better managing that data. However, we also recognise that we need to better understand the data we have before we build and transition to a new system. Our new head of data has commenced a number of projects to mine through, sort, organise and define the data across all systems. Improved

data will improve how we make decisions and will support the objectives detailed in the Judicial Planning Working Group recommendations, published by then-Minister for Justice Simon Harris TD earlier this year.

Offering digital routes for citizens, adding channels and services is part of our digital first approach. Alongside that approach sits our user-centric goal to design services with users for users. We have engaged extensively with users over the past two years and their feedback has informed the way in which we are designing our digital solutions. In listening to user feedback, we also understand that the existing non-digital service options are important for some users and as a result we will maintain those options as we modernise.

For more information on the Courts Service visit [www.courts.ie](http://www.courts.ie)



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna  
Courts Service

# Members of the Open Data Governance Board

The Open Data Governance Board (ODGP) is tasked with considering how to improve the capacity and capability of public bodies in implementing open data, and considering opportunities to maximise the value of public sector data and information for long-term economic, social and democratic benefits, making recommendations to government in this regard.



## Aoife Sexton (Chairperson)

Aoife Sexton is the chief privacy officer and chief of product Innovation at Trüata. Founded by Mastercard and IBM in 2018, Trüata is a privacy-enhanced data solutions provider. Sexton has responsibility for the data science, privacy and product functions within the organisation. She is a European advisory board member of the International Association of Privacy Professionals, and a lecturer on data protection law at the Law Society of Ireland's Law School as well its postgraduate courses on data protection and technology law.



## Andrew O'Sullivan

Andrew O'Sullivan joined An Garda Síochána from the Central Statistics Office where he was an Assistant Director General and Chief Information officer since 2016. O'Sullivan chairs the development of the Public Service Data Strategy as a member of the Government ICT Advisory Board. In An Garda Síochána, he has overall responsibility for information and communications technology. His role also encompasses that of Chief Data Officer with responsibility for ensuring the value and quality of Garda data. O'Sullivan holds degrees in computer science, engineering management and statistics from Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin.



### Barry Lowry

Barry Lowry has been the Government's Chief Information Officer since April 2016, with the primary task of taking forward the Public Service ICT and eGovernment Strategies. These set out ambitions for developing the use of shared services, digital services and data to better serve the people of Ireland and ensure that Ireland is well-placed to benefit from

European initiatives, such as the Digital Single Market. Lowry was previously the Director for IT Shared Services and Strategy, and Head of the IT Profession within the Northern Ireland Civil Service. He is a Fellow of the Irish and British computer societies and is a former winner of the BCS Northern Ireland IT Professional of the Year.



### Adegboyega Ojo

Adegboyega Ojo is associate professor of management and government information systems at Maynooth University School of Business. Before his appointment at Maynooth University, he was Senior Research Fellow and Head of the E-Government Unit at the Data Science Institute, University of Galway. His current research investigates conditions for

effective adoption of data-driven innovation and AI-based solutions in government and society.



### Martin Quigley

Martin Quigley has over 15 years' experience in the public, not-for-profit and social services sector. Quigley is director of data and analytics with Pobal. He has led the development of Pobal's data science and analytic functions, and championed the use of administrative datasets for programme

and policy improvement. In 2018 Quigley and his team won the award for the best use of data science in a Public Sector Body.



### Bahareh Heravi

Bahareh Heravi is an assistant professor in information and communication studies in University College Dublin and was appointed to the Board in December 2018. Heravi is a founding co-chair of the European Data and Computational Journalism Conference, and a steering committee member of the

Computation and Journalism Conference. She also sits on the editorial board of the *Digital Journalism* journal.



### Cianán Clancy

Cianán Clancy is Group Head, Commercial and Customer Propositions for Independent News and Media Plc (INM) – Ireland's largest media group. Prior to this, Clancy served as INM's Head of Innovation and Strategy where he supervised joint ventures, cultivated third party partnerships and guided teams in the

design, build and management of scalable new businesses through lean and agile methods.



### Neil O'Hare

Neil O'Hare is a professor of health informatics at University College Dublin and group chief information officer for the Ireland East Hospital Group. O'Hare has held academic appointments in Dublin City University and Trinity College Dublin with research interests in health informatics, imaging and UV phototherapy dosimetry. He is the current

chair of the Health Informatics Society of Ireland (HISI) and in 2019 was awarded an honorary fellowship of the Faculty of Radiology, RCSI, only the second non-radiologist to be awarded such since the establishment of the faculty in the early 1960s.



### Paul Morrin

Paul Morrin is assistant Director General in the Central Statistics Office with responsibility for Statistical System Co-ordination. Morrin joined the Central Statistics Office as a statistician in December 1993 and has worked in a number of areas in

Cork and Dublin including services statistics and national accounts. He also worked in the Department of Social Protection as a seconded statistician from April 2002 and subsequently on promotion to Senior Statistician until October 2014.



### Joan O'Connor

A recently-retired senior partner with Deloitte, Joan O'Connor currently holds a number of public sector appointments including board member of the Citizens Information Board, a member of the Medical Council and NCCA audit, finance and risk committees and the Law Society Regulatory Authority complaints

committee. Joan has a MA (Oxon), MA, and BA. She is a fellow of the Irish Tax Institute (FITI), a chartered tax adviser and a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (FCA).

## The power of accessibility: Councils save money, boost service delivery



One word that is garnering more and more attention in the digital world is “accessibility”. This is especially important for public sector websites, writes Mark Conroy, Annertech’s Director of Development.

Public sector bodies in the European Union must ensure their websites and mobile applications are accessible to everybody, including people with disabilities.

In Ireland, it falls to the National Disability Authority (NDA) to ensure that this mandate of the EU Web Accessibility Directive is upheld. In order to do this, the NDA reviews a large number of public sector websites and mobile apps on an annual basis.

Recent NDA monitoring reports indicate that there is a lot more work to be done if the internet – especially public service websites – is to be accessible to everyone.

“Accessibility is not just a regulatory issue; it is a human rights issue. The physical aspect of disabilities has been addressed for many years now – you often see ramps for wheelchairs and guidelines for service animals etc, but the same right of access applies to the

internet. It is even more important when it comes to public sector websites, which offer services to the public,” says Tom Bamford, Annertech’s accessibility specialist.

He continues: “These services need to be available to all council residents, or users of a government website, regardless of the type of impairment they experience. It is about removing barriers to ensure equal access to all.”

### The many advantages of accessibility

Having an accessible website has many benefits, from ensuring more people can use the website and creating positive brand association, to improving a site’s SEO and reducing potential legal risks.

It also affects budgets and service delivery. In a Nucleus Research study titled *The Internet is Unavailable*, researchers Rebecca Wettemann and Trevor White found that “companies without accessible sites are losing \$6.9 billion a year to competitors whose sites are accessible”.

Although public sector websites are not focused on selling goods, the research showed how accessibility (or the lack thereof) has a negative effect on resources – organisations without accessible websites end up having to allocate additional resources to their call centres to handle the repercussions.

“If you have problems with accessibility in your digital channel, you are pushing more calls, more traffic, and more work to your call centre even if consumers abandon the transaction,” Wettemann and White found.

### Common accessibility issues

An accessibility audit is an evaluation of a website or service to ensure that it is usable by people of all abilities.

Consideration is given to users of assistive technologies such as screen readers, magnifiers, and assistive input devices.

The five most common issues that Annertech's accessibility team encounter are:

1. **Colour contrast issues** – the difference in brightness between foreground and background colours can make a website difficult to read if there is not enough contrast.
2. **Designer fonts** that screen readers cannot read.
3. **Alt text not being available for images.** It is not just screen readers that access alt text – if an image fails to load for some reason the alt text will explain to the reader what they are missing.
4. **Focus states.** If a designer has designed for hover states rather than focus states, if a user is navigating a website using a keyboard there may be nothing to show the user where the cursor is
5. **Accessible drop-down menus.** As with focus states, a user on a website needs a visual cue so they know where they are on the menu. It must also be easy to navigate through the menu using a keyboard.

All of these accessibility issues are "fixable". However, the best and easiest way to ensure accessibility is to work it into the design and development process.

In other words, start with accessibility, rather than retrospectively trying to fix it.

This can be done by using a platform that is already set up to be accessible. One example of such a platform is LocalGov Drupal.

## LocalGov Drupal: An accessible solution for councils

LocalGov Drupal is a publishing platform created by councils, for councils, using the open-source Drupal CMS.

It is gaining in popularity: 35 councils in the UK and Ireland have joined the project. Annertech has been involved with LocalGov Drupal since the beta phase and is credited with bringing it to Ireland.

There are many advantages to LocalGov Drupal: It saves councils money and time, and websites can be developed quickly. The features are tried and tested, and it is a secure CMS.



### Why Annertech?

- Annertech is Ireland's largest, dedicated open-source digital agency, specialising in the Drupal CMS. It is the only Gold Certified Drupal partner in Ireland.
- Annertech has years of experience working on government and council websites. Clients include Dublin City Council, Limerick City and County Council, Fingal County Council, Cork County Council and Tipperary County Council (a LocalGov Drupal website).
- Annertech's director of development Mark Conroy is leader of the front-end working group of LocalGov Drupal.

But one of its biggest advantages is that websites built on LocalGov Drupal are accessible out-of-the-box because the project is designed to meet or exceed WCAG 2.1 level AA.

LocalGov Drupal developers are currently working on making sure LocalGov Drupal meets the newly released WCAG 2.2 guidelines.

### Conclusion

Although it is always better to start accessibility at the conception stage of a website, or to consider a platform that is accessible out-of-the-box such as LocalGovDrupal, websites that are already up and running can be changed to be more inclusive.

Annertech's accessibility audits identify issues and offer recommendations on how to fix them and Annertech's accessibility team are on hand to implement any changes.

The quicker a website is assessed the sooner work can begin on ensuring it is accessible to everyone.

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## Welsh Government: Social media expands government-public engagement

Laura Truelove, Senior Digital Content Manager at the Welsh Government, explains how simple communication, use of humour, and authentic content can build a strong social media platform and foster a better relationship between government and the public.

Entering the role in 2019, Truelove explains how prior to the Welsh Government establishing a social media team, that social media was not utilised to its fullest potential.

“In 2019, we had very few followers – in the tens of thousands – and there was a very much ‘post and run’ approach to the social media strategy. It was a case of posting a press release online and going no further, and there was definitely no engagement like replying to comments.”

### Everything Welsh

Truelove has used analytics software, which she believes gives her the opportunity to cater the content of the Welsh Government’s social media to the needs and interests of the people of Wales.

She explains how the Covid crisis, and

subsequently more visible role of First Minister Mark Drakeford MS emphasised to her the sense of Welshness among the nation’s population.

“We could see a remarkable political awakening within Wales. We saw people commenting on social media with things like ‘Boris is not my leader’ and ‘we have our own government and our own rules’. It made the First Minister a household name in a way we had not seen before.”

Amid this context, she explains the rationale for the modus operandi of the Welsh Government’s social media account. “We are proud of Wales and its history, people, language, and communities, and we are on the side of the people of Wales.

“We are striving for equality, committed to sustainability, and we are transforming Wales and



Laura Truelove, Senior Digital Content Manager, Welsh Government

supporting research, innovation, and creativity. We are laying the foundations now to benefit future generations. It is quite simple, and it goes straight to the point.”

Truelove further elucidates on the use of software such as Meltwater to analyse the demographics and posts which were successful among the Welsh Government’s audience. “We got a really good idea for things like knowing that our audience was, as you may expect, rugby mad. They love anything to do with Welsh pride and anything which is Welsh.”

She continues: “We champion Cymraeg. We have a mission to reach one million Welsh speakers by 2050 and we cannot get there as a government without getting people to come with us on that journey. We very much take a team Wales approach to everything we do.

“We are primarily a rugby-mad nation, but we made sure that people also saw our support for the Welsh football team as they qualified for the FIFA World Cup for the first time in 62 years. It is about getting behind our nation at any opportunity available.”

### The opportunity presented by Covid

“At the start of 2020, the Welsh Government had around 12,000 Facebook followers. By the end of that year the number was up to 130,000 and today, we stand at around 180,000,” Truelove explains, adding: “This trend can be seen across all of our channels.”

She adds: “During the pandemic people turned to us for reliable information; they wanted to get information about the pandemic from a trustworthy source, but also, they needed to follow us to know what they could or could not do during the pandemic, and how they could stay safe. The trend can be seen across the channels, particularly with the First Minister’s Twitter account.”

She also states how an unlikely collaboration between Goldie Lookin’ Chain, a comedy hip-hop group, and the Government led to increased interest and visibility for the Government’s message on Covid vaccine uptake. “It was something quite different, people did not expect us to collaborate with them. It got a bit of backlash but that also meant that more people watched the video.”

### Authenticity and no jargon

Strong and authentic social media content can succeed in creating a relationship between governments and the public, according to Truelove.

She cites a viral video of the Welsh First Minister, where he was asked by retired cheesemonger, Joe Bangles, about his favourite type of cheese, and his response gaining notoriety on the internet.

Indeed, an opinion poll released at the time even showed a temporary uptick in support for Welsh Labour (which Drakeford leads) from 7 per cent behind the Welsh Conservatives to a 14 per cent lead in May 2020.

“After it went viral, we were a little worried people might think it would not be appropriate for the First Minister of Wales, but many people came out to say that it was nice to see this side of him and that it makes him more relatable. It was our realisation that we had something special in our First Minister and that we should take more risks.”

Concluding, Truelove states that, in addition to analysing your social media audience with software, that the key to continuing interest is avoiding commonly used government jargon and acronyms. “You need to speak to the people in their terms and their language; we speak from our government in a way which is informal, chatty, and inclusive.”

# The internet needs guardians, guides, and stewards



Cyber threats have grown exponentially and there is significant change in the global regulatory environment impacting cybersecurity and data protection. Strong internet governance is critical writes David Curtin, CEO of .IE, the national registry for .ie domain names.

The digital transformation of our economy and society has been monumental. With the ever-increasing digitalisation of personal and work life, it has become increasingly evident that cyber threats, be they by criminals or nation-state actors, pose an evolving risk to the everyday working of society.

It is also a time of significant regulatory change. The EU Network and Information Security Directive (NIS2) regulations are upon us and must be implemented by member states by October 2024. This Directive aims to achieve a high common level of cybersecurity across EU member states and to create a high level of harmonisation with regard to security requirements and reporting obligations

across the EU. It is essential that the Government and relevant organisations come together to ensure that businesses across Ireland are ready to implement the required regulations.

More than ever, the internet needs guardians, guides, and stewards to ensure and promote good internet governance.

## Internet governance

At .IE, good internet governance permeates our strategic priorities. We seek to protect .ie domain holders and to adopt policies, processes and procedures that take account of the need for balance, having regard to the respective roles and responsibilities of

our registrants, Registrars and internet users.

We promote and encourage national internet governance through consumer protection protocols, policies and security programmes that coordinate and shape the national namespace, in line with international best practices.

**Managed registry model:** Only individuals and businesses with a provable connection to Ireland can register a .ie domain, and applications from new customers are manually reviewed to ensure that they meet this requirement. This process keeps the .ie domain largely free from registrations by bad actors with their quick-moving scams and other illegal activities that unmanaged registries cannot detect as easily.

**Consumer protection protocols:** We have created consumer protection protocols with regulators to address online illegality and to permit 'take-down' of websites under certain circumstances. We operate a Regulatory Authority Protocol for dealing with illegal content on .ie websites. The regulatory authorities who we engage with include the Corporate Enforcement Authority, the Competition and Consumer Protection Authority, the Central Bank, the Garda National Cyber Crime Bureau and ComReg, in addition to the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, the Health Products Regulatory Authority and the National Transport Authority.

**Dispute Resolution:** We have an easy-to-use Dispute Resolution service with independent third party dispute resolution agencies – WIPO and EU Net Neutrals. We have proactively introduced anti-abuse measures, in cooperation with stakeholders (via our Policy Advisory Committee) and our Registrar channel.

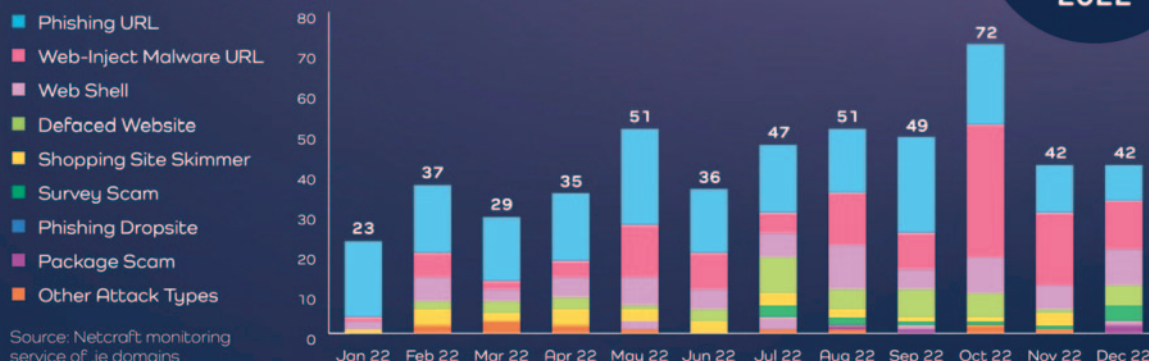
**Policies:** We have a range of policies and rules to protect consumers, safeguard registrants and promote good internet governance. These can be found at [www.weare.ie/our-policies](http://www.weare.ie/our-policies).

**Stakeholder dialogue and democracy:** We welcome and facilitate this through our multi-stakeholder and consensus-driven Policy Advisory Committee.

## Number of verified\* cyber attacks taken down

# 574

Jan - Dec  
2022



Source: Netcraft monitoring service of .ie domains  
\*Verified by Netcraft

.IE Domain Profile Report: 2022

### Technical excellence

In 2019, .IE was designated as an Operator of Essential Services (OES) under the original EC NIS Directive. Our technical services team provides a range of services, which underpin the .ie namespace, a critical part of Ireland's national internet infrastructure. These services are important for every business, individual, community, or government service, which uses the .ie internet address.

**Operating an essential service:** We have a 20-year track record of investing in and developing the national domain name system (DNS) infrastructure, which is robust and resilient.

**High availability mission-critical systems and services:** Operating the national registry for the .ie namespace requires the highest levels of security, stability, and resilience of networks and infrastructure. We manage and maintain the registry's high availability systems, mission-critical services and infrastructure in accordance with international best practices.

**Managing the database of .ie domain names:** The database is the authoritative record of who has the 'right to use' a particular .ie domain name. It is updated, in real time, for changes requested by Registrars, acting on the instructions of registrants. Registrars' APIs can submit requests 24/7/365, so database uptime and resilience is of critical national importance. We also run zone file updates, 12 times every day.

**Operating the WHOIS directory:** The WHOIS directory is an online lookup service, which provides valuable information on every .ie domain name. This service is provided free of charge on our website, [www.weare.ie](http://www.weare.ie). We do not show an individual's personal information, in accordance with GDPR principles and requirements. Access is controlled with daily limits and fair usage policies apply. In 2020, the usefulness of the WHOIS service was extended with the addition of an abuse contact facility, in the public interest.

**Tackling cybercrime:** Our locking service prevents unauthorised changes to important .ie addresses and stops web hijacking. We offer cryptographic authentication for responses received from authoritative DNS servers (DNSSEC), providing a more secure Domain Name System (DNS) which reduces phishing risks. We also provide an additional layer of security to owners of a .ie domain name, free of charge. This service provides a constant scanning of .ie sites and involves instant notification to an SME's hosting provider, who can help them take the corrective action once a scam has been detected. This is invaluable as it helps innocent victims, such as SMEs, who

might be unaware that they have experienced a cyberattack, to take the required remediation action.

**Adhering to internet security and standards:** We adhere to official internet specifications, communications protocols and procedures published by the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), an open international community of network designers, operators, vendors, and researchers concerned with the evolution of the internet architecture and the smooth operation of the internet.

At .IE, we are passionate about enabling and empowering Ireland to leverage the internet for the good of its society and economy. With .ie domains, we provide a trusted pathway to unlock the power of the internet for people and businesses across Ireland.

Together with our partners, we are enabling a better Ireland online through our technical and policy-based guardianship of the national critical infrastructure.

E: [marketing@weare.ie](mailto:marketing@weare.ie)

W: [www.weare.ie](http://www.weare.ie)



We are  
Ireland online

# Ireland's digital services: Statistical overview

## Ireland's overall DESI ranking

Ireland ranks **5th** out of **27 EU member states** in the 2022 Digital Economy and Society Index

Ireland's score in the DESI 2022 ranking: **62.7%**

Average EU score in the DESI 2022 ranking: **52.3%**

Average yearly relative score growth between **2017** and **2022: 8.5%**

Source: DESI 2022

## Digital public services

Ireland ranks **6th** out of **27 EU member states** in overall digital public services score

Ireland's overall integration of digital technology score is **83.5%**

Average EU integration of digital technology score is **67.3%**

eGovernment users: **92%**

EU average: **65%**

Pre-filled forms: **59/100**

EU average: **64/100**

Digital public services for citizens: **80/100**

EU average: **75/100**

Digital public services for businesses: **100/100**

EU average: **82/100**

Open data: **95%**

EU average: **81%**

Source: DESI 2022

## Integration of digital technology

Ireland ranks **7th** out of **27 EU member states** in overall integration of digital technology score

Ireland's overall integration of digital technology score is **43.3**

Average EU integration of digital technology score is **36.1**

SMEs with at least a basic level of digital intensity: **64%**

EU average: **55%**

Electronic information sharing: **24%**

EU average: **38%**

Social media: **32%**

EU average: **29%**

Big data: **23%**

EU average: **14%**

Cloud: **47%**

EU average: **34%**

AI: **8%**

EU average: **8%**

SMEs selling online: **33%**

EU average: **18%**

Source: DESI 2022

# EMPOWERING HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH QUALITY IT SHARED SERVICES

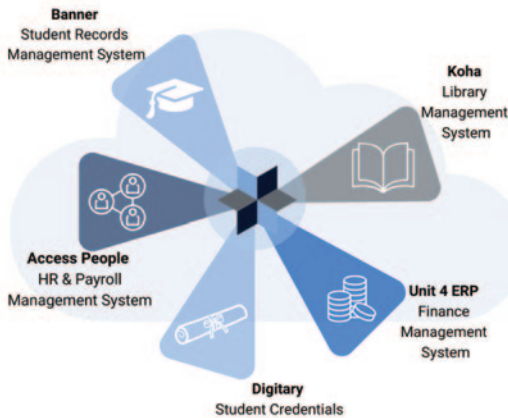
Established in 2015, EduCampus Services is a dynamic company providing IT shared services that support 20,000 staff and 140,000 students across the higher education sector in Ireland.



“We remain committed to quality in all aspects of our operations and services, while delivering value for money through efficiencies at multiple levels, including economies of scale, aggregated demand, and synergies with our parent company HEAnet CLG.”

EduCampus offers a portfolio of five key, cloud-hosted business applications that are essential to the operation of any higher education institution, as set out below.

## Key achievements



Through its operations, a range of business-critical management information systems are procured, implemented, maintained, and supported for an array of clients, spanning the universities, institutes of technology and technological universities.

As CEO of EduCampus since its establishment, Paddy Naughton has led the development of the organisation ensuring the provision of quality shared services to the higher education sector. “The EduCampus service offering is designed to reduce costs, save time, increase efficiency, and mitigate risk for our client members,” Naughton says.

Since its establishment, EduCampus Services has had a strategic focus on transitioning all applications from on-premise to cloud-based solutions.

The latest phase of the MIS Refresh Programme has seen all institutes of technology, and four technological universities fully transition to the state-of-the-art cloud-hosted Banner 9 system for student records management, resulting in an enhanced experience for students and staff, optimised process efficiencies, improved data integrity, as well as a future-proofed secure solution for the client base.

Introducing these new technologies and

reporting tools has elevated client collaboration, leading to increased knowledge sharing across the sector. EduCampus Services continues to facilitate its clients in positioning themselves for growth and success in the ever-evolving education sector.

## Annual conference

On 8 March 2023, EduCampus once again hosted its annual conference at the Convention Centre, Dublin. This year’s event was titled ‘Digital Transformation for Higher Education in Ireland’ and speakers on the day included: Joseph Ryan, Chair, EduCampus Board and CEO THEA; Paddy Naughton, EduCampus CEO; Ronan Laffan, Head of Advisory Services, Version 1; Gavin Barber, Deputy Director of Academic and Student Administration at Oxford Brookes University; and Jason Miles-Campbell, Director of Jisc Scotland and Jisc Northern Ireland.

It was a fantastic day of learning, networking, and sharing insights into current and emerging trends in the higher education and research sector including the opportunity to participate in a lively panel discussion and reconnect with colleagues. The seminar presentation slides, and video link can be viewed at [educampus.ie](http://educampus.ie).

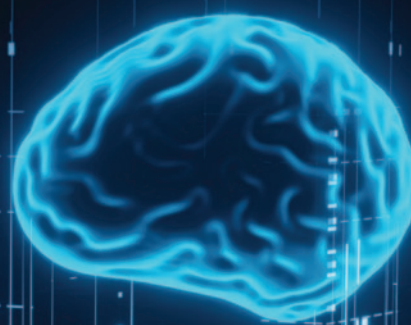
## The future

As technology in higher education continues to evolve, EduCampus will continue to collaborate with its clients to stay ahead of the curve, adapting to the changing needs of the sector, while providing the best services and solutions to its ever-expanding client base. EduCampus will continue to provide transformational leadership and harness emerging concepts to support the higher education and research sector in Ireland.

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# Ireland has mid-ranking eGovernment maturity



The most recent European eGovernment benchmark, published in July 2022, has ranked Ireland 17th out of 35 European nations for eGovernment maturity, with a score of 71 per cent, slightly above the European average of 68 per cent.

The eGovernment Benchmark sheds light on eGovernment in 35 European countries, referred to as the 'EU27+' which are the 27 European Union member states, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye.

The average European score shows that there is a considerably way to go if the potential benefits of maximised eGovernment maturity are to be realised throughout the continent. Although Ireland is ranked slightly above average, there is scope for improve in all European nations, hence a set of policy recommendations from the European Commission are included in the benchmark, with the aim to uplift eGovernment maturity across the continent.

## Three policy takeaways

**Rethink the user:** With many different types of users to serve, the report outlines how user-centric design must meet each person's needs, including those with certain disabilities or with low digital skills. This study shows that governments can improve their provision of inclusive eGovernment services. To achieve this, the report recommends that governments:

- consider the needs of both citizens and businesses, for which currently 77 per cent and 91 per cent, respectively, of services are online;
- tailor services for nationals as well as cross-border users, who can complete 81 per cent versus 46 per cent of services digitally;
- ensure perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust websites for persons with disabilities, as only 16 per cent of the websites currently meet selected web accessibility criteria;

- serve users with different devices, as 77 per cent of selected services are accessible online via desktop computers, while only 62 per cent are accessible via smartphones and tablets, with lower eID, eDocuments, and authentic sources integration for mobile users; and
- co-create services with users, currently done by one third of the governments, as well as raise awareness, simplify services, offer support, and provide alternative channels to embrace eGovernment diversity, guided by European values and principles.

**Realign the user journey:** Citizen and business life events often involve services from multiple government entities. The report states that well-orchestrated government networks are needed to serve users along their entire journey. Achieving this will involve:

- overcoming service gaps across multiple layers of government. In

Europe, 84 per cent of all services provided by central government organisations are available online, while 71 per cent of regional services and only 60 per cent of local services can be completed digitally; and

- leveraging the role of government portals, through which 93 per cent of all services can be found. This will enable users to complete all services related to their life event via single one-stop-shops. Breaking down departmental silos where possible and acting as one government with clear governance will ease end-to-end service delivery and ensure user journeys can be completed in full and all in one interaction.

**Reinforce the interoperability ambition:** Well-implemented and interoperable key enabling technologies build the foundations for the next generation of eGovernment, the report explains. Public administrations, established IT providers, innovative start-ups, and other innovators are urged to:

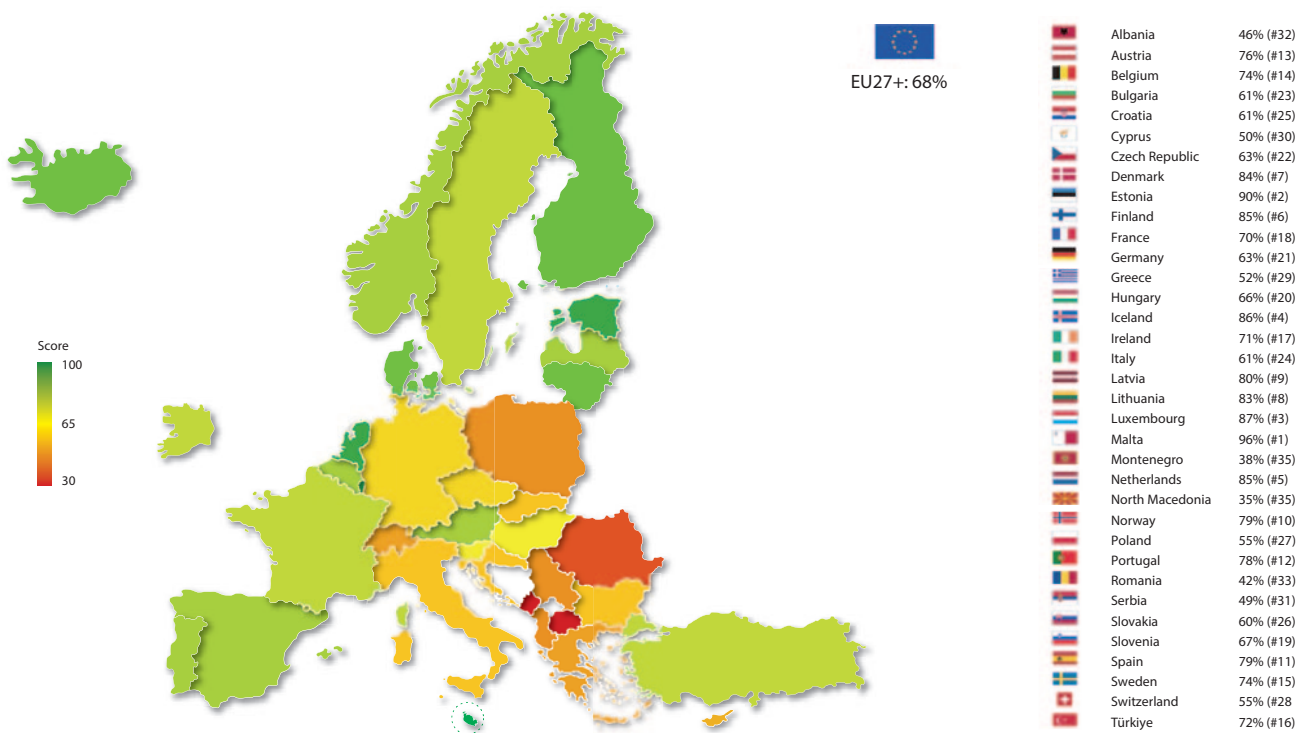
- promote interoperable data exchange to deliver more services proactively and increase the current level of just 6 per cent. Connected and consistent systems also enable governments to pre-fill more online application forms with information already known, currently at 67 per cent. Whenever personal data is reused in forms, this should be visible in more personal data monitoring solutions, currently available with 58 per cent of governments; and
- pave the way for future eIDs, for example by resolving login issues, as currently less than half (46 per cent) of the services allow a single sign-on. Moreover, users can login with their eID for three quarters of central government services, but only for about one-third of regional and local administrations. Wider implementation of interoperable solutions will create a more consistent eGovernment experience for different users, different services providers, and across European countries.

## Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform

A Department spokesperson said: “The European Commission’s eGovernment Benchmark 2022 focused on four key dimensions: user centricity, transparency, key enablers and cross-border services. Ireland considerably outperformed the EU27+ average on three of the four dimensions. On the fourth, key enablers, Ireland is continuing to rapidly improve against the assessed technical preconditions.

“In terms of uptake and usage of the State eID, Ireland is one of the fastest growing countries in the world and our developing digital wallet will provide strong ID on mobile and tablet devices. Moreover, our digital postbox is gaining traction and the recently commenced Gov.ie 2.0 project will introduce e-forms, life events, and an e-document archive. This progress in providing digital access to public services is reflected in Ireland’s position of 6th out of 27 EU members in the European Commission’s Digital Public Services in the Digital Economy and Society Index 2022.”

## eGovernment maturity in the EU27+



Source: European Commission