UN — Portugal Digital Fellowship
DIGITAL INNOVATION AND TRANSFORMATION

2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation is the driving force of fast-evolving processes which are re-shaping societies, economies, and States.

Digital technologies can act as a cross-cutting accelerator of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, SDG 16 calls for effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels in the framework of peaceful and inclusive societies. Digital transformation of governance processes and procedures has a role to play in achieving such a goal. The use of digital technologies by Governments to improve their operation as well as ways to foster bidirectional interaction with citizens has been the subject of significant and steady progress in recent years. Its enormous potential for the progressive realisation of the SDGs is widely recognised, namely through the recent adoption of the United Nations Pact for the Future and its Global Digital Compact.

The last two decades witnessed major efforts of the public sector first to introduce and later to manage the impact of ICT in their ecosystems. Although a number of lessons have been learned in relation to risk minimisation and outcome maximisation, digital transformation and digital governance require an extensive effort to build awareness, capacities, and competencies within the public sector.

Within its "2030 Development Cooperation Strategy", Portugal recognises the importance of digital transformation to achieve the SDGs, in particular for developing countries. One of the strategy's priority axes (axis 4A) is fostering prosperity, namely through digital transformation, in order to help advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the implementation of its SDGs.

This is why Portugal is again partnering with the United Nations University Operating Unit on Policy-Driven Electronic Governance (UNU-EGOV) who is in an adequate position to assist developing countries in their digital development, to organize the second edition of the UN-Portugal Digital Fellowship focused on digital innovation and transformation. This concept note offers an overview of the 2025 edition of the Fellowship, which is designed to continue in subsequent years, in line with both the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the priorities of the 2030 Portuguese Development Cooperation Strategy. This overview outlines the Fellowship's structure, organisation and training outcomes, as well as substantive contents and learning methodology.

2. CONCEPT

2.1 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The envisaged participants of this Fellowship are high-level officials from developing countries. Given the myriad of challenges stemming from their geographical isolation, priority will be given to Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), as well as Least Developed Countries (LDCs), in the first iterations of this Fellowship.

Seminar cohorts will be dimensioned for 20-25 in-person participants.

2.2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

This Fellowship will articulate in a coherent way the following questions, addressed in the context of developing countries' specific challenges:

- How to develop, evaluate and monitor digital governance and associated public digital infrastructures/resources/policies in order to maximise the potential of digital solutions to improve management and deliver high-quality public services?
- How can digital transformation be conceptualised and implemented from an inclusive and citizen-centric perspective?
- What is the role of open data within innovative digital governance models?
- How to manage change and transformation in digital governance?
- How to build safe, secure, and resilient digital government services?

The reflections and discussions conducted around these questions will equip participants with knowledge and tools on the following elements:

- The relevance and impact of digital transformation for governments and sustainable development.
- The nuts and bolts of digital transformation and digital governance.
- The major opportunities, enablers, challenges and trends of digital transformation and digital governance.
- The new trends in the design and development of more inclusive and citizen-centred digital public services.
- The opportunities and risks of emerging technologies to digital governance.
- The central role of data, and open data, in promoting innovative digital governance models.
- The mechanisms to engage and empower citizens.
- The major legal and regulatory aspects impacting digital governance.
- The main assessment techniques, benchmarks, and indicators to assess and monitor digital governance development.
- The multi-nature challenges and existent mechanisms to manage change in digital governance.

- The different models and challenges for managing the digital transformation process in the public sector and the role and competencies of a Government Chief Information Officer (GCIO).

2.3 PROGRAMME

The five foundational questions laying down this Fellowship will be approached through 13 modules, structured into 5 parts, as presented below.

<u>PART 1</u>: **Digital Transformation and Digital Governance: Rationale and Foundations**

Module 1: Digital transformation and digital governance as a holistic tool to support the Sustainable Development Goals

Module 2: Digital governance foundations

<u>PART 2</u>: **Digital Innovation and Transformation for Better Government**

Module 3: Design and development of inclusive and citizen-centred digital public services

Module 4: The architecture of digital government in Portugal: identity, integration, and accessibility – Paulo Vale, Executive Director of AI4PA Portugal

Module 5: Harnessing emerging technologies in public services delivery

<u>PART 3</u>: **Digital Innovation and Transformation for Better Governance**

Module 6: Open data and data governance for better government

Module 7: CivicTech and e-participation: digital tools for citizen engagement

Module 8: Inclusion, human rights, and participation

<u>PART 4</u>: **Towards Safer and Trustful Digital Innovation and Transformation**

Module 9: Secure and resilient digital government services

Module 10: Cybersecurity and governance - Lino Santos, Head of the National Cybersecurity, Portugal

Module 11: Legal and regulatory issues on security and privacy

<u>PART 5</u>: **The Governance of Digital Innovation and Transformation**

Module 12: Digital governance assessment

Module 13: Digital transformation: governance, innovation, and change management

2.4 TEACHING METHOD

A mixed method approach will be applied to link both theory and practice.

Problem-based learning will be chosen to facilitate learning through the experience of solving an open-ended problem found in support material.

An active learning approach, with discussion and practice as key constituents, will be adopted. Peer-to-peer and problem-based learning will be encouraged in all the modules of the Fellowship.

2.5 SCHEDULE AND COURSE STRUCTURE

Each iteration of the Fellowship will be scheduled over five working days and will consist of 25.5 effective teaching hours in total, excluding lunches and coffee breaks. Teaching will be scheduled Monday-Friday from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm.

Lunches and dinners will be served at a restaurant within walking distance, and all coffee breaks in UNU-EGOV premises.

A social/cultural activity will be included, providing participants with an opportunity to engage in informal networking while experiencing Portugal's rich cultural heritage.

The daily structure is outlined below but may be adapted.

DAY	TIME	
1	09:30 – 10:30	Opening and welcome
	10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break
	11:00 – 13:00	Lectures & teamwork
	13:00 – 14:30	Lunch
	14:30 – 16:30	Lectures & teamwork
2	09:00 – 10:30	Lectures & teamwork
	10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break
	11:00 – 13:00	Lectures & teamwork
	13:00 – 14:30	Lunch

	14:30 – 16:30	Lectures & teamwork
...	...	...
5	09:00 – 10:30	Lectures & teamwork
	10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break
	11:00 – 13:00	Lectures & teamwork
	13:00 – 13:30	Course wrap-up and programme closing
	13:30 – 15:00	Lunch

2.6 LOCATION

The Fellowship will take place at UNU-EGOV premises, located in the Campus de Couros, Rua Vila Flor 166, 4810-445 Guimarães, Portugal.

Map: https://goo.gl/maps/1nX91MSvaqws8iKh8

Note: The nearest international airport is in Porto – Porto Airport (OPO) – some 50 kilometres from Guimarães. Several transportation options such as bus, train, taxi or car are available to and-from the airport, which is placed just north of Portugal's second largest city, Porto.

2.7 DATE AND TIMELINE FOR OPERATIONALISATION

The operationalisation of the Fellowship will be subject to the following timeline:

- February 24th – Announcement of the second iteration of the Fellowship
- March 31st – Deadline for submission of applications
- April 10th – Selection and announcement of participants
- May 26th to May 30th – Second iteration of the Fellowship

2.8 CANDIDATES SELECTION PROCESS

To nominate a candidate to participate in the Fellowship, three documents are required and should be sent by email to digitalfellowship@mne.pt and egov-digitalfellowship@unu.edu.

- An official communication (i.e. Note Verbale) from the respective Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York listing all nominations from the Member State (if more than one nomination is made, these should be ranked by order of priority).

- A nomination form must be submitted for each individual candidate.

- A copy of the passport must be submitted for each individual candidate.

More information on the submission of nominations procedure, including the necessary documents, can be found at https://unu.edu/egov/un-portugal-digital-fellowship.

2.9 SPONSORSHIP PACKAGE

Each selected participant will be provided with:

- Round trip economy class flights from the capital of the country of origin to Porto International Airport.

- Transportation from Porto International Airport to Guimarães.

- Hotel accommodation in Guimarães for the duration of the Fellowship.

- Breakfast, lunches, coffee breaks and dinners for the duration of the Fellowship.

The organizers will not be providing:

- Internal travels in the country of origin, nor flights initially departing from and/or having as final destination any city other than the capital of the country of origin.

- Daily subsistence allowances (DSA).

- Travel or personal insurance cover. Participants are encouraged to purchase those by their own means.

- Assistance in obtaining travel visas. Once selected, participants should make their own arrangements to obtain the aforementioned visa for their visit to Portugal, as necessary and as soon as possible. Information on visa requirements can be found on the following webpage, namely under "who needs a visa" and "where should you lodge a visa application" on the right-hand side menu: https://vistos.mne.gov.pt/en/short-stay-visas-schengen/general-information/who-needs-a-visa.

The organizers shall also not be held liable for any claims, damages, losses, or expenses arising from or in connection with the services provided. By deciding to apply to the Fellowship and upon selection, participants acknowledge that the organizers bear no responsibility for the actions, omissions, or any

other occurrences involving participants. Any claims, liabilities, damages, costs, or expenses related to the services involving the participants will be without implication of liability to the organizers.

2.10 TESTIMONIES

The UN-Portugal Digital Fellowship serves as a catalyst for advancing digital governance by equipping public sector professionals with the knowledge and tools to drive transformation in their respective countries. The testimonies in this section highlight the programme's impact beyond individual capacity building, demonstrating how the insights gained are shaping institutional strategies and fostering cross-sector collaboration. These reflections underscore the programme's role in strengthening public administration frameworks and advancing sustainable digital development on a global scale.

My greatest learning has been the importance of putting the citizen at the center of all initiatives. Understanding that technology should be a tool to improve quality of life and facilitate access to public services is essential. Additionally, I have learned about the need to promote a culture of collaboration and adaptation within institutions, as well as the relevance of transparency and accountability in the transformation process.

The most important takeaway from the training on digital innovation and transformation is the gained insights from EU countries' experiences and the SDG regarding digital transformation, particularly emphasizing the significance of Open Government Data.

The diversity of participants and global perspectives have enriched my learning experience by offering a variety of approaches and solutions to common challenges. Each participant brings their own culture, experiences, and knowledge, allowing me to see problems from different angles and consider alternatives that I might not have thought of otherwise. Additionally, the exchange of ideas and best practices among countries has fostered a collaborative learning environment where we can all grow and benefit from the collective experience.

(as a result of the skills and knowledge gained in this programme) I will seek to foster collaboration between different departments and with citizens, using digital tools to facilitate communication and access to information. Additionally, I will focus on promoting a culture of continuous learning within my organization, ensuring that all team members are trained to adapt to technological changes and improve the quality of our services.

… The explanation was exceptional given that these technical concepts can be challenging to explain which demonstrates great expertise. The interactions with all of the lecturers were also fantastic, exchanging ideas with brilliant professional was truly a unique experience, which I am both very grateful and fortunate to have experienced.

3. UNU-EGOV PROFILE

3. UNU-EGOV PROFILE

UNU-EGOV is a think tank dedicated to Electronic Governance (e-Governance), located in Guimarães, Portugal. As part of the United Nations University (UNU), UNU-EGOV is a core centre of research, advisory services and training. As an international reference of excellence in this area, UNU-EGOV brings together multidisciplinary and multicultural teams around complex problems and emerging challenges, with a focus on the 2030 Agenda, namely SDG 16.

The UNU is headquartered in Tokyo and is composed of several Institutes and Programmes located in 12 countries (https://unu.edu). It was established in 1972 by decision of the UN General Assembly to contribute, through collaborative research and education, dissemination, and advisory services, to efforts to address the issues of concern to the United Nations, including sustainable development.

UNU-EGOV was established in May 2014 by decision of the United Nations University Council (https://unu.edu/about/unu-council), which serves as the governing body of UNU. As per Article I of the UNU-EGOV Statute, the Operating Unit has the legal status necessary for the realisation of its purposes and activities and has the capacity to enter into agreements and contracts.

The mission of UNU-EGOV is to support the United Nations system and Member States of the United Nations in transforming the mechanisms of governance and building effective governance capabilities through strategic applications of information and communication technologies to *inter alia* contribute to inclusive social and economic development.

UNU-EGOV has extensive experience in digital transformation processes, at the level of design, implementation, and evaluation, in diverse contexts including in developing countries. UNU-EGOV experts have a high level of knowledge and extensive experience in collaborating with governments in the development of policies, strategies, and plans for e-Governance and in measuring and monitoring the progress of e-Governance development. UNU-EGOV experts specialized in the fields of information systems, public administration, change management, human resource management, legal, IT strategic planning and management, and project management.

More information on the submission of nominations procedure, including the necessary documents: