

Exclusive: Why predictive services are the future for Estonia

Country's Digital Policy Advisor shares approach at Innovation Labs World.

Predictive services are the future of Estonia's digital government, Siim Sikkut, the Estonian Prime Minister's Digital Advisor said at Innovation Labs World.

"The government actually knows that the baby was born, because the hospital enters it in the population registry", he said. "So we could actually just proactively come to you."

The government will prompt the parents for a name and a bank account to send state benefits. "You can do all of them from a hospital room before you leave the hospital with a new baby", Sikkut said.

The country's elderly are getting the same kind of predictive services. "We know that you're 63, because again there is a complete population record that's out there," he said. "We know your bank account, if you pay taxes. "We could just start making the [pension] transfers to your bank account."

The country's government-wide data exchange platform helps make all of this happen. "It's a set of products or a set of standards that we all adhere to, that make us interoperable between all different parts of government", he said. "We have connected across the silos for data exchange, so that's how we have been able to make many digital services very efficient", Sikkut explained.

For instance, entrepreneurs can start companies online in less than a day."On average, it takes a few hours, maximum a day, and you have a fully legal business," he said.

Another example is from public safety. Police patrol officers were given access to real-time data. "They could be patrolling a street, and they could run a licence plate of a car, or run my background if they stopped me," Sikkut said. As a result of this, "in just a few months, they were finding 50% more stolen cars."

Estonia's digital identity is the key platform that enables seamless digital services. "What makes our identity especially powerful is that, based on my ID card and my mobile ID, I can legally sign any document and authorise any transaction", Sikkut said.

"This is massive because if you have a chance to authorise things digitally, then the full cycle of any service can be brought online", he added.

Innovation Labs World is a festival of public service innovation organised by GovInsider. It was held on 27 September in Singapore.

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