SA-EU POLICY DIALOGUE

ON STRENGTHENING OPEN DIGITAL GOVERNANCE
(THE SA-EU DIGITAL DIALOGUES).

06-07 APRIL 2022

VENUE:
MAROPENG CONFERENCE CENTRE

Conference Report

May 2022

Contents

Executive summary

The SA-EU Digital Dialogues convening2022 was held in South Africa between the 5th and 7th of April 2022. A total of 66 multi-sector stakeholder delegates were in attendance from across South Africa, and including an international expert delegation from the Dialogues partners from Denmark, and representation from the United Nations University E-GOV. The theme of the conference was "Strengthening Open Digital Governance", supported by the SA-EU Dialogue Facility. Prior to the large conference held at the Maropeng Conference Centre in the Cradle of Humankind, the Digital Dialogues core bilateral partners from SA and Denmark participated in a study tour of two digital-driven entities within the South African context: the Tshimologong Precinct at the heart of Johannesburg which is a digital incubator, and the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) in Pretoria. These exposures and engagements were purpose-designed to enable relationship-building, engagement and learning across the partners towards informing a series of policy working studios or labs designed to ensue.

The outcomes of the event included:

- Confirming focal themes (the 4 themes)
- Developing new relationships and understandings
- Potential new programming in the area of digitisation with the Danish embassy.

Key lessons learned included:

- Importance of physical convening to build relationships and understanding; the partners all agreed to a much greater depth of understanding and appreciation of each other which is already making working relations easier post-conference
- Value of the multi-stakeholder approach taken, beyond just government bureaucrats was noted and appreciated by most parties
- Value of the common information levelling enabled by the background papers
- Importance of the political championship enabled by the presence and support of Acting Minister (DPSA), Director General (DCDT), and Ambassadors (Denmark and EU Delegation).

The next steps will include a series of virtual studios that will discuss in detail the focus thematical areas emanating from the conference. This will then be followed by a study tour visit to Denmark in preparation for the conclusion of the dialogue series.

Day 0: Study Tours

The SA-EU Digital dialogues conference was preceded by a study tour with a delegation compromised of the dialogue series' partners (DPSA, CPSI, Danish agency for Digitalisation, EU Delegation to SA; EU Dialogue Facility and Wits School of Governance (Tayarisha).

The primary purpose of the study tour was to initiate dialogue amongst the respective representatives. The secondary objectives were to provide experiential learning opportunities for delegates that are related to key topics that were to inform and guide the discussion at the conference. These included:

i.   partnerships, especially between government and digital innovation ecosystems,
ii.   ICT infrastructure and architecture, in particular transformation and migration to a 4IR environment
iii.   Collaboration and co-design of solutions, including amongst the three spheres of government.

Two site visits were conducted, and these included the following:

Site Visit One: Tshimologong Precinct

A tour of the facility was conducted, highlighting the different disciplines that form part of the hub. A showcase of some of the innovative projects was done by the different sections of the hub/precinct.

This was followed by a panel discussion that focused on partnerships and inclusion, especially inclusion of youth entrepreneurs in the digital space.

Site Visit Two: State Information Technology Agency (SITA)

- a panel discussion was held on ICT technology and 4IR readiness with special attention to eServices and transition to Cloud Infrastructure and the implications for Digital Governance.
- A presentation was done by the SITA team on the Digital blueprint that highlight the following key insights: the digital blueprint is characterised by the fact that it is highly public service driven; highly data driven ecosystem
- The discussion also highlighted the need for modernisation and digitalisation of the public service
- The panel discussion was then followed by a tour of the Facility to highlight the infrastructural and architectural capability.

Conference Day 1: Introduction: Knowledge sharing and consensus building

Ms Lydia Sebokedi, the Acting Executive Director for the Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI), inaugurated the conference and the proceeding was addressed by the honourable Deputy Minister for the Department of Public Service and Administration, Dr Chana Pilane-Majake. The honourable Deputy Minister emphasised the relevance of the learning experiences to be shared by the partnering countries, South Africa and Denmark. She highlighted the expected outcomes of this engagement being that of unearthing the soft points of South Africa's digital transformation journey. While being aware of the ever-changing digital transformation journey, a further emphasis was that the conference would be able to map a way forward for an inclusive digital transformation agenda in South Africa.

Following the Deputy Minister's remarks, the delegation was welcomed by Professor Mzukisi Qobo from the Wits School of Governance, who also head up the emerging Tayarisha Centre for Digital Governance. He also emphasises the changing landscape and the need for Public service training in the digital governance space. Professor Qobo further highlighted the importance of strengthening digital governance as a key aspect of supporting state capacity in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic that required a drastic shift in thinking about the public service delivery in a digital era.

Furthermore, the delegation was addressed by the Danish Ambassador to South Africa, Tobias Rehfeld, who also emphasised the importance of the South Africa – Denmark partnership in the topic of digital governance. He also highlighted that the partnership was part of a series of other collaborative efforts by both the South African and Danish governments. While highlighting the successes of the Danish digitalisation journey, the Ambassador highlighted the importance of the learning experiences that both country partners could take away from the Digital dialogues conference.

The delegation was then addressed by Dr Bernard Rey, head of cooperation at the EU delegation to South Africa. He emphasised the relevance of the digital transformation to the EU and highlighted that the EU Dialogues Facility focuses on a number of topics and themes that are relevant to strategic partnerships. Dr Rey asserted that the EU considers South Africa as a key partner in the dialogue facilitation strategies. He further pointed out that the digital dialogues will play a crucial role in addressing issues such as bridging the digital divide gap, particularly in South Africa, which includes both the software and hardware elements of the digital transformation discussion.

Session Introduction

The purpose of the two-day engagement was pegged at promoting dialogue and providing a platform for knowledge sharing. Day one was characterised by knowledge sharing through presentations from senior experts from both Denmark and South Africa through presentations of background position papers compiled prior to the convening. This session was also characterised by group discussions through breakaway sessions that helped facilitate dialogue that taps into international best practice and standards.

The conference proceedings were structured as follows

Knowledge sharing Session

Knowledge sharing through the presentations on the Open Digital Governance

Knowledge sharing through the presentations on the Open Digital Governance from experts from South Africa and Denmark. Additionally, the experts made presentations on the international experience on open digital governance. The reports were presented as follows:

a. Report on the International Experience in Open Digital Governance presented by Mark Burke (LINK Centre, Wits University)
b. Report on the South Africa Experience in Open Digital Governance presented by Mark Burke (LINK Centre, Wits University)
c. Report on the Digitalized Public Sector in Denmark presented by Prof Ursula Plesner (Copenhagen Business School)

Presentation on the International experience in Open Digital Governance

Key Insights:

- Mission, Leadership and Positioning of Institutions
- Digital First through Digital Applications and Data
- Human Capabilities for Open Digital Governance
- Legislative, Regulatory Frameworks and Standards
- A Future Orientation for Open Digital Governance

Presentation on the South African experience in Open Digital Governance

Key Insights:
- Mission
- Digital First
- Human Capabilities
- Legislative, Regulatory Frameworks and Standards
- A Future Orientation

Presentation on the Digitalized Public Sector in Denmark

Key Insights:
- Pushing the digitalization agenda forward while maintaining trust
- Leveraging the potentials of digitalization while being realistic about barriers
- Legitimacy through being digitally advanced versus legitimacy through being prudent
- Creating a more coherent public sector through increased data-sharing
- Digital skills
- Focus on vulnerable and marginalised groups that are exempt from digital post
- Need for practical-technical competencies, information navigation competencies, and "bureaucratic competencies"
- Moral cost of digital inclusion

Knowledge sharing through country inputs from Denmark and South Africa

Country Inputs (South Africa)

a. **Country Inputs (South Africa):** "Growing South Africa together for a capable and ethical Public Service" presented by Mr Mandla Ngcobo, Chief Information Officer, Department of Public Service and Administration.

Key Insights:

- DPSA currently developing a draft Policy Framework, whose purposes is to provide impetus on some of the themes proposed towards the implementation of the Presidential Review Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution's recommendations in the public service.
- The policy framework seeks to address a number of key issues, amongst these are the following,
    i. Leadership and Governance

ii.   Funding (Inadequate coordination on the allocation and use of ICT budget)

iii.   Universal service and access to government ICT

iv.   Lack of digital thinking and skills

v.   Lack of government wide architecture

- Proposed way forward:

    a. Digital first

    b. Human capability for open digital governance

    c. Legislation, regulatory frameworks and standards for Open Digital Governance

    d. Funding

    e. Business Process Management

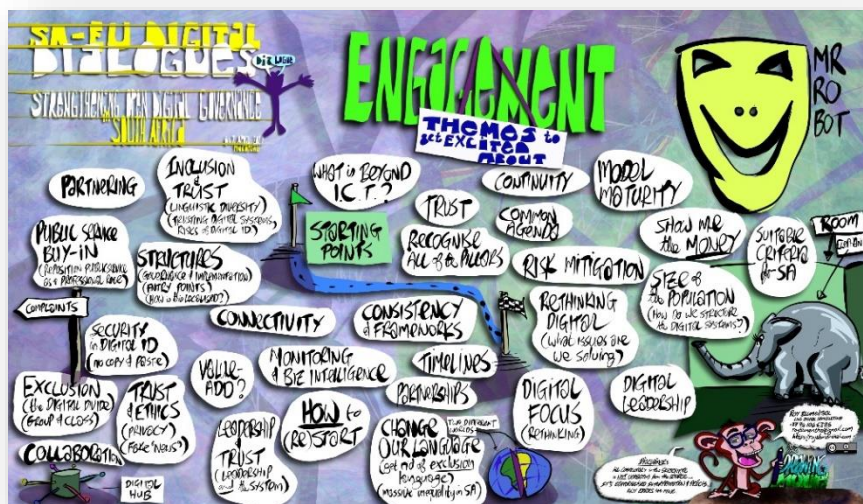   f. Universal Service and Access to ICT

Country Inputs (Denmark)

b. **Country Inputs (Denmark):** "The Danish Digital Journey" presented by Mr Yih-Jeou Wang, Senior Adviser, International team, Agency for Digitisation, Ministry of Finance.

Key Insights:

- Denmark has a very high degree of internet penetration, usage and competencies in the population
- Highlighted the role of collaboration to advance the digitalization process in Denmark
- Examples/Cases:
    i.   The Danish Citizen Portal
    ii.   Digital Post
    iii.   The NemID ecosystem – one Eid for digital access to public and private services
    iv.   The MitID – national eID solution across public and private sectors
- The cases form the Danish country inputs highlighted the advantages associated with public-private-partnerships in the digital transformation journey.
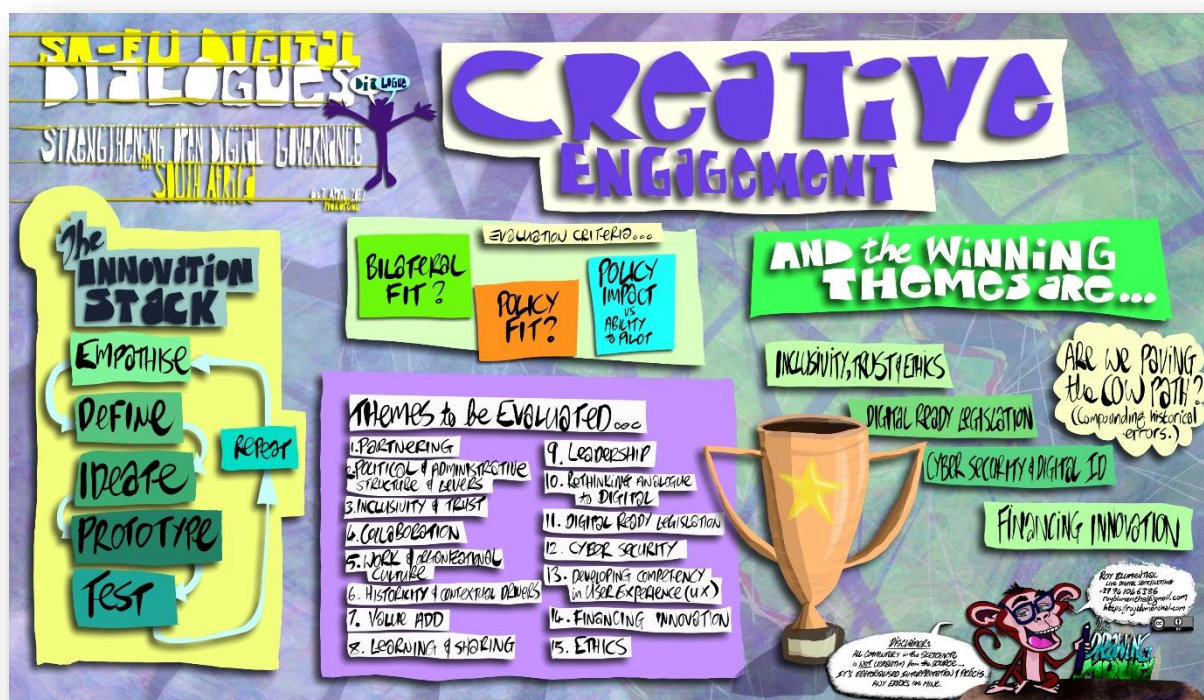
The country inputs session was followed by a Q&A session reflecting on the lessons learned from the Danish experience and in turn aligning the lessons with the South African context.

After the Q&A, delegates went into breakaway sessions for some engagements on the presentations and country inputs in a bid to build consensus on key themes and issues that will inform the outcomes of the SA-EU Digital Dialogues series.

Resolution was reached following the presentations from the different groups and the first day was concluded.

Key theme identified from the breakaway engagement session included the following

Conference Day 2: Co-design: Road Mapping

- Day 2 kick started with a review and recap of day 1 engagements. Thereafter, the convening started off with presentations from international delegates on the International perspectives on Open Digital Governance. Mr Jesper Hosbond Jensen, from made a virtual presentation on "Digital Transformation: Local Government as part of transforming Denmark". This was followed by an in-person perspective presentation by Dr Dimitrios Sarantis.

- The breakaway sessions on day 2 of the SA-EU digital Dialogues convening saw the delegates dive deeper into the process of developing ideas from the knowledge sharing sessions, which included presentations from both partner countries and international perspectives on open digital governance. This process involved a creative engagement session and a co-design and road mapping session.

- **The creative engagement** session involved specific interventions used to narrow down the list of thematic areas identified in day one. Participants were grouped and asked to score each thematic area against set criteria. This resulted in an enumerated matrix containing each focus area, and a score with which to rate each holistically, without over reliance on subjectivity.

- The following focus areas were identified in during the day 1 engagement sessions through breakaway groups:

- Collaboration

- Cyber Security

- Developing Competency in UX

- Digital Ready Legislation

- Ethics

- Financing Innovation

- Historicity & Contextual drivers

- Inclusivity & Trust

- Leadership

- Learning & Sharing

- Partnering

- Political & Administrative Structure & Levers

- Rethinking Analogue to Digital

- Value Add

- Work & Organisational Culture.

- The engagement session also entailed the unpacking of the 15 thematic areas further. This was achieved through the process of **using the below three main assessments**, which then allowed for the ranking of the focus areas across six dimensions (policy impact, suitability for

a pilot, dialogue complexity, policy fit, and relevance to the respective South African and Danish interests and contexts).

- **a Policy impact versus Opportunity for Policy Trial or Pilot**
- Each focus area was scored for relevance based on an x-y axial rating of the potential positive impact each may have on ODG policy, against the suitability of testing said focus area through a limited-period policy trial or pilot intervention.
- **b Policy fit versus Policy/Dialogue complexity**
- Each focus area was scored for relevance based on an x-y axial rating of the potential fit with the respective policy fit, especially in the context of the current development of the South African policy context for ODG, against the potential complexity of the policy dialogue. For the latter, focus areas that would require detailed and thoughtful unpacking would be prioritised over those that require simple interventions such as publishing a policy directive or regulation.
- **c Relevance to Denmark versus relevance to South Africa**
- Each focus area was scored for relevance based on an x-y axial rating of the relevance of the focus area to the interests, context and priorities of the two dialogue partners, being South Africa and the EU (represented by the Danish).
- The engagement session was followed by the co-design and road mapping processing. This process aimed at narrowing down the identified themes further. The identified themes, using the group scoring process resulted in the following prioritisations:
- Digital Ready Legislation
- Cyber Security & Digital ID
- Financing Innovation
- Ethics
- Inclusivity & Trust
- Work & Organisational Culture
- Partnering
- Rethinking Analogue to Digital
- Developing Competency in UX
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Political & Administrative Structure & Levers
- Learning & Sharing
- Historicity & Contextual drivers
- Value Add

Delegates were given the opportunity to indicate their individual preferences for the prioritisation of the fifteen focus areas. The result of informal scoring mimicked the ranking from the group scoring exercise and identified the following in order:
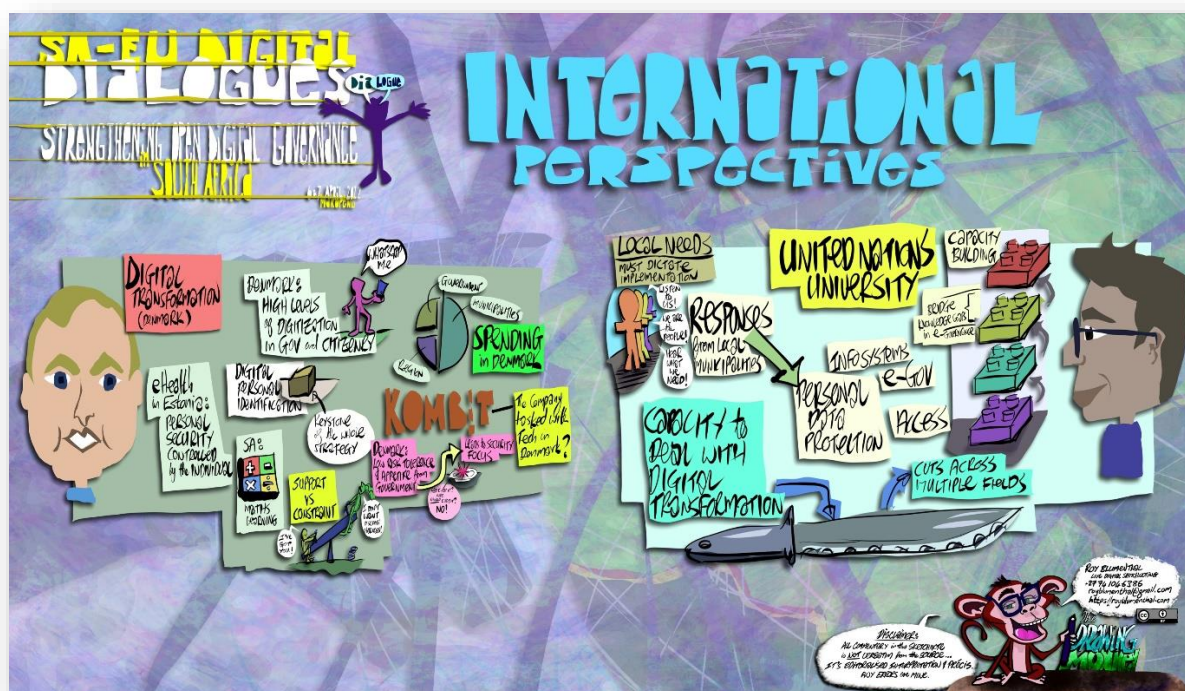
- 1. Inclusivity & Trust

- **2 Digital Ready Legislation**
- **3 Partnering**
- **3 Cyber Security**
- **4 Work & Organisational Culture**
- **4 Financing Innovation**
- Political & Administrative Structure & Levers
- Collaboration
- Historicity & Contextual drivers
- Value Add
- Learning & Sharing
- Leadership
- Rethinking Analogue to Digital
- Developing Competency in UX
- Ethics

Using the assessment process above, four thematic areas were identified as being ranked most relevant to the objectives of the SA/EU Digital Dialogue on strengthening Open Digital Governance. These themes were as follows

- Digital Ready Legislation
- Cyber Security and Digital Identity
- Financing Innovation
- Ethics, inclusivity and trust

International Perspectives on Open Digital Governance

Presentation by Mr Jesper Hosbond Jensen

Overview

Denmark has high levels of digitalisation in the public sector, and this is a result of the transformation journey that has been ongoing for over 30 years.

Local government in the Danish context is characterised by the fact that more than half of the public sector budget is spent at Municipalities.

Regional level in Denmark is responsible for Health care.

Denmark's digital journey shows that around the millennium Denmark created a digital identification component.

It has been highlighted that digital transformation takes time for example it took over 10 years for the municipalities to breakthrough monopolies.

Kombit – a company owned and created by the municipality – has been a key component in development, innovation and network in Denmark. Kombit has been focusing on, amongst other things, purchasing, facilitating and catalysing.

Case studies highlighted include the following:

i.   **Estonia** – eHealth which combines data from citizens in Estonia and allows for patient tracking through their records. The platform also allows for patients to track how their personal information is used.

ii.   **South Africa** – MathQuest Insights – platform that provides Math related support for students

Denmark has also been involved in some Government-to-Government collaborations within the EU

Danish Perspective:

i.   User driven innovation, sandboxing, risk management, security, development between vision and urgent need for development

ii.   Collaboration in partnerships (PPI), co-operation and negotiation, networks with industry/vendors/public sector, common platforms

iii.   Open communication, platforms development, reduced complexity connectivity, security, identity

iv.   Service development, value creation, productivity and implementation, empowerment

Key Insights:

- Innovation, public and private interactions
- Optimation and development – How do governments support or constrain development in the digital space
- Governance and transformation, rules of engagement, co-operation – Understanding the role of government and municipalities is very important
- Why better services, efficiency, user friendly, speed, empowerment, security – consider the importance of digitalisation process
- Democracy and citizenship – democracy is key in transforming communities
- Inclusion or not

Presentation by Dr Dimitris Sarantis
Key insights

i.   Legislative frameworks
- Consideration of laws that govern rights to digital services, access to free information and protection of personal information

ii.   Capacity building

- Consider the important modules for capacity building in training public servants
- Top selected modules in eGovernance include Interoperability in public administration; customised public services; Open data; Decision making; Smart City; Big data

iii.   Public Administration

- Listening to user needs and responding to those needs
- Working with society and creating social value
- Important to involve the society to the dialogue and listen to local community needs
- Consider the specific needs of different groups of people; vulnerable groups; people without the knowledge and people that do not trust the digital transformation mandate
- Society guides Innovation – it is therefore important to consider the process of co-thinking, co-designing, co-working with local communities.

Following the presentations there was a Q&A and responses from the presenters.

Thereafter, the delegation went into a creative engagement session that allowed for the narrowing down of the themes identified in the previous breakaway sessions from day 1. This activity's purpose was to ensure that relevant themes are streamlined to inform the co-design process that will lead to the studio events as part of the digital dialogues series.

Closing Ceremony

After the breakaway feedback session, the conference was officially closed with a vote of thanks from the steering committee leaders, Prof Geci Karuri-Sebina, from the Wits School of Governance; and Mr Pierre Schoonraad, Head of Research, from the Center of Public Service Innovation (CPSI).

Concluding statement

At the end of the Maropeng convening, four thematic areas were identified as being ranked most relevant to the objectives of the SA/EU Digital Dialogue on strengthening Open Digital Governance. These themes were as follows

1. Digital Ready Legislation
2. Cyber Security and Digital Identity
3. Financing Innovation
4. Ethics, inclusivity and trust

These themes were to provide the topical set up of the Virtual Studio series of engagements.

Annexes

A: Conference Materials Links

Open Digital Governance background research Papers:

https://www.wits.ac.za/tayarisha/activities/programmes/sa-eu-policy-dialogues/

Conference Presentations:

https://www.cpsi.co.za/sa-eu-dialogue/

Conference Graphic Harvest:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/bqdlq3jf3j0avyc/AACg7HynWuZpIRk2UxLlzSsla?dl=0