



## Press Release No. 13/2018

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### Co-producing digital services with citizens and for citizens

**As part of EU H2020 research project Co-VAL, Dr. Ines Mergel, professor of public administration at the University of Konstanz, researches the concept of co-creation in digitisation processes of public administrations.**

Imagine a toy manufacturer that lets children decide on the design of its new products. For instance, the company might seek the children's input on the desired components of a new toy pirate ship using an online platform. Professor Mergel believes that this could be a blueprint for the digital transformation of public administrations. Citizens should have a say especially in the digitisation of external public services.

This kind of collaboration between authorities and users is called co-creation. The concept is currently being studied by the EU project cooperation "Co-VAL". Ines Mergel's team is one of twelve research groups from eleven European countries that are being funded with 4.1 million euros in the context of the EU funding programme "Horizon 2020". The Co-VAL project is coordinated by the Athens Technology Center SA (Greece).

The aim is to provide policy recommendations for transformative strategies that integrate the co-creation of value in public administrations. "Co-Production of Public Value" – Co-VAL – means that the public sector works closely with the users, i.e. the citizens, to develop digital formats or entirely new digital services. Ines Mergel believes that existing e-government services in Germany are not particularly user-friendly, which could explain why users have, by and large, chosen to steer clear and rarely accept digital services provided by public administrations. One example is the digital national ID card, which is hardly being used because it fails to address citizens' actual needs.

"The government's online services must be tailored to reflect citizens' use and search behaviour. Accessing information must become easier", says Ines Mergel. To achieve this, she wants to actively involve the users.

380,000 euros from the overall Co-VAL funding amount have been set aside for her team to carry out research on the digital transformation of public administration. The first part of the project, a systematic literature review, has already been concluded. Currently, the team is in the process of conducting interviews with public and private sector experts from across Europe and the United States. Building on these interviews, Ines Mergel and her team are identifying concrete and on-

going transformation processes and, as a result, potential approaches to and opportunities for co-creation.

The next step the international research team will take will be to create a theoretical framework for these transformative processes. “We plan to extract knowledge from practical contexts, synthesize and analyze it systematically and feed our insights back into administrative practice”, explains Ines Mergel. The research results will then be harmonised with the objectives of the “Tallinn Declaration on E-Government” signed by all EU and EFTA states.

**Facts:**

- Project Co-VAL – “Understanding value co-creation in public services for transforming European public administration”
- Duration: 2017 until 2020
- The research initiative is part of the EU funding programme “Horizon 2020”
- Twelve partner institutions from eleven European countries are involved
- Overall funding amount: 4.1 million euros; funding for Professor Mergel's project: 380,000 euros

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