

## INNOVADE releases a Digital Democracy Preference Toolkit to Strengthen Digital Participation

*A new report analyzes European preferences to transform digital participation from symbolic consultation into transparent governance.*

**18 March 2026, Brussels**– Digital democracy is navigating a period of uncertainty where online political debate creates new spaces for participation and, at the same time, risks such as misinformation and echo chambers. While citizens are digitally equipped, many remain disillusioned. Simultaneously, government officials struggle to treat digital engagement as a strategic asset.

The INNOVADE project has released its **Digital Democracy Preference Toolkit**, freely available at <https://zenodo.org/records/18258934>, addressing these complexities by synthesising perspectives from nearly 500 European citizens and governmental actors. Research confirms that technical availability alone does not guarantee success; rather, digital tools must move beyond symbolic consultation toward "co-production" models that offer traceable, real-world impact on decision-making. This brief outlines actionable design and policy requirements to foster a public sphere that is inclusive, transparent, and resilient against information manipulation.

Evidence from the INNOVADE surveys reveals a strong consensus on high-value, action-oriented functionalities. Both citizens and administrators prioritise the reporting of local issues, such as broken infrastructure, and voting on concrete proposals over abstract ideation. Transparency and trust emerge as the most critical objectives and there is a clear preference for hybrid models; digital tools are viewed as a supplement to the "human touch" of face-to-face deliberation.

*"We hope that those already working on digital citizen participation can further grow their ambitions and that those not yet doing so can overcome their reservations."*

*--Xenia Klinge, Researcher, DFKI*

### The Toolkit

The Toolkit provides a comprehensive framework for the future of digital participation. Rather than listing static features, its recommendations speak to the **fundamental shift** required to make digital tools meaningful. It explores the necessity of **actionable participation** over symbolic consultation, emphasizing that for technology to be considered successful, it must enable citizen input to have a real, visible impact on policy. While there is no "silver bullet" for digital democracy, there is success found in identifying and meeting the context-dependent needs of both citizens and governments. By translating these shared preferences into tangible design recommendations, we can move toward a more resilient digital public sphere. Taking this first step is a challenging but ultimately enriching process for the future of European governance.

To better understand these requirements, INNOVADE is hosting an upcoming webinar:

**"Digital Democracy Applications: Harmonising Citizen Voices and Government Action in Europe"** on 25 March, 10-11:30 CET, bringing together experts to discuss how to bridge the gap between user expectations and administrative realities, focusing on the practical implementation of the toolkit's findings.

The event will explore how to move beyond ideation toward co-production, showcasing how digital tools can be aligned with the needs of both the public and the authorities who serve them. Participants will gain insights into fostering trust through feedback loops and inclusive design strategies. You can find more details and register for the event here:

<https://innovade-democracy.eu/events/digital-democracy-applications-harmonising-citizen-voices-and-government-action-europe>.

## INNOVADE project

INNOVADE (INNOVative DEmocracy through digitalisation) <https://innovade-democracy.eu/> is a 36-month Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Action running from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027.

The project responds to the challenges and risks brought by digital platforms to democratic life and aims to deliver advanced tools and frameworks that enable inclusive, transparent, and effective e-participation across Europe. Building on existing knowledge and analysing emerging trends, INNOVADE develops scalable and replicable solutions to foster a digitally enhanced public sphere and strengthen democratic governance. A key feature of the project is its Living Labs methodology and pilots. INNOVADE ensures that its outputs address real community needs and result in practical, user-friendly applications that empower citizens to engage with government and influence decisions that shape their lives.

## Get Involved

Policymakers, institutions, civil society organisations, and citizens are invited to engage with INNOVADE and help shape Europe's digital democracy future.

To stay updated on INNOVADE's progress, register for the newsletter at: <https://innovade-democracy.eu/newsletter>

Follow us on social media:

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/innovade-democracy>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@innovade-democracy>

Zenodo: <https://zenodo.org/communities/innovade/>

Bluesky: <https://bsky.app/profile/innovade-democracy.bsky.social>

Contact details:

Diego Dylan Domenici ([d.domenici@trust-itservices.com](mailto:d.domenici@trust-itservices.com))

The INNOVADE project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the grant agreement No 101178306.