

## SIMPLEX+ Program

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**Organisation:** AMA Agência para a Modernização Administrativa (Administrative Modernization Agency)

**Country:** Portugal

**Level of government:** Central government

**Sector:** General public services

**Type:** Digital, Methods, Organisational Design, Public Service

**Launched in:** 2016

**Link to the innovation's website**

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# Description

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SIMPLEX+ is a collaborative and nationwide simplification program launched by the Portuguese government to co-create new online public services, optimize existing ones and de-bureaucratize the relationship between public institutions and civil society. Based on a highly collaborative approach, the public bodies in charge of the administrative modernization in Portugal (Ministry, Secretary of State and Agency for the Administrative Modernization) toured the country and used numerous tools to listen and collect inputs from citizens, businesses, academia, associations and public officials, to map their priority services and what laws could be simplified. This groundbreaking bottom-up diagnosis enabled the design of a national simplification program consisting of 255 innovative measures to be implemented until the end of 2017, that will improve the quality of public services, promote better and smart regulation, and have significant social and economic impact in people's life.

SIMPLEX+ put in place an innovative public consultation in order to co-create, along with citizens, businesses and public administration, a national de-bureaucratization program. It included a tour around the country, open events with civil society, meetings with business confederations, associations and local authorities, open channels for submission of suggestions (eg. website, Facebook, government portal), and also a competition to reward innovative ideas for products to be integrated in the public administration ("Startup Simplex"). Participation and hearings were also promoted within the administration, with devoted subprograms involving staff and the creation of a Focal Point Network composed by one representative from each ministry. The program summed more than 2000 physical participants and 1400 contributions collected, which resulted in the definition of concrete and 'real-life' services that took into consideration the issues identified in that participatory process.

## Why the innovation was developed

- Portugal has a worldwide-reckoned track record of initiatives devoted to simplification and modernization of public services. SIMPLEX+ was developed to take the country to the next level of public policies design and implementation, by putting in place such a comprehensive public engagement initiative.
- Simultaneously, Portugal was lacking a recent and wide-ranging program that, gathering all the domains of civil society and public administration, would enable the definition of practical measures to ensure a quick and effective public response to people and businesses main needs, improve trust in public services, facilitate business day-to-day procedures and, ultimately, boost Portugal's competitiveness, as an example by reducing the context-related costs of engaging in an economic activity. SIMPLEX+ was the answer, as it enabled the Portuguese government to effectively map the main difficulties and requests of the public services users, and design a program to respond accordingly.

## Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Enhance public trust, Improve access, Improve effectiveness, Improve efficiency, Improve service quality, Improve user satisfaction, Increase citizen engagement, Support economic growth

## Main beneficiaries

Academia, Businesses, Civil Society, Elderly people, General population, Government bodies, Government staff

# Results

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## Results not available yet

- SIMPLEX+ is essentially based on three main stages, namely diagnosis, analysis and design, and implementation of the 255 measures, which is monitored based on a publicly available calendar.
- Presently, all the measures are in a development stage and there are already around 20 measures implemented. These measures impact the daily life of citizens and businesses, as improved the efficiency, effectiveness and the public service quality in general. However, it is difficult to measure their impact, as these are very recent implementations and there is not yet a completed evaluation process.
- In regards to the diagnosis stage, it is important to highlight that the implemented methods allowed for the collection of around 1400 inputs from the online contributors and the more than 2000 participants in public hearings.
- . Concerning the analysis stage, and in only 4 months, the governance model implemented allowed for the production of a list of well documented, scheduled public policies, based on a cost/benefit analysis, characterization and financing possibilities and benefits.

# Development

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## Design

There is a constant need for public sector modernization strategies that enable governments to better identify the needs of users of public services. In that sense, the Portuguese government decided to launch a whole new program to find ways, within the administration, to simplify and de-bureaucratize its interactions with citizens by making public services and processes simpler, faster, and overall more transparent for citizens. As so, borrowing from a previous idea for a SIMPLEX program in the last decade, SIMPLEX+ came up with more recent methodologies, a multichannel approach, specific sub programs and even new techniques such as design thinking and co-collaboration, building a totally different approach with a vastly wider scope, and a totally renewed and broader set of methodologies and tools. Design time: 4 month(s)

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## Testing

- The first assessment of the program feasibility and possible outcomes derives from a previous simplification program launched ten years ago. Between 2006-2011, more than 1000 measures of administrative simplification and e-government were successfully implemented in Portugal, on a first Simplex initiative. These measures had a very positive impact on citizens and businesses, presenting an excess of 80% execution rate. These results were a strong drive to improve the methods, broaden the scope, and build a totally different program with a vastly more ambitious aim and facing the challenges of a new era.
  - The present SIMPLEX+ is thus more participative, co-productive and innovative, by placing the needs of users of public services as the first and key criterion to identify priority areas for action and the most appropriated simplification measures. Lastly, as the methodology is based on co-creation, ongoing testes and improvements will be performed in the course of the program.
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## Implementation

### Tools used:

- A SIMPLEX+ website and Facebook page with information on the program, its agenda, and a questionnaire for suggestions.
- A Web application to categorize the information collected in the different events, linked to the SIMPLEX+ website.
- A SIMPLEX+ Tour with open events in the 20 national districts
- Meetings with representatives of the main economic sectors
- A Focal Point Network of officials from all ministries
- A subprogram to public servants with broad email participation
- A Startup SIMPLEX competition to reward innovative ideas for products to be adopted by public administration
- To complement to the online approach and tackle digital illiteracy, paper questionnaires were used
- The inputs were processed by the Administrative Modernization public bodies and the public entities involved, resulting in the national simplification program and its list of measures to implement

### Resources used:

- A SIMPLEX team of 16 people took turns crisscrossing the country, both mainland and the Autonomous Regions of Portugal, and organizing the open events to collect the views of citizens and businesses
- The portal development, as well as the web application that allowed for the categorization of the measures to be implemented, were developed through outsourcing, with the close involvement and management of the SIMPLEX+ team
- Moreover, presently all the ministries and public entities that are implementing the program have allocated resources to it
- For a program of this nature, communication was considered fundamental to better reach the several targets involved and the general population as well. To that effect, there was also an investment in communication supports, promotional videos, merchandising and other related materials.

Implementation time: 2 year(s)

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## Challenges and solutions

- The main challenge was to reach as many stakeholders as possible in a very short amount of time, 4 months, and to collect and process as much contributions as possible in order to accurately identify the most effective cost/benefit measures to be implemented.
- To address this issue, a strict calendar was established and respected, and crucial attention was given to the development of the right tools and methodologies to retrieve and process all the suggestions in a record amount of time.
- One other major challenge is the implementation of each of the listed public policies until the end of 2017, as these measures include integration, interoperability and actual reform and redesign of some of the public services in stake. However, there is a strong governance model, with project officer and a steering committee that publicly reports all the preliminary results to the public and higher officials within the government.

## Partnerships

### Multiple partners

Academics and Research Bodies, Civil Society, Other Public Sector, Private sector

SIMPLEX+ is a program based on participation and co-production of public services with the civil society. For this reason, although they are not formal partnerships based on protocols, it is important to highlight the collaboration with the Portuguese confederations and associations dedicated to businesses, agriculture, tourism, commerce and services, hospitality, foods and catering, retail sector, accounting, among other. Furthermore, the total support of municipalities from the 20 districts of Portugal and other and local authorities is worth to mention, as well as the commitment of all ministries involved in the design of such a cross-sector and integrative simplification program, after the participatory process.

All the actors referred in the previous question were fundamental partners for the success of the SIMPLEX+ program. Confederations, associations and individual entrepreneur partners played a crucial role in mapping businesses' real needs concerning administrative procedures in their interaction with the public institutions. In addition, public entities involved were also decisive not only in the evaluation of the feedback received, but also in the important stage of designing the national simplification program and its measures.

## Lessons Learned

### Lessons Learned

- It is important to ensure the proper governance and accountability mechanisms in order to provide the right conditions for the implementation of the measures to be taken. In that sense, involving and giving voice to all public entities since the beginning of the program, fostering a sourcing and bottom-up approach, proved to be an essential *modus operandi* for the program's success.

### Conditions for success

- The main success of this innovation revolves around the co-creation methodologies used, and the proper engagement of all the actors in contributing with their ideas in the initial stages.
- The multiple channels and mechanisms made available helped to make this process simple, since every targeted stakeholder had a way to contribute in his/hers preferred way.
- With all the data properly collected, the governance mechanisms that were implemented within the administration allowed for a quick assessment of cost/benefit, target audience, milestones and deadlines in very fast and efficient way. The same governance mechanism now ensures the applicability of every one of the 255 policies and reports on their execution on a regular basis.

### Other information

Among the 255 actions comprised in the SIMPLEX+ program, it is worth to highlight 16 emblematic measures, as they reflect the wide scope of public policies involved and their direct relation with citizens and businesses' needs. These measures are: To be born a Citizen with a family doctor and better informed parents; Documents Always at Hand; School 360°; Automatic Income Tax Returns; Single Environmental Certificate; Driving License on Wheels; Mobile Early Voting; Direct Payment of Taxes; Always Valid Documents; Online Criminal Records; Citizen's Spot, Paris Consulate; Passing Away Facility; Simpler Aquaculture; Payroll Statements to Interactive Social Security; Tourist licenses + simple; Mobile Citizens' Counters.