

GovStack - Accelerating the digitisation of governments

A global initiative of German development cooperation

Enabling countries to kickstart their digital transformation journey by adopting, deploying, and scaling digital government services through the digital building block approach.

Context and Challenge

Without a birth certificate, without official ID: no access to government services. Those who were never registered by the authorities, are deprived from access to hospitals, schools, and existential government services. **Digital government services** can improve or even enable access to important and life-saving services such as health, education, and social benefits for these people.

Digital government services have exploded around the world in the last twenty years. They are critical to the development of a digital economy and the building of digital societies.

However, many countries, especially in low resource settings, are struggling to keep pace with the trend toward digitizing government services. There is often a lack of financial resources and technical capacities – resulting in fragmented services that are not interoperable, duplicated structures, or the complete absence of digital administrative services. This is where multifunctional and cross-sector digital e-government solutions that are easy to design, implement and scale can make a difference.

GovStack Approach

Launched by Estonia, Germany, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL) in 2020, the GovStack initiative – together with partners such as Smart Africa, the World Bank, GSMA and SAP – aims to create a common framework

and technical practice for developing reusable and interoperable digital components – so-called “**digital building blocks**” – needed for the digital transformation of governments.

The global GovStack community invests in digital building blocks that help governments reduce costs, time, and resources required to create or modify digital platforms, services, and applications. As these digital building blocks are interoperable and based on **open-source software**, they are easier to customize, design and implement, combine as needed, and scale across multiple sectors.

Examples of digital building blocks are:

- ➔ Digital registries
- ➔ Identification and authentication
- ➔ Payments
- ➔ Registration
- ➔ Security

Project name	GovStack Flagship
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Executing agency	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Project region	Kenya, Rwanda, Ukraine, Egypt, Somalia and Djibouti
Duration	01/2022 - 03/2025

In addition, GovStack supports partner governments in making their digital administration more efficient, faster, and more secure to reduce system duplication. By increasing the security and traceability of transactions and improving accountability, the aim is to prevent fraud and

corruption. GovStack aims to increase country ownership of e-government solutions and **digital sovereignty** to improve social well-being services. Through the involvement of civil society and academia, human rights risks (such as lack of data protection or IT security) are reduced.

Objectives and Implementation

GovStack starts with research and development to produce **design specifications** based on best practices for generic, reusable digital building blocks. In doing so, GovStack is working with local and global partners and is guided by the recommendations of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the Digital Investment Framework and the Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL).

GovStack's three main areas of action are:

- ➔ Open Architecture and Building Blocks Requirements
- ➔ Mini Digital Government Platform Sandbox for learning and experimenting
- ➔ Capacity Strengthening

The GovStack initiative is creating a **model platform for digital government services** that identifies elements that can be reused across services and sectors (i.e. use cases) – building on DIAL's Catalog for Digital Solutions. The specifications and the derived model platform are intended to be openly accessible, as **digital public goods** (DPG).

Furthermore, the coordination of donor activities in the area of sustainable development and financing for building **digital public infrastructures** is to be improved. Together with actors such as KfW, Norad, UNICEF and the Bill and Melinda Gates and Rockefeller Foundation, a **global fund** is to be established to support partner governments in building secure, more effective, and cheaper digital public services.

Current Status

In 2021, eleven **technical Working Groups** were set-up and work on specifying ICT Building Blocks commenced. The Tech-Community behind the working groups consists of over 60 experts from civil society, the open-source community, academia, and the private sector. The first selection of digital building blocks will be published in spring 2022.

The GovStack initiative is partnering with Egypt, Kenya and Rwanda to pilot the approach. For this purpose, initial needs assessments will be carried out in the countries in spring 2022 and cooperation networks will be established.

As part of the **Digital for Development D4D Hub** activities, an EU cooperation together with the Horn of Africa Initiative (HoAI), France and Spain started in 2022 to develop an integrated and comprehensive e-government platform for selected countries in the Horn of Africa, including Djibouti and Somalia.

Another key component of the global GovStack community is the establishment of the **GovStack Advisory Board** at the end of 2021. Members of the advisory board include representatives of FCDO, BMGF, KfW, Sida, DPGA, UNDP, Smart Africa, GSMA und IEEE.

Furthermore, GovStack is collaborating with the multi-stakeholder initiative **Digital Public Goods Alliance** (DGPA), which was founded by Norad and UNICEF and on which advisory board the BMZ is represented. Since 2021, a joint Community of Practice (CoP) has been facilitating research, development, use and investment in digital public goods.

Published by:
Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices
Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 32+36
53113 Bonn
Deutschland/Germany
T +49 61 96 79-0
F +49 61 96 79-11 15
E info@giz.de
I www.giz.de/en

Bonn, 2021

Author/Responsible/Editor, etc.:
Pia Seiffarth (GIZ)

Design/layout, etc.:
Pia Seiffarth (GIZ)