

Mayors and president of regional councils

As a city or regional leader you are the owner of the digital strategy of your city or region. The digital revolution has radically transformed the lives of your local residents and the way local businesses operate, communicate and interact with each other and with their customers. In the current era of the digital economy, cities and regions simply cannot compete anymore without a strategy for the digital transition. Elected officials have a key role to play in shaping the digital ecosystem. They need to bring together the digital stakeholders notably for the design of a strategic roadmap for the digital transformation of businesses, universities, public administrations and services.

Leading the development of the local digital ecosystem

Elected officials at the local and the regional level have a key leadership role to play in their local digital ecosystem. They have the ability to engage with entrepreneurs, SMEs, large companies, universities, unions, clusters, accelerators, incubators and citizens in the definition of the digital transformation strategy of the city.

The role of elected officials in European territories starts with the creation of political impetus for the design of a strategic road map for the digital transformation strategy. Aligning the digital strategy of their territory or city with the smart specialisation strategy of the region is a key success factor to maximise the impact of both strategies by identifying possible joint actions.

Once the digital strategy of a territory is adopted, mayors and presidents of regional councils can achieve the actions which are specifically needed to build trust between local actors and launch the implementation of the strategy. Local and regional elected officials can organise workshops and local conferences to facilitate collaboration and cross-fertilisation between different industries and sectors. They can also create local digital councils to engage citizens first in the design and then in the implementation of the digital strategy of the territory.

The creation of long-term partnerships and trust relationships between stakeholders of the digital ecosystem is a progressive task requiring commitment and perseverance.

Increasing the digital capabilities of the workforce

Mayors and president of regional councils must be aware of the local digital skills issues faced by local firms. They need to create collaboration channels to discuss about local digital skills in order to develop digital skills assessments to ensure the digital literacy of all local citizens.

Public leaders have a key role to play in the training of the population, in the reskilling of the workforce and in the attraction of global talent. When necessary local public leaders need to launch job preservation plans to retain local digital talent in the territory. They can also create high level contests and competitions, hackathons and alike in order to gather the tech community in order to solve local challenges.

Local and regional elected official have the ability to change the mentalities in their public administration. They can promote an entrepreneurial culture in the administration and define the new digital interfaces and in-between spaces regarding the city and other stakeholders.

They should also seek to create clear governance structures in the organization to clarify the accountability and responsibilities of all. They can for example set up a digital unit in the public administration or open a Chief Digital Officer (CDO) position.

Improving access to data

Elected officials in European cities must act to launch an active strategy of how to live the message of open data. Territories in the first phases of their digital strategy have to encourage open innovation and to make public data available.

Mayors in cities and regions benefitting from a developed open city strategy cannot be complacent. They should encourage the use of public service as a testbed for digital technologies and invite different stakeholders to "test-bedding" activities.

Advancing the digital infrastructure

Local public leaders need to ensure the exchange of information on infrastructure needs between local stakeholders. They can invest in key infrastructures to create a business-friendly environment such as transport infrastructures, business offices, university buildings and not least digital high end infrastructures. They also need to invest in entrepreneurship programmes in schools, universities and for lifelong education

Mayors in cities and regions benefitting from a developed DIGITAL environment need to open access to public infrastructure for technology and to Develop/comply with standards to ensure interoperability of technologies.