Call for Papers

The 9th PUBSIC Conference

International Conference on Innovation in Public Services and Public Policy

Rome, 8–9 March 2027

Managing Person-Centred Public Services

Innovation, Inclusion and Trust

Hosted by LUMSA University

Public services are changing in significant ways. Around the world, public sector organisations (PSOs) are now expected to do more than just deliver services, follow procedures, or produce administrative results. The real challenge is to design and manage services that focus on people's needs, abilities, rights, expectations, and real-life experiences. This means we should see public services as processes that build relationships and create value, not just as administrative tasks (Osborne, 2020).



To make this change, PSOs need to rethink how they design, manage, deliver, and assess their services, and how these actions can help build trust in public institutions. People trust organisations when they see them as competent, caring, and honest. Fair, reliable, and responsive services also help build trust in government (Grimmelikhuijsen & Knies, 2017; OECD, 2024c).

The Conference explicitly welcomes perspectives from low- and middle-income countries and non-OECD institutional contexts, including research led by scholars and practitioners working in these settings. Contributions may examine how person-centred approaches respond to resource constraints, informality, geographical distance, linguistic diversity and unequal access to digital technologies. Comparative studies and context-specific accounts are encouraged to question the transferability of established models and support learning across different administrative traditions.

With this in mind, the Conference aims to encourage a global, cross-disciplinary discussion, informed by practice, about managing public services around people. Scholars and practitioners are invited to explore the organisational, managerial, technological and institutional conditions that make services more innovative, inclusive and trustworthy. Collaborative governance, experimentation and the involvement of diverse actors

in developing policies and services are central to this agenda (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Hartley, Sørensen, & Torfing, 2013; McGann, Blomkamp, & Lewis, 2018).

Public agencies and PSOs work in environments affected by changes in population, social inequality, digital technology, budget limits, climate change, migration, an ageing population, and varying levels of trust in institutions. Meanwhile, people and communities want services that are easy to use, inclusive, transparent, connected, digital, and meaningful to them (OECD, 2024b, 2024c).

The OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Human-Centred Public Administrative Services*, adopted on 17 September 2024, calls for services designed around people's needs and life events, with reduced complexity and administrative burden (OECD, 2024a). The OECD's analysis of almost 800 cases from 83 countries also identifies co-design, personalisation, inclusion and future preparedness as central directions in public service innovation (OECD, 2024b).



A broader international perspective is provided by the World Bank's GovTech Maturity Index 2025, which examines public sector digital transformation across 197 economies, including online service delivery and digital citizen engagement. Its findings show uneven progress and persistent disparities across income groups and regions (Vasconcelos et al., 2025). These differences invite examination of how institutional capacity and local conditions shape the design and use of person-centred services.

Digitalisation plays a key role in this change. Digital government can make services more accessible, integrated, personalised, and consistent. However, it can also lead to exclusion, lack of transparency, and distance from institutions. Digital transformation means changing organisational culture, processes, and relationships, not just putting existing procedures online (Mergel, Edelmann, & Haug, 2019). Making services digital by default can also create extra challenges and paperwork, especially for people in vulnerable situations (Schou & Pors, 2019; Madsen, Lindgren, & Melin, 2022; Liu, Zhou, & Liang, 2025).



The European Commission's *eGovernment Benchmark 2025* looks at how available, user-friendly, accessible, and connected online services are across Europe (European Commission, 2025). But the main question is whether digitalisation actually improves people's experiences with public services, especially for those who are vulnerable, have limited digital skills, face complex procedures, or are socially marginalised. So, digitalisation should be judged not just by how efficient it is, but also by how it affects relationships, citizenship, and inclusion (Lindgren, Madsen, Hofmann, & Melin, 2019; Schou & Pors, 2019).

Within this digital transformation agenda, artificial intelligence, data analytics, automation and interoperability raise ethical and political questions about how public services are governed. These technologies may improve service quality and planning, but can also introduce bias, compromise privacy and obscure responsibility for decisions. Person-centred digital government therefore requires arrangements for transparency, explanation, human oversight, and the challenge and correction of automated decisions (Bannister & Connolly, 2020; Busuioc, 2021). Algorithmic transparency also matters for the perceived trustworthiness of automated decision-making (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2023). The Conference invites contributions on how these safeguards can be built into service design and everyday organisational practice.

The Conference therefore encourages contributions that critically examine the relationship between public service innovation and human experience. A person-centred public service cannot be reduced to a rhetoric of "users" or "customers". It requires a rethinking of institutional responsibilities, organisational culture, professional capabilities, governance arrangements and evaluation systems. It also requires people to be considered not only as service recipients, but as citizens, co-creators, rights-holders, community members, and holders of unique knowledge. Research on co-production has demonstrated that public services are frequently produced through the interaction of professionals, users, and communities, though this also brings up issues of inclusion, power, and accountability (Bovaird, 2007; Osborne & Strokosch, 2013).

Person-centred public services are closely connected to ideas like public value, co-production, fairness, accountability, and trust. The public value approach says that public management should aim for outcomes that people value together and support democracy, not just focus on efficiency or performance (Moore, 1995; Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2014). Public service logic also sees value as something that comes from relationships and service networks, not just from organisations delivering services to passive users (Osborne, 2020).

Theoretical contributions may engage with public service logic (Osborne, 2020), public value theory (Moore, 1995; Bryson et al., 2014), service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008), human-centred design and public sector innovation (McGann et al., 2018), digital-era governance, administrative burden and theories of institutional trust.

Recent research on citizen-focused digital government shows that this idea can be seen in four connected ways: knowing and understanding users, how public institutions are organised and governed, how services are designed, and what the final services and results are like (Dechamps, Simonofski, & Burnay, 2025). These

different views raise important questions about how to define, put into practice, and measure person-centred public services.

Empirical and practice-oriented contributions are equally welcome. The Conference is interested in case studies, comparative analyses, policy evaluations, organisational experiments, digital service-redesign projects, co-design laboratories, local welfare initiatives, healthcare and social care services, education services, cultural services, urban services, justice services, employment services and other domains in which the relationship between public institutions and people is being reconfigured.

Contributions may explore successes, failures, tensions and unintended consequences. Particular attention will be given to studies that examine how public organisations listen to people, simplify access, integrate services across institutional boundaries, support groups in vulnerable circumstances, build trust and evaluate outcomes from the perspective of people and communities.

Ultimately, the Conference seeks to advance a shared agenda for managing public services around people. Innovation and digitalisation should improve accessibility, quality and responsiveness without creating exclusion or weakening the relational dimension of service provision. Standardisation should ensure consistency and equal treatment while allowing sufficient flexibility to address diverse needs. Efficiency, transparency and accountability can consequently strengthen service quality and institutional trust, although the relationship between performance and trust remains shaped by expectations, institutional contexts and perceptions of fairness, reliability and responsiveness (Van de Walle & Bouckaert, 2003; OECD, 2024c). Papers may address the following illustrative topics, organised under the three interconnected (person-centred public services, inclusion and trust) sub-themes of the Conference:

1. Person-centred public service design, organisational change and collaborative innovation

- Service design and organisational change: designing person-centred public services and managing the organisational changes required for their implementation;
- Public service logic and public value: exploring public value creation through collaborative approaches to service innovation;
- Human-centred digital transformation: aligning digital government with people's needs, experiences and expectations;
- Citizen participation and co-creation: involving citizens in service innovation through co-design and co-production.

2. *Inclusive public service delivery: accessibility, organisational culture and professional capabilities*

- Accessibility and equity: addressing barriers to public services, particularly for people in vulnerable circumstances;
- Administrative burden and user experience: simplifying service access and navigating tensions between efficiency, inclusion and personalisation;
- Proximity and territorial services: organising local services and welfare provision in diverse institutional and resource settings;
- Culture, leadership and capabilities: developing organisational cultures, leadership approaches and professional capabilities that support inclusive service delivery.

3. *Public service innovation and institutional trust: quality, accountability and outcomes*

- Service quality, responsiveness and trust: examining how public service innovation, service quality and institutional responsiveness relate to institutional trust;
- Responsible AI and algorithmic accountability: addressing data ethics, transparency, human oversight and opportunities for redress in AI-enabled public services;

- Performance measurement and evaluation: assessing person-centred services and their outcomes for people and communities;
- Accountability, fairness and rights: strengthening institutional accountability and protecting rights in person-centred service provision.

The topics are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The Scientific Committee also welcomes contributions addressing related issues consistent with the broader theme of innovation in public services and the objectives of the Conference.

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ABSTRACT SUBMISSION PROCESS

The Scientific Committee welcomes abstract submissions of 300 to 500 words for presentation at the Conference.

Abstracts should clearly present:

- the context and relevance of the problem addressed;
- the aim of the contribution and its research question or practical objective;
- the theoretical or conceptual framework, where applicable;
- the research design, methods, data and empirical setting, or a description of the practice-based intervention;
- the main, preliminary or expected findings;
- the contribution to theory, public service management, policy or professional practice;
- the relevance of the contribution to the Conference theme and, in particular, to innovation, inclusion or trust in public services.

Abstracts should be self-contained and sufficiently detailed to allow the Scientific Committee to assess the originality, methodological soundness and relevance of the proposed contribution. Purely descriptive abstracts that do not clarify the purpose, approach and contribution of the paper will not be considered.

Each submission should also include:

- a title;
- three to five keywords;
- the name, affiliation and contact details of each author;
- an indication of the presenting author.

Paper abstracts should be submitted via the online form by 28 November 2026. They will be reviewed by the Permanent Scientific Committee, and decisions will be communicated to authors by 11 December 2026.

Submit abstracts via the online form.

Final papers should be emailed to pubsic2027@lumsa.it., copying pubsic@outlook.it

Key dates

- **22 January 2027** — Early-bird registration deadline
- **10 February 2027** — Registration closes
- **18 February 2027** — Full paper submission deadline

SPECIAL PANEL PROPOSALS

Proposals for special panels focusing on specific thematic areas are also welcome. Each proposal must include four papers and indicate the title of the panel, the names and affiliations of the proposing panel convenors, and the titles of the four contributions. Special panel proposals must be submitted by 13 November 2026. Panel proposals should be submitted by email to pubsic@outlook.it with the subject line "Panel Proposals 2027".

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Keynote speakers — to be confirmed

For further information

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Register here.

Registration fees

- Early-bird fee: €300 — register by 22 January 2027
- Standard fee: €350 — register from 23 January to 10 February 2027