

## DIGITAL SOLUTIONS ACCELERATE THE TRANSITION TO THE SMART AND SUSTAINABLE CITY OF THE FUTURE

The Digital with Purpose (DwP) 2024 Cascais Summit accelerated efforts to identify new pathways and partnerships for an effective implementation of innovative technologies, policies, financial mechanisms, as well as cooperative approaches to support cities' ambitious transitions to net-zero, resilient and inclusive futures.

The Smart Cities Programme of 2024 was curated by Giorgia Rambelli, Director Mission Innovation Urban Transitions Mission.

The Summit focused on sharing knowledge and new ways to scale market uptake of responsible digital solutions and technologies in cities, with the goal to help these communities to effectively address core-human needs, and with that, to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

The 2024 Summit advanced the agenda of the 2023 Lisbon Manifesto: from one side, by upholding the principles of radical collaboration instilled by the UN Climate Change Global Innovation Hub (UGIH), and from the other, by grounding the outcomes and next steps of the Summit onto the real-life challenges, needs and experiences of cities as part of the Urban Transitions Mission (UTM)'s cohort and engaged in the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM). This year's summit successfully:

- Deepened a cross-sectoral conversation on cities' innovation needs (technology, regulatory, governance) digging further into how digital solutions and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can support and scale urban transformations with communities' core-human needs at the heart.
- Showcased the transformative impact of "digital solutions with purpose" in cities, and pinpointed how these can become a game-changer for local climate and energy reduction action.
- Shared and helped explore new avenues and models for radical collaboration between cities and digital solutions providers, bringing together the public and private sector.
- Investigated opportunities for new urban application of digital solutions, in new, up and coming, and less explored fields. These included the future of AI in holistic urban transitions planning, the potential of digital solutions to foster adaptation and accelerate response to climate threats, and the role of data and digital governance in securing inclusive transitions.

## FROM CASCAIS TO DWP 2025

The outcomes of DWP Cascais 2024 helps push further the journey of the DWP movement, by providing new insights and expanding the scope and scale of the Lisbon Manifesto's vision in relation to cities. Through the Summit, the following priority actions and collaboration were announced:

- 1. Urgency of systemic transitions:** Holistic approaches are essential to create and deliver on net-zero, resilient and inclusive cities. Enabling and supporting cities in understanding and applying digital tools and solutions that can help design systemic changes is not only essential but urgent. Digital solutions have a crucial role to play in accelerating this process and designing tools that meet the needs of cities.
- 2. Advance data insights and AI with purpose:** Increased access to data and insights are essential for managing increasingly complex urban realities, and enhancing interoperability of systems is crucial to meet transitions challenges. AI has a key role to play in advancing and augmenting information in decision making and offering near-real time positions and perspectives. The full potential, but also the risks related to these solutions, especially in regards to policy frameworks protecting individual rights, are uncharted territory for most cities.
  - **Call to explore governance and applications of AI in local governments:** GESI, the United Nations Summit of the Future, the Urban Transitions Mission, the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and the DWP movement commit to work together on an *AI with Purpose Lab* that conducts research, engages stakeholders and takes action on critical policy frameworks and digital infrastructure modernization commitments to ensure safe, equitable and net positive environmental contributions to our cities.
- 3. Boosting access to inclusive digital solutions:** The potential offered by digital solutions is often unknown or unattainable for many small and medium sized communities in the global North, and for many cities in Emerging and Developing Economies. Access to more affordable digital solutions to help operations and decision-making at the local level can not only help foster sustainable development, but also open new market opportunities. Therefore:
  - **Call for empowering smart cities worldwide:** GESI, the Urban Transitions Mission, the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and the DWP movement commit to work together to offer access to trainings and knowledge on digital solutions for cities, to build capacity

of local governments to identify and manage fit-for-purpose solutions and do so in a way that addresses both mitigation and adaptation challenges. The Innovate4Cities Conference, and the partnership between GESI and Innovate4Cities initiative, will serve both as a milestone and a channel to reach this goal, and to explore how digitalization impacts decision-making processes, driving local efforts to accelerate climate action.

4. **Scaling market uptake of affordable digital solutions:** Exploring new approaches to design and deploying affordable digital solutions is essential to offer widespread access, and to help reach the tipping point of both costs and the scale of deployment of these solutions. To respond to the urgent systemic transitions needs our world is facing, these new models and approaches should swiftly move from pilot to scale.
  - **Call to embrace and demonstrate radical collaboration:** A new call for commitment of the private sector and cities to explore, identify and test digital solutions was launched. The goal is to kick-off 15 pilot actions, focusing on impact-led development and roll-out of digital solutions to help respond to climate threats and adapt to climate change in cities, by the next DwP global summit.
  
5. **Raising ambition through bold action:** Making sustainable policies and solutions the default choice is essential to tackle the challenges our world faces. The private and public sectors need to work together to help set ambitious standards, drive their implementation, and transparently track their impact, both on the environment and on the quality of life of our communities. Therefore:
  - **Call to action to track the impacts of digital solutions with purpose:** GESI, the Urban Transitions Mission, The Global Covenant of Mayors and the DwP movement commit to work together to help track, assess, and transparently share the impacts of the implementation of digital solutions in cities climate action planning, to inform future deployment of these solution as part of the decarbonization and resilience journey of their urban transitions. The results of this assessment will be brought to the next DwP global summit. In this connection the current DWP Framework could be adapted in line with cities challenges in order to drive solution implementation, scale uptake and ensure real transformative change through an innovative competitive environment aimed at achieving healthy and sustainable living environments for citizens.

*Digital with Purpose Global Summit*