



EAPC blog

Let's talk about SmartCities (I): SmartCAT: Catalonia will be digital or not – Jordi Puigneró

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If you have started to read this article, then you must be someone who's concerned about the future of our country in a world at the height of the digital revolution. A revolution that compels us to innovate continuously, and not only in order to improve but, most of all, to stay competitive in a world where distances are no longer measured in kilometres or hours, but in megabits. In a digital society, competitiveness will be measured by the capacity to access knowledge in a collaborative manner.

In this regard, the **EAPC** has always been characterised by its decided investments in improving Catalan public administration through training in and research on public management, and also preparing the staff of public organisations for present and future changes. And now they need to be prepared for digital transformation. This transformation is penetrating all areas of our society: classrooms, workplaces, the urban and rural environment rural, etc. In short, a strategic challenge for the country that we are leading on a nationwide level from the Government of Catalonia's Secretariat for Telecommunications, Cyber-security and the Digital Society through the *SmartCAT* programme.

In this regard, one of the core issues of this programme is the management of problems generated by the growth of the urban population and rapid urbanisation. That is why smart city strategies are

emerging as a good initiative for solving such problems. To fill the gap in the literature on smart cities, the holding of such events as the **Smart City Expo World Congress** in Barcelona is essential in order for the people, scientists, academics, companies and governors to meet to connect and understand each other and draw the best conclusions with a goal to applying effective public policies for the good of the people that live in urban environments.

We are also developing a legal framework and technological architecture to enable us to implement *SmartCAT* in a safe, orderly and coordinated manner. In that regard, the Government of Catalonia has reached an agreement to establish a Catalan chapter of the City Protocol Society (CPS), where a coordination space will be formed in order for Catalan councils, companies and universities to define how Catalonia should be developed to become a smart region, in observance of common standards aimed not at having isolated smart cities but rather inter-connected smart cities.

At the Government we are devising the idea of a smart country as an icon of sustainability and inhabitability. A country that manages and integrates its critical infrastructures, a country that connects its telecommunications infrastructure, its social infrastructure and its business infrastructure. All to take advantage of the country's collective intelligence.

And strong leadership is essential for this new public governance. Therefore, here at the Secretariat we are working to turn the collaborative cogs with many and different stakeholders. Smart governance is that which places instruments for active and passive participation in the hands of the people, of institutions and of private companies to make decision-making more objectifiable and transparent. The digital empowerment of society will be a vital issue in the years to come. To ignore it and aim to govern and manage without it would be foolish and a fine example of poor governance.

It is for this and many other reasons that the Government of Catalonia passed, in October 2014, the *SmartCAT* strategy to provide a response to many of the new challenges faced by the digital society. Two years later, *SmartCAT* is already a reality in the form of projects and initiatives that are gaining ground and where the people, companies and institutions are cooperating towards the goal for Catalonia to become a world leading smart country in terms of research, innovation and implantation of digital technologies. A good example of this collaboration was the recently signed "**National Agreement on the Digital Society**". A great agreement in order for the country to face up to one of the biggest challenges today for Catalan society as a whole: digitalisation.

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◆ INNOVACIÓ, JORDI PUIGNERÓ, SMART CITIES, SMART CITY, SMART CITY EXPO WORLD CONGRESS, SMARTCAT, SMARTCITIES