Implemented by

In cooperation with

With its

german cooperation
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL
Service für Entwicklungsinitiativen

SERVICE AGENCY
COMMUNITIES IN ONE WORLD

Towards a participatory local governance: The creation of a Citizens' Space in Tlemcen

Digitalisation at the service of urban management

Promoting sustainable urban management through digitalisation remains a major concern for local authorities. It significantly influences various domains, from the social, environmental, and economic to the urban and political sectors. In Algeria, the context of the digitalisation of urban services is experiencing a gradual transformation. However, other challenges persist due to the rapid urban growth, such as the increased demand for infrastructure and the necessity to ensure efficient urban services.

The regional project "City-to-City Cooperation Maghreb-Germany" (KWT II), commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), was implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in cooperation with the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) of Engagement Global gGmbH, from March 2020 to February 2024. Among other activities, the regional project supported project partnerships between German and Maghreb cities. The good practices highlighted in this fact sheet have been developed by the municipality of Tlemcen. This practice will be scaled up as part of the follow-up regional project "Urban adaptation to climate change in the Maghreb", running from March 2024 to February 2027.

Creation of a physical and virtual Citizen's Space in Tlemcen

In Algeria, the regional project KWT II was implemented in collaboration with the National Urban Planning Agency (ANURB) of the Ministry of Housing, Urban Planning, and the City.

The municipality of Tlemcen has embarked on an innovative project to establish an inclusive Citizens' Space, both physical and virtual. The project arose from a desire to design an inclusive platform for handling citizens' requests online, which was initiated in 2019 by the President of the Popular Communal Assembly (P/APC), the elected representatives and managers of the municipality of Tlemcen. Based on the results of a survey carried out among citizens and municipal staff, the project was then focused on setting up a central point for all information relating to procedures and news from the municipality.

On the one hand, the aim was to facilitate access to information about local procedures and services, and to reduce the time taken to process citizens' requests. On the other hand, the objective was to optimise consultation sessions between municipal services and citizens, by providing them with an application on a touch-screen terminal and staff to guide and respond quickly to citizens' most frequently asked questions and requests.

Approaches and actions

The Citizen's Space is part of the implementation of axis 3 of the Tlemcen's digital transition strategy. This strategy, which was developed in 2020, aimed to make digital tools more widely available, both internally and externally, in order to optimise the efficiency of technical services. The strategy's action plan was based on three axes, as illustrated in diagram 01:
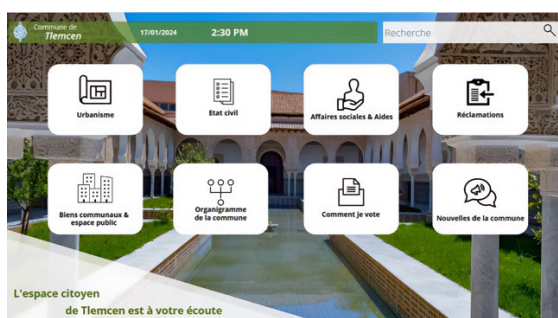
Left: Participatory and inclusive needs assessment process in Tlemcen.

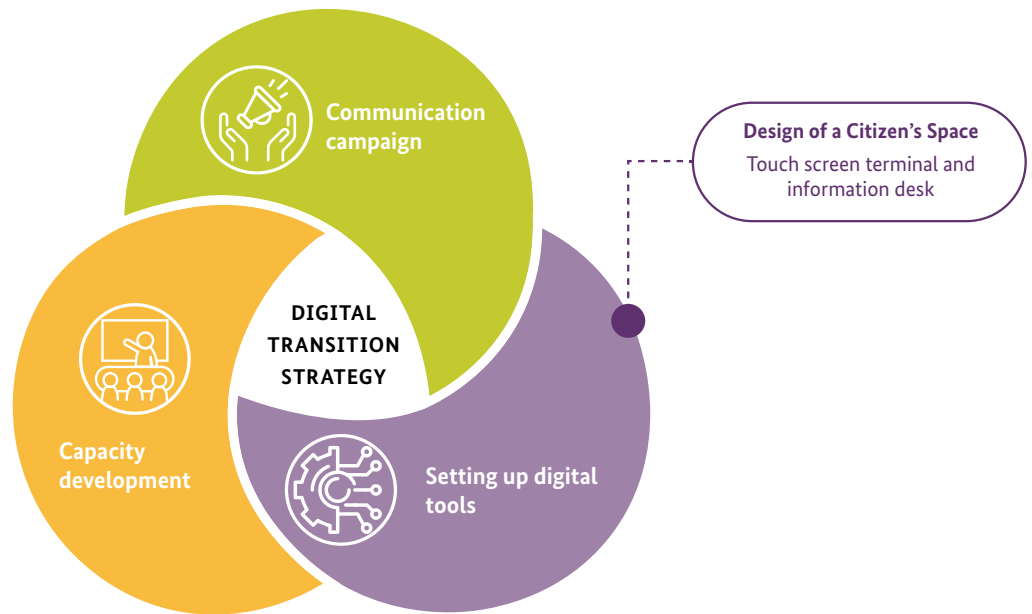*Right: Interface of the application on a touch screen terminal.*

Diagram 01: *The action plan for the overall digitisation strategy of the municipality of Tlemcen. © GIZ*

1. Capacity development: Training sessions and workshops were held to strengthen the skills of technical and administrative staff and elected representatives from the municipality of Tlemcen. These sessions focused on local governance, citizen participation, digitisation and communication tools, with the aim of providing them with the skills and know-how that are essential for the success and sustainability of this project.

2. Participatory and inclusive diagnosis: More than 200 discussions and surveys, using interviews and questionnaires, were carried out with the municipality's technical managers and elected representatives, as well as with citizens:

➤ **Local authority technical and elected officials:** The aim was to identify the services, requests and questions frequently asked by residents, and to pinpoint the difficulties encountered in receiving, supporting and dealing with requests made by citizens.

➤ **Citizens:** The aim was to gather information on their needs and the obstacles they encounter when dealing with administrative formalities in the municipality of Tlemcen.

3. A physical and virtual Citizen's Space: The choice of the Citizen's Space project stemmed from the need identified during the diagnosis, namely the centralisation of information and guidance on municipal procedures. With this in mind, the municipality began the process of creating a space with a modern, digital reception desk, equipped with an application dedicated to citizens. In addition, a person trained in communication approaches and tools, as well as the procedures, is responsible for guiding citizens and checking that their applications are in order before they are submitted to the registry office.
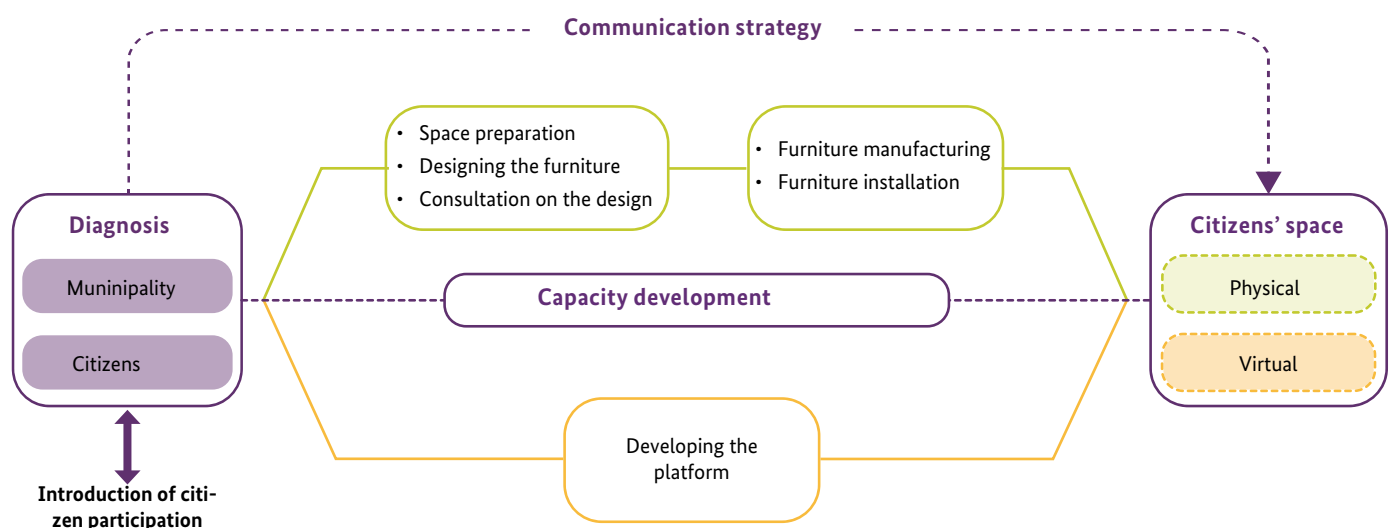

Diagram 02: *Methodological approach. © GIZ*

⬡ Achievements

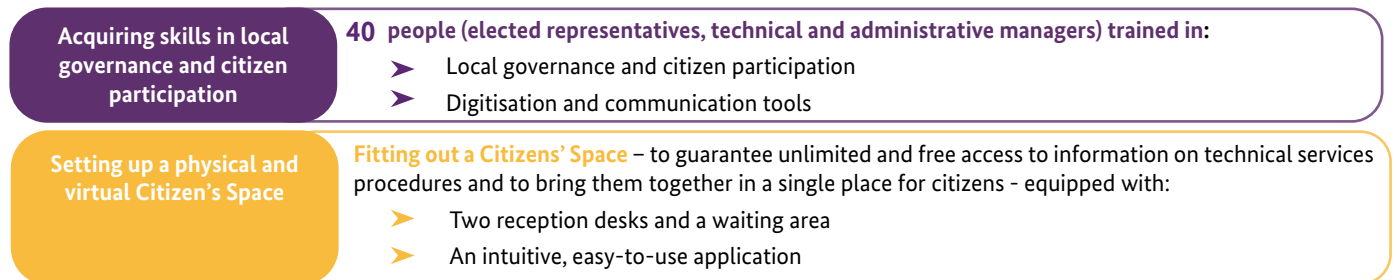The project achieved the following results (diagram 03):

Acquiring skills in local governance and citizen participation	**40 people (elected representatives, technical and administrative managers) trained in:** ➤ Local governance and citizen participation ➤ Digitisation and communication tools
Setting up a physical and virtual Citizen's Space	**Fitting out a Citizens' Space** – to guarantee unlimited and free access to information on technical services procedures and to bring them together in a single place for citizens - equipped with: ➤ Two reception desks and a waiting area ➤ An intuitive, easy-to-use application

Diagram 03: *Achievements. © GIZ*

⬡ Challenges

Various challenges have been identified, requiring appropriate solutions (diagram 04):

Coordination and sharing of information between different departments:
● This led to difficulties in the process of handling requests from citizens. To remedy this situation, a report summarising the inclusive diagnosis was drawn up, with the aim of harmonising all information relating to administrative procedures. This document served as a reference for all municipal services.

Manufacturing the furniture for the reception area:
● This was a challenge, particularly when it came to receiving proposals from craftsmen. The bids received did not meet the essential quality criteria, particularly with regard to the quality of the materials and the modern style sought. Subsequently, the manufacturing process posed an additional challenge, requiring ongoing monitoring by GIZ technical advisers.
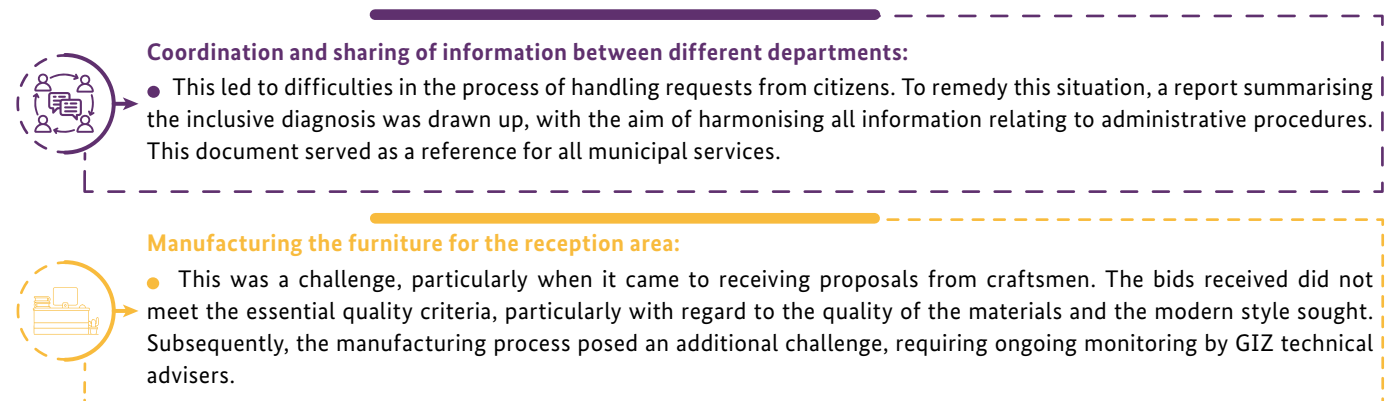
Diagram 04: *Challenges overcome. © GIZ*

⬡ Innovative aspects and strengths

The project stood out for its strengths, reflecting a commitment to digitisation and citizen participation. Here is an overview of the innovative aspects of the project (diagram 05):
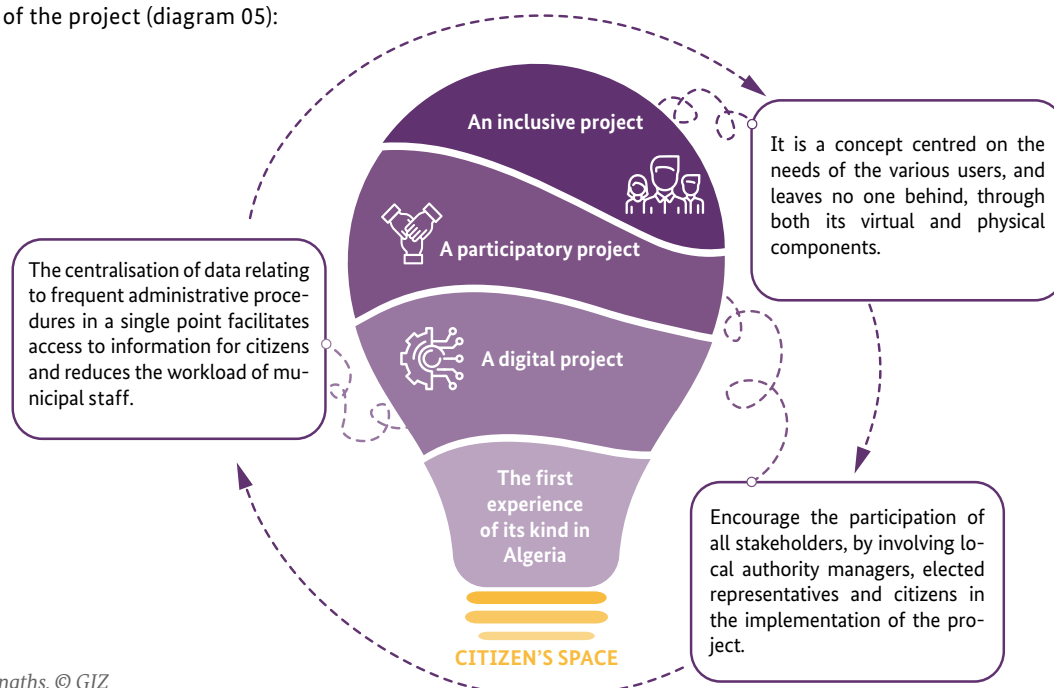
An inclusive project

A participatory project

A digital project

The first experience of its kind in Algeria

CITIZEN'S SPACE

It is a concept centred on the needs of the various users, and leaves no one behind, through both its virtual and physical components.

The centralisation of data relating to frequent administrative procedures in a single point facilitates access to information for citizens and reduces the workload of municipal staff.

Encourage the participation of all stakeholders, by involving local authority managers, elected representatives and citizens in the implementation of the project.

Diagram 05: *Strengths. © GIZ*

Left: Coordination of the launch stages of the Citizen's Space project.

Right: Installation of the furniture for the Citizen's Space in Tlemcen.

Anita Sebio Kouhè
Project Manager
anita.sebio-kouhe@giz.de
T +49 6196 79 - 1068
Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5
65760 Eschborn
Germany

Best practices, lessons learnt and advice

The experience of Tlemcen has helped to draw a number of lessons and identify some good practices and advice to be taken into consideration when implementing a similar project (diagram 06).

A participatory and inclusive approach

Adopting a participatory and inclusive approach: Actively involving municipal staff and citizens—particularly during the diagnostic phase—ensures that the real needs of stakeholders are effectively addressed throughout the implementation of this user-centered project.

Capacity development
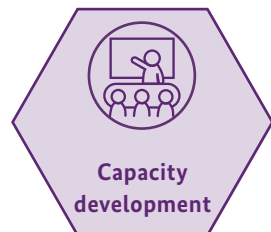
Tailoring capacity development to specific needs: Technical training and workshops were designed to meet the needs of municipal managers. These sessions followed a "learning by doing" approach, allowing municipal staff and elected representatives to apply newly acquired technical skills directly during various project phases. This hands-on method enabled the municipality to quickly take ownership of the project and develop the expertise needed to ensure its long-term sustainability.

Communication for trust-building

Communication, a foundation for building trust among citizens: A communication strategy was developed to provide citizens with regular information and progress reports throughout the project's lifecycle. Communication campaigns targeted various communication channels, such as local radio, social networks, newspapers and posters, in order to reach different audiences (women, young people, the elderly, etc.).

Diagram 06 : *Best practices, lessons learnt and advice. © GIZ*