Government Cloud services for First Aid exams

Description of the collaboration

The procedure of obtaining a driver’s licence in Hungary involves multiple interactions with several agencies, both governmental and non-governmental. In the light of the country’s e-governance strategy, the collaboration around the creation of driving licences has been reformatted with legislation that came into force on 1st of February 2021. The aim of this development is to reduce the burden of bureaucracy for the affected citizens, to provide prompt transfer of data between the relevant agencies and to provide a higher quality of service (including faster information delivery between agencies, more accurate data transfer and better access for e-services).

The collaboration between the state, medical profession and the Red Cross was established in 1993 after the system changes, involving four main partners delivering services to those applying for driver’s licences. The process involves a high degree of bureaucracy, including multiple rounds of in-person administration and paper-based information transfer between the actors. With a newly established ICT solution, the number of administrative visits aims to be reduced, and improve the data management between the actors.

To apply for a driver’s licence, applicants need to obtain four documents:

- medical fitness certificate
- knowledge test certificate
- traffic exam certificate
- first aid exam certificate.

These documents can be obtained by the driver’s licence nominees from different actors after the successful exams and must be presented to the Authorities. The name of public bodies and
their institutional background has changed over time, but their functions have remained the same in the past 28 years, thus we indicate their current names and functions:

- Ministry of Interior (public)
  - supervises the process.
  - maintains registry for all personal identification documents.

- Traffic Authority (Road Traffic Registration Body) (public)
  - currently served by a function of ‘Government Offices’ under the one-stop-shop approach.
  - acting as authority to exhibit licences.

- Traffic and Transport Examination Center non-profit LTD (public)
  - organises learner permit knowledge tests.
  - organises traffic exams.

- General Practitioners (public/semi-private)
  - deliver obligatory health checks.

- Hungarian Red Cross (third sector)
  - organises obligatory first aid exams and exhibits certificates.
  - advises on exemption cases based on previous certifications.

The Hungarian Government originally regulated the collaboration through a mixture of government and ministerial decrees, which has been changed with the introduction of the act CXVI. of 2019, an omnibus act changing the former legislation on several administration matters. With the introduction of this new law, the collaboration became regulated by higher level legislation. To meet the new requirements, a project has been launched by Hungarian Red Cross (HRC) and the responsible ministry to introduce a new ICT tool supporting the collaboration. This new phase of collaboration opens further opportunities for the cooperation between the Red Cross and the government, and has the potential to be of national importance as an example for collaboration-based public services.

**Impact of ICT on collaboration**

To meet the requirements of the changing legislative environment, partners needed to implement ICT developments within their organizations. These were overseen by the Undersecretary of State for Central Office for Administrative and Electronic Public Services, Ministry of Interior (MoI), as they are the responsible governmental body to maintain the
registry of various personal identification and information documents. All ICT developments needed to be fully compatible with the government’s central information services.

The overall aim for the renewal of the collaboration was to fully digitalize the bureaucratic procedure of obtaining a driver’s licence and replace the paper-based administration using the government’s cloud services. The actors of the collaboration were responsible to implement the necessary changes, with the professional supervision and financial support of the Ministry of Interior. Traffic and Transport Examination Center non-profit LTD set up their digital system previously, while General Practitioners already had access to the governmental healthcare cloud system as their main administrative frame. These systems were developed for different agencies of central government, embraced by the same technological and policy environment, therefore connecting them was less challenging.

On the other hand, Hungarian Red Cross, as a public benefit association did not have a broad spectrum of ICT functions and organizational experience in such developments, therefore the professional support of MoI was important. For the development of the new tool, HRC and MoI formed a new collaboration with public ICT providers and developers in possession of specific know-how related to governmental e-services. Through the process, new functions needed to be established, e.g., specific data security roles and long-term storage functions, which were previously absent at HRC.

The newly established first aid exam administration platform replaces the old administration procedures with the opportunity to instantly register the results of the exam and synchronize them with the government’s central registry. This creates a new national database for all first aid exams from 1st of February 2021, with a direct link to the central registry for driver’s licences. The system provides an easy-to-understand user interface mirroring the reformed administration algorithm. It incorporates solutions to facilitate accurate and prompt data input. For example, with a direct link to the central registry, first aid exam administrators can use auto-filling for personal data based on the client’s ID card number, or vice versa. Filling of the exam records are assisted by pre-filled information and pre-defined choices for different data. All inputs are instantly synchronized with the central registry’s database, making it far more efficient than the previous system.

Another impact of ICT on the collaboration is related to the extended use of Office 365 cloud solutions. To mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, HRC expanded the
usage of cloud and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) solutions, including SharePoint services and video conference calls. They used these services to hold meetings with the partners involved, as well as for internal communication and training activities. For the swift implementation of the new ICT tool, HRC organised training for 15 mentors and 150 administrative staff across the country. Mentors were trained in person, while administrative colleagues joined in one of the ten e-learning conference calls held by the mentors. Conference calls included standardized presentations, pre-recorded screencaps showing the most important user interactions, and open ‘question and answers’ sessions.

Efficiency of the collaboration

The collaboration around the exhibition of driver’s licences has been reformed with 1\textsuperscript{st} February 2021, introducing a new procedure and extended responsibilities of the partners, including authority rights handed over to third sector in some cases detailed in later sections. Preliminary discussions between the Hungarian Red Cross and the Ministry of Interior began in 2017. After the recognition of common interests and goals, legislative preparatory consultations took place with the involvement of all actors, leading to an omnibus act CXVI. of 2019 about the “amendments to the law to simplify and digitalize certain administrative procedures”. The new law changes and supplements the act on the Hungarian Red Cross (XL of 1993), elevating to the collaboration’s formal level (previously it was regulated by a governmental decree only). The new legislation defines the scope of data recorded and determines that HRC communicates the exam results on a digital channel to the central registry authority.

In these new arrangements, the Central Registry Authority (Undersecretary of State for Central Office for Administrative and Electronic Public Services, Ministry of Interior) collects all information related to driver’s licence nominees through digital channels to check fulfilment of the criteria. With this development, the number of face-to-face interactions has been reduced, and the service delivery became faster. As the new system is recently introduced, and COVID-19 largely affected the delivery of the exams involved (including lower turnouts and suspension of services), we have no qualitative data on the effects at the time of this study. In an ideal case, a nominee only needs to be present at the four exams (knowledge test, medical check, first aid exam and traffic exam), but no interaction is needed with the Government Office, the driver’s licence plastic card will be exhibited and sent automatically.
During an average process, nominees need to take a knowledge test, then participate in traffic practice lessons, before taking the traffic exam. To get their driver’s licence, a medical check needs to be done, as well as receiving a certificate from a successful first aid exam at the Red Cross. In the previous system, nominees needed to take all these certificates in person to the nearest Government Office to initiate the administrative process to obtain a driver’s licence. The authority then checked the validity of all these documents, a signature sample needed to be taken as well as an ID photo. The new system was more efficient by making these steps unnecessary. The results are instantly submitted by all parties to the Central Registry with sufficient data authorization. The system automatically checks other criteria, e.g., the nominee has provided a signature and ID photo recorded for previous documents (ID card or passport) and is not disqualified from driving. If all requirements are fulfilled, the Central Registry automatically forwards the request to exhibit the plastic card, which will be then sent out by post or can be collected at the nearest Government Office upon the choice of the nominee.

The development affects approximately 100,000 people each year, which is around 1% of the country’s population.

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<tr>
<th>First aid exams for driver’s licence in 2019</th>
<th>Number of exams</th>
<th>Number of successful exams</th>
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<td></td>
<td>111,153</td>
<td>101,193</td>
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Reducing the number of in-person interactions is an important step in light of the struggles to provide equal access to governmental administration services. Governmental administration services are based on a micro-regional level. Hungary has 174 districts (járás), each has a district centre with a Government Office providing unified services to the citizens. As the road infrastructure is in a very diverse state, access to district centres varies largely across the 3,155 settlements of the country. If we take the state of public transport into account, access is an important, yet hardly addressed challenge. According to the last comprehensive report on the topic, citizens from 21% of all settlements can access their district centre with a road trip more than 45 minutes, while from 22 settlements, travel time would take more than two hours. Schedules also affect different areas unequally. On large parts of Trans-Danubia and Northern-Hungary, there are periods longer than five hours during daytime in weekdays without any public transport opportunities to get to the district centre or travel back. In these areas, accessing governmental administrative services requires a whole day. Figure 1 shows a map
based on a comprehensive indicator uniting travel time, daily number of services, schedule tracking times and number of transfers needed to reach the district centre.¹

As the new system was introduced on 1st February 2021, usage statistics are not yet available. However, the aim of the Hungarian Red Cross is to register 110,000 exams until the end of the year through the new system.

The budget for the development was around 90 million HUF (251,000 EUR), which was co-financed by the Hungarian government and the European Social Fund through relevant national Operational Programmes. The development was integrated into a large-scale e-government project, involving a large number of sub-projects (“Further development and renewal of the systems of the National Data Asset Registers”, KÖFOP-1.0.0-VEKOP-15-2016-00030, with a budget of 5.4 billion HUF / 15.1 million EUR). The Hungarian Government only co-financed

¹ https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/download.php?objectId=48283
costs related to functions needed to comply with the new legislation – extra software functions, like exam scheduling must be covered by the HRC in a later development stage. Public funding was spent on software development (60 million HUF/167,360 EUR), hardware and infrastructure procurement (approx. 20 million HUF/55,800 EUR), while the staff costs needed to implement the changes (management, training, and internal support) was financed by the HRC (8 million HUF/22,300 EUR).

According to the interviews, the renewed collaboration also has a strong, but less tangible and quantifiable significance for the Red Cross as it strengthens their position as an auxiliary humanitarian actor to the government and provides a more solid ground for collaboration in other areas. Hungarian Red Cross already had a strong cooperation with different bodies of the Ministry of Interior in the law enforcement domain (e.g. National Directorate of Disaster Management, National Police Headquarters and National Directorate General for Aliens Policing). This current initiative extends the spectrum of cooperation with MoI and provides an opportunity for an ongoing higher-level, ministerial discussion around the role of the Hungarian Red Cross in delivering services to the citizens. According to the interviews, the Director General of the HRC treated this development as a priority and expressed the intent for the organization to be a proactive, prompt, and reliable partner.

Red tape

Red tape of the collaboration is deeply affected by the new legislation came into force by 1st February 2021. The new regulation strengthens the cooperation and extends the competences of the different actors. Due to the developments reducing red tape mentioned, the new phase of this collaboration has strong potential as an example for other fields of public service.

As detailed above in the section on efficiency, the new digitalized information exchange between the collaboration partners has an important effect on service delivery. The in-person administration visits posed a burden for many clients, which is cut by the new ICT tools involved. With this development, if a client fits all requirements, namely completed all exams, and got a positive medical check result, as well as has a signature sample and an ID photo recorded in the Central Registry, the driver’s licence will be processed automatically and sent to his or her postal address, or the nearest Government Offices depending on the client’s preferences. Red tape can be measured by the number of in-person interactions with the authorities throughout the process. As a result of this development, the number of interactions...
is reduced, and the need for the verification of the documents exhibited by the different collaboration actors became unnecessary. According to the interviews, there were cases from time to time when clients tried to use counterfeit or stolen documents, causing additional workload for the parties involved in the process. With a direct link between registries, such misuse becomes impossible.

An important development reducing red tape is related to the exceptions under the first aid examination requirements. Formerly, if a nominee for example with a medical decree sought to obtain a driver’s licence, she or he needed to request the exception at the Government Office as an additional in-person interaction. Most of the times, the decision was easy, but in many cases, the public servants at the Government Office had to ask the professional opinion of the Red Cross (e.g., when the applicant has a previous foreign first aid or medical trainings). The nominee than had to go in with his or her papers and interact with the exam staff of the Hungarian Red Cross, who provided an official recommendation for the Government Office to accept or decline the exception request. The client had to return with this document to the Authority, where a decision was issued based on the documents provided. This means three face to face interactions, with corresponding travel and waiting time.

In the new system, the government delegates authority rights related to the first aid exams to the exam administrative staff of the Hungarian Red Cross. This means that HRC has authority-level decision making competences in the official administration of the first aid exams for driver’s licences. This delegation of competence to an NGO is rare in the Hungarian public administration.

According to the interviews, Hungarian Red Cross plans to extend the newly introduced system with exam-organization tools, providing a holistic system for the overall management of first aid exams. This planned development includes an electronic application system assisting both the clients and the administration staff with online payment options, easier scheduling of exams as well as a central payment registry. With these functions, HRC seeks to further reduce the administrative burden on their staff and provide a more client-friendly environment. This development would not only affect the work of the exam administrators, but impact supporting functions such as accounting. As state-of-the-art data protection measures have been introduced, interviewees believe that the new system could also be a good base for a renewed registry for volunteers and members.