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Adopting AI in the Municipal World: An Unavoidable Transformation

Artificial intelligence (AI) is gradually transforming the public sector across the globe. Administrations that have adopted it are already seeing tangible productivity gains. According to an international study, up to 41% of working hours in the public sector could be assisted by AI tools, freeing up valuable human resources for higher-value tasks. In local communities, this potential even rises to 43%.

These figures reflect an undeniable reality: AI is no longer a technological luxury, but a concrete tool for optimizing operations and improving services to citizens.

Genuine obstacles

Despite this potential, AI adoption remains held back by a number of factors. More specifically, the main barriers are:

- **Data confidentiality and security** (62%)
- **Lack of a clear digital strategy** (51%)
- **Insufficient infrastructure and technological skills** (45%)
- **Ethical concerns about bias and transparency** (42%)
- **Lack of funding and clarity on return on investment** (41%)

These obstacles explain why many public organizations are still reluctant to move from pilot projects to large-scale adoption.

Overcoming barriers to AI adoption

While the challenges are many, solutions exist to help municipalities move towards successful AI adoption. When it comes to **data security**, having clear governance policies in place and using certified suppliers can help boost public confidence. To compensate for the **lack of a digital strategy**, many municipalities are choosing to implement gradual action plans comprising targeted pilot projects that demonstrate added value quickly.

A lack of **infrastructure and in-house skills** can be overcome by forming partnerships with specialized organizations and providing ongoing employee training to ensure the long-term adoption of the tools. As for **ethical concerns**, these can be addressed by making transparency, explicability, and accountability integral parts of AI projects from the outset. Finally, in order to overcome budgetary constraints, many local authorities are choosing models that involve the pooling of technological resources, or modular solutions that are scaled to the size of the municipality.

A strategic choice for small municipalities

Given **labour shortages** and **limited budgets**, municipalities cannot afford to ignore AI. It provides a direct response to these challenges by automating repetitive tasks, helping employees manage information, and maintaining service quality despite limited resources.

If municipalities fail to act, they risk weakening their ability to meet citizens' expectations. Taking action means laying the groundwork for a more agile administration that can "**do more with less**" while maintaining a high standard of public service.

The shift to AI, especially for small municipalities, relies on gradual, ethical, and tailored adoption. By starting with targeted pilot projects and focusing on training and collaboration, these municipalities can overcome the obstacles and ensure that this transformation becomes a genuine driver of innovation and sustainability for their communities.

Sources

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