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The roll-out of artificial intelligence in public administrations: comparative analysis, challenges and success factors

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SUMMARY

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a key driver in the reform of public policy, but it is neither automatic nor exclusive.

French public administrations have recently seen the adoption of AI at multiple levels. 'Shadow AI' (spontaneous unregulated use) could affect up to 40% of public officials[1], revealing an appetite for AI but creating major risks (data security, inequality between officials, territories and even users, reliability of decisions):

- **for the State**, the Interministerial Directorate for Digital Affairs (DINUM) has identified more than 140 AI products to name but a few, with significant variation across ministries (from 0 to 74 projects carried out depending on the ministry in question);
- **local authorities** show that adoption levels are generally correlated with their size (90% of the cities involved, while 73% of municipalities with fewer than 3,500 inhabitants have no AI projects);
- **the health and social sphere** is also appropriating AI in a variety of ways, particularly in the trade-offs between generative AI and the use of previous technologies notably used in the fight against fraud (data mining, RPA[2]).

In companies, AI is deployed primarily in support functions and customer relations, with the aim of growth. Considered not only as a technological challenge but as a catalyst for the strategic plan, it is being driven forward at a high level, combining the aspects of organisation, governance, social dialogue and economic management, as part of a multi-year approach that allows for deferred gains.

Foreign administrations aim to achieve both efficiency and high-quality public services in the areas of fiscal and social policies, and for roles demanding high levels of administrative work. The adoption and industrialisation of uses depend mainly on the digital readiness of foreign administrations and on a clearly defined balance between decentralised innovation and strategic regulation.

A classification of uses profiles in French public administrations emerges:

- ***(i)*** general-purpose solutions (summary, translation, etc.), which are cross-cutting but are still developed separately by government departments ('GenIAl', 'MIrAI', 'PIAG', etc.);
- ***(ii)*** solutions relating to support functions (procurement, legal affairs, human resources, etc.), which are still not widely shared;
- ***(iii)*** specialised functional solutions (fight against fraud, job offers, etc.), which are the most promising provided they are developed in consultation with staff.

In this period of widespread testing, national governance and management do not favour pooling. Each administration innovates within the constraints of the resources available to it (budget, human skills), without coordination or real pooling. Unlike companies, AI is still mainly driven by digital departments, without systematic implementation at directorate-general level that would integrate all aspects of the project (infrastructure, data, functional processes, skills and risks) and make it part of a strategic 'public service project'.

[1] According to a study by the SNDGCT (organisation representing and supporting senior local government management) published in September 2025, 40% of local authority staff use AI tools without permission.

[2] Robotic process automation.

The gains, understood in the broad sense in the public sector (time, quality, reducing errors, improving quality of life at work) are already confirmed by feedback, particularly for computer coding and document management, but only materialise after a period of learning and fine-tuning, due to the inherently changing nature of the technologies.

The task force's implementation of the methodology developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) for French public administrations indicates that:

- **one in five public officials is, in theory, significantly exposed to AI**, within the meaning of the ILO categories;
- **one in seven is significantly so**, particularly in administrative and support functions;
- one in four public officials is not very exposed (social workers, nurses, etc.);
- one in two is not very exposed at all as part of their duties involving direct contact with the public (teachers during lessons, law enforcement officers while on duty on the ground, etc.).

This analysis of functions, assessed using this task model, does not prejudge actual productivity gains, as AI can increase their efficiency and reduce the time spent on certain related tasks that are time-consuming or low-value-added, thereby improving quality for them and users alike.

In corporate support functions, the use of AI allows for gains through the optimisation of resources, the reduction of certain costs (maintenance, external services) and time savings. In France, the government's procurement department anticipates time savings of over 60% for public procurers when sourcing suppliers, while the Legal Affairs Directorate of the economic and financial ministries has halved the time spent on document research.

In terms of functions, AI improves quality and efficiency, particularly in relations with users by enabling faster and more personalised responses. Hence, the use of AI-powered document search solutions by staff for 'Services publics +' has reduced response times (from 19 to three days on average) while improving user satisfaction. Conversational AI agents (chatbots) used by municipal services significantly reduce the number of missed calls (for example, 8% of calls missed in Plaisir (Yvelines) compared with 55% previously). Finally, AI helps to attract staff and reduce the staff turnover rate (administrative management centre in Haute-Savoie).

Achieving these gains entails investment and operating costs that are difficult to estimate and often exceed forecasts (**proposal no. 7**). Frugal models and efficient usage can help to keep contain costs while protecting the environment. In public administrations, these gains must offset specific or particularly significant constraints relating to compliance, 'technical debt', data security and sovereignty.

As such, French funding is typically low compared with that of large companies and is characterised by its fragmentation, due to insufficiently structured management and governance. Between 2023 and 2025, DINUM committed €8.7 million to AI, government departments €26.2 million and France Travail €18.7 million. Finally, the 'MAREVA 2' evaluation method needs to be updated (**proposal no. 7**), as it fails to take into account the life cycle, scalability or indirect costs.

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The phasing-out of 'shadow AI' requires secure, general-purpose AI tools to be made available to all public officials (**proposal no. 1**), going beyond current arrangements (the ongoing trial of DINUM's 'AI Assistant', which is limited to 10,000 testers). Shared AI solutions for support functions are required (**proposal no. 3**), while specialised use cases for functions must be based on the principle of subsidiarity (**proposal no. 4**).

Scaling up requires various obstacles to be overcome. To facilitate roll-outs while avoiding duplication (**proposal no. 2**) against a backdrop of tight public finances, the pooling of infrastructure and 'shared resources' (graphics processing units, hosting, etc.) is essential (**proposal no. 8**). Architectural choices directly determine performance, sovereignty, security and scalability, while relying on a decarbonised energy mix that minimises the environmental footprint. Data governance, focused on greater sharing and managed at an interministerial level, is crucial because AI can only be effective if it is based on high-quality, interoperable and secure data, with sovereign environments for sensitive uses (**proposal no. 10**).

The European (EU AI Regulation, General Data Protection Regulation) and national frameworks require enhanced governance of all risks throughout the deployment process, and should be designed to guarantee sovereignty and ensure safe, fair and legally robust practices. This covers transparency, explainability, protection of personal and sensitive data, audits and human oversight. Failures elsewhere illustrate the cost of inadequate risk management (litigation, loss of trust), while public procurement must incorporate new contractual requirements (documentation, auditability, reversibility, traceability) to limit technological dependence (**proposal no. 9**).

The many transformations enabled and brought about by AI in public administrations are, first and foremost, organisational and human in nature. To avoid creating a 'graveyard of proof-of-concepts', scaling up must be grounded in the actual work carried out by staff and involve co-developing AI applications with them and with service users (**proposal no. 5**). Although still rarely practised, dialogue on technology and social issues is a key driver for the adoption and continuous improvement of AI-enhanced processes (**proposal no. 11**). The forward-looking management of jobs and skills (GPEC) focused on at-risk functions (**proposal no. 12**) must underpin a training policy structured across three levels: a common foundation for users (opportunities and risks of AI); training for public sector managers in project management; and specialised technical training to enhance strategic autonomy and operational efficiency (**proposal no. 13**). On a broader level, the governance of AI solution roll-out must be based on a structured change management approach which determines its acceptability and effectiveness.

Finally, governance must combine cross-functional oversight with functional autonomy, empowering each department to take responsibility for its own overall transformation and the support required (processes, skills, data and risks). Given the evolving nature of technologies and possible biases, the sustainable performance of AI solutions must be continuously monitored throughout their entire lifecycle, including operational impacts and evolving patterns of use.

The main challenge is no longer the adoption of AI, as that is already under way. Rather, the challenge is its transformation into a means of bringing about lasting improvements for the public service, its staff and its users. It is less a technical matter than a catalyst for transforming organisations, processes and skills, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of public policies.

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LIST OF PROPOSALS

Proposal no. 1 [all public administrations]: Make secure, 'general-purpose' AI solutions available to all public officials, with the framework for their use to be defined by the relevant government departments.

Proposal no. 2 [all public administrations]: Develop, maintain and make available a map of AI projects at the level of each public administration (for example, at the level of general secretariats for ministries, national funds for social security bodies, and associations of elected representatives for local authorities), with the aim of identifying available services and avoiding duplication.

Proposal no. 3 [SGG, DAE, DGAFP]: Provide interministerial AI solutions for support functions (procurement, legal affairs and human resources in particular).

Proposal no. 4 [all public administrations]: Ensure that 'functional' AI solutions form part of a process of integration into IT systems.

Proposal no. 5 [project leaders]: Involve users in the evaluation of the gains made possible by the roll-out of AI solutions.

Proposal no. 6 [DINUM]: Adapt the value analysis and feedback method (MAREVA) to make it a methodology for evaluating AI solutions based on the value of projects and their full costs.

Proposal no. 7 [project leaders]: Incorporate the assessment of the impacts and costs of AI solutions right from the design stage. In case of a favourable decisional choice, assess the maturity of the organisation (see the task force's proposal, Annex 17).

Proposal no. 8 [DINUM, DSS]: Establish and fund a multi-year plan for the gradual pooling of the infrastructure and 'shared resources' essential to the development of public AI:

Proposal no. 9 [DINUM, DAE]: Make available to public administrations standard contractual clauses setting out the responsibilities of the AI solutions provider in order to ensure reversibility and the purchaser's autonomy (skills and ownership of data in particular).

Proposal no. 10 [DINUM]: Update and implement a public data governance framework focused on greater data sharing and coordinated at inter-ministerial level, with a particular emphasis on identifying sensitive data and uses.

Proposal no. 11 [all public administrations]: Strengthen dialogue on technology and social issues in the development and implementation of AI strategies and solutions.

Proposal no. 12 [DGAFP]: Define and implement a forward-looking management strategy for jobs and skills (GPEC) that integrates the challenges of AI, by prioritising the necessary skills and the functions most at risk.

Proposal no. 13 [DGAFP, public service schools]: Define and implement a strategy for initial and continuing training of public officials on AI, including (i) common ground on the challenges, opportunities and risks of AI, (ii) specific training in the management of AI projects for managers and (iii) training on the necessary AI skills.

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