

## Talking Interoperability

A dialogue series for advancing interoperability in the social protection sector

### Azerbaijan: Shaping the Future of Social Digital Solutions

*This brief summarizes key learnings from the online webinar dialogue on interoperability in the Azerbaijan's digital transformation in social protection held on 10 September 2024.*

*The keynote was presented by **Sabina Huseynova** – advisor to the Director, DOST Digital Innovations Center, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, and **Orkhan Salahov** – Deputy Director, DOST Digital Innovations Center, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population. The discussants were **Andrea Martin**– Social Protection Consultant, World Bank, and **Jeremi Joslin**– Executive Director, OpenSPP. The session was moderated by **Liyuan Xiao**– Digital Social Protection Specialist, Universal Social Protection Department, ILO.*

**Please click [here](#) to access the recording and presentation slides.**

### Overview

Azerbaijan has significantly advanced the digitalisation of its social services. It has digitalised 159 social services—over 90% of the total, including pensions, labour contracts, allowances, social assistance, and more—reaching about 87% of the population. These efforts are driven by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population (hereinafter - the Ministry).

The social system's digitalisation timeline, as shown in the figure, reflects a gradual and structured progression in Azerbaijan's digitalisation (2003-2013). Beginning with basic infrastructure development and personal data collection, it is followed by the launch of the Centralised Information System (CEIS) in 2014, marking the era of expansion and integration (2014-2017) and enabling data integration from over 80 state agencies. The CEIS serves as a central repository for electronic information related to social services of the Ministry, offering a single-window approach across 19 sub-systems (such as disability, pension, etc.) and four registries, including labour, employment, social assistance, and social security.

This learning brief explores Azerbaijan's most recent digital transformation phase between 2018 and 2023, which was the focal point of the webinar.

### 2018-2023: Advanced Digital Transformation

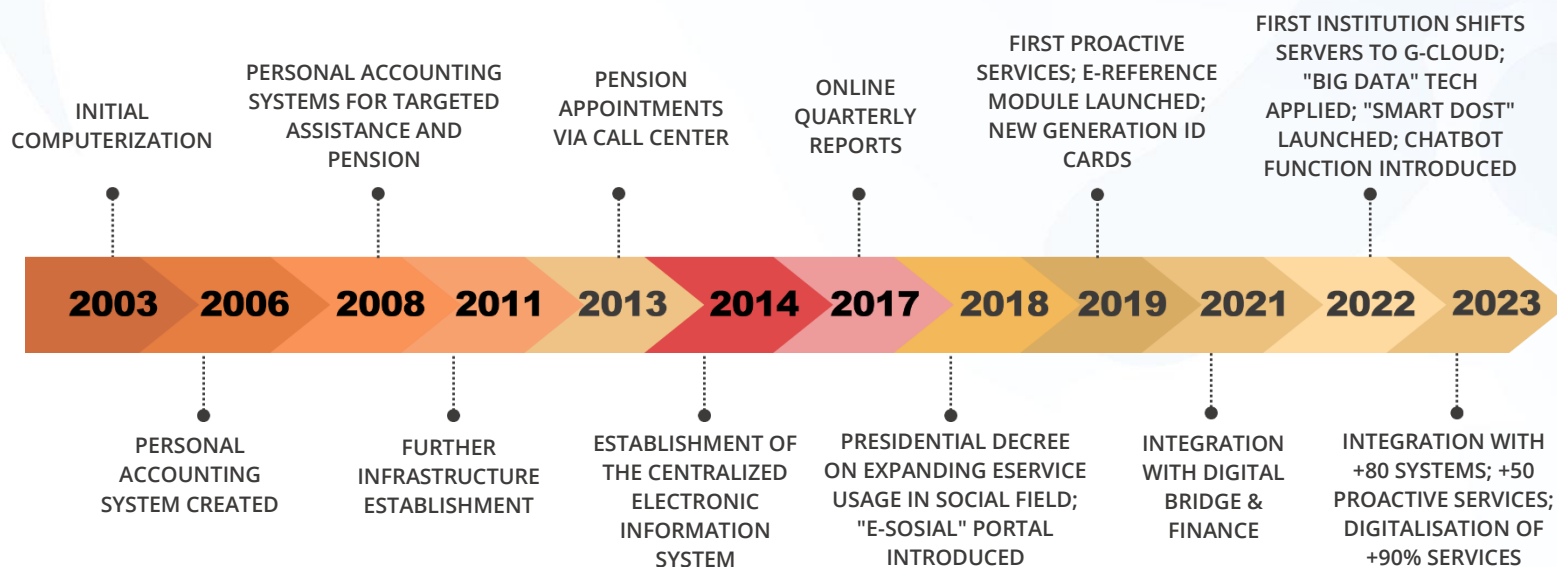
Azerbaijan's Presidential **Decree No. 258 (2018)** mandates the expansion of e-services in the Ministry, providing the legal foundation and impetus for comprehensive system reforms.

To realise this mandate, the country introduced **new-generation ID cards** in 2019, incorporating unique identifiers and biometric data. **These trusted unique IDs enable data exchange and interoperability with other state databases.** Another milestone in 2019 is the establishment

of **proactive social payment mechanism**, allowing for identifying, acknowledging, and fulfilling citizens social rights without their formal written request and paper-based documentation. Once a relevant status is determined (e.g. disability, retirement, childbirth), the CEIS pulls data from other ministries, and the system verifies eligibility, allocates social payments, notifies citizens via SMS, and forwards information to banks for issuing cards to eligible recipients. This proactive mechanism leads to automated fulfilment of social rights, enhanced transparency, elimination of paper document collection, prevention of abuses and delays, reduction of citizen-official interactions, as well as cost, time, and processes efficiency.

In 2021, the **digital Bridge Project** initiated providing a **unified information exchange tool across state and non-state platforms**. This project allows for the integration within over 80 state entities information systems and with financial institutions, facilitating interoperability and ensuring a seamless exchange of data beyond the Ministry. This seamless data exchange leads to faster and more efficient access to social protection and financial services for citizens. Additionally, in 2021, **the DOST Digital Innovation Center** was established, unifying the management of information and communication and **centralising IT functions** (e.g., programming, data analytics, infrastructure) for the Ministry and related agencies within one institution.

### Social System Digitalisation Timeline

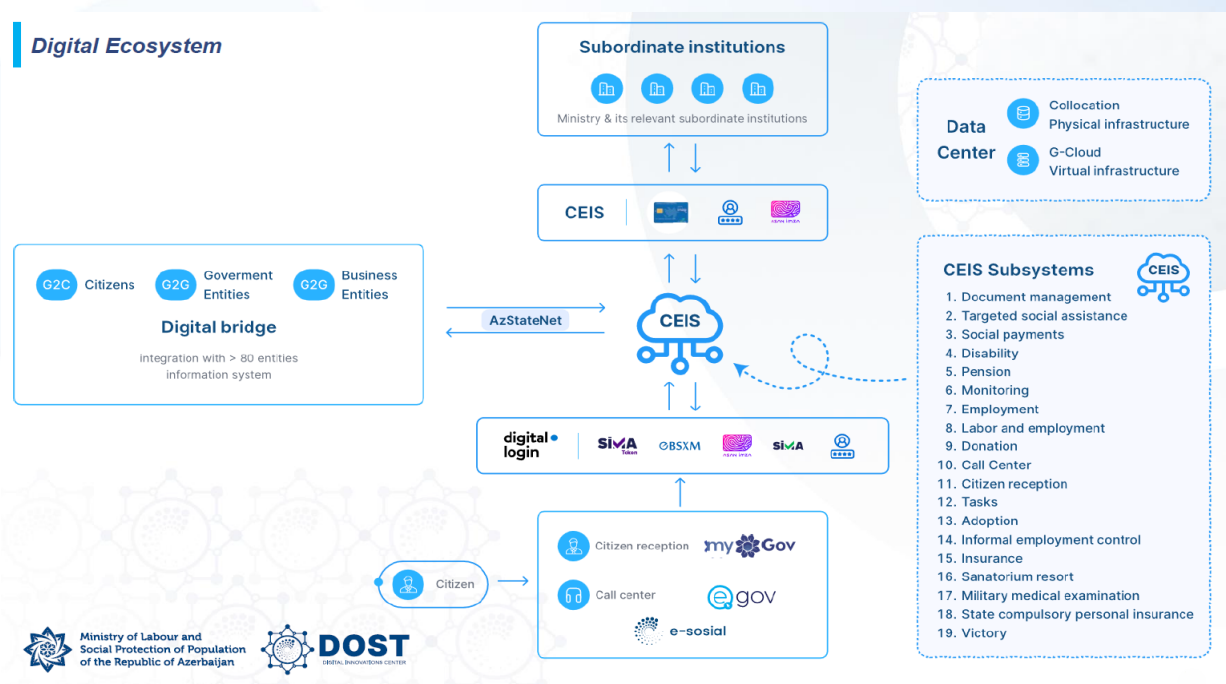


### Key features of the delivery system

Citizens access social protection services through various delivery channels, including **traditional avenues** such as DOST Service Centres and the call centre 142, alongside **digital platforms** like e-sosial.az, which serves as a Unified Social Registry. This **multichannel approach** ensures accessibility to digital services for all citizens in all regions. Azerbaijan employs a unified entry point for all digital platforms, referred to as the Digital Login, which is a single nationwide sign-on mechanism incorporating various methods, including facial recognition.

Furthermore, to **increase public control over personal data**, citizens can manage and access their personal information through **e-sosial.az** and **e-references platforms**, ensuring transparency and ease of access to information related to social services.

The diagram below outlines **the digital ecosystem** of the Ministry, showcasing its components and their interconnections, including the delivery system, CEIS, and the Digital Bridge.



## Future Directions

Azerbaijan's **roadmap for 2025-2027** includes several key initiatives:

- **AI-driven Decision Making:** Integrating **AI technologies** into the social protection system to enhance data-driven decisions and predictive analytics for more targeted service delivery managed by Data Management and Artificial Intelligence centre.
- **Data-driven Proactive Approach:** Expanding the scope of proactive services to ensure that vulnerable groups receive their entitled benefits without manual applications.
- **Digital ID:** The rollout of digital IDs through the my.gov application in 2024 eliminates the need for physical ID cards, significantly improving service efficiency and accessibility.

In conclusion, Azerbaijan has made **gradual and structured progression** in social protection digitalisation, resulting in enhanced service delivery, accessibility, and efficiency. These achievements can be attributed to several key factors. **Strong political leadership** from the Ministry, backed by presidential decrees, played a vital role in driving this transformation. The development of **robust technical and legal infrastructure** facilitated interoperability across government institutions, while a **user-centric design** ensured that citizens could easily engage with social protection services through accessible digital platforms and mobile applications.

Prepared by Amirhosein Rahbari, research consultant at socialprotection.org, based on presentation by Sabina Huseynova and Orkhan Salahov, with inputs from discussion with Andrea Martin, Jeremi Joslin, and Liyuan Xiao.