



David De Groot
eGovernment Manager at République et Canton du Jura

Collaborative Technology Bridges the Digital Divide and Increases Citizen Access to Local Services

CISCO
APRIL 7, 2021

Located in the northwest of Switzerland, Jura is a French-speaking canton, or state, and we aim to provide all of our citizens online access to government services. To do that, we have integrated all municipal and cantonal services on one platform, and initiated a digital kiosk project to distribute this platform to the masses.

Guichet Virtuel translates to “virtual counter,” which is what we created. We offer various services at our website—everything from applications for building permits, fishing licenses, and license plates to scholarships, passports, and even vaccinations. If you want easy-to-understand information about how to fill in a tax form or view last year’s tax information, you can manage it all from there.

But we’ve also gone a step further, working to bridge the digital divide for our citizens.

Moving Online and Addressing Equal Access

There are three levels of government in Switzerland, and a lot of information is divided between several websites, such as municipalities and canton. Our goal was to try to consolidate as much as possible onto one platform so that citizens only had to go to one place to complete their transactions. By doing so, citizens would no longer have to ask themselves what level of government provides which service. Instead, they just open the Guichet Virtuel.

The first online services were published on the Guichet Virtuel back in 2012. Before then, a citizen couldn’t perform transactions on the website itself. Obtaining these services also often required a physical presence. Someone could find and download a form, but they’d either have to mail it to the appropriate office or take time off work and stand in a line at the government office to submit the form.

Services should be easy to navigate online without excluding anyone based on digital literacy level or type of device used.

With all the recent advances in technology, these services shouldn’t require a physical presence and they should be easy to navigate online. Another concern of ours was accessibility. No one should be excluded from these services because they don’t have a particular device or technical knowledge. We know that everyone doesn’t have the same access to devices. Even if someone does have a smartphone, tablet, or computer, they may not know how to use it to access government services.

I am the eGovernment Manager for the canton and I’m also part of the digital transformation team. Two years ago, I spoke at a conference about bringing companies onto Guichet Virtuel. After my talk, someone from [Cisco](#) approached me about their [Country Digital Acceleration program](#), suggesting that they could help our efforts.

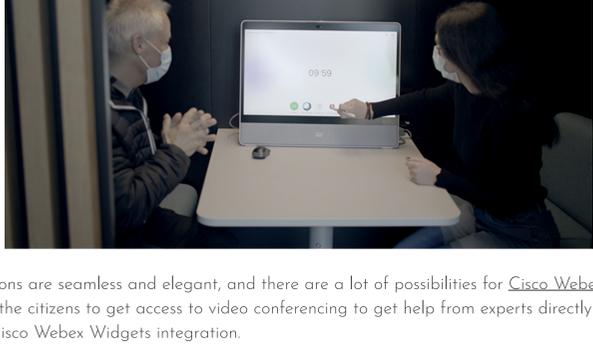
The canton was in fact a long-time partner of Cisco’s, having worked with them on our telephone system. From our first meeting about Guichet Virtuel, we realized we could also work together on a communication collaboration strategy that merged a physical kiosk with digital technology. I thought the opportunity to use Cisco’s video conferencing and screen-sharing technology would be a real plus for our citizens, making the kiosks more intuitive.

A Global Partner with Multiple Solutions

This project has opened our eyes to working with Cisco for more than just phones.

The digital kiosk is a private space installed in our government offices where citizens can come, sit, and access all of our digital services, even if they don’t have their own laptop or smartphone. The kiosks simplify tasks, save time, and help make the information accessible to everyone. No longer does someone have to go to one office for one service and a different office for another service.

In our kiosks we have begun to use [Webex Desk Pro](#), Cisco’s AI-powered collaborative device for the desk, which is intuitive and easy to use. The straightforward simplicity we have experienced from Cisco throughout this project supports our effort to reach as many citizens as possible. We’ve integrated Webex Desk Pro into our administrative offices, allowing citizens without devices to access this technology, and to help everyone learn how to access the services they need. You could go to any government office with a kiosk, whether it’s for the canton or the municipality, and there will also be someone there to support you in using the Guichet Virtuel.



Cisco integrations are seamless and elegant, and there are a lot of possibilities for [Cisco Webex](#), for example. We would like the citizens to get access to video conferencing to get help from experts directly on the Guichet Virtuel using Cisco Webex Widgets integration.

The benefit of working with Cisco is that rather than just facilitating online transactions, we have created an interactive end-to-end video conferencing solution that is intuitive, simple to deploy, secure, and cloud based, with robust web integrations. Cisco supports us not only at the technology level but also in sharing the experience they have acquired with other, similar projects around the globe.

Giving Power to the People

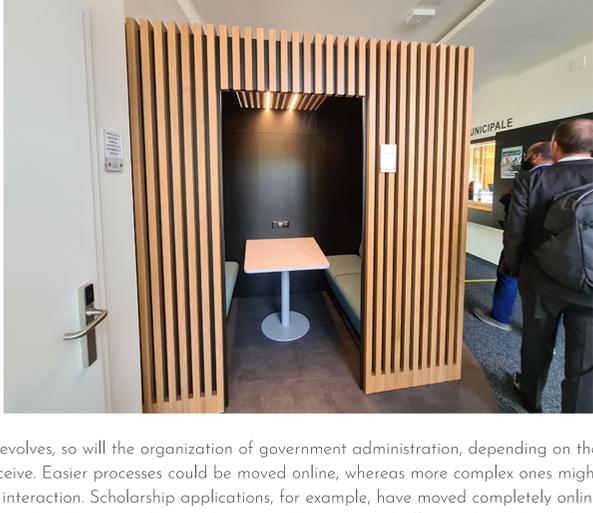
The number of Guichet Virtuel users has grown significantly since 2017–2018. Today, it’s used by 21,000 of the canton’s 70,000 residents, and with the addition of COVID-19 vaccination registration forms, the number of new users is growing very fast. We’ve received great feedback about the platform, but the issue with that feedback is the early adopters were the very people who want to use online services. They’ve likely already bought into the idea that online services make life easier and more convenient. The kiosks are an opportunity to not only expand the reach of the virtual platform, but to capture more feedback from people who don’t use online services and/or can’t easily access them from home.

By listening to slow technology adopters, you can learn a lot about their hesitations and concerns.

We could learn all kinds of information from listening to these users: Have they been excluded from using digital services until now because they didn’t have the infrastructure? Do they need better support? They may also tell us about services we are missing and help us define our priorities for development and improvement. We’re excited about the potential for more positive interactions between citizens and their government.

Government Administration Embraces Collaborative Tech

Some employees have expressed concerns about the added workload of supporting kiosk users. We acknowledge that yes, there may be more work at the beginning, but it will eventually lead to more work being offloaded to Guichet Virtuel. That will mean one of two things for employees: either they can focus on providing specialized knowledge, especially as the program expands to include video conferencing, or they can become generalists in helping citizens access all services offered through the virtual counter.

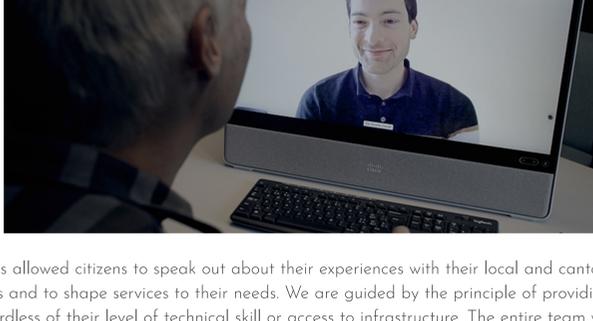


As the project evolves, so will the organization of government administration, depending on the type of requests we receive. Easier processes could be moved online, whereas more complex ones might still require some personal interaction. Scholarship applications, for example, have moved completely online. For more specific questions, though, a specialist may be required. A municipal office might not have that person on site, but with video conferencing we can facilitate that discussion and get any question answered. The citizen can then access specific advice without moving to the location of the Scholarship department. Whether that video conference happens from a kiosk or from a resident’s home, the level of support should be the same. Meanwhile, municipal offices are very interested in the digital kiosks to help them facilitate building permit applications.

This has been a transformational project for Jura’s administration. By late 2020, we’d installed two digital kiosks, one in a municipal office and another in the scholarship department, with employees trained to help citizens use the devices and access the digital public services. When the pandemic hit, it became difficult to promote using a public touchscreen. We are confident, though, in the growth of the program after the pandemic.

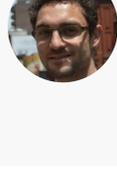
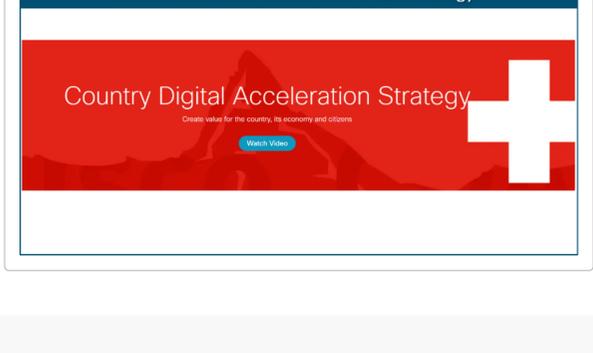
An Easier Life for Citizens

Municipal administrations are very close to their citizens, so providing kiosks to municipalities is the obvious route for expansion. Of course, the greater the project’s success, the more departments will want to offer online services. Our focus thus far has been on individuals, but we’re already in discussions to expand online services to organizations as well.



This project has allowed citizens to speak out about their experiences with their local and cantonal administrations and to shape services to their needs. We are guided by the principle of providing access to everyone, regardless of their level of technical skill or access to infrastructure. The entire team working on this project wants to make citizens’ lives easier, and now that team includes Cisco helping us along the way. We cannot wait for the end of the pandemic restrictions to accelerate this exciting project!

- [Country Digital Acceleration program](#)
- [Collaboration](#)
- [Webex Desk Pro](#)
- [Webex](#)



David De Groot
eGovernment Manager at République et Canton du Jura

More Stories from CISCO [see all](#)

cisco

Fighting Ransomware and Phishing Attacks with Cisco Secure Email

Wijnjo Beukers
Manager Technical Support
Group IT at Van Leeuwen
Group BV

cisco

The Bridge Between Business and IT: Building a More Transparent and Understandable Network

Svetoslav Nanchev
IT Director at One
Communication ShA

cisco

Reliability, Visibility, Control: Improving a Ten-Country Retail Network with Cisco

Florian Decamps
Technical Director at
Vertbaudet