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EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020

Accelerating the digital transformation of government

{SWD(2016) 108 final}
{SWD(2016) 109 final}

1. INTRODUCTION

eGovernment supports administrative processes, improves the quality of the services and increases internal public sector efficiency. Digital public services reduce administrative burden on businesses and citizens by making their interactions with public administrations faster and efficient, more convenient and transparent, and less costly. In addition, using digital technologies as an integrated part of governments' modernisation strategies can unlock further economic and social benefits for society as a whole[1]. The digital transformation of government is a key element to the success of the Single Market.

The eGovernment Action Plans[2] have been political instruments to advance the modernisation of public administrations across the European Union. They have been supporting coordination and collaboration between Member States and the Commission and led to joint actions on eGovernment.

Evaluation results of the past eGovernment Action Plan 2011-2015[3][4] recognise that the Action Plan[5] had a positive impact on the development of eGovernment at the European and Member State level. It contributed to the coherence of national eGovernment strategies as well as to the exchange of best practices and the interoperability of solutions between Member States. In particular, it led to the development of technological enablers that are key to facilitate access to and use of public services. However, citizens and businesses are not yet getting the full benefit from digital services that should be available seamlessly across the EU.

By joining efforts at European Union level, the availability and take-up of eGovernment services can be increased, resulting in faster, cheaper, more user-oriented digital public services. Seamless cross-border and digital public services contribute to competitiveness and make the EU a more attractive place to invest[6] and live in.

The Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe (DSM)[7] announces the launch of a new eGovernment Action Plan for 2016-2020 that aims to remove existing digital barriers to the Digital Single Market and to prevent further fragmentation arising in the context of the modernisation of public administrations. This EU eGovernment Action Plan aims to be the instrument to join up efforts. While Member States pursue their own strategies and activities, this Action Plan – based on a shared long-term vision - sets out a number of principles that forthcoming initiatives should observe in order to deliver the significant benefits that eGovernment can bring to businesses, citizens and public administrations themselves.

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1 Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies, OECD, 2014

2 i2010 eGovernment Action Plan 2006-2010 and eGovernment Action Plan 2011-2015

3 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/mid-term-evaluation-e-government-action-plan-2011-2015-implementation-smart-2012-006020

4 Staff Working Document for Evaluation accompanying the EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 Communication

5 COM(2010) 743 final

6 In line with the Investment Plan for Europe, http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-and-investment_en

7 COM(2015) 192 final

The Action Plan provides for a dynamic and flexible approach, to keep track of the fast changing environment[8]. Beyond the actions identified in this Action Plan, further actions may be proposed either by the Commission or by stakeholders, including Member States. All actions led by the Commission will be prepared in line with the Commission's better regulation standards.

The Action Plan will serve as a catalyst to coordinate public sector modernisation efforts and resources in the field of eGovernment. The Action Plan will not have a dedicated budget or funding instrument; it will however help to coordinate funding sources and accompanying measures that are available to Member States through different EU programmes[9].

2. VISION AND UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

Member States' governments have long aspired to being open, flexible and collaborative in their relations with citizens and businesses, using eGovernment to increase their efficiency and effectiveness and constantly improving public services[10].

This Action Plan is guided by the following vision:

> By 2020, public administrations and public institutions in the European Union should be open, efficient and inclusive, providing borderless, personalised, user-friendly, end-to-end digital public services to all citizens and businesses in the EU. Innovative approaches are used to design and deliver better services in line with the needs and demands of citizens and businesses. Public administrations use the opportunities offered by the new digital environment to facilitate their interactions with stakeholders and with each other.

Opening the data and services between public administrations within and across borders will increase their efficiency and facilitate the free movement of businesses and citizens. Citizens' lives have become increasingly digital, leading to higher expectations of public administration performance[11]. Users wish to understand how the service works[12] and they expect greater transparency. Furthermore, by opening up to and engaging with stakeholders in decision-making[13], public administrations will become more trustworthy and more accountable. In addition, opening public sector data and services to third parties, in full compliance with the legal framework for the protection of personal data and for privacy, can contribute to growth and competitiveness.

Initiatives to be launched as part of this Action Plan should observe the following underlying principles, which are strongly supported by stakeholders[14]:

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8 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/mid-term-evaluation-e-government-action-plan-2011-2015-implementation-smart-2012-006020

9 Including Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), ISA² programme (Interoperability solutions for European Public Administrations), Horizon 2020, European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), the Justice Programme and the Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP).

10 Malmö Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment, 2009

11 EU eGovernment Benchmark Report 2014

12 EU eGovernment Benchmark Report 2015

13 Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies, OECD, 2014

14 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/contributions-and-preliminary-trends-public-consultation-egovernment-action-plan-2016-2020

- Digital by Default: public administrations should deliver services digitally (including machine readable information) as the preferred option (while still keeping other channels open for those who are disconnected by choice or necessity). In addition, public services should be delivered through a single contact point or a one-stop-shop and via different channels.
- Once only principle: public administrations should ensure that citizens and businesses supply the same information only once to a public administration. Public administration offices take action if permitted to internally re-use this data, in due respect of data protection rules, so that no additional burden falls on citizens and businesses.
- Inclusiveness and accessibility: public administrations should design digital public services that are inclusive by default and cater for different needs such as those of the elderly and people with disabilities[15].
- Openness & transparency: public administrations should share information and data between themselves and enable citizens and businesses to access control and correct their own data; enable users to monitor administrative processes that involve them; engage with and open up to stakeholders (such as businesses, researchers and non-profit organisations) in the design and delivery of services.
- Cross-border by default: public administrations should make relevant digital public services available across borders and prevent further fragmentation to arise, thereby facilitating mobility within the Single Market.
- Interoperability by default: public services should be designed to work seamlessly across the Single Market and across organisational silos, relying on the free movement of data and digital services in the European Union.
- Trustworthiness & Security: All initiatives should go beyond the mere compliance with the legal framework on personal data protection and privacy, and IT security, by integrating those elements in the design phase. These are important pre-conditions for increasing trust in and take-up of digital services.

Administrations, public bodies, businesses and users know themselves best what they need. The choice of systems and technologies, of distributed or centralised designs should be entirely according to their choice and needs but need to fully respect agreed interoperability requirements.

3. POLICY PRIORITIES

The DSM Strategy sets out the strategic objectives to 'modernise public administration, achieve cross-border interoperability and facilitate easy interaction with citizens', aimed at accelerating the digital transformation of public administrations in the Member States and the Commission. In view of these policy priorities, this Action Plan sets out concrete actions to accelerate the implementation of existing legislation and the related take up of online public services.

[15] A proposal for a directive on web accessibility is currently pending with the co-legislators, COM (2012)721.

3.1. Modernise public administration with ICT, using key digital enablers

Modern and efficient public administrations need to ensure fast and high-quality services for citizens and a business-friendly environment, as recognised by the recent Annual Growth Surveys[16]. Public administrations need to transform their back offices, to rethink and redesign existing procedures and services, and open their data and services to other administrations, and, as far as possible, to businesses and civil society.

These efforts need to rely on key digital enablers. Digital public services should build on shared and reusable solutions and services based on agreed standards and technical specifications in order to reduce their cost of development, their time to deployment and increase interoperability. A common understanding of interoperability throughout the European Union is guaranteed through the European Interoperability Framework[17]. Cross-border investment can greatly benefit from this interoperability.

Work is on-going to support the transition of Member States' public administrations towards full e-procurement, use of contract registers and interoperable e-signatures[18]. With the focus on the European Single Procurement Document, e-Certis and e-Invoicing and a coordinated approach to development of the national e-procurement systems, the objective is that by 2018, companies will be able to bid for public procurement contracts anywhere in the European Union electronically and by 2019 eInvoicing will be accepted by public administrations in the EU.

Further efforts by all administrations are needed to accelerate the take up of electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market (eIDAS[19] services). Further actions to accelerate the cross-border and cross-sector use of electronic identification (eID), including mobile ID, and trust services (in particular eSignature, website authentication and online registered delivery service) will be pursued in digitally enabled businesses (such as banking, finance, eCommerce and sharing economy) and in the public sector namely on the European e-Justice Portal. The Commission will also explore the need to facilitate the usage of remote identification and secure authentication in the retail financial services[20].

The re-use of open services and technical building blocks (such as eID, eSignature, eDelivery and eInvoice) by Member States is critical for interoperability. The availability of these services is currently guaranteed by funding from the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF); it is however necessary to ensure their availability and long-term sustainability beyond this funding programme. Therefore, the Commission will present a way forward for their sustainability beyond 2020.

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16 Annual Growth Survey 2015 and 2016

17 Revised EIF to be published in 2016

18 COM(2015) 192 final, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1447773803386&uri=CELEX:52015DC0192

19 Regulation (EU) No 910/2014

20 http://ec.europa.eu/finance/consultations/2015/retail-financial-services/index_en.htm

Actions The Commission will	***Target date***
1. Support the transition of Member States towards full e-procurement and use of contract registers.	2019
2. Accelerate the take-up of eIDAS services, including eID and eSignature.	2016
3. Ensure the long-term sustainability of cross-border digital services infrastructure.	2018

As announced in the DSM strategy, the Commission plans to propose a revised European Interoperability Framework (EIF) by the end of 2016 and will support its take-up by national administrations with the aim to strengthen the interoperability of public services in the EU.

Further efforts are needed to ensure the take-up of existing European and international standards and technical specifications as well as new ones being developed under the Priority ICT Standards Plan. The Commission will coordinate with Member States the development of a prototype for a European Catalogue of ICT standards for public procurement which will support interoperability in the acquisition of digital solutions by encouraging the reference to common sets of ICT standards and profiles in Public Procurers' calls for tenders.

Actions The Commission will	***Target date***
4. Present a revised version of the European Interoperability Framework (EIF) and support its take-up by national administrations.	2016-2019
5. Coordinate the development of a prototype for a European Catalogue of ICT standards for public procurement.	2017

In view of its own digital transformation and in order to comply with the legal obligations set out for EU public administrations, the European Commission will also undertake a number of concrete actions.

When conducting its regulatory fitness (REFIT) exercises to review the existing internal market acquis and/or drafting new proposals, the Commission will pay particular attention to interoperability and on the benefits that the effective usage of digital technologies can bring. The aim is to remove unnecessarily complex, paper-based or duplicating processes (e.g. multitude of contact points, reporting processes, data exchange or systems requirements).

In view of its own digital transformation, the Commission will publish its data on the EU Open Data Portal[21], which will feed into the European Open Data Portal[22], share and reuse operational building blocks such as Digital Service Infrastructures (DSIs) where relevant, and apply the revised version of the EIF. The Commission will gradually introduce the 'digital by default' principle when interacting online with external stakeholders, using eIDAS services

[21] http://open-data.europa.eu
[22] http://data.europa.e/europeandataportal

(in 2018), eInvoicing (in 2018) and eProcurement (in 2019). In order to reduce the administrative burden, the Commission will also gradually roll out the 'once-only' principle in its interactions with suppliers and grants participants and examine possibilities to introduce the 'once-only' principle for other stakeholders. The Commission will assess the implication of a possible implementation of the 'no legacy principle' (renew IT systems and technologies after a certain amount of time, to keep in line with the ever-changing environment and development of technology) in public administrations.

Actions	***Target date***
6. The Commission will use the common building blocks such as CEF DSIs and follow the EIF. It will gradually introduce the 'digital by default' and 'once-only' principles, eInvoicing and eProcurement and assess the implication of a possible implementation of the 'no legacy' principle.	2016-2019

Additional initiatives could aim at reducing the administrative burden and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public administrations, by making digital public services 'needs-based' and user-friendly or by re-using data and services between public administrations (respecting data protection and privacy rules).

Other initiatives could aim at developing new common building blocks in addition to the existing ones[23], supporting their take-up and encouraging the use and sharing of cloud, data and computing infrastructures. Initiatives could also promote the usage of big data or Internet of Things for instance for data-intensive services and evidence-informed policy-making, implementation and enforcement supported by appropriate infrastructure. A shared Cloud Infrastructure to host eGovernment services could help realising important savings by economies of scale, improving their time to market, as well as opening up public administrations' data and services. The European Cloud initiative[24] will offer an infrastructure for science but will also widen it to public administrations giving access to unprecedented data and computing power to deliver better services at all levels (from local to national to EU level).

3.2. Enabling cross-border mobility with interoperable digital public services

The EU Single Market cannot function effectively without cross-border digital public services. Such services facilitate access to markets, increase confidence in and stimulate competition across the Single Market. Administrations should help businesses operate online across borders within the Single Market, simplify access to information under EU business and company laws and enable businesses to easily start doing business, expand and operate in other Member States through end-to-end public e-services.

[23] such as eID, eSignature, eDelivery, eInvoicing and eTranslation

[24] European Cloud Initiative – Building a competitive data and knowledge economy in Europe

In order to move towards these policy priorities, a number of concrete actions are included in this Action Plan with the aim to contribute to the creation of business friendly cross-border public administrations and help the mobility of citizens.

Currently Single Market-related information, advice, problem-solving mechanisms, contact points and procedures do not operate as a whole but are dispersed, incomplete, not sufficiently inter-connected and not consistently user-friendly – both at EU and national level. It is therefore difficult for users to find the right information and assistance required. The Commission will therefore propose the creation of a Single Digital Gateway, based on existing portals, contact points and networks, expanding, improving and streamlining all information, assistance and problem solving services needed to operate efficiently across borders, and enabling users to complete the most frequently used national procedures fully on-line.

The Commission will make the European e-Justice Portal a one-stop shop for information on European justice and access to judicial procedures in the Member States. For 2016, this will include the go-live of tools for direct communications between citizens and courts in other Member States (e-CODEX), as well as the introduction of the European Case Law Identifier (ECLI) search engine. Further developments will follow the Multiannual European e-Justice Action Plan 2014-2018.

The Commission will continue its ongoing work together with the Member States on setting up the mandatory interconnection of all Member States' business registers[25], in order to allow access via the European e-Justice portal to certain information on companies registered in Member States and to ensure that all EU business registers concerned can communicate with each other electronically in a safe and secure way. This will enhance confidence in the Single Market through transparency and up-to-date information on companies and reduce burdens on companies.

The Commission will also further develop an electronic interconnection of insolvency registers to enhance transparency and legal certainty in the internal market[26]. Regulation 2015/848 obliges Member States to set up their own domestic insolvency electronic registers by 2018, while the establishment of the interconnection of insolvency registers is set for 2019. This will become available on the European e-Justice Portal.

Improving the use of digital tools when complying with company-law related requirements throughout different phases of a company's lifecycle would achieve simpler and less burdensome solutions for companies. Beyond the Single Member Company proposal, the Commission will consider within an initiative as outlined in the Single Market Strategy further ways[27] to facilitate the use of digital solutions throughout a company's lifecycle, in

[25] Directive 2012/17/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2012 amending Council Directive 89/666/EEC and Directives 2005/56/EC and 2009/101/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the interconnection of central, commercial and companies registers (OJ L 156, 16.6.2012, p. 1)
COM(2015) 192 final, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1447773803386&uri=CELEX:52015DC0192

[26] as required by Regulation (EU) 2015/848 on insolvency proceedings (recast)

[27] As defined in the Commission Communication "Upgrading the Single Market: more opportunities for people and business" (COM(2015) 550, p. 5.

particular in relation to the online registration procedures and to the electronic filing of company documents and information[28] in business registers, also in a cross-border context.

The Commission will propose legislation to extend the Single Electronic Mechanism for registration and payment of VAT to cross-border business to consumers online sales of physical goods, in order to reduce the administrative burden, one of the main barriers businesses face operating cross-border.

As announced in the DSM, a large scale pilot project on implementing the once-only principle across borders in the business-to-government area will be launched in 2016 with the participation of Member States.

In addition, the Commission will establish a European single window addressing also the once-only principle for reporting purposes in maritime transport. In a wider context, the Commission is working on the digitalisation of transport documents for all modes and the promotion of their acceptance by public authorities.

Actions The Commission will	***Target date***
7. Submit a proposal for a Single Digital Gateway.	2017
8. Make the European e-Justice Portal a one-stop shop for information on European justice issues.	2016
9. Set up in cooperation with the Member States, the mandatory interconnection of all Member States' business registers.	2017
10. Further develop the electronic interconnection of insolvency registers.	2019
11. Present an initiative to facilitate the use of digital solutions throughout a company's lifecycle.	2017
12. Present a legislative proposal to extend the Single Electronic Mechanism for registration and payment of VAT.	2016
13. Launch a pilot on the Once Only Principle for business.	2016
14. Establish a single window for reporting purposes in maritime transport and digitalise transport e-documents.	2018

In support of the cross-border mobility of citizens, the Commission will set up the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI), allowing the interconnection between administrations in charge of social security for electronic data exchanges across 32 countries[29]. The purpose of EESSI is to strengthen the protection of citizens' rights by enabling the electronic exchange of personal social security information in the EU among Member States' competent administrations.

[28] See also COM(2015) 550, p. 5.

[29] 28 European Union (EU) Member States (MS), Switzerland and 3 European Economic Area (EEA) countries: Norway, Iceland, Lichtenstein

The Commission will further develop the EURES European Job Mobility portal, offering more services for job seekers and employers, increasing the integration between Public Employment Services systems and the portal by also exchanging Jobseeker Profiles (CV's)[30]. This will facilitate the mobility of job seekers in the EU.

The Commission will support Member States in the development of eHealth services that also enable cross-border exchange of e-prescriptions, based on the e-prescription guidelines adopted by the eHealth Network[31] and telemedicine and tele-monitoring solutions, in particular for the successful provision of treatment by European Reference Networks[32]. In addition, it will support the development of a report and guidelines by the eHealth Network on citizens' electronic access to their health data.

Actions The Commission will	***Target date***
15. Complete the setup of the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information.	2019
16. Further develop the EURES European Job Mobility portal.	2017
17. Support Member States in the development of cross-border eHealth services.	2016-2018

Future initiatives proposed under this priority could aim at providing seamless cross-border services provided to citizens for their 'life events' (such as changing jobs, moving or getting married) and businesses, making it easier for them to start doing business, expand and operate in other Member States. Additional initiatives under this priority could also aim at improving the quality of existing eGovernment services offered to citizens and businesses of other Member States.

3.3. Facilitating digital interaction between administrations and citizens/businesses for high-quality public services

The new digital environment offers opportunities to facilitate the interaction of citizens, business and non-governmental organisations with public administrations. High quality public services are linked with competitiveness and have an influence on where investments are being made. Recent experiences show that there is a promising potential to deliver such high quality public services, by stepping up the involvement of businesses and citizens as well as researchers in their design and delivery, and by ensuring feedback for improvement where necessary. This leads to further reducing red tape, easing use, lowering delivery costs.

Furthermore, by opening up public sector data and services and facilitating their re-use by third parties in due respect of the 'Trustworthiness & Security' principle, public administrations can foster new opportunities for knowledge, growth and jobs. When opening

[30] The purpose of EURES is to provide information, advice and recruitment/placement (job-matching) services for the benefit of workers and employers as well as any citizen wishing to benefit from the principle of the free movement of persons.

[31] Guidelines on ePrescriptions Dataset for electronic exchange under cross-border Directive 2011/24/EU

[32] According to Article 12 of Directive 2011/24/EU on the application of patients' rights in cross-border care

their data, public administrations become more transparent, increasing their accountability while getting closer to their citizens.

In view of these policy priorities, the Commission will provide high quality, accessible online services to citizens and businesses in the EU by transforming websites managed by the Commission into a thematic, user-centred web presence. This will significantly change the way the Commission interacts with citizens online by providing a relevant, coherent and cost-effective web presence. This will increase transparency as well as enabling the engagement and participation of citizens and businesses in EU programmes and policy making.

In order to facilitate interaction of citizens with public administration, the Commission will assess the possibility of applying the once-only principle for citizens in a cross-border context, in due respect of the legal framework on personal data protection and privacy.

As part of the European Cloud Initiative[33], the Commission will create a platform for public authorities to open their data and services, creating a "Government as a Service (GaaS)" base for the EU.

There is a growing demand from business and citizens to have access to high quality, interoperable and re-usable data to provide new services, in particular the area of spatial data. The use of spatial data for urban, land-use, traffic planning and for scientific purposes can unleash new innovations that respond to societal needs such as reducing the negative impact on the environment. In this regard, the Commission will promote the development of end-user applications, including specific EU-level applications, so as to harvest from citizens and business more efficiently the data provided through Spatial Data (INSPIRE) for EU-level policy making and implementation, in particular in relation to reporting and compliance promotion[34]. This will improve the evidence based policy making and support eGovernment processes where high quality spatial data (e.g. cadastres, maps, addresses, buildings, parks, protected sites, natural risk zones, etc.) is needed.

Actions The Commission will	***Target date***
18. Assess the possibility of applying the once-only principle for citizens in a cross-border context.	2019
19. Accelerate the deployment and take-up of the INSPIRE Directive data infrastructure.	2016-2020
20. Transform its websites to support increasing engagement and participation of citizens and businesses in EU programmes and policy making.	2018

[33] European Cloud Initiative – Building a competitive data and knowledge economy in Europe

[34] Directive 2007/2/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community, OJ L 108, 25.4.2007, p. 1. (The report will be made available soon at the following web page: http://inspire.ec.europa.eu/)

Future initiatives that could be proposed under this priority should contribute to engaging citizens, businesses and civil society in the collaborative design, production and delivery of public services and to facilitate interaction between public administrations and businesses and citizens. Other new initiatives could include the harvesting of data from any source and the re-use of public sector data and services for the creation of new, innovative services by other actors (whether public or private). In addition, initiatives may focus on increasing the transparency of public administrations, as engagement with and participation of stakeholders is also expected to increase accountability and trust and reduce opportunities for corruption.

4. DELIVERING THE ACTION PLAN

This Action Plan includes actions to be launched in 2016 and 2017. Further actions may be needed to achieve the objectives set out within each of the above policy priorities, and in order to adapt to the rapidly changing technological environment.

New actions may be proposed by the Commission in order to implement EU legislation or to initiate joint action. Stakeholders (including a group of Member States) may also propose actions for implementation under the eGovernment Action Plan, in particular for different life events through an interactive digital engagement platform.

The Commission will also set up and chair an "eGovernment Action Plan Steering Board" composed of Member States' representatives responsible for their national eGovernment strategies. The Steering board will be in charge of governing the Action Plan (but not the individual actions in the Action Plan), in particular to assess and select newly identified actions during the entire duration of the Action Plan and to coordinate the effective implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan measures. If a proposed action results in a Commission initiative, it will be subject to its Better Regulation requirements[35].

Delivering on the measures proposed in this eGovernment Action Plan will be possible only through a joint commitment and joint ownership between the Commission and the Member States, at all levels of administration.

[35] In line with Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines, SWD(2015) 111