

eGovernment Progress in EU27+

Reaping the benefits

19 SEPTEMBER, 2007

●●● Progress Report

The report, which has a foreword by Commissioner Viviane Reding, is based on data collected by the i2010 eGovernment subgroup representatives from EU27+ countries. It has been compiled by European Commission staff.

 eGovernment



Table of **contents**

Foreword	5
Chapter 1: Inclusive eGovernment	6
Chapter 2: Efficiency & Effectiveness of eGovernment.....	9
Chapter 3: High Impact Services	14
Chapter 4: Putting Key Enablers in Place	17
Chapter 5: eParticipation	19
Conclusion	22

Summary

The 2005 Manchester Ministerial eGovernment Conference focused on "Transforming Public Services". The present report shows that the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan is now visibly stimulating the transformation of public services. At the same time information and communications technology (ICT) is boosting economic growth by placing citizens and businesses at the centre of government services. Tangible impacts are being demonstrated throughout Europe, in the Action Plan's five policy domains:

Inclusive eGovernment

Member States are making progress - and almost all countries have policies in place. However, public website accessibility compliance is still weak, which means that large groups are still being excluded from the information society. In light of this, literacy, employability and social integration will receive further attention, and will target specific groups.

Efficiency & effectiveness of eGovernment

Nearly all Member States have policies in this domain, but less than half have impact measurement frameworks in place. eGovernment is rapidly becoming mainstream, hence expenditure figures for 2007 are difficult to quantify while, in 2004, European investment in eGovernment amounted to €11.9 billion. The emphasis is shifting towards reducing administrative burden and gaining traction from sharing good practice. Action is still needed, especially to ensure the positive user impact of eGovernment services.

High impact services

Almost all Member States have established policies to stimulate the development of high impact services. eProcurement is a key service on the agenda. The next challenge will be to fulfil transnational and pan-European ambitions. Availability is good, but half the countries report usage below 25%. Few services exist that are fully pan-European, hence motivating agencies and governments to give their services a pan-European dimension is a key challenge. Large-scale

European piloting of eProcurement will commence in 2008.

Key enablers

Most European countries have an official policy on the use of electronic identity (eID). This is vital to assure that electronic services work together and are delivered electronically. Few countries are really implementing interoperable eID in their services. The upcoming European large-scale eID pilot will address cross-border interoperability.

eParticipation

More than half of the European countries have policies in this field and many ambitious pilots are running. The European Parliament is actively supporting the area. While the potential is large, public confidence is an important factor to keep in mind.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the i2010 eGovernment subgroup representatives from EU27+ countries for their coordination and data collection, and for reporting on national progress throughout the spring of 2007.¹ The report has been compiled by European Commission staff and was edited by Trond Arne Undheim.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the legal opinion or position of the European Commission and in no way commit the institution.

¹ For exact actions in the pipeline, we point to the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment, expected to be issued during the 19-21 September 2007 event and subsequently available on the Portuguese Presidency's web pages. For more extensive analysis, please see *European eGovernment 2005-2007: Taking stock of good practice and progress towards implementation of the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan*, a state-of-the-art report from the European Awards Consortium on behalf of the European Commission, August, 2007. The report is available on epractice.eu from 18 September 2007.

Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to present to you the progress report on eGovernment in the EU27+. This report was foreseen in the 2010 eGovernment Action Plan agreed by Council in June 2006. Work started with the Ministerial Declaration made during the 2005 eGovernment Ministerial Conference held in Manchester, UK. What is immediately clear is that these concrete political initiatives have stimulated common approaches and cooperation resulting already in visible progress in terms of transforming public administrations and the services they deliver as well as the reality and achievements of the eGovernment approach.

Services are becoming more effective nationally and more interoperable at European level. At the same time we are delivering higher quality, saving billions of euros through efficiency gains, and increasing transparency and accountability of our administrations.

eGovernment-based services act as a benchmark for a competitive economy. Countries that score high on public-sector openness, efficiency and e-government delivery also top economic performance and competitiveness scoreboards, according to the World Economic Forum and measurements made by other international bodies.

This report can only summarise the progress made, but it clearly shows that there is a phenomenal level of activity ongoing in Member States. Moreover, we see that for the majority of Member States policies and implementation actions are now in place and aligned with the goals of the Action Plan.

Member States have developed and agreed roadmaps for mutual recognition and authentication of electronic identities, for cross-border eProcurement and for inclusive eGovernment. These roadmaps represent a major achievement. In the case of eID and eProcurement the next step will be large-scale pilots demonstrating interoperability of national systems. The Commission has allocated support for these pilots in the ICT Policy Support Programme – a part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP).

Equally important is the reported work to reduce administrative burdens for both citizens and businesses, the progress made in terms of ensuring inclusive

eGovernment services, the increasing level of eParticipation activity, and the willingness to share good practices.

Hence, substantial progress has been made in all core policy areas of the Action Plan both nationally and in terms of cooperation around common interests. However, big challenges still remain and we will only reach our agreed 2010 goals if we maintain strong political support and continue strong cooperation.

We have moved forward, but we still need to accelerate the transformation process. Public expectation is high. Citizens and businesses have become used to on-line commercial products and expect their governments to offer services of equivalent quality and usability.

The challenges for the future remain plentiful as new technology options emerge. Easy access to a comprehensive, straightforward set of eGovernment services has been a cherished dream of both citizens, businesses as well as the civil servants that facilitate them. We have three years left to reach the objectives we set in Manchester, so we must stay focussed and even step up a gear.

Finally, I would like to thank all the Member States who contributed to the preparation of this progress report. Their input was, and will be, valuable in targeting future actions so that Europe can maintain its leadership position in the area of eGovernment.



Viviane Reding

Member of the European Commission
In charge of Information Society and
Media

Chapter 1: Inclusive eGovernment

Inclusive eGovernment is the use of ICT to provide public services that enrich citizens' lives, stimulate public participation in the community, strengthen democracy and reach out to people at risk of social, economic or digital exclusion². More than one third of the EU does not have access to ICT-based public services³. In fact, Member States have committed themselves to inclusive eGovernment objectives to ensure that:

●●● "by 2010 all citizens, including socially disadvantaged groups, become major beneficiaries of eGovernment, and European public administrations deliver public information and services that are more easily accessible and increasingly trusted by the public, through innovative use of ICT, increasing awareness of the benefits of eGovernment, and improved skills and support for all users."⁴ ●●●

The implementation of the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan builds on the strong cooperation between national and EU eGovernment initiatives and working groups of experts. For this Inclusive eGovernment experts from Member States meet on an ad-hoc basis with the European Commission to discuss concrete actions and related technical content aimed at the implementation of the Inclusive eGovernment 2007 Roadmap⁵ which was agreed in 2006.

Within this joint consultation exercise, the following activities have been undertaken:

- Definition of the scope, including the identification of target groups and suggestions for administrative

² Inclusive eGovernment targets the delivery mechanisms along the supply chain while the adjacent area of eInclusion also concerns itself with developing tailored services for excluded groups. http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/ei nclusion/policy/egov/

³ For detailed figures, see the 2007 EU²⁷ benchmarking of online public services: to be published on 19 September 2007: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2 010/

⁴ The i2010 eGov Action Plan, p.5, see: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/e government_research/doc/highlights/comm_pdf_co m_2006_0173_f_en_acte.pdf

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/e government_research/doc/inclusive_egovernment_r oadmap.pdf

options to be undertaken at EU level.

- Identification of three areas of interest to Member States, namely: literacy, employability and social integration.
- Focusing on public service delivery mechanisms and business models of the supply channels to ensure efficiency and sustainability.

26 out of 30 countries have a policy on inclusive eGovernment. **Sweden** does not have an overall policy but has policies related to specific groups of society such as elderly or disabled people or immigrants. Sweden does not prioritise one group over another.

In **The Netherlands**, the policy focuses on specific target groups which have more information obligations (administrative burdens) towards government than the average citizen. Nine role models have been identified based on the following disadvantaged groups: chronically ill, disabled or elderly people, benefit recipients and volunteer organisations. The priority is to reduce administrative burdens of these target groups rather than the average citizen. More specifically, this is being achieved through the use of tools such as the digital client file, automatic remission of local taxes, pre-filled forms for applying for pensions.

1. Battling social exclusion

Inclusive eGovernment addresses social exclusion by focusing on delivery mechanisms along the supply chain so that all citizens, especially those most in need of government support, can benefit from the advantages brought about by eGovernment without necessarily using e-services themselves.

The survey indicates that 22 out of 30 countries have dedicated social inclusion policies, eight countries do not. Although the label varies from country to country, the priority of 16 countries falls on accessibility for disabled people, and nine countries focus on creating opportunities for disabled people. Another seven countries prioritize compliance to the Web



Accessibility Initiative (WAI)⁶, universally designed solutions, accessibility or accessible content. Twelve countries focus on broadband access, seven of which consider broadband an instrument for rural areas or remote communities, whereas five countries emphasise its importance for online tax return. Ten countries focus on improving skills by training digital illiterates, seven focus on the family situation or promoting employment, six try to improve access for children, youth or students, and five focus on types of support that enable the elderly to increase their standard of living by using ICT.

In **Belgium**, the governments now automatically grant benefits based on a person's social security status, which is now guaranteed by law. People who are entitled to a tax reduction, reduced telephone charges or a free pass for public transport, will not be asked anymore to submit proof. They can refuse to deliver such proof without losing the benefit. The granting institution has to consult the Crossroads Bank for Social Security, not the citizen⁷.

Portugal launched the National Initiative for Citizens with Special Needs in the Information Society⁸. The eInclusion initiatives led to the creation of the *Internet Spaces Network*, which is among the largest in Europe. More than 1,030 Internet Spaces all over the country provide free access to multimedia computers and the internet to citizens. Trained personnel contribute and accessibility to the disabled is fully embedded. The network involves installing the internet in public libraries, social solidarity institutions, digital inclusion centres for immigrants, employment and training centres, culture, recreational and sports clubs.

An estimated 22% of the **UK's** 11.3 million population is socially excluded. They suffer several of the following disadvantages: unemployment, poor housing, lack of qualifications, ill health, broken family situation and financial stress. There are an estimated 50,000 families in the UK who are a particularly high cost to the state, of upwards toward €350,000 (£250,000) a year. The UK is now putting in place better prediction tools to intervene earlier. Good practice exchange in areas like multi-

agency work, extending data sharing, and personalising rights and responsibilities, have a key role. Supporting achievement and managing underperformance are equally important⁹.

2. Tricky to comply with web accessibility

While 27 countries have a policy on web accessibility, many seem less confident on compliance¹⁰. Accessibility is notoriously easy to support in principle, but difficult to implement.

As an example, three countries, Denmark, Ireland and Portugal have had web accessibility on the agenda since 1999. However, most policies were put in place from 2004-2007. On the other hand, the **German** federal government disability act of 2002¹¹ said from 31 December 2005 that all federal public websites should be accessible¹². A 2006 test revealed that 65% of federal websites comply. **Iceland** estimates that 15% of public websites are accessibility compliant¹³ although ministries as well as municipalities close to the capital area are 90% compliant. Since 2004, by law, **Italy** requires new public websites to be accessible and is now actively monitoring them.

3. The magical multi-channel delivery

Twenty countries have a multi-channel policy.

In **Spain**, 060 is the magic code providing a single access point. Many services provided by different administrations can be accessed via the 060 network, whether they are office-, internet-, or phone-based. Citizens can access these points in the street or their office on the web (www.060.es), by the phone (060) or SMS. The network is available 24/7 and coordinates the services offered by national, regional and local administrations. The goal of 060 is to offer these services without moving from one office to another and not needing to know

⁹ UK inclusion approach: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_to_sk_force/publications/reaching_out/

¹⁰ Regarding de facto compliance, see 2007 EU27 benchmarking results (op.cit) and <http://www.eiao.net/>

¹¹ The German Act on Equal Opportunities for Disabled People, 2002.

¹² Accessible is here defined as compliant to WCAG 1.0 WAI AA.

¹³ Accessible is here defined as compliant to WCAG 1.0 WAI AA, figures are from 2005.

⁶ Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI): <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

⁷ Belgian social security (good practice case): <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/1908>

⁸ Portuguese Government Resolution 96/99, followed by Government Resolution 110/2003.

which administration provides the required service¹⁴.

In **Malta**, citizens can access their personal social security records and payments via the internet, and may also opt to be notified about their social security payments via SMS rather than receiving printed payment advice by post. However, the most salient initiative is the introduction of eGovernment Agents that act as intermediaries to those without access¹⁵.

In **Austria**, all websites that belong to the .gv.at domain are now available free of charge or connection fees via wireless hotspots (WLAN), and via public kiosks, in a groundbreaking cooperation between the Austrian Government and two major telecommunication providers. Similar to Malta, Austria also has legislation in place allowing officials to act as intermediaries for citizens who do not have online access or a citizen card¹⁶.

In **Portugal**, multi-channel delivery includes a single access point through the Citizen's Portal on the internet, combined with mobile phone communication (including SMS alerts and information) and the traditional face-to-face, mail and telephone attendance. The portal's most distinctive character is a network of physical *Citizen's Shops* where all public services to citizens are rendered in unified points of attendance and the use of the Citizen's Portal will be facilitated. Some private services, like utilities, are also available at the same point¹⁷.

In the **UK**, the Transformational Government agenda has moved to the heart of UK's public service reform. The report argues that to improve service delivery, there will be a single information access point across the public sector (Directgov¹⁸ and Businesslink.gov) and that rather than implementing multi-channel as a principle, the focus should be

on reducing duplication and proven efficiency¹⁹.

4. What now?

It is now essential to ensure wider use of the solutions mostly developed regionally and locally. However, their relevance on a wider scale and in different, social, economic, geographical, and political context must be assessed. Secondly, Member States should now put in place multi-channel service delivery strategies, since this is likely to provide a sustainable model for inclusive public services.

In view of these challenges, the European Commission in 2007 launched a study of the current state of the art, viable business models, and a multi-channel service delivery framework.

The above actions, together with the consultation²⁰, and the political conclusions and commitments put forward by the Member States through the eGovernment Ministerial Declaration 2007, will further the agenda established in Manchester in 2005.

¹⁴ Spain, ePractice eGovernment Factsheet (July 2007):

<http://www.epractice.eu/files/media/media711.pdf>

¹⁵ Malta, ePractice eGovernment Factsheet (April 2007):

http://www.epractice.eu/files/media/media_723.pdf

¹⁶ For an overview of the Austrian eGovernment policy, see: <http://www.epractice.eu/factsheets>

¹⁷ The Portuguese Citizen Portal: <http://www.portaldocidadao.pt> For an overview of the Portuguese eGovernment policy, see: <http://www.epractice.eu/factsheets>

¹⁸ Directgov (good practice case): <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/directgov> and Directgov: website of the UK government: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/>

¹⁹ The UK Varney report: 'Service transformation: A better service for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the taxpayer': http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pre_budget_report/prebud_pbro6/other_docs/prebud_pbro6_varney.cfm is being followed by a government-delivery plan to implement the report's findings (to be published in 2007).

²⁰ Consultations with the relevant stakeholders in 2007 includes: local public administrations, NGOs, civil society, volunteers associations, etc.

Chapter 2: Efficiency & Effectiveness of eGovernment

ICT can make life easier for businesses and citizens by making administrations more efficient – quicker – and also more effective – smarter.

... "Member States expect eGovernment to contribute to high user satisfaction with public services and significantly lighten the administrative burden on businesses and citizens by 2010. Moreover, the public sector should achieve considerable efficiency gains as well as increasing transparency and accountability through innovative use of ICT by 2010."²¹ ...

The fact that 25 out of 30 countries have a policy on Efficiency & Effectiveness (E&E) is encouraging. Among the 25, fourteen of them have developed those policies during 2006 and 2007. Clearly, the European i2010 eGovernment Action Plan has had an impact on policy.

In 2004, a Commission study (eGEP²²) found that only five countries had impact based E&E Measurement Frameworks. Today, 14 out of 30 countries have put them in place, mostly in 2006-2007, and several more are underway for 2008. The March 2008 milestone to ensure at least 15 Member States have frameworks in use is reachable.

In parallel with national efforts, and in line with the i2010 benchmarking framework, yearly benchmarking and case-based impact and benefit analysis based on common indicators are performed based on Member States' inputs to monitor progress with this Action Plan. A recent EU-funded study shows that the highest performing eGovernment services are strongly underpinned by citizen trust, and government transparency²³.

Expenditure is an important measure because it allows investments to be matched with potential impact. The **eGEP study** found that in 2004, European investment in eGovernment amounted to €11.9 billion. In 2007, the situation is

unclear, as Member States no longer have exact figures, separate from overall IT-expenditure. It appears that eGovernment has permeated public administrations to a degree that splitting up the budget into that category no longer is possible across EU27+. However, there are some interesting trends. Eastern and Southern European countries report massive spending. Hungary invests €222 million (up from €53 million), Poland, €1.25 billion (up from 27 million). Italy's staggering €3 billion budget for overall ICT expenditure including cross-agency projects (down from 3.8 billion) and Spain's €1.7 billion (up from €0.46 billion) tell a tale as well. The UK will invest about €18.5 billion in 2007 – while they spent €3.4 billion in 2004. These large differences may be due to the fact that varied measurements are in use across the EU. However, in terms of trends in eGovernment expenditure, it seems clear that investment is growing the new Member States, which would fit well with overall the priorities of European Structural Funds.

The French **Mareva**²⁴ (2005) and German **WiBe 4.0** (2006) measuring methodologies²⁵ are examples of measurement frameworks that apply across large European countries. They are tailored to each country, but have the necessary generic elements the Commission has defined: building on value drivers like efficiency, effectiveness and democracy, measuring impact both qualitatively and quantitatively, using measurable targets and being in active use across government.

The i2010 eGovernment Action Plan focuses on increasing user satisfaction and reducing administrative burden: "Member States expect eGovernment to contribute to high user satisfaction with public services and significantly lighten the administrative burden on businesses and citizens by 2010. Moreover, the public sector should achieve considerable efficiency gains as well as increasing transparency and accountability through innovative use of ICT by 2010."²⁶

²¹ The i2010 eGovernment Action Plan, p.6., op.cit.

²² All 2004 figures quoted below are eGEP project figures: <http://www.rso.it/egep>

²³ "Trust and Transparency: pre-requisites for effective eGovernment", by M.Blakemore and P.Lloyd, *CCeGov Think Paper no. 10*, <http://www.ccegov.eu/?Page=ThinkPapers>

²⁴ Mareva, the French eGovernment measurement methodology (good practice case):

<http://www.epractice.eu/cases/2024>

²⁵ See the eGEP project: <http://www.rso.it/egep> (Measurement Framework, pp. 14).

²⁶ i2010 eGov Action Plan, p.6, see: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/e-government_research/doc/highlights/comm_pdf_comm_2006_0173_f_en_acte.pdf



eGEP Measurement Framework Model (2006)

1. Less administration = more jobs

Efficient & effective administrations contribute to economic growth and jobs. However, requirements laid down at both national and EU level create an administrative burden in terms of time and money spent by businesses and citizens. Studies estimate the burden to range from 1.5% to 7% of GDP. An extrapolation of Dutch data suggests that administrative costs may amount to circa 3.5% of GDP in the EU²⁷. In 2004 the CPB, the Dutch Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, estimated that reducing the administrative costs by 25% would eventually lead to an increase in EU GDP of 1.6%. Recent work carried out by the Commission, building on CPB estimates, indicates that a 25% administrative cost reduction may yield significant benefits of up to 1.5%- or some €150 billion- in GDP.

A lot of work is ongoing in Member States to measure and reduce administrative burdens by simplifying procedures, sharing of services and re-implementation using modern ICT techniques. **Slovenia**, for example, in 2005 put in place a €0.8 million programme for reducing administrative burden. The programme defined 34 measures to reduce administrative burden for 2006 and 30 measures for 2007, respectively. In addition approximately the same number of measures was collected from citizens and included in the programme on an annual basis²⁸. The **Iceland Simplified**

programme has been in place since 2006²⁹. **Belgium** has seen their Kafka programme³⁰ and Agency for administrative simplification gain a following around the world. In four years (2003-2007), 200 federal laws have been either scrapped or simplified. Regionally, around 180 laws or decrees have been scrapped also. In total, the Kafka point has received 21,025 messages between 2003 and 2007.³¹ **Germany** has put in place a database of information obligations under Federal and European legislation³² which in a transparent way helps businesses to identify administrative burdens and to make proposals for their reduction. In **Portugal**, the SIMPLEX Programme, launched in 2006, originally contained 333 initiatives. 86% of them were successfully concluded on time. Simplex 2007 has scheduled 235 initiatives, involving all ministries and a broad range of departments³³.

In fact, the UK, The Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and the Czech Republic have all put in place reduction targets. Studies carried out by the Dutch Central Planning Bureau indicate that the administrative burden varies from 6.8% of GDP in Greece, Hungary and the Baltic States to 1.5% of GDP in the UK and Sweden.

²⁹ With *Iceland Simplified*, as of 1 January 2007, every government bill discussed in the cabinet shall be accompanied by a check-list indicating the necessity of new rules, what consultation took place, impact assessment, and constitutionality). The programme will run until 2009.

³⁰ The Belgian Kafka programme:

<http://www.kafka.be/>

³¹ The Belgian Kafka programme, IDABC eGov Observatory (08.05.2006):

<http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/en/document/5555/194>

³² German database of information obligations: <http://www.bundesregierung.de/informationspflichten>

³³ The Portuguese Simplex programme, see: <http://www.ucma.gov.pt/simplex/>

²⁷ Kox (2005): Intra-EU differences in regulation-caused administrative burden for companies. CPB Memorandum 136. CPB, The Hague.

²⁸ Slovenia, ePractice eGovernment Factsheet (May 2007): <http://www.epractice.eu/files/media/media721.pdf>

In January 2007, the Commission Communication to Council and Parliament proposed an Action Programme for Reducing Administrative Burdens in the European Union. The programme includes an EU reduction target of 25% by 2012. The aim is to enhance the quality and impact of Commission legislation, and covers some 140 simplification initiatives.

2. Giving the users what they want

Tapping into user satisfaction is crucial to successful service delivery all across the EU. The Commission's work programme for 2007-2010 on Efficiency & Effectiveness of eGovernment³⁴ clearly sets out this agenda. Early lessons learnt across Europe, especially from the Top of the Web study (2004) and the eUser project (2005) show users to be demanding, constantly wanting better service, in a cycle of rising expectations.

While twelve countries, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, The Netherlands, and the UK report high user satisfaction, few countries have put in place measures of user satisfaction across government. To date, little is known about the approaches. What we do know is that Lithuania did a public opinion poll about trust in the state and found it increased to 48% (from 35% in 2005). **Finland** will throughout 2007 create common operating models for a citizen and an enterprise portal to launch more customer centric online services. **Portugal** is currently using the European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI)³⁵ to trace user satisfaction and will do so yearly from now on³⁶. The Dutch measure user satisfaction with eGovernment services and have found that 60% value these services positively.

34

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/e-government_research/doc/e_e_%202007_2010.pdf

³⁵ The Index will be composed of quality indicators based on real experience of contacts between citizens and public services (e.g. waiting times, staff courtesy, knowledge about the subject matter...), according to the ECSI methodology. A pilot project was developed in 2006 in collaboration with New University of Lisbon and Portuguese Association of Quality. Tax administration, Registries and Social Security were the services evaluated in this phase. Three channels of services delivery are considered and compared: in person (either sectorial service or citizen shop), phone and web service. See: ECSI http://www.ipq.pt/ecsi/main_in.html

³⁶ Portugal, ePractice.eu eGovernment Factsheet (April 2007):

http://www.epractice.eu/files/media/media_728.pdf

The federal portal *HELP.gv.at*,³⁷ provides services to all those who deal with **Austrian** institutions, and has won numerous international awards, including the e-Europe Award 2003. It is organised as a one-stop-shop covering about 150 life events (birth, marriage etc.) as well as topics like "housing" or "starting a business". *HELP.gv.at* is offered in German and English and extends its reach to people from other countries that live, work or take an interest in Austria. The open standards architecture is offered free of charge to organisations in other European countries.

Fully integrating the service delivery of 2300 local communities on a national portal is a significant achievement. *HELP.gv.at* emerged as a direct result of strong cross-agency collaboration and the leadership provided by the Federal ICT Strategy Unit, who also put in place a platform independent eID solution and removed legal barriers to make joined-up service delivery possible. Also, a 2006 eGovernment training initiative for the whole administration raised awareness of the benefits and spread knowledge. *HELP.gv.at* could set European standard in the time to come and is a model for advanced service delivery.



©Eric Andras

The **Norwegian** national portal *Mypage*³⁸ is a user-defined and secure citizen's portal where users can carry out personalised public e-services in one place. Citizens also can control, and correct, the information held about them by various public administrations. In May 2007, after only four months of operation, about 200 services from more than 40 public administrations are provided serving more than 200 000 registered citizens (5% of the population). The *Mypage* cooperation involves most Norwegian state agencies and municipalities and thus covers the

³⁷ See Help's English website:

<http://www.help.gv.at/Content.Node/HELP-FC.html>, and Help's EU good practice case entry:

<http://www.epractice.eu/cases/289>

³⁸ Norwegian national portal Mypage (EU good practice case): <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/1007>

whole range of public services for citizens. It required order in hundreds of back-office operations and relies on joined up information from Norway's many public registers. Putting it in place took political will at the highest level of government. The way Norway organises such collaboration is a model for others.

3. Accelerating good practice exchange

Sharing experiences, successes and failures, across Europe, or within Member States, has massive benefits. Before 2005, there were only sporadic exchanges taking place. In 2005, the European Good Practice Framework (2005-2006) kick-started the process, getting some 300 cases online over two years. From 2007 onwards the new **epractice.eu**³⁹ initiative merged with the IDABC eGovernment Observatory.



Now, Europe has a joined-up good practice exchange scheme. Services include a web portal, blog, weekly newsletter, country factsheets, glossary, online library, practitioner profiles, events calendar and monthly workshops created by the European Commission for the professional community in eGovernment, eInclusion and eHealth. Building a community of practitioners from all 27 Member States, EU-member candidate states and EFTA countries in particular, is welcomed. The portal combines online activities with frequent offline exchanges: workshops, face-to-face meetings and public presentations. A large knowledge base of real-life case studies submitted by portal members is freely available.

The portal currently has 25,000 monthly visitors, issues 500 news items, lists close to 200 events per year, and holds monthly face-to-face workshops. There is free access to almost 400 learning cases (plus 310 cases coming from the 2007 Awards), representing €1.1 billion in project

implementation. The 10,000 registered experts join hundreds of events yearly, rate and comment others' case experience, and maintain their public professional profiles. Users may contact each other for informal exchanges as well as practical issues like finding a speaker or expert in their domain.

Learning from good practice exchange is a major accelerator of achievement. While some companies have successfully pursued knowledge management inside their own company for decades, spreading knowledge in communities of practice is much more recent. So-called user-generated content has exploded in the last few years⁴⁰, but is so far largely untapped by governments. The European approach aims to take a leading role, combining online and offline exchange, and enabling governments across the world to leverage the knowledge of eGovernment (as well as eInclusion and eHealth) professionals.

The European good practice milestone of September 2007 aims for 50% growth in the number of cases online compared with a year ago where the top 5% of cases attain a credible quality label combining expert opinion and Web 2.0 interactivity, and to ensure considerably improved pan-European coverage, compared to September 2006. If Member States follow up the Commission's investment, stimulating case entry and participation in the exchange, this is realistic. One encouraging example is that in 2007, **Italy** launched a €60 million programme for regional and local good practice exchange which will be effective from 2008 and will last for 24 months.

4. What now?

While progress in E&E has been steady, action is still needed, especially to ensure that user satisfaction with eGovernment services is measured and that there is positive user impact across Europe. In 2008, the EC will launch a study on user satisfaction and impact in the EU with funding from the CIP programme. The study will provide much needed comparative data and will conduct a fully re-usable survey which all public agencies afterwards can use free of charge.

³⁹ ePractice.eu: <http://epractice.eu> See also the eponymous good practice case entry: <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/1978>

⁴⁰ Killer-applications like My Space <http://www.myspace.com/>, LinkedIn <http://www.linkedin.com/> are example of user-generated content creation, also called Web 2.0 interactivity.

Reducing administrative burden with eGovernment and related approaches is becoming a European priority. To reach the 25% European reduction target as well as national targets, Member States must rapidly learn from successful strategies amongst themselves. At the European level, there is a need to prioritise action in a few areas with high pain and high gain factor. To do that, some initial analyses are being carried out,⁴¹ but, in any case, political decisions lie ahead.

Thematic networks funded by the CIP programme will stimulate peer-to-peer learning. However, Member State action is also needed throughout 2007-10. Making sure all countries have E&E policies and measurement frameworks in place can only occur if all countries set ambitious targets for good practice exchange from the project level and up through to the top. Likewise, investment must continue, and even though the task is tricky, investment figures should be produced by 2010.

⁴¹ See Euregov: <http://www.euregov.eu/index.html>

Chapter 3: High Impact Services

High impact eGovernment services affect many citizens and businesses, and have a powerful impact, visible in terms of the EU's Lisbon agenda. They focus on achieving high impact through widespread usage, not only through availability of the service electronically. Such services create a high demand on key enablers like eSignature, eIdentity, and interoperability. In the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan, electronic public procurement (ePP) was chosen as the first service to implement:

●●● "Member States have committed themselves to giving all public administrations across Europe the capability of carrying out 100% of their procurement electronically (where legally permissible) and to ensuring that at least 50% of public procurement above the EC threshold is carried out electronically by 2010."⁴²●●●

EC activity on eProcurement is manifold and includes IDABC programme activities⁴³, actions from the Internal Market and Services, and Information Society and Media Directorates-General, in coordination with Member States.

There are 23 countries out of 30 that already have a policy regarding high impact services or a related area, and many good practices are emerging.

1. Good practice – high impact

In **Ireland**, a national supplier register holds, among other things, common tender documents and business certificates to cater for trans-border submissions by suppliers. As of May 2007, 1,702 authorities and 36,595 suppliers were registered. The average advertising savings for a public authority is €145,000 per year.

From 2005, **Portugal** enabled entrepreneurs to create a new enterprise in less than one hour. More than 28,000 enterprises have been created up to May 2007 representing more than 50% of all enterprises created, in an average of 49 minutes each. The full online creation of an enterprise was launched at the end of

June 2006⁴⁴. More than 400 enterprises are already created this way. The introduction of eInvoicing in the public administration in 2007 is leading to very large savings on the invoicing process (in the range of 70%-80%)⁴⁵. In **Estonia**, since the beginning of 2007, you can set up a business in two hours. Indeed, there have been cases where it took only 12 minutes to process.

In **Slovenia**, a one-stop-shop for entrepreneurs enables Slovenians to register their business activity in the business register and transfers a person's tax data to the tax administration. The system also allows the reporting of data needed for health and pension insurance, and the submission of a craft permit application. In 2006, the system had over 5,000 more sole traders operating compared with 2005. Estimated annual savings at the beginning of the project amounted to €1,500,000 year for citizens⁴⁶.



©Eric Authras

In **Belgium**, the Crossroads Bank for Social Security and the National Office for Social Security launched a joint project to improve collaboration and digital data exchange between more than 2000 social security institutions in Belgium⁴⁷. The network encompasses private companies and public administrations which can consult their databases and exchange up to 190 different types of electronic messages securely. The aim of the project was to effectively combine back office integration and an ePortal solution to provide improved services to citizens, companies

⁴⁴ See the Portuguese Online Enterprise Portal: <http://www.portaldaempresa.pt/CVE/en>

⁴⁵ Portuguese eProcurement pilots: <http://www.epractice.eu/?ctopic=0&cntr=20&page=gpcase&case=149>

⁴⁶ The Slovenian One-stop-shop for entrepreneurs: <http://evem.gov.si/sp/> Also see Slovenia ePractice eGovernment Factsheet (April 2007): <http://www.epractice.eu/files/media/media721.pdf>

⁴⁷ <https://www.socialsecurity.be/> and ePractice (good practice case): <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/1908>

⁴² i2010 eGovernment Action Plan, p.8, op.cit.
⁴³

<http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/en/document/2084/5874>

and public institutions. The Belgian Social Security case has a strong and visible impact. The service clearly meets social and economic needs and provides benefits to a significant portion of businesses and citizens. It also has a pan-European dimension. It has cross-border scope and could easily be transferred easily to other countries or service domains.



©C.Borland / PhotoLink

2. Progressing towards 100% availability of eProcurement⁴⁸

Availability figures are encouraging. Denmark, Latvia and Luxembourg have already reached the 100% availability target. Germany has 100% nationally and close to 100% regionally. Four countries, France, Italy, Portugal and Estonia, declared progress in the range of 76-99% – for them the target seems easily reachable. Belgium, which declared progress towards 100% availability in the 51-75% range, is also in a fortunate position. Five countries (Hungary, Lithuania, Norway, Slovenia and UK (excluding Scotland)) are half way (or less) from reaching the goals.

3. Struggling with 50% use of eProcurement⁴⁹

Progress figures on usage are less encouraging. The ambitious goal is still far from being reached. The UK reports that only Scotland has already reached the objective. Germany declares to be 70% at the federal level and approximately 40% regionally, but notes that only a small number of bidders still make use of the opportunity of eSignature during the pre-awarding process. For 15 countries out of 30, the progress is in the 0-25% range. Finland and Denmark are among the top five in their usage even though Finland only reports 0-25% availability, which seems to indicate that only their niche services have high use⁵⁰. Denmark's eInvoicing strategy is widely reported because of their decision to shut down all other channels⁵¹.

Public eProcurement consists of two phases: pre-awarding (eNotice, eTendering, eSubmission, accept eSignature) and post-awarding (eOrdering, eInvoicing, ePayments, and the use of eSignature). The UK declares that the Scottish public eProcurement system is fully in use and covers all phases. The German system is in full use and covers the whole pre-awarding phase, whereas the eInvoicing and ePayments steps are still in an initial implementation phase. Norway will have a fully operable system covering all phases on their electronic procurement portal⁵² by 1 December 2007, when the latest addition of electronic tools to cover the pre-awarding phase are in place.

Three countries, France, Germany and Ireland, have fully adopted support for the pre-awarding phase. 11 countries out of 30 are beginning to support the pre-awarding phase.⁵³ 15 countries are already in the implementation phase⁵⁴.

UK (here in line with Scotland) declares to fully support the post-awarding phase. Germany fully supports the eOrdering phase and the use of eSignatures, but it is still in the initial phase for the support of eInvoicing and ePayments. 14 countries out of 30 are beginning to support the post-awarding phase.⁵⁵ Also, 14 countries are already in the implementation phase.⁵⁶

savings could add up to over €50 billion,” see COM(2006) 173 final, (p.3).

⁴⁸ Norwegian eprocurement portal: www.ehandel.no

⁴⁹ Pre-awarding, beginning phase: 40% of the responding countries, namely Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Sweden, Slovakia, and Turkey.

⁵⁰ Pre-awarding implementation phase: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, The Netherlands and UK.

⁵¹ Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, The Netherlands and Turkey.

⁵² Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Italy and Spain.

⁴⁸ 100% availability means all administrations (national, regional and local) have an e-enabled e-procurement tendering process.

⁴⁹ 50% use means that half of the actors in the procurement process make active use of electronic public procurement.

⁵⁰ NB: Finland declares 0-25% availability, but 51-75% use.

⁵¹ See case description:

<http://www.epractice.eu/?ctopic=0&cntr=5&page=gpcase&case=1967> Electronic invoicing in Denmark saves taxpayers €150 million and businesses €50 million a year. If introduced all over the EU, annual

4. What now?

In 2008, it is expected that more than six Member States will participate in the Large Scale Pilot on eProcurement. They will also disseminate results to non-participating Member States.

Clearly, national systems will need to become more advanced to take the cross-border challenge and services directive⁵⁷ on board. Progress in eProcurement is non-linear: one country may have an advanced feature in one domain, but may need help in another. Therefore, sharing experiences through the new ePractice.eu⁵⁸ activity of the Commission is crucial to making rapid progress. Member States must support, encourage, and award active participation from successful national initiatives and eGovernment experts, both contributing and enhancing cases, rating and commenting cases online, contributing to workshops, and making use of networking facilities.

⁵⁷ Services Directive, 2006/123/EC
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/top_layer/index_19_en.htm See final text: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32006L0123:EN:NOT>

⁵⁸ Good practice activity in eGovernment, eInclusion and eHealth: <http://www.epractice.eu>

Chapter 4: Putting Key Enablers in Place

Key enablers are technologies or building blocks that significantly improve service. Since the 2005 Manchester Declaration, the implementation of electronic identity (eID) is recognised as one of the key enablers in eGovernment. The agreed objective is to implement an EU-wide interoperable system for eID recognition and authentication. The 2010 eGovernment Action Plan goal is very clear:

...*"By 2010 European citizens and businesses will be able to benefit from secure and convenient electronic means, issued at local, regional and national levels, and complying with data protection regulations, to identify themselves to public services in their own or in any other Member State."* ...

Most of the countries surveyed have eID projects either planned or underway. The challenge is now to work on the "mutual recognition" called for by the Action Plan. Although some countries have experimented with other countries or claim to have some interoperable systems in place, cross-border interoperability is lacking in general. With a few exceptions, there is very little use of electronic signatures.

1. Policy elements in place for eID

Close to 90% (26/30) have a policy in place for key enablers such as eID. Ten of these were established in 2006 or later. Three countries: Hungary, Poland and Slovakia stated that they have no eID policy, and Ireland is in the process of developing a policy to formalise existing practices. In most countries the policy on key enablers also comprised eID management. Only four countries reported that this aspect was not included. More than 50% of the countries surveyed report that they have a national policy related to eDocuments and Open Source. Twenty countries report to have a policy also on the use of open standards.

2. Few implement interoperable eID

While 60% of the countries surveyed report to have piloted eID systems so far, only eight countries say their eID policy

includes interoperability with other Member States. Few countries experience the high use of electronic signatures among citizens. The exception is Lithuania, which estimates its signatures are used by 46% of the population⁵⁹. Denmark, which is number two on the list, estimates that only 16% of their citizens use it. The usage is somewhat higher among business but, with the notable exceptions of Lithuania and Denmark, basic building blocks of interoperability are missing.



©Nick Koutis

3. Characteristics of successful eID strategies

The approaches taken towards eID in Austria, Belgium, and The Netherlands stand out because of: (1) built in interoperability with other Member States, (2) an advanced state of deployment, and with a significant user base, so that there is a significant body of lessons learned from the exercise, or (3) clear displays of the benefits of eID.

The strength of the **Austrian** eID system⁶⁰ lies in its built-in cross-border interoperability. The Citizen Card is a model that provides a series of functions for carrying out eGovernment and eCommerce transactions securely. The Citizen Card can be used to create and verify electronic signatures for electronic documents, to encrypt and decrypt electronic documents, and to record data in a data storage area and to retrieve it from there. It provides for unique identification and authentication whilst guaranteeing the highest data protection standards. In the spirit of European mobility, other Member States citizen cards can be used in Austria, provided they are equipped with an identity link or are capable of being so equipped. At present, citizen cards from Belgium, Estonia,

⁵⁹ Lithuania's figure is pre-PKI (not yet implemented). Its main "engines" of eSignature are mutual recognition and ebanking.

⁶⁰ Austrian eID:
<http://www.epractice.eu/index.php?ctopic=o&cntr=1&page=gpcase&case=197>

Finland and Italy are already included in the Austrian concept and it is already possible to use those cards in Austrian eGovernment.

The strength of the **Belgian** eID system⁶¹ is the systematic and thorough planning of the roll-out effort, and its advanced state of deployment. Full deployment of eID to all Belgian citizens and foreigners living in Belgium as well as introduction of eID enabled applications is the target. Over 3.5 million eID cards have already been issued and it is expected that all Belgian citizens living in Belgium will be using an eID card by the end of 2009 at the latest. Technologically, the solution follows open standards, and is in fact part of a flexible, service-oriented architecture. The eID card itself is a key to access information stored in back-office systems. The fact that there is only identity information stored on the card enhances social acceptance.

The **Dutch** national eID system, DigiD⁶² is widely used. Over 5.7 million Dutch citizens have a DigiD login code which they can use to access services offered by more than 241 local, regional and national administrations. DigiD has several security levels and uses open standards. Research shows that at least 96% of all Dutch municipalities intend to participate. Key success factors include a launching manifest with six large national services (including tax online), mandatory usage for high impact services (80%), and low barriers to use the solution both for municipalities and users.

Spain has earmarked €77 million for eID in 2007, their largest running eGovernment project. Some 300 services are now running, covering 2.5 million inhabitants by end of the year. Spain's new law for eGovernment, approved in June 2007, gives citizens the right to communicate with government electronically as well as the right to only provide information once⁶³. In **Italy**, the programme to promote adoption of eID online access to services has distributed nearly 18 million smart cards.



©Eric Audras

4. What now?

Introducing secure and easy-to-use eID solutions opens the door to new business opportunities, advances the internal market and facilitates the free movement of citizens. Having such a system will facilitate public service delivery in areas such as procurement, social security, taxation and health. It will also deliver benefits like convenience, time and cost savings, reduced fraud, simplified procedures, and enhanced privacy.

The launch of a large scale European eID pilot is planned for 2007, financed by the CIP-programme⁶⁴. The pilot should support semantically interoperable eID management schemes across Europe, and will operate in at least six participating Member States, enhancing technical, semantic, organisational and legal interoperability. The pilot will be operational from 2008-2009 onwards, with sub-pilots in areas such as mobile working, social security, taxation, transport or health reimbursement. By the end of the pilot, one should have common specifications for interoperability layer and building blocks, openly available, and a scalable and replicable process so that new countries, services and domains can follow suit.

⁶¹ ePractice Factsheet for Belgium:
http://www.epractice.eu/files/media/media_725.pdf
See also, the Belgian eID system (good practice case):
<http://www.epractice.eu/cases/28> and the Belgian eID Card webpage: <http://eid.belgium.be/>

⁶² The Dutch eID system, DigiD: (good practice case):
<http://www.epractice.eu/cases/digid>

⁶³ Spain, ePractice eGovernment Factsheet (July 2007):
<http://www.epractice.eu/files/media/media711.pdf>
and Validation platform (MPVP) for the Spanish eID card (good practice case):
<http://www.epractice.eu/cases/1984>

⁶⁴ CIP ICT PSP programme:
http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/ict_psp/

Chapter 5: eParticipation

ICT offers innovative ways for decision-makers from local to European level to engage with people to counter a growth in disaffection with politics and a feeling of disconnect. eParticipation is about strengthening and broadening citizens' participation in democratic decision-making. This involves using ICT to reach a wide range of people and to give them the tools to voice their opinion and to get involved in policies and politics. By so doing, the quality of legislation can be improved, the decision-making process more transparent, and communication and understanding is increased. It offers citizens the opportunity to develop their own communities and even form their own groups, thereby strengthening their sense of empowerment and social cohesion.

The i2010 eGovernment Action Plan states that:

♦♦♦ "Better decision-making and more extensive involvement of citizens in all phases of democratic decision-making, including at European level, are critical for the cohesion of European society."⁶⁵ ♦♦♦

1. Policies in place – pilots underway

18 countries out of 30 report having eParticipation policies in place and a further five who do not yet have a policy report a number of national or local initiatives. Almost half of those that provided information on the official start date initiated their policy in 2006 or 2007. In all countries eParticipation is still at an early stage of development, with a range of activities and projects being tried out, with a potential to expand in the coming years. Already, however, issues of scalability and wider application of eParticipation practices are emerging as important challenges.

The overwhelming majority of countries rate their website as the most important means of delivering their eParticipation strategy and 18 countries report providing some form of participatory architecture (Web 2.0). Of the latter, 12 consider Web 2.0 as either their most or second most important delivery channel. Email was also

frequently given a high score in terms of its importance in delivering eParticipation strategies and was cited as either the first or second priority for seven countries. Unusually, Hungary cited mobile telephones as its most important means of delivery, because of the penetration rate (more than 90%).

eVoting policies are limited to only a few countries. Of the 17 countries with eParticipation policies, five did not include any information on eVoting, either online or in kiosks. Only Romania highlighted it as a priority in their feedback. However, a number of governments have been experimenting with eVoting in the form of pilot initiatives and have plans for more eVoting in the future. In feedback to the Belgian government, eVoting was highlighted as a service in which citizens expressed particular interest.

2. Web 2.0 improves transparency

One of the most popular initiatives in the area of eParticipation has been the successful development of government websites to improve transparency and access to information. Legislation as well as proposals for new or revised legislation is available online in many countries and frequently via a central portal. This allows the public to have instant access to legislation and to monitor the legislative process more easily. The Irish Government is also testing an "amendments in context" function, which would show how an amendment would appear if it were passed to make it easier to understand the impact of any proposed changes. Cyprus and Finland also provide information on citizens' rights and the decision-making process on their websites. Bulgaria has initiatives in two locations allowing citizens to follow city council meetings.

A variety of means have been used to give people the opportunity to debate and provide input into decision-making. These include public consultations, opinion polls, forums, blogs and webchats. Local authorities from Ireland, Spain, the UK and Slovakia are involved in a Community-funded project under the eTEN programme. *eParticipate*⁶⁶ is a market validation project aiming to promote public involvement in local decision-making using ICT, in particular webcasting. In 2004, **Italy** started encouraging citizens' participation in decision-making processes through the use

⁶⁵ eGovernment Action Plan, p.10.

⁶⁶ <http://www.eparticipate.org/>

of ICT in local and regional government. Since then, 57 projects with a total cost of €41 million have been selected and are currently being implemented.

In some cases, ICT has been used to allow the public to express their views on planned legislation, for example, in Spain, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia (the latter received over 300 suggestions for improvements to existing legislation in 2006). Malta has a customer care system⁶⁷ through which questions, suggestions and complaints can be sent to the Maltese government.

In other countries, the focus has been on using Web 2.0 websites to allow the public to contribute to debates on specific topics: in Germany the ePetition of the federal parliament has been a vivid instrument for voters. On the German local level, for instance, 1,228 contributions were received during an internet discussion on Hamburg's budget. The discussion platform on Austria's education system was visited more than 500,000 times and more than 1,800 contributions were posted. Norway and Sweden have focused on using the technology locally, such as the pilot project in the Norwegian municipality of Molde, which uses the internet to act as a meeting place for residents, politicians and civil servants to discuss local issues.

3. Transforming elections with e-channels

ICT has been used to improve electoral procedures, in Europe and elsewhere. In Spain, a website was set up which allowed electors to send questions to candidates for the European elections in 2004⁶⁸. The questions and subsequent answers were published online.

eVoting could play an important role in improving the democratic process by increasing voter turnout at elections, in particular young voters whose participation rates are low. The Community-funded ePoll project⁶⁹ aims to start the deployment of a remote electronic polling system with the involvement of government departments in Italy, France and the UK.

eVoting has already been used experimentally in elections. **Estonia**, allowed a limited number of citizens to vote via the internet for local elections in 2005 and for national elections in March 2007. **Portugal** conducted pilots for the European elections in 2004 and the General Election in 2005 to test future potential as well as introducing members of the public to the technology. **Denmark** has undertaken some pilot eVoting initiatives locally and is looking into improving this with the introduction of digital signatures. **Lithuania** is also planning to introduce internet voting in 2008.

The Netherlands has conducted experiments with internet voting for Dutch citizens who live abroad. The first experiment was for the European parliamentary elections in June 2004. 7,197 voters registered to vote by internet or telephone, 4,871 actually voted over the internet, 480 voted by telephone. The second experiment was held during the national parliamentary elections in November 2006. 34,305 voters from abroad had registered. 21,593 (63%) registered to vote over the internet, 19,815 voters actually casted their vote over the internet.

Using ICT in the electoral process has significant potential, so far largely untapped. It can be used as an information tool to improve voter understanding of the procedures and political party views and policies. It can allow voters the opportunity to get to know the candidates. eVoting could also improve participation levels. However, issues regarding reliability and usability need to be resolved before the public will have confidence in the system and to ensure that a wide range of citizens are able to benefit from it, including those with sight disabilities.



⁶⁷ Servizz, the Maltese customer care system: <http://servizz.gov.mt/default.aspx>

⁶⁸ Web-enabled 2004 European elections in Spain: www.candidato2004.net

⁶⁹ The EC-funded ePoll-project: <http://www.e-poll-project.net/>

4. What now?

For the moment, it is too early to draw firm conclusions on the impact of these eParticipation projects. However, information from the UK's Digital Dialogues Pilot Project has been evaluated, and results show that their online consultations and political debates attracted a very different type of audience and participant, in the majority of cases people who had never participated in politics before. This gives an indication of the potential of eParticipation policies to engage citizens in democratic decision-making. Similarly, the UK government's *The Power of Information* report recommends that governments engage in partnership with online communities and advises civil servants on how best to implement new media⁷⁰.

Many EU-funded research projects demonstrate the great potential of eParticipation and pave the way for adoption in Member States⁷¹. At the same time quite some interest is shown in the **Commission's eParticipation Initiative**⁷² by all levels of decision-making bodies – local, regional, national, European – and with the strong support of the European Parliament.

Numerous different pilot projects are underway throughout the EU. Continued, even greater, sharing of best practices will allow governments to identify successful strategies. Learning from one another, governments at all levels can find the best means to reach a wider audience and engage with citizens. This should not be restricted to national policies, but all levels from local to European need to be involved. **Iceland**, for example, has published guidelines based on its research to help local public authorities interested in starting online forums and **Belgium** has a cooperation agreement between federal, regional and communities, collecting information on best practices and developments from all levels of government.

Governments should consider how they can encourage participation. Public awareness campaigns and guidance on how to participate are crucial to success. The UK Government's Interim Report from its pilot project recommends having in place a marketing campaign and providing the public with clear information about the potential they have for influencing outcomes as well as a commitment to feedback at the end of the process. Many countries lack such campaigns and guidance.

More needs to be done to enable local communities or people with the same interests to form groups and participate in decision-making. Many decision-makers appear reluctant to encourage the formation and involvement of interest groups. Yet, these groups are an important means of increasing the involvement of people in politics and improve decision-making.

Many countries lack data on the type of eParticipation services that would be well-received by the public. The **French** Government conducts online surveys and has established panels to evaluate and help improve their eGovernment services. Evidence has shown that e-democracy activities that provide a clear effect on to public administrations and policies are most effective⁷³. However, more analysis of eParticipation methods is required if governments are to provide services that meet citizens wants and needs.

⁷⁰ The Power of Information report, An independent review by Ed Mayo and Tom Steinberg, delivered to the UK Government in June 2007:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/publications/reports/power_information/power_information.pdf

⁷¹ See **DEMO-NET** (<http://www.demonet.org/demo>) and eRepresentative

(<http://www.erepresentative.org/site/>), IST projects where some National EU Parliaments are partners.

⁷²

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/e-government_research/eparticipation/

⁷³ Nicola Hall, cceGov Think Paper 6: The Participative Citizen, Version No. 2.0:

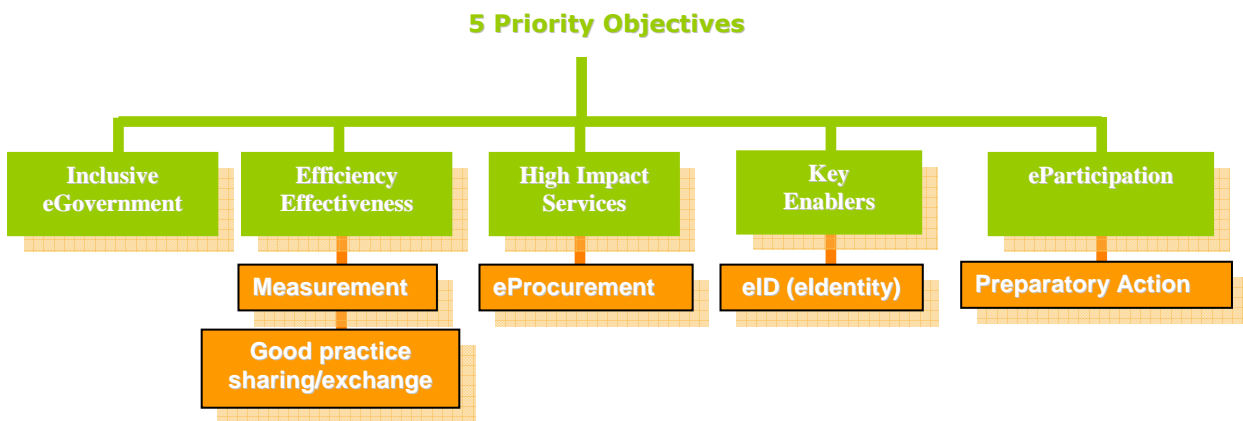
<http://www.ccegov.eu/Downloads/Think%20Paper%206%20v2%2000%20Jan%202007%20Final.pdf>

Conclusion

As Commissioner Viviane Reding points out in her foreword, substantial progress has been made in all core policy areas of the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan nationally and in terms of cooperation around common interests. However, big challenges still remain and we will only reach our agreed i2010 goals if we maintain strong political support and continue strong cooperation. We have

moved forward, but we still need to accelerate the transformation process. Public expectation is high. Citizens and businesses have become used to online commercial products and expect their governments to offer services of equivalent quality and usability. We have three years left to reach the objectives we set in Manchester, so we must stay focused and even step up a gear.

eGovernment Action Plan



For further information:

European Commission - Information Society and Media DG

Office: BU31 02/71-1049 Brussels

Email: info-egovernment@ec.europa.eu

Tel: +32 2 296 90 76

Fax: +32 2 296 17 40

<http://ec.europa.eu/egovernment>