

PRESS RELEASE

524/16

20/09/2016

Council conclusions on eGovernment

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING

- the conclusions adopted by the European Council on 28 June 2016, especially with regard to paragraph 11, section II (Jobs, Growth and Investment), inviting, in order to bring the full benefits of the Digital Single Market to all stakeholders, governments and EU institutions to meet the targets of the eGovernment Action Plan;
 - the Commission Communication of 19 April 2016 entitled "EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 - Accelerating the digital transformation of government"^[1] and the subsequent conclusions on the "Digital Single Market Technologies and Public Services Modernisation" package^[2], adopted by the Council (Competitiveness) on 26 May 2016, especially with regard to paragraph 13 (eGovernment) recognising the need for further elaboration in the Council on the eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020, given its positive potential for modernising the economy and the society;
 - the Commission Communication of 6 May 2015 entitled "A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe"^[3];
 - the Commission Communication of 15 December 2010 entitled "The European eGovernment Action Plan 2011-2015 - Harnessing ICT to promote smart, sustainable & innovative Government"^[4] and the subsequent conclusions adopted by the Council (Transport, Telecommunication and Energy) on 27 May 2011^[5];
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- the objectives of the Ministerial Declaration of the European eGovernment Conference in Malmö on 18-20 November 2009.

NOTING

- the Conclusions of the Conference entitled "Digital and Open Government: Next Step to Maturity" held in Amsterdam on 2-3 June 2016;
- the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies of 15 July 2014^[6].

RECOGNISING THAT

- the digital transformation of governments is essential to address current economic and societal challenges, while facing budgetary constraints, as stated in the consecutive Annual Growth Surveys;
 - the European Commission and Member States, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, have been collaborating on advancing eGovernment at the EU and national levels for over a decade, in particular through the eGovernment Action Plans, with the aim of transforming public administrations by using technology. The Action Plans have also been drivers for the establishment of national eGovernment strategies in Member States;
 - the results of the EU-funded Large-Scale Pilots have significantly contributed to the further enhancement of cross-border services in Europe, while acknowledging the positive potential of the future projects, notably on the Once-Only principle;
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- the objectives of eGovernment are, among others, to empower citizens and businesses, to increase mobility in the Single Market and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector, which all contribute to the fulfilment of the growth potential of the digital economy and a socially inclusive Europe;

- the facilitation of cross-border digital public services further reduces the administrative burden by making secure interactions of the citizens and businesses with public administrations in other Member States faster, more efficient, convenient and transparent, thereby contributing to the success of the internal market;
- it is important that eGovernment and electronic services are designed in an open and interactive manner in order to ensure maximum benefits for citizens and businesses.

STRESSING THAT

- the principles outlined in the Communication on the EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016 -2020, namely Digital by default (including making legislative initiatives fit for the digital era), the Once-only principle (in due compliance with data protection rules), Inclusiveness & Accessibility, Openness & Transparency, Cross-border by default (where applicable), Interoperability by default (based on standards and open specifications in accordance with principles on standardisation^[7]), Trustworthiness & Security are equally important for the European Commission and for the Member States in the implementation of the eGovernment Action Plan;
- various degrees of digitisation of public services have been achieved in the implementation of eGovernment at national level, as monitored for instance by the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) and, in particular, the eGovernment benchmark. While monitoring of the progress in eGovernment and evaluation of the results achieved through benchmarking among the Member States, is considered useful, NOTES, however, the absence of specific, realistic and measureable targets in the Action Plan;
- an increasing use of cross-border digital public services poses challenges to information security and data protection, since it involves different parties with different responsibilities raising challenges which need to be carefully addressed;
- coherence is necessary between the actions stemming from the eGovernment Action Plan and the concerned EU policies, financial instruments and programmes (including CEF, ISA2, H2020 and ESIF), and can assist Member States with the digital transformation of governments.

1. WELCOMES

- a) The main achievements of the eGovernment Action Plan 2011-2015. In particular, the reusable building blocks, such as eIdentification and eAuthentication (eID, eSignature), eDelivery, eInvoicing, Automated Translation and Cyber-Security enable proper functioning and the implementation of the Digital Services Infrastructures at different levels of government, including those which are sector-specific;
- b) The policy priorities as well as the specific actions of the Action Plan which aim to accelerate the digital transformation of governments with ICT by using the key digital enablers, facilitating cross-border mobility with interoperable and secure end-to-end digital public services and facilitating digital interaction between administrations and citizens or businesses;
- c) The ambition to provide personalised public services, based on user-needs, enabling all citizens and business in the EU to interact electronically with the governments, while applying user research and participatory approaches to the design and delivery of innovative solutions;
- d) The dynamic and open nature of the Action Plan, recognising the need to adapt to the rapidly changing technological environment and allowing stakeholders, including public administrations at all levels, to suggest adjustments to the Plan.

2. INVITES THE MEMBER STATES TO

- a) Collaborate in order to ensure swift implementation of the Action Plan by developing and sharing among themselves their national Action Plans, taking into account the areas highlighted in the Country Specific Recommendations during the European Semester process;

- b) Accelerate their efforts to implement the digital transformation of governments at all levels so that needs-based and user-centric services can be easily provided and continually improved upon, the administrative burden significantly reduced and the efficiency of public administrations increased;
- c) Unlock the full potential of reliable statistics, data science and of data-driven innovation to accelerate the digital transformation of governments, while building in checks and balances for citizens in order to protect their personal data^[8] and privacy;
- d) Continue to improve governance, network and information security^[9] to protect personal data^[10], the privacy of citizens, business secrecy and sensitive information handled by public administrations against misuse and cyber security threats;
- e) Consider making the necessary financial and other resources available for re-use and uptake of the Digital Service Infrastructures, including for training and awareness raising, while ensuring overall consistency, adherence to the principle of effective public procurement, and ensuring interoperability of the national solutions to enable cross-border use of the digital public services, where applicable;
- f) Create conditions for businesses, in particular those online, to start and expand their operations within the internal market while simplifying, where applicable, access to information under company law as well as the use of eProcurement;
- g) Encourage uptake of notified eID schemes under eIDAS by citizens, businesses and public administrations;
- h) Open up government data, where legally possible, as requested by businesses and citizens to deliver new added-value products and services;
- i) Stimulate the adoption of user-oriented innovative technologies by implementing pilot projects which promote the use of big data and the internet of things for data-intensive digital public services;
- j) Adhere, where applicable, to the principles stated in the EU eGovernment Action Plan when launching new initiatives at all levels of the public administration and to the principles of the European Interoperability Framework and Strategy in the cross-border dimension;
- k) Cooperate within the eGovernment Action Plan Steering Board, as set out in the Action Plan, to discuss the possible implementation of actions already identified by their target dates and to explore new actions needed, including at local level.

3. CALLS ON THE COMMISSION TO

- a) Identify specific, realistic and measureable targets for the Action Plan based on key performance indicators in cooperation with the eGovernment Action Plan Steering Board and evaluate their fulfilment;

- b) Present and discuss progress at upcoming eGovernment events organised in the context of the Action Plan with the view of a mid-term evaluation in the first half of 2018;
- c) Improve and extend existing methodologies for monitoring and evaluating progress in the implementation of eGovernment at Member State level;
- d) Facilitate and encourage the exchange of knowledge and expertise between stakeholders;
- e) Set a positive example to the Member States and other EU institutions by its own digital transformation, which should ensure adherence to the principles enshrined in the eGovernment Action Plan in the Commission's interactions with its stakeholders;
- f) Consider its own existing ICT solutions and infrastructures and those in the Member States before proposing new legislation, if necessary, in the areas enabling users to find comprehensive information online and facilitating the completion of electronic procedures;
- g) Further assess the barriers to seamless cross-border operations of citizens and businesses based in the EU, and the potential of digital technologies which could facilitate better alignment of rules and processes and, where appropriate, recommend measures to remove the barriers;
- h) In close collaboration with Member States propose a specific plan for governance, including Member States' involvement, and long-term sustainability of the Digital Service Infrastructures, in particular of the core service platforms and the EU-funded Large-Scale Pilots;
- i) Report to the Council annually in writing on progress made on the Action Plan;
- j) Promote, together with Member States, cross-border principles of the e-Government Action Plan 2016-2020 among the EU, the associated countries and the countries of the Mediterranean and Eastern Partnership;
- k) In consultation with Member States, elaborate a proper mechanism for dynamic updating of the Action Plan.

4. INVITES STAKEHOLDERS TO

- a) Contribute proactively to the advancement of the standardisation agenda at the EU level on the basis of industry best practices and the latest technological progress;
- b) Invest in Research and Development and participate in the H2020 programme in order to develop new solutions and technologies e.g. big data, personal data management systems, high performance computing and the internet of things which address current and future societal challenges;
- c) Pilot the implementation of the newly identified technologies and share experience and best practices;

- d) Use the eIDAS services in digitally enabled businesses to facilitate the use of secure remote authentication, including mobile identification, and trust services, with a view to fully accepting cross-border business exchanges in a paperless way;
- e) Contribute to improving digital skills and digital maturity so that citizens, including the disadvantaged groups, and public administrations can benefit from digital public services;
- f) Contribute proactively, for instance by using open data and open application interfaces, where appropriate, to the public dialogue on accelerating the digital transformation of governments at all levels, including modernisation of public administrations, and on improving the public policy-making and decision-making processes."
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[1] 8097/16 COM (2016) 179 final.

[2] 9524/16.

[3] 8672/15 COM (2015) 192 final.

[4] 18135/10 COM (2010) 743 final.

[5] 10308/11.

[6] <http://www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government/Recommendation-digital-government-strategies.pdf>

[7] Annex II to Regulation 1025/2012

[8] Regulation 679/2016

[9] OJ L 194, 19.7.2016, p.1

[10] Regulation 679/2016