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# COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

## e-Commission 2006-2010: Mid-Term Review

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The modernisation and transformation of public services is one of the key contributors to the Lisbon Partnership for Growth and Jobs through the provision of transparent, predictable, efficient and effective public e-services for the benefit of society<sup>1</sup>. This is "*an effective means of redress*" in an increasingly globalised world, as outlined by the contribution of the Commission to the October 2007 meeting of Heads of State and Government<sup>2</sup>.

The Commission acts both as a political force fostering the modernisation of public services throughout Europe, in particular through the i2010 information society strategy, and as an administration, through its own reform agenda aiming to be "*able to communicate with and build trust among European citizens*", as recently reconfirmed in the Commission's Annual Policy Strategy for 2008<sup>3</sup>.

In this general context of societal change regarding the role that public administrations play and the related expectations that citizens and businesses have in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in an information society, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) represent a strategic tool to accompany, enable, and shape such an evolution.

In line with these challenges and policy developments, the e-Commission initiative<sup>4</sup> aims at the ICT-enabled modernisation and transformation of our Institution, i.e. to **increase the quality, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of the services provided by the Commission to citizens, businesses, partner administrations and staff.**

Three years after the launch of the e-Commission 2006-2010 initiative, the overall picture is encouraging and most of the foreseen actions are delivering the expected value. Nearly all policy and administrative undertakings benefit from ICT support and the foundations for new services, for instance to foster collaborative work, have been developed. It is however appropriate to critically review this initiative with a view to reflecting within the e-Commission framework the political, societal, technological and administrative evolutions that have taken place since end 2005.

## 2. E-COMMISSION AT MID-TERM

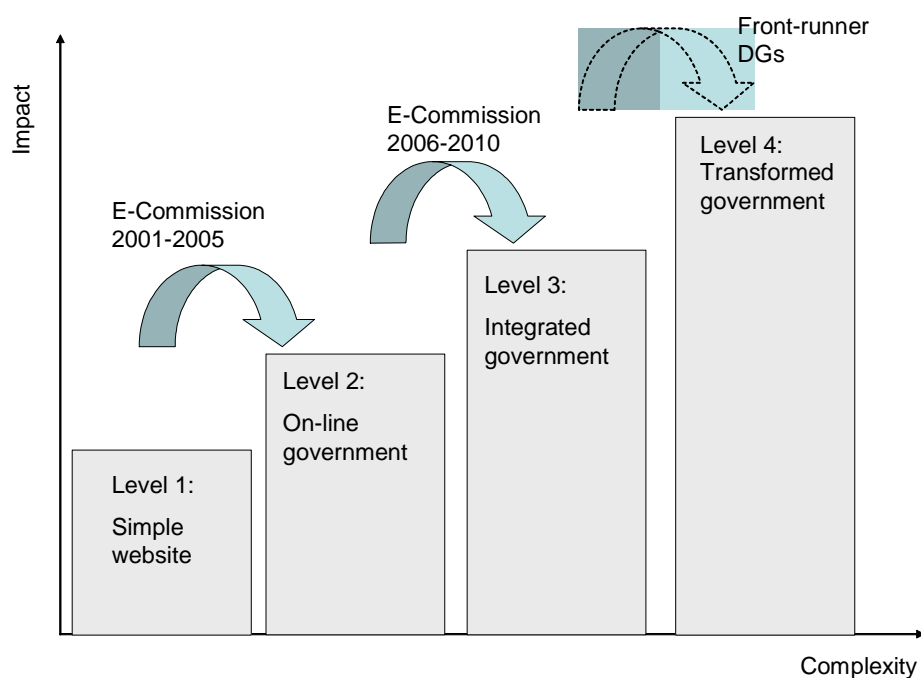
### 2.1. The e-Commission roadmap

The e-Commission initiative aims, over the period 2006-2010, to enable enhanced efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of the European Commission for the benefit of internal and external stakeholders by leveraging the possibilities offered by ICT. This will increase the e-government maturity of the Commission that should

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<sup>1</sup> eGovernment Ministerial Declaration, Lisbon, 19 September 2007  
<sup>2</sup> COM(2007)581, "The European Interest: Succeeding in the age of globalisation"  
<sup>3</sup> COM(2007)65  
<sup>4</sup> C(2005)4473

reach the "Integrated government" level by 2010 characterised by intensified two-way digital exchanges between all stakeholders<sup>5</sup>.



This objective clearly goes beyond the mere technological challenges associated with the use of ICT. By adopting such objectives **the Commission has recognised that the value brought by ICT investments transcends technology and should primarily bring political and administrative value.**

The 2005 e-Commission communication stressed that the success of this initiative is possible if and only if, all internal stakeholders are concerned. These are the informatics, the administrative and the policy communities of the Commission and thus all DGs are involved.

In this context, setting-up a coordinated approach with a strong political sponsorship is vital. Defining a roadmap has enabled such an approach by providing a simple and robust management framework for overseeing the implementation of the e-Commission. Its primary goal was to present the different activities, projects and programmes to be undertaken from 2006 to 2010.

Two axes are used to articulate the implementation of the e-Commission and develop a best-practice e-administration: an *external dimension* supporting European policies with e-services supplied by the Commission to citizens, business and partner administrations; and an *internal dimension* offering staff improved e-services supporting internal Commission processes.

<sup>5</sup> Integrated government: Parts of administrative activity are automated. The services offered are not based on existing procedures that are simply revamped to use ICT but are the product of a genuine integration between interaction channels, back office information systems and administrative processes. However, some steps in administrative workflows are still paper-based.

Reaping the expected benefits of an integrated Commission also requires actions of an organisational and a technical nature. Thus the roadmap has two further axes: *organisational enablers* and *technical enablers* which underpin the external and internal dimensions.

Within each of these four axes, actions<sup>6</sup> have been identified, across the Institution, based on an initial list in the 2005 communication, completed with actions reported by Directorates General (DG) through various reporting channels, such as the Strategic Planning and Programming and the ICT governance<sup>7</sup> processes.

## 2.2. State of play

### 2.2.1. Progress per axis

The *External Dimension* has seen a significant improvement in the availability and sophistication of Commission on-line services in support of European policies since 2005. This trend is illustrated by the results of a survey, conducted during the summer of 2008, targeting external stakeholders. Respondents (both private individuals and organisations) consider that the e-Commission initiative does have a positive impact on efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and quality of the services of the Commission.<sup>8</sup> Their perception of the e-government maturity of the Commission is close to 2.7, compared with 2 which was the level in 2005 and thus is on track towards the objective of level 3 to be reached by 2010.

The *Internal Dimension* is characterised both by important achievements, *inter alia* in support of the Institution's decision-making processes, and in the human resources, financial, document and crisis management domains; but also by the challenge of developing and rolling-out corporate systems in such a complex organisation as the Commission with 41 DGs and services. The overall picture is however very encouraging as illustrated by the level of staff satisfaction: in 2008, 79.8% of Commission staff declared themselves to be satisfied or very satisfied with their ICT environment.

In general, homogeneous progress across all axes of the e-Commission roadmap has been achieved. The accomplishments in both the *external* and *internal dimensions* are complemented by those in the *organisational enablers* area, in particular in the ICT governance and methodological fields, as well as in the *technical enablers* field e.g. regarding the provision of collaborative internet tools to support communication on European affairs. The potential impact of new corporate e-Commission and e-Government information systems on the underlying ICT infrastructure should however be systematically analysed and evaluated.

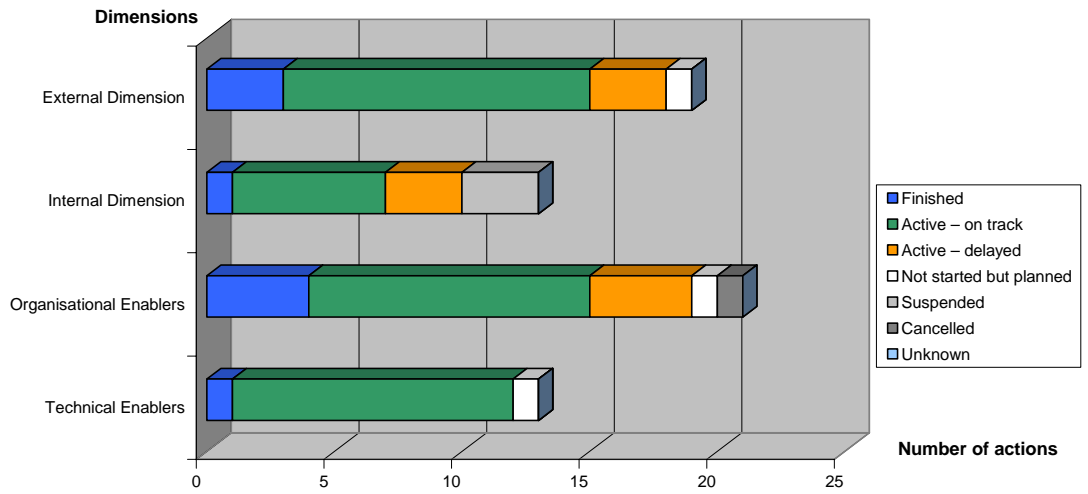
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<sup>6</sup> See Annex II for a complete list of e-Commission actions and their related status

<sup>7</sup> As defined by SEC(2004)1267

<sup>8</sup> See Annex III for detailed results

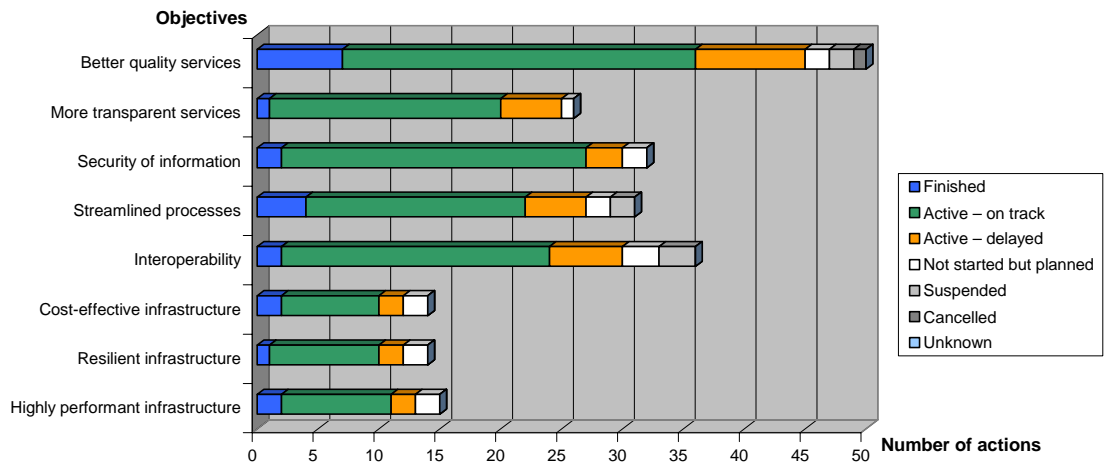
### Status by axis



### 2.2.2. Progress per objective

The 2005 communication set eight objectives for the period 2006-2010: better quality services, more transparent services, security of information, streamlined processes, interoperability, cost-effective infrastructure, resilient infrastructure, and highly performing infrastructure.

### Status by objective



Similarly to what can be observed regarding the progress per axis, progress towards all these objectives has been achieved. Increasing transparency, better quality of services and operational excellence appear to be on the right track. However, two areas require specific attention<sup>9</sup> in the period 2009-2010: interoperability and the streamlining of processes, for which specific additional actions should be envisaged.

### 2.3. Contribution to policy objectives

Since 2005, the importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has grown steadily. They have become an essential part of most policy initiatives at European level *inter alia* in the Internal Market, Home Affairs and Border Security and Environment fields. Progressing towards more effective, efficient and transparent government, which is a key element of the re-launched Lisbon strategy, does indeed require the optimal use of ICT as underlined by the 2007 e-Government Ministerial Declaration adopted in Lisbon.

Furthermore, innovative use of ICT is a key contributor to cross-cutting policy issues such as administrative burden reduction, transparency, communication and compliance. Other emerging administrative priorities, like business continuity, also entail major ICT activities. In order to meet these objectives, most Member States have adopted an e-Government strategy and the Commission has also defined an e-Government action plan<sup>10</sup> which is reflected in the e-Commission strategy.

Within the Commission, the power of process streamlining with the effective use of ICT can bring a significant contribution to the **simplification initiative**<sup>11</sup> sponsored by Vice-President Kallas through the re-engineering of Commission processes and through improved information management so as to seize the rationalisation opportunities that should "*enable to concentrate more [resources] on operational activities*", in line with the conclusions of the human resources screening exercise<sup>12</sup>.

In this context, today, nearly all policy initiatives require ICT support. Beyond technology, what matters is the political and administrative value delivered by ICT. Concrete examples of the value delivered by e-Commission actions in many different policy and administrative areas are detailed in Annex I.

## 3. NEXT STEPS

Based on the experience of the last three years, it is felt that the e-Commission roadmap structure is a valid one. The overall needs, i.e. delivering better quality services to all stakeholders, will remain and they will continue to trigger actions at organisational and technical levels.

While it can be stated that for the most part the actions outlined in the e-Commission roadmap are advancing well and remain pertinent, as highlighted above, two areas require specific attention: interoperability and business process streamlining.

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<sup>9</sup> Only two thirds of the actions contributing to these areas are either finished or are active and on track

<sup>10</sup> COM(2006)173

<sup>11</sup> SEC(2006)529

<sup>12</sup> SEC(2007)530

**Interoperability** is an essential enabler of an integrated Commission. Efforts and cooperation in this area should thus be deepened and accelerated. Internally, this should entail actions to foster the identification and creation of data registers to be shared between Commission information systems. Externally this implies active collaboration with Member States to share and exchange data in line with the recently adopted "Small Business Act" for Europe<sup>13</sup>, in order to "*refrain from asking SMEs for information which is already available within the administration, unless it needs to be updated*". The orientations of the successor programme to IDABC (known as ISA<sup>14</sup>) as well as the revision of the European Interoperability Framework shall be taken into account in these interoperability actions.

Streamlining of **business processes** is essential for improved services and economies of scale, more particularly, in the administrative area. This is a domain which requires efforts from the whole Commission and not only from the informatics community. The identification of existing processes within the Commission<sup>15</sup> should be pursued so as to spotlight areas where synergies across DGs can be exploited by 2010 and beyond. In this field, the training offered to instil a process management culture is of paramount importance. Under the e-Commission umbrella it will continue evolving so as to methodically raise awareness about the roles and responsibilities of all internal stakeholders involved in projects aiming at using ICT to modernise our administration.

The political, societal, technological and administrative evolutions observed over the past three years also need to be reflected in the further implementation of the e-Commission strategy in 2009-2010. Triggers such as the advent of collaborative environments, restrictions of resources for governments, and the pan-European nature of most political priorities (e.g. climate change, energy, fight against terrorism, etc.) all influence the way ICT can bring value to modern administrations.

All these drivers need to be further analysed and may give rise to new actions during the 2009-2010 period, subject to the availability of actual resources determined through the normal budgetary processes. Orientations for such actions are:

- Complete the on-going actions that have been started during the 2005-2008 period and ensure alignment with the eGovernment ministerial declaration approved in Lisbon on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2007, which highlights the areas of e-procurement and electronic identity;
- Update the e-Commission roadmap with all concerned DGs, keeping in mind not only the overarching objectives of internal administrative simplification but also the reduction of burdens imposed on businesses and citizens, as well as transparency and easy traceability of financial operations;
- Based on the experience gained in 2006 under the auspices of the ABM Steering Group, chaired by the Secretary General and involving all horizontal services, define and review Commission ICT priorities on a yearly basis;

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<sup>13</sup> COM(2008)394

<sup>14</sup> COM(2008)583, Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on interoperability solutions for European public administrations (ISA)

<sup>15</sup> Establishment of the Commission's process glossary

- Start elaborating the Commission's ICT strategy for 2011-2015, including the evaluation of the impact on infrastructure facilities;
- Further deploy and promote the Commission's technical interoperability platform;
- Identify and, when necessary, create the Commission's data registers as a contribution to data interoperability;
- Complete the Commission's process glossary and identify areas where synergies can be exploited across DGs as a contribution to organisational interoperability;
- Identify and tackle the identified cross-cutting IT issue related to the absence of important building blocks such as a corporate grant management system common to all DGs as a concrete contribution to the optimisation of ICT assets in the Commission;
- Update the list of the Commission's critical and essential information systems and IT services in line with the framework for business continuity management as defined by SEC(2006)898 and 899;
- Pursue the efforts to align the technical infrastructure and services to the needs of the Institution, notably business continuity;
- Enable the integration of the various, currently separated, communication infrastructures among themselves together with the background processes and information systems by the implementation of a Unified Communications Corporate Infrastructure;
- Rollout an advanced electronic signature solution at the Commission;
- Define ways of further greening the Commission's ICT in line with the EMAS initiative.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Three years after the adoption of the e-Commission 2006-2010 strategy the overall picture is encouraging and most actions are on track. Progress can be observed for all objectives and the Institution is on the right path to reach level 3 of the e-government maturity ladder by 2010. The Commission thus faces a new stage of maturity where collaboration, common repositories, rationalisation and integration of the information systems portfolio will provide the framework to assemble processes in seamless operations.

Furthermore, public administrations witness an inexorable increase in "users" expectations (from staff, citizens, businesses and partner administrations), which require more and better on-line services. Understanding these needs and addressing them through an innovative use of ICT requires an alliance with users.

As a result, it is proposed to devote the remainder of the 2006-2010 period to completing the roadmap which would allow the Commission to reach the level of "integrated government" and to preparing for 2011-2015.

For 2011-2015, the strategic objective will be to move towards the next e-government maturity level, i.e. to implement a transformed Commission: whereby public services are built from the viewpoint of external and internal users, rather than based on the organisation's structure, with completely automated end-to-end processes crossing organisational boundaries; where information is shared in transparency among services; and cross-DG working groups collaborate and share knowledge and expertise.

On this basis the Commission is invited to:

- Acknowledge the progress made so far in implementing the 2006-2010 e-Commission strategy and invite DGs to continue their efforts in this field in 2009-2010 and beyond;
- Adopt the proposed orientations for next steps for the e-Commission for 2009-2010;
- Instruct DIGIT to propose the ICT strategy of the Institution for 2011-2015, so as to sustain the Commission's efforts to be a world-class, knowledge-based public administration.