

Transforming Government

eGovernment in the EU is supported through research, exchange of good practices and deployment of services. The key objectives to be reached by 2010 are participation, inclusion, effectiveness, efficiency and productivity.

What is eGovernment?

eGovernment is the use of information and communication technology, combined with organisational change and new skills to improve public services, increase democratic participation and enhance public policy making. Ideally, transformation should occur jointly at European, national, regional and local levels. The impact will depend not only on technology, but also on organisational resources and strategic vision.

Enabling innovation in government

Challenges such as continuous innovation, cutting-edge research and development, take-up and cross-border use of new technologies and exchanges of good practices are best tackled by a combination of European, national and regional initiatives. The European dimension is essential because of the extent to which people move between Member States. We need to avoid solutions that work only in one administration or country, particularly in areas such as electronic identification (eID), procurement and social benefits.

A European perspective is also crucial for accelerating progress and creating European markets for public service and technology providers. The eEurope public sector benchmarking process has been replicated far beyond the 25 Member States of the European Union. The current i2010 strategy will equally inspire and reinforce national strategies. eGovernment concerns all of us, and leadership by example is welcome, wherever it exists.

We must learn from the success of others, challenging the natural inertia of governments to achieve more for less.

i) Working with all stakeholders

The active involvement of all stakeholders – administrations, industry, academia, and civil society is essential. Many already actively participate in and benefit from EU research, deployment and implementation projects.

Member States cooperate through the eGovernment subgroup of eEurope (now i2010) programme management committees, project consortia, and intergovernmental networks (EUPAN). Their focus is on realising the positive impact of eGovernment and achieving measurable benefits for citizens, businesses and administrations. Sharing good practices across Europe is one way to reduce barriers to, and the cost of, eGovernment solutions. The European Commission has established a European good practice framework, as well as open source software and interoperability observatories.

ii) Across European Commission

There are several EC programs involved in the modernisation of public administration. Information Society Technology deals with eGovernment policy, good practices and research in the IST programme. The eTEN programme supports the piloting and deployment of e-services. The IDABC programme (Interoperable Delivery of European eGovernment Services to public Administrations) supports interoperable pan-European eGovernment services.

i2010 and eGovernment

Growth and employment is at the heart of the renewed Lisbon strategy. Through i2010 the European Commission works with Member States to achieve this vision. eGovernment is a crucial part of the three policy dimensions of i2010:

1) A Single European Information Space, 2) Investment and Innovation in Research, 3) Inclusion, better public services and quality of life.

Europe is currently facing convergence of technologies, which challenges both regulators and industries. There is a productivity gap to close with the USA, where a major factor is under-use of ICT in combination with organisational and sometimes institutional change. Digital divides are not closing fast enough as new divides emerge based on skills, not on access alone. High Member State commitment is needed to achieve the Lisbon goals, yet with minimal regulation. See europa.eu.int/i2010.



The European Commission is also actively involved in e-procurement, ICT for security, border control and data protection. eGovernment is at the heart of major EU-wide policies that implement modern public services.

Emerging topics

Progress is being made on many fronts, such as eDemocracy and user interaction, interoperability between ICT systems and security. This progress is fuelled by investment in research, deployment, and implementation. Emerging challenges include:

i) eParticipation

Wide participation in democratic decision-making is the life-blood of democracy and is central to bringing Europe closer to its citizens. On the one hand the Internet brings many new possibilities to mobilise involvement, on the other hand, in many countries fewer citizens vote, follow political news, or take part in public debates.

eParticipation – using ICT for better participation in democratic debate and better decision-making – may have much potential, especially at the local and regional levels. The added-value of working at an EU-level is in sharing the risks inherent in research, replicating successful pilot projects, exchange of experiences and indeed, applying new insights and technologies for participation in the EU institutions themselves.

ii) Networked Governance

As networks emerge and gain importance in the European workplace, the question is how to move beyond the traditional public administrations based on hierarchical and bureaucratic processes, that is, how to *transform government*. Networked governance is about tapping into the potential within administrations, such as the expertise and experience of civil servants, personalising interaction with all citizens, leaving no one behind, and integrating information, systems and services into new innovative citizen-centred services. It is crucial that services are built on open standards and take into account the need for interoperability from the start. European research in this domain will give many options in the years ahead, trans-European pilot projects will deliver re-usable building blocks, and networked governance solutions can help to deliver EU policy in innovative ways.

iii) Trans-European services

Trans- and Pan-European services lead to the efficient and capable Europe envisaged through the EU Internal Market. However, it requires respect for government autonomy at all levels, for different traditions or perceptions. A major challenge is the trusted identification and authentication of citizens

and businesses in several Member States. A common policy agenda is needed to ensure interoperability, as is the use of common software, or the sharing of resources. Ensuring a rapid take-up and validation of new or experimental services may require an agreement on common standards.

How to succeed?

Successful eGovernment projects:

- get political and top-level administration and management to buy-in from start to finish,
- invest in organisational change, not just in technology,
- involve users early in the service design process,
- start small and be open to learn from users and practices elsewhere and scale up fast,
- use clear indicators to measure impact and progress along the way.

The impact will depend not only on technology, but also on organisational resources and strategic vision

While we are still far from knowing the impact of all the European investments in eGovernment, we know it has already had considerable effect. The leading countries on the rankings of the eEurope benchmarking have all successfully put their 20 basic public services online.

In the future we will track the effect of eGovernment on citizens, businesses and governments more directly. How satisfied are the people involved with the services? What are the economic effects and the impact on growth and jobs? Clearly, transforming government is not done overnight. That is why European cooperation is needed to facilitate and encourage, set the agenda, and spread excellence.

Further Information

- **Europe's Information Society: Thematic Portal**
europa.eu.int/information_society/
- **eGovernment Research and Development**
europa.eu.int/egovernment_research
- **eTEN Programme:** europa.eu.int/eten
- **IDABC Programme:** europa.eu.int/idabc
- **eGovernment Good Practice Framework**
www.egov-goodpractice.org
- **Information Society and Media Directorate-General:** Av. de Beaulieu 24, 1160 Brussels
infso-desk@cec.eu.int