Competitive digital single market - eGovernment as a spearhead

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PURPOSE: The European eGovernment Action Plan 2011-2015.

BACKGROUND: the implementation of the first European eGovernment Action Plan has seen governments across all Member States exchange good practice, and resulted in a number of large-scale pilot projects which are developing concrete solutions for rolling out cross-border eGovernment services. An online community of practitioners, established in 2002, has provided a focus for debate on the potential to provide innovative solutions in areas such as eGovernment, health services, and inclusion. Progress has also been made in the re-use of public sector information, and an electronic public procurement platform has been developed. However, cross-border eGovernment services are few and, even where eGovernment services are offered, the majority of EU citizens are reluctant to use them. There is clearly a need to move towards a more open model of design, production and delivery of online services, taking advantage of the possibility offered by collaboration between citizens, entrepreneurs and civil society.

The Digital Agenda for Europe sets eGovernment within a comprehensive set of measures aimed at exploiting the benefits of information and communication technologies (ICT) across Europe. The Commission is therefore proposing a second eGovernment Action Plan which aims to realise the ambitious vision contained in the Declaration made at the 5th Ministerial eGovernment Conference (the 'Malmö Declaration'), which was also supported by industry and by a citizens' panel.

According to this ambitious vision, by 2015 European public administrations will be "recognised for being open, flexible and collaborative in their relations with citizens and businesses. They use eGovernment to increase their efficiency and effectiveness and to constantly improve public services in a way that caters for user's different needs and maximises public value, thus supporting the transition of Europe to a leading knowledge based economy."

CONTENT : as part of the Commission-wide effort to promote a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy for the EU, as outlined in the Europe 2020 Strategy, this Action Plan contributes towards fulfilling two key objectives of the Digital Agenda for Europe, in particular :

- By 2015, a number of key cross-border services will be available on line – enabling entrepreneurs to set up and run a business anywhere in Europe independently of their original location, and allowing citizens to study, work, reside and retire anywhere in the European Union.

- By 2015, 50% of EU citizens will have used eGovernment services.

The Action Plan also aims for 80% of enterprises to have used eGovernment by 2015.

SCOPE OF THE ACTION PLAN: the Action Plan aims at maximising the complementary nature of national and European policy instruments. It supports the transition from current eGovernment to a new generation of open, flexible and collaborative seamless eGovernment services at local, regional, national and European levels that will empower citizens and businesses.

Given the central role of national governments in the implementation of the Action Plan the European Commission's main responsibility is to improve the conditions for development of cross-border

eGovernment services provided to citizens and businesses regardless of their country of origin. This includes establishing pre-conditions, such as interoperability, eSignatures and eIdentification.

PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS : various actions related to the four political priorities identified are proposed:

1) User empowerment :

- services are designed around users' needs and provide flexible and personalised ways of interacting and performing transactions with public administrations ;
- collaborative production of services, where collaborative tools (e.g. Web 2.0 technologies) enable users to play an active role in the design and production of public services ;
- re-use of public sector information e.g. by making raw data and documents available for re-use in a wide variety of formats (including machine-readable ones) and languages and by setting up PSI portals (review of Directive 2003/98/EC);
- improvement transparency : set common voluntary transparency targets and exchange available experiences ; provide online access to information on government laws and regulations, policies and finance; enable citizens to have electronic access to personal data that are held on them;
- involvement of citizens and businesses in policy-making processes (for example, the Commission will collaborate with Member States on developing the electronic service to support citizens initiatives.

2) Internal market :

- seamless services for businesses : supporting the implementation of next generation points of single contact and the associated eProcedures; and PEPPOL aims to pilot an EU-wide interoperable public eProcurement solution allowing entrepreneurs to perform the full public procurement cycle online;
- personal mobility : ensure the development of interoperable services enabling citizens to communicate, perform transactions, and send and receive electronic documents and information to and from public administrations across the EU;
- EU-wide implementation of cross-border services: the Commission and the Member States will jointly share results on successful experiences gained in the large-scale pilot projects to determine and agree on key cross-border services ready for sustainable implementation throughout the EU.

3) Efficiency and effectiveness of governments and administrations :

- improve organisational processes : (for example : the cost of invoicing can be decreased in electronic public procurement processes, while increasing effectiveness;the eCommission 2011-2015 Action Plan will support streamlined administrative processes, facilitate information sharing and simplify interaction with the Commission.
- reduction of administrative burdens through the implementation of the 'once-only' registration principle whereby the information needed from citizens is only collected once, on condition that data and privacy protection requirements are met;
- Green Government (for example by implementing electronic archiving, using videoconferences instead of travelling, etc

4) Pre-conditions for developing eGovernment :

- open specifications and interoperability (implementation of activities to put into action the European Interoperability Framework, for example);
- key enablers (revision of the eSignature Directive, proposal for a decision to ensure mutual recognition of eIdentification and eAuthentication across the EU) ;

- Innovative eGovernment: the new generation of eGovernment services will need to rely on innovative technical approaches, such as clouds of public services and service-oriented architecture (SOA) to build open, flexible and collaborative eGovernment services while at the same time lowering ICT costs. Pilot projects will be launched.

GOVERNANCE: the European Commission will set up and chair a High-Level Expert Group of Member States' representatives responsible for the national eGovernment strategies. This High-Level Expert Group will inform the High-Level Group for the Digital Agenda and will coordinate with the ISA ProgrammeCommittee.

A mid-term evaluation of implementation of this Action Plan will be conducted in 2013. Depending on the results of the mid-term evaluation, any necessary adjustments to the objectives and activities of the Action Plan will be reviewed with the proposed High-Level Expert Group.

The overall progress made on the Action Plan and on eGovernment in general will be measured annually. Member States will share relevant benchmarking initiatives with the European Commission and other Member States in order to allow development of common measurement exercises among interested parties.