

# The advantages of the e-government action plan and its impact on European citizens

Prof. Asoc. Dr. Ersida Teliti  
Faculty of Law, Tirana University  
[ersida.teliti@fdut.edu.al](mailto:ersida.teliti@fdut.edu.al)

MSc. Ketjona Kaçupi  
Ministry of Justice  
[ketjonakacupi@gmail.com](mailto:ketjonakacupi@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT:** *Nowadays, it is a fact that most public services are provided through electronic platforms and the Internet. In this context, the necessity to be near the public has prompted the need to establish e-government as an internal platform of states, as well as in the context of the well-functioning of the EU. Effective e-Government can provide a wide variety of benefits including more efficiency and savings for governments and businesses, increased transparency and greater participation of citizens in political and social life. A well-implemented e-Government platform enables citizens, enterprises and organizations to carry out their interactions with government more easily, more quickly and at lower cost. As part of its strategy, European Commission is taking concrete actions for the development of cross-border digital public services. In accordance with the above, this paper aims to highlight the work of the EU responsible institutions in the framework of establishing an effective e-government platform, as well as highlighting the advantages and disadvantages brought by the use of e-government in the functioning of the European Union administration.*

**KEYWORDS:** e-government, action plan, impact, EU administration.

## Introduction

E-government is the use by governments and public administrations of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in their efforts to achieve three interlinked goals. First, to become more efficient in their own operations. Second, to provide more effective services for citizens, businesses and other users. Third, as an essential tool in ‘good governance’ which according to the United Nations<sup>1</sup> encompasses eight main characteristics about how public administrations should function: efficiency, effectiveness, equity, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, participation and inclusion, as well as also requiring political stability, the rule of law, domestic revenue mobilization and good state capacity to be successful<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations (2013) "Governance, Public Administration and Information Technology for Post-2015 Development", Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, United Nations, New York:

[http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/Governance\\_PA\\_Report.pdf](http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/Governance_PA_Report.pdf).

<sup>2</sup><https://www.respaweb.eu/download/doc/eGov+-+From+E-Government+to+Open+Government.pdf/d3ab1cd43fa4cd3071be9cea7e4b0cd3.pdf>.

The purpose of e-government is not only the conversion of traditional information into bits and bytes and making it reachable via the internet websites or giving government officials computers or automating old practices to an electronic platform. But it also calls for rethinking ways the government functions are carried out today in order to improve processes and integration. Governments have different strategies to build e-government. Some have created comprehensive long-term plans. Others have opted to identify just a few key areas as the focus of early projects. In all cases, however, the countries identified as most successful have begun with smaller projects in phases on which to build a structure<sup>3</sup>.

E-Government in Europe is characterised by a “virtuous circle”: public administrations develop better and better digital services because user demand is high; and more and more users access government services online because these services are available and easy to use. With the rapidly changing technological environment and increasing expectations from citizens and businesses, modernisation of public administration is becoming an increasing priority across Europe. In fact, public sector modernisation has been at the core of European reforms since the last decade. The European Commission recognised the importance of digital transformation of the state as early as 2006, with the adoption of the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan, which set out actions to “make public services more efficient and more modern and to target the needs of the general population more precisely”<sup>4</sup>. The progress of European public administrations in implementing eGovernment and interoperability has been closely monitored by the European Commission since 2008 in the form of yearly eGovernment factsheets, produced under the National Interoperability Framework Observatory of the ISA2 programme. Over the past 10 years the eGovernment factsheets have shed light on the main modernisation of public administration reforms in Europe by detailing national changes in eGovernment strategies, legal frameworks, development of eGovernment infrastructure, delivery of digital public services to citizens and businesses, and also listing the main actors responsible for eGovernment at national level<sup>5</sup>. The 2020 eGovernment Benchmark report shows remarkable improvements across the board: Over the last two years, every one of the 36 countries measured has improved the digital delivery of public services according to the four benchmarks considered in the assessment. However, the scale of improvement and the overall performance vary substantially<sup>6</sup>.

There is huge variation in eGovernment performance across Europe. A “Digital Diagonal” string of countries from the South-West to the North-East of Europe perform above the European average and are also in most cases showing stronger progress than the European average, while the other European countries are behind the European average on both progress and performance. Progress is measured as the difference in performance between the data available in the last (2014-2015) and the first (2012-2013) complete biennial assessment of

---

<sup>3</sup> Alshehri M., Drew S., “Implementation of e-Government: Advantages and Challenges”, fq. 79.  
<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/143886366.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> COM (2006) 173 final. Communication from the Commission, of 25 April 2006, i2010 eGovernment Action Plan - Accelerating eGovernment in Europe for the Benefit of All.

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/sites/default/files/docs/news/10egov\\_anniv\\_report.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/sites/default/files/docs/news/10egov_anniv_report.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/egovernment-benchmark-2020-egovernment-works-people>.

eGovernment surveys. Performance is measured as an average of scores for 4 top level benchmarks: user centricity, transparency, cross-border mobility, key enablers<sup>7</sup>.

Governments also have advanced in making public services digital, but focused less on the quality of the delivery from the user's perspective, especially in terms of ease and speed of use. While the online availability of services at EU level reached 81%, the ease of using and speed of using these services online as perceived by the mystery shoppers, testing online services advanced poorly, increasing by only 1 percentage point since the first complete assessment in 2013. The transparency indicator examines the extent to which governments are transparent about their own responsibilities and performance, the service delivery process, and the personal data involved. This benchmark has increased by 8 percentage points since 2012-2013 at EU28+ level, reaching 56% in 2014-2015. However, the implementation of good transparent service procedures is still lagging behind in large parts of Europe. Transparency of personal data halts at 55%. Across Europe governments have room for improvement to make their organizations more transparent. This is the highest scoring sub-indicator, showing an average score of 64%. eGovernment services are still lacking the adequate level of support to citizens and business who wish to move or operate across borders. This is undesirable since this can help accelerate the realization of an inclusive Digital Single Market. Business-related services are more advanced in terms of cross-border mobility than citizen-related services: even if the latter increased more since the first measurement, business mobility gets a higher score (64% against 52% for the citizens). Key Enablers as indicator measures the availability of five technical elements which are essential for public services: Electronic Identification (eID), Electronic documents (eDocuments), Authentic Sources, Electronic Safe (eSafe), Single Sign On (SSO). The technology of key enablers, that could drive user empowerment and efficiency, is not used to its full potential and currently the benchmark scores 54%<sup>8</sup>.

## **1. Effectiveness of eGovernment Action Plans and Strategies in EU**

Over the 10 years from 2008-2018, different European countries adopted political communications such as strategies, action plans or roadmaps to digitize their public services and promote interoperability and the overall functioning of public administrations. This should be seen in the first stage of the policy cycle concerning the design of new public interventions. Most adopted digital government strategies and action plans need a supporting legislative framework to be implemented. Hence, the adoption of new laws or amendment of existing ones is the second phase of the digital government policy cycle. Over the course of the past 10 years, all European public administrations have adopted laws on the delivery of digital public service, the implementation of digital infrastructures (such as eID, eDelivery, among others) and the digitization of their public procurement practices, among several others<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/eu-egovernment-report-2016-shows-online-public-services-improved-unevenly>.

<sup>8</sup> As above.

<sup>9</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/sites/default/files/docs/news/10egov\\_anniv\\_report.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/sites/default/files/docs/news/10egov_anniv_report.pdf).

‘Digital Strategy’ refers to the design and implementation of eGovernment strategies, roadmaps or action plans needed to modernize public administrations at different levels that respond to the evolving societal needs and technological trends. Digital strategies can be all-encompassing, include multiple principles and goals related to modernization of public administration in the country, or sector specific, such as strengthening cyber security. The analysis of European countries’ adopted strategies since 2008 reveals shifting priorities; from focusing solely on the delivery of digital public services (eGovernment) and the adoption of the right technologies and business processes, to supporting the digitization of all sectors of the state (modernization of public administration) more broadly. Over the years, with the changing technological landscape and the changing role of government in the society, strategies focusing on new domains were adopted. European public administrations increasingly began adopting strategies on new technologies, such as G-Cloud in Belgium’s national programme; cybersecurity, with Estonia adopting already a third strategy in this domain; and open data, with a majority of analyzed countries participating to the Open Government Partnership<sup>11</sup> and others adopting strategies of their own accord<sup>10</sup>.

The EU eGovernment Action Plan 2011 – 2015, based on the Malmö Ministerial Declaration, set out to contribute to two general targets: increase the usage of eGovernment services and make a number of key on-line public services available across borders. This Action Plan had four policy priorities: User empowerment, Internal market, Efficiency and effectiveness of governments and administrations, and Pre-conditions for developing eGovernment<sup>11</sup>. The purpose of this implementation and evaluation Staff Working Document is to describe the implementation progress of individual actions of the European eGovernment Action Plan 2011 - 2015 and to evaluate whether it was fit-for-purpose, delivered on its objectives at a reasonable cost, was relevant, coherent and had EU added value<sup>12</sup>. A new study on eGovernment services in the EU reveals that online public services are becoming increasingly accessible across Europe, 81% being now available online. However, deeper analysis of user-centricity, transparency, cross-border mobility and in general quality of use shows that growth is uneven and a substantial number of EU countries are still lagging behind. This sends a clear signal for acceleration, in order to keep up with private sector pressing needs, and citizens' expectations. To address these challenges, in April 2016, the Commission has launched a new eGovernment Action Plan for 2016-2020. It is based on the following underlying principles: digital-by-default, cross-border by default, once-only principle, inclusive by default; privacy & data protection; Openness & transparency by default<sup>13</sup>.

The eGovernment Action Plan in force 2016-2020 enables people across the EU to fully enjoy the benefits of digital public services. The plans set goals to: a) set up a Digital Single Gateway enabling users to obtain all information, assistance and problem solving services

---

<sup>10</sup> As above.

<sup>11</sup> EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016 - 2020, Accelerating the digital transformation of government.

<sup>12</sup> As above.

<sup>13</sup><https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/eu-egovernment-report-2016-shows-online-public-services-improved-unevenly>.

needed to operate efficiently across borders; b) interconnect all business registries and insolvency registers and connect them to the eJustice portal, which will become a one-stop shop; c) pilot the “once-only” principle for businesses across borders so they only need to provide information to a public administration in one EU country and if permitted it is then re-used between different countries; d) helps EU Member States develop cross-border eHealth services such as e-prescriptions; as well as e) accelerate the transition to e-procurement and implementation of the once-only principle in public procurement<sup>14</sup>.

In order to achieve its objectives, the eGovernment Action Plan identified 20 actions addressing at least one of the following policy priorities, such as:

- a) modernizing public administrations using Key Digital Enablers,
- b) enabling mobility of citizens and businesses by cross-border interoperability,
- c) facilitating digital interaction between administrations and citizens/businesses for high-quality public services.

The European eGovernment Action Plan in force met most of its objectives and demonstrated the importance of having common European goals in eGovernment. This Action Plan is a “mobiliser” instrument for eGovernment policies in the Member States and a guiding framework for funding in the European Commission. The potential benefits and important savings from eGovernment outweigh its costs. Modernizing the European public administrations through eGovernment remains relevant and brings important EU-added value<sup>15</sup>.

The 2020 eGovernment Benchmark report shows remarkable improvements across the board. The EU countries overall performance stands at 68%. Two years ago, the overall performance sat at 62%. The focus on end user experience has seen this top-level benchmark increase to 87%. More than three out of four public services can be fully completed online (78%). Users can find the services they are looking for via portal websites 95% of the time, and information about these services online nearly 98% of the time. Of the three sub-indicators, the most recent one, Mobile Friendliness, scores lowest, albeit having seen the highest increase, up from 62% two years ago to 76% today. The transparency experienced the biggest improvement over the last two years, now sitting at 66%, increasing from 59%. Users receive a delivery notice when a service is completed in 64% of cases. Moreover, 98% of the websites were transparent about the organizational structure, mission and responsibilities, access to information, the possibility to request additional information and where to find the corresponding legislation. However, the time it will take to complete online forms and obtain a service is only clear for just under half of the services. It is also often unclear how personal data is processed by public administrations. The possibility to see whether your data has been used is present in 64% of the countries, when your data has been used in 42% of the countries and by whom in only 17% of the countries<sup>16</sup>.

With few exceptions, the countries at the lower end of the performance scale have improved, thus lowering the gap between frontrunners and laggards. The differences in variance

---

<sup>14</sup> <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/egovernment-action-plan>

<sup>15</sup> EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016 - 2020, Accelerating the digital transformation of government.

<sup>16</sup> <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/egovernment-benchmark-2020-egovernment-works-people>.

of digital public service delivery at different administrative levels within one country is also diminishing: The difference between the online availability at national and local level now stands at 12 p.p., compared to 20 p.p. two years ago. While 87% of services are available online to domestic users, only 69% are available to foreign users, with huge differences between Member States. One of the key obstacles for the cross-border use of digital public services are problems with access to procedures requiring authentication. Foreign national eIDs are accepted for only 9% of the services that citizens can access with a domestic eID. This indicates that the cross-border acceptance of eIDs still requires investments by the EU27+<sup>17</sup>.

Cybersecurity remains a challenge for government websites: Only 20% of all URLs assessed meet half of the 14 basic security criteria evaluated. This underlines the importance of significantly enhancing website security levels to ensure that users can trust public sector websites and services. Success breeds success: The study's "benchlearning" analysis points towards a "virtuous circle": public administrations develop better and better digital services because user demand is high; and more and more users access government services online because these services are available and easy to use. Making it possible for citizens to obtain services across European borders is key for reaping the benefits for the European single market. New opportunities, such as increasing the compatibility with mobile devices, are being seized by many public administrations. Nevertheless, governments must better inform citizens on the use of their personal data, and security challenges have not been fully dealt with yet. Cross-border service provision remains a priority for Europe.

Privacy is a critical issue in the implementation of e-government in both developed and developing countries. Privacy and confidentiality are the main critical barriers on the way to the e-government implementation. Privacy refers to the guarantee of an appropriate level of protection regarding information attributed to an individual. Citizen confidence in the privacy and careful handling of any personal information shared with governmental organizations is essential to e-government applications. Moreover, citizens are deeply concerned with the privacy of their life and confidentiality of the personal data they are providing as part of obtaining government services. Thus, they pointed out that privacy and confidentiality must remain priorities when establishing and maintaining web sites in order to ensure the secure collection of data<sup>18</sup>. In fact, the security also is one of the most significant challenges for implementing eGovernment initiatives. Many studies have found that security is one of the most important obstacles. Security means protection of all information and systems against any disclosure to unauthorized access or unauthorized modifications. It is a vital component in the trust relationship between citizens and government. Security issues may present the largest obstacle to the development of eGovernment services. Thus, security policies and standards that meet citizen expectations are an important step toward addressing these concerns<sup>19</sup>.

---

<sup>17</sup> As above.

<sup>18</sup> Alshehri M., Drew S., "Implementation of e-Government: Advantages and Challenges", fq. 83. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/143886366.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> As above.

Access to base registries – base registries can be considered as one of the main building blocks of an interoperable public administration and they refer to a trusted and authentic source of basic information on citizens and businesses in the country under the control of a public administration or organization appointed by government. Interconnection of base registries is a fundamental step to realize the implementation of the Once Only Principle Policy in Europe, with the ultimate aim to reduce the administrative burden on citizens and businesses. Whilst there is currently only an EU Directive on the interconnection of business registries<sup>20</sup> and the Business Register Interconnection System<sup>21</sup>, several Member States have adopted national legislations laying down standards, definitions and owners of different registries at the national level. In 2009 Czech Republic adopted an Act on Basic Registers in 2009, which was amended in 2015.

In today's world, data has gained a prominent position. As highlighted by the Commission in its Building a European Data Economy communication, “data has become an essential resource for economic growth, job creation and societal progress”. However, the recognition of the importance of opening up public sector data began much earlier, in 2003, with the adoption of the Directive on the re-use of public sector information, otherwise known as the ‘PSI Directive’. Open data refers to data that is legally open, which is published under an open license with limited conditions for re-use. Open data also refers to data that is technically open, which means that the file is machine-readable and free to access by everyone, without restrictions to a non-open source software tool. When opening up public data, it is important to ensure its portability and its interoperability, as well as standards that it uses. All European public administrations are committed to opening up their public data and make it easy to reuse, share and understand. The European Data portal tracks the performance of individual countries against 10 broad categories: open data readiness – policy and use (consisting of presence policy, national coordination, licensing norms, and use of data); portal maturity (consisting of usability, reusability of data and spread of data across domains); and open data readiness – impact (consisting of political, social, economic). Despite significant progress made by countries over the years, there is room for improvement. The next main challenge with regard to open data is to ensure that it is actively reused by different entities. The current review of the PSI Directive<sup>22</sup> might further contribute to opening further the public information data in Europe and facilitating its reuse. Both Austria and Cyprus consider the creation of its open government portal as one of its main eGovernment achievements of the past 10 years.

## Conclusions

---

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2015-10566>.

<sup>21</sup> <http://toop.eu/once-only>.

<sup>22</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32013L0037>.

- E-government is the use by governments and public administrations of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in their efforts to achieve three interlinked goals.
- The purpose of e-government is not only the conversion of traditional information into bits and bytes and making it reachable via the internet websites or giving government officials computers or automating old practices to an electronic platform.
- E-Government in Europe is characterized by a “virtuous circle”: public administrations develop better and better digital services because user demand is high; and more and more users access government services online because these services are available and easy to use.
- The European Commission recognized the importance of digital transformation of the state as early as 2006, with the adoption of the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan.
- The 2020 eGovernment Benchmark report shows remarkable improvements across the board: Over the last two years, every one of the 36 countries measured has improved the digital delivery of public services.
- Governments also have advanced in making public services digital, but focused less on the quality of the delivery from the user’s perspective, especially in terms of ease and speed of use.
- The transparency indicator examines the extent to which governments are transparent about their own responsibilities and performance, the service delivery process, and the personal data involved.
- The eGovernment Action Plan in force enables people across the EU to fully enjoy the benefits of digital public services.
- The European eGovernment Action Plan in force met most of its objectives and demonstrated the importance of having common European goals in eGovernment.
- This Action Plan 2016-2020 is a “mobiliser” instrument for eGovernment policies in the Member States and a guiding framework for funding in the European Commission.
- The 2020 eGovernment Benchmark report shows remarkable improvements across the board.
- Cybersecurity remains a challenge for government websites: Only 20% of all URLs assessed meet half of the 14 basic security criteria evaluated. This underlines the importance of significantly enhancing website security levels to ensure that users can trust public sector websites and services.
- Privacy is a critical issue in the implementation of e-government in both developed and developing countries.
- Interconnection of base registries is a fundamental step to realize the implementation of the Once Only Principle Policy in Europe, with the ultimate aim to reduce the administrative burden on citizens and businesses.

## **Bibliography**

- Alshehri M., Drew S., “Implementation of e-Government: Advantages and Challenges”. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/143886366.pdf>.

- EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016 - 2020, Accelerating the digital transformation of government.
- United Nations (2013), “Governance, Public Administration and Information Technology for Post-2015 Development”, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, United Nations, New York:  
[http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/Governance\\_PA\\_Report.pdf](http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/Governance_PA_Report.pdf).
- <https://www.respaweb.eu/download/doc/eGov+-+From+E-Government+to+Open+Government.pdf/d3ab1cd43fa4cd3071be9cea7e4b0cd3.pdf>.
- [https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/sites/default/files/docs/news/10egov\\_anniv\\_report.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/sites/default/files/docs/news/10egov_anniv_report.pdf).
- <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/egovernment-benchmark-2020-egovernment-works-people>.
- <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/eu-egovernment-report-2016-shows-online-public-services-improved-unevenly>.
- [https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/sites/default/files/docs/news/10egov\\_anniv\\_report.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/sites/default/files/docs/news/10egov_anniv_report.pdf).
- <http://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2015-10566>.
- <http://toop.eu/once-only>.
- <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32013L0037>.