



MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

approved unanimously on
24 November 2005, Manchester, United Kingdom

Meeting in Manchester on the occasion of the Ministerial eGovernment Conference “Transforming Public Services” of the United Kingdom Presidency of the European Council and of the European Commission, Ministers of European Union (EU) Member States, Accession States and Candidate Countries and Ministers of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) Countries, responsible for eGovernment policy, under the chairmanship of Minister Jim Murphy, representing the UK Presidency and in the presence of European Commissioner for Information Society and Media Mrs Viviane Reding

recognising that:

- transformed public services can contribute significantly to the achievement of the Lisbon goal of making Europe the most dynamic and competitive, knowledge-based economy by 2010 by improving citizens' quality of life, by supporting the single market in areas such as citizen mobility and by reducing administrative burden on enterprises. The innovative use of ICT can prove to be a powerful catalyst and a key enabler in transforming public services as already demonstrated in many examples across Europe. The innovative use of ICT can also make a significant contribution to achieving Europe's sustainable development goals;
- the successes and momentum of the two successive eEurope Action Plans (2002 and 2005) and the eEurope+ Action Plan are now to be built upon through the i2010 initiative – “A European Information Society for Growth and Employment”. As part of this initiative, a clear, target-based European Action Plan for eGovernment is required. This approach should highlight successful policies and strategies and facilitate the sharing of best practices between all associated countries;
- the previous Ministerial Declarations on eGovernment agreed under the auspices of the Belgian and Italian Presidencies set out priority areas for action which are still relevant today but require revisiting given the lessons learned in recent years and developments in policy and technology and given the will to realise the benefits that transformed public services and effective use of ICT can bring to Europe's citizens, businesses, the European economy and to public administrations themselves. Therefore, there is a desire across our governments for a new set of common and ambitious objectives based around the benefits and impact of eGovernment, i.e. an i2010 eGovernment Action Plan in the form of a sustained, comprehensive, evolving and regularly reviewed framework of sustainable targets relating to measurable benefits for businesses, citizens, public administrations and Europe's economy;
- the eEurope eGovernment Subgroup of representatives and leaders of national eGovernment initiatives, supported by the Irish, Dutch, Luxembourg and UK Presidencies, under the chairmanship of the European Commission, has proven invaluable in developing policy proposals for eGovernment under the framework of i2010. The Subgroup's work is reported in the Bloomsday Recommendations and the CoBrA Recommendations to the eEurope Advisory Group and the Signposts to eGovernment 2010 document;
- the work of the European Public Administration Network provides for the exchange of experience in national eGovernment activities and for deeper analysis of selected topics and offers a forum to all Member States to present their activities. The Network will be valuable in helping Member States meet the targets set out in this Declaration;
- the targets and actions set out in this Declaration are entirely without prejudice to the competences exercised at European, national or sub-national level by a variety of public

administrations; indeed, they are proposed as ways to improve efficiency and enhance quality in the exercise of those competences through cooperation between administrations;

agree that:

- providing inclusive services is an explicit objective of governments and the innovative exploitation of technology can play a key part in reducing exclusion. Programmes addressing eInclusion have contributed to increasing access to ICT to those who are unable or less inclined to exploit new technologies. The focus for eGovernment Ministers should be on the use of ICT in order to achieve better and more inclusive government. This could include improved services and policies with outcomes such as increased transparency, inclusion, accessibility and accountability or greater participation in decision-making, all built into their design from the outset;
- following a period of considerable effort in transforming public services when many valuable eGovernment services, often fully transactional, have been made available across the Member States (as witnessed through the eEurope benchmarking exercises), the time has come to realise sustainable benefits for businesses and citizens from these efforts and to ensure that Europe's public servants are equipped with the skills and competences necessary to adapt and manage change;
- the effective use of ICT in public administrations in the redesign of business processes within public administrations has the potential to lead to significant improvements in public sector effectiveness and efficiency, both in customer-facing services and internal processes, including policy and implementation research;
- the effective use of ICT in public procurement is an area of great significance for achieving efficiency gains: public sector purchases in Europe account for 15-20% of GDP and electronic public procurement can reduce costs by as much as 5%. The aggregate impact across Europe is therefore potentially very high. eProcurement benefits administrations and businesses alike, with the potential to improve markets and competition and to stimulate innovation;
- the effective use of ICT should have a positive impact on the four internal market freedoms of movement included in the EU Treaty (persons, goods, capital and services) and on Europe's cultural diversity. eGovernment services and electronic cooperation between administrations in support of these could potentially benefit Europe's labour market and economy, for example, services facilitating mobility, and should therefore be further explored and developed at the EU-level;
- a user-centric approach can contribute towards reductions in the administrative burden on businesses (especially SMEs) and citizens, can improve quality of life and can contribute towards trust in government and democracy. While eGovernment services must respect data protection legislation, the value of trust and privacy should underlie all service provision and this can be facilitated through the use of secure and trusted means of electronic identification and authentication;
- much can be gained by cooperation across Europe and across policy areas in terms of research, experimentation, the sharing of good practice and delivery and Ministers believe that methods for sharing and cooperation should be strengthened; they consider it essential therefore to work together and with other stakeholders, notably the local and regional level public administrations and the private sector, and to ensure adequate financing at the EU-level in the Seventh Framework Programme, the eTEN and future CIP programme, the IDABC programme and Structural Funds programme.

Ministers of EU Member States, Accession States and Candidate Countries and Ministers of the EFTA Countries, responsible for eGovernment policy, believe that the societal and economic benefits to be gained from meeting the ambitious targets set out below are compelling, as is also the business case within every public administration to endeavour to meet them. Meeting these targets would contribute significantly to the achievement of the shared ambition of making Europe a more attractive place to live, work and invest. The Ministers therefore submit this Declaration to the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council and invite the European Commission to include these points in its Communication establishing an Action Plan for eGovernment under the framework of i2010.

NO CITIZEN LEFT BEHIND – INCLUSION BY DESIGN

By 2010 all citizens, including socially disadvantaged groups, will have become major beneficiaries of eGovernment

By 2010 European public administrations will have made public information and services more easily accessible through innovative use of ICT and through increasing public trust, increasing awareness of eGovernment benefits and through improving skills and support for all users

Some of the key problems faced by socially excluded people can be effectively addressed by the imaginative use of ICT. Although such people are often the biggest users of public services, access, service design, personal capacity and disability, trust, skills, willingness and awareness can represent barriers when those services are delivered electronically. Inclusion is a key part of the i2010 initiative and eAccessibility, as defined in the recent Communication from the European Commission on this topic, represents an important example of how public services can be rendered more inclusive by design. Indeed, many examples are emerging where innovative use of ICT actually contributes towards inclusion rather than acting as a barrier.

ICT can help reach the excluded, particularly through multi-channel strategies. In the development of means to implement public policies, ICT has the potential to improve social inclusion, for example, through services designed to reach previously excluded groups, such as people with disabilities, and by making it easier for these groups to meet citizenship obligations and comply with the regulatory and legislative demands placed upon them. Networking technologies can also facilitate personal and community development. Therefore, when social and economic policy-makers grasp the full potential of ICT, creative policy can be inspired and designed to benefit the disadvantaged.

Ultimately, there are considerable macro-economic benefits to be gained from achieving greater inclusion and in order to realise these, we still have much to learn and would profit from sharing experiences and further developing the capability of policy-makers in this area. The benefits for society, the economy and for public administrations in reaching these targets are potentially very significant. These objectives and the associated benefits are therefore consistent with the Lisbon Agenda.

Related Actions

During 2006 Member States will work together to agree a roadmap for inclusive eGovernment objectives that synchronises, where relevant, with “i2010 ICT for inclusion” activities.

During 2006 and 2007, Member States will, through the European Public Administration Network, exchange experiences in developing policies which are inclusive by design, for example, in citizen-centric service delivery or the use of multi-channel architectures.

USING ICT TO MAKE A REALITY OF EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT

By 2010 eGovernment will be contributing to high user satisfaction with public services

By 2010 eGovernment will have significantly reduced the administrative burden on businesses and citizens

By 2010 the public sector will have achieved considerable gains in efficiency through the use of ICT

By 2010 European administrations will have significantly increased transparency and accountability wherever possible and relevant through innovative use of ICT

While there is considerable diversity across Europe in our governmental systems, legal frameworks and laws, the effective and efficient use of ICT can have a significant impact on the relationship between public administrations and citizens and businesses.

Effective and efficient use of ICT has the potential to improve services in terms of overall quality and, in many cases, to deliver time and cost savings for businesses and citizens when dealing with government. When citizens or businesses are required to meet regulatory or legislative obligations or when they are receiving public services and entitlements, burden reduction can, for example, be achieved through once-only, electronic data provision, or simple, partly pre-filled electronic forms, or faster response times from public administrations. The effective use of ICT can also help widen and deepen participation in democratic debate and decision-making. Public administrations also benefit from innovative use of ICT, e.g. when combined with the streamlining of a range of service delivery processes, ICT can deliver reductions in public administrations' operational costs.

Ultimately, there are considerable macro-economic benefits to be gained from more effective, efficient and transparent public administrations and reducing the costs of setting up and running a business. These objectives and the associated benefits are therefore consistent with the Lisbon Agenda.

Related Actions

From 2006, in open partnership with the private sector and civil society, Member States will promote the development of, and share experiences in, the use of eGovernment solutions to reduce the administrative burden on businesses and citizens, in the innovative use of ICT to increase effectiveness and efficiency of public administrations and in the innovative use of ICT to increase transparency and accountability, all while fully respecting data protection legislation. Where appropriate, Member States will make use of the European Public Administration Network for such sharing of experiences.

During 2006-2008, both at the EU and national level, Member States will promote awareness and the adoption of open standards in public administrations and share experiences in standardisation as key enablers to effective and efficient government.

DELIVERING HIGH IMPACT SERVICES DESIGNED AROUND CUSTOMERS' NEEDS

By 2010 all public administrations across Europe will have the capability of carrying out 100% of their procurement electronically, where legally permissible, thus creating a fairer and more transparent market for all companies independent of a company's size or location within the single market

By 2010 at least 50% of public procurement above the EU public procurement threshold will be carried out electronically

Over the period 2006-2010 Member States will focus their efforts on delivering those high impact services in Europe which will contribute most to the achievement of the Lisbon Agenda

Over the period 2006-2010 emphasis will be put on high-impact services designed around citizens' and businesses' needs which support progress towards the Lisbon goal. These services might include services related to pan-European citizen mobility, improved job search services across Europe,

access to personal information such as patient records, education, pensions, culture and leisure and enterprise mobility such as company registration and VAT refunding. These will need to be prioritised according to their potential impact.

eProcurement is one such, proven high impact service. Achieving the targets set out above will lead to lower transaction and processing costs for public administrations and to increased efficiency, for example greater speed in procuring services and goods and reduced spending due to increased choice and competition. Competition, with a higher participation of SMEs, in turn will lead to greater innovation in the private sector. eAuctions can also lead to reduced spending by public administrations. Moreover, the administrative burden of selling to public administrations will be reduced by meeting this target. For public administrations across Europe concerted efforts will be required in the sharing of lessons learned and of eProcurement solutions in order to achieve this target.

Ultimately, there are considerable macro-economic benefits to be gained from delivering high impact services, such as improved functioning of markets and improved quality of life. These objectives and the associated benefits are therefore consistent with the Lisbon Agenda.

Related Actions

Member States will assess during 2006 which further potential priority services deserve future attention as high impact services in this evolving agenda.

Member States will, during the period 2006-2010, share technologies, where appropriate develop common solutions and work towards interface harmonisation of existing solutions in the field of eProcurement and develop means of dissemination across all levels of the public sector.

Member States will, during the period 2006-2010, continue to contribute to implementing the Action Plan on electronic public procurement. The Action Plan was adopted in 2004 to assist implementation of the new legal framework for electronic public procurement, identifying possible difficulties and suggesting solutions for promoting the effective take-up of electronic public procurement across the EU. In addition, Member States will agree standards in matters related to eProcurement such as company identification, purchase ordering and invoicing for eProcurement.

WIDELY AVAILABLE, TRUSTED ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES ACROSS THE EU, THROUGH MUTUALLY RECOGNISED ELECTRONIC IDENTIFICATIONS

By 2010 European citizens and businesses shall be able to benefit from secure means of electronic identification that maximise user convenience while respecting data protection regulations. Such means shall be made available under the responsibility of the Member States but recognised across the EU

By 2010 Member States will have agreed a framework for reference to and where appropriate the use of authenticated electronic documents across the EU, as appropriate in terms of necessity and applicable law

As our eGovernment services become more transactional, the need for secure electronic means of identification for use by people accessing public services is essential for citizen and business trust and in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of our public administrations. Respect for, and recognition of, different forms of eID to achieve interoperability are therefore key principles for future eGovernment development. Interoperable eIDs meeting recognised international standards and built on stable technologies would be a foundation for secure cross-border eGovernment services. As electronic identity technologies become proven in large-scale application, Member States should work together to pilot them with a view to adoption, by sharing expertise, good practices and the tools and building blocks they have developed.

Other key enablers shall also be pursued in the future such as recognition of electronic documents and electronic archiving.

Ultimately, there are also considerable macro-economic benefits to be gained from meeting these targets as all economic actors would benefit. While fully respecting data protection legislation,

effective use of eIDs may lead to fewer requests for the submission of data and therefore also to a reduction of the administrative burden on our businesses and citizens. eIDs, issued and managed at the national, regional or local level, that are portable, interoperable and meet an agreed common minimum standard of technical security, have the potential to support citizen mobility and create a more flexible labour market. There is also competitive advantage for Europe to make available electronic identities that are used and accepted by both government and the private sector. These objectives and the associated benefits are therefore consistent with the Lisbon Agenda.

Related Actions

Member States will, during 2006, agree a process and roadmap for achieving the electronic identity objectives and address the national and European legal barriers to the achievement of the electronic identity objectives. Work in this area is essential for public administrations to deliver personalised electronic services with no ambiguity as to the user's identity.

Member States will, over the period 2006-2010, work towards the mutual recognition of national electronic identities by testing, piloting and implementing suitable technologies and methods.

Member States will, by 2010, agree a framework for reference to, and where appropriate the use and sustainable archiving of, authenticated electronic documents.

In addition to the actions set out above under each of the four policy areas, Ministers:

Agree to work together and with the European Commission to share existing tools, common specifications, standards and solutions more effectively and to encourage collaborative development of solutions where necessary;

Invite the European Commission to develop, by means of its research programmes, evidence of the socio-economic impact of eGovernment across Europe;

Invite the European Commission to develop, in close cooperation with the Member States and taking into account national contexts, a set of common, clear and specific indicators to measure the outcomes in relation to the goals of this Declaration, as far as is possible, and to provide detailed data from across the Member States in time for the fourth Ministerial eGovernment Conference;

Invite the European Commission to monitor progress against the abovementioned set of indicators in close cooperation with the Member States and

Invite the European Commission to indicate in its eGovernment Communication how to ensure that existing and future EU-level programmes and committees work towards achieving the targets set out in this Declaration.

Ministers call on the European Commission to drive forward progress on the actions set out in this Declaration, to mobilise the various EU programmes active in eGovernment to contribute effectively and coherently to the achievement of i2010 eGovernment objectives, targeting funds accordingly.

Ministers endorse the targets and actions set out above, will consider how they will integrate these into national strategies and will set out, in 2006, their current or proposed activities in support of meeting these targets.

Ministers look forward to the Communication of the European Commission on EU eGovernment policy under the framework of i2010, to further sharing of experiences through the European Public Administration Network and to further collaboration on European initiatives in the sphere of eGovernment through the existing European programmes.

In conclusion, Ministers thanked the United Kingdom Presidency and the European Commission for organising the third Ministerial eGovernment Conference and Ministerial meeting and very much welcome the intention of the future Portuguese Presidency to host the next Ministerial eGovernment Conference in 2007 as this presents an opportunity to review progress against eGovernment objectives in two years' time.