



European
eGovernment
Conference 2003
Villa Erba, Lago di Como - 7/8 Luglio 2003

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

Como, 7 - 8 July, 2003

Ministers of the EU Member States, Acceding Countries, Candidate Countries and EFTA Countries met in Como on 8th July 2003 for the European eGovernment Conference jointly organised by the Italian Presidency of the Council and the European Commission, and exchanged views on implementing eGovernment in the framework of the eEurope 2005¹ and the eEurope+ 2003 Action Plans.

Ministers emphasised the importance of effective eGovernment throughout Europe for the achievement of the Lisbon strategy objectives and reaffirmed their commitment in strengthening cooperation with acceding and candidate Countries.

Ministers, acknowledging the progress made in delivering on-line services and in advancing collective thinking on eGovernment, agreed on the need to adjust and refine the eGovernment agenda, and give priorities and concrete indications on specific actions for progressing eGovernment.

Considering the principle topics of the Conference (the role of eGovernment for European competitiveness, a better life for citizen and cooperation between all levels of government),

Ministers:

Recognised the role of eGovernment in creating on-line applications and services for the users, favouring in the same time innovative technologies to the benefit of the Information Society.

Acknowledged the role of eGovernment as a driver for the modernization of the entire European public sector and as a key in increasing productivity and efficiency of Public Administration, thereby freeing resources and delivering more value for taxpayers money.

Underlined that European competitiveness can be strengthened by reducing administrative burden (i.e., red tape) on enterprises and costs for administrations.

Emphasised the importance of eGovernment as a means to improve efficiency and transparency in the public sector and the European institutions and thus increase attractiveness for investment. Pointed out the role of eGovernment as a tool for enhancing the quality of life of European citizens through inclusive public services for all.

¹ Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, "eEurope 2005: An information society for all, An Action Plan adopted by the Seville European Council, 21/22 June 2002", COM(2002) 263 final, 28 May 2002.



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Recognised the relevance of using ICT to develop and enhance new forms of involvement and participation of the citizens in policy definition and decision-making processes.

Pointed out the role of eGovernment as a means to achieve a modern European administration through electronic cooperation between different levels of government and across national borders.

Welcomed ongoing experiences in the European Countries in cooperation between levels of administration.

Recognised the need of close cooperation between European Commission and the European Countries in order to define pan-European standards and to identify and implement effective pan-European online services.

Recognised the World Summit on Information Society to be held in Geneva, December 2003 and Tunisia, November 2005, as a unique opportunity for all stakeholders to discuss at global level the establishment of a Global Information Society. Hence, Ministers recommended that due relevance be given to eGovernment in the Summit's discussion and in the WSIS Action Plan.

Turning Objectives into Actions

Ministers expressed their conviction that the deployment of secure and reliable eGovernment throughout the EU, respectful of the autonomy of each Country, requires a shared user-centred vision of innovation in the public sector focused on the following priorities:

Pan-European eGovernment Services

The deployment of ICTs by governments, or the private sector on the behalf of governments, should cement further the four freedoms of the single market enabling citizens and enterprises from one EU Member State to settle, work or trade in another Member State.

Many of the policy areas with a European dimension and directly involving citizens or companies (Internal Market, consumer rights, social protection, R&D, etc) could benefit from an eGovernment approach and pan-European online services.

Current European pilot experiences in the field of job search and learning opportunities should be considered as examples of pan-European services to be diffused and extended to other fields.

Ministers invited the Commission in close collaboration with Member States to identify a list of pan-European services that can be deployed in the next years, notably in the context of the possible successor of the IDA programme, and identify the necessary research to advance pan-European services.

Improved Service Delivery

Ministers reaffirmed the importance of taking all necessary action towards open, inclusive electronic services publicly accessible without discrimination, and of multiplying efforts in the implementation of the "Web Accessibility Initiative" guidelines in all public administrations web sites.

Ministers recalled the target of the eEurope Action Plan of ensuring by end 2004 that basic public services are interactive, where relevant, and exploit both the potential of broadband networks and of multi-platform access. The objective is not necessarily that all services are provided on all



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platforms, but rather that the most appropriate channel for each service is identified, keeping in mind that ICT give also the opportunity to deliver better services at the counter.

Ministers recommended that their Countries accelerate the exchange of practical experiences in delivery of public services on different platforms and emphasised the importance of research and development into multi-platform access.

Ministers recommended the exchange and diffusion of experiences and best practices on e-democracy among the European Countries.

Trust, Security and Privacy

European eGovernment services must rely on a secure environment in order to improve the trust of citizens and businesses. The benefit of a pan-European eGovernment initiative can only be fully harnessed if there is confidence that the new information and communication technology is reliable and secure. It is necessary to promote shared standards of security across the European Union, to be diffused at all levels of administration.

The past few years have seen significant developments in electronic identity and authentication systems. Yet in most countries their take-up and deployment is still in a relatively early stage. Cross-border issues of interoperability should be addressed taking account of legal practices and cultural differences.

The deployment of online public services should fully take into account personal data protection rules, as referred in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and EU legislation.

Ministers welcomed cooperation between Member States and the Commission in order to assess the feasibility and support research on cross-border usage of emerging solutions for identification, security and privacy. Therefore, Ministers welcomed a fast approval of the Regulation establishing a European Network and Information Security Agency and better co-operation at European level between all different actors operating in this field of network and information security.

Interoperability of Public Administration Systems

Cooperation required to develop pan-European services depends in part on the interoperability of information and communication systems used at all levels of government around the European Union and the EFTA Countries in the EEA (European Economic Area).

Ministers welcomed the Working Paper on Interoperability in support of eGovernment provided by the Commission as an input to the Conference and restated their desire to see the Commission, in close cooperation with their Countries, deliver the interoperability framework for pan-European services by end 2003, as announced in eEurope 2005 and eEurope 2003 +.

Ministers agreed that research is needed at European level in order to identify solutions enabling the sharing of documentation resources and procedures that allow the development of trans-border on-line services.

Ministers encouraged their administrations to redefine systems and processes in order to coordinate better the actions of different levels of government, by using open standards.

Ministers took note of the increasing interest in the use of open source software in public administrations, and welcomed further exchange of experiences between their Countries and the Commission.

Getting the Best from Public Funding



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The achievement of the eEurope 2005 Action Plan is closely related to making a European eGovernment strategy a success. The Action Plan has been approved by the Heads of States and Governments, which gives it undeniable political force.

The EU offers a wide range of programmes related to eGovernment, such as MODINIS (under approval), IDA, FP6 (IST), eTEN, eCONTENT, Safer Use of Internet and support through structural funds. Each one of them is managed by one or several committees.

Ministers recognised that these programmes should coherently contribute towards the achievement of eEurope 2005 goals and agreed that the needs of the public administration have to be taken into account to define the relevant priorities in view of the further development of these programmes and the assignation of their financial instruments.

Ministers welcomed a one-stop approach to European programmes in support of eGovernment and invited the Commission to consider in the forthcoming Communication on eGovernment mechanisms to provide coherent strategic guidance to and exploitation of these programmes in order to maximise their joint effect.

e-Government Implementation

Acknowledging that the fulfilment of electronic government depends on the ability to adopt models ensuring co-ordination between different government levels, Ministers recognised the importance of the exchange of strategic and operational experiences among their Countries, in particular through the European Public Administration Network.

Organisational Change

Ministers recognised that the implementation of eGovernment requires a profound reorganisation within the administrations, including process redesign, training of personnel, legislative changes and new management models. The eGovernment approach should be centred on citizens and businesses rather than administrative formalities and supported by business intelligence and promotion of a digital culture. The European Public Administration Network will propose organisational recommendations and will enable the exchange of best practices among the European Countries on this topic.

Central-Local Cooperation and Coordination

Ministers agreed that the cooperation between the different layers of government (including the European, national and local levels) is crucial to ensure seamless provision of electronic services to citizens and businesses, avoiding duplication of investments.

Ministers invited the European Public Administration Network to enhance and sustain the exchange of experience concerning innovative and more efficient models for a modern administration for EU citizens, making specific reference to co-ordination/co-operation, enabled by eGovernment, between European national and regional/local administrations and look forward to strengthen cooperation with the Commission on these issues, where relevant.

Public-Private Co-operation

Ministers recognised the importance of establishing new public-private partnerships in order to facilitate a reciprocal exchange of experiences on achievements of the private and public sectors.



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Public sector information is an important content resource. Information resources held by the public sector can be an asset for the creation of added-value services by private companies. Ministers committed themselves and invited the Commission to enhance activities in this direction. A swift adoption and transposition of the directive on the re-use of public sector documents, pilot projects that ease cross-border barriers to re-use, and the spread of good practices throughout the European Union will contribute to reaching this goal.

Reuse and Best Practices

National and European initiatives should aim to accelerate the development and take-up of eGovernment, multiplying and leveraging best practices, creating critical mass through deployment support, in consideration of accounting approaches such as value-for-money and cost-of-ownership, and creating synergies by joint development of future concepts. Strengthened cooperation between these initiatives should be pursued.

eGovernment Evaluation and Monitoring

While the number of good practices is growing there remains a need for a better understanding and assessment of the impact and role of eGovernment and for effective benchmarking to give policy makers evaluation elements for their decisions. Therefore Ministers called for focussed academic research and continued monitoring with existing indicators based on more qualitative benchmarking methods.

Ministers, asked the Italian Presidency to bring the results of the Conference and the Ministerial Declaration to the attention of the Telecommunications Council in its forthcoming meeting.