European Commission

eGovernment Benchmark 2023
Executive Summary

Connecting Digital Governments

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The eGovernment Benchmark: Monitoring Europe's digitalisation of public services

The eGovernment Benchmark monitors Europe's digitalisation of public services. The digital transformation of our societies and our public services in particular, is driven by government policies enabling digital technologies to flourish. With its Digital Decade policy programme, the European Union strives to lead the way in this respect by setting common targets for 2030. This study captures the digital transformation of governments in 2021 and 2022 during a time marked by the Covid pandemic which highlighted further the importance of digital public services.

Analysing digital governments through the eyes of citizens and entrepreneurs

- The eGovernment Benchmark sheds light on eGovernment in 35 European countries, referred to as 'Europe' or the 'EU27+': the 27 European Union Member States 🇪🇺, Iceland 🇮🇸, Norway 🇳🇴, Switzerland 🇨🇭, Albania 🇦🇱, Montenegro 🇲🇪, North Macedonia 🇲🇰, Serbia 🇷🇸 and Türkiye 🇹🇷.

- Mystery Shoppers assessed 15,083 websites during July and August 2021, and November and December 2022, across **9 life events**, related to key government domains.

- This study evaluates online public services on **four dimensions**, which consist of 14 underlying indicators, broken down into 48 survey questions. The four dimensions can be described by the following key questions:

User Centricity – To what extent are services provided online? How mobile friendly are they? And what online support and feedback mechanisms are in place?

Transparency – Are public administrations providing clear, openly communicated information about how their services are delivered? Are they transparent about policy making and digital service design processes, as well as about the way people's personal data is being processed?

Key Enablers – What technological enablers are in place for the delivery of eGovernment services?

Cross-Border Services – How easily are citizens from abroad able to access and use the online services? And what online support and feedback mechanisms are in place for cross-border users?

Based on the four dimensions and 48 underlying survey questions, countries receive an **overall eGovernment maturity** score. This composite score ranges from 0 to 100 points.

European digital governments at a glance

The European leaders are Malta (96 points) and Estonia (92). Other frontrunners are Luxembourg (89), Iceland (88), Finland (86), the Netherlands (85), Lithuania (85), Denmark (85), Latvia (82), Türkiye (81) and Norway (80). The EU27+ overall performance averages at 70.

Compared to last year, some countries showed remarkable growth. Türkiye saw a 10 points increase, while Greece (+8), Serbia (+8) and Poland (+7) also improved spectacularly.
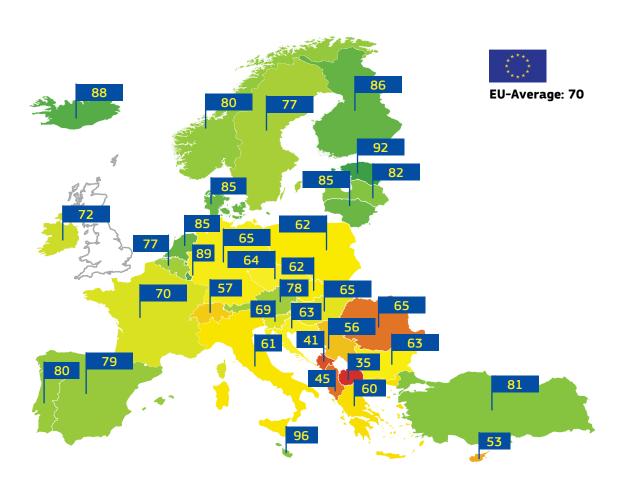
Figure 1: Country overall performance, biennial average 2021 and 2022

The **User Centricity** dimension is still a spearhead, standing at an EU27+ average of 90 points, and can be used as the impetus to improve all other key dimensions. With an average of 71 points, the **Key Enablers** dimension shows promising performance growth, with countries enabling safe authentication through eID and pre-filling personal information from base registries for more and more services. **Cross-Border Services** (57) are ready for the next step: creating online services for foreign users can quickly accelerate with more than 30 countries connected to eIDAS and the ongoing improvements on the Your Europe portal. The **Transparency** of eGovernment (currently at 62 points) can be improved upon by consistent service processes that are clear for the user.

eGovernment with the user at its heart

The eGovernment Benchmark consistently shows that many government services are available online. Still, one out of five citizens that regularly use the internet does not interact with the government online at all. Are online services designed with their audience in mind? How seamless is the user journey for citizens and entrepreneurs looking for an online service?

- **Finding the right government website** is the first step in the user journey. Portal websites combine information on different types of services from multiple public organisations, also known as one-stop-shops. More than nine out of ten services can be found via a government portal (94%).

- **Fast government websites avoid frustrations for users.** The average European government websites take 1.9 seconds before becoming fully interactive, where below 3.8 seconds is considered fast.

- **Government websites are not yet accessible to all users on all devices.** Currently, 93% of European government websites are mobile friendly, but web-accessibility remains a challenge, with more than eight out of ten public sector websites (82%) violating one or more Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) criteria.

- **Easy-to-understand government portals make users' lives easier.** Users are typically provided with information on how to access government services online. For example, 95% of websites have a frequently asked questions section and 90% of websites have some form of instruction or demonstration on how to obtain the service.

- **98% of services have information online, but more clarity about service processes is required.** Only 46% of websites provide an estimated time for the application process and only 60% of websites explicitly state the delivery timelines of services.

- **Seven out of ten services allow secure authentication with eID** while 17% of services still require in-person identification. Even though many online services are enabled for eID use, only about half (49%) of services allow single sign-on.

- **Personal information is pre-filled for 68% of online services,** making life for users easier. Moreover, in almost eight out of ten (77%) of services, users could submit or download required documents online.

- **84% of government services can be completed fully online[1],** up from 81% last year. This means that users obtain these services fully digitally, without the need for a physical visit to the local city office. **Lastly, 7% of the examined government services are delivered proactively.**

The Digital Decade: Three service gaps to bridge on the road to 2030

Europe strives to have all its key public services online in 2030 at the end of this Digital Decade. Currently the Digital Decade indicators *Digital public services for citizens* and *Digital public services for businesses* stand at 77 and 84. To rise to the challenge for 2030, Europe needs to bridge three gaps:

- **Bridge the gap between cross-border users and national users.** Currently, 84% of services for national users and 49% of services for cross-border users are fully online[2]. Moreover, services are often delivered in a more user-centric manner for national users. Cross-border users face many hindrances when obtaining services online. Language issues and being unable to authenticate with their own eID are the most common barriers.

- **Bridge the gap between citizens and entrepreneurs.** European entrepreneurs enjoy mature digital services provided by their government. 92% of services for entrepreneurs are online, compared to 80% for citizens.

- **Bridge the gap between local & regional governments and central governments.** As it stands, 88% of evaluated central government services are completely online, compared to 76% of evaluated regional government services and 62% of evaluated local government services.

Interoperability as key towards Connecting Digital Governments

Creating a level playing field between different levels of government is the first step towards better online services for everyone. Europe's interoperability framework and its new Interoperable Europe Act will play a vital role in this move forwards. Instead of each town or city reinventing the wheel for themselves and creating their own services, they can reuse what is already there. Architectural building blocks, such as eID and eSignature, can be easily adopted on other websites.

Interoperability is further supported by the Single Digital Gateway and the eIDAS Regulation, making cross-border services in the future just as easy as national services. Having all services in standard formats, in multiple languages, accessible with your own eID makes lives easier for citizens and entrepreneurs alike. Services across Europe will be similar, independent of country and service provider. By making the push towards interoperability and implementing the Single Digital Gateway, Europe is Connecting Digital Governments.

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1.   Note that this percentage is based on question "A2 Is the actual service online?". This percentage is different from the score for the Online availability indicator that is used as input for the Digital Decade targets. The Online availability indicator also measures whether information about a service is available and whether the service can be reached via one of the main government portals.

2.   Note that the percentage for national users stems from question A2 (see footnote 2) and the percentage for cross-border users is based on question "G2 Can the service be obtained online by a cross-border user?".

Glossary of Key Terminology

eGovernment: electronic government (also digital government).

Dimensions: the four pillars against which indicators for eGovernment are aggregated and measured.

1. **User Centricity:** the extent to which information and services are available online, supported online, and compatible with mobile devices.

2. **Transparency:** the extent to which service processes are transparent, services are designed with user involvement, and users can manage their personal data.

3. **Key Enablers:** the extent to which digital, tools such as electronic identification (eID), eDocuments, Pre-filled Forms and Digital Post solutions, enable identification and communication between a user and a government service.

4. **Cross-Border Services:** the extent to which citizens and entrepreneurs from other European countries can access online information and services in a usable and integrated way through electronic identification and eDocuments.

Life event: a package of government services, usually provided by multiple agencies, that support citizens or entrepreneurs through key points of their lives, such as the birth of a child or starting a business. The eGovernment Benchmark covers nine life events (government domains):

• Assessed in 2022: Business Start-Up, Career, Studying and Family.

• Assessed in 2021: Regular Business Operations, Health, Moving, Transport, Starting a Small Claims Procedure.

Life event services: services within a user journey for national and cross-border users.

• **Informational services:** services and procedures that provide users with adequate and personalised insight into their situation.

• **Transactional services:** services and procedures needed to fulfil the essential requirements of a life event, such as registration.

• **Portal websites:** eGovernment websites that gather and provide information and services from multiple public administrations, also known as one-stop-shops.

• **National users:** citizens and entrepreneurs that seek information and services in their own country.

• **Cross-border users:** citizens or entrepreneurs that seek information and services in a European country other than their own.

Method: the way in which we collected the data.

• **Mystery Shopping:** the primary type of data collection in the eGovernment Benchmark – a proven evaluation method that makes the user journey and experience the primary focus of attention.

• **Automated tools:** online tests through which websites are entered and assessed on a number of criteria.

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