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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE
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COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**i2010 eGovernment Action Plan: Accelerating eGovernment in Europe
for the Benefit of All**

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i2010 eGovernment Action Plan: Accelerating eGovernment in Europe for the Benefit of All

(Text with EEA relevance)

1. THE i2010 eGOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN – OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR 2010

The Commission hereby presents its eGovernment Action Plan, an integral part of its i2010 initiative for jobs and growth in the information society, to make a major contribution to the Lisbon Agenda and other European Community policies.

Countries that score high on public-sector openness and efficiency and eGovernment readiness are also top on the economic performance and competitiveness scoreboards¹. This strong link between national competitiveness, innovation strength and the quality of public administrations means that in the global economy better government is a competitive must. With eGovernment, public administrations can make a major contribution to the Lisbon Agenda.

It is equally important to accelerate eGovernment with a view to modernisation and innovation because governments face major challenges such as ageing, climate change or terrorism and citizens are demanding better services, better security and better democracy, while businesses demand less bureaucracy and more efficiency. As European Union continues to enlarge and embrace greater diversity, new needs and demands are arising such as for seamless public services across borders, essential to increase citizens' opportunities for mobility and for business in Europe. eGovernment can help governments to meet these challenges and demands.

The successes and potential of eGovernment are already clearly visible with several EU countries ranking amongst the world leaders. Electronic invoicing in Denmark saves taxpayers €150 million and businesses €50 million a year. If introduced all over the EU, annual savings could add up to over €50 billion. Disabled people in Belgium can now obtain benefits over the Internet in seconds, whereas previously this took 3 or 4 weeks. Such time savings and convenience can become widespread and benefit all citizens in Europe in many public services.

With this Action Plan the Commission seeks to:

- Accelerate the delivery of tangible benefits for all citizens and businesses;

¹ World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Reports, European Commission Innovation Trendcharts and Scoreboards, UN Global eGovernment Readiness Reports (2003, 2004, 2005).

- Ensure that eGovernment at national level do not lead to new barriers on the single market due to fragmentation and lack of interoperability;
- Extend the benefits of eGovernment at EU level by allowing economies of scale in Member States' initiatives and cooperating on common European challenges;
- Ensure cooperation of all stakeholders in the EU in designing and delivering eGovernment.

This Action Plan draws, in particular, on the Ministerial Declaration² adopted at the 3rd Ministerial eGovernment Conference, which set clear expectations for widespread, measurable benefits from eGovernment in 2010. The Commission welcomes this Declaration and the firm commitment of Member States and the private sector³. The Action Plan builds on the excellent cooperation with national eGovernment initiatives in the eGovernment subgroup of the eEurope Advisory Group.

The Action Plan focus on the European Commission's contribution to supporting Member States' objectives and Community policies, in particular the Lisbon Strategy, internal market, better regulation and European citizenship.

The Action Plan focuses on five major objectives for eGovernment with specific objectives for 2010⁴:

- **No citizen left behind:** advancing inclusion through eGovernment so that by 2010 all citizens benefit from trusted, innovative services and easy access for all;
- **Making efficiency and effectiveness a reality** – significantly contributing, by 2010, to high user satisfaction, transparency and accountability, a lighter administrative burden and efficiency gains;
- **Implementing high-impact key services** for citizens and businesses - by 2010, 100% of public procurement will be available electronically, with 50% actual usage⁵, with agreement on cooperation on further high-impact online citizen services;
- **Putting key enablers in place** - enabling citizens and businesses to benefit, by 2010, from convenient, secure and interoperable authenticated access across Europe to public services;
- **Strengthening participation and democratic decision-making** - demonstrating, by 2010, tools for effective public debate and participation in democratic decision-making.

2. NO CITIZEN LEFT BEHIND – ADVANCING INCLUSION THROUGH EGOVERNMENT

Inclusive eGovernment presents:

- The challenge of **fighting the digital divide**, countering digital exclusion when public services are provided online;

² 24 November 2005, Manchester, UK.
<http://www.egov2005conference.gov.uk/documents/proceedings/pdf/051124declaration.pdf>.

³ EICTA Industry Declaration on eGovernment, 25 November 2005.

⁴ Targets 1-4 are summarised from the Ministerial Declaration.

⁵ For public procurement above the EC threshold; see section 4.

- The opportunity of **ICT-enabled inclusive policies** thanks to new possibilities offered by eGovernment.

ICT-enabled public services help to consolidate social cohesion and ensure that disadvantaged people face fewer barriers to opportunities. Government websites still have much to do to comply with eAccessibility guidelines⁶. Users will continue to want channels other than the Internet to access public services, such as digital TV, mobile and fixed phone and/or person-to-person.

Member States have committed themselves to inclusive eGovernment objectives to **ensure that by 2010 all citizens, including socially disadvantaged groups, become major beneficiaries of eGovernment, and European public administrations deliver public information and services that are more easily accessible and increasingly trusted by the public, through innovative use of ICT, increasing awareness of the benefits of eGovernment and improved skills and support for all users.**

The Commission will support Member States' efforts to achieve these objectives, in line with the eAccessibility Communication⁷ and the agenda for eInclusion that is planned for 2008 as part of the i2010 ICT for inclusion policy. Based on this agenda, further specific action will be taken from 2008 onwards.

The European Commission, in open partnership with Member States, the private sector and civil society and in coordination with European Public Administration Network (EPAN), will take the following specific action:

2006	Agree with Member States on a roadmap setting measurable objectives and milestones on the way to making all citizens beneficiaries of eGovernment by 2010.
2007	Set up with Member States a common and agreed guide that aligns eGovernment developments with the eAccessibility Communication.
2008	Issue specifications for multi-platform service delivery strategies allowing access to eGovernment services via a variety of channels, e.g. digital TV, mobile and fixed telephone and other interactive devices.

Between 2006 and 2010:

- Research projects, deployment pilots, support from the Structural Funds where appropriate, policy studies and common specifications in related EC programmes will address users' needs and focus in particular on cost-effective solutions for personalisation, user interaction and multi-lingualism for eGovernment.

- Exchanges and sharing of practical experiences will be aligned with the exchanges of national experience in EPAN and focus on multi-channel strategies, inclusive policies and good practice solutions.

⁶ eAccessibility of Public Sector Services in the EU, November 2005, UK Presidency Report.

⁷ eAccessibility communication, COM(2005) 425

3. MAKING EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS A REALITY

Efficient services save time and money and effective services are more meaningful for citizens, businesses and administrations along the lines of the five objectives of this Action Plan. They deliver benefits at three levels: a) citizens and businesses; b) administrations; and c) society and the economy at large.

Member States expect **eGovernment to contribute to high user satisfaction with public services and significantly lighten the administrative burden on businesses and citizens by 2010. Moreover, the public sector should achieve considerable efficiency gains as well as increasing transparency and accountability through innovative use of ICT by 2010.**

While most of the challenges are at national or sub-national level, the European Commission adds value in providing support to all five objectives of this Action plan with two types of activities: measurement and sharing.

3.1. Measurement

Providing relevant information⁸, quantifying, benchmarking⁹, measuring and comparing impact and benefit is essential for mainstreaming eGovernment. Work has been progressing on a common impact/benefit-oriented measurement framework which includes benchmarking using common indicators (measured nationally or by European-level action) and case-based learning using measurable indicators¹⁰. Economic models are emerging and need to be further developed as complementary tools to help identify ways of using the data, e.g. identifying the relationship between investment and productivity within an eGovernment project or the contribution of eGovernment policies and programmes to GDP growth, jobs or social cohesion.

3.2. Sharing

The need for greater sharing of experience is widely recognised¹¹. Mechanisms have been and are put in place such as the eGovernment Good Practice Framework¹², the eGovernment Observatory¹³, Your Europe portal¹⁴, the TESTA network¹⁵ and the Single Window Customs¹⁶.

⁸ Eurostat surveys on household and enterprises in the Member States provide important information on inclusive eGovernment and eProcurement.

⁹ MODINIS benchmarking eGovernment basic services on-line- 6th measurement (2006), and new pilot project on improving eGovernment benchmarking indicator.

¹⁰ MODINIS eGEP study on financing, benefits and economics of eGovernment, http://europa.eu.int/egovernment_research.

¹¹ Ministerial Declaration, Second Ministerial Conference, Como, IT, 7 July 2003; eGovernment Communication 2003, COM(2003) 567; Council Conclusions on eGovernment, December 2003.

¹² <http://egov-goodpractice.org>

¹³ eGovernment Observatory: <http://europa.eu.int/egovo>

¹⁴ <http://europa.eu.int/youreurope>

¹⁵ <http://europa.eu.int/idabc/en/document/2097/556>

¹⁶ http://europa.eu.int/comm/taxation_customs/common/publications/com_reports/customs/index_en.htm

This will allow risk-sharing and economies of scale in investigating innovative solutions and replicable building blocks for innovation and sharing good practices. This would also include the Commission's own eCommission¹⁷ work. Fuller use should be made of the EPAN results on innovative public services by linking them to Commission-supported good practice.

In the short to medium term, the proposal is to address sustainability of infrastructure services through EC programmes and national/regional funding. Long-term sustainability is still to be ensured¹⁸.

The European Commission, in partnership with Member States, the private sector, and civil society will take the following action:	
2006	The Commission, working together with Member States, will propose a common impact-oriented eGovernment measurement framework and subsequently fine-tune it.
2007	In line with the i2010 benchmarking framework, benchmarking and case-based impact and benefit analysis based on common indicators will be performed based on Member States' inputs to monitor progress with this Action Plan.
2008	The Commission, together with the Member States, will explore mechanisms to ensure the long-term financial and operational sustainability for sharing experiences, infrastructures and services.

Between 2006 and 2010 the Commission will continue actively to promote the sharing of resources, good practice and experience in eGovernment.

4. HIGH-IMPACT KEY SERVICES FOR CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES

The eGovernment agenda is advancing through the modernisation of hundreds of public services. While most of these are local, regional and national, a number of services delivered across borders make a significant difference to citizens, businesses and administrations and can act as flagships for European eGovernment. These also serve to mobilise top-level commitment and to create substantial demand for key enablers such as electronic identification and interoperability, mutually reinforcing objectives in this Action Plan (see also the next chapter). Implementation of these flagship services must focus on achieving measurable impact through widespread *usage*, not only on making such services available electronically.

One such high-impact service is electronic public procurement. Government revenues account for some 45% of GDP and public authorities purchase 15 to 20% of GDP or €1500 to 2000 billion in Europe every year. Electronic procurement and invoicing could result in savings in total procurement costs of around 5% and reductions in transaction costs of 10% or more, leading to savings of tens of billions of euros annually. In particular, SMEs can benefit from

¹⁷ E-Commission 2006-2010, Enabling Efficiency and Transparency, 22 November 2005.

¹⁸ Regarding the IDABC programme, decision 2004/387/EC (L 144, 30. 4. 2004 (see Corrigendum OJ L 181, 18. 5. 2004, p. 25) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004, Article 10(8) and Article 3(d) specifies that mechanisms to ensure the financial and operational sustainability of IDABC infrastructure services are to be defined.

easier access to public procurement markets and increasing their ICT-capabilities and thereby competitiveness.

A high level of take-up of eProcurement is therefore highly desirable. Member States have committed themselves to **giving all public administrations across Europe the capability of carrying out 100% of their procurement electronically (where legally permissible) and to ensuring that at least 50% of public procurement above the EC threshold¹⁹ is carried out electronically by 2010.**

Over the period 2006-2010 the Commission will in cooperation with Member States explore high impact services with a pan-European dimension that contribute most to the achievement of the Lisbon Agenda. Specific attention will be paid to citizen mobility services, such as improved job search services across Europe, social security services relating to patient records and electronic health prescriptions, benefits and pensions across Europe, and educational services relating to studying abroad. Other key services to be considered include company registration and VAT refunding for businesses. Opportunities should also be seized for synergy with Structural Funds and local/regional development.

Cross-border eProcurement has been chosen as the first application to focus on. This work is to support the eProcurement Action Plan agreed with Member States in 2004²⁰. It is to help accelerating Member States' developments towards the realisation of cross border solutions.

The European Commission, in partnership with Member States, the private sector, and civil society will take the following action:	
2006	Agree with Member States on a roadmap setting measurable objectives and milestones and achieving 100% availability of public eProcurement and 50% take-up of eProcurement by 2010.
2007	Based on existing or under development Member States solutions, accelerate common specifications of key elements for cross border public eProcurement and launch implementation pilots.
2009	Assess pilots deployments and disseminate results across the EU.
2010	Review of progress of cross border public eProcurement applications in the Member States.

Between 2006 and 2010 cooperation on additional high-impact eGovernment services will be agreed with Member States.

5. PUTTING KEY ENABLERS IN PLACE

eGovernment has reached a critical juncture. Further significant progress requires certain key enablers to be in place, particularly for high impact services to be effective. Among those, interoperable electronic identification management (eIDM) for access to public services,

¹⁹ From about €50 000 for simple public services to €6 000 000 for public works.

²⁰ COM(2004) 841; Legal framework for eProcurement from directives 2004/18/EC and 2004/17/EC

electronic document authentication and electronic archiving are considered critical key enablers.

EU countries are already implementing eIDM, meeting national service needs, cultural traditions and personal data protection preferences. Harmonised national ID cards might be one specific means to implement public service eIDM, but this is a national choice. Biometric national ID cards and eIDM for public services are markedly different: national ID cards serve public security, for example by facilitating integrated border management and supporting fight against terrorism, whereas electronic identification for public services is intended to ease access and offer personalised and smarter services.

Member States recognise the importance of eIDM for ensuring that **by 2010 European citizens and businesses will be able to benefit from secure and convenient electronic means, issued at local, regional or national levels and complying with data protection regulations, to identify themselves to public services in their own or in any other Member State.**

The European Commission proposes a pragmatic approach to the interoperability of different eIDM systems. The aim is to respect the different national approaches and solutions without creating a barrier to using public services across borders.

Wider public consultation will be considered to update views on public acceptance. E-signatures provide a technology that can be used in the eIDM process. The Commission will in its follow up to the e-Signatures Directive actively foster mutual recognition and interoperability of electronic signatures to overcome barriers to the Single Market. The Commission will also consider if regulatory measures are needed for the development of electronic identification and authentication for public services.

Moreover, electronic documents will be essential for many services, e.g. public procurement contracts, remote medical prescriptions or educational certificates. Between 2006 and 2010 the Commission will set up, with the Member States, a reference framework for authenticated electronic documents across the EU and will develop and implement a work programme for closer cooperation on management and authentication of and easier cross-border access to electronic records and archives in public administrations.

Finally, interoperability is a generic key enabler. Interoperable essential infrastructure services (e.g. for secure communications between administrations or cross-border access to registers), common specifications, interoperability guidelines and re-usable software are all building blocks of high impact eGovernment. Work is ongoing towards the adoption of an updated European Interoperability Framework and promotion and awareness for interoperable eGovernment services based on standards, open specifications and open interfaces as planned in the Interoperability Communication²¹.

²¹ Communication on Interoperability COM(2006) 45

The Commission, together with Member States, the private sector and civil society, will take the following action:	
2006	Agree with Member States on a roadmap setting measurable objectives and milestones on the way to a European eIDM framework by 2010 based on interoperability and mutual recognition of national eIDM.
2007	Agree common specifications for interoperable eIDM in the EU.
2008	Monitor large scale pilots of interoperable eIDMs in cross-border services and implementing commonly agreed specifications.
2009	eSignatures in eGovernment: Undertake review of take-up in public services.
2010	Review the uptake by the Member States of the European eIDM framework for interoperable eIDMs.

6. STRENGTHENING PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING IN EUROPE

Democratic decision-making and participation face several challenges. Across Europe (non-mandatory) voter turnout at national and European level is generally low. Decision-making is often felt to have become more complex, involving more parties and interests and more difficult trade-offs. Citizens are becoming ever better informed and are demanding greater involvement. Governments are seeking to build wide and inclusive support for public policies to ensure effective implementation and avoid new democratic and societal divides. Better decision-making and more extensive involvement of citizens in all phases of democratic decision-making, including at European level, are critical for the cohesion of European society.

At the same time there are new opportunities: in particular, ICT has great potential to involve large numbers of citizens in public debate and decision-making, from municipal to European level. The Internet has already led to new forms of political expression and public debate such as blogs.

The interface between democracy, new technologies, new forms of social organisation and governance is what eDemocracy is about. 65% of respondents to the online eGovernment policy poll expect eDemocracy to help reduce democratic deficits²² and there are good examples of eDemocracy. Nevertheless, many questions and concerns still need to be addressed, from inclusion to the quality of decision-making.

The European Commission's role is to enable cooperation at European level, notably in eParticipation, to increase understanding, to accelerate progress by sharing re-usable solutions from across the world, and to support, by means of ICT, the transparency of European institutions and the involvement of citizens. The eCommission initiative and the European Transparency initiative will also contribute to this²³. Furthermore, best practices and common

²² Online consultation by DG Information Society & Media, October-December 2005.

²³ Communication to the Commission from the President, Ms Wallström, Mr Kallas, Ms Hübner and Ms Fisher Boel for the launch of a European transparency initiative, SEC(2005)1300

specifications for tools to bring citizens closer to parliamentary decision-making processes will be explored, in consultation with parliaments in the EU and other stakeholders.

The Commission, in consultation with stakeholders, will take the following action:	
2006-2010	Test ICT-based tools that facilitate transparency and public involvement in democratic decision-making. Support exchanges of experience.
2006	Launch a preparatory action on ICT-based tools for enhanced parliamentary decision-making.
2007-2013	Set advanced forms of eDemocracy as a priority of the IST research programme under FP7.

7. MANAGING AND IMPLEMENTING THE eGOVERNMENT i2010 ACTION PLAN

The implementation of this Action Plan largely relies on cooperation with the Member States and other stakeholders. At the EU level, the Action Plan is supported by programmes such as Modinis²⁴, eTEN²⁵, IST²⁶, IDABC²⁷ and the future CIP²⁸ (Competitiveness and Innovation framework Programme).

Given the instrumental role of the eGovernment subgroup of leaders and representatives of the national eGovernment initiatives, their productive working methods and practical working relationship with EPAN, the Commission, after consultation of the Member States, will propose to continue the group at strategic level under the i2010 initiative.

The Commission, in cooperation with Member States and in close consultation with stakeholders, will perform strategic monitoring, develop roadmaps and monitor the European eGovernment Action Plan.

The group will report on incorporation of the Action Plan in national eGovernment plans (Member States have committed themselves to report in 2006) and develop strategies on specific topics, such as inclusive eGovernment and high-impact citizen-oriented services.

Comprehensive progress review, new directions for political priorities and subsequent updating of this Action Plan, recognising achievements and promoting re-usable solutions, are envisaged in the i2010 annual report and on a bi-annual basis through Ministerial Conferences.

The Commission will prepare, with the forthcoming Portuguese Presidency, the 4th Ministerial eGovernment Conference, to be held in Portugal in 2007.

While the primary objective of this Action Plan is to benefit Europe, the experience gained could be beneficial to further international cooperation including developing countries.

²⁴ http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/2005/all_about/modinis/

²⁵ http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/eten/

²⁶ <http://www.cordis.lu/ist/>

²⁷ <http://europa.eu.int/idabc/>

²⁸ http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/cip/

8. CONCLUSIONS

Effective and innovative public administrations are essential to a globally competitive Europe. eGovernment is the key to unlocking potential in the public sector. This Action Plan, announced in the i2010 initiative, maps out the way ahead for eGovernment in Europe and provides the focal points for EC programmes, initiatives and policy-making from 2006 to 2010 and a practical way forward through roadmaps and strategic monitoring in priority areas. Successful implementation of this Action Plan will require the cooperation of all stakeholders.