

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

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DRAFT OPINION

**Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment,
Research and Culture**

eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020

Rapporteur: **Martin Andreasson** (SE/EPP)
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This document will be discussed at the meeting of the **Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture** to be held **from 11 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. on 22 June 2016**. To allow time for translation, any amendments must be submitted through the online tool for tabling amendments (available on the Members' Portal: <http://cor.europa.eu/members>) **no later than 3 p.m. (Brussels time) on Thursday, 9 June 2016**. A user guide is available on <http://toad.cor.europa.eu/CORHelp.aspx>.

Reference document

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 - Accelerating the digital transformation of government
COM(2016) 179 final

**Draft opinion of the Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and
Culture – eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020**

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. welcomes the proposal's overall vision and its aim of removing existing digital barriers to the single market and preventing further fragmentation arising in the context of the modernisation of public administrations;
2. highlights the key importance of local and regional authorities, both in modernising administrations as the creators and administrators of digital infrastructure and services in areas of importance for society, and in taking responsibility for directly providing their residents with services shaped to meet expectations in an increasingly digitalised world;
3. stresses how very important public services are in driving the digital transformation of the European economy, over and above e-government, and notes that the proposals set out include measures within most areas of people's lives, but not in the culture and education sector;
4. draws attention to the importance of modernising public institutions and making them accessible to individuals and businesses by means of digital services, and therefore emphasises its support for the development of cross-border public services, especially those that allow for interoperability and information transfer, such as e-identification, e-signatures, the electronic service of documents and other aspects of e-government¹;
5. recommends that those local and regional authorities that are important to the success of the planned measures should be involved not only in the implementation, but also in the development of the planned national measures and tools highlighted in the action plan;
6. suggests that the European Committee of the Regions should be included in the e-Government Action Plan Steering Board, at least as an observer, in order to ensure that the discussions reflect the local and regional dimension, given that a significant proportion of welfare services are provided by local and regional operators;

Introduction

7. shares the Commission's view that e-government makes administration simpler, more efficient and more transparent;

¹

See CdR 4165/2014, 5960/2013, 5559/2013, 3597/2013, 1646/2013, 2414/2012, 1673/2013, 626/2012, 402/2012, 65/2011, 104/2010 and 5514/2014.

8. also agrees with the Commission's assessment that many individuals and businesses are still unable to enjoy the full potential of digital public services, and points out that the development of e-government in Europe has been uneven between the Member States and regions;
9. against this background, welcomes the action plan's aim of being the instrument to join up efforts to modernise administrations in Europe;
10. welcomes the fact that the action plan's dynamic and flexible design allows for additional measures that can take advantage of local and regional authorities' knowledge of providing digital public services in areas of importance to society, such as education, care and healthcare, industry, infrastructure, etc.;
11. highlights the action plan's ambition to serve as a catalyst for public sector modernisation. In order for it to be successful, it is important for local and regional authorities to be involved in the work and to have good access to funding sources and accompanying measures within the EU programmes coordinated via the action plan;

Vision and underlying principles

12. supports the Commission's vision that, by 2020, public administrations and institutions should be open, efficient and inclusive, providing borderless, personalised, user-friendly, end-to-end digital public services to all citizens and businesses in the EU;
13. recognises that transparent administrations that provide data and services openly and securely are important in increasing transparency and efficiency, but at the same time points out that certain types of information handled by public institutions need a high level of protection;
14. endorses the principle that digital should be the default method used by public administrations for delivering services, and therefore stresses that conscious, long-term, structured efforts must be made to increase digital inclusion so that more people can access the infrastructure and skills they need to enjoy the opportunities offered by digitalisation;
15. supports the level of ambition shown in the principle that public administrations should ask citizens and businesses to provide the same information only once;
16. at the same time notes that there are legal, technical and organisational challenges that need to be addressed before information can be re-used; in that connection, welcomes the pilot project on implementing the "once-only" principle for business contacts across borders and takes the view that the extensive contacts that companies have with local and regional authorities should be analysed in the pilot phase;
17. notes that inclusiveness in the design of digital content and services is a principle that will benefit all users, especially people with disabilities. It is therefore important to continue with cooperation and research to update existing standards in order to keep pace with technological progress;

18. agrees with the principle that public administrations should share information and data between themselves and with citizens and businesses openly and inclusively. At the same time, the Committee stresses that it is important for all organisations to be in a position to determine which types of information should be publicly available and which should be protected;
19. supports the principle that public administrations' e-government services should be cross-border by default, and stresses that local and regional authorities, many of them in border regions, can play a crucial role in identifying and developing cross-border services that are relevant, efficient and seamless;
20. supports the principle of interoperability by default, which is a key factor in making use of the possibilities offered by digitalisation;
21. agrees with the Commission that adequate personal data protection, privacy and information security should be included at an early stage in the development of digital services, as lack of trust in digital services is still a barrier to the growth of e-government;
22. therefore welcomes the fact that the legal framework is being harmonised in the General Data Protection Regulation, but points out that competition in this field is global, and underlines the importance of ensuring that the legal framework does not hinder the pace at which new solutions and services are developed;
23. stresses the importance of effective guidance on the Data Protection Regulation and the need to include all stakeholders in discussions concerning property rights and liability with respect to the use of personal data;
24. highlights the Commission's role in creating the basic conditions for interoperability and harmonisation that will allow for the exchange of information on which the principles are founded;

Political priorities

25. points out that there are still groups of people in Europe who do not have internet access or sufficient digital skills to use digital services, and that proactive efforts need to be made to improve digital inclusion;
26. stresses that reliable, affordable, high-performance networks in all areas are crucial in order to ensure that all individuals and businesses can access modern digital public services and can make the most of next-generation technology (Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data, e-health, smart cities, etc.);
27. emphasises that support options at European and national level must be consistently and continually developed in order to support the deployment of high-speed broadband in all areas, particularly in the regions' rural areas, where a lack of profitability is often a barrier to market-driven development;

28. stresses that, in order to succeed in modernising public administration, common standards and technical specifications need to be developed jointly with all relevant stakeholders; this would allow for efficient, reusable digital services with a high degree of interoperability;
29. welcomes the Commission's plan to revise the European Interoperability Framework, and urges the Commission to continue to support administrations' take-up of the recommendations in the framework;
30. emphasises that local and regional authorities should be seen not just as users of cross-border standards and services, but also as key producers within the European Interoperability Framework;
31. welcomes the Commission's plan to develop a prototype for a European catalogue of ICT standards for public procurement, and highlights the vital importance of procurement, particularly within local and regional authorities, in avoiding proprietary lock-in and making it possible to implement solutions and services with a high degree of interoperability and innovation;
32. notes that electronic identification is a core element in secure, efficient and accessible digital public services, and welcomes the fact that the Commission plans to take action to accelerate the take-up of eIDAS services²;
33. points out that work on interoperability and standards takes time and requires a long-term vision, as well as adequate and lasting funding;
34. therefore welcomes the fact that the Commission will present a way forward for guaranteeing the long-term sustainability of cross-border digital services. This is necessary in order to build trust in these services and their technical building blocks and to ensure that the efforts made in connection with this work do not go to waste;
35. feels that public institutions should provide sufficiently accessible infrastructure but, in view of the complexity of setting an appropriate timeline for updating systems and technology in digital ecosystems, calls on the Commission to look closely at the consequences and limitations of the possible implementation of the "no legacy" principle;
36. welcomes the Commission's ambition of making the e-Justice Portal a one-stop shop bringing together information and functions for communicating and finding information and practices relating to European law and judicial procedures, information on companies and insolvency registers;
37. welcomes the mandatory interconnection of all Member States' business registers, because businesses are increasingly operating beyond national borders and there is a growing need and demand for information on companies in a cross-border context, not least in Europe's border regions;

38. in this context, also welcomes the electronic interconnection of insolvency registers to enhance transparency and legal certainty in the internal market and avoid forum shopping;
39. supports the initiative to facilitate the use of digital solutions throughout a company's lifecycle, and calls for this initiative to involve less red tape for businesses;
40. welcomes the fact that the Commission will propose an extension to the Single Electronic Mechanism for registration and payment of VAT, and calls for the complex VAT rules to be developed in a targeted way to facilitate cross-border digital trade;
41. is in favour of supporting cross-border mobility of citizens by exchanging social security information (EESSI) and information between job-seekers and employers in the EU (EURES);
42. is in favour of EU initiatives to enable the cross-border exchange of healthcare data and services, as this will improve patient safety and is in line with the intentions of the Patient Mobility Directive³;
43. agrees with the Commission that getting citizens, businesses and researchers closely involved in the design and delivery of digital public services will improve the quality, efficiency and utility of those services;
44. stresses that open data, provided to third parties securely and reliably, are a vital prerequisite in order to modernise and transform local and regional authorities so that they can deliver tomorrow's innovative services throughout their operations;
45. therefore welcomes the initiative of creating an EU platform for public authorities to open their data and services, but stresses that the Commission should support the development and coordination of strategies to open up data by providing local and regional authorities with technical and methodological support;
46. emphasises that the provision of high-quality, interoperable data will require concerted efforts with regard, *inter alia*, to information architecture, information classification and interoperability at all levels, and therefore welcomes the deployment and take-up of data infrastructure at EU level, whereby the work done under the INSPIRE Directive can provide a model for the provision of common data descriptions;
47. in this context, welcomes the European Cloud Initiative⁴, which will provide an opportunity to improve transparency and efficiency by allowing for a shared cloud infrastructure for the provision of digital public services;

³ 2011/24/EU.

⁴ COM(2016) 178 final.

48. emphasises that digital literacy and skills among citizens, workers and job-seekers are hugely important for the widespread implementation of digitalisation in the economy and for the modernisation of administrations;

Work under the action plan

49. agrees that implementation of the action plan will require shared commitment and ownership at all levels of administration, and highlights the responsibility borne by local and regional authorities as the public sector's primary "interface" with citizens and businesses.

Brussels,

II. PROCEDURE

Title	eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020
Reference(s)	COM(2016) 179 final
Legal basis	Article 307 TFEU
Procedural basis	Optional referral (Rule 41 (a) of the Rules of Procedure)
Date of Council/EP referral/Date of Commission letter	20 April 2016
Date of Bureau/President's decision	
Commission responsible	Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC)
Rapporteur	Martin Andreasson (SE/EPP)
Analysis	17 May 2016
Discussed in commission	22 June 2016
Date adopted by commission	22 June 2016
Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)	
Date adopted in plenary	11-12 October 2016
Previous Committee opinions	<p>CdR 65/2011: The European eGovernment action plan 2011-2015</p> <p>CdR 5514/2014: Interoperability as a Means for Modernising the Public Sector</p> <p>CdR 4165/2014: Interconnected Europe – potential of the ICT sector as a source of growth</p> <p>CdR 5960/2013: European single market for electronic communications</p> <p>CdR 1673/2012: Unleashing the Potential of Cloud Computing in Europe</p> <p>CdR 625/2012: Data Protection Package</p> <p>CdR 104/2010: Digital agenda for Europe</p>
Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation	N/A