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**Communication from the commission on
The Role of eGovernment for Europe's Future**

Preliminary Impact Assessment

{COM(2003) 567 final}

Preliminary Impact Assessmentor Communication on eGovernment

Communication on eGovernment "The Role of eGovernment for Europe's Future" – lead: DG-INFSO – associated: DG-ENTR

1. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

Describe the problem that the policy/proposal is expected to tackle:

Europe's public sector faces new economic and social challenges and is to play a strong role in the Lisbon strategy. Public administrations are challenged to improve efficiency, productivity and the quality of services, with unchanged or even reduced budgets.

eGovernment is the use of information and communication technology in public administrations, combined with organisational change and new skills in order to improve public services and democratic processes and strengthen support to public policies. eGovernment is an important means to better cope with the challenges to public administrations.

However, for eGovernment to deliver its potential there are many barriers to overcome, such as organisational change, safeguarding trust and confidence in online interaction, realising widespread access to online public services, interoperability across organisational and national borders, development of pan-European services for mobility in the Internal Market and European Citizenship.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE PROPOSAL

What is the overall policy objective in terms of expected impacts?

This Communication signals the importance the Commission attaches to eGovernment, consistent with the important role of eGovernment in eEurope 2005. It analyses the current state of play and identifies key issues and barriers and proposes measures to accelerate the take up of eGovernment

It calls upon Member States for political commitment and leadership and cooperation at European level, with all actors in the private and public sector, to jointly address barriers, resulting in accelerated take-up of eGovernment. It presents a coherent set of actions that reinforce eGovernment work within the eEurope 2005 context, with increased synergies between the relevant EU programmes, in order to add value to the investment at national, regional and local level. It strengthens the Internal Market and European Citizenship by emphasising pan-European services.

3. POLICY OPTIONS

What policy options are available to reach the objective? What range of alternatives will be considered?

The Communication brings together in a coherent overview related actions most of which are already ongoing or were already planned. A few additional actions are proposed, mostly to reinforce cooperation at European level and increase synergies.

What is proposed here holds the middle ground between:

- No Communication at all. However, the consequence would be more fragmentation of solutions at Member State level, more duplication in spending, and less impact of activities at European level. Moreover, following the July eGovernment 2003 conference the Italian Presidency intends to arrive at Council Conclusions in November. The Commission's right of initiative is properly maintained by tabling first this Communication, which will form the reference for the Council Conclusions.

- Seeking consensus on a legal instrument to require certain eGovernment services and re-orientating some European eGovernment-related programmes. However, online provision of public services is generally the competence of the Member States. A more forceful alignment of programmes would jeopardise the benefits of diversity and innovation, and requires a cumbersome procedure that is neither realistic nor proportional.

How have the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality been taken into account?

All actions have been assessed for their compatibility with the principle of subsidiarity. They are also proportional taking into account the current state of play in eGovernment and the kind of action relative to the problem concerned.

4. IMPACTS – POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

On a preliminary basis, what are the likely positive and negative impacts of the selected options, particularly in terms of economic, social and environmental consequences? Who would be affected?

Citizens and businesses will get improved, more accessible, more cost-effective and user-friendly public services, and get them earlier. There will be savings by avoiding duplicate spending across Europe. Solutions will be identified that are better developed at European level - e.g. given cost sharing and evolution towards pan-European services.

5. FURTHER ANALYSIS

What further analysis is proposed?

Actions are included for a further analysis into benefits and the economics of eGovernment and synergies that can be achieved by increased cooperation.

Is a consultation planned? On what basis?

This Communication will be widely distributed with feedback through meetings with national eGovernment initiatives and the private sector. This would also include feedback in the context of the eEurope Action Plan (eEurope Steering Group).

6. FOLLOW-UP

Is a formal extended assessment recommended? Justification if not?

For this Communication no extended assessment is recommended. The reason is that it brings together in a coherent way existing and already planned actions with a limited number of new actions. These latter, while consistent with and reinforcing the actions already going on, do not have direct economic, social or environmental impacts, nor imply additional regulation, and are mainly exploratory and thus aim to open up perspectives for future work in eGovernment (such future work may then need to be looked at in terms of impact at the appropriate stage). Thus this Communication helps to maintain the momentum of work going on.