eGovernment & online public services

**Why invest in making public services available online?**

The Commission underlines ([Annual Growth Survey 2016](#)) that modern and efficient public administration is necessary to ensure fast and high-quality services for firms and citizens in the EU. The Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe[1] (DSM) identifies eGovernment as one of the key elements to maximise the growth potential of the digital economy and to achieve an inclusive digital Europe. Online public services are crucial to increasing the cost-efficiency, transparency and quality of the services provided to citizens and companies, in particular for SMEs.

The positive effects on administrative efficiency, transparency and quality of services are likely to have positive spill-over effects on the private sector’s competitiveness, and thus also have a positive impact on employment. These benefits will be there for national, regional and local levels.

**How to act?**

Regions wishing to invest in making public services available online should consider the following steps:

**Governance/stakeholder involvement:** Public regional and local authorities should engage with relevant stakeholders. These stakeholders may vary but could typically include:

- public sector authorities at national, regional and local level;
- private sector companies, both as users and developers;
- international organisations (e.g. OECD);
- standardisation bodies;
- non-governmental organisations (e.g. Transparency International).

**Priority setting:** Increasing customer centricity for public services will increase online take-up. Customer centric service design should start by gaining deep insights into the most relevant citizens segments for each specific region, for example for students in a region with several universities or for senior citizens in a region inhabited by a significant number of pensioners, and also prioritise service personalisation as much as possible. This can be done by governments at local, regional and national levels, deploying user data to offer individual and, where relevant, automatic services, as well as permitting users to adjust or design their own service portfolio through ‘MyPage’ type approaches.

High levels of accessibility and usability that reduce the number of steps so that the user can benefit from eGovernment services more automatically, especially through the reuse of user data via the ‘once-only’ principle is an important approach. Focus should be given on simplifying so called life event services which, from the users’ perspective, seamlessly combine online services from different government entities.

Conscious efforts should be made to save users’ time and, where appropriate, money. Much can also be achieved through offering simple user support, such as short ‘how to’ videos, online chat, links to additional information like ‘what to expect’ information and FAQs, and the possibility of instant feedback. The deployment of so called ‘big data’ is increasingly important, and local and regional authorities should also be aware of the potential of incorporating the users’ own data, crowd-sourced data, and relevant data from legitimate third parties. In the near future much of this data will be accessible in the cloud and available for use by many stakeholders, not just governments, to develop and co-create their own services.

Improved eGovernment services at local and city levels attract both greater use and increased trust, not least because of their greater relevance and closeness to daily life. Most current eGovernment services are the so-called basic services which enable governments to achieve their national statutory obligations, and most of these are already widely available to a high standard.

There is significant potential, already recognised in many localities, for a large number of ‘extended’ value adding services in areas like health, social care, education, employment, transport, environment, etc., which many users can benefit from quite frequently. Such ‘everyday’ services are often location-driven and may involve mobile devices. They can be tailored depending on where users are, who they are, and what they are doing. e-Signatures and e-invoicing can be important tools to support the functioning of eGovernment services and eCommerce, especially to overcome security concerns and lack of trust in digital transactions. Public administrations are encouraged to re-use building block Digital Service Infrastructures (DSIs) funded by the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). These DSIs are basic digital service infrastructures intended to be re-used in other digital services.

The combination of the above-mentioned factors provides a solid business case environment for the development and deployment of public services at local and regional level.

**Policy mix:** The development of a Digital Single Market is an important political priority. A well-functioning Digital Single Market requires cross-border digital public services, linking up the current systems that have been developed on a national level. EU-wide implementation of cross-border services is a central component of the eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020.

There are strong potential synergies between Structural and Investment Funds and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for modernising administrations at all levels. Member States should actively encourage their local and regional authorities to be fully and effectively involved in the deployment and promotion of cross-border digital service. ESIF can provide funding at regional and local level for the development of CEF-DSI enabled cross-border digital services that will be linked to the national and EU infrastructures.

**Further reading**

http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/egovernment