



eGovernment Policy Stakeholders Meeting

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Final report

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1 Executive summary

In the i2010 initiative, the European Commission announced that an eGovernment Action Plan at EU level will be prepared for approval in 2006. In order to ensure that as many qualified inputs and opinions as possible are considered in the preparation of this Action Plan, a public policy stakeholders meeting was held in Brussels on 21 September 2005.

Participants came from industry, public administration, civil society organisations and academia, as well as from several Directorate Generals of the European Commission. In all, 38 speakers made brief presentations, and the audience actively responded with many questions and comments. This report attempts to capture the main points and issues arising from these presentations and discussions, and also aims to highlight contrasting views and approaches.

The presentations and discussions were organised in four round tables, and summaries of the main issues are provided below. Full details of the many points made, some of which were contradictory, are provided in the main body of the report.

Efficient and effective eGovernment

The main issues to discuss here were what do efficient and effective eGovernment mean, how can we be sure that achievements are made in this area, and whether or not targets and objectives should be agreed for 2010. The main points discussed were:

- *Sharing competence and knowledge for change:* This should be achieved by sharing knowledge through networking, the establishment of competence centres, innovation labs, and good practice showrooms, and implementing pilots especially in support of SMEs. Some regions, Member States and sectors will be more advanced than others for certain services. This does not matter, but a balance needs to be established between leaders/innovators moving ahead, on the one hand, and joint collaboration and sharing, on the other.
- *Networks and ecosystems for service orientation and collaboration:* There is a clear shift in thinking from largely a process focus to a more networked approach. This includes an ecosystems perspective for ICT development, including collaboration through communities of practice, policy and research.
- *Interoperable business processes focussed on the user:* Several presenters underlined the need to link regional, national and EU levels through interoperability, common understanding and joint action plans. At present, regions often find it difficult to relate to national, let alone EU level agendas. For example, the Cobra recommendations sound fine, but how can they be implemented in practice at regional level in terms of involving users? Common agendas should include process interoperability and service-orientation, and this can be supported by providing a common process repository, for example, of the 20 benchmarked eEurope services.
- *Social dialogue, public value and EU policy:* This includes recognising the needs of all societal stakeholders, including civil servants, as part of the ecosystem approach. For many, the objectives of eGovernment remain unclear. Some discussants indeed suggested we should focus less on the 'e' in eGovernment and more on connected government and government modernisation, ensuring that public value and EU level policy remain the overall drivers.
- *Efficiencies:* Those identified include costs, productivity, sharing processes, data re-use, and people change (skills, behaviour, awareness, and leadership).
- *Effectiveness:* Those identified includes coherence, simplification, transparency, social dialogue, discourse, accountability, integration, multi-channel and 'push' services, as well as public value.

Inclusive eGovernment

The key points for discussion here included ensuring that no new exclusion results from eGovernment (avoiding the digital divide), and how to use eGovernment proactively to achieve more inclusion in any public policy. The main points discussed were:

- *Inclusive access platforms:* A clear message from the discussion was the critical importance for inclusion of easy, cheap, ubiquitous access. Technical solutions proposed included home platforms, digital TV, multi-media, multi-channel, and end-to-end security. In particular, mobile and mGovernment were stressed as this will reach 90% of the population. Above all, there is a need for service openness, utility, usability, fulfilment, 'holistic' content, and user control.

- *The role of the regions and localities:* There is a need to focus on the local and regional level, as it is here most eInclusion takes place and is tackled, for example through eCommunities. eInclusion changes depending on local conditions and contexts and on different socio-economic groups, so that the role of the Local Authority is vital. The i2010 Programme must have a local agenda, and the forthcoming CIP has an important role to play.
- *eInclusion through eDemocracy:* Many participants linked eInclusion directly to eParticipation and eDemocracy, and the need in this context for responsiveness, interactivity, connectivity, accountability, personalisation and a secure ID. Given that trust in government is decreasing, an engagement strategy is urgently needed. It is also important to incorporate universal human rights into the eGovernment agenda, for example through privacy provision and freedom of information.
- *The dynamic nature of eInclusion:* Another important aspect of eInclusion is to enable users to opt into or out of eGovernment, and exercise freedom of choice. This can best be done by keeping it simple and flexible, putting complexity elsewhere if necessary (e.g. in the back-office), and ensuring that users are not confronted with electronic 'concrete'. However, the next generation may change everything, including the meaning and importance of eInclusion, but this does not absolve us from tackling current problems.

High impact eGovernment services

The key issues concerning high impact eGovernment services are what makes the most difference for businesses and citizens, rather than for government. There were two main groups of presentations, first, working together and collaboration, and, second, specific initiatives, as well as issues which were common to both. The main points discussed were:

- *Working together and collaboration:* Most participants agreed with the contention that there are no killer applications, but that the recipe for high impact is, first and foremost, to share experiences and knowledge. Focus should therefore be on transferability, open standards, regulatory interoperability, partnerships and shared services, and particularly on the development of integrated and holistic strategies, but with regional specificity.
- *Specific initiatives:* An important route to high impact is to look at patterns of success in the commercial sector, for example peer-to-peer computing. Other potentially important services include large-scale wireless eGovernment applications, cross border disaster management which is already providing real high impact examples, and large-scale eParticipation which also promises high impact although progress is as yet patchy and not always impressive.
- *High impact in context:* We also need to recognise, however, that there are different impacts for different people, places, demands and needs, and that local networks can provide high impact 'basic' services. One important way forward is to make services more attractive and to deliver 'public value', although this also means we have to be much better than we are at present in understanding what this means. One main bottleneck to high impact was also mentioned, i.e. the lack of process transformation, which could open the way to ambient government services.

Key enablers for eGovernment

Main points for consideration in terms of key enablers included what is needed in order to achieve the 2010 objectives and visions, and what is needed to make eGovernment a widespread success. The main points discussed were:

- *Identity and authentication:* There was clear consensus that eID is a critical enabler, especially which can be used across Europe, so federated identity solutions are probably required together with the infrastructures and frameworks which support this. There is also a need to balance identity with privacy, and to perhaps replace it with authentication for a particular purpose. One ID token per person across Europe is important, but simplicity for users and in operation is even more so.
- *Making openness work:* Similarly, open web standards, open standards, open source software (OSS) and IPR, all of which are of interrelated and which underpin eGovernment progress, are seen as important enablers. We must avoid confusion between open standards as specifications and open source software (OSS) as implementations, and ensure that we create technology which is independent of a particular implementation. Open standards are, indeed, the way forward for voluntary, industry-led technical standards. Questions raised here include, should the results of EC-supported eGovernment research be open to all or used by participants for commercial exploitation? And, is IPR the basis for innovation or a barrier to it, and how can we ensure the former? Answers to these questions, as well as clear but fair resolutions of the issues they raise, could have a strong impact on local entrepreneurship and the local ownership of solutions.
- *Architectures, organisational change and user needs:* Other important issues include the need for trans-institutional architectures and seamless cooperation. Organisational inertia was seen by many as

the biggest barrier, and especially change resistance by civil servants. Above all, users want fast, fair, reliable and free services, and are also concerned to protect their privacy, but also want to see government opened up (i.e. become less private).

As an experimental approach to gathering wildly diverse views and suggestions, the stakeholders meeting was highly successful. However, the intention of the meeting was not to provide unambiguous outcomes or conclusions, but rather to stimulate and tap into the wide debate across Europe about how eGovernment can support government, at every level, perform better, as well as to contribute to longer term policy goals.

This explains why an unapologetic diversity of views and approaches is strongly apparent in this report, although it is the case that much consensus is also apparent, at least around the importance and contents of the major issues involved. All these deserve some emphasis and further consideration in the EU's policy building and implementation processes. These major issues are summarised in the sub-sections of each of the roundtable reports, but it is also clear that, as quite a few stakeholders commented, there are no magic bullets, no hard conclusions, but a cornucopia of good ideas.

It is clear, of course, that the final eGovernment Action Plan will need to prioritise and focus. This will leave some interests satisfied and some less so. However, the value of the present workshop is that at least we are more fully aware of the range of views, needs and interests, so that decisions can be taken openly and transparently, thereby making their implications and impacts much more easily accessible and assessable.

It should be pointed out that the views and opinions expressed in this report are those made by contributors to the stakeholders meeting, and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of the European Commission or its agents.

This report has been prepared by Jeremy Millard, Danish Technological Institute.

2 Introduction

In the i2010 initiative, the European Commission announced that an eGovernment Action Plan at EU level will be prepared for approval in 2006. In order to ensure that as many qualified inputs and opinions as possible are considered in the preparation of this Action Plan, a public policy stakeholders meeting was held in Brussels on 21 September 2005.

The meeting was introduced by Paul Timmers, Head of the eGovernment Unit in the European Commission, who outlined the state of play of eGovernment policy, including the Cobra recommendations from September 2004. He also reported on discussions held with leaders and representatives of national eGovernment initiatives in the eGovernment subgroup. It was explained that the outcome of the meeting would feed back into the eGovernment subgroup, and would assist in fine-tuning discussions about the Action Plan and contribute to assessing the impact of new policy.

Interested parties were then invited to make brief presentations of their priorities for future eGovernment policy organised in four roundtables:

1. Efficient and effective eGovernment
2. Inclusive eGovernment
3. High impact eGovernment services for citizens and businesses
4. Key enablers for widespread eGovernment service take-up

Participants in the stakeholders meeting came from industry, public administration, civil society organisations and academia, as well as from several Directorate Generals of the European Commission. In all, 38 speakers made brief presentations, and the audience actively responded with many questions and comments. This report attempts to capture the main points and issues arising from these presentations and discussions, and also aims to highlight contrasting views and approaches.

After this introduction, a synopsis is provided for each of the four roundtables, including a short summary of the main issues arising. A final section provides concluding comments and places the workshop within its context. Annexes follow containing the agenda and list of participants, as well as web-site links where the presentations and related documents are available.

3 Efficient and effective eGovernment

The Roundtable Chair introduced the key issues relating to efficient and effective eGovernment suggested for discussion. Efficiency is about time- and cost-savings for citizens, businesses, as well as inside the administrations themselves. Effectiveness is concerned with offering the public services that users actually need and making these more usable and meaningful. This includes focusing on reducing the administrative burden for users, saving time and money, increasing transparency (including anti-corruption), lowering internal administrative costs, improving service quality, and achieving higher user satisfaction.

In this context some of the questions to be asked include whether it is possible to measure efficiency and effectiveness, and, if so, which measurable objectives for 2010 should be agreed. In addition, it is necessary to consider whether EU-wide comparisons should be made, and whether or not it is possible to transfer success. Finally, how can research and innovation contribute, and which government transformation objectives should we aim for.

The main points from the presentations and ensuing discussion are summarised in the following.

3.1 Sharing competence and knowledge for change

One of the main features of successful eGovernment is the connectivity it provides, based on distributed computing and the development of appropriate technologies, semantics, organisational responses and robust platforms for interoperability. One of the biggest challenges at the European level is cross-border services, and even less understood are the organisational aspects of this, especially in terms of legal environments and institutional and working cultures. Civil servants are a particular challenge in this context, and concentrated effort is needed to ensure their legitimate interests are included and to avoid un-informed resistance to beneficial changes. Many of these problems can be tackled by setting up networks of competence centres distributed over regions and countries, for example incorporating showrooms of good practice, test-beds for experimentation and implementation, and support mechanisms for SMEs. Such networks must link in and serve all stakeholders, and, for example, include public-private-civil partnerships, as well as the strong involvement of academia.

Perhaps the term 'eGovernment' is not the most appropriate. Better could be 'connected government' or 'modernisation'. The public administration must re-organise itself and needs to foster internal change and innovation, especially when confronted with the need to do 'more for less'. This will include sharing of competencies and data across different agencies, but also sharing between the public and private sectors given that the latter, in certain fields, is more advanced. Cooperation to develop one-stop-shops using the private sector as an intermediary for public sector services is a successful example, as in Italy where car registration and driving licence services are delivered through local car dealer networks. The consequence is that people (whether inside or outside the administration) have to change by acquiring new skills (for example through eLearning), adapting their behaviours at work and as users of services, and using collaborative tools. Clear targets, objectives and measurements are also necessary.

The mobilisation of eGovernment partnerships is essential, not just at EU and national levels but also between regions. Action is needed to build a common understanding of the main eGovernment challenges across Europe and to build a discourse framework which includes benchmarking and testing. If this is not done, the risks are high that eGovernment will wither into inter-sectoral strife in which each agency and interest only strives to maximise its own efficiency, whilst larger scale effectiveness is forgotten. A judicious balance is needed between, on the one hand, enabling eGovernment innovators and leaders to move decisively forward, and, on the other, large scale collaboration in order to share the benefits, for example through competence centres, innovation laboratories, and cooperation frameworks.

3.2 Networks and ecosystems for service-orientation and collaboration

In the private sector, and especially in ICT industry, over the last ten years, a service-orientated approach has been successfully implemented and has delivered clear efficiency and effectiveness outcomes, also in reaching out to customers, whether businesses or citizens. This has largely been built up across a heterogeneous and networked-based environment, and has been strongly facilitated by the successful cooperation between communities of practice, research and policy, linking cross-organisational groups, mixing technology and organisational needs and aligning processes to end-user needs. The key component of success here has been active stewardship of an open ICT ecosystem, accessible to all legitimate

stakeholders and highly flexible. Efficiency and effectiveness mean good relations between different stakeholders, embedded within open ecosystems for collaboration.

There is a clear shift in thinking from largely a process focus to a more networked approach, based on service-orientated architectures and networks, open source and interaction between governments, businesses and citizens. However, the necessary shift in thinking by the administrations is incomplete, and its impacts on government processes, organisation, and relationships with users remind us that much remains to be done. The main challenges are the development of appropriate standards, process design, information architectures, change management, and how to tackle the awareness and skills problems of civil servants. Successful eGovernment services, particularly at the regional and local levels, imply massive networking, huge complexity, large scale sharing to build common understandings, and taking responsibility for self improvement. Practical guidelines for eGovernment at local level are still largely lacking. We should put the eGovernment hype behind us and start talking about government modernisation.

Efficiencies can be seen through cost reductions and productivity increases, whilst effectiveness, for example, comes from better service integration. ICT enables new types of services to be offered, for example, push systems which automatically grant rights to citizens who need a refund of medical expenses, child benefits, or a free transport pass. Thus, effectiveness for the citizen, rather than only for the administration, is key.

3.3 Interoperable business processes focused on the user

Building eGovernment systems is not only a technical issue but is today very much dependent on a change of paradigm which focuses on process interoperability as the backbone of eGovernment architecture and knowledge. This highlights the importance of collecting best business practices (such as the Nordic eTax systems) so as not to re-invent the wheel. A common process repository is required, such as for the twenty eGovernment services benchmarked as part of the eEurope 2005 Action Plan, but which does not consist only of software but also enables knowledge to be shared between administrations and across countries.

Many local stakeholders are successfully developing regional eGovernment action plans, but find it difficult to link these into, or see the relevance of, national and EU level initiatives. The main challenge of interoperability is not purely technological but much more in terms of organisation, leadership and culture. Thus, although the appropriateness and logic of recommendations like Cobra are clear, it is difficult for sub-national actors to know how to respond. For example, when focusing on user-centric systems, precisely how can users be involved? Support is needed, for instance through semantic interoperability, when developing pilot projects at regional level. How can regional eGovernment budgets be sensibly spent without only focusing on technology development?

Thus, there is a need to see processes also in relation to people and delivering services to them. Standards are very important, and although these are quite well developed at the front end they are largely lacking at the back. In the latter context, Europe needs to look to North American research regarding ontology development. Therefore, both back-office efficiencies are required but also better front-office coherence. For example, by letting citizens know precisely what administrations are doing for them. As eGovernment becomes simpler and more transparent, so users can see precisely what is happening to them, where they are and where they can expect to be in the future. In focusing on these and similar goals it is not sufficient only to think of 2010 as an end date, but also of detailed road-maps showing how to get there.

3.4 Social dialogue, public value and EU policy

The debate seems to have forgotten the critical effectiveness issues of accountability and social dialogue. This is not just in relation to the role of the state, but a much broader approach is needed across DGs within the European Commission, and which involves civil servants, as in the Scandinavian model. Without such a dimension, which is not driven only by ICT industry but includes all the social partners, eGovernment may remain a powerful tool, but its real objective and impact will become obscure. Efficiency alone will become paramount, but for unknown or dubious purpose. Thus, we must re-focus on public value, and what this means and how eGovernment can support it. Part of this agenda involves democratic values and participation, including social dialogue at every level.

Indeed, for many the objectives of eGovernment remain unclear. Many politicians do not understand what is going on, so this group must be a prime target for awareness building. MEPs tend to be better informed than most parliamentarians, but the gap between such knowledge and interest and the ignorance of the majority seems to be growing. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, so this is likely to present great difficulties

in the future. Thus, training, not just of ordinary civil servants, but also of politicians and decision-makers is vital. The need for political will and political champions is as pressing as ever.

Technical solutions are important, but also effective policies should be agreed and implemented. For example, the EU should encourage all public services in all Member States to be offered 100% electronically, and through multiple channels where appropriate. The EU should ensure that full descriptions of all public administration processes, at all levels including the EU, are made available on the Internet where these concern the citizen, such as for social welfare, health, etc. Other important initiatives are needed at EU level, such as pan-European identity and authentication, the re-use of administrative and user data also across borders, and a multi-channel approach.

3.5 Summary of the main issues

Many of the issues raised focused on the need to change by sharing knowledge through networking, the establishment of competence centres, innovation labs, and good practice showrooms, and implementing pilots especially in support of SMEs. An ecosystems approach should be used for ICT development and for collaboration through communities of practice, policy and research. Social dialogue and recognising the needs of all societal stakeholders, including, civil servants should be part of this ecosystem approach. For many, the objectives of eGovernment remain unclear. Some discussants indeed suggested we should focus less on the 'e' in eGovernment and more on connected government and government modernisation, ensuring that public value and EU level policy remain the overall drivers.

Several presenters underlined the need to link regional, national and EU levels through interoperability, common understanding and joint action plans. At present, regions often find it difficult to relate to national, let alone EU level agendas. For example, the Cobra recommendations sound fine, but how can they be implemented in practice at regional level in terms of involving users? Common agendas should include process interoperability and service-orientation, and this can be supported by providing a common process repository, for example, of the 20 benchmarked eEurope services. Some regions, Member States and sectors will be more advanced than others for certain services. This does not matter, but a balance needs to be established between leaders/innovators moving ahead, on the one hand, and joint collaboration and sharing, on the other.

Efficiencies identified include costs, productivity, sharing processes, data re-use, and people change (skills, behaviour, awareness, and leadership). Effectiveness identified includes coherence, simplification, transparency, social dialogue, discourse, accountability, integration, multi-channel and 'push' services, as well as public value.

4 Inclusive eGovernment

The Roundtable Chair introduced the two main key issues relating to inclusive eGovernment as, firstly, ensuring that no new exclusion results from eGovernment (so fighting the digital divide is important), and, secondly, how to use eGovernment pro-actively to achieve more inclusion in any public policy.

Questions arising include what is needed which is not being done today, and how inclusive is eGovernment so far. In this context, it is also important to relate the discussion to the EU 2010 objectives (especially Lisbon), for example through simplified and 'easier' government. Also, what joint actions for inclusion strategies, and what technologies should be developed, need to be discussed. Finally, how does eInclusion relate to eParticipation and democratic involvement.

The main points from the presentations and ensuing discussion are summarised in the following.

4.1 Inclusive access platforms

One of the most important digital divides is a technology divide, which requires a policy of eAdoption, i.e. the take-up of ICTs by firms, public bodies and citizens. Such policies, especially in the context of Lisbon, must seek to ensure that the tools of the Information Society are widely available to all sectors of society irrespective of their location, age, gender, employment status, ethnicity or physical abilities.

Whilst the situation is improving quite quickly with the extension of terrestrial broadband coverage, industry experts estimate that as many as 20 million European households are likely still to be without broadband

access by 2012, unless appropriate public intervention policies are initiated. Even where broadband is available, take-up is still very low at about 8% for Europe as a whole. Clearly, more needs to be done here as broadband is a key enabler.

Apart from broadband, several technology access platforms were highlighted as deserving specific attention. First, multi-media home platforms using, for example, digital TV which could be rolled out relatively cheaply through a public procurement process. The aim should be both easy and cheap access for all to eGovernment services, as well as to dynamise local economies. Many countries have already taken this route, including Italy, Belgium, Finland, and Korea. Second, mobile will become ever more important for delivering government services in the future. mGovernment is becoming a necessity, otherwise there is a risk of neglecting 90% of the population. The European Commission should recognise and support such initiatives in Europe, especially by helping to address DRM (Digital Rights Management), and the need for end-to-end security.

Critical technical issues for inclusion include unified access standardisation, for example through automatic routing of requests to the right place or person in the administration, the technical integration of back offices, and for secure electronic access so the user only has to identify her/himself once and is able to keep control of the information given to the administration. Each of these is difficult to achieve in practice because of political and organisational barriers, so EU-level support is necessary as the problems and solution are very similar across Europe.

A non-technological access platform to counter exclusion, which however depends on the technology, is the role of human intermediaries. These work, for example, from small citizen offices located in the more deprived areas of Berlin, and use digital suitcases to visit old people's homes, hospitals and the like. Beneficial mixing of technical, human and other channels is being increasingly used to target groups with special needs.

4.2 The role of the regions and localities

A vision is needed which helps to re-shape social interaction using well developed eGovernment services at local and regional level. There are important differences between the old and new Member States, for example in terms of democracy and access. It is imperative that regional administrations in all Member States understand the economics of eGovernment, including return-on-investment and public value.

There are significant barriers to eGovernment, especially in the regions of the new Member States, because of lack of cooperation between politicians, civil servants, scientists, ICT R&D, etc. Regional governments need to develop closer links between the research community and public administrations. There is also a general lack of measurement tools at regional level, for example measuring competitiveness and growth, i.e. qualitative public value impacts. Overcoming these barriers will involve shifting our conceptual frameworks from eGovernment to eGovernance, by using multi-disciplinary analyses and by promoting eParticipation in FP7.

Territorial digital divides are some of the most marked across Europe, and especially in the new Member States, but eGovernment at local level can help redress this challenge. Solutions, of course, also depend upon serious and deep re-engineering of the whole architecture of the public administrations (the complete workflow), with a focus on citizens' needs and based on the most advanced models of eDemocracy and eParticipation. There is a big need for such models which can clearly demonstrate their effectiveness.

Most eGovernment is developed and used at local level, but technology is not the critical issue, although it is the critical enabler for delivering useful services and value to citizens and businesses. However, regions suffer even more compared to the national level from lack of commitment and cooperation, lack of skills, lack of funding, and the lack of appropriate legal frameworks. The local level also represents the main arena for tackling inclusion. Given the importance of highly diverse needs, contexts, and opportunities, the local level is where socio-economic exclusion and the digital divide is most readily recognised and best tackled. It is therefore important to develop a local agenda for i2010 which incorporates eInclusion plans at local level.

Given that the types of eInclusion, and the approaches used in tackling it, vary tremendously between localities, the role of the Local Authority becomes critical. Focus and support for action must therefore be at this level, without neglecting the importance of synergies and the development of common approaches where appropriate across Europe. The planned EU Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) will focus attention and activity directly on local and regional levels, and includes policies for ICT and eGovernment. CIP thus deserves Member State support as it is the programme which can help deliver most of the eGovernment initiatives supported by the EU.

4.3 eInclusion through eDemocracy

Many aspects of eInclusion are encapsulated in the eDemocracy and eParticipation debate, as there can be no genuine eDemocracy without eInclusion. This is also dependent on appropriate skills, both of users and civil servants, and more broadly on educational and socio-economic barriers to inclusion and eInclusion. In the knowledge-based society, the digital divide becomes a growing threat for many social groups. As described above many of these issues are most critical at the local and regional levels, as it is here that eCommunities, built around eParticipation, grow and flourish. Despite the ability of ICT to ignore geographic distance, eCommunities are still primarily local in nature, and much of this arises from interactions between the citizen, civil organisations and local authorities.

eDemocracy refers to the use of ICT to underpin and strengthen democratic systems and processes. It ranges from the most formal aspects of electoral systems (eVoting) to less formal participation in the democratic process (access to information, communications with elected representatives and consultation, influencing decision making, and direct involvement in decision making). Moreover, ICT is increasingly seen as a useful means to improve the accountability and transparency of political systems, with the potential to improve consensus-based decision making and to build increased trust and confidence in political processes.

Open, participative and democratic government requires education and a focus on information literacy through inter-disciplinary cooperation with the goal of increasing the trust of citizens in government and eGovernment. It is built around connectivity, interactivity and responsivity, where a secure ID can become the whole basis of eDemocracy. Trust in government has been markedly decreasing across Europe recently, and part of the response to this must be to focus on universal human rights in the Information Society, with strong privacy aspects and with an important role for freedom of information.

4.4 The dynamic nature of eInclusion

Sustainable and inclusive eGovernment systems require flexibility, utility and usability, and because the technology is always changing this can only be achieved through semantic interoperability. Flexibility and simplicity are all-important concepts for eGovernment. We must avoid adding electronic concrete to existing services, and this requires the development of flexible architectures. Simplicity is achieved through a focus on content, rather than usage, but this must be content that everybody can use. However, making it simple for users, which is the main goal together with openness, could increase complexity elsewhere, for example in the context of re-organisation, business process re-engineering, the involvement of multiple stakeholders, and new technology.

Choice is becoming a key concept in eGovernment provision, especially the ability to be able to opt into or out of using a service, and to enable the user to stay in control. We often think only in terms of eGovernment users and non-users, but the world is not bi-polar like this, so there is a danger in designating as users those who have no choice. A third user category should therefore be recognised, i.e. those who have opted out..

Current eGovernment systems are not always being used through choice. People want holistic information, as well as services and approaches which capture their imaginations through a vision of a networked and knowledge society. Current policies do not provide a sufficient role for the market, nor for the open standards, full interoperability and multi-vendor solutions required, for example in eProcurement, to increase freedom of choice for users. However, there is too much focus on interoperability, and, although this is important, there is also a need in future to focus much more on what information is required and how it can be supplied. There is a need to shift emphasis from form to content through greater efforts on data ontologies and policies. A lot of good work is being done on this front in the US, from which we can learn, but also, for example, in Iceland and Estonia.

An engagement strategy with users is required, so that Europe's highly mixed and diverse populations, as well as the highly different contexts within which government services are used, are all taken into account. There are, however, also risks of over-specificity and over-analysis, especially as things are changing so rapidly that we are in danger of chasing our tails. There is also a danger of over regulation creating a new barrier, for example in eProcurement. We need to measure progress on eGovernment but not on compliance.

Sustainable political commitment and awareness is needed at different levels, and this is best done through vision-building which takes account of different cultures, histories and legal backgrounds. Our understanding

of eInclusion itself is also subject to different definitions and contexts. This could make it difficult to recognise a common European vision, but we can do this by fostering coherent and consistent understanding across borders. A forum is needed to discuss the political implications of eGovernment, for example what do we really mean by inclusion, efficiency and effectiveness, and are there trade-offs between them?

The up-coming generation may change all this. Many youth today have grown up with computers and the Internet, so their attitudes to the use of what the older generation terms 'new technology', as well as to eServices generally, already appear to be completely different. It is possible to envisage that within 10 to 20 years, when the youth of today become responsible citizens and workers, concepts of eGovernment and eInclusion will change dramatically if not disappear altogether. The technology will probably also have changed out of all recognition. However, this does not absolve us from tackling current issues and problems, but simply warns us against adopting a Micawber-like solution to these problems by doing nothing on the assumption "that something good will turn up".

4.5 Summary of the main issues

A clear message from the discussion was the critical importance for eInclusion of easy, cheap, ubiquitous access. Technical solutions proposed included home platforms, digital TV, multi-media, multi-channel, and end-to-end security. In particular, mobile and mGovernment were stressed as this will reach 90% of the population. Above all, there is a need for service openness, utility, usability, fulfilment, 'holistic' content, and user control.

Another important issue is the need to focus on the local and regional level, as it is here most eInclusion takes place and is tackled, for example through eCommunities. eInclusion changes depending on local conditions and contexts and on different socio-economic groups, so that the role of the Local Authority is vital. The i2010 Programme must have a local agenda, and the forthcoming CIP has an important role to play.

Many participants linked eInclusion directly to eParticipation and eDemocracy, and the need in this context for responsivity, interactivity, connectivity, accountability, personalisation and a secure ID. Given that trust in government is decreasing, an engagement strategy is urgently needed. It is also important to incorporate universal human rights into the eGovernment agenda, for example through privacy provision and freedom of information.

Another important aspect of eInclusion is to enable users to opt into or out of eGovernment, and exercise freedom of choice. This can best be done by keeping it simple and flexible, putting complexity elsewhere if necessary (e.g. in the back-office), and ensuring that users are not confronted with electronic 'concrete'. However, the next generation may change everything, including the meaning and importance of eInclusion, but this does not absolve us from tackling current problems.

5 High impact eGovernment services

The Roundtable Chair introduced the key issue surrounding high impact eGovernment services as what makes the most difference for businesses and citizens, rather than for government. How can we recognise and put in place such potentially high impact services, and how can we mobilise top-level commitment to this end. For businesses, eProcurement has already been recognised as a high impact service, but it is more difficult doing the same for citizens.

There were two main groups of presentations, first, working together and collaboration, and, second, specific initiatives. The main points from each group's presentations and ensuing discussion are summarised in the following, together with some issues which were common to both.

5.1 Working together and collaboration

Across Europe eGovernment research funding is highly fragmented. A great deal is taking place but it is difficult to discover what or where. There is thus a danger of re-inventing the wheel, and of different parts of Europe and different sectors unnecessarily creating their own path dependencies, with consequent lose-lose scenarios for all stakeholders. An urgent need therefore exists to exchange knowledge about what is going on. The recipe for high impact is, first and foremost, to share experience, but this is not only good experiences, as lessons arising from mistakes or 'bad' practices can often be much more powerful.

There is no general model for high impact which can be used in every context, but the rich exchange of experiences and multi-level and cross-border collaboration can reveal what can be shared, transferred or learnt. This should be supported by open standards and a multi-dimensional approach to eGovernment, and by developing tools and models which can assist in ensuring that laws and regulations can be interoperable. The EIF (European Interoperability Framework) is a good example of such a worthwhile tool, and this now needs to be extended to encompass organisational, legal and process interoperability, shared services and partnerships, and to support the creation of single standards and competencies.

High impact services have, by definition, high take-up, and this is promoted by a multi-channel approach, and publicity campaigns focusing on awareness raising and inclusivity. These should also be linked to initiatives in eParticipation and eDemocracy, and fed into the good practice framework in order to enhance sharing, not just between countries and administrations but also across sectors.

High impact is also supported by suitable policies which take a holistic, strategic and integrated approach, whilst, at the same time, take account of regional specificity and promote the vision of the eAdministration. Expected outcomes need to be clearly spelt out, such as reducing physical presence in the administration offices and internal cost savings. The European Commission should pressure regions to adopt eGovernment strategies, and, as part of this, promote public-private-partnerships. At national level, telecom infrastructures are key, based on modern technology at low cost. The main barriers to achieving such policies appear to be the lack of properly functioning administration systems, the lack of knowledge and the lack of adequate technology. Risks are also apparent, including increasing digital divides and the alienation of civil servants.

Policies are also needed for the future development of eGovernment to ensure high impact, and three stand out. First, models for global eGovernment transformation which assist Member States implement eGovernment, for example focusing on the links between different levels and jurisdictions. The European Commission should support such development models and help design blueprints for eGovernment transformation. Second, the move to shared services, i.e. the sharing of non-core services, such as human resource management, together with good practices and advice about implementation. Third, a focus on inclusion and user needs, i.e. a citizen-centric approach. eGovernment can increase access to and the availability of government services, and much has indeed been accomplished, but many user segments still lag behind, so there is a need to specifically build in user requirements strategies from the outset.

5.2 Specific initiatives

Many of the most successful high impact services in the last five years have been developed in Estonia, for example Kazaa and eDonkey as genuine decentralised peer-to-peer sharing of software, especially music, and used by 55 million people every day, as well as Skype. Another example is mobile bank payments. eGovernment must learn from these examples, and recognise and respond to fast changing technical developments. These also include free mobile messaging services based on WiFi and now operating over 30 km. This could provide many eGovernment services in real time free of charge. By 2010, everything will be mobile, free, voice activated and using standard open source software. Making eGovernment services as attractive and as high impact as possible, means exploiting the potential of both these peer-to-peer computing and large scale wireless applications.

Local networks and cross-border initiatives are also, as yet largely, untapped high impact strategies. Focus here should include the regional level, despite the differences of languages, cultures, and legal systems. Successful pilot projects in cross-border disaster management and disaster response, for example, already exist, and others, including cross border invoicing and cross-border intelligent transport, are underway. The i2010 Programme should help connect these cross-border regions together.

Large-scale eParticipation, as part of an engagement strategy to encourage eGovernment service take up and trust in government generally, has a huge potential to deliver profound impacts. The European Commission can clearly act at European level here, as well as encourage Member States and regions to do the same within their own jurisdictions. The oft forgotten key to such an approach is first and foremost through political representatives and decision-makers, and (as noted above) progress here is highly variable but overall not impressive.

5.3 High impact in context

High impact should be about identifying what is the most important eService or facility that can make the most difference to citizens or businesses. However, it is clear that this can vary enormously for different users, different user contexts, and different places. There are no killer applications.

The Cobra recommendations are potentially a huge step forward, but there are also large barriers. The budgets available are too tight, there is a language problem with not enough in local languages, and we need services which deliver real public value, but we do not yet understand what this means. We are still struggling to understand what it means to re-engineer public administrations, especially at the local and regional levels. But we can also recognise key factors for success, such as sustainable local networks, without which nothing much can happen. This also implies the involvement of the private and civil sectors and especially SMEs and other small civil organisations. Such local networks can best provide 'basic' services, for example through local technical and competence centres, often with a large amount of sharing between adjacent or similar areas in order to mitigate the low levels of finance and expertise available.

The biggest barrier to high impact is Europe's dismal progress in process transformation. Government processes have hardly changed since the early 20th Century. What is needed is a secure and seamless infrastructure across the whole of Europe in order to create 'ambient' governance. Benefits can only come by doing things differently, and making the public sector proactive so as to anticipate the needs of citizens and businesses, whilst still insisting that the user first gives permission.

5.4 Summary of the main issues

Most participants agreed with the contention that there are no killer applications, but that the recipe for high impact is, first and foremost, to share experiences and knowledge. Focus should therefore be on transferability, open standards, regulatory interoperability, partnerships and shared services, and particularly on the development of integrated and holistic strategies, but with regional specificity.

An important route to high impact is to look at patterns of success in the commercial sector, for example peer-to-peer computing. Other potentially important services include large-scale wireless eGovernment applications, cross border disaster management which is already providing real high impact examples, and large-scale eParticipation which also promises high impact although progress is as yet patchy and not always impressive.

We also need to recognise, however, that there are different impacts for different people, places, demands and needs, and that local networks can provide high impact 'basic' services. One important way forward is to make services more attractive and to deliver 'public value', although this also means we have to be much better than we are at present in understanding what this means. One main bottleneck to high impact was also mentioned, i.e. the lack of process transformation, which could open the way to ambient government services.

6 Key enablers for eGovernment

The Roundtable Chair introduced the key issues surrounding key enablers in eGovernment in relation to what is needed in order to achieve the 2010 objectives and visions. What should be put in place in order to make eGovernment a widespread success, and to prepare for the next generation of modernisation, through innovation and transformation.

Some possibilities to consider could be eID, security, open standards, semantic interoperability, sharing of good practices and resources, and skills. A particular question to address is what are 2010 objectives that are feasible, realistic, yet sufficiently ambitious?

The main points from the presentations and ensuing discussion are summarised in the following.

6.1 Identity and authentication

eGovernment across Europe cannot take place without establishing a federated identity framework, also in collaboration with the private sector. The current cost of managing identities in Europe is already high and with the explosive growth of web services this will increase astronomically. We will be able to make huge

savings if each of us only has one identity to manage. The mechanism itself for doing this is not critical, but the information that comes back to the user must be standardised across Europe and such data must be reusable. We have to agree on a model to do this, but this must start with a high level policy decision.

Interoperable eidentity is thus a key enabler for eGovernment, but this needs to be balanced with privacy protection. Many people do not use eGovernment or eBanking because they feel it is too risky. Once personal data exist, it is difficult to control their movement or to delete them. The replication and theft of data is technically very easy to do. Thus, a strong research effort is needed here, for example into the concept of the 'zero knowledge protocol', in which you only need to prove to another party that you have useful data or know something, but without revealing what it is. Perhaps we should also move away from the concept of 'identity' itself, which for some people in some situations has negative connotations, and move towards the notion of the 'authentication' of a particular person when accessing a particular service. Barriers to progress include existing infrastructures and systems, and there is also tension with businesses which need to make a profit.

Trust is also a key enabler linked to, but not the same as, identity. One way forward is to focus on object identification (whether people, legal entities, documents, etc.), and ensure, for example, the mutual recognition of documents.

Progress, overall, is painfully slow. We are still far away from achieving what we anticipated just five years ago, for example with PKI. Many digital signatures are being rolled out, but most are in very closed environments like eBanking. eID is essential, but Europe seems to have lost the plot. We may have solved many problems nationally, although many holes remain here, but we have not yet begun to grapple with the European dimension where the real benefits will accrue.

However, we must also ask what kind of identity management users want. All systems have pros and cons, but the choice should be with the citizen. Is this compatible with the need for a single federated system? We should also put eidentity into perspective, especially during the current debates on security and terrorism. eID will not, of itself, reduce terrorism, but it will make life a lot easier for many people, especially if we can solve the problem that each service typically requires a different level of authentication.

A clear goal for 2010 should be a single ID token for each person for use across the whole of Europe, which covers all interaction with both government and commerce, and includes privacy protection and anonymity where justified. But simplicity is even more important, and if simplicity requires more than one ID token, simplicity should come first.

6.2 Making openness work

Open web standards are essential enablers. As yet, there is no definition of open standards in the ICT domain, so this needs urgent attention, especially as there is still a great deal of fragmentation. Everybody is now using XML, so this is no longer an issue, but new developments like 'Xform' and 'XML signatures' are looming and need to be incorporated. eGovernment can, in fact, be a driver and help leverage these developments and thereby help to create appropriate standards. Moreover, we must ask what is the future of the digital format we are creating today, and will we still be able to use it in future. For example, will today's storage formats still be usable in ten years time? There are already worrying examples where documents stored ten years ago on four-inch-floppies cannot now be accessed by any extant system. These are highly important issues and key enablers (or disablers) for successful eGovernment.

We must avoid confusion between open standards and open source software (OSS). The former are specifications and the latter are implementations, and it is important to ensure that we create technology which is independent of a particular implementation. Open standards are, indeed, the way forward for voluntary, industry-led technical standards.

The issue of the IPR of EC-supported research results is crucial. Should such results be available for commercial exploitation only by those involved in the research, or should they be made freely available for all? A decision on this could impact the terms of industry involvement in research, but also the widespread diffusion of innovations. The critical question is does IPR support innovation or constitute a barrier to progress? OSS, by definition, must be royalty-free, but will this stifle innovation and destroy the basis for exploitable business models?

The role of OSS is thus an important part of the debate, especially given the need for new business models. Because the overall issues are not clear cut, and different interests are involved, the European Commission needs to provide some leadership in order to help remove the barriers and accelerate demand. If used

wisely, OSS can help create new entrepreneurship across Europe, especially on the supply side and amongst SMEs at local level. Coupled with small scale support funds, such SMEs can be helped to jump the chasm between pilots and commercial exploitation. Although legislation can sometimes itself become a barrier, it is needed here in order to define open standards and OSS.

Another key enabler (the 'silver bullet') is local ownership of solutions. An important input to this could be the unpicking of successful EC-supported RTD projects in order to identify re-usable components, architectures, management solutions, and similar. A repository or databank should be provided for all to tailor to their own requirements.

6.3 Architectures, organisational change and user needs

The key enabler is building trans-institutional architectures and reducing redundancy in eGovernment through seamless cooperation and developing wide scale application and process integration. This would also have the added benefit of much greater transparency, both within government, and especially for decision-makers, but also for users. Such architectures must be built from a multi-disciplinary perspective, i.e. technical, legal, social, organisational, cultural. etc., and we need to avoid establishing new non-sustainable legacy systems. We are behind the US in this field, for example in ubiquitous intelligence, and US dominance could be a barrier for Europe.

eGovernment is not about the technology but about organisational change which puts the technology to good use. Accepting this, implies three shifts in thinking. First, moving from an ICT focus to a business focus and thus to issues like security, health, care, etc. Second, civil servant resistance and understanding that only "a wet baby likes a nappy change", imply careful change management and an examination of both good and bad practice. Third, we need more governance from the EU on eGovernment as part of a broader international perspective.

We must also focus on what citizens really want or need, and to recognise that there can be a difference between want and need. At one level, citizens just require fast, fair, reliable and free services, but underneath they are also concerned with security and privacy, as well as with the transparency and accessibility of government, and with its responsiveness to their personal situation.

6.4 Summary of the main issues

There was clear consensus that eID is a critical enabler, especially which can be used across Europe, so federated identity solutions are probably required together with the infrastructures and frameworks which support this. There is also a need to balance identity with privacy, and to perhaps replace it with authentication for a particular purpose. One ID token per person across Europe is important, but simplicity for users and in operation is even more so.

Similarly, open web standards, open standards, open source software (OSS) and IPR, all of which are of interrelated and which underpin eGovernment progress, are seen as important enablers. We must avoid confusion between open standards as specifications and open source software (OSS) as implementations, and ensure that we create technology which is independent of a particular implementation. Open standards are, indeed, the way forward for voluntary, industry-led technical standards.

Questions raised here include, should the results of EC-supported eGovernment research be open to all or used by participants for commercial exploitation? And, is IPR the basis for innovation or a barrier to it, and how can we ensure the former? Answers to these questions, as well as clear but fair resolutions of the issues they raise, could have a strong impact on local entrepreneurship and the local ownership of solutions.

Other important issues include the need for trans-institutional architectures and seamless cooperation. Organisational inertia was seen by many as the biggest barrier, and especially change resistance by civil servants. Above all, users want fast, fair, reliable and free services, and are also concerned to protect their privacy, but also want to see government opened up (i.e. become less private).

7 Conclusions

The stakeholders meeting was an innovative approach to eliciting bottom-up and evidence-based inputs to eGovernment policy making, and can be used as an important input to the impact assessment process required for major European policy proposals. It was particularly successful in gathering a rich range of opinions and suggestions from a very wide cross-section of eGovernment stakeholders. In all, 38 speakers made brief presentations, and the audience responded actively with thought provoking comments and suggestions.

As an experimental approach to gathering wildly diverse views and suggestions, the stakeholders meeting was thus highly successful. However, the intention of the meeting was not to provide unambiguous outcomes or conclusions, but rather to stimulate and tap into the wide debate across Europe about how eGovernment can support government, at every level, perform better, as well as to contribute to longer term policy goals.

Thus, it is not possible or to be expected that hard and clear conclusions could result from this workshop. It represents, instead, an initial mining of views and inputs in order to better understand the landscape of interests, opportunities and threats. In this, the workshop was very successful, and its experimental open format ideally suited to its task.

This explains why an unapologetic diversity of views and approaches is strongly apparent in this report, although it is the case that much consensus is also apparent, at least around the importance and contents of the major issues involved. All these deserve some emphasis and further consideration in the EU's policy building and implementation processes. These major issues are summarised in the sub-sections of each of the roundtable reports, but it is also clear that, as quite a few stakeholders commented, there are no magic bullets, no hard conclusions, but a cornucopia of good ideas.

There was also consensus on the need, in the words of one stakeholder, for ruthless focus. However, this task comes later in the process. The results of the present workshop will also be fed into the eEurope eGovernment subgroup meeting on 28 September 2005, in which representatives from Member States' national eGovernment programmes will come together to make their own contribution to the development of the eGovernment Action Plan.

Thus, many ideas have been presented in this workshop, some pulling in opposite directions, which makes it difficult to generalise and draw clear conclusions. The workshop was, in this sense, rather messy and perhaps inchoate, but this is also a strength given that it is not important at this stage to be more precise whilst the first foundations are laid for the eGovernment Action Plan.

It is clear, of course, that the final plan, as plans must do, will need to prioritise and focus. Indeed, this will certainly need to be a ruthless focus, which will leave some interests satisfied and some less so. However, the value of the present workshop is that at least we are more fully aware of the range of views, needs and interests, so that decisions can be taken openly and transparently, thereby making their implications and impacts much more easily accessible and assessable.

8 Annex 1 – Stakeholders meeting agenda

EGOVERNMENT POLICY STAKEHOLDER MEETING

YOUR VOICE ON EGOVERNMENT 2010

AGENDA

21 SEPTEMBER 2005
BRUSSELS – TULIP INN BRUSSELS BOULEVARD
AVENUE DU BOULEVARD 17, B - 1210

09.00	Registrations
10.00	Welcome & Introduction – Paul Timmers
10.30 – 11.45	Round Table I - Animator Paul Timmers <i>“Efficient and Effective eGovernment”</i> Open discussion
11:45 – 12.00	Coffee break
12.00 – 13.15	Round Table II – Animator Nick Batey <i>“Inclusive eGovernment”</i> Open discussion
13:15 – 14.00	Lunch break
14.00 – 15.15	Round Table III – Animator David Broster <i>“High impact services for businesses and citizens”</i> Open discussion
15:15 – 15.30	Coffee break
15.30 – 16.45	Round Table IV – Animator Agnès Bradier <i>“Key enablers”</i> Open discussion
16:45 – 17.00	Concluding Remarks & End of meeting- P Timmers

The agenda, slides and related documents are available at:
http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/egovernment_research/egov_policy_stakeholder/index_en.htm

9 Annex 2 – Stakeholders meeting speakers

eGovernment Policy Stakeholder Meeting Tulip Inn Boulevard Brussels - 21st September 2005 Session Speakers

Surname	Name	Organisation	session
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SESSION I theme: efficient and effective government, back office simplification, organisational issues

TOTH	Attila	NOVITECH Plc.	1
BECUCCI	Fabio	UNASCA - Rome	1
KNUDSEN	Trond	THE RESEARCH COUNCIL OF NORWAY	1
SALSON	Nadja	European Federation Public Service Unions	1
TSCHAMMER	Volker	FRAUNHOFER FOKUS	1
VAN BASTELAER	Beatrice	REGION WALLONNE - eGov Unit	1
VERHEYDEN	Alain	IBM	1
LANGE	Anne	CISCO SYSTEMS	1
RICHTER	Felix	CAPGEMINI	1

SESSION II theme: inclusive eGovernment, local and regional eGovernment

CLO	Alain	SUN MICROSYSTEMS	2
FOSSUM	Eric	Bronnoysund Register Centre, Norway	2
HAMILTON	Andy	UNIVERSITY of SALFORD	2
LEONARD	Michel	UNIVERSITY of GENEVA	2
ZALISOVA	Irina	EPMA	2
WAUMANS	Herman	ORACLE	2

SESSION III theme: High impact services, general strategies

BLOMQVIST	Ulf	VINNOVA	3
CABITZA	Federico	Universita' Degli Studi Milano - Bicocca	3
COSATTINI	Annamaria	Italian Network of Regional Competence Centres for e-gov	3
GRICAR	Joze	UNIVERSITY of MARIBOR, eCommerce Center	3
LOWE	Charles	eFORUM ASSOCIATION	3
TELESINSKI	Tomasz	EUROCOMMUNALE - Assoc. Of Wielkopolska Municipalities & Counties	3
TILMAN	Vincent	EUROCHAMBERS	3
WAUTERS	Patrick	CAPGEMINI	3
WOOLSEY	Peter	EBSA	3

SESSION IV theme: Key enablers: identity, resource and expertise pooling, technology

WILDER	Birgit	AUSTRIAN FEDERAL CHANCELLERY	4
DARDAILLER	Daniel	W3C EUROPE - World Wide Web Consortium	4
LEDGAARD IBSEN	Henrik	SILVERBULLET CONSULTING	4
MASCARELLO	Alzssio	CSI-PIEMONTE, Italy	4
MULDER	Evert-Jan	THE CENTRE OF EXPERTISE	4
NARDELLI	Enrico	NESTOR UNIV ROMA TOR VERGATA	4
RIEDL	Reinhard	UNIVERSITY of ZURICH	4
SCHMITZ	Patrice-Emmanuel	eJUSTICE Project / partner UNISYS Belgium	4
TAYLOR	Graham	OPEN FORUM EUROPE	4
WIBERG	Torbjorn	UMEA UNIVERSITET	4
GIUNTA	Valeria	COVINGTON & BURLING (Representing BSA)	4

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