



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 26.9.2003
COM(2003) 567 final

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

The Role of eGovernment for Europe's Future

{SEC(2003) 1038 }

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(Text with EEA relevance)

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1. INTRODUCTION

The public sector plays a very important role in Europe's social and economic model by supporting high levels of welfare for citizens, ensuring socio-economic cohesion and supporting the functioning of a competitive market environment. It is engaged in a wide range of activities from education, healthcare and social security to protecting consumers and strengthening the environment. Europe's economic strengths, such as a skilled workforce and leadership in major industries, require a proper functioning of its public sector.

Europe's public sector is today at a crossroads, facing challenging economic and social conditions, institutional change and the profound impact of new technologies. Expectation is growing that, as it is a major economic actor for boosting economic growth, the public sector can and will play a strong role in realising the Lisbon strategy for economic, social and environmental renewal.

Within the public sector, public administrations are facing the challenge of improving the efficiency, productivity and quality of their services. All these challenges, however, have to be met with unchanged or even reduced budgets.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) can help public administrations to cope with the many challenges. However, the focus should not be on ICT itself. Instead it should be on the use of ICT *combined with* organisational change and new skills in order to improve public services, democratic processes and public policies. This is what **eGovernment** is about.

Already today, good practices in many countries show that eGovernment is a powerful means indeed to deliver better quality public services, reduce waiting times and improve cost-effectiveness, raise productivity, and improve transparency and accountability.

eGovernment should have a strategic focus: the achievement of the Lisbon goals, reduction of barriers to the internal market for services and mobility across Europe, effective implementation of national policies and regional or local development.

However, the introduction of eGovernment is not easy. Providing user-centred services and cutting red tape (i.e. unnecessary administrative burden), requires that information is shared across departments and different levels of government (e.g. between the local and national level). More often than not this implies organisational change. It requires willingness to re-think established ways of working. This often leads to resistance. Moreover, eGovernment is not free. The pay-off often takes time.

Full-scale implementation of eGovernment raises difficult issues. These include safeguarding trust and confidence in online interaction with governments, widespread access to online services so that no digital divide is created, interoperability for information exchange across organisational and national borders, and advancing pan-European services that support mobility in the Internal Market and European Citizenship.

Therefore, strong political leadership is needed, in order to overcome resistance and barriers, to change mindsets, to push through organisational change, to sustain investment, and to keep the long-term perspective in mind while insisting on concrete deliverables in the shorter term.

eGovernment is a central element in the eEurope 2005 Action Plan. It is the only area of eEurope where governments not only need to ensure that the enabling conditions are in place, but where they alone are responsible for making it happen. The recent eGovernment conference, part of the eEurope 2005 Action Plan¹, and its Ministerial Declaration demonstrated the benefits of making eGovernment a reality in Europe.

This Communication, building upon that Conference, EU programmes, national, regional and local strategies and initiatives, and the work of the Network of Public Administrations, analyses the current state of play in eGovernment, identifies key issues and barriers, and presents a coherent set of actions that reinforce eGovernment within the eEurope 2005 context.

This Communication signals the importance the Commission attaches to eGovernment as a means to establish world-class public administrations at all levels in Europe that fully contribute to the Lisbon strategy through new and better public services for citizens and businesses. It calls upon Member States to express political commitment and leadership and to step up efforts with all actors in the private and public sector.

2. Challenges facing Europe's public sector

The following sections analyse the challenges confronting public administrations and the broader public sector in Europe.

2.1. Responding to a changing world

The public sector is challenged to play a key role in modernising Europe's economy and society, so that Europe becomes more competitive and dynamic, with sustainable growth and capable of creating more and better jobs while providing for greater social cohesion. These are the Lisbon targets for 2010. Their achievement, however, depends on sustaining a high average level of growth over the decade of 3% or more — current economic conditions have highlighted the challenge this implies².

Government revenues add up to 45% of the EU's GDP. The public sector is the single largest purchaser in the economy. Public consumption amounted to 20.6% of GDP in 2002, up from 19.9% in 1998³. Public administrations are also a major provider of services to business, influencing enterprises' ability to compete, and of services to citizens, enabling them to obtain education and training and to find jobs.

The counterpart of ensuring the delivery of many public services is found in obligations on enterprises and citizens such as those relating to social security, environmental reporting and tax collection. The cost of administrative obligations is estimated at 2-3% of GDP and falls disproportionately on SMEs. Entrepreneurship and innovation are influenced by the time and

¹ The eGovernment 2003 Ministerial conference was jointly organised by the Italian Presidency of the Council and the Commission, europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/egovconf/index_en.htm.

² Spring Report 2003; European Council Conclusions of March 2003; 2003 Broad Economic Policy Guidelines; Economic Forecast Spring 2003.

³ Statistical Annex Spring 2003 to the European Economy Report.

expense needed to set up a new company, which can vary respectively from a few days to more than a month and from nothing to 1500 Euros⁴.

Making such activities more efficient – cutting red tape – and more effective –accessible, user-friendly, secure, targeted – will boost economic growth throughout the economy as a whole.

Public administrations are also expected to be prepared for future and emerging challenges.

Demographic changes put authorities to the test. For example, immigration, conditioned by the EU policy framework, is already a factor for demographic change. Maximising the positive effects of immigration may require stepping up efforts in integration services, from language training to support for ethnic entrepreneurship, and dealing with increased demand for multi-lingual and multi-cultural access to general public services.

The better functioning of the Internal Market will facilitate cross-border provision of services and mobility within Europe for employment, educational or social reasons. It will thus increase the range of demands for public services. Public administrations are expected to provide cross-border and even pan-European public services.

In future citizens will increasingly expect authorities to safeguard liberty, justice and security, throughout the EU. This implies cooperation across Member States and internationally, as well as dealing with new insecurities caused by technology.

Just like the rest of the economy, public administrations and the public sector face the challenge of responding to new technological developments, in particular in information and communication technology. For example, the Internet has enabled new forms of involvement in policy-making, such as rapidly forming online opinion groups, public on-line consultations or the systematic collection of feedback on needs for help and advice from citizens and businesses. This means that public administrations must review their established ways of decision-making.

In the business world new ways have been emerging to organise value chains and customer relationships. These suggest more efficient and user-centred ways to deliver public services, learning from but not blindly copying e-business, and new public-private partnerships⁵.

Today's achievements in bringing public services online are based on research done in the past. For the public sector to become more active in shaping the knowledge society, innovation and research needs to be increased for and with the public sector.

Beyond the challenge to realise a modern public administration, there are further institutional challenges in Europe. These originate from the internal market, convergence as part of the largest ever enlargement process towards EU-25, devolution trends, globalisation and the European Convention with requirements for new governance. With increased networking of local, regional and national administrations across the EU for multi-level governance, and enabled by new technologies, a more integrated 'European public space' for EU citizens and businesses is gradually emerging.

⁴ Benchmarking Enterprise Policy, Results from the 2002 Scoreboard, European Commission Staff Working Document.

⁵ See also the report "eGovernment in Europe: State of Affairs", prepared by EIPA for the eGovernment 2003 Conference.

2.2. Higher expectations from citizens and companies

Citizens are becoming used to ever-faster response times and ever-higher quality of products and services from the private sector. They expect the same performance from public administrations too. Obscure procedures, long queues, having to re-enter information that is already held by the administration, and “one size fits all” approaches are all practices that are increasingly criticised.

Public service provision is expected to become more user-friendly and personalised, adapted to the needs of individuals. Public service generally needs to be inclusive, all citizens need to be served, independently of their skills and capabilities, income, or geographical location. The public sector cannot choose its clients, contrary to the private sector (nor can the public usually choose whether or not to be clients of the public sector).

The competitiveness of business is strongly influenced by the transaction costs incurred in dealing with administrations. As international competition becomes fiercer, businesses are demanding that red tape is eliminated. Governments are also responsible for many of the inputs to production processes. Firms therefore expect cheaper and better public services in order that they may stay competitive.

Finally, citizens and businesses expect authorities to become more accountable for the management of taxpayers’ money. They also demand more transparency of decision-making and democratic involvement in all phases of policy development. ‘Democratic deficit’ has become an election theme: a sense of democratic ownership is expected to be reinstated amongst voters.

2.3. Coping with limited resources – more with less

Governments are under pressure to deliver more value for taxpayers’ money. Administrations have to deliver more and better services with equal or fewer resources. Public expenditure is severely constrained in many Member States due to slow economic growth and the need to reduce budget deficits. The challenge is to achieve productivity growth in the public sector in order to create more opportunity for service improvement at equal cost.

Moreover, with the ageing of the population, public administrations will have to do with fewer employees and fewer working taxpayers as well, while still having to provide largely the same number of services and at better quality as well.

Civil servants demand more interesting jobs, with more opportunity for self-development and personal interaction. But job guarantees in terms of lifetime employment and benefits are increasingly being eroded. The attractiveness of the government as an employer is at stake.

3. THE ROLE OF EGOVERNMENT

eGovernment is defined here as **the use of information and communication technologies 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 enabler to realise a better and more efficient administration. It improves the development and implementation of public policies and helps the public sector to cope with the conflicting demands of delivering more and better services with fewer resources.

While technology cannot transform bad procedures into good ones, eGovernment creates the *choice* for the public sector to do its tasks differently.

For example, by improving efficiency and competition in public procurement through electronic procurement, hundreds of millions of euros can be saved and reinvested in public goods and services, thus contributing to economic growth. At the same time, the transparency and accountability of public procurement improve.

Some governments have drastically cut the time needed to set up a new company and offer free online registration. This enables entrepreneurs to dedicate their limited resources to truly entrepreneurial activities. Through online social security reporting, companies already today save on administrative overheads, thus freeing resources for production or innovation.

Making information from the public sector online available for re-use (where allowed under the legal framework) enables businesses to develop more attractive and competitive products.

Providing information about training and jobs across the EU on a one-stop website as a pan-European service, lowers the barrier for labour mobility in the Internal Market. Public information offered in several languages through a website helps immigrants to better find their way, thus easing economic and social integration.

eGovernment enables the public sector to maintain and strengthen good governance in the knowledge society. This means:

- (1) **A public sector** that is open and transparent: governments that are understandable and accountable to the citizens, open to democratic involvement and scrutiny.
- (2) **A public sector that is at the service of all.** A user-centred public sector will be inclusive, that is, will exclude no one from its services and respect everyone as individuals by providing personalised services.
- (3) **A productive public sector that delivers maximum value for taxpayers' money.** It implies that less time is wasted standing in queues, errors are drastically reduced, more time is available for professional face-to-face service, and the jobs of civil servants can become more rewarding.

In short, eGovernment is helping to establish a more open, inclusive and productive public sector, in line with good governance⁶. This is the pre-condition for a public sector that is prepared for the future.

Good governance in the sense above, achieved by the proper combination of information and communication technologies, organisational innovation and improved skills ('eGovernance'), is also applicable to services such as health, education and public transport.

eGovernance is therefore a wider notion, and many of the lessons learned and actions identified below are also applicable to online service provision in these other areas such as

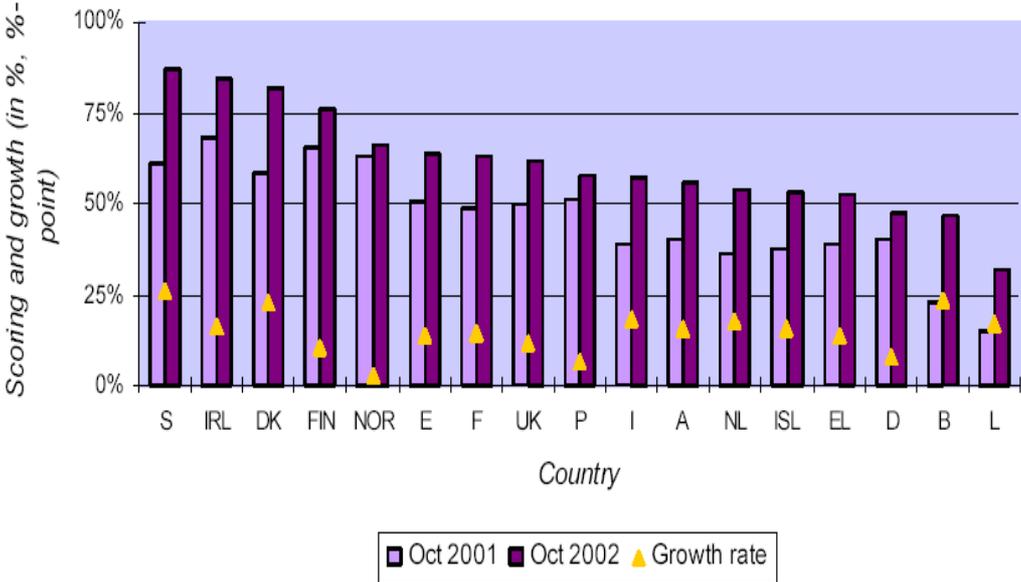
⁶ These objectives reflect the principles of good governance of the 2001 White Paper on European Governance, COM(2001) 428.

health and education. However, the focus here, whenever eGovernment is mentioned, is on administrative services and support for democratic processes.

4. STATE OF PLAY, ISSUES AND ACTIONS

4.1. State of play

All European countries have been developing eGovernment plans and strategies over the past few years. Progress has been made in all countries in bringing public services online, with average online availability growing from 45% to 60% between October 2001 and October 2002)⁷. At this stage differences between countries are perhaps less important than growth rates and strategic commitment to modernising public administrations, which can result in rapid progress over the coming years. Generally there is a tendency to move from technology to solutions, as demonstrated at the recent eGovernment 2003 conference in Como.



Online availability of public services, from Oct 2001 to Oct 2002; growth rates 2001- 2002; based on 20 public services; source: CGEY, Feb 2003

Online *provision* is of course no guarantee of online *usage*. Of equal importance are awareness that these services are available, the affordability of access, ease of use, and willingness to use these services. Above all, it is the real delivery of benefits that counts: how people perceive these services, how they use them, the benefits they experience, and benefits eGovernment brings to the administration itself. Such usage-oriented data are currently still relatively scarce⁸.

⁷ Online availability is a weighted average of the sophistication (support for information, one-way interaction, two-way interaction, full electronic case handling) of 20 public services for businesses and citizens defined by European Commission and Council.

⁸ Some data are reported e.g. by IST projects such as SIBIS, which investigated in several countries the willingness to use public services online compared to traditional usage, the actual awareness of such services, and their actual usage (<http://www.sibis-eu.org/sibis/>). Usage data are also reported and analysed in the recent IPTS report “ePublic services in Europe: past, present and future”.

From a commercial perspective eGovernment is already a sizeable market. In 2002 about €30 billion was spent on the ICT part of public administration (administrative services only, excluding health, defence, education, etc). Of this an estimated €5 billion, growing rapidly at 15% p.a., was spent on ICT for eGovernment⁹. However, this is only a fraction of the total spending on eGovernment, since there is a significant accompanying investment in (re-)organisation and training.

4.1.1. *Services to citizens – a better quality of life*

eGovernment has already shown to have significant effects on citizens' life. Citizens can have greater access to information from authorities. That enables them to understand where their taxes are spent and how decision-making is done, thus empowering citizens. This is an improvement towards more transparent, accountable and open public institutions. It reinforces democracy. In addition, greater transparency helps in the fight against corruption and fraud. These are important potential benefits, not only in Europe but also in developing countries and emerging economies around the world.

It is important to foster direct communication between citizens and policy-makers. Through online forums, virtual discussion rooms, and electronic voting, citizens can express their views, directly question the decision-makers, and so contribute with an informed opinion to the democratic process. An example of a broad online consultation is the e-Vote website, which was running during the Greek Presidency of the Council in the first half of 2003¹⁰. At EU level, 'YourVoice in Europe' offers a single access point in all official languages for Commission public consultation¹¹.

One-stop shopping portals are gradually becoming the norm for citizen services. A 'life-event' orientation¹² is often offered on the portal, bringing together all relevant information for citizens related to a specific stage in life¹³.

HELP is a comprehensive citizen portal of the Federal Chancellery in Austria, a winner of the 2003 eEurope Award for eGovernment (www.help.gv.at)

Such citizen portals are becoming more sophisticated by adding electronic identification, electronic payments (which raises questions about the choice of standards) and increased interactivity¹⁴. In particular their usage, although not yet widespread, is gradually growing. Although dedicated online services for disabled persons are emerging¹⁵, access through alternatives to the PC such as digital television or mobile terminal consistent with offline access so as to guarantee inclusion, is still relatively rare¹⁶.

⁹ EITO 2002. Note that a restrictive definition of ICT for eGovernment is used in EITO 2002.

¹⁰ <http://evote.eu2003.gr/EVOTE/en/index.stm>.

¹¹ <http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice>

¹² The term 'life events' refers to the government services needed at specific stages in life, e.g. having a baby; starting / leaving school; changing employment status; being a victim of crime; moving home; becoming disabled; retiring.

¹³ Examples are the Irish civil registry life events site (www.groireland.ie) which provides a.o. automatic processing of child benefits claims; and CAT365, www.cat365.net) from Spain addressing education and training, finding a job (and an integrated business creation service).

¹⁴ E.g. the Finnish Centre for Pensions is offering a web-site in three languages on pensions, including a service to identified insured persons who use a personal authentication card to access internet banking, currently reaching some 80% of the working population (www.tyoelake.fi).

¹⁵ E.g. the French Handiplace.org portal, www.handiplace.org.

¹⁶ New technology can increase access but also raise productivity of service delivery, as illustrated by the Dutch CareMore approach, where district nurses use PDAs for home visits to patients (www.sensire.nl).

The European Commission has taken up eGovernment through eCommission (modernisation of internal administration, improved communication with in particular Member States and other European institutions, and better public services to citizens and business)¹⁷. Activities that directly concern citizens include online availability of all legislation and other official Commission documents, and the introduction of Interactive Policy Making for input to policy-making (spontaneous feedback and online consultation), which is part of the Better Regulation approach. A next step is Europa 2nd Generation, a new generation of portals for a complete range of thematic information and interactive services on EU policies and activities, hiding the organisational complexity behind the scene.

4.1.2. Services to businesses - boosting competitiveness in Europe

Today enterprises in Europe work within a regulatory regime that includes frequent and mandatory dealings with government, often with separate administrative bodies. This places a high administrative and time burden on enterprises. eGovernment clearly has a role to play here by providing a ‘single point of access’ for administrative information and requirements. Examples are public procurement, customs and taxation, social contributions, geographical information, and information on registration of a new company and application of necessary authorisations and permits.

Bremen Online Services provides online transactions and payments in a secure and legally binding way for citizens, businesses and intermediaries (lawyers, tax consultants, etc.). Significant savings have been achieved on the side of lawyers, companies and administrations (www.bremer-online-service.de).

An important aspect of eGovernment for business services is that more productive and higher quality service provision by public administrations lead to increased productivity and competitiveness in the private sector as well, by reducing the cost of the public service itself as well as transaction costs at business side (time, effort), accompanied by fewer administrative errors.

For example, results reported from several countries in operational systems of electronic customs handling are that the majority of declarations can be processed in a few minutes, with 24/7 availability and significant quality improvement¹⁸. The same is noted with electronic VAT obligations that are being developed throughout the EU and similar advantages are awaited from future computerisation of excise documents in the intra-community movements¹⁹.

The sophistication of online services (that is, going beyond mere information provision and also supporting interactivity and transactions) has made more progress in business services than in those to citizens²⁰.

¹⁷ “Towards the eCommission: Implementation Strategy 2001-2005”, June 2001.

¹⁸ The Swedish Virtual Customs Office (www.customs-vip.info/eGov/) processes 90 % of all declarations electronically and deals through automated clearance with 70% of the declarations within 3 minutes. Polish Integrated Customs Duty and Tax System, for border controls and customs revenue, achieved error reduction by as much as a factor of 20 (www.krakow.uc.gov.pl/clogran.htm). The national public procurement agency in Denmark has achieved through ETHICS electronic tendering a doubling of its productivity and a complete elimination of complaints (www.ski.dk/). The Romanian eMarket procurement system reports savings of 20% (www.e-licitatie.ro).

¹⁹ See also the Communication on a simple and paperless environment for customs and trade, COM(2003) 452, July 2003

²⁰ Cap Gemini Ernst & Young (CGEY) survey for the European Commission, February 2003.

Some online services for business are now moving to more extensive use of electronic certificates. Introducing these new technologies through online public services for business may also help to achieve a critical mass, e.g. by enhancing their use in electronic public procurement, electronic customs, excise and tax declarations, or by eliminating all paper flows in social security reporting. More generally, electronic interaction with authorities is seen as a road to ‘going digital’, in particular for SMEs.

4.1.3. *Services between administrations - strengthening cooperation*

eGovernment policy can provide ways to enable a structured interaction between national, regional and local government and Community institutions²¹, even though many obstacles have to be overcome, including competing goals, a sometimes confusing abundance of regulations, the fragmentation of tasks amongst traditional public sector institutions²² and a legacy of procedures and ways of working.

Regional and local administrations are often at the forefront of the

Cooperation between administrations is the basis of the service provided by Agencia Tributaria, another eGovernment Award winner, simplifying and speeding up the provision of tax certificates to citizens through secure electronic communications between the administrations and with citizens (www.agenciatributaria.es).

delivery of on-line public services²³. Their efforts, including those through their associations, have been instrumental in advancing eGovernment. eGovernment development at regional and local level has become an increasing programme priority of the Structural Funds, representing about 30% of information society expenditure in Objective 1 regions and 20% in Objective 2 regions. The revised Structural Funds guidelines for information society investment, 2000-2006, address eGovernment amongst others in terms of reinforcing the demand-side and financing of eGovernment content, in particular for local and regional services.

In most Member States, national policies and programmes relating to the information society and eGovernment affect regional planning and programming. Effective co-ordination is needed between the national and regional levels²⁴ especially in inter-regional networking, cooperation between associations, and exchange of good practices.

4.2. **Issues and actions**

A number of critical issues have to be addressed in order to scale up from individual examples to widespread availability and use of online public services, and to enable more advanced and user-friendly services. In the following paragraphs such high priority issues are analysed and corresponding actions indicated (actions are in double-lined boxes). The intention is not to be exhaustive, but rather to identify those key issues for which a common response is applicable.

²¹ Reflecting the White paper on European Governance.

²² E.g. the electronic social security system in Belgium involved process re-engineering with 2,000 social security institutions at national, regional and local level (<https://www.socialsecurity.be/>).

²³ Examples are ENTERPRISE-51, a single office providing advice and services to companies in 51 municipalities of the Italian province of Pordenone (www.amministrazionefuturo.com); “Service-Public Local”, from France, on local public services for economic development (<http://www.servicepubliclocal.net/>) and the UK “3 Islands Partnership” provides electronic services for both citizens and businesses to remote islands in Scotland with sparse populations, avoiding extensive and expensive travel.

²⁴ Salerno conference on Information Society and Regional Development (15-16 May 2003).

Several of the actions identified below need to be followed up in close cooperation with the respective EU programmes and with the European Network of Public Administrations.

4.2.1. *Inclusive access*

Increased participation through online services means that all citizens need to be provided with full opportunities for access. Potential barriers include lower penetration of Internet in some countries, limited service availability, and the lack of user-friendly access for people with disabilities or less IT-literacy.

The principle of access for all to public services is an important objective of public administrations. Education and training are essential to ensure that citizens have the necessary digital literacy to be able to take full advantage of the services offered by eGovernment. Digital literacy is one of the priorities of the new eLearning programme²⁵.

Participation can be improved if services can be accessed through a choice of devices, including PC, digital TV, mobile terminal, or public Internet access points, alongside the usual physical, offline service provision.

Such a multi-platform approach is essential for inclusion, to avoid creating a new societal divide. The related eEurope 2005 target is that by end 2004, Member States should have ensured that basic public services where relevant, exploit the potential of multi-platform access. The European Commission (Interchange of Data between Administrations programme, IDA) will carry out a study into the multi-platform approach in order to identify best practices and guidelines in the delivery of eGovernment services.

Applying ‘Design for All’ principles will enable broadening participation of citizens. It is important to elaborate guidelines for the design and assessment of user interfaces and access to public services. As part of eEurope 2002 Member States have adopted the Web Accessibility Initiative guidelines, which should now become an integral part of online public services.

Inclusive multi-platform access should be reinforced in national eGovernment action plans, supported by best practice exchange.

Internet penetration in the EU has increased rapidly since the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 (more than 40% of households and 90% of businesses and schools are now connected). This increase is related to the introduction of new, more interactive services. This then increases the need for faster Internet, i.e. for broadband. The transition from narrowband networks to broadband networks is an important step towards more responsive public services that offer richer, more informative interaction. Broadband also increases the time users spend on Internet.

Fast and ‘always-on’ communication is also a condition for continuous access to shared information bases inside the administrations themselves. Therefore broadband is essential for scaling up from a single good practice to widespread take-up throughout the administration.

The eEurope 2005 Action Plan sets ‘*widespread availability and use of broadband by 2005*’ as an important objective. The Communication “Electronic Communication : Road to the

²⁵ COM(2002) 751 of 19 December 2002.

Knowledge Economy”²⁶ sets a target of half of Internet connections to be broadband by 2005. Availability can be stimulated by interlinked supply-side and demand-side policies.

These include the new telecommunications regulatory framework which in a technology-neutral way stimulates competition between communication networks. Demand aggregation will strengthen the case for sustainable investments in broadband and in new platforms such as digital television and 3G. The Commission will organise a workshop in Autumn 2003 on local initiatives, including demand aggregation.

Most of demand-side policies in eEurope 2005 are not specific to ‘broadband’ or ‘multi-platform’, but span all objectives. eEurope 2005 calls for all public administrations to connect with broadband by 2005. Demand-side policies should also assess citizens and businesses’ response and experiences to the delivery of services through various channels²⁷.

New, advanced forms of interactivity in public services, stimulated by broadband and multi-platform access, should be addressed in EU R&D, piloting and implementation programmes.

4.2.2. *Trust and confidence*

Public services can be offered only within an environment where trust and confidence flourish. Such environment should always guarantee secure interaction and access for citizens and businesses.

Protection of personal data, authentication, and identity management are primary issues where no public service should ever fail. Public institutions should always ensure that digital transactions and communications are secure and that personal data will remain protected. Citizens should always be able to control access to their personal data, and how these data have been stored, used, and accessed. Failure to ensure this may, in addition to breaching the law, entail significant social and economic costs. Only data that are necessary for the fulfilment of the respective purpose may be collected²⁸. To this end, the use of privacy enhancing technologies should be favoured.

Privacy enhancing technologies in eGovernment should be promoted, a.o. through the relevant EU programmes.

Data protection, network and information security, the fight against cybercrime and dependability are prerequisites for a properly-functioning information society, and consequently core policy issues within the EU. The Commission together with the Member States has launched a comprehensive strategy for these issues.

A range of R&D projects, supported by the EU Fifth Framework Information Society Technologies (IST) programme and the Sixth Framework programme address these issues. For network and information security the rapid adoption of the European Network and Information Security Agency, now on the table of Council and European Parliament, will be an important step forward.

²⁶ COM(2003) 65, 11 February 2003.

²⁷ See also Ministerial Declaration of eGovernment 2003 Conference.

²⁸ The so-called data minimisation principle, as contained in the data protection Directive 95/46 EC.

The eEurope 2005 Action Plan also calls for the development of a 'culture of security'. This is as relevant for the public sector as it is for the private sector. This will also include the availability of a secure communications environment for the exchange of classified information between the Commission and Member States, a task being carried out by IDA.

eGovernment strategies at all levels should advance trust and confidence in public services and online democratic participation.

Significant developments in electronic identity and authentication systems have taken place over the past few years. Access to citizen data must be in full compliance with the European and national data protection legislation, where the choice of technology should empower citizens as much as possible to retain control of their personal data. However, realising efficient and personalised services based on citizen data is often hampered by rigid administrative practices, competency considerations and competing systems. In most countries their take-up and deployment are still in a relatively early stage and experience is being built up²⁹. This is therefore the right time to enhance cooperation in this area and prepare jointly for the future, given also the scope and scale of the challenge.

E.g. the cities of Bologna, Naestved, Prato, Saarbruecken and Sheffield improve the use of digitally signatures both between the administration and its clients and inside the administration. Interoperability is ensured in the eTEN SPES project.

Identity management in the EU should be advanced by addressing interoperability issues as well as future needs while taking into account differences in legal and cultural practices and the EU framework for data protection. EU programmes for research & development, deployment and implementation should contribute coherently (i.e. FP6/IST³⁰, eTEN³¹, and IDA³²).

4.2.3. *Better use of public sector information*

Economic and social benefits can be generated from re-using the content resources the public sector holds in areas such as geographical information, tourist information, meteorological information, statistics etc. This will not only contribute to economic growth and job-creation, but will also increase the choice and quality of services for citizens.

Digital Cartography in South Tyrol, Italy provides a Geographic Information System and interactive maps for construction and environmental planning taking into account natural occurrences such as earthquakes. Similarly the Portuguese Seixal municipality promotes the use of GIS data for civil servants and technicians (srvweb.cm-seixal.pt).

There are, at the moment, considerable barriers present in the European market that make it difficult to launch information services based on public-sector information and covering different European countries. The rules and practices for the re-use of public sector content resources differ widely between Member States. In addition, different standards and the multiplicity of languages make it difficult to fully exploit the potential.

²⁹ In two-thirds of cases authentication of citizens is still by password and user-id only (e-Forum, June 2002).

³⁰ For eGovernment R&D in FP6/IST see http://www.cordis.lu/ist/directorate_c/.

³¹ eTEN, europa.eu.int/information_society/programmes/eten/, is the trans-European networks e-services programme.

³² For IDA see <http://europa.eu.int/ISPO/ida/jsps/index.jsp?fuseAction=home>.

To address the differences between the legal provisions in the Member States the Commission proposed a directive on the re-use of public sector documents³³. The conclusions of the 2003 European Spring Council call for an adoption of this directive by the end of 2003. Ministers expressed their commitment and invited the Commission to enhance activities in this area³⁴.

A swift adoption and transposition of the Directive on the re-use of public sector documents should be achieved. Pilot projects that ease cross-border barriers and the spread of good practices throughout the EU should be promoted.

Such pilot projects could be part of the follow-on to the eContent programme and could draw upon the experience gathered in the IDA programme and the IST priority of the Sixth Framework Programme.

4.2.4. *Public procurement*

One area where significant gains can be achieved is public procurement. Traditional public procurement operations are complex, time-consuming and resource-intensive, and thus contribute to significant productivity losses. The use of ICT in public procurement can raise efficiency, improve the quality and value for money of public purchases, and generate significant savings for tax-payers (see box). It can contribute to better relations with suppliers, higher user satisfaction, better utilisation of human resources in the procurement process and improved auditability of public expenditure. To achieve such benefits, fundamental changes are required in the public sector procurement environment within administrations and in the relations between administrations and potential suppliers.

In the UK, for example, the Office of Government Commerce aims to save € 350 million over 3 years for central civil government purchases through the implementation of its e-procurement strategy. Similarly, the Irish government hopes to save over € 400 million over 5 years or an estimated 2% of procurement expenditure in the public sector.

The absence of clear Community rules has until now been an obstacle to the take-up of electronic public procurement in Europe. The forthcoming final adoption of the legislative package of public procurement Directives, which includes specific rules on electronic public procurement, should be a turning point for the spread of electronic public procurement in Europe. eGovernment services supporting and facilitating the interaction between businesses and governments, such as the provision of certificates in digital form and the availability of electronic signatures across Europe, can contribute positively to the switch from paper-based to electronic procurement.

Adoption of the new procurement legislation provides a window of opportunity for modernising procurement in the public sector. A Community approach integrating the Internal Market dimension is crucial to prevent potential fragmentation of the procurement market due to incompatible electronic procurement systems and standards across Europe, and to avoid imbalances in economic development due to slower penetration of the new technologies in certain countries or regions.

The Commission is considering proposing in 2004 a comprehensive three-year Action Plan to accompany the implementation of the new provisions on electronic public procurement.

³³ COM(2002) 207.

³⁴ Ministerial Declaration, eGovernment 2003 Conference, Como, 7-8 July 2003.

It will set out a strategy and identify all legislative and non-legislative measures required to eliminate obstacles to cross-border electronic public procurement and ensure interoperability of electronic procurements systems. To encourage co-ordination between Member States and prepare the ground for the Action Plan, the Commission has set up a working group. Within the framework of the IDA programme, specific support actions are underway.

4.2.5. *Strengthening the Internal Market and European Citizenship through Pan-European Services*

Citizens are free to work and re-locate within the EU. Enterprises trade and carry out business across the Union. They then often have to interact with national public administrations, in their own or another Member State. The further development of the knowledge-based economy, the deepening of the internal market, particularly for services, and the enlargement of the Union, all increase the demand for cross-border and even pan-European interaction with public administrations. Examples are in access to general government information, compliance with regulations, and exchange of administrative transactions between institutions belonging to different countries³⁵.

Some pan-European services are already in place and continuously evolving.

EURES and PLOTEUS are pan-European services³⁶, that indicate the potential of EU-wide employment and related educational services, that is, where a citizen may wish to know what employment vacancies exist in certain Member States, whether their qualifications will be recognised, what educational facilities are available, etc. The internal market service SOLVIT tackles the hurdle of citizens and enterprises in dealing with administrative obstacles in cross-border procedures. Initiatives including Dialogue with Citizens and Business³⁷, and the portal of the EU administration³⁸, will form the basis for the future Your Europe portal, providing access to a wide range of information and services from EU and national administrations.

Pan-European services, when being developed, should look at potential problems and try to avoid them. One such problem can be, when services have been developed from the Member State's national perspective and tradition (e.g. language) alone, their access may be difficult for citizens and enterprises in other Member States. Another issue could be that their development inadvertently results in new barriers to the internal market due to technical or procedural reasons³⁹.

Ideally both citizens and business would have a one-stop access to administrations ('single face') that is consistent in its service delivery across Member States. An example would be the case of VAT obligations, where traders more and more often have to register and declare

³⁵ An example of a cross-border service is Transcards that permit citizens in the Thiérache region to use the most suitable health facilities, regardless of whether they live on the Belgian or French side of the border.

³⁶ Resp. <http://europa.eu.int/eures> and <http://www.ploteus.net>. These services are supported by the IDA programme and managed by the Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture.

³⁷ <http://europa.eu.int/citizensrights> and <http://europa.eu.int/business>

³⁸ Being implemented through IDA as a point of access to pan-European eGovernment services, <http://europa.eu.int/public-services>.

³⁹ For example, the risk of an electronic certificate issued in one Member State not being accepted for the electronic signature of a contract with the public administration of another Member State could be a barrier to cross-border participation in electronic public procurement.

VAT in several Member States, and where therefore a "one-stop" access in one Member State only would bring significant benefits⁴⁰.

eGovernment services should be designed to be open to users in other Member States and accessible seamlessly, regardless of whether the service is under the responsibility of a local, regional or national public administration, or a European institution or agency.

The provision of common pan-European services can be a sensitive issue. Many Member States require that government services are provided by the administrative body closest to the customer, which may be at the local or regional level, in line with subsidiarity. This requires a high degree of cooperation between administrations across the EU, involving the private sector as well⁴¹.

Pan-European services can give a substantial impetus to the Internal Market and its associated freedoms, as well as to European Citizenship, provided that there is inclusion of the needs of cross-border users, co-operation of Member States' administrations, the provision of interoperable infrastructures, and provision of specific public services at the European level.

The task is now for Member States and European Institutions to ensure that pan-European services are defined, developed, deployed, implemented, enriched with content, and promoted.

Rapid adoption of the proposed IDA^{bc} programme⁴² will enable the implementation of pan-European services that help implementing Community legislation, for administrations, businesses and citizens.

Rapid adoption is also needed of the proposal for the revision of the Financial Regulations for eTEN, for an increase of the funding ceiling to 30% to accelerate deployment of pan-European services.

4.2.6. *Interoperability*

In Europe, the provision of public services is still often rather fragmented and people have to go from one 'counter' to another (whether physical or on the web). Companies and citizens would much benefit from public services that are provided seamlessly online⁴³ and for which they do not need to know the different departments involved.

⁴⁰ Such a system has already been put in place for value-added-tax on electronic services from third country operators since the 1st July 2003 (Directive 2002/38/EC) and could be extended to a wider scope (see also the open consultation on "Your voice in Europe").

⁴¹ Common online services at the European level need not necessarily be provided by European institutions. They could be provided by trade associations, professional bodies, or in partnership with the private sector. An example is the one-stop-shop (guichet unique) procedure for satellite licences and authorisations provided by CEPT (Conférence Européenne des Postes et Télécommunications).

⁴² COM(2003) 406, Interoperable Delivery of pan-European eGovernment Services to Public Administrations, Businesses and Citizens, 8 July 2003; an Advisory Board involving representatives of the private and public sector is to be set up in the context of IDA to assist in the identification and deployment of pan-European services.

⁴³ That is, the service is provided without any break-points regardless of the number of different administrative systems or administrative bodies involved.

They also prefer to have services and information tailored to their needs and requirements, while knowing that their right to privacy is protected and services themselves are secure. However, personalised services require integration and sharing of processes and knowledge across departments and institutions. This requires IT systems of the various participating administrative bodies to be interconnected and information and administrative processes to be 'joined up', i.e. they must 'interoperate'.

Interoperability is the means by which this inter-linking of systems, information and ways of working will occur: within or between administrations, nationally or across Europe, or with the enterprise sector.

At the technical level, open standards can help to achieve such integration. In addition, administrations are building up experience with open source considering intrinsic aspects such as cost and security, and benefits from externalities including ease of integration.

Exchange of experience in the use of open standards and open source amongst administrations should be promoted amongst others through the relevant EU programmes.

But interoperability is not just a technical issue of linking up computer networks: it also concerns organisational issues, such as co-ordinating processes that not only span intra-organisational boundaries, but also interwork with partner organisations that may well have different internal organisation and operations.

Failure to put in place interoperable eGovernment systems will have both economic and social costs. These include: static unresponsive public administrations that are expensive to run and incapable of implementing policy promptly; inability to develop value added eGovernment services; higher costs, greater administrative burden and competitive disadvantage relative to local firms (e.g. inability to participate in public e-procurement activities), and hampering the proper functioning of the Internal Market.

For the successful development of pan-European eGovernment services, policy should be developed that addresses the European dimension of interoperability⁴⁴. Agreement on common standards and specifications is essential to support life event and information sharing eGovernment services, as well as R&D into interoperability for networked organisations that in future will deliver new and innovative public services. Most Member States are already addressing this challenge by adopting national 'eGovernment interoperability frameworks'. This is being complemented at European level by the development of the European Interoperability Framework⁴⁵, and at policy level by the Commission staff working paper 'Linking up Europe: the importance of interoperability for eGovernment services'.

The "interoperability framework in support of the delivery of pan-European eGovernment services to citizens and enterprises" as referred to in eEurope 2005, is to be adopted in its first version by the end of 2003.

⁴⁴ One Member State's administration should be able to access an information resource of another Member State's administration to validate the status of an enterprise or to check the eligibility for social welfare of a citizen from another Member State, with the same ease as it could do this for nationally registered enterprises or its own citizens. Similarly, the technical and semantic interoperability of geographic information, for example, would enhance trans-border intra-agency co-operation, environmental monitoring and the co-ordination of disaster relief.

⁴⁵ A draft version will be available for public consultation on the IDA website.

4.2.7. *Organisational change*

The introduction of ICT is only one ingredient of eGovernment. Organisational change and acquisition of new skills with a change of mindset are equally important. eGovernment often requires significant changes in the way public administrations operate, administrative processes are executed, policies are developed and budgets are controlled.

The change towards an organisation according to the concept that the user is at the centre (customer orientation), which was already at the heart of the New Public Management approach, is reinforced by eGovernment and made visible at the front-office in personalised online services, a one-stop approach and a life- (or business-) event orientation. Future forms organisations may have to be increasingly agile and flexible such as to respond better to citizen needs.

Reorganisation within the administrations may require process and procedure redesign, training of personnel, the development of new skills and competencies, adaptation of local rules and legislation and new employee management models. ICT is an important means to improve access to and quality of education and training. The eLearning programme 2004-2006 has been proposed to support this process.

The proper management of change is a prerequisite for the establishment of a service-oriented mentality that most citizens and business desire, while avoiding disruptions in the current service provisioning. This should include assessment of the change process: how public organisations move from the early stages of eGovernment (information and interaction) to the more advanced stages (transaction and transformation).

The European Public Administration Network (of Ministers of Public Administration) will propose organisational recommendations and will enable the exchange of best practices⁴⁶.

The EU FP6 programme will support R&D into the combination of technological and organisational innovation in public administrations, towards a European Research Area in eGovernment.

4.2.8. *Performance and benefits of eGovernment*

eGovernment can contribute to improving the productivity of public administrations. Productivity growth can be defined as more or better or faster output for a given input. However, in the public sector there are definition and measurement problems for inputs and outputs.

One problem is the pricing of public services, which is often not directly related to the inputs (taxation is not specific to the service provided). Also, as many online services are to a large extent information-based, they follow the rules of information economics in which marginal prices are approaching zero, and are thus not an indicator of the value of the service, while the operational costs of initial information development and maintaining information over its lifecycle, which can be significant, still have to be covered.

⁴⁶ The Directors-General of Public Administrations in the EU have also made available the Common Assessment Framework, which is a tool for organisational self-assessment with a view to quality management.

Another problem is that prices are not determined through market mechanisms, since generally there is no competition when the service is delivered. Information economics, however, teaches that there are other mechanisms that can ensure performance and to some extent substitute for price. These include contractual mechanisms and quality indicators, such as expressed by user satisfaction and which may be represented by trusted labels.

Likewise, where there is a lack of competition in providing services to the public or even a monopoly situation, public scrutiny can be a replacement.

The focus of indicators until now has largely been on supply indicators (such as the number of services online) rather than on the user and usage.

New approaches to benchmarking in eGovernment are needed as well as research into the economics of eGovernment with a view to a better assessment of benefits and performance of eGovernment.

This will also assist in better defining future concrete targets for the modernisation of public administrations and improved public services and in assessing the outcomes and impact of the actions identified before.

5. AN EGOVERNMENT ROADMAP

eGovernment can deliver many benefits but there are also many barriers to be overcome. Its full-scale implementation is not easy and requires commitment from the very top of public administrations and, indeed, from the political level.

The eGovernment roadmap proposed here includes the actions identified before. These are to be complemented by two horizontal actions, namely reinforcing the exchange of good practice across the various aspects of eGovernment and leveraging investment in eGovernment in Europe. This roadmap aims at reinforcing and implementing the eEurope 2005 Action Plan and thus makes a significant contribution to the Lisbon strategy.

5.1. Reinforcing the exchange of good practice

In order to deepen and strengthen the eEurope approach for leveraging good practices a further reinforcement of exchange of good practice in eGovernment is necessary⁴⁷.

Exchange of good practice has already demonstrated its usefulness. Best practices encompass technological, organisational, legal and training elements, they require long-term commitment of all key actors involved, and they illustrate tangible benefits and results. Exchange of experience and replication of best practices can bring cost-savings in moving to broad take-up. It also prepares for future interoperability and interworking between administrations.

While demonstrating the state of the art, best practices also point to new requirements for regulatory frameworks, change management, and organisation of work within administrations, and generally help to identify research challenges and form a contribution to establishing a European Research Area in eGovernment.

⁴⁷ See also the Ministerial Declaration of the Como eGovernment 2003 conference.

The eEurope Awards for eGovernment have successfully stimulated best practice exchange. eTEN and IDA give specific emphasis on replicating good practices at trans-European level. However, continuity is a key factor in the process of exchanging good practices.

What is needed however, is to avoid a mere one-off "copying" of an awarded application which might not be suitable in another socio-cultural context. A framework is needed that provides, amongst others, for continuity, establishes mutual interaction between current EU programmes and initiatives related to eGovernment, addresses legal and other aspects of reusing good practice and ownership of eGovernment systems to implement the solution.

Through a comprehensive framework the exchange of good practices in eGovernment will be reinforced.

By being open for wider participation such a framework can also stimulate learning from and transfer of good practices internationally. It can thereby become a contribution to global cooperation in eGovernment, which is a priority in the World Summit on the Information Society⁴⁸. In this respect, in the future economic co-operation and development aid could be considered with EU partners, notably in relation to capacity-building.

5.2. Leveraging investment

A range of European initiatives and programmes exist that can address eGovernment, from research to implementation. These comprise parts of the Sixth Framework, eTEN and IDA programmes, as well as the investment in regional priorities through the Structural Funds.

Altogether this investment at European level is small compared to the total investment that is being done – or should be done – in eGovernment.

As mentioned before, the annual spending in the EU on ICT in public administration is about €30 billion, of which a fast-growing proportion, currently some €5 billion, is spent on eGovernment-related ICT. That ICT spending should be accompanied by a much larger investment in organisation and human resources. For comparison: research in companies has shown that the total investment in such 'organisational capital' can be up to ten times the initial ICT investment, before the full benefits are delivered.

Therefore the total investment needed is likely to be several tens of billions each year. Such investment is necessary to realise the potential of eGovernment, in particular that Europe is equipped with a world-class public sector which fully contributes to the Lisbon objectives through new and better public services for citizens and businesses.

Support at European level should therefore aim at enabling maximum leverage of the much larger investment at Member State level. By creating synergies across Member States duplicate spending can be avoided. However, the extent of increased efficiencies needs to be quantified.

A first step to increasing the synergy and impact of the EU programmes will be to provide a one-stop approach (common entry point) for the potential users of these programmes.

⁴⁸ COM(2003) 271, Communication on the World Summit on the Information Society, 19 May 2003; Ministerial Declaration of the Como eGovernment 2003 conference.

That is, a single entry point for information and questions related to EU programmes that can support eGovernment. In the longer run further synergies could be explored, for example by lifecycle support to projects, cooperation on work-programme development, and joint use of inputs from advisory bodies.

In this way the current activities at EU level can prepare the ground for more coherence and savings in overall Member States' spending.

The role of a shared approach amongst Member States to with a view to supporting and boosting investment in eGovernment should be explored.

5.3. Meeting the eEurope 2005 targets

The eEurope 2005 Action Plan provides the reference point for commitment to advancing the information society at European level.

In terms of instruments it relies upon exchanges of best practice, initiatives from the private sector and in Member States at all levels, and leveraging the available resources and programmes at EU level, with overall strategic monitoring by the eEurope Steering Group.

eEurope 2005 has formulated specific eGovernment targets for:

- Broadband connections for public administrations
- Interoperability framework for pan-European services
- Interactive public services (accessible for all, multi-platform)
- Electronic public procurement
- Public Internet Access Points
- Culture and tourism e-services

Work in most of these areas is supported by the actions already mentioned. By 2004, the mid-term review of eEurope will report on progress. In order to maintain and accelerate progress towards these targets and provide strategic guidance for eGovernment in line with the present Communication, the Commission will continue to consult public and private sector actors.

5.4. Conclusions

Already today eGovernment is proving that it can help public administrations to become more productive and offer personalised services for all, in an open and transparent way.

The benefits of eGovernment can go far beyond the early achievements of online public services. In this it is essential is that the public sector adapts its organisation and skills for a user-centred approach in which technology is serving people.

There are, however, many barriers and obstacles to overcome and sizeable investments are needed. Change processes in organisation and culture take time: it can take several years before the combined investment in ICT, organisation and skills deliver the full benefits. The transformation of public administrations that eGovernment entails will encounter resistance.

Therefore strong political leadership and commitment are needed, guided by a long-term vision of the public sector's contribution to Europe in the knowledge society.

This Communication presents a coherent roadmap comprising actions in eGovernment that are already ongoing or planned as well as new actions. These latter, e.g. in identity management, the next step in pan-European services, reinforcing best practice exchange, exploring shared approaches, etc., are expected to build upon and strengthen work going on and open up perspectives for future initiatives in eGovernment.

Forward thinking and innovation should be combined with concrete deliverables and results in the shorter term. Exchange of good practice and cooperation between administrations at all levels can accelerate adoption and bring savings by re-using proven concepts and solutions.

A coherent approach to eGovernment by the current EU initiatives and programmes should be pursued, to leverage national, regional and local investments and accelerate the availability of pan-European services for citizens and businesses.

Member States in particular are called upon to provide political leadership and reinforce commitment at all levels of government, and thereby contribute to providing Europeans with a world-class public administration that makes its full contribution to the Lisbon goals through high quality and innovative public services for all.

**Annex –
Overview of Actions**

Action	Time	Resp
(1) Inclusive multi-platform access to be reinforced in national eGovernment action plans, supported by best practice exchange.	End 2003	Council
(2) New, advanced forms of interactivity in public services, based on broadband and multi-platform access, to be addressed in EU R&D, piloting and implementation programmes.	2004	Com
(3) Privacy enhancing technologies in eGovernment should be promoted, a.o. through the relevant EU programmes.	2003-	Council + Com
(4) eGovernment strategies at all levels to promote trust and confidence in public services and in online democratic participation.	2004	Council
(5) Identity management in the EU to be advanced, addressing interoperability and future needs, taking into account legal and cultural practices, coherent contribution of FP6, eTEN, IDA.	2004	Com
(6) Swift adoption and transposition of the Directive on the re-use of public sector documents. Pilot projects that ease cross-border barriers and the spread of good practices throughout the EU.	2003	EP + Council
(7) Proposal for a comprehensive three-year Action Plan to accompany the implementation of the new provisions on public e-procurement.	2004	Com
(8) eGovernment services to be designed to be open to users in other Member States and seamlessly accessible.	2003-	Council
(9) Member States and the European Institutions to ensure that pan-European services are defined, developed, deployed, implemented, enriched with content, and promoted.	End 2003 (defined)	Council + Com
(10) Adoption of the proposal for a Decision on the IDA follow-up programme, IDA _{bc} in support of the deployment of pan-European services by European public administrations.	End 2003	Council + EP
(11) Rapid adoption of the proposal for the revision of the Financial Regulations for eTEN (funding ceiling of 30%) to accelerate deployment of pan-European services.	Before July 2004	Council + EP
(12) Exchange of experience in the use of open standards and open source amongst administrations to be promoted amongst other through the relevant EU programmes.	2003-	Com

(13)	The “interoperability framework in support of the delivery of pan-European eGovernment services to citizens and enterprises” as referred to in eEurope 2005, to be adopted in its first version.	End 2003	Com
(14)	The EU FP6 programme will support R&D into the combination of technological and organisational innovation in public administrations, towards a European Research Area in eGovernment	2003-	Com
(15)	New approaches to benchmarking and research into the economics of eGovernment for improved assessment.	2003-	Council + Com
(16)	Through a comprehensive framework the exchange of good practices in eGovernment will be reinforced.	End 2003	Com
(17)	First phase of one-stop shopping approach to eGovernment activities in Commission.	End 2003	Com
(18)	The role of a shared approach amongst Member States with a view to supporting and boosting investment in eGovernment to be explored.	2003-	Council + Com