

Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment

at the ministerial meeting during Estonian Presidency of the Council of the EU on 6 October 2017

We, the ministers¹ in charge of eGovernment policy and coordination from 32 countries of the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), have unanimously approved this declaration under the chairmanship of Minister Urve Palo, representing the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the EU, and in the presence of Vice President Andrus Ansip of the European Commission (hereinafter: Commission) in charge of the Digital Single Market.

We recognise that:

- The global landscape is rapidly changing and, as stated in the Rome Declaration², Europe is facing serious social, environmental, economic and political challenges.
- Digital progress is transforming our societies and economies to the core, challenging the effectiveness of previously developed policies in a broad range of areas as well as the role and function of the public administration overall. It is our duty to anticipate and manage these challenges to meet the needs and expectations of citizens and businesses.
- The ongoing work by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations (UN) and the G20 on globalisation and digital transformation has shown several opportunities to reform the current policy frameworks in the coming years in context of digital development.
- Development of eGovernment has a central role to play to meet these challenges and make use of the emerging digital opportunities. Amongst others, the digital transformation can strengthen the trust in governments that is necessary for policies to have effect: by increasing the transparency, responsiveness, reliability, and integrity of public governance.
- eGovernment is significant for the development of the data economy and the Digital Single Market, especially for ensuring the secure and free movement of data as an enabler for digital innovation in Europe and for reducing the costs of and barriers to seamless functioning of the Single Market.

¹ Including for some countries the high-level officials acting effectively, according to their respective national governance set-up, in the role similar to ministers in leading eGovernment policy and coordination across their government.

² <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/03/25-rome-declaration/>



- Since the adoption of the 2009 Malmö Declaration,³ we have taken many steps towards modernising the delivery of public services nationally and across the borders within the EU with digital tools. However, we are yet to seize the full potential of the digital transformation in our administrations as well as at the EU level.
- The EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020⁴ has been a significant step in this transformation journey. However, more needs to be done and faster to ensure its implementation, including to spread digitisation across all policy areas and to put the end-users – citizens, businesses, public sector employees – truly at the centre of services (user-centricity).
- It is time to start laying the foundation for further digital evolution and joint actions beyond 2020, while ensuring the sustainability of current achievements and initiatives. At EU level, this does not have to result in increasing the total EU budget, but rather reorientation and clear prioritisation of expenditures to support the objectives and policy action lines laid out in this declaration.
- The digital transformation of the public administration is our collective endeavour at national, regional and local levels within our countries as well as by the EU institutions⁵, respecting the division of competences. Our efforts can be greatly facilitated by collaboration, interoperable solutions and sharing of good practices throughout public administrations and across borders.
- Development of eGovernment has to respect, support and enhance the fundamental freedoms of people such as freedom of expression, privacy and right to the protection of personal data, and comply with relevant EU laws, especially the General Data Protection Regulation.

Building on previous initiatives, such as the Council of the EU Conclusions on the EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020⁶ and taking note of the statement of national digital champions on eGovernment signed in Bratislava,⁷ we **confirm our commitment to the vision laid out in the EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 and in the European Interoperability Framework.**⁸ Thus, the overall vision remains to **strive to be open, efficient and inclusive, providing borderless, interoperable, personalised, user-friendly, end-to-end digital public services to all citizens and businesses** – at all levels of public administration.

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/sites/digital-agenda/files/ministerial-declaration-on-egovernment-malmo.pdf>

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/communication-eu-egovernment-action-plan-2016-2020-accelerating-digital-transformation>

⁵ Meaning in this declaration: the institutions as per Article 13 of the Treaty of the EU, plus also collectively the EU agencies and bodies.

⁶ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12359-2016-INIT/en/pdf>

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/digital-champions-bratislava-statement-egovernment>

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/eif_en



To reach this vision and bring to life the principles of the EU eGovernment Action Plan, **we will in the next five years (2018-2022) take steps towards the following objectives in our public administrations:**

- For the principles of **digital-by-default, inclusiveness and accessibility, we will:**
 - **ensure that European citizens and businesses may interact digitally with public administration**, if they choose to do so and whenever feasible and appropriate from a cost-benefit and user-centricity perspective;
 - work to ensure the consistent quality of user experience in digital public services as set out in the Annex “**User-centricity principles for design and delivery of digital public services**” of this declaration;
 - work to increase the readiness of European citizens and businesses to interact digitally with the public administrations;
- For the principle of **once only**, we will work to implement it **for key public services, at least as an option** for citizens and businesses;
- For the principle of **trustworthiness and security**, we will:
 - ensure that information **security and privacy needs are taken into consideration when designing public services and public administration information and communication technology (ICT) solutions**, following a risk-based approach and using state-of-the-art solutions;
 - work to **increase the uptake of national eID schemes**, including to make them more user-friendly and especially more suitable for mobile platforms, while ensuring their appropriate security levels;
- For the principle of **openness and transparency**, we will make it **possible for citizens and businesses to better manage** (e.g. access, check and inquire about the use of, submit corrections to, authorise (re)use of) **their personal data held by public administrations**, at least in base registries and/or similar databases where feasible;
- For the principle of **interoperability by default**, we will **work on national interoperability frameworks** based on the European Interoperability Framework (EIF), while respecting also the relevant national standards, and adhere to EIF for cross-border digital public services.

Policy action lines

The policy action lines stated below will be applied to the extent and in ways that are appropriate and feasible in the particular country and digital public service context, taking account of, for example, user-centricity, cost-benefit, personal data protection or security considerations, or the subsidiarity principle.



We, the signatories, undertake in our countries and call upon the EU institutions to undertake the following lines of policy action to move towards the five-year objectives:

1) Digital-by-default, inclusiveness and accessibility

We will in our countries:

- provide citizens and businesses with the option to interact digitally with public administrations, if they choose to, while following the “User-centricity principles for design and delivery of digital public services” as set out in the Annex of this declaration;
- take steps to reduce the need for citizens and businesses to unnecessarily interact with public administrations, for example, by relying on (re)use of data;
- take steps to further increase the readiness of citizens and businesses to interact digitally with public administrations by developing their digital skills as well as promoting the available digital public services (including cross-border ones);
- ensure better digital accessibility of public services and information for all citizens and businesses, including by improving the accessibility of public administration websites and mobile apps;⁹
- take steps to enable seamless digital delivery of services across sectors and collaboration in public service provision, by allowing EU institutions, private sector and civil society linkages to information held in public administration databases and systems in appropriate policy areas.

We call upon:

- ***the Commission and other EU institutions*** to adopt the digital-by-default principle and commitments similar to the annexed “User-centricity principles for design and delivery of digital public services” for all service interactions with EU institutions – by 2019.

2) Once only

We will in our countries:

- take steps to identify redundant administrative burden in public services and introduce once only options for citizens and businesses in digital public services by collaboration and data exchange across our administrations at national, regional and local level as well as with other countries for cross-border digital public services;

⁹ Taking note and starting from the ongoing implementation of the directive on the accessibility of websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2016.327.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:L:2016:327:TOC



- take steps to increase the findability, quality and technical accessibility of data in key base registers and/or similar databases, to build up readiness for applying the once only principle for national or cross-border digital public services;
- work to create a culture of re-use, including responsible and transparent re-use of data within our administrations;
- make use of available funding to digitise all necessary key data and implement data exchange services between administrations for applying once only on both national and/or cross-border levels.

We call upon:

- ***the Commission*** to step up the work to define the organisational and technical steps necessary for applying the once only principle to key cross-border digital public services in support of the Single Market, building on the results from pilot projects and programmes;
- ***the Commission*** to further explore possibilities of Standard Business Reporting in view of the implementation of the ESMA European Single Electronic Format to make company data comparable, transparent and accessible digitally to reduce administrative burdens;
- ***the EU institutions*** to apply the once only principle for the EU-level digital public services they own and coordinate, in all policy areas – by 2022.

3) Trustworthiness and Security

We will in our countries:

- speed up preparations in our countries to ensure timely implementation and promote the widespread use across sectors of the Regulation on electronic identification (eID) and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market (eIDAS)¹⁰, including to undertake the voluntary notification of electronic identity schemes used for access to public services at earliest possibility;
- work to make our digital public services secure and properly identifiable by using the eIDAS framework for qualified electronic trust services, including by advancing the take-up of qualified website authentication certificates and qualified electronic seals;
- enable the private sector to make use of national eID schemes and trust services in securing the delivery of their digital services, where beneficial to the citizen, including by the further development of single sign-on, mandates and delegations;
- co-ordinate, exchange and collaborate more with each other to increase our strategic, operational, research and development capacity in the area of cybersecurity, in particular

¹⁰ http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.257.01.0073.01.ENG



via the implementation of the network and information security (NIS) directive¹¹ to strengthen the security and resilience of our public administration and services.

We call upon:

- ***the Commission*** to work jointly with our countries to develop proposals on how take EU research and development funding more into use for the development of cybersecurity and privacy tools and technologies and their deployment in the public administration – in 2018;
- ***the Commission*** to take steps to increase the recognition of eIDAS compliant solutions by global market players, in particular, for notified electronic identification means and qualified website authentication certificates, and to provide support to accelerate the uptake of those services for cross-border activities;
- ***the Commission*** to continue promoting the development and use of standards that ensure uniform conditions for the implementation of eIDAS Regulation.

4) Openness and transparency

We will in our countries:

- make it possible for citizens and businesses to digitally manage their personal data held by the public administration (e.g. access, check and inquire about the use of, submit corrections to, authorise (re)use of), at least for base registries and/or similar databases;
- increase the availability and quality of open government data that is of value to economy and society, including by adopting the open-by-default approach and enabling more the automatic linkages to databases (for example, by application programming interfaces);
- take steps to ensure long-term preservation of public information resources in a cost-effective way by taking it into consideration in design of public administration ICT solutions.

We call upon:

- ***the EU institutions*** to make it easier for citizens and businesses to fully digitally manage (e.g. access, check and inquire about the use of, submit corrections to, authorise (re)use of) their personal data that EU institutions hold – by the end of 2020;
- ***the Commission*** to take the lead and involve Member States in preparing an initiative on accessibility and re-use of public and publicly funded data, based on the evaluation of existing legislation and subject to an impact assessment, and further explore the possibility of opening up privately held data of public interest, as proposed in the Digital Single Market mid-term review – by spring 2018;
- ***the Commission*** to become more active in the area of open government at global level, to advance this transformation and relevant mutual learning across the world.

¹¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016L1148>



5) Interoperability by default

We will in our countries:

- enhance the re-use of emerging joint solutions under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) programme or other common frameworks¹² - in particular eID, eSignature, eDelivery, eProcurement and eInvoicing - and promote their implementation in more domains, while avoiding sectoral duplication of service infrastructures;
- make more use of open source solutions and/or open standards when (re)building ICT systems and solutions (among else, to avoid vendor lock-ins), including those developed and/or promoted by EU programmes for interoperability and standardisation, such as ISA²;
- make ICT solutions owned by or developed for the public administrations more readily available for reuse in private sector and civil society, for example, by developing and publishing terms and conditions on how third parties may reuse the solutions.

We call upon:

- **the EU institutions** to implement the European Interoperability Framework and the Interoperability Action Plan (including within all Commission services), especially for cross-border services within the Single Market – by the end of 2021;
- **the Commission** to discuss cross-border interoperability principles and work to reach relevant agreements with global partners, especially the eIDAS framework for global interoperability and mutual recognition of electronic identities and trust services;
- **the Commission**, building on the Council Conclusions on mainstreaming digital solutions and technologies in EU development policy, to submit proposals on how to fully integrate digital considerations into the EU's external development policy support instruments, to ensure interoperability with EU frameworks and standards when third countries make investments to digital infrastructure and services with EU assistance – by the end of 2019;
- **the Commission** to consider strengthening the requirements for use of open source solutions and standards when (re)building of ICT systems and solutions takes place with EU funding, including by an appropriate open licence policy – by 2020.

6) Horizontal enabling policy steps

We will in our countries:

- take steps to increase the digital leadership skills among top civil and public servants and digital skills more widely within the public administration at all levels, as a necessary precondition to any successful digital transformation of public administrations;

¹² e.g. those implemented by ISA² and CEF programmes



- prepare and implement initiatives to widen and deepen the use of data and analytics (including big data) in our countries to move to data-driven public services and make full use of data for better decision-making;
- commit to expand and deepen the exchange and sharing of good eGovernment practices and successful domestic solutions, to speed up the digital transformation at all levels of government – including by enhancing the joint governance structures with local and regional authorities;
- make efforts to ensure adequate and timely funding resources for the prioritised digital transformation in our public administrations, at all levels;
- devote resources for more and faster experimentation with emerging ICT within the public administration, including by the offering of ‘testbeds’ for researchers and businesses;
- work to modernise the design of public services, procurement and contracting arrangements, to make them compatible with modern and agile ways of developing and deploying digital technology.

We call upon:

- ***the EU institutions*** to improve the inter-institutional cooperation and step up individual efforts for thorough digital transformation of their organisations, following the EU eGovernment Action Plan and the European Interoperability Framework principles;
- ***the Commission***, building on the Council Conclusions on mainstreaming digital solutions and technologies in EU policy, to fully integrate digital considerations into existing and future policy and regulatory initiatives;
- ***the Commission*** to prepare a roadmap on how to fully embrace digital transformation for all Commission-managed funding distribution processes, which is a key area of red tape right now – by 2018;
- ***the Commission*** to launch initiatives to improve digital skills more widely within its services, especially the digital leadership skills among management – by the end of 2018;
- ***the Commission*** to take steps to harmonise and consolidate indicators of eGovernment progress in the EU across policy areas, including to reinforce the coordination with statistical work of Eurostat;
- ***the Commission*** to prepare proposals on the future (post 2020) and sustainability of existing EU-level cross-border digital service infrastructures and building blocks, including their funding and management, in anticipation of the end of the current Connecting Europe Facility programme and based on the experiences and evaluation of the large scale pilots – within the process of the next EU multiannual financial framework preparations;
- ***the Commission*** to convene and support the work of groups of interested countries and other parties to exchange practices and develop reference guidelines and standards for taking emerging ICT into use in the public administration, for example, starting with data analytics, artificial intelligence and blockchain;



- **the Commission** to support our countries in the digital transformation of our public administrations, including by making resources more and easily available through EU-level instruments for research and practical deployment of emerging ICT in the public administration, with due attention for connected ethical issues.

We call upon the Commission to take note of this declaration when adding further actions to the eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020.

We will annually present our progress on implementation of this declaration in our countries through the eGovernment Action Plan Steering Board. We also **call upon the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU to take stock of the implementation of this declaration in autumn 2018.**



Annex: User-centricity principles for design and delivery of digital public services

We, the ministers in charge of policy and coordination of digital public services in the countries of the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), recognise the needs and expectations of our citizens and businesses as they interact with public administrations. We commit that the design and delivery of our services will be guided by the following principles of user-centricity.

When interacting with public administrations and using digital public services, citizens and businesses should expect:

Digital Interaction

- To have the option to digitally interact with their administrations

Accessibility, security, availability and usability

- That the services are made more accessible (including findable) and secure and can be used by all in a non-discriminatory manner, with appropriate assistance available upon need
- That the principles of universal design have been applied to the setting up of the services and that the websites are simple to read and easy to understand
- That the authenticity of digital public services is secured and can be recognised in a clear and consistent manner

Reduction of the administrative burden

- That public administrations make efforts to reduce the administrative burden on citizens and businesses, namely by optimizing and/or creating digital processes and services where relevant and possible, and by offering personalised and pro-active services
- Not to be asked to provide the same information to public services more than once, in due respect of data protection rules and regulations

Digital delivery of public services

- That public services can as much as possible and appropriate, especially upon request of the user, be fully handled online, including the provision of any evidence required to obtain a right or fulfil obligations
- That the status of service delivery can be checked online where relevant

Citizen engagement

- That digital means are used to empower citizens and businesses to voice the views, allowing policy makers to collect new ideas, involve citizens more in the creation of public services and provide better digital public services

Incentives for digital service use

- The barriers to use digital public services should be effectively removed, including by extending and promoting the benefits of, for example, higher confidence, speed, effectivity and reduced costs to individuals who are able to use them

Protection of personal data and privacy

- That the handling of personal data respects the general data protection regulation and privacy requirements in the EU and national levels, when applicable informing citizens about the use and storage of their personal data and allowing citizens to access and ask for the correction and deletion of personal data, where appropriate

Redress and complaint mechanisms

- That redress mechanisms are available online and that citizens and business have access to complaint procedures online, while also in other available channel(s) of their choice

