COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Council Conclusions on eGovernment for all Europeans

2735th TRANSPORT, TELECOMMUNICATIONS and ENERGY Council meeting
Luxembourg, 8-9 June 2006

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. WELCOMES
   - the Communication from the Commission on "i2010 eGovernment Action Plan : Accelerating eGovernment in Europe for the Benefit of All"[1]
   - the Communication from the Commission on "Interoperability for Pan-European eGovernment Services"[2].

2. RECALLS
   - the Conclusions of the European Council in March 2005 relaunching the Lisbon strategy;
   - the Conclusions of the European Council in March 2006 calling on the Commission and the Member States to implement the new i2010 Strategy vigorously;
   - the general objectives of the i2010 strategy as endorsed in the Council Conclusions of December 2005;
   - the Council Conclusions on eGovernment of November 2003;
   - the objectives of the Ministerial Declaration of the European eGovernment Conference of Manchester in November 2005;
   - the outcome of the High Level Seminar in Vienna in February 2006 on "eGovernment for all Europeans".

[1] COM(2006) 173 final.
[2] COM(2006) 45 final.

P R E S S

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3. RECOGNISES

- the need to join common efforts, in order to achieve wider impact and promote take-up around the policy priorities and the objectives, as set out in the Ministerial Declaration of Manchester and the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan in the areas of :
    a. Inclusive eGovernment;
    b. Efficient and effective eGovernment;
    c. High impact services;
    d. Key enablers, including management of electronic identifications;
- the growing interest in eParticipation and the impact of ICT on activities in the political sphere and welcomes its inclusion in the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan;
- the importance of innovation as an essential part of eGovernment and the significant contribution of the public sector in achieving the overall Lisbon goals;
- the important role efficient and seamless eGovernment services play in improving the competitiveness of European economies;
- the need to formulate requirements and identify opportunities to stimulate innovation and lead markets through eGovernment solutions;
- the necessity to continuously improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public administrations by promoting innovative services and processes aiming at reducing administrative burden on citizens and businesses;
- that high-impact eGovernment services have the potential to facilitate the exercise of the four internal market freedoms, to ensure better quality of life and inclusion and to enable greater participation of European citizens in the decision-making process at European, national, regional and local levels;
- the need to safeguard through the promotion of open standards, open specifications, open interfaces and interoperable solutions that eGovernment solutions at the national level do not lead to new barriers in the internal market.

4. UNDERLINES

- that the implementation of the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan should be guided by key principles, such as sustainability, interoperability, inclusiveness, transparency, mutual recognition of key enablers, data protection, security based on privacy enhancing technologies and policies and multi-platform service provision;
- the need to establish a culture of active cooperation and coordination between all stakeholders in designing and delivering eGovernment and coherent policy approaches;
- the importance and the potential of "pilot" regional co-operation models in identifying eGovernment solutions, that could be further promoted at European Union level;
- that policy measures should pay attention to the regional and local dimensions in delivering electronic services as well as to national administrative systems and legal cultures;
- the need to make better use of existing eGovernment resources, as currently developed and managed by Member States and the Commission.

5. INVITES THE COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES TO

- undertake all necessary efforts to implement the specific objectives, actions and roadmaps as outlined in the Action Plan, in particular to :

- intensify the collaboration between public administrations at all levels across Member States, in order to ensure the creation, development and implementation of user-centered and inclusive services, in particular cross-border services or common access to appropriate national services for all EU citizens, whilst taking into account the principle of subsidiarity;
- develop and agree an effective and proportionate measurement framework for e-Government services, including reduction on burden on businesses, citizens and public administration and evaluating satisfaction with public services, in order to track progress and provide a basis for an assessment against the Action Plan;
- further support a structured and regular dialogue with all stakeholders contributing in particular to the interchange of eGovernment solutions;
- share eGovernment resources in all relevant projects from 2006 on and explore mechanisms to ensure the long-term financial and operational sustainability, in order to optimize the existing information and best practice exchange mechanisms, including building blocks and technical solutions aiming at interoperability between national information systems and improving administrative cooperation;
- promote the implementation of high-impact eGovernment services for citizens and businesses across the EU, including eProcurement and other services with a direct impact on the internal market through appropriate demand stimulation policies and initiatives;
- put in place, on the basis of existing services and work going on at national and European level, key enablers such as interoperable electronic identification for the secure access to electronic public services based, where appropriate, on recognised international standards, common strategies, guidelines, terminology, and consistent architectures, while fully respecting data protection legislation;
- create appropriate conditions by agreeing during 2006 on a roadmap for the recognition of authenticated electronic documents and strengthening efforts in developing a long-term archiving model within the European Union;
- experiment with innovative eParticipation schemes aiming at increasing participation in democratic processes focusing on tools and addressing citizens' demands.

6. INVITES THE MEMBER STATES TO
- undertake all necessary efforts to promote the policy priorities and the achievement of the objectives related to i2010 eGovernment Action Plan when designing their National Reform Programmes (NRPs);
- ensure an appropriate legal and organisational environment which stimulates the creation of accessible, inclusive, user-centered and seamless electronic services of public administrations across the European Union and wider ICT take-up in the public and private sectors;
- focus on a sustainable approach providing public servants with the necessary skills and competencies to manage change and provide citizens, businesses and administrations with user-centric services leading to tangible benefits and improving quality of life;
- make available secure means of electronic identification, in order to access electronic services, taking into account user convenience and the principle of mutual recognition within the EU;

- encourage the use of commonly developed key enablers within public administrations at all levels, thus promoting interoperability, the use of open standards and interactive and integrated electronic public services;
- further enhance the role of public-private partnerships in promoting the development of eGovernment solutions, thus contributing to the implementation of the eGovernment policy agenda.

7. INVITES THE COMMISSION TO
   - monitor the implementation of the objectives of i2010 eGovernment Action Plan in close cooperation with the Member States and strengthen coordination processes;
   - accelerate and support the implementation of those objectives, in particular by :
     - promoting interoperability and open standards by ensuring that European standardisation policy addresses, where necessary, the particular needs for effective eGovernment;
     - ensuring coherent and efficient use of the eGovernment-related EU programs, in order to create greater synergies;
     - encouraging investment in ICT Research and Development, supporting, as far as appropriate, the development of synergies between national and Community research and innovation efforts in eGovernment by using existing instruments for Research and Technological Development;
     - encouraging the dissemination of learning and good practice through the i2010 High Level Group, biennial Ministerial conferences and good practice awards;
     - continuing the assessment of economic and social impact of cross-border eGovernment services;
   - put in place the necessary mechanisms to stimulate pilot projects and other necessary support activities in line with existing and future Community programmes;
   - report annually to the European Parliament and the Council, in the framework of the Annual Report on the European Information Society, on relevant progress in achieving the i2010 policy priorities and to recommend, where appropriate, policy adjustments.

8. INVITES STAKEHOLDERS TO
   - participate actively in the process of the implementation of the eGovernment policy agenda by considering public-private partnerships in promoting the development of eGovernment solutions, so that eGovernment solutions should not necessarily be limited to public sector bodies;
   - actively contribute to the development of shared roadmaps and put building blocks in place;
   - support the delivery of more inclusive services through innovative policy design and more effective delivery across all sectors;
   - structure the involvement of SMEs, which are essential partners in the deployment at the local level, and of civil society, particularly concerning eParticipation;
   - report on the significant progress made by industry in the realisation of the objectives of the eGovernment i2010 Action Plan."