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**CONSULTATION DOCUMENT FOR A FUTURE POLICY PAPER ON PAN-EUROPEAN
GOVERNMENT E-SERVICES**

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's Europe citizens are free to work and re-locate within the Union. Enterprises trade and carry out business across the Union. When citizens and enterprises do this they frequently have to interact with national public administrations. Member States are currently putting in place e-Government strategies that will allow such interactions to take place electronically. In parallel, they are frequently improving their business processes and the way in which business with citizens and enterprises is carried out.

However, there is a risk that the development of government e-services may inadvertently result in the erection of barriers to the continued development of the single market and the associated freedoms of movement. This would happen if citizens and enterprises who need to interact electronically with a national public administration other than their own were unable to do so. For enterprises it could mean a relative loss of competitiveness, and for citizens increased costs. For Europe it could mean that the development of the single market and the associated four freedoms is hampered or even blocked.

Not all government e-services have potential users across the Union. However, some e-services clearly should be open to cross-border users. In this document, the phrase 'pan-European government e-service' is used to describe this type of service. Examples for enterprises include online applications for public procurement and for company registration. For citizens, examples include e-services relating to work and study (e.g. the social security consequences for citizens crossing borders for work / study).

In these and similar situations, a major policy objective should be to ensure that, when a Member State provides pan-European government e-services, these services are really open to and accessible by citizens and enterprises in other Member States. That is to say, this kind of government e-service must provide for trans-border access to them and for any associated exchange of information with public administrations in other Member States.

The long-term vision is, therefore, to:

ensure that all citizens, enterprises and administrations will have access, where needed, to the pan-European e-services of any EU public administration in a seamless way, regardless of whether the service or any information or documentation associated with or needed as pre-requisite to the service, is under the responsibility of a local, regional or national public administration, or a European institution or agency.

Following from this, pan-European Government e-services should be developed¹ so that:

¹ In connection with this, the IDA (Interchange of Data between Administrations) programme of the Enterprise Directorate General has a long tradition in the provision of pan-European e-services, particularly in the Administration to Administration (A2A) business area. Developers of pan-European government e-services could build on the experiences of IDA, and on IDA deliverables such as the Catalogue of IDA Generic Services and the IDA Architecture Guidelines. Further information on IDA can be obtained at: <http://www.europa.eu.int/ispo/ida>

- the benefits of electronic ways of working will accrue to all Europe’s citizens and enterprises, particularly where there is a need to interact electronically with a public administration in another Member State;
- the development of pan-European government e-services is congruent with single market objectives; and
- the pan-European government e-services are available on-line through multiple channels and designed to meet the needs of their customers (be they citizens, enterprises or administrations) both in the Member State providing the service and abroad.

2. GOVERNMENT E-SERVICES TODAY

While all Member States are well on their way in the planning and delivery of government e-services² it would be fair to say that such services are generally not designed with the encouragement of trans-European mobility or e-business in mind.

These concerns were expressed in a report, prepared by the European Institute of Public Administration for the Swedish presidency of the EU, and presented at the 36th Conference of the Directors-General of the Public Service of the Member States of the European Union, Uppsala Sweden, 17th and 18th May 2001. The report ‘Public e-Services within the European Union Today’³, noted that national e-services aimed at facilitating free movement were poorly, if at all, developed.

While these studies were primarily concerned with the freedom of movement of Europe’s citizens, there is no reason to believe that an improved situation exists for enterprises.

This was confirmed by the study ‘Benchmarking of electronic service delivery in the public sector’⁴, produced by the IDA (Interchange of Data between Administrations) programme of the Enterprise Directorate General. This showed that there is considerable room for improvement in the pan-European dimension of government e-services. The study concluded that it is currently quite difficult to get access to full e-services from abroad⁵. This may be due to language aspects, as well as to problems in locating and using a service from abroad.

² Examples of government e-services available today are provided in annex B.

³ An extract from this report is available on the IDA (Interchange of Data between Administrations) web site: <http://ag.idaprogram.org/Indis35prod/fileattachments/719.DOC>

⁴ The report ‘Benchmarking of electronic service delivery in the public sector’ is available on the IDA web site at: <http://ag.idaprogram.org/Indis35Prod/doc/386>

⁵ In this area, the IDA project ‘Portal of the EU Administration’ will offer services online to EU citizens and enterprises in specific areas. The pilot will focus on mobility and will include the needs of EU citizens that wish to work or study in another Member State and of enterprises that want to establish in other Member States. A preliminary report on the IDA portal project is available on the IDA web site at: <http://ag.idaprogram.org/Indis35Prod/doc/321>.

This was also an issue of concern expressed at the Swedish presidency / IDA (Interchange of Data between Administrations) conference⁶, held in Sandhamn, Sweden, 13th and 14th June 2001. However, the conference also recognised that government e-services can also be a facilitator of trans-border services. It was recognised that the provision of e-government services would give confidence in electronic ways of working to the enterprises, in particular small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In addition, the conference proposed that the Member States and the European institutions should initially establish e-procurement systems to encourage SMEs to participate in trans-border services.

However, the Sandhamn conference also noted that the requirements of enterprises for trans-border services with public administration are not known with a high degree of certainty. This point was taken up in the Ministerial Declaration, approved at the Belgian Presidency / European Commission conference 'eGovernment: From Policy to Practice'⁷, Brussels, 29th and 30th November 2001. Here the Ministers agreed to encourage national administrations and the EU institutions to establish a common view on which pan-European e-services are most essential on a European level, and to the establishment of an e-government platform, building on the European Forum on eGovernment⁸ and the eGovernment Observatory⁹.

In their operations enterprises make use of a wide range of government services. Typically these include taxation, social welfare contributions, statistical returns, compliance with employment regulations, obtaining licenses, permits, etc. These services are increasingly provided by public administrations as 'e-services' accessible over the internet. If an enterprise operates in more than one Member State they will need to access the e-services not only of their own public administration but potentially those of the public administrations of each Member State within which they do business.

⁶ The full proceedings of the Sandhamn conference are available on the IDA web site: <http://ag.idaprog.org/Indis35Prod/doc/316>

⁷ Belgian Presidency / European Commission conference 'eGovernment: From Policy to Practice' http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/egovconf/index_en.htm

⁸ The creation of a European Forum on e-Government, open to both the public authorities and the enterprise sector, was initially proposed at the 8th meeting of the European ministers for the public service and administration, meeting in Strasbourg, in November 2000, as part of the French presidency of the European Union. Its aim is to promote exchanges of practical experiences, both cross-regional and cross-functional, and information on the development of e-Government initiatives as far as on-line public services are concerned. This permanent exchange system should inform European e-government policy makers in real time, contribute efficiently to an assertion of European know-how in the field of e-Government and reinforce its presence in international events. http://www.fonction-publique.gouv.fr/lactualite/lesgrandsdossiers/europe/Egouvernement_uk.htm

⁹ The eGovernment Observatory is an IDA action that will gather information on existing e-government initiatives, and on emerging trends in applications, technologies and related areas that have the potential to be major enablers of e-government. The Observatory will carry out general surveillance of e-government activities, trends, technologies, and also carry out in-depth analyses. The role of the eGovernment Observatory in the establishment of a common view on which pan-European eServices are most essential on a European level was noted in the Ministerial Declaration, approved at the Belgian Presidency / European Commission conference 'eGovernment: From Policy to Practice'⁹, Brussels, 29th and 30th November 2001. http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/egovconf/index_en.htm

The requirements of citizens for trans-border access to government e-services may not be as obvious as the needs of enterprises. However, a large number of Europe's citizens do have real needs for such access. These would include citizens that live in one Member States but work or study across the border in another Member State. There is a wide range of government e-services relating to taxation, social welfare, employment regulations, registration and participation in education, car registration etc. that these citizens may need to access. Trans-border access to government e-services would also be required, for example, by people who buy holiday homes or acquire assets in Member States other than their own. Trans-border access to government e-services may also be required in situations relating to changes in employment status and in the family, such as marriage, child-birth, adoption and death.

In addition, the further development of the knowledge-based economy, the functioning of the single market, particularly for services, and the enlargement of the Union, may well entail increased cross-border business with public administrations. This will occur particularly in the areas of access to government information, compliance with regulations, and from increased trade and the associated exchange of administrative transactions with the EU candidate countries. Cross-border users, therefore, will include not only users in other Member States, but also users in the candidate countries. Furthermore, government e-services will also act as an important factor in the integration of the ultra-peripheral regions with the Union.

As the political imperative for establishing pan-European Government e-services has been recognised by the two most recent presidencies, the task is now for the Member States administrations and the European institutions to ensure that such services, open to all, are implemented.

3. PAN-EUROPEAN GOVERNMENT E-SERVICES

The purpose of this consultation is to establish the needs and priorities for Europe's enterprises and citizens to have access to pan-European government e-services where these are provided by a Member State's administration other than their own

There are various reasons for developing pan-European government e-services. The ability to interact electronically with public administrations in other Member States will make life easier for enterprises and citizens that need to do so. Access for enterprises and citizens to government e-services in all Member States will support the functioning of the single market, which all Member States are obliged to support. In addition, it may be possible to add value by the development of certain types of government e-services (e.g. 'one stop shops') at the European level.

Looking at government e-services today, it would appear that there are at least four types of government e-service that have a cross-border dimension.

3.1. Cross-border users

The first are those government-services that should be open to users in other Member States. An example of such an e-service would be online public procurement.

To ensure that enterprises can interact electronically on an equal footing with all Member States' public administrations the objective should be to ensure, where there is a business need, that these services are open to users in other Member States¹⁰.

Citizens may also need to interact electronically with national administrations other than their own. But they are more likely to need access to information services, particularly in the areas of work, social security and study. Consequently, these e-services should also be designed with consideration for the needs of users, both enterprises and citizens, in other Member States.

3.2. Information exchange between Europe's public administrations

The second are government e-services that need access to information held by public administration in another Member State. An example would be where an e-service needs to confirm the taxation status or social welfare contribution of a citizen. If the citizen comes from another Member State, the e-service may need to obtain the relevant information from that citizen's national public administration.

3.3. Life events for citizens and enterprises at the European level

Frequently, the requirement to share or obtain access to information results from the development by the Member States of government e-services based on 'life events'¹¹ (for citizens) and 'business episodes'¹² (for enterprises). Life event processing aims to eliminate or significantly reduce the burden on the user of dealing with multiple administrative bodies by ensuring that a single event captures all the necessary user-related information. While there are many ways of implementing life events they frequently involve the sharing or exchange of information between different administrative bodies.

¹⁰ An example of a government e-service that must be open to cross-border transactions is public e-procurement. Examples of the various national initiatives in this area are provided by the eEurope initiative's Accelerating e-Commerce priority area's web site: http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/action_plan/stimulate/ecommerce/member_states/emarketplaces/index_en.htm

¹¹ The term 'life events' refers to the government services needed at specific stages in life. Typical examples of life events include: having a baby; starting / leaving school; changing employment status; being a victim of crime; moving home; becoming disabled; retiring; dealing with bereavement. Services related to life events are usually provided by more than one government agency. Government e-services based on life events intend to join up these services in a way that is useful to customers. An example of government e-services based on life events that are currently provided at the national level is the UK government's 'UK Online' web site: <http://www.ukonline.gov.uk/lifeepisodes/>

¹² The term 'business episodes' refers to the components of the business life cycle. They are, in effect, life events for enterprises. Typical examples of business episodes include starting a business, employing staff, acquiring a licence, statutory returns, taxation, closing/selling a business. An example of government e-services based on business episodes that are currently provided at the national level is the Irish government's 'Basis - Business Access to State Information and Services' web site: <http://www.basis.ie/>

However, where users deal with public administrations in Member States other than their own the information necessary for the completion of the life event may be managed by another Member State's public administration.

Consequently, when Europe's public administrations develop systems based on life events they should allow for the possibility of participation in the life event by non-national administrative bodies (i.e. to develop life events at the European level). This requires that an appropriate degree of interoperability is built into the back-office systems of Europe's public administrations, or that such systems are open to interactions and requests for information and services from other administrations¹³.

3.4. European-level services

Currently, some government e-services are available at the European level¹⁴. These are e-services provided by European institutions, agencies or other international public sector organisations.

However, there is another class of government e-services for which there are good efficiency reasons for their provision at this level. These would typically be e-services for compliance with regulations for which grounds for national deviation do not exist.

The objective here is to allow European enterprises to interact in standard way when meeting common European legislative requirements with different public administrations across Europe. The benefit for enterprises would be that, operating in the single market, they would not have to 're-learn' how to perform the same business with different national administrations.

However, the provision of common pan-European e-services may be a sensitive issue. The European level is not the most obvious point of access to services. Many Member States require that government services, whether electronic or not, are provided by the administrative body closest to the

¹³ In this context, a pre-requisite for the development of government e-services open to all Europe's citizens and enterprises is the agreement of an electronic identity for the citizen and the enterprise, acceptable throughout European public administration. This was recognised as crucial at the Sandhamn conference and the importance of policy coherence on electronic identification was referred to in the aforementioned Ministerial Declaration.

¹⁴ An example of such a service for enterprises is EMEA (the European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products). EMEA issues authorisations for medicinal products in conformity with the arrangements laid down by the World Health Organisation. These authorisations certify the Community marketing authorisation and good manufacturing status of medicinal products in the EU. EMEA: <http://www.emea.eu.int/>.

For citizen oriented e-services an example is EURES (the European Employment Services). EURES aims to facilitate the free movement of workers within the European Economic Area, in particular, by providing advice to potentially mobile workers on job opportunities and living and working conditions in the EEA. EURES: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/elm/eures/en/index.htm.

Examples of other e-services currently provided at the European level include SIMAP (public procurement information (<http://www.simap.eu.int/>)), and the European Business Register (<http://www.ebr.org/>).

customer. Frequently, this may be at the local or regional level. In addition, the principle of subsidiary must be respected. A high degree of co-operation between the Member States would also be required to build common services, especially as these would feed information to or be the primary access point to Europe's diverse public administrative structures.

From the above it would appear that the provision of effective government e-services that will support Single Market functioning and the associated freedoms, as well as other EU objectives, will require:

- the inclusion of the needs of cross-border users in the planning and delivery of government e-services by Member States' public administrations;
- the co-operation of Member States' administrations in the provision of government e-services that involve access to or sharing of government information;
- the provision of certain types of government e-services at the European rather than at the national level.

4. PLANNING AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITIES AND PROCESSES

While the broad policy objectives have, to a large extent, already been agreed under the Swedish and Belgian presidencies, ensuring that government e-services are open to cross-border users will require close co-operation between the Member States and the European institutions.

Initially, this will involve:

- the identification of the needs of enterprises for pan-European government e-services. In this, it should be recognised that the needs of an enterprise operating in multiple Member States may be different from those of an enterprise that wishes to carry out cross-border business occasionally;
- the identification of the needs of citizens for pan-European government e-services and for public sector information;
- an assessment of the current availability of government e-services and of their openness to trans-border interactions;
- an assessment of the technical and interoperability standards and specifications and any legislative change required to support trans-border services.

These tasks could be carried out by the eGovernment Observatory currently being established, as well as with the analysis of the results of the current consultation on this document.

This should result in the:

- prioritisation of the business areas for which pan-European government e-services are required, and timetables for their implementation;

- agreement on the business processes in the Member States public administrations that will require closer co-ordination, and that will should support trans-border processing of life events;
- inclusion of the needs of users in other Member States in planning and project management activities;
- agreement on an interoperability framework to allow national administrative systems to share or exchange information, on authorisation, or to provide services to other administrative systems, across borders;
- establishment of pan-European benchmarks for government e-services. These would relate to openness of government e-services to trans-border users, their ability to share and exchange information with back-office processes other Member States, etc.;
- mechanisms for the identification, tracking and management of benefits. This should include a business impact analysis whenever new actions are launched and identification of the openness of e-government services to enterprises and citizens in other Member States;
- mechanisms for the identification, monitoring and resolution of problems.

5. A COMMUNICATION ON PAN-EUROPEAN GOVERNMENT E-SERVICES

This document has shown that the implementation of government e-services that, where required, are not open to cross-border users, can have negative effects on the effective implementation of the single market and on the take-up of e-government services in general. It has pointed out that government e-services will probably entail greater interoperability and information exchange between Europe's public administrations, and that this should be planned for. It has also noted that there are good reasons for the provision of certain services as a single e-service at the European level or to have greater commonality in the way these e-services are provided by the Member States.

As these are issues that affect every Member State and the European institutions, it is proposed that a Communication from the Commission to the Council, the Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee be drawn up to further the debate on these issues.

The Communication will be based on the strategy paper resulting from this consultation document, and would also ask that an action plan, developed from the following planning and prioritisation activities and the role of IDA and of other EU programmes in this area, be endorsed.

Annex A

Roadmap for the preparation of the Communication and associated co-ordination activities

In order to achieve the objectives of this consultation document, co-ordination activities within the Commission, as well as between the Commission (notably IDA) and the Member States, and open consultation with external stakeholders, are required, i.e.:

- assessment of European e-government services, as a major priority line of the possible new eEurope initiative (2003-2005), in support of the Commission key priorities for 2003 and onwards;
- consultations with stakeholders and end-users (including citizens, enterprises, their representatives and associations). In particular:
 - an on-line consultation. This will entail the publication (March 2002) of this document on the IDA web site for comments and observations by Monday 17th June 2002. This will include a determination of the views of enterprises and citizens on the types of government e-services that they believe are required at the pan-European level;
 - the updating of this document with a synthesis of the comments and observations received;
 - organisation of a conference with enterprises ('Pan-European E-Government Services for Citizens & Enterprises: The Role of IDA', (scheduled for 19th - 20th September, 2002) to 'validate' and bring forward the discussion on the issues raised herein. This will involve open discussion at the conference with representatives of the stakeholders and end users;
- use of this consultation document as a major input to the IDA mid-term evaluation, leading to the possible re-orientation of the Programme over 2003-2004 (as IDA II ends on 31/12/2004) and towards the definition of post-IDA II initiatives;
- preparation of a draft Communication for an interservice consultation in September 2002;
- finalisation of the Communication to be adopted by the Commission at the end of October 2002, as "chapeau" Communication to be presented together with the results of the IDA II mid-term evaluation and the subsequent amendments to the IDA II decisions for 2003 and 2004.

Annex B

Government e-services today

The eEurope Action Plan – eEurope 2002: An Information Society for All – was adopted by the European Council in June 2000. The plan is divided into a number of action areas one of which is Government Online.

Twenty three benchmarking¹⁵ areas are set for the Action Plan of which three are related to Government Online. These are:

- the percentage of basic public services online;
- public use of government information;
- public procurement.

The first benchmarking indicator (the percentage of basic public services online) covers twenty services. Of these eight are A2B (administration to business) services and twelve are A2C (administration to citizen) services.

The A2B services are:

- Social contribution for employees;
- Corporate tax;
- VAT ;
- Registration of a new company;
- Submission of statistical data;
- Custom declaration;
- Environmental permits;
- Public procurement

The A2C services are:

- Income taxes;
- Job search;
- Social security benefits;
- Personal documents;

¹⁵ The benchmarking report ‘Web-based Survey on Electronic Public Services’ (Results of the first measurement: October 2001) is available on the DG Information Society web site at: [HTTP://EUROPA.EU.INT/INFORMATION SOCIETY/EEUROPE/BENCHMARKING/INDEX_EN.HTM](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/benchmarking/index_en.htm)

- Car registration;
- Application for building permission
- Declaration to the police;
- Public libraries;
- Birth & marriage certificates;
- Enrolment in higher education;
- Announcement of moving;
- Health-related services.

In order to identify common trends the benchmarking indicators were grouped, in the recent benchmarking exercise, into four public services clusters. These are defined as:

- income generating services;
- registration;
- returns;
- permits and licences.

The following table provides examples¹⁶ of government e-services for each public service cluster:

Public service cluster	Service content
Income-generating services	
Income tax	Ministero dell'economia e delle finanze (IT) http://www.agenziaentrate.it
Registration	
Registration of a new company	Ministério da Justiça (PT) Web site: http://www.darn.me.pt
Returns	
Job search services	VDAB (BE) http://www.vdab.be FOREM (BE) http://www.hotjob.be
Permits and licences	
Personal documents	Oasis (IE) http://www.oasis.gov.ie

Simplified procedures and co-ordinated service provision also enable the development of interactive public services. Examples of co-ordinated e-government solutions include:

- Service–Public portal site for citizens (la portail de la administration française) (FR) : <http://www.service-public.fr>
- Portal site for electronic forms (IE): <http://www.eforms.gov.ie>

¹⁶ These examples are taken from material presented at the Belgian Presidency / European Commission conference on eGovernment: "From Policy to Practice", which included the results of the benchmarking study on online public services. This material is available at: http://www.europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/egovconf/index_en.htm

The development of interactive public services is also assisted by back-office re-organisation. Examples of government e-services related to back-office re-organisation include:

- Car registration (SE): <http://www.vv.se>
- Cross-roads bank for social security (BE): <http://www.ksz-bcss.fgov.be>
- Automatic generation of income tax returns and car registration by third parties (FI)
- EDIFACT systems for customs clearance (all countries).