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Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment

approved unanimously in Malmö, Sweden,
on 18 November 2009

We, Ministers responsible for eGovernment policy of the European Union (EU) Member States, Accession States and Candidate Countries and of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) Countries, have unanimously approved this declaration in Malmö, Sweden, on 18 November 2009, under the chairmanship of Minister Mr Mats Odell, representing the Swedish Presidency, and in the presence of Vice President of the Commission in charge of administrative affairs, audit and anti-fraud, Mr Siim Kallas, on the occasion of the Ministerial eGovernment Conference “Teaming up for the eUnion” of the Swedish Presidency

Background

1. We recognise that Europe is currently facing serious economic, social and environmental challenges. As our governments move to face and overcome these challenges, there is a growing expectation from European citizens and businesses for their governments to be more open, flexible and collaborative in their delivery of public services across Europe.
2. We recognise that eGovernment has not only become mainstream in national policies but has also reached beyond national boundaries to become an important enabler to deliver European-wide policy goals across different sectors, from justice to social security, to trading business services and beyond.
3. We recognise that better public services need to be delivered with fewer resources, and that the potential of eGovernment can be increased by promoting a common culture of collaboration and by improving the conditions for interoperability of our administrations. Such a culture should be underpinned by the principles of Good Administration.
4. We recognise that previous declarations on eGovernment agreed under the Belgian, Italian, United Kingdom and Portuguese Presidencies, have inspired collaboration and sharing between Member States and fostered progress at the European level.

Our Joint Vision and Policy Priorities for 2015

5. We aspire to a vision whereby European governments are recognised for being open, flexible and collaborative in their relations with citizens and businesses. They use eGovernment to increase their efficiency and effectiveness and to constantly improve public services in a way that caters for users' different needs and maximises public value, thus supporting the transition of Europe to a leading knowledge-based economy.

6. Through this declaration, we will build on past achievements and increase our collaboration on eGovernment. Our public administrations should jointly strive for the following policy priorities, to be achieved by 2015.

- » Citizens and businesses are empowered by eGovernment services designed around users' needs and developed in collaboration with third parties, as well as by increased access to public information, strengthened transparency and effective means for involvement of stakeholders in the policy process,
- » Mobility in the Single Market is reinforced by seamless eGovernment services for the setting up and running of a business and for studying, working, residing and retiring anywhere in the European Union,
- » Efficiency and effectiveness is enabled by a constant effort to use eGovernment to reduce the administrative burden, improve organisational processes and promote a sustainable low-carbon economy,
- » The implementation of the policy priorities is made possible by appropriate key enablers and legal and technical preconditions.

7. We, Ministers responsible for eGovernment policy of the EU Member States, Accession States and Candidate Countries and of the EFTA Countries, agree to strive for this vision and to collaborate closely with the European Commission in order to define new actions based on our policy priorities for the period from 2011 to 2015. These actions should be underpinned by our obligations under national and European legislation, in particular those on privacy and data protection and administrative procedures. These actions should further build upon and extend existing initiatives at all levels whilst taking into account the importance of information and network security across borders.

8. The objectives set out in this Declaration are entirely without prejudice to the competencies exercised at European, national or sub-national level by a variety of public administrations. The objectives set out in this Declaration are proposed as ways to improve efficiency and enhance quality in the exercise of those competencies through cooperation between Member States.

Our Shared Objectives by 2015

Citizens and businesses are empowered by eGovernment services designed around users needs and developed in collaboration with third parties, as well as by increased access to public information, strengthened transparency and effective means for involvement of stakeholders in the policy process.

Our public administrations should therefore:

9. **Improve eGovernment services to cater for the different needs of users and deliver them in the most effective way.** We will develop user-centric services that provide flexible and personalised ways of interacting with public administrations. We will develop multi-channel strategies in order to deliver eGovernment services in the most effective way. We will develop inclusive services that will help to bring down barriers experienced by digitally or socially excluded groups. Efficient eGovernment services built around the needs of users will increase trust in government and contribute to higher user satisfaction whilst achieving efficiency gains.

10. **Invite third parties to collaborate on the development of eGovernment services.** We will actively seek collaboration with third parties, for example businesses, civil society or individual citizens, in order to develop user-driven eGovernment services. Collaboration with third parties will stimulate the creation

of innovative, flexible and personalised services, increase the overall effectiveness of services and maximise public value.

11. Increase availability of public sector information for reuse. We will increase availability of public sector information for reuse, in accordance with the spirit of and the conditions established by Public Sector Information Directive 2003/98/EC. We will encourage the reuse of public data by third parties to develop enriched services that maximise the value for the public. New demand-led information products and services enabled by the reuse of public sector information will support the transition of Europe to a knowledge-based economy.

12. Strengthen transparency of administrative processes. We will explore how we can make our administrative processes more transparent. Transparency promotes accountability and trust in government.

13. Involve stakeholders in public policy processes. We will actively develop and promote effective, useful and better ways for businesses and citizens to participate in the policy processes. Increased public engagement through more effective methods at all levels enhances government's efficiency and effectiveness and improves the quality of its decisions and services.

Mobility in the Single Market is reinforced by seamless eGovernment services for the setting up and running of a business and for studying, working, residing and retiring anywhere in the European Union

Our public administrations should therefore:

14. Create a noticeable and positive change in the ease with which a business can be set up and run in the Single Market. We will enable and support the creation of seamless cross-border eGovernment services focusing our efforts on how businesses can be set up and provide and procure services and goods. To achieve this we will increase the trustworthiness, security and interoperability of eGovernment services and systems in the Single Market in order to enable and support the creation of seamless cross-border services. A well-functioning Single Market is a prerequisite for increased competitiveness of the EU.

15. Create a noticeable and positive change in the ease with which citizens can study, work, reside and retire in any Member State. We will enable and support the creation of seamless cross-border eGovernment services by focusing our efforts on these life-stages. Providing cross-border eGovernment services and enabling efficient electronic cooperation between Member States should make mobility for citizens easier and less costly.

16. Develop cross-border eGovernment services that are based on real social and economic needs. We will initiate joint projects of cross-border eGovernment services based on specific needs. Sectoral projects would benefit from synergies with other sectors and the reuse of existing infrastructures rather than developing specific sectoral-based solutions.

Efficiency and effectiveness is enabled by a constant effort to use eGovernment to reduce the administrative burden, improve organisational processes and promote a sustainable low-carbon economy.

Our public administrations should therefore:

17. Reduce the administrative burden for citizens and businesses. We will use eGovernment to reduce administrative burdens, partly by redesigning administrative processes in order to make them more efficient. We will exchange experience and jointly investigate how public administrations can reduce the frequency with which citizens and businesses have to resubmit information to

appropriate authorities. We will emphasise respect for privacy and data protection with regard to the use of personal data since it is crucial for enhancing confidence and trust. Trust and security are integral for take-up of services by citizens and businesses when creating services that rely on the electronic exchange of information.

18. Consider how organisational processes could be improved. We will analyse on a routine basis how organisational processes can be developed when we apply information and communication technologies in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness. We will foster innovation and relevant skills of our civil servants in order to increase the capabilities of our public administrations. We will also share experience, good practice and research on how this can be achieved. eGovernment is an important enabler for organisational improvements.

19. Reduce their carbon footprint. We will use information and communication technologies to support our efforts in making demonstrable reductions in carbon emissions and in contributing to wider carbon-reduction targets. We will cooperate to build a common understanding of what our targets and measurements are to lower energy consumption. Information and communication technologies play a leading role in the fight against climate change, contributing to a sustainable low-carbon economy.

The implementation of the policy priorities is made possible by appropriate key enablers and legal and technical preconditions

Our public administrations should therefore:

20. Create appropriate preconditions and key enablers to ensure closer administrative cooperation. We will conduct studies to identify and evaluate legal, organisational, semantic, and technical obstacles that hinder the development of cross-border eGovernment services and consider their solutions. Information exchange and administrative cooperation in the European Union enables our administrations to intelligently connect with each other, businesses, citizens and organisations in order to reach joint objectives and to facilitate the implementation of European legislation.

21. Pay particular attention to the benefits resulting from the use of open specifications in order to deliver services in the most cost-effective manner. We will ensure that open specifications are promoted in our national interoperability frameworks in order to lower barriers to the market. We will work to align our national interoperability frameworks with applicable European frameworks. The Open Source model could be promoted for use in eGovernment projects. It is important to create a level playing field where open competition can take place in order to ensure best value for money.

22. Regard innovation as an integral part of our way of working. We will promote innovation in eGovernment services through research and development, pilot projects and other implementation schemes. We will explore and develop the possibilities offered by new open and flexible service architectures and new computing paradigms. Innovation is a central part of eGovernment and will contribute to the goal of making Europe a leading knowledge-based economy.

Our Joint Governance and Implementation of the Policy Priorities

23. We regard this declaration as our joint policy priorities until 2015. We commit ourselves to take all the appropriate measures in order to reach these objectives and we will ensure that our national strategies and policies reflect the priorities outlined in this declaration. We will submit this Declaration to the

Council and invite the European Commission to include these priorities in the Action Plan for eGovernment.

24. We invite the Commission to secure the full support of the Member States through collaboration and coordination on the development of the action plan for 2011 to 2015, based notably on the objectives in this declaration, in the form of a Communication. A larger mid-term evaluation, based on an agreed methodology produced in collaboration between the Commission and the Member States, should be conducted in 2013 to assess the progress and difficulties encountered in the implementation of the action plan.

25. We invite the Commission to organise the joint governance of the forthcoming action plan. The Member States should follow-up the implementation of the Action Plan through membership of a steering group, chaired by the Commission. This group should consist of representatives responsible for the national strategies on eGovernment. The group should meet periodically and suggest necessary adjustments to priorities, objectives and actions.

26. We further invite the Commission to take appropriate measures to support the objectives of this declaration:

- a. **Optimise the use of available resources and instruments** in order to maximise the effect of the declaration and the forthcoming action plan. This includes conducting studies, surveys, research and development, pilots and other available implementation schemes, using the open method of coordination and investigating the need for adequate rules and regulations. Progress of eGovernment in the EU, its take-up and impact should be measured annually using a mix of instruments and methodologies in collaboration with the Member States.
- b. **Coordinate ongoing and future European eGovernment projects** so they align with the forthcoming action plan in order to facilitate sharing and avoiding unnecessary duplication of work. This includes those resulting from the ICT Policy Support Programme in the context of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, the Programme for Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administrations, the Framework Programmes for Research or any other relevant programmes and activities of the European Commission. Dissemination and take-up of the results of Large-Scale Projects in the Member States should be supported and solutions to assure the sustainability of pilots and actions under these projects and programmes should be explored. The coordination of activities should take into account the specificities of different Member States.
- c. **Conduct studies of the existing and future need for cross-border eGovernment services** for setting up and running a business in the Single Market and for studying, working, residing or retiring in Europe. These studies will provide the foundation for initiating joint projects for reinforcing the Single Market.
- d. **Identify gaps in cross-border interoperability and mutual recognition** and intensify the activities on key enablers such as trustworthy electronic identity, electronic signatures and electronic documents, and continue developing a joint infrastructure, for example the Internal Market Information system that can be used by all Member States administrations and the Commission in the provision of cross-border services. The programme for Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administrations and other European interoperability activities should play an important role in achieving this goal. When available, existing infrastructure should be used to build additional

services and development of new infrastructures should be based upon real needs which are commonly agreed.

- e. **Continue to support the efforts of the Member States** towards more open, flexible and collaborative governments by further harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies and eGovernment within the Commission through the relevant strategies and action plans.
- f. **Continue to support the sharing of experiences and good practice** between our public administrations and with the private sector and civil society. Civil servants should be encouraged to exchange experiences with colleagues, businesses and citizens. A culture of collaboration and sharing should be promoted in order to engage the community of eGovernment professionals in our public administrations.

27. Finally, we expect a close cooperation between Member States, third countries, international institutions and the European Commission towards the post-i2010 initiative. We encourage the forthcoming Presidencies to undertake appropriate initiatives and continue to actively support the Commission in developing the post-i2010 initiative. By implementing this Declaration, and by teaming up for the eUnion, Europe creates the opportunity for global leadership in eGovernment.