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21st eGovernment Benchmark Report: User centricity remains key across EU public services

Most European governments facilitate safe online access to personal data on secured portals, supporting citizen data sovereignty

Paris, July 2, 2024 – The 21st edition of Capgemini's annual eGovernment Benchmark report, which evaluated approximately 15,000 government services, revealed that more than eight out of ten (86%) services are now available online. Yet, 65% of websites fail to meet all eight of the selected criteria from the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)[1] – which gives an impression of how accessible services are to users with specific disabilities. For example, users with visual impairments experience accessibility barriers when accessing services in most EU27 countries.

The study that covers the EU27 Member States, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries and seven EU candidate countries[2], reveals clear progression over the past four years in the way governments provide services to their citizens online. The EU27's overall performance registers at 76 points out of 100, a five-point increase from two years ago. User centricity continues to be the highest scoring key dimension, with a score of 93 points. The most significant improvement was seen in the key dimension of cross-border services, which increased from 59 points to 66 points. The report further reveals that the EU is paving the way towards reaching the Digital Decade target of ubiquitous availability of public services online, where services are uniform and easily accessible regardless of country or service provider.

Interoperability is key to offering digital services to everyone
The report shows that 91% of services delivered by central government organizations (e.g. tax authorities) is available online, compared to just 71% for local governments (e.g. cities). However, this gap reduced substantially in the past four years.

There's also a large difference in the user experience for nationals and cross-border users. National users can use 88% of all the offered services digitally, whereas this is only 56% of the services for cross-border users. This means that there is a 32 percentage points gap between online availability of services for national users compared to cross-border users. Over the past four-year period, this gap has decreased slightly, coming down from 35 percentage points, but cross-borders users still encounter many barriers when requesting online services. To further catch up, local and regional government authorities should aim to improve the technological infrastructure required for high-quality services.

Interoperability is key to improving these services. Architectural building blocks, such as eID and eSignature, can be easily adopted on government websites, making services across Europe more consistent, and independent of country and service provider. By making a push towards interoperability and implementing

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[1] https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/
[2] Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, and the EU candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

the Interoperable Europe Act, Europe is moving towards seamless interaction between digital services and data across various levels of government and between public administrations and businesses or citizens.

"As we approach the 2030 milestone set by the European Commission's Digital Decade policy program, it's encouraging to see that EU countries are prioritizing the development of resilient and sovereign digital infrastructures. This is key to the deployment of accessible digital services and improving offerings for cross-border users. The Interoperable Europe Act will give a further push to this development, especially promoting the achievement of the European Once-Only Principle[3]. If it fulfils its potential, we could even see more re-use of Government Solutions across the EU instead of reinventing the wheel every time. This is especially helpful when budgets are tight and resources are limited," said Marc Reinhardt, Public Sector Global Industry Leader at Capgemini.

Growing prominence of AI-induced activities
The report indicates that enhancing AI has been a key element in the wider strategy of making the EU fit for the digital age. 29% of portals offer a live support function that includes AI capability. However, the growing prominence of AI has various regulatory implications. To address this, AI models must be created with design choices that reflect EU values.

Safe and user-centric services accelerate usability and digitalization
The report shares insights into safe, easy, and transparent services, which are key pillars for trustworthy eGovernment and service delivery. Users can identify with their national eID in 76% of services, allowing for safe authentication. Moreover, governments prefill personal information almost just as often (72%) when information is needed to complete the service, making it easier for citizens and businesses.

The eGovernment Benchmark clearly shows that governments in the European Union are adapting their websites to smartphone users. When it comes to mobile-friendliness, more than nine out of ten of all government websites are responsive on mobile devices, up from just 60% in 2017.

Cybersecurity: still room for improvement
The report indicates that less than 1% of all eGovernment websites in the EU pass all 13 security criteria tests, which indicates the need for improvement on cybersecurity. The Netherlands is the only Government that offers websites meeting all security criteria. The Netherlands also has active policies to increase awareness and provide instruments and tools to improve resilience and security. Safeguarding against cybersecurity threats also emerges as a major EU policy priority that is integral for maintaining resilient digital supply chains and infrastructure.

Niels van der Linden, Account Lead for the European Union Institutions at Capgemini Invent comments, *"Designing safe and user-centric services is key to accelerating digitalization and enhancing usability for everyone. The 2024 eGovernment Benchmark underscores the importance of these principles in the digital transformation of public services across Europe. Focusing on secure, transparent, and accessible solutions will ensure that digital advancements benefit all citizens and businesses, fostering a more inclusive and efficient digital society."*

Methodology
The report is led by Capgemini Group and jointly carried out with its consortium partners, IDC and Politecnico di Milano, underlines the key factors required to meet the digital decade targets of 2030. The study covers the EU27 Member States as well as the European Free Trade Association countries: Iceland, Norway and

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[3] https://commission.europa.eu/news/once-only-principle-system-breakthrough-eus-digital-single-market-2020-11-05_en

Switzerland, and seven EU candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

By evaluating the digital transformation efforts of governments in the EU27, the report provides a comprehensive overview and actionable insights to drive the advancement of eGovernment services across the continent. The study covers 2,344 public administrations: 1,053 central, 304 regional and 987 local government bodies.

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