

## Section 5: Guidelines to solutions to key eGovernment barriers

One of the main focal points of this project is to develop guidelines to overcome the current barriers to eGovernment across Europe. This section presents an example of these solutions—covered in more detail in Deliverable 3 (Solutions).

### 1. Leadership

- Support eGovernment champions, at whatever level such leadership emerges. Political support from the top is good, but difficult to sustain or feed down to other tiers of government unless it is backed by highly motivated and creative officials at all other levels. The leadership drive shown by these officials can, in turn, be greatly enhanced by political support, say from a Government Minister.
- Establish a Chief Information Officer (CIO) role in all relevant departments, agencies and public bodies to ensure there is a champion ready to promote eGovernment initiatives at every level. This role has been the most generally successful way of creating such champions, as demonstrated by the experience over many years in US federal departments and agencies, as well as in most private companies.
- Raise political interest and leadership priority in eGovernment through concrete shorter-term projects with high esteem, in order to offset the typically politically neutral perception of ICT and innovation issues.
- Set clear targets and guidelines for European eGovernment initiatives, including the identification of likely repercussions if the objectives are not met.

### 2. Financial inhibitors

- Identify long-term eGovernment benefits and costs rather than focusing mainly on short-term costs. Government often fails to calculate the costs, but also (and more commonly) often fails to calculate the benefits of eGovernment initiatives.
- Estimate the 'asset value' of websites and other eGovernment services, as has been done for websites and electronic services in private corporations. In doing this, governments should take account of the real public value of easily available, visible, accessible and navigable government information.
- Analyse the costs of legal modifications that could overcome eGovernment barriers (e.g. modifications to Freedom of Information Acts or Data Protection and Privacy laws) to ensure that change does not itself become a financial obstacle.

### 3. Digital divides and choices

- Acknowledge that there is no single, simple 'digital divide' between those with and those without access to the Internet. Instead, there is a segmented citizenry with distinctively different eGovernment needs.

- Recognize the importance of the need to motivate choices among citizens to take-up eGovernment once they have access, as well as ensuring that access and the competencies to use that access are widely available.
- Target eGovernment to satisfy the requirements of citizens with different needs. For instance, the most ardent Internet users should be able to access everything possible online, as that is where they will expect to deal with government. Other Internet users need to be persuaded that eGovernment can provide the same benefits as eCommerce or eBanking. And non-users need to be given practical motivations to want to try ePublic Services.
- Develop multiple channels where appropriate (e.g. print or telephone call centres as well as online services). In addition, many non-Internet users know someone or an organization who can use the Internet for them if they need it. Government should therefore identify the relevant trusted intermediaries for particular groups and provide support for them in eGovernment initiatives.
- Offer easy-to-understand 'meta-data' guides to help navigation through information, websites and other eGovernment services.
- Create multilingual online support where needed.
- Provide documents in formats that can be easily accessed by a wide range of potential users.

#### 4. Poor coordination

- Use the benefits of the Internet and web to overcome coordination problems within and between government agencies.
- Create web portals to allow easy, efficient and reliable link up and search across tiers of government, as this can make uncoordinated government look coherent from a citizen's perspective. Internal search engines can make a significant difference to how citizens perceive online government in large departments. Search optimization strategies can also improve the visibility of eGovernment.
- Evaluate and improve EU harmonization in interpreting EU Directives relevant to eGovernment.
- Develop and disseminate guidelines on the interpretation of eGovernment-related EU Directives.
- Ensure that when public bodies in the EU share data, respect is shown for the legal conditions of Directive 95/46/EC on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and the free movement of such data.
- Determine at the European level in what circumstances the re-use of public sector information should be allowed.

#### 5. Workplace and organizational inflexibility

- Understand and address reasons for resistance to eGovernment initiatives, such as negative impacts on staff when processes are redesigned (e.g. when cooperation with private parties leads to a loss of jobs within government).
- Ensure that government organizations can respond adequately to new technologies: there are often problems with web-based initiatives that work against hierarchy, formality and solemnity.
- Offer incentives to facilitate change, such as a financial bonus when making the transition.

- Do not conceive of eGovernment as a digital replacement for paper: administrative procedures should be adapted in order to reap the benefits offered by new technologies.
- Encourage wider European cooperation between administrations by harmonizing approaches at European, national, regional and local levels (e.g. for data protection regulations and in developing a common culture for re-using public sector information).

## 6. Lack of trust

- Demonstrate that eGovernment has benefits for citizens as well as government. Clarify the motives and anticipated positive effects behind eGovernment initiatives openly and honestly.
- Use incentives to encourage citizen use of eGovernment, thereby building trust in these services. Incentives include saving time and money, or getting some kind of 'value added', such as enhanced information provision or quicker and easier processing of transactions.
- Reduce online risks for citizens and clarify liability.
- Use eGovernment to enhance public administration transparency.
- Develop effective legal 'electronic rights', e.g. relating to access to information and contact with civil servants and authorities.
- Ensure and demonstrate that eGovernment processes provide a level of legal security as high as off-line processes.

## 7. Poor technical design

- Government must give as much priority as business to making its websites appealing as a 'window' to the world that is usable by all. Websites are potentially the most visible parts of government, so are becoming as important as buildings.
- Government organizations must test their online presence for usability (through user testing) and visibility (through search engine optimization strategies).
- Agree relevant technical standards, particularly those supporting interoperability, and ensure they are widely implemented.

## Sources

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