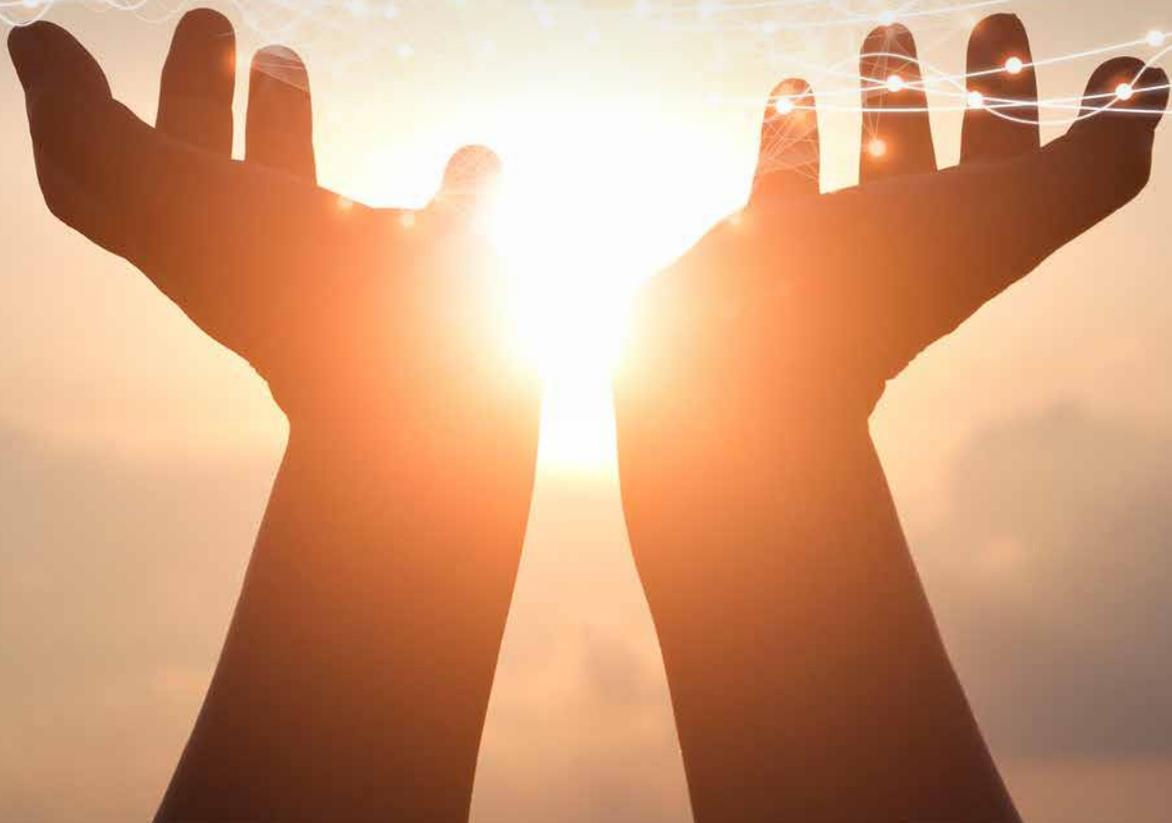




eGovernment Benchmark 2020

eGovernment that works for the people



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A study prepared for the European Commission DG Communications Networks, Content & Technology by:



Internal identification

ARES number: Ares(2019)2221960

SMART number: SMART 2019/0021

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology

Email: CNECT-BENCHMARK-EGOV@ec.europa.eu

Directorate H - Digital Society, Trust and Cybersecurity

Unit H.4 – eGovernment and Trust

Christine Redecker – Project Officer for the eGovernment Benchmark Report

Directorate F - Digital Single Market

Unit F.4 - Digital Economy and Skills

Stefanos Kotoglou – Project Officer for the eGovernment Benchmark Data Collection

European Commission

B-1049 Brussels

eGovernment Benchmark 2020

eGovernment that works for the people

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A study prepared for the European Commission
DG Communications Networks, Content & Technology

**EUROPE DIRECT is a service to help you find answers
to your questions about the European Union**

Freephone number (*):
00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you)

LEGAL NOTICE

This document has been prepared for the European Commission however it reflects the views only of the authors, and the European Commission is not liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse of this publication. The Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this study. More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://www.europa.eu>).

PDF ISBN: 978-92-76-19452-1 doi: 10.2759/135059

Manuscript completed in September 2020

First edition

The European Commission is not liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse of this publication.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020

© European Union, 2020



The reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by the Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39). Except otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). This means that reuse is allowed provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

Executive summary

eGovernment in the Spotlight

The COVID-19 crisis has shone a spotlight on the importance of eGovernment. Across the EU, citizens who are unable to leave their homes have been wholly dependent on the digital delivery of public services. From running a business, to seeking justice on a small claim, to enrolling in education, day-to-day life has moved online for hundreds of thousands of people.

The crisis has thus highlighted the importance of the yearly eGovernment Benchmark assessment, which is summarised in this report. This report, like its predecessors, provides a comprehensive, data-driven, evaluation of progress in the digital provision of public services across the 36 countries¹ measured. It benchmarks countries against the availability and characteristics of digital public services. It allows participating countries to better understand where they stand, where their strengths lie and where they could fare better.

1. **User Centricity** – To what extent are services provided online? How mobile friendly are they? And what online support and feedback mechanisms are in place?
2. **Transparency** – Are public administrations providing clear, openly communicated information about how their services are delivered? Are they transparent about the responsibilities and performance of their public organisations, and the way people's personal data is being processed?
3. **Key Enablers** – What technological enablers are in place for the delivery of eGovernment services?
4. **Cross-Border Mobility** – How easily are citizens from abroad able to access and use the online services?

Where Does Europe Stand?

In order to give a consistent and repeatable means of making valid comparisons, performance of online public services is evaluated against four “top-level” benchmarks. The average score of the four top-level benchmarks represents the overall eGovernment performance of a country, from 0% to 100%. The EU27+ overall performance stands at 68%. Two years ago, the overall performance sat at 62%. A closer examination of these four top-level benchmarks reveals that:

1. **User Centricity**: The focus on end user experience has seen this top-level benchmark increase to 87% (4 percentage points higher than two years ago)². More than three out of four public services can be fully completed online (78%). Users can find the services they are looking for via portal websites 95% of the time, and information about these services online nearly 98% of the time. The ‘one-stop-shop’ portal websites help users to find services and commonly provide online support and feedback channels. Of the three sub-indicators, the most recent one, *Mobile Friendliness*, scores lowest, albeit having seen the highest increase, up from 62% two years ago to 76% today. While this means that nearly one in four government websites are still not fully compatible with mobile devices, the speed of improvement is comforting.
2. **Transparency**: This area experienced the biggest improvement over the last two years, now sitting at 66%, increasing from 59% (7 p.p. higher than two years ago). Users receive a delivery notice when a service is completed in 64% of cases. Moreover, 98% of the websites were transparent about the organisational structure, mission and responsibilities, access to information, the possibility to request additional information and where to find the corresponding legislation.

¹ The 36 participating countries are the 27 European Union Member States, Iceland, Norway, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom, as well as Albania and North Macedonia.

² The percentage point (p.p.) changes refer to the last reporting period. The benchmark data is collected biennially. This report is based on data collected in 2018 and 2019 (referred to as the 2019 biennial average), comparing it to the previous data collection exercise in 2016 and 2017 (referred to as the 2017 biennial average).

However, the time it will take to complete online forms and obtain a service is only clear for just under half of the services (46%). It is also unclear how the government processes your personal data. The possibility to see whether your data has been used is present in 64% of the countries, when your data has been used in 42% of the countries and by whom in only 17% of the countries.

3. **Key Enablers:** European countries should improve the implementation of digital enablers in eGovernment service delivery. In total, this top-level benchmark stands at 61% across the EU27+ (4 p.p. higher than two years ago), showing ample room for improvement. On a positive note, sending and obtaining official documentation via digital channels is possible for two-thirds (68%) of the services. However, users can use their own national eID for only half (57%) of the services that require online identification. Moreover, only half (54%) of online forms contain pre-filled data to ease completion. Two thirds (67%) of government organisations allow their users to receive letters via email rather than post. Ten countries even implemented a digital post-box across all eight Life Events.
4. **Cross-Border Mobility:** This is an area for improvement. Users that want to obtain a service from another European country can do so in 62% of the services for citizens and 76% of the services for businesses. The cross-border acceptance of eIDs still requires the most investment by the EU27+. Citizens can use their own national eID solution for only 9% of the services from other countries. For businesses this number jumps to 36%. The Cross-border Mobility top-level benchmark scores the lowest of the four top-level benchmarks (56% across the EU27+, 7 p.p. higher than two years ago).

How Do Countries Compare?

Over the last two years, every one of the 36 countries measured (referred to as “EU27+” in the following) has improved the digital delivery of public services according to the four benchmarks above. However, the scale of improvement and the overall performance varies substantially.

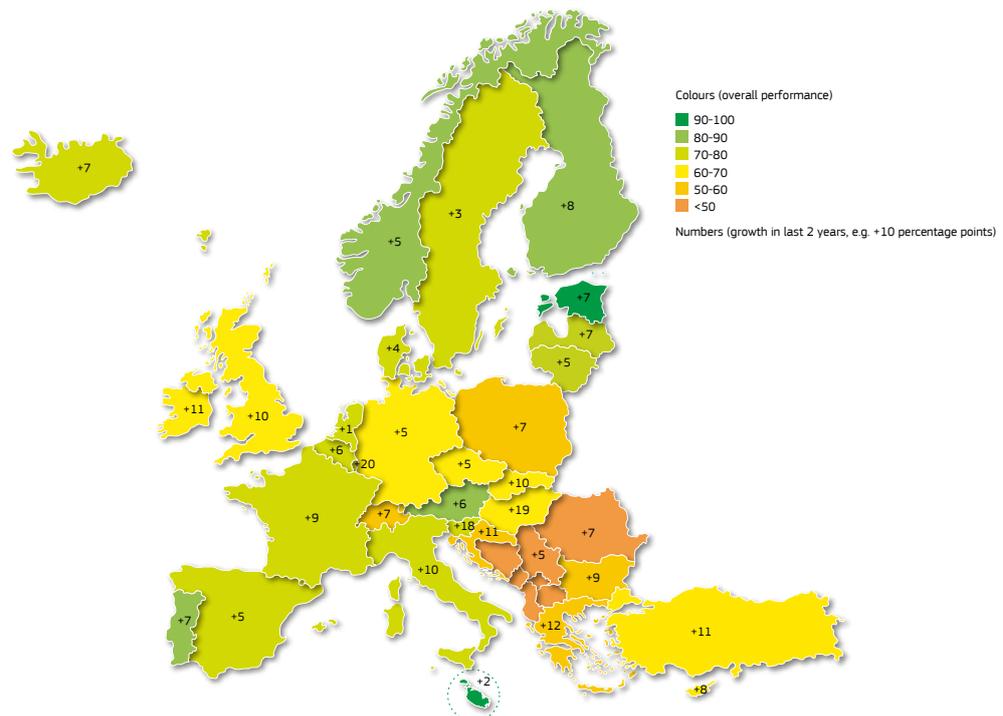


Figure 1.1 Overall country performance (2019 biennial average + growth compared to two years ago)

The European frontrunners in eGovernment are Malta (overall score of 97%), Estonia (92%), Austria (87%) and Latvia (87%). These countries score highest across all four top-level benchmarks, followed closely by Denmark (84%), Lithuania (83%) and Finland (83%).

In terms of progress, Luxembourg, Hungary and Slovenia have made the greatest advances in the last two years, rising with 20, 19 and 18 percentage points respectively (resulting in corresponding overall scores of 79%, 63% and 72%).

With few exceptions, the countries at the lower end of the performance scale have improved, thus lowering the gap between frontrunners and laggards. This is not the only gap that is narrowing. The variance of digital public service delivery at different administrative levels within one country is also diminishing. While it is comforting to note that these gaps are closing, progress is still lagging behind expectations in some areas.

The two performance gaps that are narrowing

Frontrunners vs laggards: The five top performers now score 89% on average, while the five lowest performing countries stand at 54%. This current gap for overall eGovernment performance of 35 p.p. contrasts with a gap of 50 p.p. two years ago. For the *User Centricity* top-level benchmark, the gap has narrowed to 19 p.p. The gaps are more persistent in the areas of *Transparency* (42 p.p.) and *Cross-border Mobility* (49 p.p.). The gap between the five top performers and bottom performers is most apparent for *Key Enablers* (a gap of 58 p.p.). More specifically, countries are catching up on building services with user support and feedback channels, and the online availability of services (both with a gap of 20 p.p.) and transparency of public organisations (with a gap of 32 p.p.). However, in the areas of pre-filling online forms with authentic sources and implementing eIDs nationally, we still observe gaps of 64 p.p. and 61 p.p. respectively, with minimal progress achieved in narrowing these variations (compared to gaps of 64 p.p. and 68 p.p. two years ago).

National vs Local: Historically, national administrations have had higher *Online Availability* of services than regional and local administrations. However, the gap between national and local government administrations has narrowed over the past two years. Online availability for national governments grew from 69% to 89%. Local administrations improved at a higher pace from 49% to 77%. This led to some narrowing of the gap between the national and local government levels from 20 p.p. to 12 p.p. Two years ago, 12 countries saw a performance gap of 25 p.p. or more. This number has since decreased to only 5 countries.

The two performance gaps that persist

Citizens vs Businesses: In contrast to these narrowing gaps, the long-observed difference between the *Online Availability* of services for business-related services and services targeting citizens persists. Over the last two years, online availability of services targeted towards businesses increased by 6 p.p., from 70% to 76%, while services targeted towards citizens improved by only 5 p.p., from 60% to 65%. Moreover, businesses receive more *Transparency of Service Delivery* (70% versus 54%) and can upload or obtain *eDocuments* with 82% of the services (instead of 64% for citizens). When businesses apply for a service, governments pre-fill 70% of the online application forms. Only 53% of the application forms for citizen-related services contain pre-populated data.

Foreign vs Domestic: While the availability of online services for foreign users is improving, progress in this area is far too slow. The *Cross-Border Online Availability* indicator reached 69%, whereas the *Online Availability* indicator for national users reached 87%. This 18 p.p. gap is reduced from a 20 p.p. gap two years ago. Primarily, this is because in the procedures where identification is required, foreign eIDs are not accepted. Citizens can use their own national eID solution for only 9% (6% two years ago) of the services from other countries which require and accept domestic eIDs. This barrier is followed by documentation issues: 67% (80% two years ago) of the procedures where documentation is required do not allow foreigners to upload or retrieve documents. Language problems pose an additional barrier: 43% (50% two years ago) of the procedures lack alternative languages on the service website. 18% (22% two years ago) of the services cannot be completed, because users are requested to physically visit a government office and foreign users cannot do so while being abroad.

The Cybersecurity Challenge

When users visit government websites, they must be able to trust those websites. However, only 20% of all URLs assessed meet half of the 14 basic security criteria evaluated. This underlines the importance of significantly enhancing website security levels to ensure that users can trust public sector websites and services.

Success Breeds Success

The study's "benchlearning" analysis calibrates the benchmark performance of each country against various characteristics. This means that countries operating within similar contexts, but with different levels of eGovernment performance, can learn from each other. In general, countries with high scores in the online supply of digital services (i.e. a high level of *Digitalisation*) tend to also have a high number of users of these services (i.e. a high level of *Penetration*). What the data shows is the development of a 'virtuous circle': public administrations develop better and better digital services because user demand is high; and more and more users access government services online because these services are available and easy to use.

Overall Strong Progress

The data indicates across the board progress in providing government services online and in a user-centric manner. That said, there is room for improving the adoption of *Key Enablers*, such as eIDs. Moreover, making it possible for citizens to obtain services across European borders is key for reaping the benefits for the European single market. New opportunities, such as increasing the compatibility with mobile devices, are being seized by many public administrations. Nevertheless, governments must better inform citizens on the use of their personal data, and security challenges have not been fully dealt with yet. The COVID-19 crisis will have a major impact on online public service provision and can act as a catalyst for change. Therefore, we are likely to see an acceleration in the development and quality of eGovernment services across Europe, and how they can be put to work for all people.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE EU

In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct information centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you at: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

On the phone or by email

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696 or
- by email via: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE EU

Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en

EU publications

You can download or order free and priced EU publications at: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publications>. Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local information centre (see https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en).

EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1952 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>

Open data from the EU

The EU Open Data Portal (<http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en>) provides access to datasets from the EU. Data can be downloaded and reused for free, for both commercial and non-commercial purposes.

