



eGovernment Benchmark 2021

Entering a New Digital Government Era

INSIGHT REPORT

Written by Capgemini, Sogeti, IDC and Politecnico di Milano for the European Commission Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology
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Contact: Gudrun Stock (Deputy Head of Unit for the eGovernment Benchmark Report) & Stefanos Kotoglou (Project Officer for the eGovernment Benchmark Data Collection)

E-mail: CNECT-BENCHMARK-EGOV@ec.europa.eu

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

eGovernment Benchmark 2021 Insight Report

Entering a New Digital Government Era

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PROJECT TEAM

Capgemini: Niels van der Linden, Sem Enzerink, Jochem Dogger, David Regeczi & Roel Geilleit
Sogeti: Sandrine Cipponeri & Erlend Firth
IDC: Massimiliano Claps & Alba Balla
Politecnico di Milano: Giuliano Noci, Michele Benedetti, Giulia Marchio & Marco Gaeta

Contact: Niels van der Linden (Project Manager eGovernment Benchmark)
E-mail: niels.vander.linden@capgemini.com

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Executive summary

The eGovernment Benchmark: Europe's Digital Government Gauge











The COVID-19 pandemic has brought turbulence, but also stimulated resilience and innovation. It has boosted the digitalisation of the EU economy and society, which includes how **government services** are delivered. Promoting the digital transformation of governments remains a clear priority for the EU.

With Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)** adopted on 12 February 2021, the EU made available a budget of EUR 672.5 billion for large-scale public investments and reforms by Member States.¹ It enables to recover from the COVID-19 crisis and to promote the Union's economic, social and territorial cohesion. Overall, Member States exceeded the target of investing 20% in digital, and Member States set aside close to 40% of their digital investments in the further digital transformation of public services.

The Commission's proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the 2030 Policy Programme '**Path to the Digital Decade**' adopted on 15 September 2021 sets out the concrete digital targets which the Union as a whole is expected to achieve by the end of the decade.² This was first delineated in the Communication '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade' adopted on 9 March 2021.³ In this context, the digitalisation of public services has been identified as one of four cardinal points for mapping the EU's trajectory for the Digital Decade and online provision of 100% of key public services as one of the related ambitious targets.

This study captures government services transitioning from offline to online. Member States' reforms and investments under the Recovery and Resilience Facility as well as their work towards achieving the Digital Decade targets should further boost future progress. The **eGovernment Benchmark** compares how governments deliver digital public services across Europe. It has become an internationally recognised study that looks at how platforms for citizens, businesses, tourists and expat communities continue to change and improve.

Analysing Digital Governments Through the Eyes of Citizens and Entrepreneurs

- The eGovernment Benchmark sheds light on eGovernment in **36 European countries**, referred to as 'Europe' or the 'EU27+': the 27 European Union Member States , Iceland , Norway , Switzerland , the United Kingdom , Albania , Montenegro , North Macedonia , Serbia  and Turkey .
- Citizens from the participating countries assessed digital government services. They visited, tested and evaluated **7,877 webpages** between August and September 2020, across **8 Life Events** (government domains).
- This study evaluates online public services on **four dimensions**, which consist of 14 underlying indicators, broken down into 48 survey questions. The four dimensions can be described by the following key questions:

¹ More information can be found at:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en.

² The full Policy Programme can be found at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_4630.

³ The 2030 Digital Compass can be found at:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/europes-digital-decade-digital-targets-2030_en.

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 policy making and digital service design processes, as well as 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?

European Digital Governments at a Glance

1. In the area of **User Centricity**, it stands out that more than eight of ten government services (81%) are now available online. 6% of these services are delivered proactively, meaning no action is required by users as governments anticipate needs and automatically deliver services before they are demanded.
2. In the area of **Transparency**, notably 61% of government portals and personal spaces inform users on whether and which of their personal data have been consulted by public administrations (e.g. to verify eligibility for certain services).
3. In the area of **Key Enablers**, nearly two thirds of all services (64%) enable users to identify themselves online with the use of an official electronic identification solution (eID).
4. In the area of **Cross-Border Services**, less than half of the services (43%) can be obtained by non-domestic users. Key obstacles are linguistic issues and the lack of acceptance of foreign eIDs.

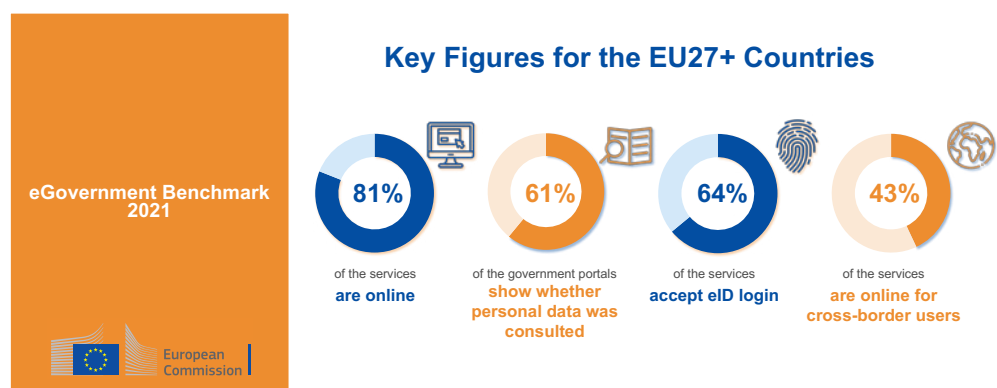


Figure 1 : Overview of key figures (EU27+ biennial average)

In addition to the progress on the four dimensions, we compute an **overall eGovernment maturity** score based on the underlying survey questions. This composite score ranges from 0% to 100%. The EU27+ overall performance stands at 68%. The European leaders are Malta 🇲🇹 (96%) and Estonia 🇪🇪 (92%). Their digital government is the most user-centric, transparent, technologically enabled and open to users from other European countries. This leading pair is followed by a strong group of countries: Denmark 🇩🇰 (85%), Finland 🇫🇮 (85%), Austria 🇦🇹 (84%), Iceland 🇮🇸 (84%), Luxembourg 🇱🇺 (84%), Portugal 🇵🇹 (82%), the Netherlands 🇳🇱 (82%), Latvia 🇱🇻 (82%), Norway 🇳🇴 (81%) and Lithuania 🇱🇮 (81%).

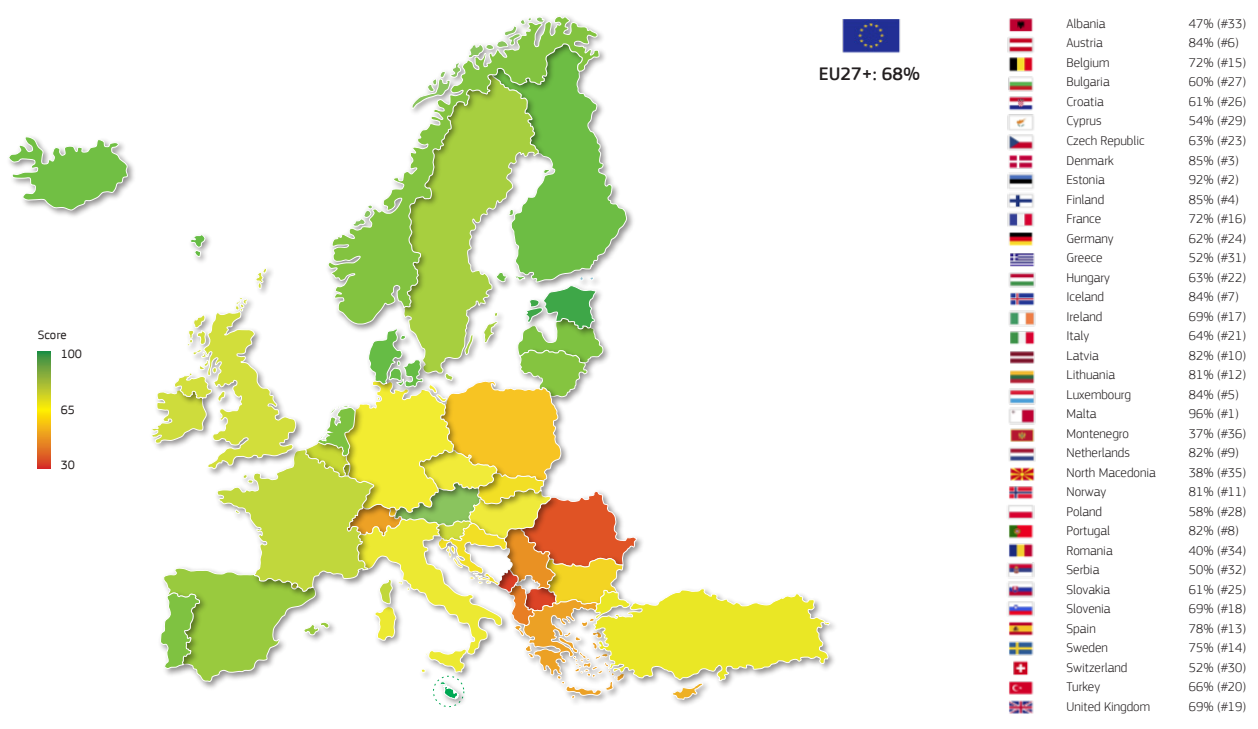


Figure 2 : Country overall eGovernment maturity (EU27+ biennial average)

Key Policy Takeaways

As the COVID-19 pandemic fades, chances arise to leverage digital capacities across various policy domains, government levels and across European borders. In short, the **COVID-19 pandemic accelerated change**. Yet, the crisis has not been a panacea to digitally transform governments. Only parts of the government fast-tracked their shift from offline to online services.

1. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, **the Career and Business Start-Up Life Events have proven that European administrations have what it takes to build digital services**. More government areas could catch up. With the right motivation and resources, digital transformation can be quick and effective. Civil servants managed to rapidly digitalise unemployment and business services that had remained offline in most countries for years. Can policy departments in other corners of government adjust their strategies and incentives too?
2. **Central government services outperform local and regional services throughout**. More seamless journeys would ensure a coherent online experience across different government layers. Currently, service gaps between local and national levels create friction: 85% of all services provided by central government organisations are available online compared to only 59% of local services. Service digitalisation offers the opportunity to streamline government journeys across multiple government entities. Can central, regional and local governments join forces to create a 'one government' experience?
3. **Business services are more digital than citizen services**. Increasing the digitalisation of citizen services would ease the daily lives of Europeans. At the moment, 91% of services for entrepreneurs can be fully completed online, compared to 77% for citizens. Can governments snowball their successful digital efforts outside business and tax departments and leverage their capacities more extensively elsewhere?
4. **National users have an edge over cross-border users**. More cross-border service delivery would make it easier for Europeans to move and reside across the continent. In Europe, 81% of the government services are online for national access. However, less than half (43%) of these services can be completed online by cross-border users. Can governments identify the most relevant international users and border workers to enable them to obtain services when crossing the border?

Glossary of Key Terminology

eGovernment: electronic government (also digital government).

Dimensions: the four pillars against which indicators for eGovernment are aggregated and measured.

1. **User Centricity:** the extent to which information and services are available online, supported online, and compatible with mobile devices.
2. **Transparency:** the extent to which service processes are transparent, services are designed with user involvement, and users can manage their personal data.
3. **Key Enablers:** the extent to which digital tools such as electronic identification (eID), eDocuments, authentic sources, digital post and security support secure identification and communication between a user and a government service.
4. **Cross-Border Services:** the extent to which citizens from other European countries can access online information and services in a usable and integrated way through electronic identification and eDocuments.

Life Event: a package of government services, usually provided by multiple agencies, that support citizens or entrepreneurs through key points of their lives, such as the birth of a child or starting of a business. The eGovernment Benchmark covers eight life events (government domains):

- Assessed in 2020: Business Start-Up, Career, Studying and Family.
- Assessed 2019: Regular Business Operations, Starting a Small Claims Procedure, Owning and Driving a Car and Moving.

Life Event services: services within a user journey for national and cross-border users.

- **Informational services:** services and procedures that provide users with adequate and personalised insight into their situation.
- **Transactional services:** services and procedures needed to fulfil the essential requirements of a life event, such as registration.
- **Portal websites:** eGovernment websites that gather and provide information and services from multiple public administrations.
- **National users:** citizens and entrepreneurs that seek for information and services in their own country.
- **Cross-border users:** citizens or entrepreneurs that seek information and services in another European country than their own.

Method: the way in which we collected the data.

- **Mystery Shopping:** the primary type of data collection in the eGovernment Benchmark – a proven evaluation method that places the user journey and experience at the evaluators' centre of attention.
- **Automated tools:** online tests through which web address are entered and assessed on a number of criteria.

1. Introducing the eGovernment Benchmark

*“We must now make this **Europe’s Digital Decade** so that all citizens and businesses can access the very best the digital world can offer.”*

European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen



1. Introducing the eGovernment Benchmark

1.1. COVID-19 Drives Digital, Including for Government

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought turbulence, but also stimulated resilience and innovation. It has boosted the digitalisation of the EU economy and society, which includes how **government services** are delivered. Promoting the digital transformation of governments remains a clear priority for the EU. This study captures government services transitioning from offline to online.

1.2. The eGovernment Benchmark: Europe's Digital Government Gauge

The eGovernment Benchmark compares how governments deliver digital public services across Europe. It has become an internationally recognised study that looks at how platforms for citizens, businesses, tourists and expat communities continue to change and improve.

This study evaluates online public services on four dimensions, which consist of 14 underlying indicators, broken down into 48 survey questions. The four dimensions can be described by the following key questions:

User Centricity – To what extent are services provided online? How mobile friendly are they? And what online support and feedback mechanisms are in place?

Transparency – Are public administrations providing clear, openly communicated information about how their services are delivered? Are they transparent about policy making and digital-service design, as well as the way people's personal data is being processed?

Key Enablers – What technological enablers support delivery of eGovernment services?

Cross-Border Services – How easily can citizens from abroad access and use the online services?

The eGovernment Benchmark Methodology in a nutshell

1. To present a comprehensive overview of how countries are performing in eGovernment, we analysed **93 services across eight Life Events** – a bundle of digital services that the average citizen or business is likely to require). We cover 2,625 distinct administrations (1,141 central, 353 regional and 1,130 local government bodies).
2. To evaluate these Life Events, well-trained **Mystery Shoppers** – citizens from the participating countries – visited and evaluated 7,877 webpages between August and September 2020: 5,193 webpages from their own government, 1,257 cross-border webpages from another government, 352 national portals, 350 cross-border portals, and 725 mobile apps/responsive websites. Automated open tools were used to complement the Mystery Shoppers to assess Mobile Friendliness, Findability, Accessibility Foundations and Cybersecurity.
3. The assessment takes place biennially, with data on the following Life Events collected in even years: Business Start-Up, Career, Studying and Family. In odd years, we assessed the following events: Regular Business Operations, Starting a Small Claims Procedure, Owning and Driving a Car and Moving. This report presents the findings for 2019 and 2020.

Importantly, method changes limit historical comparisons to a subset of indicators and services (for example, the number of services per Life Event was reduced and questions around Transparency of Public Organisations were replaced by questions around Transparency of Service Design). A full description of the method and a list of all evaluated services can be found in the Method Paper.

36 countries participated in the study. These countries are:

- The 27 European Union (EU) Member States 
- The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries: Iceland , Norway  and Switzerland 
- The United Kingdom 
- The European Union candidate countries: Albania , Montenegro , North Macedonia 
, Serbia  and Turkey 

Throughout the report, these countries will be referred to as 'Europe' or the 'EU27+'.

The eGovernment Benchmark methodology is linked to **European policy plans and actions**, which aim to further the EU's vision for a better digital future. These include:

- The European Union's Digital Compass, which is part of the Digital Decade ambition and supported by ongoing European and national policy programmes.⁴
- The ministerial Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-based Digital Government, which was signed by the ministers responsible for digital transformation in the public administration of the European Union Member States.⁵
- The European Union Recovery and Resilience Facility, which looks to lessen the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. At least 20% of the plan's total budget must be spent on the digital transition.⁶

The eGovernment Benchmark is key to tracking continued improvements of online public services. By analysing trends, we can pinpoint in what areas and how governments have improved. Lessons learned can help accelerate progress and **enter a new era of digital government in Europe**.

⁴ More information can be found at <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-compass>.

⁵ The full Declaration can be found at <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/berlin-declaration-digital-society-and-value-based-digital-government>.

⁶ The entire plan can be found at https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en.

2. Europe's State of Play

*"Our digital transition will not be complete without the **digitalisation of public services.**"*

European Commission Executive Vice-President, Margrethe Vestager



2. Europe’s State of Play

2.1. Overall Maturity Spearheaded by User Centricity

Where do European digital governments stand? We calculate progress on four dimensions: User Centricity, Transparency, Key Enablers and Cross-Border Services. We then compute an overall eGovernment maturity score based on the underlying survey questions. This composite score ranges from 0% to 100%.

The EU27+ overall performance stands at 68%, the average of all participating countries. As shown in figure 3 below, The European leaders are Malta (96%) and Estonia (92%). Their digital government is the most user-centric, transparent, technologically enabled and open to users from other European countries. This leading pair is followed by a strong group of countries: Denmark (85%), Finland (85%), Austria (84%), Iceland (84%), Luxembourg (84%), Portugal (82%), the Netherlands (82%), Latvia (82%), Norway (81%) and Lithuania (81%).

The **User Centricity** dimension scores the highest. The three related indicators, incorporating 11 survey questions, score an average of 88%. Governments do a good job putting their users first and moving offline procedures online. The dimension of **Cross-Border Services**, however, lags behind the other dimensions—its three indicators and 10 survey questions score an average of 55%. This suggests that users from other European countries find it difficult to access and use online services. **Transparency** and **Key Enablers** sit in between, averaging 64% and 65%. The Transparency dimension covers three indicators with 16 survey questions. Transparency initiatives, such as service process descriptions, personal data monitoring tools and user consultation channels are not yet commonly available. The Key Enablers dimension consists of four indicators and 11 questions. Progress in this area ensures users are equipped with the right solutions to securely and swiftly login, share documentation, fill in forms and communicate with their government.

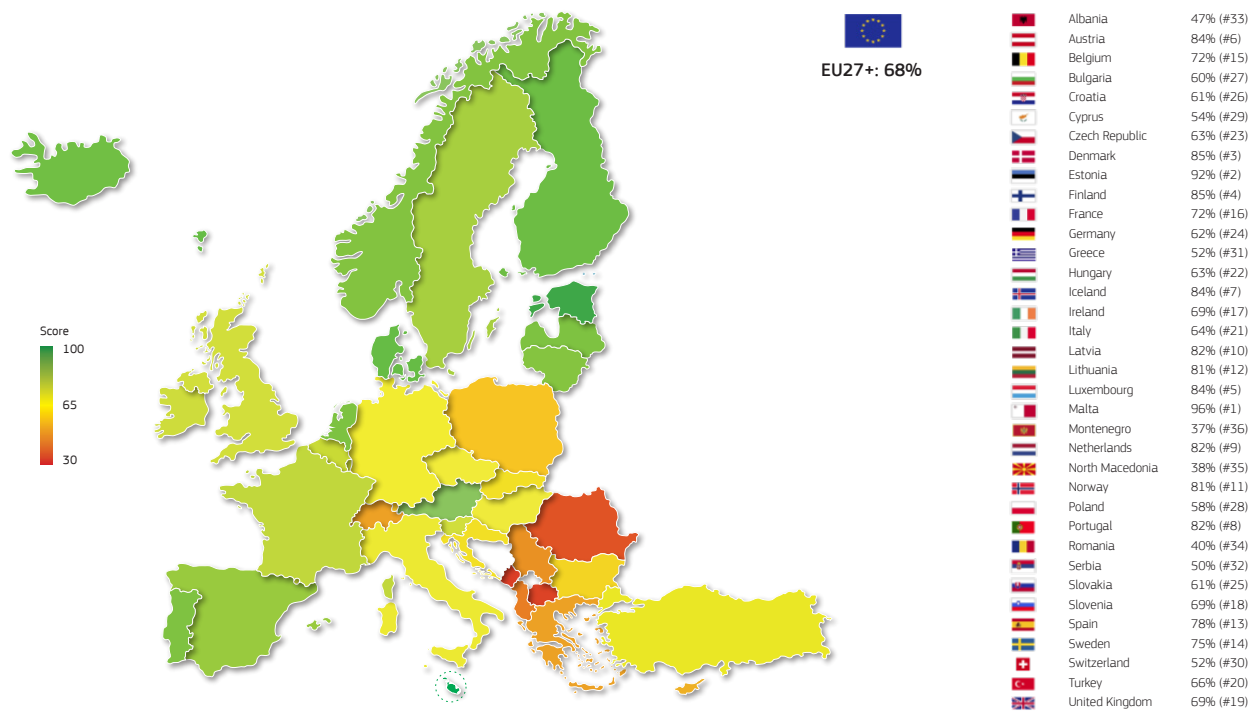


Figure 3 : Country overall eGovernment maturity (EU27+ biennial average)

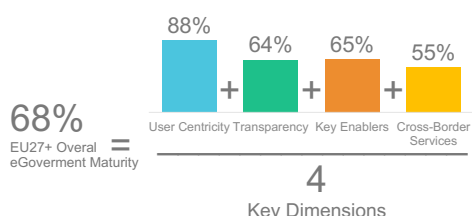


Figure 4 : Breakdown of overall eGovernment maturity into four dimensions (EU27+ biennial average)









Which of these four dimensions differentiates the leading countries from the rest of Europe? **High-ranking countries** are most ahead in terms of Cross-Border Services, followed by consistent performance and progress on Key Enablers. European countries display more similar results for User Centricity and Transparency.





2.2. User Centricity Excels

Findable Portals: Gateways to the Digital Government




Where do users start their eGovernment journey? Users often search on a central government portal to find out how to obtain their service and whether they are eligible. Portal websites combine information on different types of services from public organisations.

Examples of well-performing portal websites throughout Europe

-  Finland: suomi.fi
-  Malta: gov.mt
-  Spain: administracion.gob.es
-  The Netherlands: rijksoverheid.nl
-  Iceland: island.is
-  Lithuania: epaslaugos.lt
-  Portugal: eportugal.gov.pt
-  Ireland: gov.ie


Over nine out of ten services can be found via a government portal (94%). In Finland , Ireland , Iceland , Malta , the Netherlands , Norway , Sweden , all evaluated services can be reached via a main 'one-stop-shop' portal.

Online Availability: Accessing Services 24/7




In Europe, **eight out of ten government services can be completed online (81%)**. In Malta , Portugal  and Denmark , citizens and businesses can complete more than 98% of the services online. For offline services, procedural information is published online in 98% of cases across Europe.

Some governments provide services proactively. This means no action is required by users, as governments anticipate needs and automatically deliver services before they are demanded. Proactively delivering services is effortless for users and improves their experience.

Currently, 6% of the examined government services are delivered proactively.

In six European countries, the proactive services make up a share of only 2% or less of the service provision. By effectively reusing data, this can increase the coming years. Luxembourg  is ahead and already delivers 18% of its services proactively.

Examples of proactive services throughout Europe

-  Austria: Automatically obtain child allowances after registering a new-born child.
-  Luxembourg: Proactively receive unemployment benefits after registering as unemployed.
-  Malta: Automatically receive a state pension when reaching the retirement age.

A pilot study on Mobile Apps and Services (Mobile Service Delivery)

- Smartphones are the main way Europeans access the internet—85% use their smartphone, while only 51% use a laptop (<https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/89100>).
- Eight services were piloted on a mobile device to assess mobile service delivery by comparing the performance of public websites and services on mobile devices and computers.
- While 79% of the selected services can be completed with a laptop or desktop computer, only 62% accommodate for mobile devices. eID acceptance was slightly lower too: 61% acceptance on mobile devices while 68% for the same eight services completed on a computer.
- Pre-filling personal information into online forms is especially relevant for mobile users, where small touchscreens make repeatedly entering information inconvenient. Information is pre-filled for almost as many mobile users as desktop users (60% versus 64%).

User Support: Lending a Helping Hand

Sometimes users need help when interacting with their digital government, or they want to suggest a new feature to improve the government website. User support channels help to meet these support needs.




In 98% of cases, governments publish their contact details on their website, such as a phone number or email address. Live chat support or demonstration videos are less available, existing on 82% of websites.

Feedback helps governments to find out what users like and want. 86% of the portals have a feedback section, a form with which users can share their experiences and suggestions. Complaint forms come into play when things go wrong: a service is not working properly or users feel their cases are taking too long. 85% of the government portals in Europe have an online complaint form.

Mobile: The Government at Your Fingertips

Some users prefer a desktop; others prefer their mobile device, such as smartphones and tablets. Portable devices promote flexibility and allow users to interact with their government while on the road.

Almost nine out of ten government websites are mobile friendly (88%, compared to 76% a year ago and 68% two years ago). The font and lay-out of these websites adjust to mobile

screens so that information is easy to read. In Sweden , Finland  and Denmark  (85%), all government websites evaluated are mobile friendly.

2.3. Transparency Can Be Further Increased

Transparency of Service Delivery: Managing User Expectations

When users access a digital government service, knowing what is expected from them and what they can expect from their government is highly important. This defines a transparent service.

It is not always clear how long it will take to fill in a form or complete an application. Less than half of all services indicate how long a service process will take (49%). Delivery timelines could be clearer too: for 61% of services, the expected day to receive an outcome or decision is indicated, and in 56% of services, a maximum time limit for the delivery of the service is shown. However, in eight out of ten services (81%) users do get a submission notice upon completion.

Transparency of Personal Data: Staying in Control

Personal data, such as date of birth and address, are part of the user's digital fingerprint. This data is confidential, and users should know what personal information the government holds on them and when data is used when providing a service.

2

Currently, 17% of European government portals provide no information whatsoever about the use of personal data by the government. Another 22% provide a general explanation of who is authorised to use personal data and for which purposes. A slight majority (61%) of government platforms display whether data has been consulted, with some offering more advanced transparency solutions: 20% report solely whether data was consulted; 22% whether and when data was consulted; 14% whether, when and by whom their data was consulted; and lastly, 5% offer users the full picture of whether, when and by whom their personal data was consulted and for which purpose.

Transparency of Service Design: Co-creating Digital Services

Citizen consultation and participation channels help users to understand policy as well as digital service design. Based on this, they can have their say, if they desire.

Only 39% of administrations provide information about how they design digital services and explain what processes, panels, expert groups and stakeholders are concerned. Three quarters of public organisations (76%) are transparent about their policy-making processes. However, only 29% are open to public opinion via consultations. Other, more specific ways for users to participate in the development of government online services are even fewer. One fifth of administrations (20%) actively invite users to have a say in digital service design by organising online workshops, brainstorming at service-design events or conducting usability surveys.

In contrast to the low European levels of policy and service design, Ireland , Iceland , Luxembourg , Malta , the Netherlands  and the United Kingdom  offer service design participation options throughout all Life Events measured in 2020.

2.4. Key Enablers Need a Push

When citizens interact digitally with their government, they need to prove their identity in a secure manner, provide authenticated documentation, fill in forms, and receive notifications. Key Enablers –

eIDs, eDocuments, Authentic Sources and Digital Post – ease this process.

eID: The Key to Accessing eGovernment

91% of services across Europe require identification, either offline or online. Electronic identification solutions (referred to as eIDs) are like online passports. People use their eID to prove who they are online. This type of identification is considered more secure than a basic username and password. eIDs ensure safe, fast and easy access to digital government services. With electronic identification, users no longer need to visit government buildings to prove their identity in person nor wait for documentation to arrive via post.

Out of the services that require identification, **26% require users to show their identification card in person and 74% allow for online identification.** Depending on the country and administration, different types of online identification can be used. Of the 74% of services that allow for online identification, the following options are offered:

- 64% allow an official national eID.
- 9% allow other online government mechanisms (e.g. organisation-specific account and password, national registration or tax number).
- 1% allow private sector mechanisms (e.g. eBanking token).

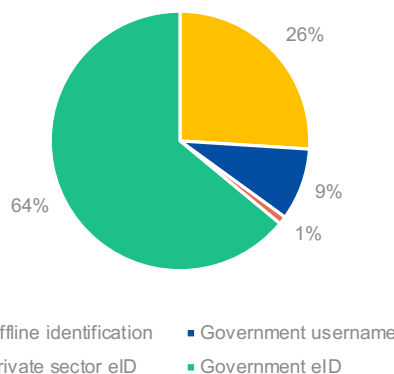


Figure 5: Percentage of identification modes (EU27+ biennial averages)

When logged in online, **less than half of the services (44%) allow a single sign-on**. Without it, users often need to re-authenticate when switching between websites of different competent authorities within one Life Event journey.

Europe's eID frontrunners are Malta 🇲🇹, where 98% of the online services that require identification can be accessed using the Maltese eID, followed by Iceland 🇮🇸 (97%), Estonia 🇪🇪 (96%), Finland 🇫🇮 (96%), Denmark 🇩🇰 (93%) and Norway 🇳🇴 (91%).

Examples of national eID solutions across Europe

- 🇲🇹 Malta: **Identity Malta**, an eID card and e-residence documents
- 🇮🇸 Iceland: **Auðkenni**, electronic certificates and an app for online identification and signatures
- 🇪🇪 Estonia: **e-identity scheme**, with an ID card, RP card, Digi-ID, e-Residency Digi-ID, Mobiil-ID and Diplomatic identity card
- 🇫🇮 Finland: **Suomi.fi e-Identification**, to use a variety of government services
- 🇩🇰 Denmark: **NemID** a common login including a key card, mobile app, key token, hardware, interactive voice/response and Magna key card
- 🇳🇴 Norway: **ID-porten**, a common login solution encompassing MinID, BankID, BankID on mobile, Buypass or Commfides

eDocuments: Uploading and Obtaining Files Online

eDocuments or electronic documents are official government forms and papers. Some services require users to upload a document, such as unemployment evidence papers. Other services ask users to send a document, such as a diploma or business permit.

At the moment, seven out of ten services (72%) enable online documentation. Denmark 🇩🇰, Norway 🇳🇴 and Portugal 🇵🇹 do particularly well, with online documentation available 97% of the time or more. When users can upload and obtain documentation online, it saves time and money on printing and mailing paper, while contributing to “greener” public administrations and services. This streamlines their user journey and is welcomed from a sustainability point of view.

Authentic Sources: Pre-filling Information from Base Registries

Every time citizens and entrepreneurs fill in an online government form, they provide information. Certain information is commonly requested, such as someone's name, address, and contact details. Users expect that personal information already provided should not need to be collected multiple times. The government solution for this demand is to reuse Authentic Sources. Authentic Sources, like base registries, are deployed by governments to collect and store data.

A pilot study on Website and Email Security

- Six in ten Europeans (61%) are concerned about their online personal information not being kept secure by public authorities (<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2249>). Using the Internet.nl test (<https://internet.nl/>) and the Mozilla Observatory (link: <https://observatory.mozilla.org/>), government websites and email domains were assessed on cybersecurity criteria.
- None of the government websites passed all 14 security criteria. In particular, only 2% of sites prevented a wide range of cross-site scripting and clickjacking attacks (Content Security Policy), and only 3% of sites prevented third parties from reading or changing content sent between a user and the website by using a secure connection via HTTPS.
- A similar test was conducted for the email domains used by governments as support channels. Only 1% of the government portal email domains passed all four email security tests conducted. In particular, only 3% of mail server connections implement STARTTLS and DANE to avoid man-in-the-middle attacks, and only 8% use IPv6 to reach email domains.

2

61% of the online forms in Europe are pre-filled with information from Authentic Sources. In Estonia 🇺🇸, Finland 🇫🇮 and Malta 🇲🇹, 97% of the online forms contain prepopulated data, which reduces the time to complete the form and minimises typing errors.

Digital Post: Staying Informed and Connected

Communication is a must for effective administrations. Users want to be informed, for example about the latest status of a service request. Governments can use digital post solutions as a digital enabler to communicate with their users. It ensures all government letters are available in a single online place. This paperless solution also helps governments become more sustainable.

Examples of Digital Post solutions across Europe

🇧🇬 Bulgaria: [My Space / eDelivery](#)

🇨🇪 Czech Republic: [Data \(Mail\)box](#)

🇱🇻 Latvia: [eAdrese](#)

🇸🇰 Slovakia: [Slovensko Electronic Mailbox](#)

🇹🇷 Turkey: [e-Government Gateway](#)

Today, almost three quarters (73%) of government organisations allow their users to receive letters via email rather than post. 15 countries have implemented a digital post-box across all eight Life Events: Austria 🇦🇹, Bulgaria 🇧🇬, Czech Republic 🇨🇪, Denmark 🇩🇰, Estonia 🇺🇸, Finland 🇫🇮, Hungary 🇭🇺, Iceland 🇮🇸, Latvia 🇱🇻, Lithuania 🇱🇹, Luxembourg 🇱🇺, Malta 🇲🇹, Norway 🇳🇴, Slovakia 🇸🇰 and Turkey 🇹🇷.

2.5. Cross-Border Services Overlooked?

Cross-Border Online Availability: Accessing Services across Europe

Next to services for nationals, European governments provide services to cross-border users, persons with other nationalities that want to live, work, study or enjoy a vacation abroad. Cross-border users may prefer to access foreign government systems in another language, with their own eID and online in case they still reside

across the border. In Europe, less than half (43%) of services are designed for international users.

Examples of cross-border service provision throughout Europe

🇱🇺 Luxembourg: Not only Luxembourgish entrepreneurs, but also entrepreneurs from other European countries can register their business online.

🇸🇪 Sweden: Not only Swedish students, but also students from elsewhere can enrol digitally for a new programme of study, thus helping international students enjoy a semester abroad.

Cross-Border User Support: Assisting International Users

Interacting with a foreign government can mean dealing with an unfamiliar language and culture, and this can necessitate a special kind of support. **User support functionalities** help cross-border users to get the help they need. 86% of portal websites have a help functionality for international users in place. Complaint procedures are only available on half of the portals (56%).

Cross-Border eID: Online Identification across Borders

Ideally, national eIDs should give access to online services in both someone's own country and any other European Union Member State, just like a physical passport.

Since 29 September 2018, all EU citizens with notified eIDs according to the eIDAS Regulation rules, should be able to use their national eID for accessing online public services in other Member States.⁷ At the moment, 14 Member States have one or multiple notified eIDs, which should be accepted elsewhere.

Currently, only a quarter of the services (24%) enable access with **eIDs from multiple European countries**. In Austria 🇦🇹 and Luxembourg 🇱🇺, two thirds of the services (66%) accept foreign eIDs, for instance from German citizens.

⁷ More information can be found at: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/eidas-regulation>.

Cross-Border eDocuments: Online Files across Borders

Document requirements may be different for international users as well. For cross-border users, submitting and obtaining relevant

documentation is possible for 62% of the services. This involves uploading and obtaining **eDocuments** such as certificates, diplomas and proof of residence.

Did you know the eGovernment Benchmark findings feed into the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)?

- Selected eGovernment Benchmark figures feed into the European Commission's Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi>.
- This composite index is the main tool used by the European Union and its Member States to measure digitalisation. It consists of four key areas: Human Capital, Connectivity, Integration of Digital Technology and Digital Public Services. Three indicators of the Digital Public Services dimension capture eGovernment Benchmark results:
 - Pre-Filled Forms (DESI 5a2): stands at 61% for the EU27+ countries, based on the eGovernment Benchmark indicator Authentic Sources. This means that over six out of ten online forms that require personal information pre-fill these fields based on data already known by the government.
 - Digital public services for citizens (DESI 5a3): stands at 71% for the EU27+ countries, based on the eGovernment Benchmark indicator Online Availability and Cross-Border Online Availability for all citizen related Life Events. This means that most services in the area of Career, Studying, Family Starting a Small Claims Procedure, Owning and Driving a Car and Moving can be fully completed online with sufficient information and can be reached via main government portals.
 - Digital public services for businesses (DESI 5a4): stands at 82% for the EU27+ countries, based on the eGovernment Benchmark indicator Online Availability and Cross-Border Online Availability for all business related Life Events. This means that most services in the area of Business Start-Up and Regular Business Operations can be fully completed online with sufficient information and can be reached via main government portals.

3. Highlighting Trends in Government Digitalisation

*“Digital transformation in Europe must be based on **democratic values** and ethical principles.”*

Germany’s State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community and Federal Government Commissioner for Information Technology, Dr. Markus Richter



3. Highlighting Trends in Government Digitalisation

Some trends in government digitalisation stand out this year. The following sections show the most relevant topics and developments.

3.1. COVID-19: An Accelerator for Digital Governments


The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many facets of society and the economy. Our daily lives changed course and governments' ability to adapt has been tested. How did the health crisis **impact** digital service delivery?


In short, the **COVID-19 pandemic accelerated change**. Yet, the crisis has not been a panacea to digitally transform governments. Only parts of the government fast-tracked their shift from offline to online services.

In some areas, government digitalisation accelerated: entrepreneurs wanting to start a business and the unemployed benefited most from new online services.

Career services for (un)employed persons accelerated the most. In Europe, four out of five debt counselling services now provide online information and guidance (81%, compared to 47% two years ago). Notably, in almost eight out of ten cases, citizens can now register online as unemployed, speeding up the route to receive benefits and potentially find a new job (77%, increased from 65% two years ago).

Examples of career services during COVID-19

 Croatia: The Croatian ePass system, a browser-based solution, allows citizens to request authorised travel during periods of quarantine and download their electronic pass (containing a QR code) after an automated check by the system. The system has been accessed over three million times.

 Albania: The central e-Albania platform provides similar functionality. It handles permissions for citizens as well as businesses with essential workers who may exercise their activities on-site. More than six million applications were registered.

Some **Business Start-Up** related services improved too. Almost all entrepreneurs can currently find online information and guidance on how to arrange compulsory health insurance (96% now, was 80% two years ago). Tax identification cards and numbers can be obtained digitally in 94% of cases (rose from 84% two years ago) and those starting a new company can register digitally with their Social Security Office more often than two years ago (91%, compared to 81% two years ago).

In other areas, this volume expansion of newly added services was not reached: digitalisation

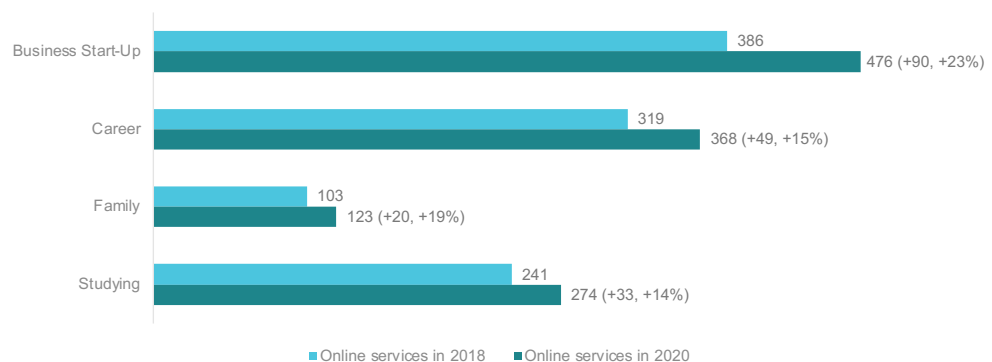


Figure 6: Number of newly added online services between 2018 and 2020 (EU27+, per Life Event) two years ago

levels for parents and students increased, but not with the same absolute number of services.

Digitalisation of **Family services levelled off**, even though the sector was already less digital than others before the pandemic. Services that were traditionally offline remained offline. For example, less than half of parents could register their new-born child online (49%, a minimal increase from 42% two years ago). Online services to register marriage and civil partnerships also remained consistent. Only 34% of these services could be completed fully online, slightly higher than two years ago (28%).

Studying services also stayed relatively unchanged, although these services were already at a higher level than family affairs. Students can apply for additional social benefits online with two thirds of universities (66%, up from 59% two years ago). Applying for student grants is possible in three out of four universities (74%), but again similar to two years ago (69%). Despite their relevance during a crisis, student services did not rapidly transform.

While the most immediate impact of the pandemic has been on employment and business activities, one would expect other government areas to catch up. This has not been the case.

Next to sectoral differences, national differences exist. Some countries managed to accelerate their digitalisation efforts: Croatia 🇪🇺, Albania 🇪🇺, Serbia 🇪🇺, Montenegro 🇪🇺, Hungary 🇪🇺, Ireland 🇪🇺 and Luxembourg 🇪🇺 deployed the most new online services, all showing over 34% growth. By expanding the catalogue of digital services, users could stay at home and respect lockdown measures while continuing their user journey. Countries with less new online services either provided most services already online two years ago or transform their digital government in a more incremental and less radical way.

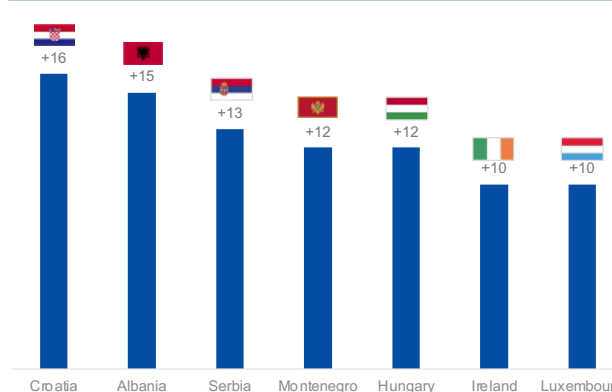


Figure 7: Number of newly added online services between 2018 and 2020 (countries with the most services added)

3.2. Central Government Services Outperform Local and Regional Services Throughout

European governments operate on multiple layers, whether local (like a municipal office), regional (like a province or university), or national (like a ministry or national agency). But, the maturity of digitalisation differs across these three government levels. With a few exceptions, **central government services outperform local and regional ones**.

Example of integrating central, regional and local service via a portal website

🇦🇹 Austria: The Austrian portal website Oesterreich.gv.at is an internet platform linking a large number of public authorities. As the one-stop eGovernment platform for citizens, it provides information on all interactions with Austrian authorities required in the most frequent life situations such as pregnancy, childbirth, marriage or housing. It also allows some of these procedures to be processed electronically. The portal connects authorities and citizens through the different administrative layers of government.

In Europe, **85% of all services provided by central government organisations are available online**, while 74% of regional services and only 59% of local services can be completed digitally.

Key enablers show an even larger gap. Users can login with their eID for 71% of central government services. This far exceeds the 22% for regional services and 29% for local services.

Data reuse by regional and local services also lags behind the data reused by central governments: 71% of central government online forms are pre-filled with information already known via other services, more than doubling what is possible at regional and local administrations (both at 31%). The ambition to share and reuse personal information – in a secure way – across jurisdictions has not yet materialised.

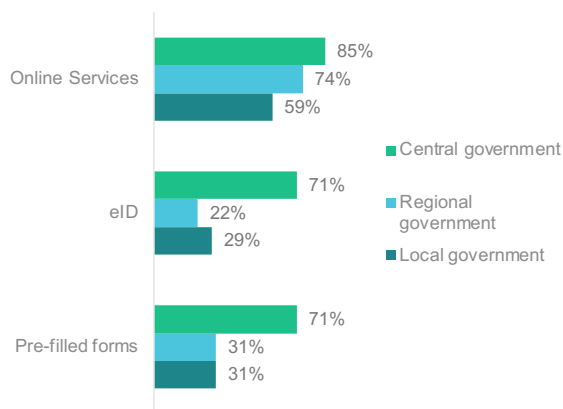


Figure 8: The percentage of services available online, with eID and pre-filled forms (EU27+ biennial average) per Life Event two years ago

A few exceptions exist to this pattern of more digitalised central governments. Exceptions include Austria 🇦🇹, Estonia 🇪🇪, Iceland 🇮🇸, Montenegro 🇲🇪, the Netherlands 🇳🇱 and Norway 🇳🇴. In these countries, the three governmental levels move at the same pace, with slightly more regional or local services available online than central ones.

While it could have been expected that the pandemic would have boosted the digitalisation of local public services to support lockdown measures, this effect has not materialised. On the contrary, locally provided services have not seen a significant increase in digitalisation. The gap between national and local services has not narrowed (substantially).

3.3. Business Services Are More Digital than Citizen Services

Individuals may interact with the government on their own behalf, as citizens, or as entrepreneurs representing their company. Digitalisation levels differ between these different users: **eGovernment for businesses is more mature than for citizens.** Business Life Events measured over the past two years (Business Start-up and Regular Business Operations) are more mature across all indicators than Citizen Life Events (Family, Career, Studying, Owning and Driving a Car, Moving, and Starting a Small Claims Procedure).

More concretely, **91% of services for entrepreneurs can be completed online compared to 77% for citizens.** Key enabling technologies show an even wider gap: eID solutions are available to entrepreneurs 78% of the time, while only 56% for citizen services. Similarly, entrepreneurs can obtain and submit online documents more often than citizens (in 86% of cases for businesses versus 67% for citizens).

This general observation holds for **all citizen domains**. However, the gap with business services varies: only 63% of family services can be arranged digitally, while more than eight out of ten services for students and people moving are available online (both 83%, and thus closer to the business average of 91%).

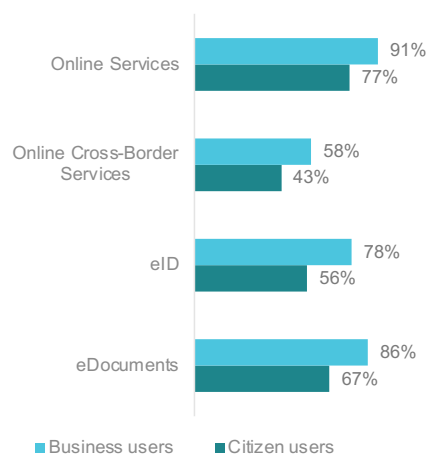


Figure 9: The percentage of services available online, with eID and eDocuments support (EU27+ biennial average)

What we Measure for Businesses

- Business Start-Up (2020): For citizens that want to start a business, we assess the administrative steps to register a new company. We also evaluate whether users can obtain a tax registration number online and how easily they can find mandatory insurance schemes. Early trading activities, such as hiring employees and requesting permits, are measured too.
- Regular Business Operations (2019): For experienced entrepreneurs, we assess corporate tax declaration and submission of financial reports via digital channels. We check for information on working conditions for employees, and whether businesses can change employee statuses online.

What we Measure for Businesses

- Career (2020): For citizens that lose their job, we assess whether they can register as unemployed online; whether information on unemployment benefits and entitlements are available; and whether these can be applied for online. Similarly, assistance services for finding a job are assessed, and information on retirement as well as online pension claims.
- Studying (2020): For students, we assess the enrolment process in university programmes in the country of origin and abroad; whether application procedures for student loans and other financing schemes are available; and if, for students already enrolled, they can track grades online.
- Family (2020): For parents, we assess applying for child maintenance allowance online; obtaining parental authority for unmarried partners; and requesting a passport or replacement birth certificate.
- Starting a Small Claims Procedure (2019): For citizens involved in an accident, we assess whether they can find information online about how to make a legal claim and whether they can do so online. It also includes consideration of how to appeal online.
- Owning and Driving a Car (2019): For car owners, we assess whether information on vehicle taxes, insurance and registration obligations is available online; whether it is possible to verify information on second-hand vehicles in the car registry; and whether fines and duties relating to a private car can be settled online.
- Moving (2019): For families moving into a new residence, we assess what online information is available on local schools and amenities; whether it is possible to register the new address in the municipality register online; and whether other relevant authorities are notified automatically.

The prevalence of online business services is **visible across all European countries**. Nevertheless, differences between business and citizen services are smallest in Austria , Denmark , Spain , Malta  and Portugal .

3.4. National Users Have an Edge over Cross-Border Users

Is dealing with another European government as simple and effective as requesting services in one's home country? Cross-border users that want to live, work, study or enjoy a vacation abroad may face online difficulties due to their foreign nationality. European labour, education and tourism may slow down whenever governments do not cater for multi languages, foreign eIDs and other preferences of international users.

Example of cross-border services during COVID-19

- 🇨🇵 Cyprus: To facilitate travel arrangements of passengers to Cyprus and capture all necessary information required by health authorities, the CyprusFlightPass (CFP) online platform was created. It enables passengers to complete all necessary formalities quickly and easily to receive the authorisation to fly. Over a million CFPs were issued in 2020.

Whereas 81% of government services are online for nationals, less than half (43%) of these services can be completed fully online by international users. What **barriers** explain the service gap between national and cross-border users?



8 out of 10

Services for National Users Are Online (81%)



4 out of 10

Services for Cross-Border Users Are Online (43%)



Figure 10: The percentage of national and cross-border services available online (EU27+ biennial average)

or recognition of **required documents**. Moreover, 38% of the services do not allow users to upload or obtain their **eDocuments**, such as, certificates, diplomas and proof of residence.

A third reason is that many public service providers only accept **eIDs** from their own country. Whereas national citizens can identify themselves for 62% of the services, only 24% of the services enable access with eIDs from other European countries.

A fourth explanation is that in 29% of the services, a **physical** visit to a government office is required. This creates an additional burden for Europeans who have yet to move to their new country of residence.

A first explanation is that government websites lack **adequate information and language features**. In 65% of the cross-border services, non-nationals encounter language issues. For 35% of the services, multiple languages are available, meaning one or more languages complement the country's official language(s). In 56% of cases, cross-border users receive insufficient information relevant to their situation. In some cases (6%), a service can only be completed by a physical encounter.

A second reason is that 24% of the services considered in the cross-border assessment cannot be completed online due to issues with translation

In three-quarters of cases (74%), cross-border users face more than one **barrier**. Users may manage to manoeuvre through one hurdle but face multiple barriers that further hampers government interaction.

The service gap between national and cross-border users **occurs in all European countries**. Yet, the number of online national and cross-border services differs least in Cyprus 🇨🇵, Ireland 🇮🇪, Luxembourg 🇱🇺, Malta 🇲🇹 and Sweden 🇸🇪. In these countries, services that are available online for nationals are also generally available online for cross-border users.

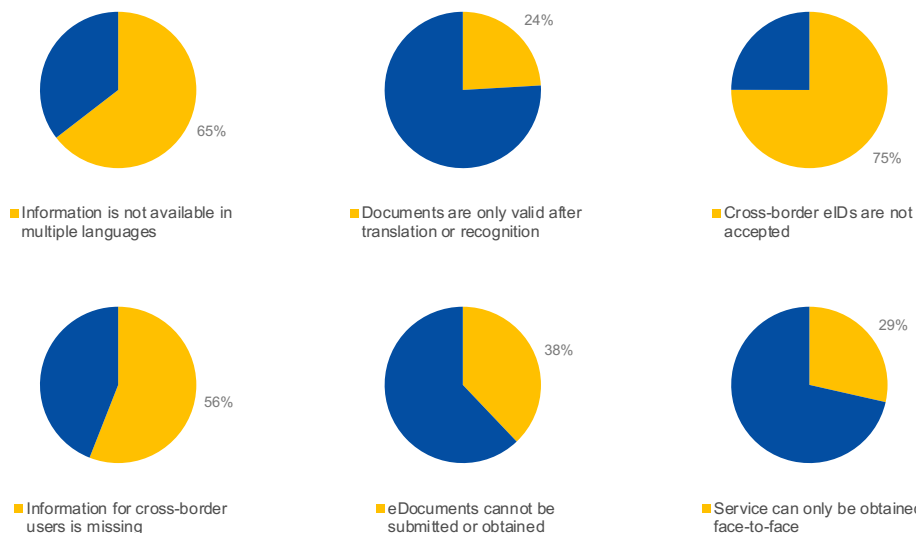
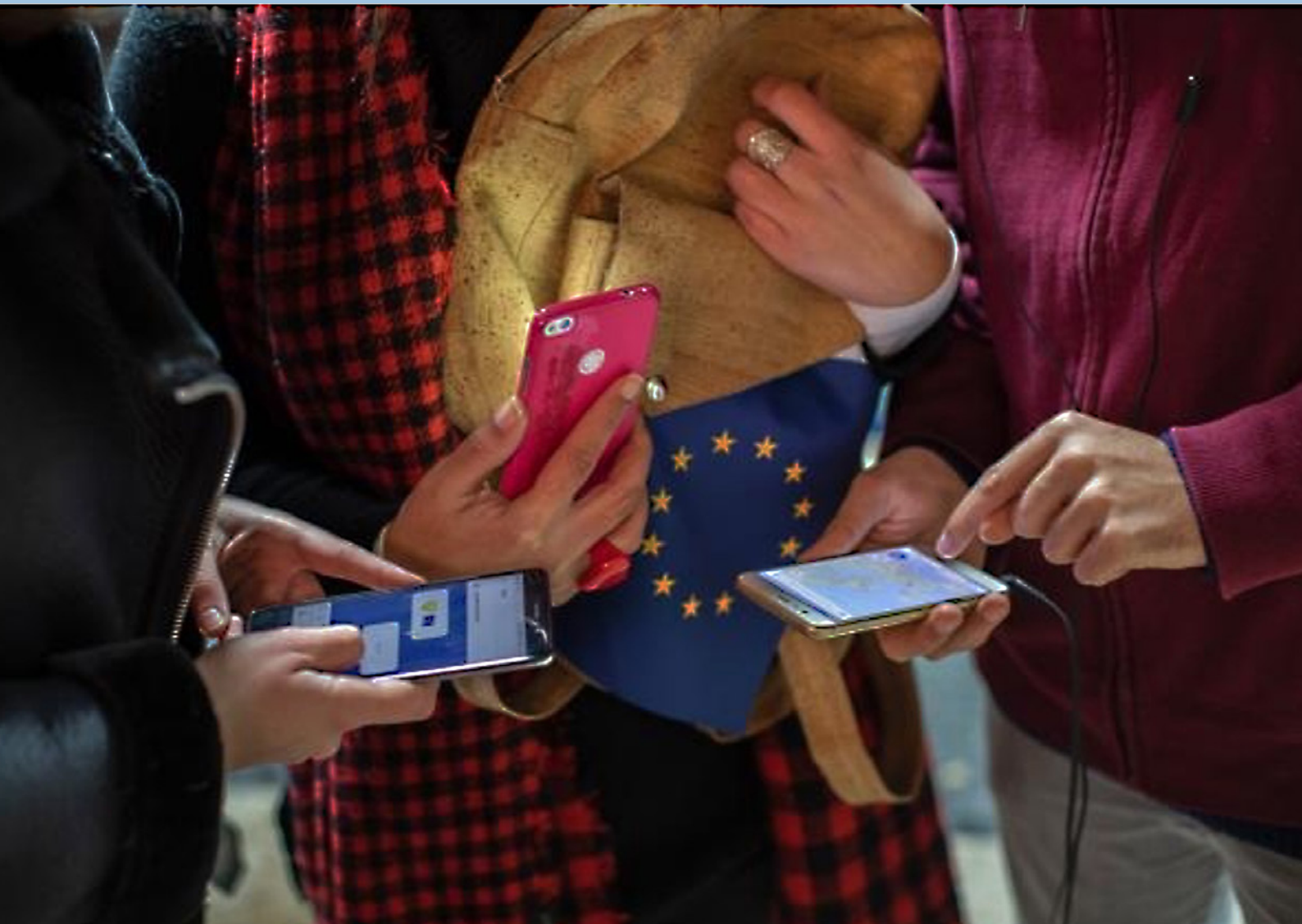


Figure 11: The percentage of cross-border barriers (EU27+ biennial average)

4. Key Policy Takeaways

*“The importance of digital administrative procedures is now **more obvious than ever before.**”*

European Commission Directorate-General for Communications Networks,
Content and Technology



4. Key Policy Takeaways

4.1. Main Lessons Learned: Chances to Leverage Digital Capacities across Policy Domains, Government Levels and Borders

Europe can celebrate multiple **eGovernment successes**. Online availability levels are high at 81%, and the vast majority (88%) can be viewed easily from a mobile device. Moreover, eight out of ten services (81%) send a service completion notification to users and almost three-quarters of government bodies (73%) communicate with users via a digital mailbox.

At the same time, some services remain offline, lack transparency, go without key enabling technologies or are unavailable to cross-border users. While the **COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated change**, the crisis has not led to the full digital transformation of governments.

Overall, the Career and Business Start-Up Life Events have proven that European **administrations have what it takes** to build digital services. With the right motivation and resources, digital transformation can be quick and effective. Civil servants managed to rapidly digitalise unemployment and business services that remained offline in most countries for years. COVID-19 gave governments a push for change. Policy departments in other corners of government should learn from this experience. Adjusting strategies to boost the digitalisation of public services can be done relatively easily and quickly if the right incentives are in place. This would ensure no one misses out the benefits of digital service delivery.

The longer we live in the digital age, the higher expectations will become. According to a recent Eurobarometer, less than half of Europeans (46%) rate public services in their country to be 'good'.⁸ Service digitalisation offers the opportunity to **streamline government journeys** across multiple government entities.

Currently, service gaps between local and national levels create friction: 85% of all services provided by central government organisations are available

online compared to only 59% of local services.

Furthermore, governments should **snowball their successful efforts in digitalising business services and tax departments** and leverage their capacities to other key public services. At the moment, 91% of services for entrepreneurs can be fully completed online, compared to 77% for citizens. Excellent business services have been a reasonable priority during the pandemic as they can contribute to boosting overall economic activity. Individuals and families, on the other hand, need high-quality services too. Slow offline birth registration could delay payment of child allowances. Delays renewing a passport could lead to inadvertent cuts to benefits. Online service gaps should be closed as a matter of priority.

A similar challenge appears for national and cross-border users. 81% of government services are online for nationals. However, less than half (43%) of these services can be completed online by cross-border users. In times where crossing the border in person comes with restrictions, the situation of the many Europeans that commute across borders has to be better addressed in digital service provision. **More cross-border service delivery** would make it easier for Europeans to move across the continent and contribute to economic recovery by seizing career opportunities abroad.

4.2. Main Areas for Improvement: Greater Focus on Mobile, Personal Data, eIDs and Cross-Border Services

What areas should Europe focus on the coming period?

- In the area of **User Centricity**, a next generation of mobile services is half-finished. Although the information on 88% of the websites is mobile-compatible, only 62% of the transactional service modules proceed on a smartphone or tablet. Web accessibility is also an issue. As the web accessibility pilot indicates, only 16% of websites comply with the eight accessibility criteria that have been measured. A well-orchestrated approach is needed to make the digital government a place for all users.

⁸ Leaders The full Eurobarometer can be found via the following link: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2355>

- Within the **Transparency** area, personal data solutions need a push. Only 61% of government portals inform users on whether and when personal data is consulted, while even fewer mention by whom and why the data is used. Further transparency will hand control and ownership of personal information back to the user. The same goes for increasing user involvement. Only one-third of government portals (36%) facilitate user participation to improve digital services. Consultation and participation will help users to have a say and help governments to design services that meet stakeholder expectations.
- In the **Key Enablers** area, eIDs help link together government services, creating a better and safer user experience. Currently, 64% of services accept eID logins. Further adoption is needed, especially in the Citizen related Life Events. Websites need to be protected too. With none of the government websites passing all 14 security criteria analysed, users and their personal information might be at risk. Administrations that start implementing modern internet standards will curtail rising cybersecurity attacks.
- The area of **Cross-Border Services** shows a service delivery divide. Less than half (43%) of the services for foreign users are available online, almost doubled by the online services for nationals (81%). Cross-border mobility would benefit from wider mutual recognition of electronic identification. Removing linguistic and interoperability barriers will enable Europeans to experience full cross-border citizenship and entrepreneurship.

In short, European countries can be proud on their accomplishments even while new challenges arise. Ongoing investments are needed to make digital solutions last. As the pandemic slowly fades, governments have a unique opportunity to accelerate and boost their digitalisation programmes. Public administrations will, with reinforced efforts and guided by European values, **enter the new digital government era.**

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