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The European Commission eGovernment Benchmark: Further Uptake Required To Meet Growing Citizens' Expectations For Public Services

The survey carried out by Capgemini unveils that almost one in two citizens are using eGovernment services in Europe, while user satisfaction for public online services lags behind the private sector.

Paris, May 28, 2013 – The European Commission released today the 10th Benchmark Measurement of European eGovernment Services, carried out by Capgemini Group, one of the world's foremost providers of consulting, technology and outsourcing services, and its partners*. The study: *Digital by Default or by Detour*, reveals that although availability of eGovernment services is now generally high, usage and satisfaction still need improvement – particularly when compared with private eServices. Pressures on public budgets and ever-growing user expectations of online public services, provide the drivers for digital transformation to use technology in a smarter way and ensure better value for customer and government.

New to the benchmark is a survey of 28,000 EU citizens on their opinion of public eServices. This demand-side picture is complemented by detailed analyses of 20-30 individual services for three high-impact life-events: starting a business; losing and finding a job; and going through higher education – very relevant to EU's economic performance. The third part of the survey looks at the extent to which countries have installed key technical building blocks (such as electronic authentication and authentic sources) to help underpin fast, consistent and error-free public services.

Simplicity, control and transparency, time saving and flexibility, are the key reasons citizens prefer to use eGovernment services. Time savings are indeed mentioned by 80% of citizens who used online services and flexibility by 76% of them. Saving money is also important – coming in third on the stated reasons. Respondents from the 32 participating countries indicated that the barriers to adopting eGovernment services were difficulties in usage (24%), and lack of awareness (21%). Many citizens are still unwilling to use eGovernment services, and indicated a strong preference for personal contact (62%), and/or expect that offline contact is required anyway (34%), and/or believed other channels to be more effective (19%). Interestingly, concerns about protection and security of personal data was only modest, at 11%

“Digital communications channels are becoming far more important given the substantially lower costs associated with them, compared to telephone helpdesks or face-to-face contact. Governments across Europe need to understand far better the different backgrounds and needs of the people they represent and how best to communicate with them, while also managing the bottom line,” says Dinand Tinholt, Vice President and EU account executive of Capgemini responsible for the study.

While national eGovernment services around the three life-events show promising signs regarding their online availability within countries, cross-border services are still a work in progress – providing relevant information to users but not process transactions. For businesses in particular, the survey found that core services were well developed across Europe but there was still room for improvement.

The citizen survey looks into views on a basket of 19 public services and assesses which are the most used by Europeans. Some of the key findings were:

- **Although 46% of European citizens use eGovernment services**, a significant proportion (28% of these) are at risk of dropping out after their experience.
- **Most popular eGovernment services include:** ‘declaring income taxes’ (73% of users will use the eChannel for this service next time), ‘moving/changing address’ (57%), and ‘enrolling in higher education and/or applying for student grant’ (56%).
- **Least popular eGovernment services include:** ‘reporting a crime’ (41% of users will use the eChannel for this service next time), ‘starting a new job’ (41%) and ‘starting a procedure for disability allowance’ (42%).
- **Fulfillment from eGovernment services:** 47% of eGovernment users got all they wanted from the public administration; 46% were partially fulfilled, and 5% did not get what they needed at all.

When it came to the life-event of losing and finding a job, satisfaction with eGovernment employment services was low, particularly for social oriented services such as debt counseling, housing, access to health promotion programmes etc. – thus introducing risks of people spiraling into decline (long term unemployment).

“Another key insight is we see a growing re-use of some data collected by governments could automate the delivery of services, thus reducing administrative burden for entrepreneurs. Cross-border eGovernment services for businesses are there in parts, however more needs to be done,” adds Dinand Tinholt.

The survey also found that greater emphasis on government transparency is needed. While governments are providing basic information about their organizations online, services that actually empower citizens and enable to hold public administrations to account are less well developed (such as publishing performance measurements, informing about participation in the policy making process, or giving access to appeals procedures).

While satisfaction with eGovernment services has dropped since 2007¹, satisfaction with social media platforms remains stable. In times of economic turmoil, where governments are forced to undertake radical changes and to realize cutbacks, retaining trust is vitally important. Governments should exploit new technologies in their delivery of services by using social media platforms to improve presence and drive usage of eGovernment services if they want to develop more sustainable business models.

“In these times of economic crisis, it is natural enough to worry about short term issues. But we will need food on the table in the long term, too. We will need to maintain competitiveness in a changing world. To find jobs for the young. To spend taxpayers' money more efficiently. To care sustainably for an ageing population. To manage energy resources better. ICT can deliver all that. It can boost productivity, efficiency, effectiveness. And it can provide so many innovations and applications,” says Neelie Kroes, European Commissioner for the Digital Agenda.

To access the full report, please go to <http://www.capgemini.com/egov-benchmark>

For more information about the EU's digital agenda, please go to <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/>

***Capgemini and Sogeti have conducted this study in partnership with IDC, Rand, DTi and ISPractice/Indigov.**

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¹ Note that these figures are average of results in 32 participating countries compared to figures collected from 10 Member States during the 2007 measurement.