Workshop Report:

eGovernment at Regional and local level:
Have your say and shape our Public Administrations of the future

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Preface

The 1st workshop since the adoption of the <u>new eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020</u> was held on 20 September 2016. This workshop presented the new plan and focused on animating its implementation, in particular its dynamic aspects.

From the workshop, which was jointly organised by the SEDEC Secretariat of the Committee of the Regions and the European Commission (DG CONNECT), we expect to show how the new eGovernment Action Plan is useful for all levels of public administration - European, national, regional and local - and how any stakeholders will be engaged in its future evolution. The workshop brought together public administrations and leading engaged citizens and businesses from across Europe, to create and discuss ideas for action.

The workshop started with a presentation of the adopted eGovernment Action Plan and presented also the draft opinion of the Committee of the Regions. It then outlined how all administrations can monitor the evolution of already-included actions and contribute and participate in the definition of new actions, which is part of the dynamic nature of the Action Plan. Contributions from the Committee of the Regions and SEDEC representatives, as well as from guest speakers, included practical examples and use cases to facilitate cooperation between, for example, border regions, helping them deliver cross-border public services.

To aid the delivery of better eGovernment services, the workshop also discussed ways in which infrastructure and common service building blocks can be shared, taking into account roles and responsibilities at European, national, regional and local level.

Specific topics that the meeting addressed included the availability of open data, how governments can pursue the transformation process, and how to involve citizens, businesses and public administrations in the co-creation of services.

In the afternoon session the workshop also introduced the <u>eGovernment4EU platform</u>. Participants were invited to come up with real practical needs leading to suggestions and proposals for new actions and to submit them to the Commission and the Member States by using the platform to interact with the community in the room and with those who have connected remotely via the platform. The suggestions and proposals will eventually be presented to the eGovernment Steering Board to possibly become new actions in the eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020.

Introduction

Yoomi Renström, SEDEC Chair; Jean-François Junger Deputy-Head, Unit H4 eGovernment & Trust

IT and digitalisation are major issues for the EU, and also at national, local and regional level, and for the people that use government services. It is interesting to see how we build the infrastructure that we need to make digitalisation work. Some regions are lagging behind, because building the required infrastructure is a challenge, these are the regions that are most in need of support. However, it is not just a question of infrastructure. This is a complex issue. In my experience as a mayor in Sweden, I encountered difficulties with schools not having the right systems and software to connect with each other, as each school selects the software and systems that they think are the best. This is true in healthcare also.

If these problems are being experienced in a well-connected country like Sweden, then how can we ensure interconnectivity in the whole of the EU? This is something that we must do, but it will be costly and difficult to make people understand the necessity of it. There is not only a divide in digital infrastructure; there is also a divide in digital skills. So the most important question is not why this is necessary. We all know why. What is more interesting to discuss is how to do it and today's discussions should throw some light on this.

It was noted that the workshop was the first stakeholder event since the adoption of the Action Plan, and provided an opportunity to see the results of the discussion that took place during the previous workshop. The workshop is to be an opportunity for stakeholders to help the Commission to identify the needs that stakeholders have in order to do improve eGovernment services in the EU. It was suggested that, during the morning presentations, participants should note the elements in the presentations that correspond to the needs they have, and how they have addressed them. Then, in the afternoon session, the participants will identify other issues and other needs that they have in terms of interacting with public administration, and work in groups to find answers to the various questions and introduce them on the platform. The platform will be a key element allowing the Commission to communicate with the different actors and stakeholders in the Member States and in different regions in Europe in identifying needs and finding partners to co-develop effective solutions.

eGovernment Action Plan 2016 -2020: principles, pillars, actions

Andrea Halmos, DG CNECT H4, eGovernment & Trust

Introduction

One of the aims of the current workshop is to show why the current eGovernment Action Plan, the third successive plan, published in April 2016, is of high relevance to local and regional administrations. There are a number of reasons for this. There are almost 95,000 local and regional authorities in the EU, and many of the policy-making issues concerning the modernisation of the services that affect citizens' lives are often in the hands of local and regional administrations. Much of the EU legislation that touches upon national administration has a direct impact on regional and local administration.

One of the raisons d'être of the eGovernment Action Plan is the cross-border element, which very often touches on local and regional administrations, when they have mobility between citizens and businesses across regions. This has created a rationale for the Commission to try and have digital public services work across borders, in order to facilitate this mobility. Consequently, in the new Action Plan there is a greater role for regional and local administrations to play, particularly in light of the dynamic nature of the Action Plan, which gives the possibility to identify new ideas for action (beyond those already identified in the Communication).

eGovernment and public sector modernisation, with the use of ICT, has moved on over the past decade from being a major tool to enable a more efficient way of delivering public services to being part of the overall modernisation of public administration. This has involved a move towards a digital government strategy, an open government strategy, in which the modernisation of public administration is not just is a cost-saving measure, but has implications in terms of economic growth, societal equality, and good governance (transparency, integrity and citizen engagement). Engagement of stakeholders can greatly benefit the outcome of public administrations both in terms of service delivery and policy-making. The idea is that the integration of ICT should be part of an overall public sector modernisation objective and not just an add-on, using ICT to make current services more efficient.

The second idea behind the Action Plan is the move from silos to a joined-up and open government principle, where citizens and businesses have easier access to services, because there is sharing of data between administrations. There is also a great benefit to be gained from such openness, not only within administration themselves, but also towards stakeholders, through the delivery of more needs-based services and engaging stakeholders in more informed policy-making, resulting in more impactful policy implementation.

The third idea involves moving from availability to take-up - from a one-size-fits-all type of service delivery to the realisation that users expect services to be more customised and easy to use, like the services that they use in the private sector. So the tools are there for public administrations, to help them better understand the needs of citizens and engage them from the start in the design of new services. With the availability of open data and open services, this is possible.

Based on these ideas, we started to draft the eGovernment Action Plan as foreseen in the Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe. We published it in April 2016, putting forward a very ambitious vision for Europe for 2020, whereby public administrations in Europe should be open, efficient and inclusive and provide borderless, personalised, user-friendly, end-to-end digital public services. Innovative approaches are used to design and deliver better services and the digital environment is used to facilitate their interaction with stakeholders.

Also in the Action Plan, there is a set of principles.

- Digital by Default;
- Once only principle;
- Inclusiveness and accessibility;
- Openness and transparency;
- Cross-border by default;
- Interoperable by default;
- Trustworthiness and security.

These principles have equal value and should be the leading principles when identifying new actions and new services.

We have come up with an over-all policy framework of the eGovernment Action Plan. As recognised by the Digital Single Market strategy, a lot has been achieved but there is still a need to modernise public administration with the help of ICT. There is a need to facilitate mobility across borders in Europe with the help of digital public services, and to facilitate the provision of high-quality services through the engagement of stakeholders in service design and delivery. These three areas form the three pillars of the policy framework. In total, 20 actions have been identified across the different policy areas (the actions related to the different pillars can be seen in the presentation, which you can access below). The actions all have a life-span within the first two-three years of the Action Plan. We are inviting stakeholders, including Commission services, Member States, public administrations, businesses and citizens to come forward and suggest new ideas.

In the new eGovernment Action Plan, there is an in-built dynamic approach which allows for new actions to be identified and eventually to be added to the Action Plan. It was with this in mind that a stakeholder engagement platform was set up on the Futurium site, where stakeholders can come forward and suggest ideas and identify issues or needs that they have in public administration, and suggest possible solutions.

All the suggestions will be collected and presented to the Member States. There is no guarantee that all suggestions will make it into the Action Plan, but there is a procedure in place to capture and process all the ideas received. This process includes a call for ideas that is constantly open. From the ideas received, the Member States and Commission will select actions to be added to the Action Plan. During this procedure there will be transparency on filtering criteria, and monitoring of the subsequent implementation of the actions.

There are a number of funding opportunities through the Connecting Europe Facility, which provides funding for public sector modernisation and eGovernment-related funding is also made available through the Structural and Investment Funds and Horizon 2020.

There is also an interesting toolbox that has been created through a joint work of various Commission services, in order to support public administrations in their modernisation efforts.

The stakeholder engagement platform is constantly open, and discussions are underway with the Member States as to how frequently the submissions will be analysed, but the plan is to present the ideas for action to the Member States for discussion on a regular basis.

Andrea's presentation at the workshop is available online, and can be accessed here.

CoR/SEDEC Committee opinion

Martin Andreasson (CoR rapporteur on eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020)

This presentation began with an introduction to a persona – Steve – who is taking his friends on a drive, even though it is obvious from the presentation that he is blind. This is possible thanks to the use of autonomous vehicles, made available by Google. Only a few weeks ago the first autonomous taxi was introduced, in Singapore. But more importantly than just the technological aspect, Steve now has new expectations from life and can have an autonomous lifestyle that he could not dream of before. This raises the question: Will this have an impact on the public sector and how Steve will expect the public sector to work? The answer is clearly 'yes'. It will change everything. This is not about technology; it is about what people expect from the public sector. This is why the eGovernment Action Plan is so very important. As Andrea has already pointed out, what we do in public administration is one thing, but how we build the entire public service is interconnected, and this is the big point I want to make. Autonomous vehicles are only the beginning. 3D printing will change how the manufacturing industry works. Drones will also impact the labour market, just as autonomous cars will affect taxi drivers. Waze is a simple platform that uses data from people driving around, allowing users to see in real time where there is congestion. Three years ago, Mr. Watson, the super-computer, beat the other contestants on the quiz show Jeopardy. Watson understands spoken language and can find answers to questions put to him faster than the human mind. This was three years ago. Another interesting thing to be aware of – Moore's Law states that every 18 to 24 months, the capacity of computers will double. So, what we see today will be twice as good in a year's time. In the near future, as part of the Internet of Things, everything will be interconnected and will feed information into the system. This is the context we are working in.

The Committee of the Regions is not saying that this is good or bad, merely that this is inevitable, whether we like it or not. Neither does it want to give hope to regional authorities who would like to opt out of this process. Individual people may have this choice, but local authorities will not have this luxury. They need to be able to adapt to future realities. This is much bigger than just public administration. It is about how we deliver services to people. As local and regional authorities, we deliver lots of services within education, within healthcare, within the business environment, etc. This is why the CoR welcomes the new Action Plan, and sees it as important for everybody, but especially for local and regional authorities, as service deliverers. One of the things we are missing is that we have examples of things in most areas in which local and regional authorities work, but the SEDEC Committee is also interested in cultural and educational approaches, and this is something we have not seen in the Commission's reports so far, so this is something that could be covered on the platform.

The CoR also welcomes soft infrastructure initiatives that allow information transfer across national, regional and organisational boarders, such as eProcurement, eID and eSignatures. This infrastructure makes it possible to secure data that needs to be secured.

The CoR also believes that to get everything to work, it is necessary to get talking, which is why events like the current workshop are important. A lot of local and regional authorities are keen to start working on these issues. But they are not only interested in executing these initiatives; they also want to be part of the planning stage. Therefore, the suggestion was raised that the CoR should be included in the eGovernment Action Plan Steering Board, because this is not only an issue for the Commission and the Member States, it is an issue for everybody.

The CoR endorses the underlying principals in the eGovernment Action Plan.

The CoR also believes that this set of principles encapsulates what needs to be done in a very concise and clear manner.

However, the CoR also raised some concerns. The Commission is already working on some of these areas, but it is important to highlight them again and again.

- There are still big differences in access to high-quality and affordable Internet connections. This really needs to be addressed, as we will not have development if we do not have the infrastructure in place to support it.
- Education and digital skills are something that we all need to work on, to ensure that people have the skills to use technology, and can adapt to a labour market altered by this technology.
- There is still work to be done in finding the right balance between security and openness. When

implementing the Once Only principle, we constantly encounter problems with sharing information between different agencies.

- One possible solution for this is to put in place routines for the classification of information, as these are not always in place. We need to make more of an effort in assessing what sort of information should be secure, and what should be open.
- There are also a number of obstacles in the way to a digital single market, for example VAT. In Europe we still have a lot of different VAT rules, which makes it difficult to have a big open market for businesses.

A question was asked as to whether people will want these changes, for example automated vehicles. In response it was noted that there will certainly be people who will want to opt out. The point is; what impact does this have on our disability care. Blind people like Steve (the persona introduced above) will not accept having to book a car hours or days in advance, when the technology exists to allow him autonomy. The change will happen, and we need to be ready to adapt to it.

Another question was asked about what the big issues are that need to be resolved – policy, cooperation between companies and the public sector? In response it was noted that whatever issues arise, the technology is there to deal with them. Public administrations need to be ready to adapt to societal change as it happens and decide what sort of services they will deliver and how they will see their role. This is something that is being discussed a lot – how the relationship between government and stakeholders is changing. There is an open call under Horizon 2020 related to this, about the transformation of European public administrations and how governments can prepare for this. The approach that we are adopting in the Action Plan is one of flexibility and responsiveness. If the infrastructure for the delivery of services is set up in such a way that it is modular and can be reused in different contexts, then governments can decide whether they want to deliver the services or have others come in and create additional services. In terms of policy, there is an exercise within the Commission to revisit previous policies and regulations and new legislation to understand how they can work in a new digital era.

A question was put to the CoR about lessons learned and recommendations for the future arising from the previous Action Plans. In response, it was noted that previously there was more of a focus on technical solutions (the IT side), whereas now it is more about how to deliver services and change public sector administration.

Martin's presentation at the workshop is available online, and can be accessed here.

What is already being done in the regions?

Shared infrastructure case studies from the Scottish Digital Transformation Service and update on the Scottish Digital Public Services Strategy, and the impact of the EU eGovernment Action Plan

Emma Gillies, Head of the Digital Transformation Service of the Scottish Government

This presentation centred largely on the work conducted within the Scottish government's digital transformation service and its digital ecosystems unit. Scotland's digital transformation service was established in August last year, it is a shared service. Our vision ties in what was said earlier, to put users right at the heart of services. We work with organisations to deliver business transformation. The important thing is that we don't mention digital anywhere. For us, digital is an enabler and what we are doing is transforming the way that government provides services.

We start with user needs, and we then look at how the organisation is set up to meet these user needs, and only after that do we look at the technology that will enable service provision. We support organisations in developing digital strategies. We look at how digital they are and how digital they want to be. We look at how they are servicing their user needs The problem to be solved is examined, then we talk with suppliers to find the best way to provide a solution, so requirements and solutions are not developed in isolation – it is part of a process. We also support organisations in building their digital talent and we have set up a Digital Academy in Scottish government to develop digital delivery skills. There is also a Digital Readers course and an Agile Readers course, so that people who are the gateway to funding understand how to work in an Agile way, because this can be a blocker.

We are doing this because we realise that if we just go to the market and try to buy digital skills, we can't compete with banks and other industries that pay a lot more money, so we need to develop digital skills in government and we also support organisations in hiring the right kind of digital talent. We are essentially a digital consultancy within the Scottish Government.

In addition, we work very closely with HR, procurement and IT within the Scottish Government, to make them more digital. To give one example, we went into one organisation that has hundreds of employees. They had just acquired a system, and they were not clear about how this system was going to impact the processes they had in place. One of the things we looked at was where they were in terms of service delivery and where they needed to get to. In line with that, we conducted user engagement to see what it was that users wanted. We cross-referenced this with the system that had been bought for millions of pounds, and found that it met 13% of user needs. In other words, it didn't meet 87% of needs, so we had to figure out how to meet these.

While the digital transformation service looks at organisations from an individual point of view, the digital ecosystems unit looks across organisations to find the commonalities, standards and processes that can be standardised as much as possible. It is necessary to break down barriers and silos, challenge politics and some of the egos involved. In Scotland, we start small, prove the concept, demonstrate the value and then scale up. We are also looking at data hosting, using the Cloud, and social security - how Scottish government can gain new powers to deliver benefits to its citizens.

We are also launching a digital first standard, which is basically the digital by default principle, which involves approaching any service delivery in a digital way.

Emma's presentation at the workshop is available online, and can be accessed [here](#).

Cross-border public services case

José María Cruz, Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)

The Association of European Border Regions defends the interests of border areas in Europe, transforming the lack of development into social inclusion and economic innovation. It also aims to transform confrontation into integration. It is concerned with external borders, but also with internal borders and faces challenges related to mobility and complex administration, which are also some of the priorities of the eGovernment Action Plan – so we are talking about the same things.

The presentation included a [video](#) that demonstrated that even in borders that are marked by confrontation, there is still a common interest and a common motivation to resolve problems.

The role of cross-border cooperation is to strengthen already existing dynamics at local and regional levels, for instance in the environmental, cultural, economic and health fields. This is interesting for the eGovernment Action Plan, because to implement the plan it will be necessary to decentralise the actions and take into consideration the dynamics existing at local and regional levels, if projects are to take root at these levels.

In order to involve citizens and businesses in the co-creation of services, which is one of the issues raised by organisers of the workshop, it will first of all be necessary to generate trust between stakeholders on both sides of the border. In generating trust, it is important to talk not only about infrastructure, but also about education and culture, and about information, communication and languages.

The presentation included some examples of cross-border cooperation from which lessons learned could be applied more broadly. The main such example was the Cerdanya Hospital on the French-Spanish border. The cross-border element provided the project with enough critical mass to be implemented. It is funded by the Spanish and French governments and the Region of Catalonia, this pooling of resources was also an important element in implementing the project. This hospital serves an area with 30,000 inhabitants and straddles two different health systems. It arose based on a common need and started in 2008 with the setting up of a cooperation structure, providing a way to manage common resources. This is quite an important aspect, and also applicable to the eGovernment Action Plan. Two months ago the hospital launched a cross-border platform in order to exchange patient information between the hospital staff and the French health system. Lack of information/communication was cited as one of the main reasons for the low-French usage of the hospital compared to the Spanish side, which is also interesting.

As another example, it was noted that along eastern border of France, there are over one million people who commute into Germany and Switzerland on a daily basis and then return home to sleep. They encounter various problems arising from the different social security systems, taxation, pension schemes, etc. AEBR talked to them and saw that even if there is European regulation regarding social security or taxation at European level, the national governments were not really able to interpret this regulation. So the aspect of education and teaching people new ways of cooperation is important. Furthermore, at regional level there was a perception that the solving of regional issues was not a priority at the national level. Language is also an issue – if you live in France and work in Germany you may have to speak German, but not necessarily to a level where you can understand the complexities of taxation law. When you are facing complexity, it should not be only one institution or sector participating in the discussion, if the complexity is to be transformed into something clearer for the public.

José's presentation at the workshop is available online, and can be accessed here.

Engagement of citizens in service design or policy-making case

Tamas Erkelens, Program Manager Data Innovation; Chief Technology Officer; City of Amsterdam

This presentation included a case study for a project aimed at poverty reduction, and also a vision for the digitisation of public services. There were also some examples of cross-city cooperation. As a government, it is important that we develop products and services that are based on the needs of citizens, which are very diverse.

The poverty production project was a very large one, in which it was attempted to find out why 20% of the population in Amsterdam live below the minimum wage in the Netherlands. As a result, there are a lot of people who are ill-equipped to deal with societal change and are unable to find the right government services and products that they need. This means that a lot of people are entitled to services but do not request them. It is not only because they couldn't find them, sometimes it was because they did not want them. We had interviews with some sub-groups, for example working mothers in a specific district, to find out what is happening. A persona was created – Grace. Grace thinks that God will solve her problems. Her social relations are entirely church-based and the help that she gets comes from the church. This is very effective in some ways.

The persona was created through interviews, and was scoped in a bigger context using data analytics. Do people like this interact with government? In some cases it was found that there was interaction, but people had difficulties filling in forms. So, we are trying to change the forms, but this is a huge process, and there is still a lot of work to be done. Technical and visual aspects play a role in the level of interaction with government services (an example from the Poverty Reduction site of approaches that achieve greater interaction can be found in the presentation).

A comparison was made between who was entitled to services and who actually requested services, with some interesting results, across neighbourhoods, languages and other specific groups. If you want to build on this knowledge, you need to work with stakeholders at the local level and also be able to use new technologies. This is an example of eGovernment in practice. It is necessary to create a feedback tool, which means you can learn what your user wants and government services can continuously improve.

An example was given of using Data Science methods, which showed that, despite the fact that people aged 17-27 are at a crucial stage in their lives, there are very few social benefits and services used in this group. Social services are more delivered between the ages of 30 and 50. When looked at from an investment perspective, the most crucial stage is the age from 17 to 21, to make the investment work, rather than paying benefits for 20 years afterwards. Using Data Science and techniques from the private sector it is possible to modernise government services and make the political choices visible.

When it comes to digitising public services, it possible to generalise these specific examples to find out what can be shared across cities and regions. Generic aspects that are important to cities include:

- Building blocks;
- Standardisation;
- API's that are standardised, but also new fields like Blockchain, Internet of Things, Augmented Reality;
- Government as a service, with services reused across cities or across countries;
- Good practices should be reused;
- EU projects created for reuse: Open source + know-how.

Eurocities is an important partner and we will meet with 30 to 40 cities to talk about the eGovernment Action Plan in Tampere in October. Amsterdam is working together on various topics with cities such as London, Helsinki, Berlin, and Hong Kong and others. One good example of a European project that has an impact was the project Code for Europe.

Open Data and opinion on "Digitising European Industry"

Kieran McCarthy, Cork City Council, Ireland

The digital revolution is fast paced, and a chameleon in nature. It is perhaps more an evolution than a revolution. For years, ICT has been hosting a 'taking back' programme in democracy and equality, and local and regional governments have been witness to this third industrial revolution. The citizen is now the producer and the consumer - or prosumer - in the smart economy. People are connected more than ever before in human history.

So, what do we know about this digitisation and its transformative effects? We know that it's very fluid and very cross-disciplinary. We know that to access it we must have multiple partnerships. We are dealing with lateral thinking, which challenges ideas about freedom, power and identity. When we think about digitisation, we think about Facebook and Twitter more than about what our local government is doing. We are dealing with a chessboard, with multiple pieces interacting, with huge potential for new synergies and partnerships. We are dealing with something in which all 500 million European citizens are engaged, regardless of their status.

So, where are we going with this? In terms of producing knowledge, eGovernment does play a large role in this ground-up evolution. The aims of eGovernment are quite diverse. We are trying to understand cities and regions in order to harness better powers. It recovers and engages the public good, plugging into and archiving the everyday lives of citizens. It also embraces a collective understanding of cities and their ongoing development in diverse topics such as health, politics, economy, society and the environment. It leads a strong agenda in being environmentally friendly and more energy efficient. With the democratisation of knowledge, there is a lot of blurring of boundaries between technology and humans, science and culture. eGovernment does produce new modes of knowledge creation and creates new synergies and new interfaces and encourages crowd-sourcing and the creation, sharing and modifying of ideas about modernity and imagined futures.

The process of eGovernment generates, accumulates, filters, archives and sorts processes of data in different ways. It captures entire populations, gathering new mass forms of knowledge, not previously gathered. The data is not hand-picked – it is mutable and multi-medial. We are dealing with mass dynamic flows of diverse, fine grained, relational data of unimaginable scales and complexities. This leads to the creation of new orientations around place, with new modes of place-making emerging.

With eGovernment and the work that is being done, we get new hybrid environments emerging, some landmarks in our cities and regions become competitive with GPS markers. Virtual trails become implanted in people's minds and Wi-Fi cafes become corporate meeting rooms. There are vast behavioural changes; we all seem to need free Wi-Fi, which many cities offer. Everything is in real-time operational governance. Distance is a moot point, time is inconsequential. We now live in 24 hour cities, with interruption in our lives 24/7.

eGovernment brings profound changes in processes, practices, distribution and audiences in the production of knowledge, and there are consequences for how knowledge is produced, and how business and governance is enacted. There are also consequences for how data is harvested and how statistics are commodified. There are social and ethical concerns in terms of privacy, civil liberties and human rights. There are digital surveillance concerns. We need to look at how eGovernment influences us, and how we influence it. We also need to look at how eGovernment evolves – and what effect we have on its evolution – how we evolve with it, how eGovernment domesticates and controls us, and vice versa. We also need to look at how to achieve the right balance.

Being smart has lit an enterprising fire in our cities and regions and the advent of the third industrial revolution brings the principles of smart specialisation to many of the EU's regions. Regions can become collaborators, enablers of strategy, leaders, and champions of fresh narratives and utilisers of new sources of energy. Young and old can drive this new economy and lay the foundations of new European growth.

Kieran's presentation at the workshop is available online and can be accessed here.

Discussion

It was noted that producing models of how things should look is relatively easy. A question was asked as to whether this work had met with a positive response from authorities. Do they understand it? Are they prepared to change their way their work? One respondent noted that organisations that interface directly with the public in the provision of services have a mind-set that is more open to change, and that they are interested in improving the levels of service that they offer.

A question was asked about whether changes in regulation are necessary to work in specific cross-border contexts. In response, it was noted that there are some issues with understanding EU legislation at the local and regional level, so the first step is to help them to understand the regulations that are already in place. What is really important at regional level is to have funding. If someone wants to implement one of the actions, their main concern will be how much money it will cost, and how much money they will save by implementing it. We need to look for new ways to provide funding.

With increased openness and availability of information, Wi-Fi and so on, there is an expectation that everything will be free. But in reality nothing is free; somebody will have to bear the cost. In the experience of Cork, Ireland, the local administration teamed up with two universities and the local Chamber of Commerce to come up with a concept called Cork Community. Between the four or five institutions involved, it was possible to fund an innovation officer for the city. If you really want eGovernment, or any other digital agenda, to be effective, it is necessary to have partnerships.

The question was then asked as to whether the EU's vision of eGovernment is achievable, in terms of people actually benefitting from it. For some groups of citizens it is realistic, but there is also another group who are not easy to bring online, or who don't have the option of going online. So it is about supporting them. Again funding is an issue. Partnerships, for example with banks, will play a key role in reaching citizens that are not online yet. There are government services that can help people go online, and they need to be informed about these. It is a difficult challenge, because so many different entities are involved. More funds will certainly be needed in the beginning. But we should also note that it is not only necessary to add things, we need to take away things that were not effective in the past. There is a lot we can learn by looking at organisations that have made this transition.

One of the key problems with governments is that they tend to de-simplify – if they can make something complex, they will. If we take a bureaucratic perspective, there are many levels of government. But from a user point of view, there is only one government. Funding is indeed an issue. But there is no one source of information on funding, there are hundreds. The Action Plan calls for digital by default, but not for openness and transparency by default. Why not?

The secret in taking it from a vision to something that actually happens is managing the process, and managing the legacy and all the different levels of government, otherwise it won't happen. So we need to build structures where we can make these kinds of decisions and build this new infrastructure, where it will appear as if there is only one government. Openness by default is certainly an aim, but security is also a consideration.

As regards funding, analogue and digital changes must go hand in hand, and the combination of ESF and ERDF from regional and structural funding is an interesting approach. It is interesting to find synergies between spending on digital (ERDF, Thematic Objective 2) and spending on the capacity of administrations, organisational structures and the way processes are redesigned (ESF, Thematic Objective 11). It is about changing the way we deliver services and digitisation is an element of this. The Commission is leading by example with the Single Digital Gateway, and the revamping the Europe.eu website is also moving in the right direction.

The representative of one local administration noted that they have appointed five European officers to trace EU funding. Their sole job is to track down funding for various types of projects. These are an important asset in locating and accessing the funding that is already available.

One point was made in favour of pan-European shared services, which make it much easier for cities and small villages and regions to use. Syntax is important for cross-border services. The work being conducted by ISA in this area is very important. Privacy is not a problem. If you define what you want to do as an administration by law, then you will get the permission to do it. It is just a question of defining the data that you need.

Results of sub-group discussions

Jean-François Junger Deputy-Head of Unit CONNECT.H4 eGovernment & Trust and colleagues

This section of the workshop involved participants dividing into sub-groups to discuss their needs and ideas for actions and to enter these onto the eGovernment4EU platform.

The needs rose can be grouped as follows:

Cross-Border:

1) Cross-border exchange of data?

Literacy:

2) Skills and training to go digital

3) Accelerating digital literacy and scalability

4) Sharing publication data and learning resources

Access:

5) A digital proximity counter at every local administration (i.e. parish level)

6) How can the language barrier be overcome?

7) Fibre internet access for every household and business across Europe

Usability:

8) How do we implement the concept of a "single point of contact" for businesses?

9) Digital Single Gateway ASAP

10) Joined-up services

11) Digital identity/Once Only

12) Abolish public services where possible.

13) Citizen-government interaction online

14) Personal contacts with public authorities should not be abolished

15) Only once can sometimes be once too many

16) Public sector data as DNA of the Web.

17) Government data open by default

eParticipation/eDemocracy:

18) Collaborative platform

19) Foster an IT citizen forum

Internal reform:

20) Digital-by-default now by law?

Growth:

21) Investment/Funding of Start-ups

Specific services:

22) Disclosure of environmental procedures to citizens

23) Moving Digitally in BxL

24) Health records access

25) eGovernment on the foundation of an internet of human beings

For complete information on the needs identified click here.

Closing session

Jean-François Junger Deputy-Head, Unit H4 eGovernment & Trust

The ideas gathered at the participative session will be presented to the Member State representatives which form the eGovernment Steering Board, and the Commission and the Member States will have to decide together whether they are taken on board the Action Plan or not. The Commission is going to ask the Member States whether they are willing and able to invest resources to address the topics indicated, or not. This is completely voluntary. What we want is to be very visible. Participants were asked to continue returning to the platform from time to time, when they have ideas or they meet people with ideas, or just to comment on other ideas. More importantly, they were asked to continue spreading the news, to generate more input and more comments and ideas. More best practice examples are needed. The platform will only be successful if people are aware it exists and start participating.

The Commission is willing to help Member States and regional and local authorities if they want to organise events like today's event in an effort to engage citizens.

Participants were asked if there are any questions that are important and that need to be addressed more, or if there elements that are missing.

In response, one participant representing a city noted that there should be recognition that it is a social transition also, digitisation is not only an efficiency move, and it is a very important social transition. The eGovernment Action Plan is one of the few plans by the Commission to recognise this. We have a shared responsibility to keep an eye on this social transition.

One comment was made about the need to always have sustainability in mind, or to try to see whether there would be a funding model that could make sure that the service remains available over time, even if there is a change in local government.

Addressing these comments from participants, with regards to the issue of social transformation, it was noted that this is something that the Commission indeed recognises and in Horizon 2020 there is a research topics addressing this aspect specifically (Societal Challenge 6, CULT-COOP-11): how ICT is transforming society, and also transforming the role of government, the perception of public administrations and the interaction between citizens, administrations and other actors.

The participant acknowledged the value of this research and noted that it is also important, in a plan like this where we talk about a Digital Single Market, that there should be a more prominent place for the social consequences that the DSM entails and also, a precondition for economic growth should be that everybody can participate. So, from an economic viewpoint, it makes sense to pay more attention to the groups that are left out in the usual focus groups and the more market-driven approach to developing services and products, such as the elderly and disabled, but also those who don't understand the language of the digital world.

Regarding the issue of sustainability, it was noted that this indeed is something that needs to be addressed. But some actions may need to be sustained at the local or regional level. We cannot *a priori* identify and enforce it. But if an activity had been carried out and the various actors are willing to invest, they have to think in the long-term. If private companies cooperate with authorities to respond to one of the needs identified, they will also be thinking along these lines.

The purpose of the platform is to show that some actors have needs, and that some authorities are willing to invest to address those needs and maybe administrations in another region will have similar needs, and they can decide to pool resources to find a solution. We need to make administration work in a more effective way, to put the available resources to better use.

During a previous discussion of the platform with the Member States it was noted that the platform can also be a useful tool for individual regions that want to cooperate, to invest together to find solutions to common needs. It should not be seen as something exclusively aimed at the Member State level.

A question was asked about how to identify best practices. In response, it was noted that there is a tagging system on the platform. There is also the Joinup platform, which has information about many best practices. Work is underway to bring these two platforms together.

A question was asked about moderation of the platform and whether contributors who submit needs will receive some notification as to whether the idea is being dealt with. In response it was noted that there will not be any direct feedback. The only thing that can be guaranteed is that all the ideas will be presented to the Member States, and that the Member States and the Commission will jointly decide whether they are willing to invest resources into addressing the points raised.

Annex I: Agenda

Workshop on eGovernment at regional and local level

Date: Tuesday, 20 September 2015 Location: Van Maerlant Building

09:00- 10:00	**Welcome/Registration**	
10:00- 10:15	**Opening and Welcome**	Chair: Ms Yoomi Renström (SEDEC Chair)
10:15- 10:40	**eGovernment Action Plan 2016 -2020: principles, pillars, actions + Q/A**	Andrea Halmos EC CONNECT.H4 eGovernment & Trust
10:40- 11:00	**CoR/SEDEC Committee opinion + Q/A**	Martin Andreasson (CoR rapporteur on eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020)
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee break	
11:15 -12:00	**What is done already in the Regions?** - Shared infrastructure case studies from the Scottish Digital Transformation Service and update on the Scottish Digital Public Services Strategy, and the impact of the EU EGovernment Action Plan - Cross-border public services case - Engagement of citizens in service design or policy-making case - Open Data and opinion on "Digitising European Industry"	Emma Gillies, Head of the Digital Transformation Service of the Scottish Government José María Cruz, Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) Tamas Erkelens, Program Manager Data Innovation; Chief Technology Officer; City of Amsterdam Kieran McCarthy, Cork City Council, Éire-Ireland
12:00 – 13:00	**Discussion with participants:** - What are the needs for regional and local Authorities in an EU context? How can citizens and businesses be engaged?; What could the eGovernment Action Plan do for regional and local administrations?	Moderator (chair)+ all
13:00 – 14:00	*Lunch*	
14:00- 16:00	Participative sub-group discussions & hand-on session on Needs/Ideas/Actions and the eGovernment4EU platform	Jean-François Junger Deputy-Head of Unit CONNECT.H4 eGovernment & Trust and colleagues