



eGovernment Benchmark 2023 Insight Report

Connecting Digital Governments

INSIGHT REPORT

Written by Capgemini, Sogeti, IDC and Politecnico di Milano
for the European Commission Directorate General for
Communications Networks, Content and Technology
September 2023

Capgemini

sogeti
Part of Capgemini

IDC



POLITECNICO
MILANO 1863

DG CONNECT

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Communications Networks,
Content and Technology

Directorate B — Digital Decade and Connectivity Unit B.2
— Digital Decade Coordination

Contact: Petra Kleininger (Project Officer for the
eGovernment Benchmark Data Collection)

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

European Commission
B-1049 Brussels

Manuscript completed in July 2023

1st edition

PROJECT TEAM

Capgemini: Niels van der Linden, Jochem Dogger,
Sem Enzerink, Ruben Steendam & Martin Page
Sogeti: Sandrine Cipponeri & Erlend Firth
IDC: Massimiliano Claps & Alba Balla
Politecnico di Milano: Giuliano Noci, Michele Benedetti
& Giulia Marchio

Contact: Niels van der Linden (Project Manager
eGovernment Benchmark)

E-mail: niels.vander.linden@capgemini.com

LEGAL NOTICE

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

PDF | ISBN 978-92-68-05653-0 |
doi: 10.2759/474056 KK-BH-23-001-EN-N

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2023

© European Union, 2023

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

For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the European Union, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective rightholders.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	04
Glossary of Key Terminology	08
INTRODUCING THE EGOVERNMENT BENCHMARK	09
eGovernment in dire times	10
The eGovernment Benchmark: Europe's comparative study into Digital Governments	10
Analysing performance in the light of policy priorities	11
EUROPE'S STATE OF PLAY	12
Overall Maturity: Malta and Estonia lead the way	13
Key dimensions: User Centricity remains the spearhead across Europe	14
What separates the best from the least digital?	16
EGOVERNMENT WITH THE USER AT ITS HEART: USER-CENTRIC SERVICES FOR NATIONAL USERS	18
Finding the right government website	20
Fast websites, avoiding frustrations	20
Websites accessible to all users	20
Easy-to-understand government portals	21
Clear information provision	21
Secure authentication with eID	21
Getting help when filling in eForms	22
Completing the service entirely online	23
The peak of user friendly: Proactive service delivery	23
CROSS-BORDER EGOVERNMENT	24
The state of cross-border service delivery	25
Single Digital Gateway and eIDAS as accelerators for cross-border services	27
New cross-border services in the Digital Decade	27
PERSISTENT GAPS IN DIGITAL SERVICE DELIVERY	29
eGovernment for citizens and for entrepreneurs	30
Local and regional government bodies can learn from central government	33
KEY CONCLUSIONS TOWARDS CONNECTING DIGITAL GOVERNMENTS	35
Digital government with human values at its heart	36
The Digital Decade: Three service gaps to bridge on the road to 2030	37
Interoperability as key towards Connecting Digital Governments	38

Executive Summary

The eGovernment Benchmark: Monitoring Europe's digitalisation of public services

The eGovernment Benchmark monitors Europe's digitalisation of public services. The digital transformation of our societies and our public services in particular, is driven by government policies enabling digital technologies to flourish. With its [Digital Decade policy programme](#), the European Union strives to lead the way in this respect by setting common targets for 2030. This study captures the digital transformation of governments in 2021 and 2022 during a time marked by the Covid pandemic which highlighted further the importance of digital public services.

Analysing digital governments through the eyes of citizens and entrepreneurs

- The eGovernment Benchmark sheds light on eGovernment in 35 European countries, referred to as 'Europe' or the 'EU27+': the 27 European Union Member States , Iceland , Norway , Switzerland , Albania , Montenegro , North Macedonia , Serbia  and Türkiye .
- Mystery Shoppers assessed 15,083 websites during July and August 2021, and November and December 2022, across **9 life events**, related to key 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:



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 processes, as well as about the way people's personal data is being processed?



Key Enablers – What technological enablers are in place for the delivery of eGovernment services?



Cross-Border Services – How easily are citizens from abroad able to access and use the online services? And what online support and feedback mechanisms are in place for cross-border users?

Based on the four dimensions and 48 underlying survey questions, countries receive an **overall eGovernment maturity** score. This composite score ranges from 0 to 100 points.

European digital governments at a glance

The European leaders are Malta 🇲🇹 (96 points) and Estonia 🇪🇪 (92). Other frontrunners are Luxembourg 🇱🇺 (89), Iceland 🇮🇸 (88), Finland 🇫🇮 (86), the Netherlands 🇳🇱 (85), Lithuania 🇱🇹 (85), Denmark 🇩🇰 (85), Latvia 🇱🇻 (82), Türkiye 🇹🇷 (81) and Norway 🇳🇴 (80). The EU27+ overall performance averages at 70.

Compared to last year, some countries showed remarkable growth. Türkiye 🇹🇷 saw a 10 points increase, while Greece 🇬🇷 (+8), Serbia 🇷🇸 (+8) and Poland 🇵🇱 (+7) also improved spectacularly.



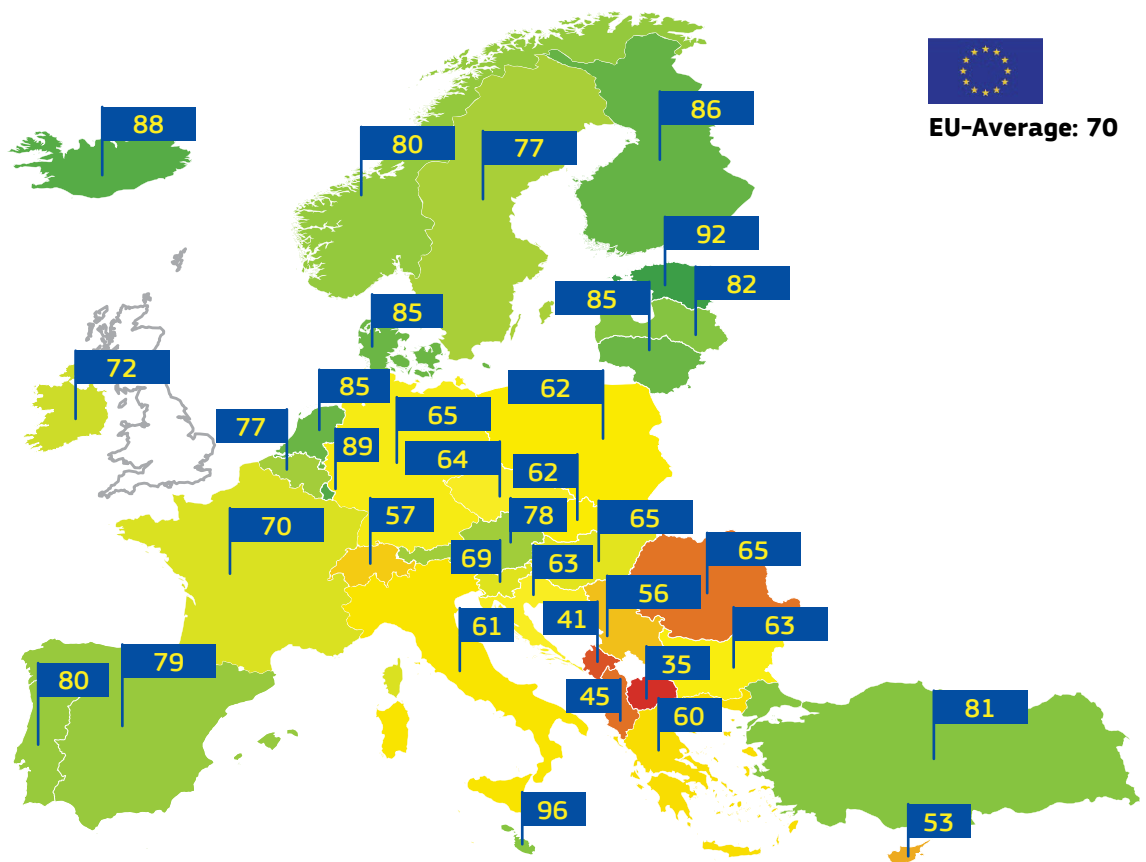


Figure 1: Country overall performance, biennial average 2021 and 2022

The **User Centricity** dimension is still a spearhead, standing at an EU27+ average of 90 points, and can be used as the impetus to improve all other key dimensions. With an average of 71 points, the **Key Enablers** dimension shows promising performance growth, with countries enabling safe authentication through eID and pre-filling personal information from base registries for more and more services. **Cross-Border Services** (57) are ready for the next step: creating online services for foreign users can quickly accelerate with more than 30 countries connected to eIDAS and the ongoing improvements on the [Your Europe](#) portal. The **Transparency** of eGovernment (currently at 62 points) can be improved upon by consistent service processes that are clear for the user.

eGovernment with the user at its heart

The eGovernment Benchmark consistently shows that many government services are available online. Still, one out of five citizens that regularly use the internet does not interact with the government online at all. Are online services designed with their audience in mind? How seamless is the user journey for citizens and entrepreneurs looking for an online service?

- **Finding the right government website** is the first step in the user journey. Portal websites combine information on different types of services from multiple public organisations, also known as one-stop-shops. More than nine out of ten services can be found via a government portal (94%).
- **Fast government websites avoid frustrations for users.** The average European government websites take 1.9 seconds before becoming fully interactive, where below 3.8 seconds is considered fast.

- **Government websites are not yet accessible to all users on all devices.** Currently, 93% of European government websites are mobile friendly, but web-accessibility remains a challenge, with more than eight out of ten public sector websites (82%) violating one or more Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) criteria.
- **Easy-to-understand government portals make users' lives easier.** Users are typically provided with information on how to access government services online. For example, 95% of websites have a frequently asked questions section and 90% of websites have some form of instruction or demonstration on how to obtain the service.
- **98% of services have information online, but more clarity about service processes is required.** Only 46% of websites provide an estimated time for the application process and only 60% of websites explicitly state the delivery timelines of services.
- **Seven out of ten services allow secure authentication with eID** while 17% of services still require in-person identification. Even though many online services are enabled for eID use, only about half (49%) of services allow single sign-on.
- **Personal information is pre-filled for 68% of online services,** making life for users easier. Moreover, in almost eight out of ten (77%) of services, users could submit or download required documents online.
- **84% of government services can be completed fully online¹,** up from 81% last year. This means that users obtain these services fully digitally, without the need for a physical visit to the local city office. **Lastly, 7% of the examined government services are delivered proactively.**
- **Bridge the gap between cross-border users and national users.** Currently, 84% of services for national users and 49% of services for cross-border users are fully online². Moreover, services are often delivered in a more user-centric manner for national users. Cross-border users face many hindrances when obtaining services online. Language issues and being unable to authenticate with their own eID are the most common barriers.
- **Bridge the gap between citizens and entrepreneurs.** European entrepreneurs enjoy mature digital services provided by their government. 92% of services for entrepreneurs are online, compared to 80% for citizens.
- **Bridge the gap between local & regional governments and central governments.** As it stands, 88% of evaluated central government services are completely online, compared to 76% of evaluated regional government services and 62% of evaluated local government services.

Interoperability as key towards Connecting Digital Governments

Creating a level playing field between different levels of government is the first step towards better online services for everyone. Europe's [interoperability framework](#) and its new [Interoperable Europe Act](#) will play a vital role in this move forwards. Instead of each town or city reinventing the wheel for themselves and creating their own services, they can reuse what is already there. Architectural building blocks, such as eID and eSignature, can be easily adopted on other websites.

Interoperability is further supported by the [Single Digital Gateway](#) and the [eIDAS Regulation](#), making cross-border services in the future just as easy as national services. Having all services in standard formats, in multiple languages, accessible with your own eID makes lives easier for citizens and entrepreneurs alike. Services across Europe will be similar, independent of country and service provider. By making the push towards interoperability, Europe is Connecting Digital Governments.

The Digital Decade: Three service gaps to bridge on the road to 2030

Europe strives to have all its key public services online in 2030 at the end of this [Digital Decade](#). Currently the Digital Decade indicators *Digital public services for citizens* and *Digital public services for businesses* stand at 77 and 84. To rise to the challenge for 2030, Europe needs to bridge three gaps:

1. Note that this percentage is based on question "A2 Is the actual service online?". This percentage is different from the score for the Online availability indicator that is used as input for the Digital Decade targets. The Online availability indicator also measures whether information about a service is available and whether the service can be reached via one of the main government portals.
2. Note that the percentage for national users stems from question A2 (see footnote 2) and the percentage for cross-border users is based on question "G2 Can the service be obtained online by a cross-border user?".

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, Pre-filled Forms and Digital Post solutions, enable identification and communication between a user and a government service.
4. **Cross-Border Services:** the extent to which citizens and entrepreneurs 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 a business. The eGovernment Benchmark covers nine life events (government domains):

- Assessed in 2022: Business Start-Up, Career, Studying and Family.
- Assessed in 2021: Regular Business Operations, Health, Moving, Transport, Starting a Small Claims Procedure.

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, also known as one-stop-shops.
- **National users:** citizens and entrepreneurs that seek information and services in their own country.
- **Cross-border users:** citizens or entrepreneurs that seek information and services in a European country other 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 makes the user journey and experience the primary focus of attention.
- **Automated tools:** online tests through which websites are entered and assessed on a number of criteria.

Introducing the eGovernment Benchmark

“The eGovernment Benchmark is key to **tracking continued improvements** in online public services.”

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



Introducing the eGovernment Benchmark

eGovernment in dire times

The digital transformation of our societies at large, and our public services in particular, is driven by considered long-term government policies enabling digital technologies to flourish. At the same time, these efforts are regularly distracted by geopolitical events requiring immediate political response.

Half of the data for this eGovernment Benchmark was collected in 2021, when the coronavirus (COVID-19) still confined many in Europe to their homes. The other half was collected in 2022, when the first war on European soil for decades was being fought in Ukraine. These crises are first and foremost human tragedies, resulting in the death and displacement of many. At the same time, these crises turned out to be catalysts for digitalisation: during the pandemic online services were the preferred method of service delivery, when physical contact was still dangerous. The war in Ukraine required neighbouring countries, such as Poland, to develop digital services for Ukrainian refugees as fast as possible.

This study captures the **digital transformation of governments** in 2021 and 2022, during a crucial time of societal and economic turmoil.

The eGovernment Benchmark: Europe's comparative study into Digital Governments

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 improve.

The eGovernment Benchmark study evaluates online public services on four dimensions, with 14 underlying indicators, comprising of 48 questions in total. The four dimensions can be described by the following key questions:

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?

The eGovernment Benchmark Methodology in a Nutshell

To present an in-depth view on eGovernment performance, the analysis covers **95 services across nine life events** – sequences of digital services that the average citizen and business are likely to require.

Services related to Business Start-Up, Career, Family and Studying were analysed in November and December 2022. Services around Regular Business Operations, Health, Moving, Starting a Small Claims Procedure and Transport were assessed in July and August 2021. This report presents biennial findings, for **2022 and 2021**, which is the average of all nine life events.

Well-trained **Mystery Shoppers** – citizens from the participating countries – evaluated the life events by visiting and assessing government websites using a standardised survey.

Mystery Shoppers assessed **15,083 websites**: 8,973 websites and 815 portals from their own governments, as well as 4,470 cross-border websites and 825 portals from other European countries. Additional automated open tools shed light on Mobile Friendliness, Findability, Accessibility Foundations and Cybersecurity.

The study covers **2,977 public administrations**: 1,294 central, 505 regional and 1,178 local government bodies.

2. **Transparency** – Are public administrations clear 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?
3. **Key Enablers** – What technological enablers support delivery of eGovernment services?
4. **Cross-Border Services** – How easily can citizens and entrepreneurs from abroad access and use the online services? And what online support and feedback mechanisms are in place for cross-border users?

35 countries participated in the study. Throughout the report, these countries will be referred to as ‘Europe’ or the ‘EU27+’. These countries are:

- The 27 European Union Member States 
- The European Free Trade Association countries: Iceland , Norway  and Switzerland 
- The European Union candidate countries: Albania , Montenegro , North Macedonia , Serbia  and Türkiye 

Analysing performance in the light of policy priorities

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 [Digital Decade policy programme](#), which shows Europe’s digital ambitions and aims at 100% online provision of key public services by 2030.
- The [Single Digital Gateway](#), which facilitates online access to information, administrative procedures, and assistance services that EU citizens and businesses may need in another EU country.
- The European Commission (proposed) [Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles](#), which empowers Europeans to fully enjoy the opportunities that the Digital Decade brings, driven by common European values.
- 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.

- The [European Union Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), which mitigates the economic and social damage of the coronavirus pandemic by targeting 26% of the funds in the recovery and resilience plans towards digital transition.
- The [eIDAS regulation](#), which is a key enabler for secure cross-border transactions and ensures that people and businesses can use their own national electronic identification schemes (eIDs) to access public services available online in other EU countries.
- The [Interoperable Europe Act](#) to strengthen cross-border interoperability and cooperation in the public sector across the EU.
- The [Web Accessibility Directive](#) provides people with disabilities with better access to the websites and mobile apps of public services.

Recent years have shown what Europe can achieve when it cooperates. For example, during the pandemic, it was easy to show your covid-certificate cross-border. More and more, citizens and entrepreneurs across Europe can obtain the same services in their own country as in others. Services across Europe will be similar, independent of country and service provider. By making the push towards interoperability and implementing the Single Digital Gateway, Europe is connecting digital governments.

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



Europe's State of Play

Overall Maturity: Malta and Estonia lead the way

Where do European digital governments stand? The **overall eGovernment maturity** score averages the *User Centricity, Transparency, Key Enablers* and *Cross-Border Services* dimension scores. This composite score ranges from 0 to 100 points.

As shown in Figure 2, the European leaders are Malta 🇲🇹 (96 points) and Estonia 🇪🇪 (92). Other frontrunners are Luxembourg 🇱🇺 (89), Iceland 🇮🇸 (88), Finland 🇫🇮 (86), the Netherlands 🇳🇱 (85), Lithuania 🇱🇹 (85), Denmark 🇩🇰 (85), Latvia 🇱🇻 (82), Türkiye 🇹🇷 (81) and Norway 🇳🇴 (80). The EU27+ overall performance averages at 70.

Compared to last year, some countries showed remarkable growth. Türkiye 🇹🇷 rose by 10 points, while Greece 🇬🇷 (+8), Serbia 🇷🇸 (+8) and Poland 🇵🇱 (+7) improved spectacularly as well.

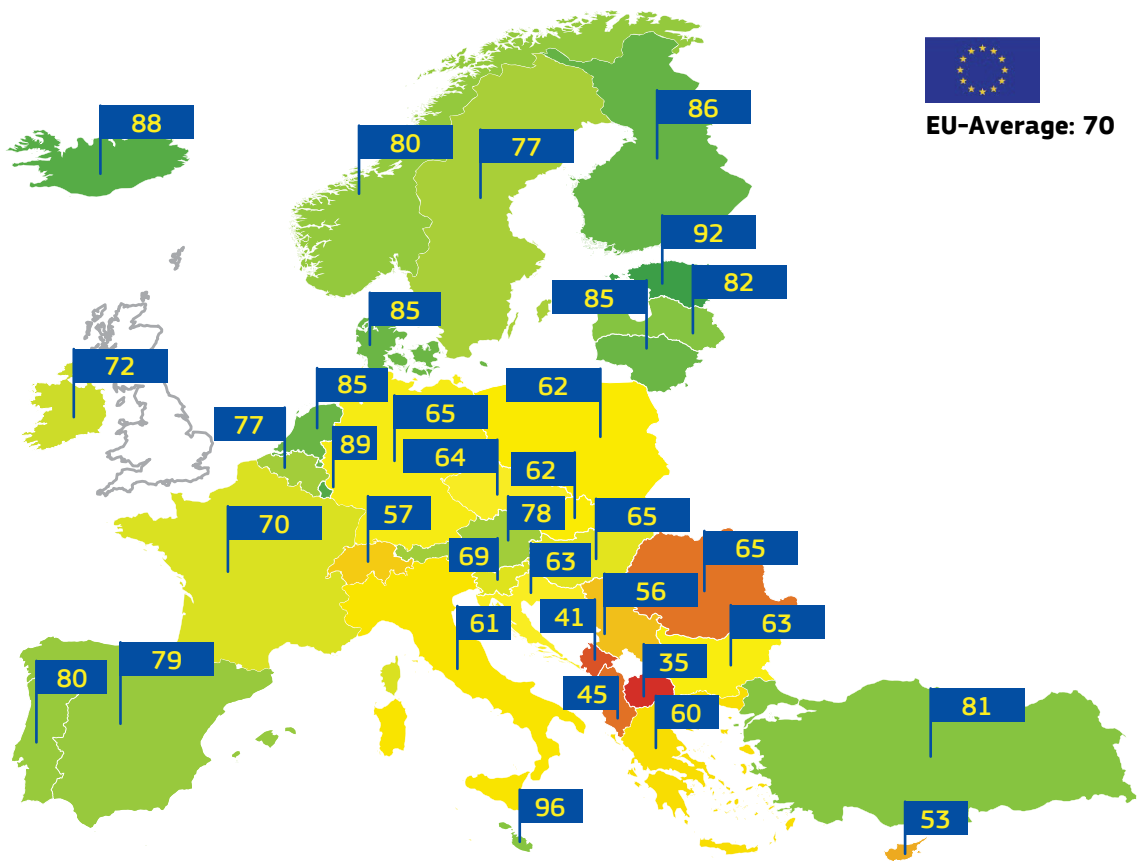


Figure 2: Country overall performance, biennial average 2021 and 2022

Key dimensions: User Centricity remains the spearhead across Europe

The Overall Benchmark scores are based on four eGovernment key dimensions: *User Centricity*, *Transparency*, *Key Enablers* and *Cross-Border Services*.

Countries perform best on the **User Centricity** key dimension. Its indicators of *Online Availability* (based on three survey questions), *User Support* (seven questions) and *Mobile Friendliness* (based on automated tooling) score an average of 90. Governments clearly put people at the centre of their digital transformations (see section 3) and successfully moved offline procedures online. Moreover, *Mobile Friendliness* stands at 93, meaning that governments provide 93% of their services on mobile friendly websites. Moreover, government portals provide ample help functionalities on the portals. Malta , Finland  and Türkiye  particularly excel in user-centric services, each scoring 99 points.

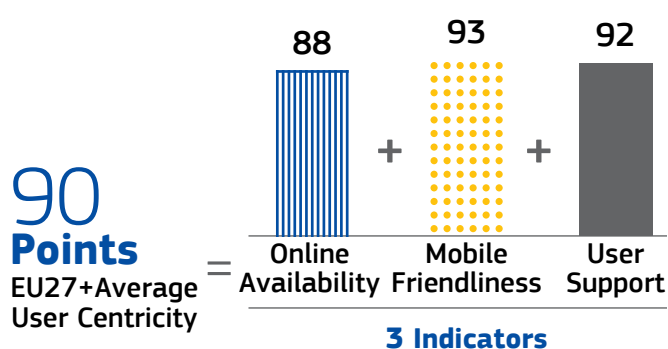


Figure 3: EU27+ Average User Centricity

Transparency is the second lowest scoring key dimension (after *Cross-Border Services*). This dimension covers the indicators of *Transparency of Service Delivery* (based on seven survey questions), *Transparency of Personal Data* (five questions) and *Transparency of Service Design* (four survey questions). European governments are giving users more insights into how their personal data is being used and are increasingly involving citizens in service and policy design. However, transparency during service delivery, for

instance via clear process descriptions and timelines, is not yet widely available. Malta  is the leader for the Transparency key dimension, closely followed by Iceland  and Luxembourg .

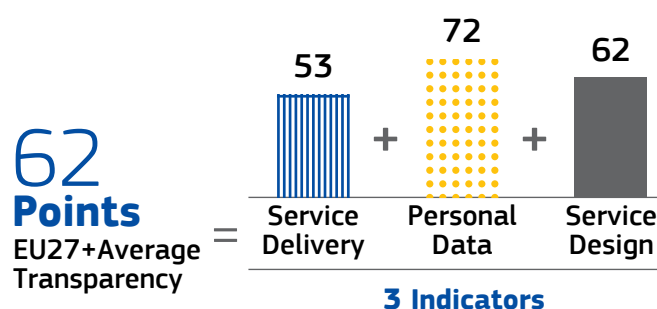


Figure 4: EU27+ Average Transparency

Key Enablers are the building blocks for safe, user-centric and consistent eGovernment. The Key Enablers dimension consists of the indicators *eID* (five survey questions), *eDocuments* (two questions), *Pre-Filled Forms* (two questions) and *Digital Post* (two questions). In most countries, users can already submit and download eDocuments, and the digital mailbox is currently the norm in four out of five countries. The next leap forwards can be expected in eID authentication, including Single Sign On and subsequent pre-filling of personal information in the online form. Lithuania , Iceland  and Malta  are the highest scoring countries for the *Key Enablers* dimension.

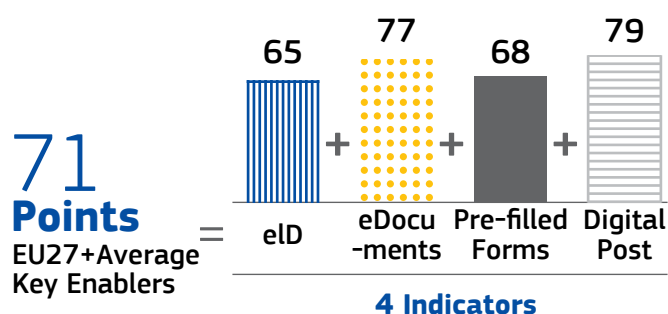


Figure 5: EU27+ Average Key Enablers

The **Cross-Border Services** key dimension has the most room for improvement. Its indicators of *Cross-Border Online Availability* (two questions), *Cross-Border User Support* (three questions), *Cross-Border eID* (two questions) and *Cross-Border eDocuments* (two questions), score an average of 57 points. Cross-border users struggle to obtain online services in foreign countries due to myriad reasons, such as a lack of (English) information, authentication with the national eID, or a need for face-to-face contact. Section 4 will take an in depth look at cross-border service delivery. Some countries are already booking robust results for cross-border users: Luxembourg , Estonia  and Malta  treat non-nationals online almost as well as their own citizens.

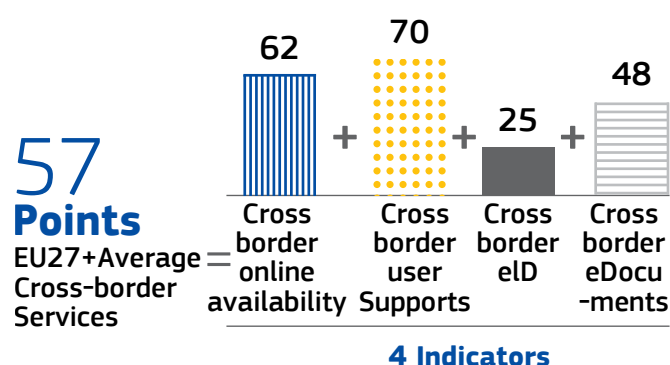


Figure 6: EU27+ Average Cross-Border Services

Six eGovernment Components Are Covered in the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)

A selection of eGovernment Benchmark numbers feed into the European Commission's Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI).

This index is a tool used by the European Commission to track digitalisation successes. Six eGovernment Benchmark indicators are part of the DESI:

- **Digital Public Services for Citizens (DESI indicator 4a2):** stands at 77 for the EU27 Member States, based on the eGovernment Benchmark indicators of Online Availability and Cross-Border Online Availability for all citizen-related life events. This means that most services in the life events of Career, Studying and Family, as well as Health, Moving, Starting a Small Claims Procedure and Transport, can be fully completed online with sufficient information and can be reached via main government portals.
- **Digital Public Services for Businesses (DESI indicator 4a3):** stands at 84 for the EU27 Member States, based on the eGovernment Benchmark indicators of Online Availability and Cross-Border Online Availability for all business-related life events. This means that most services in the areas of Business Start-Up and Regular Business Operations can be fully completed online with sufficient information and can be reached via main government portals.
- **Pre-Filled Forms (DESI indicator 4a4):** stands at 68 for the EU27 Member States, directly based on the eGovernment Benchmark indicator Pre-filled Forms. This means that almost seven out of ten online forms requiring personal information pre-fill these fields based on data already known by the government.
- **Transparency of service delivery, design and personal data (DESI indicator 4a5):** stands at 65 for the EU27 Member States, based on the eGovernment Benchmark key dimension Transparency. This means that governments can provide further insight into how services are delivered, how services are designed and how personal data is used.
- **User Support (DESI indicator 4a6):** stands at 84 for the EU27 Member States, based on the average of eGovernment Benchmark indicators User support and Cross-border user support. This indicates that more than both portals for national users as well as portals for cross-borders users provide help functionalities and have feedback mechanisms available.
- **Mobile Friendliness (DESI indicator 4a7):** stands at 93 for the EU27 Member States, directly based on the eGovernment Benchmark indicator Mobile Friendliness. This means that more than nine out of ten government websites are delivered on mobile friendly websites.

What separates the best from the least digital?

Bottom 10 (least digital) and Top 10

Not all countries in Europe are in the same phase of their digital transformation. Figure 7 shows the average score of the top 10 countries and the bottom 10 countries in the Benchmark for each of the key dimensions. Across Europe, countries are focusing on *User Centricity*. The bottom 10 score close to 80 for this dimension, while the top 10 receive almost a perfect score.

High-ranking countries outperform the rest of Europe most notably in *Cross-Border Services*. This result indicates that countries start out by focusing on services for national users and only shift their view towards foreign citizens after services for national users are sufficiently mature. The difference between the top and bottom 10 is almost equally large for the *Key Enablers* dimension. European countries first put basic services online and improve them afterwards.

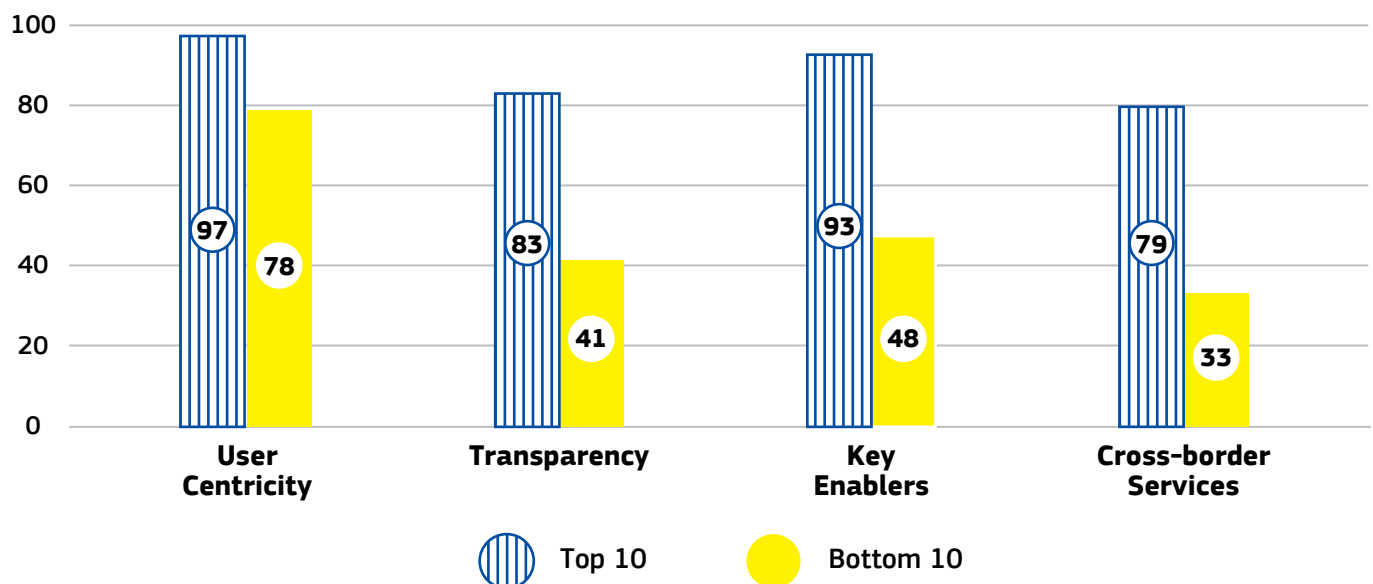


Figure 7: Maturity per key dimension for top 10 and bottom 10

Looking at the long term: Europe puts efforts into Key Enablers

Zooming out from this year's data to a five-year view shows how Europe's digital transformation of public services has progressed over time. What key areas have shown most progress in recent years?

The EU27+ score improved by eight points over five years, from 62 in 2017 to 70 in 2022. The uptake of *Key Enablers* is the main driver of these improvements. Many European countries made the leap forwards and incorporated eID and digital mailbox solutions on their government portals. *User Centricity* also improved steadily, mainly through the *Mobile Friendliness* of websites. In 2017 only 60% of government websites were mobile friendly, compared to 93% in 2022.

Cross-Border Services and *Transparency* stagnated in the past five years, which can be partially attributed to the

change in methodology in 2019 and 2020. Nevertheless, those indicators that were not impacted by the method update, such as transparency of service processes and online availability of services for cross-border users, also showed limited progress.

Several countries in particular leaped forwards in the past five years. Luxembourg , Türkiye , Hungary , Croatia  and Greece  improved by more than 20 points each, joining either the European middle group or even the European leaders. Luxembourg for instance, was 19th in the 2017 eGovernment Benchmark and 3rd in this year's edition. Although these countries are different in many ways, there are also remarkable similarities between them. Key to each of their improvements was an excellent government portal with a wide range of services. Each of these government portals is supported by key enablers, such as eID and a digital mailbox. Moreover, users are also informed about their personal data.

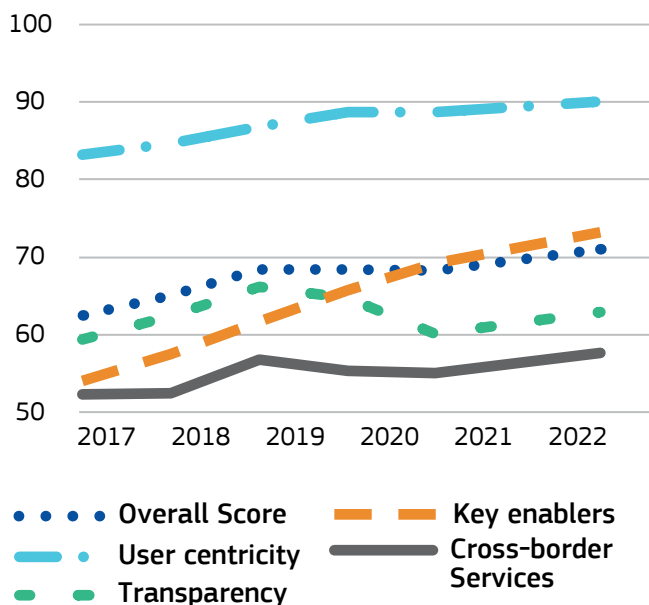


Figure 8: Progress in the eGovernment Benchmark in the past five years

Countries that improved more than 20 percentage points and their national portals

guichet.public.lu	Luxembourg 
turkiye.gov.tr	Türkiye 
gov.hr	Croatia 
magyarorszag.hu	Hungary 
gov.gr	Greece 

eGovernment with the user at its heart: **User-centric services for national users**

“ We believe in a **human-centred** digital transition. ”

European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen



eGOVERNMENT WITH THE USER AT ITS HEART



eGovernment with the user at its heart: User-centric services for national users

Europe is a diverse continent consisting of almost 450 million citizens and containing more than 23 million companies and SMEs. The eGovernment Benchmark consistently shows that many services are available online but, as it stands, the use of these services lags behind their availability. Data from Eurostat shows that just 44% of citizens submitted an online form to the government in the past year³.

This result can be explained by either a lack of digital skills or the fact that offline services suffice. However, another explanation is that not all services are that easy to use. According to the Eurobarometer survey, less than half of Europeans (46%) rate public services in their country to be 'good'⁴. This chapter looks into the online journey for users who want to obtain digital public services. How can the eGovernment user journey become **seamless**?

Finding the right government website



The user journey for digital services often starts on one of the famous search engines. Government portals should therefore be easy to find online and this findability can be improved through Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). The Benchmark assessed how findable Europe's government portals are, with 62% qualifying as either 'good' or 'excellent'.

Portal websites combine information on different types of services from multiple public organisations, also known as one-stop-shops. Ideally, the service that the user is looking for is also available on the government portal. More than nine out of ten services can be found via a government portal (94%).

Fast websites, avoiding frustrations



Having a fast and efficient website is crucial for improving the user experience and making it more accessible to visitors. When a website takes a long time to load or has broken links or images, users can become frustrated and might leave the site. This is especially important in the public sector, where citizens may not have alternative options for accessing certain services. The average European government website takes 1.9 seconds before becoming fully interactive, where below 3.8 seconds is considered fast⁵.

It should be noted that these good results are achieved during 'normal' circumstances. Government websites might struggle during peaks of traffic that slow web servers down, for instance when the deadline for filing one's taxes approaches.

Websites accessible to all users

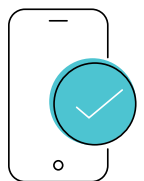


Mobile Friendliness

Users have various preferences in terms of how they access eGovernment portals. Some users access online services through computers, such as desktops or laptops, while others prefer to use mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets. Portable devices promote flexibility and allow users to interact with their governments in more diverse contexts, such as when away from home. **93% of European government websites are mobile friendly**, meaning the font size and layout of almost all government service websites adjust to mobile screens so that information is easy to read.

Accessibility

In 2019, the European Union adopted the European Disability Act⁶ with the objective to make services more accessible to everyone. Similarly, all users should be able to benefit from digital government solutions. Websites should be presented to users in ways they can perceive, be operable in terms of user interface and navigation, be understandable



3. Eurostat ICT & Household survey : https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/isoc_ciegi_ac/default/table?lang=en.

4. The full Eurobarometer can be found via the following link: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/91061>

5. <https://developer.chrome.com/en/docs/lighthouse/performance/interactive/>

6. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1202>

and easy to follow, and be robust in terms of being interpreted by a wide variety of agents, including assistive technologies. These guidelines are formalised in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Using the axe browser extension, all 15,000 eGovernment websites of 2022 and 2021 were assessed on 8 of the 50 WCAG 2.1 success criteria.

The majority (82%) of public sector websites violate one or more WCAG 2.1 criteria and are therefore not compliant with accessibility requirements. This value is largely unchanged from 84% in the previous report. Websites often achieve only limited compliance with the perceivable criterion, for example because alternative texts for pictures are missing and colours lack contrast. This harms all users, especially those with visual disabilities; but also makes context-specific access to a website difficult, such as when viewing a screen in bright sunlight. The websites tend to score better on measures of operability, understandability and robustness.

Easy-to-understand government portals



User Support: Providing online help

Users expect support when completing a service online, such as being guided with clear instructions, being able to ask questions, and having channels to express their experiences.



Users are typically provided with information on how to access government services online. For example, 95% of websites have a frequently asked questions section and 90% of websites have some form of instruction or demonstration on how to obtain the service. If the user needs to contact the responsible department about a specific government service, these contact details, such as a phone number or email address, are provided on almost all government portals (96%). In instances where the user needs further support, 89% of portals have a related discussion fora or social media where questions and replies can be exchanged.

Usability: Descriptive titles and breadcrumbs

Users are also supported through websites that are designed in a clear and easy-to-use way. On average, 88% of government websites have a descriptive title that makes it easy for the user to follow the content of the webpage. In addition, 80% of websites show breadcrumbs or descriptive labels that aid users to navigate towards other pages.

Clear information provision



Regardless of whether a service is delivered online, **98% of services have information online explaining how to obtain the service.** This helps users access the service through digital or non-digital means, as available.

Transparency of service delivery: Managing user expectations

When a service is delivered online, various features enhance the transparency of a service. Users wonder what to expect from their government when requesting a service and conversely what their governments expect from them. A clearly described service process promotes eGovernment that everyone can understand.

In general, service websites do not provide users with an indication of how long it will take to apply for a service, with only 46% of websites providing an estimated time for the application process. This means that users cannot properly plan their time to complete their applications. Additionally, websites often do not support users in understanding the procedures after they apply for the service. For instance, only 60% of websites explicitly state the delivery timelines of services and only 52% state a maximum time limit by which the administration must deliver the service.



Secure authentication with eID

eID: The key to accessing digital government services

Users need to prove who they are when accessing a government service. Electronic identification solutions (eIDs) are like online passports that enable users to prove who they are online without needing to physically present themselves at government service desks to verify their identity. Using eIDs to access online services has the additional advantage of being more secure than log-in systems that require only a basic online username and password.

Of the services that require identification, 70% (up from 67% in the previous year) **allow for online identification with an official national eID**. On the other hand, 17% (down from 21%) of services still require in-person identification. Further to standard national eIDs, 12% of government service websites require logins via other online government mechanisms, such as using an organisation-specific account and password, national registration, or tax number. In some exceptional cases (1%), private sector mechanisms, such as an eBanking token, are used as identification when accessing government services online.

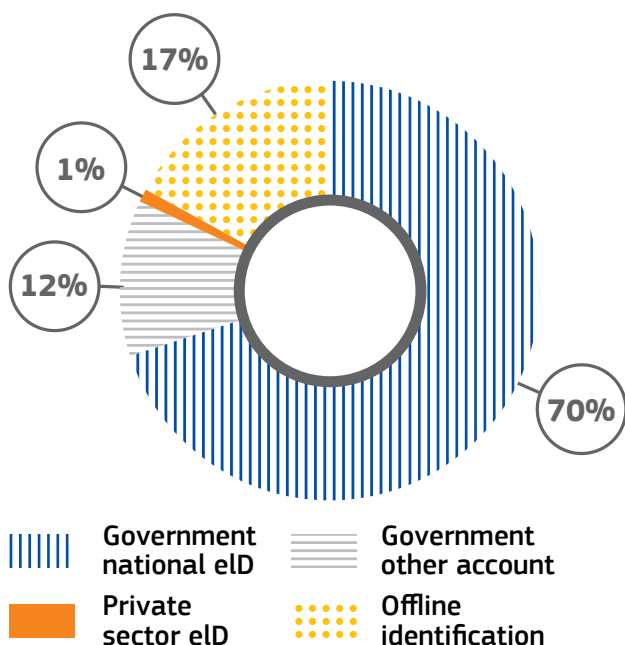


Figure 9: Percentage of identification modes (EU27+ biennial averages)

Europe's eID frontrunners are Estonia , Iceland , Denmark , Lithuania  and Norway , where more than 95% of the services can be accessed using the national eID.

Even though many online services are enabled for eID use, only about half (49%) of services allow **single sign-on**. This means that users often need to re-authenticate when switching between websites for services within one life event journey. This hampers seamless, secure, and interoperable access across different government service providers.

Users should also be sure that the websites they're using are safe. Web security is assessed with multiple automated tests from Mozilla Observatory and Internet.nl. Currently, **European government websites pass half of the web-security tests** carried out.

Getting help when filling in eForms

Pre-filled forms to ease online form applications



Government forms typically request standard information across all applications, such as a user's full name, address and contact details. Users expect that this common personal information will not need to be collected multiple times. Indeed, governments can reuse data stored in authentic sources or base registries to pre-fill online forms. 68% of online forms in Europe are pre-filled with information from base registries, but large differences persist between citizen and business life events. For entrepreneurs starting their business, 81% of services use pre-filled information, compared to just 64% for family related services and 58% for students.

Visual aids and error messages when filling in forms

Services are more straightforward to access when the user is guided with examples and when they receive feedback on the information they provide. Only 41% of government websites include visual aids or suggestions for filling out input fields in online forms. These features would help users fill out the form correctly. When users enter erroneous information into the form, 48% of websites have functionality to flag the input as incorrect and provide an error message for the user to correct the information.

eDocuments: Uploading and obtaining digital files

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 proof of residence. At the moment, nearly eight out of ten services (77%) allow for uploading or obtaining online eDocuments. In Iceland , Malta , Portugal  and Denmark , online documentation can be uploaded or obtained for more than 95% of services.

Completing the service entirely online



In Europe, **84% of government services can be completed fully online⁷**, up from 81% last year. This means that users obtain these services fully digitally, without the need for a physical visit to the local city office. Malta 🇲🇹 and Denmark 🇩🇰 are the only countries that provide all services under evaluation online to national users.

A limited sample of 18 services were assessed on mobile devices to make a comparison with the performance of the same services on computers. **Across Europe, only 63% of the services can be fully completed on a mobile device, compared to 82% for computer users accessing the same selection of 18 services.** Challenges include a lack of mobile eID options (59% on mobile devices versus 70% on computers) and online forms containing pre-filled personal data less often (56% versus 66%). Pre-filling information is especially relevant for mobile users, where small touchscreens make repeatedly entering information inconvenient.

The peak of user friendly: Proactive service delivery



Proactive service delivery means that no action is required from the citizen to obtain the service. By connecting data sources in the back end, governments know automatically which services citizens are entitled to. Moreover, proactive service delivery ensures that all citizens and entrepreneurs get what belongs to them. **Currently, 7% of the examined government services are delivered proactively**, which is a one percentage point increase compared to last year. Malta 🇲🇹, Luxembourg 🇱🇺 and Austria 🇦🇹 deliver most services proactively (respectively 18%, 15% and 14%).

Interestingly, large differences exist between the life events when it comes to proactive service delivery. 14% of services are delivered proactively for entrepreneurs starting a business, simplifying their first steps into entrepreneurship. However, this number drops to just 5% for services in the Career life event, while people who lose their job might be helped out greatly with a more proactive digital government.



Examples of proactive services in Europe

- 🇳🇱 Netherlands: 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.

7. Note that this percentage is based on question "A2 Is the actual service online?". This percentage is different from the score for the Online availability indicator that is used as input for the Digital Decade targets. The Online availability indicator also measures whether information about a service is available and whether the service can be reached via one of the main government portals.

The **Single Digital Gateway** and **eIDAS** as accelerators for cross-border services

“Unlocking the potentials of the digital transformation, specifically by setting up and implementing multi-country projects, will pave the way for a competitive and sovereign Europe”

Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton



Cross-border eGovernment

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

The European Union plays a key role in facilitating digital services for cross-border users. One of the pillars of the [Digital Single Market](#) is to create better access for consumers and businesses to digital goods and services across Europe. Moreover, the [eIDAS regulation](#) enables users to use their national eID when applying for cross-border services. Lastly, the [Single Digital Gateway](#) (SDG) together with the [Your Europe](#) portal provide online services and information for all European citizens looking for services in another European country.

The state of cross-border service delivery

Currently, less than half of all digital services are available online for international users (49%), whereas more than eight out of ten services (84%)

for national users can be completed online⁸. Moreover, in all European countries, online services for national citizens and entrepreneurs are more mature than for their cross-border counterparts. This difference is smallest in Luxembourg , Malta , Estonia , Ireland  and Cyprus . It should be noted that Ireland has an advantage in this regard because the government websites are already in English, which makes them easier to understand for foreign users.

Barriers for cross-border service delivery: Information provision

The first and foremost reason why citizens and entrepreneurs cannot complete cross-border users is language differences. Of the services that cannot be completed online by cross-border users, **64% services are not available in multiple languages**. Moreover, for 28% of these services, the information available is not sufficient and for 34% the translation provided on the webpage is unclear and ambiguous.

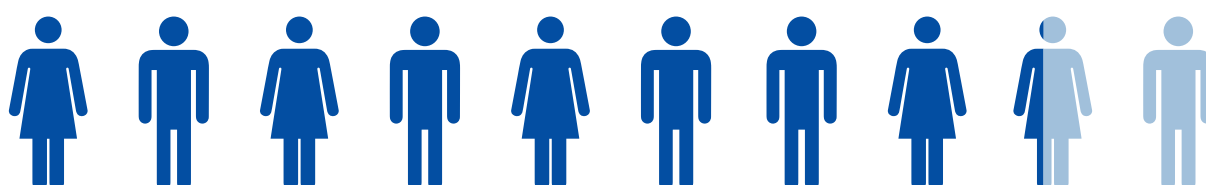
Barriers for cross-border service delivery: User support

Cross-border users are often confronted by government websites with partially unfamiliar languages when looking for services. This language difference further hinders their options to request online services. Luckily, 84% of government portals do have a support page specifically



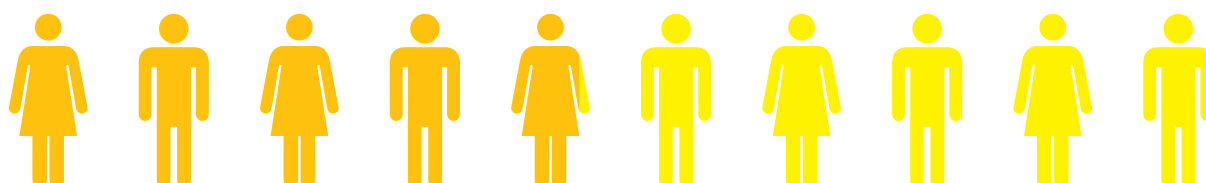
More than 8 out of 10

Services for national users are online (84%)



Less than 5 out of 10

Services for cross-border users are online (49%)



8. Note that these percentages are based on questions "A2 Is the actual service online?" and "G2 Can the service be obtained online by a cross-border user?". These percentages are different from the score for the (Cross-border) Online availability indicator that is used for the Digital Decade targets. The Online availability indicators also measures whether information about a service is available and whether the service can be reached via one of the main government portals.

for cross-border users. Moreover, most government portals allow users to voice their concerns with feedback mechanisms (69%) and complaint procedures (57%) in place on most government portals.

Barriers for cross-border service delivery: Cross-border eID

In many European countries, authentication with eID is almost as common as using your physical passport. Citizens and entrepreneurs can use their eID for 70% of services for national users and service providers (central, regional and local) are increasingly relying on digital identification. Ideally, your digital passport would be just as valuable in foreign countries as your physical passport, but this is far from the current situation: **just 25% of services accept eIDs from multiple European countries.**

Barriers for cross-border service delivery: Cross-border eDocuments

Some services required additional documentation to be submitted or retrieved. Ideally these documents can

either be downloaded and/or submitted as eDocuments online. National users can already submit or download eDocuments for 77% of the services, but the picture for cross-border users is less bright: **less than half (48%) of the services for cross-border users accept eDocuments.** Moreover, one in five (21%) cross-border services cannot be completed online due to issues with translation or recognition of required documents.

Barriers for cross-border service delivery: Face-to-face contact required

Going to the local city council is a restrictive exercise for users who are not living in the country they're requesting a service from. Nevertheless, in three out of ten services for cross-border, **face-to-face contact is still required** (excluding services for which physical appearances are legally obligatory, such as issuing a passport). Lastly, more than three out of four services cannot be completed online because cross-border users encounter more than one barrier. This means that clearing one of the barriers would still not enable cross-border users to complete the service digitally.

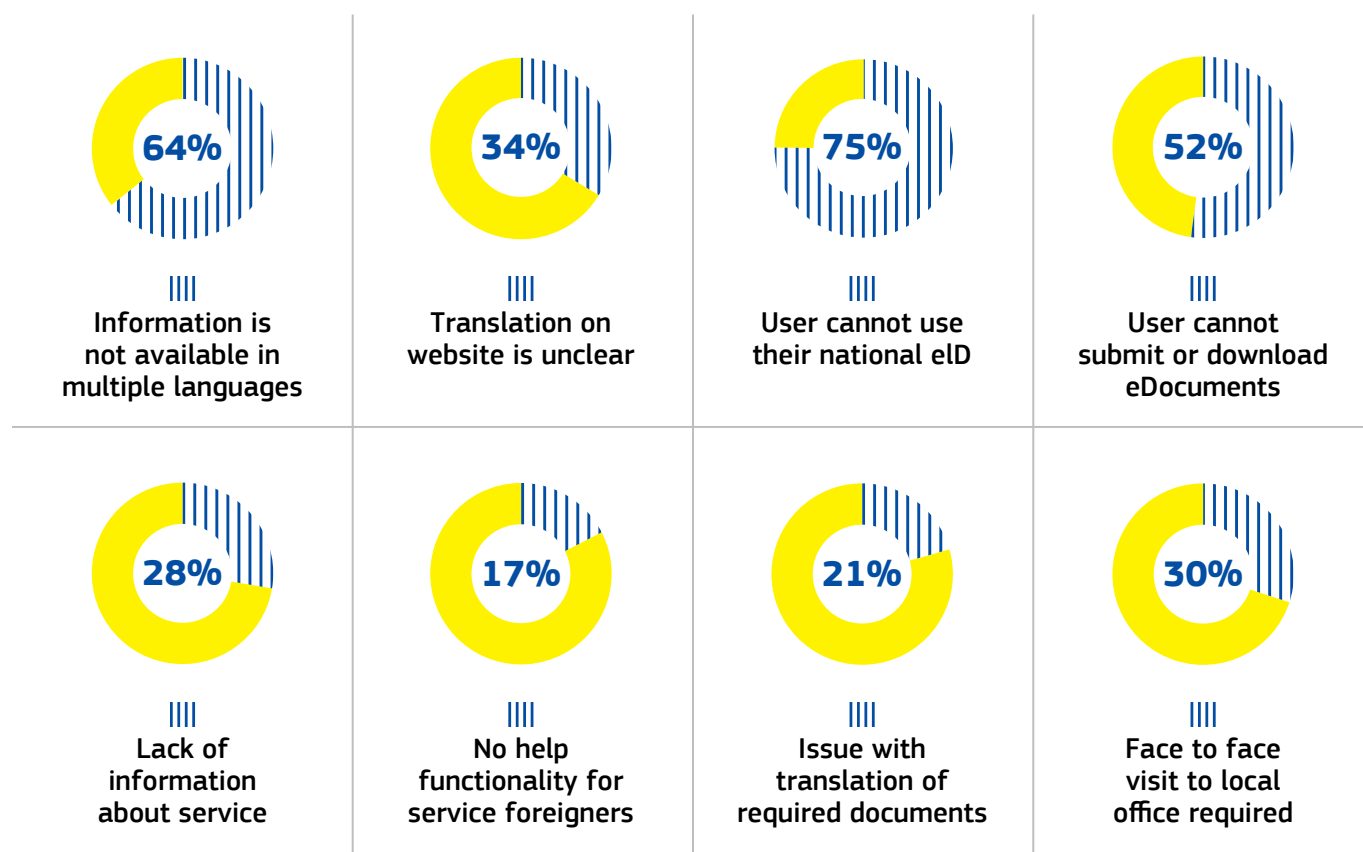


Figure 10: Barriers for cross-border use of online services

Single Digital Gateway and eIDAS as accelerators for cross-border services

The European Union plays a key role in facilitating smooth and interoperable cross-border services. Barriers such as the challenges with multi-languages and the lack of cross-border eID options can be removed by European regulations and initiatives.

eIDAS

The [eIDAS regulation](#) was implemented in 2018 and ensures that people and businesses can use their own national electronic identification schemes (eIDs) to access public services available online in other EU countries. Moreover, eIDAS creates a European internal market for trust services such as eSignature by ensuring that they will work across borders and have the same legal status as their traditional paper-based equivalent.

As of March 2023, 31 European countries have one or multiple notified eIDs, which should be accepted elsewhere. This was just 14 last year. Cross-border eID is ready for take-off from a technical perspective. Positively, Austria , Estonia , Finland , Lithuania , Luxembourg , and the Netherlands  already accept foreign eIDs for over half of the services. Central government service providers score particularly well in this regard.

Single Digital Gateway Regulation

Since adopting the Single Digital Gateway Regulation in 2018, the European Commission and Member States have been building the Your Europe portal. The portal enables citizens and entrepreneurs to information about online services, such as work and retirement within the Union, or how EU rules apply across EU countries. Moreover, by the end of 2023, Your Europe will offer access to 21 online procedures in all EU countries, supported by the Once Only Technical System (OOTS), which ensures that authentication with eID and the submitting of eDocuments are seamless cross-border exercises. As such, the Single Digital Gateway should be a catalyst for Cross-Border Online Availability, Cross-Border User Support and Cross-Border Key Enablers in the coming years.

The Once Only Technical System in Practice

Austria , the Netherlands  and the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW)  in Germany started a promising pilot using the Once Only Technical System. Several services, such as the registration of a company in another country can be done online on both Austria's and NRW's business portal. The services use eIDAS for identification for natural and/or legal persons and the OOTS for Once Only sharing of personal data and documents.

The eGovernment Benchmark partially covers the services in the Single Digital Gateway Regulation. Whereas 84% of the EU27+ services can be completed online by nationals and 49% by cross-border users, the Single Digital Gateway related services average 87% and 52%.

New cross-border services in the Digital Decade

The effect of national governments' efforts towards better cross-border services and European regulation becomes apparent when comparing the data collected about services in 2022 with the same data in 2020. In the past two years, the number of new cross-border services in European countries no longer requiring a visit to a government service desk rose to 57, enabling citizens and entrepreneurs to interact with foreign governments online. This is an increase of 18% compared with 2020.

Most services that became available online between 2020 and 2022 are in the Career and Business Start-up domain. Moreover, countries are making advancements when it comes to implementing the SDG. Many of the services made available online by countries in the last two years have a clear connection to the 21 procedures listed in Annex II of the Single Digital Gateway⁹.

9. Note that some of the procedures in Annex II of the Single Digital Gateway Regulation relate to more than one service in the Benchmark. E.g., the procedure for registration of employees with compulsory pension and insurance schemes in the SDG covers the Benchmark service Register your company as an employer as well as the Benchmark service Register employee before first workday

New online cross-border services for Entrepreneurs

Register your company as an employer	+5 countries
Obtain VAT collector number	+4 countries
Register with Social Security Office	+3 countries
Check conditions for environmental permits	+3 countries

New online cross-border services related to your Career

Apply for state pension	+6 countries
Apply for unemployment benefits	+4 countries
Register employment to stop unemployment benefits	+4 countries
Appeal against decision for unemployment benefits	+3 countries
Register conditions impeding you from looking for work	+3 countries

Other new online cross-border services

Obtain recognition of diploma declaration	+4 countries
Apply for child allowance	+3 countries



Persistent gaps in **digital service delivery**

“ We commit to strengthening the democratic framework for a digital transformation that benefits everyone and improves the lives of all Europeans ”

Declaration on European Digital Rights and Principles



Persistent gaps in digital service delivery

The following sections highlight developments in government digitalisation in the past year for different user groups and levels of government.

eGovernment for citizens and for entrepreneurs

Digital governments offer a broad range of services to a diverse group of individuals. These individuals may interact with the government on their own behalf, as citizens, or as entrepreneurs representing their company

Life Event Measurements

What we Measure for Businesses

- Regular Business Operations (2021): For entrepreneurs, we assess the ability to complete corporate tax declarations and submit financial reports via digital channels. We check for information on working conditions for employees, and whether businesses can change employee status online.
- Business Start-Up (2022): For citizens who 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.

What we Measure for Citizens

- Starting a Small Claims Procedure (2021): For citizens involved in an accident, we assess whether they can find information online about making a legal claim and whether they can do so online. It also includes consideration of how to appeal online.
- Transport (2021): For car owners, we assess whether information on vehicle taxes, insurance obligations, 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 (2021): 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 online; and whether other relevant authorities are notified automatically.
- Health (2021): For citizens that require healthcare services, we measure services related to obtaining basic healthcare, searching for relevant healthcare providers, applying for the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), receiving e-consultations, and accessing digital medical records.
- Career (2022): For citizens who lose their job, we assess whether they can register as unemployed online; whether information on unemployment benefits and entitlements is available; and whether these can be applied for online. Similarly, assistance services for finding a job are assessed, along with information on retirement as well as online pension claims.
- Studying (2022): 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 (2022): For parents, we assess applying for child maintenance allowance online; obtaining parental authority for unmarried partners; and requesting a passport or replacement birth certificate.

10. https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes_en.

(see box on Life Event Measurements). For business-related activity, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are particularly important users of government services since they form the backbone of Europe's economy. SMEs represent 99% of businesses in the EU, employ around 100 million citizens, and account from more than half of Europe's GDP¹⁰.

Digital government for entrepreneurs is more mature than for citizens

Digital services tend to be available online more often for business users than for citizens. As an overall score, business life events measured across 2021 and 2022 average 79 points whereas those provided to citizens average 68. Across all four of the composite dimensions (*User Centricity*, *Transparency*, *Key Enablers*,

and *Cross-border Services*), provision of eGovernment services is more mature for business-related services than for citizen-related services. There is a correlation between the maturity of business and citizen services. For example, *User Centricity* is the most mature indicator for both business- (95) and citizen-related (88) services. The indicator for *Cross-border Services* is the least mature for both business (65) and citizen (55) users. Entrepreneurs are already facilitated reasonably well in their online interaction with governments in another country, whereas citizens still need to rely on face-to-face interactions to receive many government services. The greatest discrepancy is within the *Key Enablers* dimension. This means that, for instance, authentication with eID and communication via a digital mailbox are already common for entrepreneurs, but not yet for citizens.

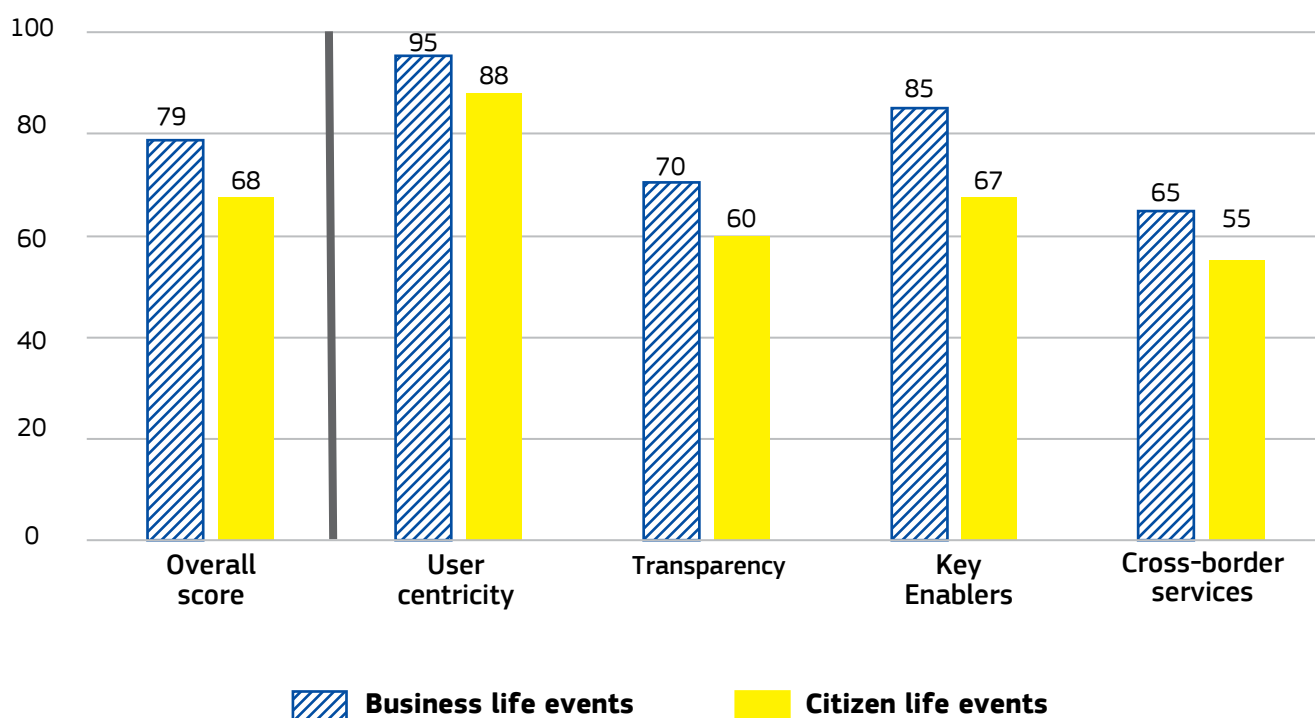


Figure 11: Differences in digital maturity for citizens and business life events

Businesses enjoy better online government services than citizens

Currently, **92% of services for business users and 80% for citizens are available online**¹¹. Of the services provided online, a similar proportion are optimised for mobile-friendly use for business (94%) and citizen (93%) users. In addition to being available online, digital services for business users also tend to be more mature. For example, business users have instructional demos that explain how to obtain the service on 97% of websites compared to 87% for citizen users. Additionally, business-related service websites more often have feedback mechanisms (96%) and complaint procedures (90%) than citizen-related services (88% and 83% for feedback and complaints, respectively).

Online availability decreases significantly if the services are cross-border. Only 54% of services for cross-border businesses and 48% for cross-border citizens are available online. An exception is services for students, which are available online for cross-border use in 61% of services. A particularly large discrepancy between businesses and citizens within cross-border services is the ability to authenticate with eID: business users can use eIDs in 37% of service websites, whereas citizen users can authenticate with eID on just 21% of websites.

In contrast to cross-border use of eIDs, national use of eIDs is far more prevalent. Nonetheless, a similar discrepancy exists between business (83%) and citizen (64%) users in the ability to authenticate themselves electronically to access government services. In a similar trend for eDocuments, business users (92%) can obtain and submit online documents more often than citizen users (74%) can.

Online services for business users also tend to be more transparent in their delivery than for online services for citizen users. For instance, business-related services score well on progress trackers during the service process and indicate how much longer it will take to complete the service (77%). On the other end of the spectrum, only 52% of business-related services provide information on service performance. Citizen-related services have the same pattern of high and low scoring transparency features but score substantially lower in both instances: 54% of online services provide a progress tracker and 30% provide performance information.

The pattern of more services being offered online to business users than to citizen users holds true across all European countries, except Malta, Iceland and Sweden. In Malta scores all services are available online, both for citizens and entrepreneurs. Thirteen other countries provide all business-related services online as well.

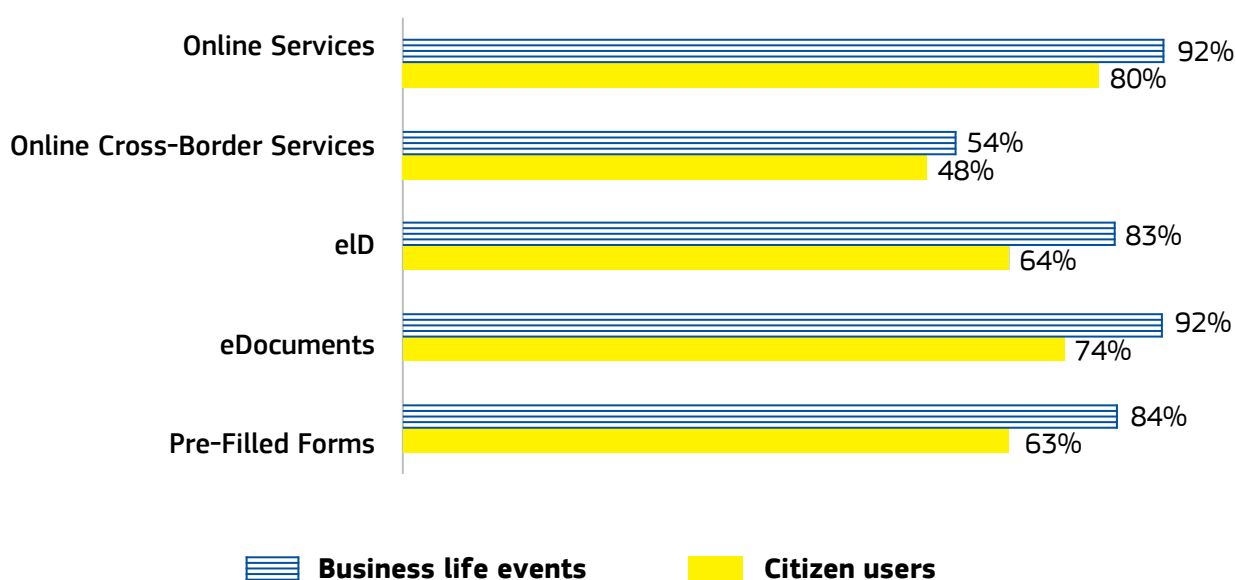


Figure 12: Differences in service delivery for business and citizen users

11. Based on question "A2 Is the actual service online?". This number differs from the Digital Decade indicators, which also assesses whether information is available, whether the service can be found via one of the relevant web portals and whether the service is online for cross-border users.

Local and regional government bodies can learn from central government

European citizens and business representatives interact with their government on different levels depending on the type of services or the delegation of legal responsibilities in a country. Users can interact with their local (e.g., a municipal office), regional (e.g., a province or university), or central (e.g., a ministry or national agency) government to meet varying needs and obligations. The maturity of digitalisation tends to differ across these three levels of government. In general, there exists a hierarchy of digital maturity, where services provided by the central government are most mature, followed by regional, and then local levels of government.

Specifically, **88% of evaluated central government services, 76% of evaluated regional government services, and 62% of evaluated local government services are available online¹²**. In 2022, these numbers were 84%, 71% and 60%. Despite this slight growth in the online availability of government services in general, regional and local governments still lag behind the central government in the provision of services online. Local governments in particular fall behind the other levels of government and are making additional services available online at the lowest rate (an increase of only 2 percentage points on the previous year). By contrast, regional governments have increased online service availability by 5 percentage points. Even though not all services are available online, across all levels of government at least 94% of services have information available that guides users to complete the service through available (digital and non-digital) channels.

Relative to the online availability of national services described above, cross-border services have much lower availability online. Central governments lead the way in cross-border services compared to regional and local governments, offering 52% of services online to cross-border users. This is about double the proportion of cross-border services offered online by regional (27%) and local (25%) governments.



12. Note that the Benchmark does not (and cannot) measure all local and regional service providers. The sample chosen for local and regional service providers consists of the biggest cities/regions in a country. The sample size for local and regional service providers differs between 5 and 20, depending on country population size. A one-to-one comparison between central, and local and regional service providers is further complicated by the type of services delivered by different government entities (e.g. income tax for central government entities, and obtaining a parking permit for local government entities)

There is a particularly striking difference between central and decentralised levels of government in terms of enabling users to digitally authenticate themselves online. While users can authenticate with eID for 78% of services from the central government, only 38% and 33% of regional and local government services, respectively, allow the use of eIDs. These values are largely unchanged from the previous report. eDocuments are more widely accepted than eIDs, but with the familiar dichotomy between central and lower levels of government: 85% of central government services accept eDocuments whereas only 48% of regional and local government services accept and use eDocuments. The central government is also more capable of reusing data from base registries to pre-fill forms. 78% of central government online forms are pre-filled with information already known from other services, which is substantially more than for regional (40%) and local (36%) government services.

There are some exceptions to the trend that central governments outperform regional and local governments in the provision of digital services. Malta scores 100% on the online availability indicator for central government (no scores are collected for regional and local government given the country's government structure). Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway score 100% on the online availability indicator for regional government. Denmark additionally scores 100% on the online availability indicator for local government. In Sweden, online service availability is higher for regional government services (91%) compared to the central (86%) and local (60%) governments.

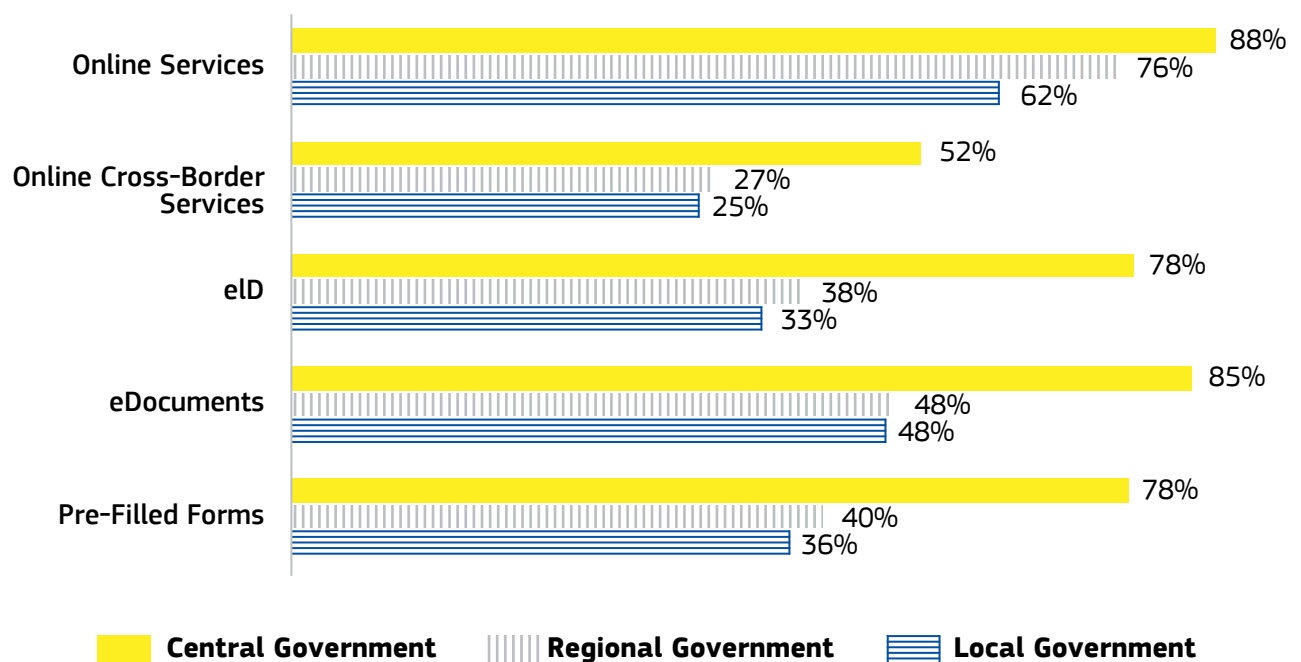


Figure 13: The percentage of (cross-border) services available online, supported by key enablers (EU27+ biennial average)

Key conclusions towards **Connecting Digital Governments**

“Unlocking the potentials of the digital transformation, specifically by setting up and implementing multi-country projects, will pave the way for a competitive and sovereign Europe.”

European Commission Executive Vice President,
Margrethe Vestager



Key conclusions towards Connecting Digital Governments

European governments are taking the next step in their digital transformations. The User Centricity dimension is still leading the way and can be used as the impetus to further improve all other key dimensions. The Key Enablers dimension already shows promising performance growth, with countries enabling safe authentication through eID and pre-filling personal information from base registries for more and more services. Cross-Border Services are ready for the next step: creating online services for foreign users can quickly accelerate with more than 30 countries connected to eIDAS and the ongoing improvements on the Your Europe portal. The Transparency of eGovernment can be improved upon by consistent service processes that are clear for the user.

The use of eGovernment is slowly increasing across Europe, as four out of five of Europeans that used the internet in the last twelve months interacted with the government online. Europe's objective in this regard should be to invite citizens to use digital services, both by making more services available, as well as by making services easier to use. Two initiatives in particular will help European governments in the coming years: Europe's Digital Decade targets and the Declaration on European Digital Rights and Principles.

Digital government with human values at its heart

In 2022, the European Union published its Declaration on European Digital Rights and Principles. The declaration should provide a framework for citizens on their digital rights, as well as guidance for EU Member States and is intended to help everyone in the EU get the most out of the digital transformation. From the eGovernment Benchmark results some clear trends can be concluded regarding these principles (although the measurement does not cover each principle entirely; other measurements and studies could complement this view).

European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles

1. Putting people and their rights at the centre of the digital transformation
2. Supporting solidarity and inclusion
3. Ensuring freedom of choice online
4. Fostering participation in the digital public space
5. Increasing safety, security and empowerment of individuals
6. Promoting the sustainability of the digital future

Putting people and their rights at the centre of the digital transformation

The eGovernment Benchmark shows that governments often put users at the heart of their digital services. Most online portals have ample help functionalities guiding users who experience challenges. Moreover, the mobile friendliness of websites keeps improving. Still, the user journey could become even more seamless. Governments should streamline their services to make the journey as easy as possible for users to understand.

Supporting solidarity and inclusion

The declaration explicitly states that "Everyone should have access to the internet, to digital skills, to digital public services and to fair working conditions". The Benchmark shows that access to digital public services is not yet the norm for everyone. This is especially so for people with visual disabilities who struggle to access online services. Moreover, the quality of government services shows an urban-rural divide, where citizens receiving services from central government or larger cities, get better services than those living in smaller cities and regions.

Ensuring freedom of choice online

European citizens should be able to choose how they want to obtain services on the understanding that online is not always better. Not all citizens have the digital skills to easily find their way online, so offline channels are a prerequisite to keep them on board. Currently, 9% of the services are mandatory online (mostly related to corporate taxes) and 96% of government portals under evaluation also provide contact details for phone or in person.

Fostering participation in the digital public space

The declaration states that “citizens should be able to engage in the democratic process at all levels and have control over their own data” and the Benchmark evaluates these criteria almost one on one. On 96% of government portals users are informed about key policy making processes, but just 55% of portals also enable users to participate in policy making through online consultations and surveys. Similarly, users can modify their personal data online on 79% of government portals, but just 55% of portals show users whether their data has been consulted by government organisations.

Increasing safety, security and empowerment of individuals

Obtaining online services should be safe and secure for everyone. eID plays a key role in this, just as digital mailbox solutions do. On these fronts, European governments have made substantial steps forwards in the past years. Website security, on the other hand, lags behind. Public administrations across Europe could take advantage of open-source testing tools and implement follow-up measures. These can include securing proper procurement to ensure security by design and prioritising budgets accordingly to invest more heavily in a sophisticated cybersecurity plan.

Promoting the sustainability of the digital future

The digitalisation of government services plays a positive role in the transition towards a more sustainable society. Moving from forms to eForms spares enormous amounts of paper annually. To give an indication: the Serbian eGovernment services have saved 180 million sheets of A4 paper in less than four years¹³. Another example is the rise of telemedicine. By discussing intakes and test results online, people do not have to travel to the clinic or hospital. As a result, it has been estimated that about 6.5 thousand tons of CO2 emissions from health care can be avoided in Spain¹⁴ alone.

The Digital Decade: Three service gaps to bridge on the road to 2030

Europe has set ambitious targets on its Digital Compass, which will navigate Europe's efforts for the upcoming years. The Digital Compass resulted in the Digital Decade Policy Programme, which was adopted on 8 January 2023. One of its cardinal points focuses on the digitalisation of public services and defines three targets:

- 100% of key public services online
- 100% of citizens have access to medical records online
- 100% of citizens can use an electronic Identification system (eID)

The first target is monitored by the eGovernment Benchmark. Currently the **Digital Decade indicators Digital public services for citizens and Digital public services for businesses stand at 77 and 84**. The step towards fully online is still substantial and countries need to speed up their efforts to fulfil the Digital Decade's promises. Diving deeper, the challenge for key public services consists of three main gaps that all need to be bridged before 2030:

13. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/04/how-technology-helped-serbia-save-180-million-sheets-of-paper-in-less-than-4-years>

14. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-16864-2>

Bridge the gap between cross-border users and national users

The differences between the quality of service delivery between national and cross-border users remain persistent. Currently, **84% of services for national users and 49% of services for cross-border users are fully online¹⁵**. Moreover, services for national users are often and delivered in a more user-centric manner. Cross-border users face many challenges, ranging from language issues to lack of authentication options and issues with submitting eDocuments. If Europe wants to make the most of its Digital Single Market, then the gap between services for cross-border users and national users cannot remain a bridge too far.

Bridge the gap between citizens and entrepreneurs

European entrepreneurs enjoy mature digital services provided by their government. Moreover, **92% of services for entrepreneurs are online, compared to 80% for citizens¹⁶**. Cross-border services show a similar picture with 54% of services for cross-border entrepreneurs online and just 48% for cross-border citizens.

Bridge the gap between local & regional governments and central governments

The final gap that needs to be bridged is that between central government on the one hand and regional and local government on the other. Central government service providers offer most services online and also frequently provide users with the opportunity to use their eID. **As it stands, 88% of evaluated central government services are completely online, compared to 76% of evaluated regional government services and 62% of evaluated local government services**. For cross-border services this difference is even larger: 52% of services provided by central government are online to cross-border users. This is about double the proportion of cross-border services offered online by regional (27%) and local (25%) governments.

Interoperability as key towards Connecting Digital Governments

Creating a level playing field between government levels is the first step towards better online services for everyone. Europe's [interoperability framework](#) and its new [Interoperable Europe Act](#) will play a vital role in this move forwards. Instead of each town or city reinventing the wheel for themselves and creating their own services, they can reuse what is already there. Architectural building blocks, such as eID and eSignature, can be easily adopted on other websites.

Cross-border service delivery would reap the fruits of interoperability as well. As it stands, a lack of appropriate translation functions and cross-border eID options are the most common barriers for cross-border users. Already, countries have service catalogues with service descriptions used both on their own government websites (both central, regional and local) in their national language as well as the Your Europe portal in other languages, meaning that each government authority does not need to make their own translation. Moreover, the ongoing implementation of eIDAS will make life for cross-border citizens easier and their authentication better secured.

Europe could help countries with the final push towards interoperability, potentially by directing funds from the Recovery and Resilience Facility to smaller government authorities that are currently still struggling in their digitalisation efforts.

15. Note that these percentages are based on questions "A2 Is the actual service online?" and "G2 Can the service be obtained online by a cross-border user?". These percentages are different from the score for the (Cross-border) Online availability indicator that is used for the Digital Decade targets. The Online availability indicators also measures whether information about a service is available and whether the service can be reached via one of the main government portals.

16. Based on question "A2 Is the actual service online?". This number differs from the Digital Decade indicators, which also assesses whether information is available, whether the service can be found via one of the relevant web portals and whether the service is online for cross-border users.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE EU

IN PERSON

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

ON THE PHONE OR BY EMAIL

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

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

FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE EU

ONLINE

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

EU PUBLICATIONS

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

EU LAW AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

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

OPEN DATA FROM THE EU

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

