

European eGovernment Resource Network

Background and Existing situation

Throughout the EU today, the rapid growth of government and administration eServices has led to the production of substantial resources:

- There is considerable “content”, from entire operational eService components and applications, down to detailed support materials (data models, studies, interoperability frameworks, etc)
- There are many existing “containers”, from databases, repositories and portals, to complete knowledge management systems;
- There are some “registries”¹ (or other, more or less, formalised, descriptions) of components², both within specific administrations and shared between them.

Mechanisms for governing these eService resources, along with policies and practices are firmly in place *within* many national administrations. As the need for cross border, or pan-European eServices, has grown, increasing attention has been paid to monitor ongoing activities and identify specific needs at a European level. However, much of the effort is project-based and thus, by definition, time-limited: no authority or governance mechanism currently exists at the EU-level.

What is needed

Some form of instrument is needed that would enable Pan-European eServices to be developed in a way that makes maximum use (and re-use) of existing resources and allows administrations to assist each other and pursue interoperability and resource sharing through cooperative and voluntary conformity. This should include:

- a high-level overview of policies, project conclusions and outputs that could usefully be made available to other actors;
- guidance regarding the best mechanisms to be pursued in the development of specific eServices projects, developments, standards and specifications;
- improved coordination between existing authorities, ensuring the best possible economies of scale for any eServices effort, through the pooling of resources;
- support for the implementation of eServices from commonly available “building blocks”, open source components and using best available practices.

The Proposal for a European eGovernment Resources Network

The Austrian initiative, first launched at the Ministerial Conference in Como in 2003, for a European eGovernment Resources Network could be such an instrument. The proposal is to start as a “virtual” infrastructure supporting efforts to develop cross-border and pan-European eServices and providing: an easily navigable overview of existing eServices and their components, documentation and support infrastructures (standards, best practices, etc.) that Member States are willing to make available for information and/or re-use by others; help in defining the processes that make up new pan-European

¹ “Registry” is often associated exclusively with personal and company registration systems. In the context of eServices, a “registry” is the principal reference infrastructure for sharing information about available services, and any repository associated with it. It is in this sense that the word is used in this document

² “Components” in this context means all entries into a repository, whether documents, code-lists, application profiles, schema, data models or executable eService components.

eServices and necessary building blocks; and identify missing elements that could be provided most efficiently through pan-European cooperation.

In summary, the Network would facilitate the activities of public administrations in developing and implementing new cross-border or pan-European eServices. The Network will develop and evolve according to demonstrable need and in response to specific use cases, scenarios and requests from the Member States. In particular it should be able to provide the following:

A. Policy and Strategy

It will be important to highlight the policy implications of future cross-border and pan-European eServices, in particular:

- Common approaches to registration and availability of information on existing eServices and their components (including via possible future federated service information registries);
- Policies regarding management of metadata (in particular with regard to service descriptions) and other reference data, schema, lists, types, etc.;
- Scenario building for different policy areas and actors (including governance, management and the development of standards and specifications);
- Development of a true EU “knowledge infrastructure” providing detailed oversight of the state of development of pan-European eServices.

B. Technology

Starting from a proof-of-concept, demonstrate technology solutions to the identified information and knowledge requirements:

- A federated information “registry” of available eService components, using open standards;
- Human and programmatic access to the registry and discovery of available resources (exploration of “semantic web services”);
- (Semantic) Mapping between existing eServices in different administrations in order to facilitate interoperability;
- Pan-European eService design, emphasising citizen- and business- oriented eServices.

C. Standards

Where the relevance of data standards has been demonstrated, providing a coherent reference of which standards to use or how to create them, including:

- Reference and function models for eService provision and pan-European services in particular;
- Minimum requirements for registration of components (service description, metadata, etc.) as a cornerstone for the platform independent exchange of information about eServices available;
- Identifying and formalising “interoperability points” for interfaces between different services.

The development of the Network should proceed in close cooperation between the Member States, the European Commission and relevant standards bodies and consortia. It should feed in to discussions to consider an EU-level infrastructure that would help coordinate and render more visible ongoing initiatives.

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