PARLEU2017.EE

Parliamentary Dimension
of the Estonian Presidency
of the Council of the
European Union

Plenary Meeting of the LVIII COSAC
26–28 November 2017, Tallinn

Background Information

Session III: Digital Single Market – current developments in e-services

Digital technologies generate new innovations, products, services, business models, as well as new ways of interaction between citizens and governments. The **Tallinn Digital Summit** on 29 September 2017 sent a strong message on the need for a stronger and more coherent Digital Europe. This was reaffirmed at the **European Council** on 19 October 2017, when the heads of state and government announced that they were ready to do what it takes for Europe to go digital. It was agreed that the challenges posed by the digital transformation and the reviewing of policies affected by digitalisation would be dealt with collectively.

Governments and public sectors have an important role to play in order to successfully build a **Digital Europe**. The public sector contributes between 20% and 30% of the European GDP, and estimates suggest that the Digital Single Market could cut the administrative burden of the public sector by 15–20%. Public administrations should lead the way by becoming enablers and adopters of new and breakthrough technologies, reducing the administrative burden on businesses and citizens by making their interactions with public administrations faster, more convenient, transparent, and less expensive.

As was concluded at the Tallinn Digital Summit, all government proceedings involving the free movement of people, capital, goods and services within the single market should be made possible to be conducted digitally. It was agreed that **principles such as Once-Only** and **One-Stop Government** should be introduced to facilitate interoperability and cross-border digital public services. The public sector should facilitate the digital transformation, taking a lead in the use of electronic and innovative procurements, making all communication digital, and introducing **digital practices and services as default options.**

Widespread use of e-ID and e-signature saves time and reduces costs for all actors involved, while also guarding against identity theft and poor cybersecurity. The first public step at the **EU level in the e-signing process** was made on 25 October this year, when the President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani and the Estonian Deputy Minister for EU Affairs Matti Maasikas, representing the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, electronically signed an EU legislative act. It is clear proof that the EU institutions are working together to make the digital transformation a reality and to offer efficient and secure digital solutions in the public sphere. It demonstrates the commitment of the EU to implement **eIDAS**, the EU-wide regulation that provides a predictable regulatory environment to enable secure and seamless electronic interactions between businesses, citizens, and public authorities.

National Parliaments play an important role in the digitalisation of the public sector. According to the findings of the **28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC**, most of the respondents considered the digitalisation of the public sector to be very important. The report shows that the national Parliaments have overcome their mistrust of digital solutions, and this has created a good basis to further develop the digitalisation of the public sector. Digitalisation of parliamentary procedures has taken place in nearly half of the national Parliaments. For example, almost half of the national Parliaments have electronic voting systems during

Parliamentary Dimension
of the Estonian Presidency
of the Council of the
European Union

the plenary, and use systems enabling paperless plenary and committee meetings. The vast majority use electronic document management systems and more than half use electronic platforms for communicating with other government departments. The fact that digitalisation of parliamentary procedures is being actively implemented is a good foundation for further digitalisation of the public sector.

At the same time, more than half of the national Parliaments consider data protection concerns as the main challenge. According to the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC, creating the right environment for digital services has been the most debated topic in national Parliaments. Thus, when developing digitalisation, it is essential to respect, support and enhance the right to privacy and the right to the protection of personal data, and to comply with the relevant EU laws, as was also stressed at the **Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment**.[1] The need and the importance of a common European approach to cybersecurity was also discussed at the Digital Summit. An ambitious goal for the EU to become a leader in **cybersecurity by 2025** was set by the heads of state and government.

Coming back to the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC, when asked about the main policy challenges for further development of digital initiatives, the majority of the national Parliaments agreed that **costs and infrastructure** were the main impediments to further development. Communication networks constitute the backbone of the digital world. In a similar vein, it was concluded at the Digital Summit that the EU should establish an ambitious roadmap and framework to deploy world-leading optical fibre and **5G network by 2025**. While most of the targets related to upgrading infrastructure and upskilling the labour force will have to be achieved by the Member States, the EU should examine how to increase the contribution of European investments towards these goals.

To conclude, digital tools allow better access to public services and increase democratic participation in general. The digitalisation of the public sector involves much more than making public services available online. For citizens and businesses, it not only offers great potential in terms of saving time and cutting costs by using online public services, but new technologies also enable an active collaboration with policymakers across the EU.

Some points for discussion:

1) What are the most widely used e-services in your country?
2) What are the challenges in implementing effective e-services?
3) How can e-services be made more useable for all user groups?

---

[1] Signed by the ministers in charge of eGovernment policy and coordination from 32 countries of the European Union and the European Free Trade Area on 6 October 2017.