

OECD e-Government Studies

Future of e-government

AGENDA 2020



OECD E-Leaders Conference 2008
Main Conclusions



Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties





OECD E-LEADERS CONFERENCE 2008

THE FUTURE OF E-GOVERNMENT - AGENDA 2020 -

MAIN CONCLUSIONS



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**THE HAGUE
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Foreword

In the past decade, e-government has developed tremendously from being an issue in and of itself to becoming a cross-cutting transformational issue supporting governments' abilities to deliver on promises. It is now important for governments to look at their achievements, and identify and focus on the medium- and long-term issues which will emerge in the coming decade. After 10 years of examining e-government at the OECD, it was time to take stock of the lessons learned, and to lay out the trends and issues for decision-makers to shape the Future of E-Government – Agenda 2020.

Consequently, the Dutch Government's offer to host a gathering of the most senior government officials responsible for e-government in each OECD country – the OECD E-Leaders – for a political and strategic discussion on the future role of e-government. The OECD E-Leaders Conference 2008 gave OECD countries an opportunity to discuss and reflect on where e-government development is going internationally, and how to start taking upcoming e-government issues into consideration in upcoming developments nationally.

As e-government has truly become a global issue with a far-reaching impact on all public sectors and economies, there is a need for a broad international co-operation and exchange of knowledge and experience in the area. Representatives of the countries currently in the process of accession¹ and in the process of enhanced engagement², and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries³ were invited to participate and contribute to the discussions on the first day.

¹ Chile, Estonia, Israel, Russia, and Slovenia.

² Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, and South Africa.

I hope that the OECD E-Leaders conferences will continue to serve as a valuable and much needed annual international forum for political and strategic e-government discussions where decision makers can benefit from the exchange of ideas, visions, knowledge, and good practices. The aim of collegial support and assistance to perform better as governments is at the heart of what the OECD can provide as an organisation, and the OECD E-Leaders Conference 2008 is a solid foundation for a continued dialogue among OECD E-Leaders.

Odile Sallard

Director

*Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate
OECD*

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The Good Governance for Development (GfD) Initiative aims at modernising public governance in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) through dialogue among policy practitioners from MENA and OECD countries.

Towards a new agenda...

Technology has often been seen as the solution to all problems for governments. Whilst not being the solution to all problems, e-government has become an integral part of public sector transformation. Information and communication technology (ICT) have helped to deliver more modern services for citizens and businesses, stimulate the Information Society and emerging new economy, drive public sector transformation and help governments prepare for future pressure on public administrations.



Mrs. A. Bijleveld-Schouten, State Secretary, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, The Netherlands.

Now that ICT has become an integrated part of everyday life, the next generation of e-government will have to continue to improve public sector performance.

But what is next? The OECD E-Leaders Conference 2008 discussed the need for a change of focus and direction: making administrations efficient and effective by putting e-government services online is no longer enough.

The Dutch host, Mrs. A. Bijleveld-Schouten, State Secretary in the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, outlined the challenges in her opening speech to the Conference that "... e-government is about empowerment. Empowerment of our economic potential, local and international". It is about: "... creating an environment where business can strive with government support without government hindrance."



Mr. Aart J. de Geus, Deputy Secretary-General, OECD.

The importance of discussing the future political and strategic goals for e-government among e-leaders globally was emphasised by Mr. Aart J. de Geus, Deputy Secretary-General of the OECD. After nearly 10 years of e-government work at the OECD, Mr. de Geus found it important to learn from the past and use this experience as a platform to explore the future of e-government. E-Government development has become a mainstream issue internationally and need to include also non-OECD countries such as the specially invited countries from the Middle-East and North-Africa region and others.

Focusing on citizens' needs – Government 2.0?

The main focus of most participating delegations was the need to improve governments' understanding of users and their needs - citizens and businesses alike. Particularly ways to improve service delivery to citizens was an overarching theme for discussion.

Today, all countries are struggling to better meet user expectations, but few have the necessary and sufficient knowledge of these expectations. Empowering citizens to participate in the development of the public sector has created an unprecedented recognition among governments of the need of a whole-of-public-sector approach to service delivery.

Many delegations shared this view as high-lighted in the introductory keynote speeches by Dr. William Dutton, Oxford Internet Institute, and Mr. Kees Keuzenkamp, The Netherlands: there is no contradiction between being citizen-centric and achieving the goal of a high-performing public sector delivering high-quality services to its users.



Mr. Kees Keuzenkamp, Acting Director, Innovation and Public Sector Information Policy Department, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, The Netherlands.



Dr. William Dutton, Director, Oxford Internet Institute.

Providing high-quality and efficient public services – whether they are e-government-based or not – is a question of knowing what the expectations are and how to meet them. This means that having a holistic approach to public service delivery with the user at the core is not enough. It is also about engaging them



Mr. Salem Al Shair, Director, eServices, Dubai eGovernment, United Arab Emirates.

Today, many countries are struggling to set up the prerequisites for delivering integrated services following a multi-channel service delivery strategy. This involves cross-cutting collaboration and co-operation within the public sector itself. Finding the right balance between “the stick” and “the carrot” to ensure a whole-of-public-sector approach is a challenging political discussion.

Countries in the Middle-East and North-African region are also moving towards citizen-centric services. Mr. Salem Al Shair, United Arab Emirates, underlined the importance of having e-government also supporting economic goals.

Integrating e-government in the public sector

Countries recognise that e-government has become a unique and powerful tool for governments. It has contributed to making public administration significantly more efficient and effective. It has, in its own right, forced governments into rethinking organisations, responsibilities, business processes, and collaborative and co-operative arrangements within and across levels of government – and also forced governments to take a whole-of-public-sector view of their service provision to citizens and businesses.



Mr. William Perrin, Director, Cabinet Office, United Kingdom, and Chairman of the *OECD Network of Senior E-Government Officials*; and Mr. Mario Pezzini, Deputy Director, Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate, OECD.

It is nevertheless still a challenge and it will remain a challenge in the coming years to ensure that the main lessons learned, are taken onboard and implemented:

- ***E-Government is a powerful generic tool for overall policy implementation:*** E-Government has proven to be a powerful generic and strategic tool for public sector transformation, and an unavoidable support for broad policy implementation in almost all areas of society.
- ***E-Government is improving efficiency and effectiveness of government functions and is driving standardisation:*** E-Government has proven to be a forceful driver for sharing of resources (*e.g.* information and data, business process, and services) and for standardising organisational, legal, and technical frameworks.
- ***The digital divide is still a significant challenge for countries:*** The challenges of the digital divide are still present in many countries.

A new agenda?

Despite more than a decade of work in OECD countries, e-government has not yet delivered on all its promises. Countries are still looking into how to harvest the full benefits of e-government now that many of them have passed the phase of “... picking the low-hanging fruits” from simple automation.

Now that e-government has become a natural part of governments’ toolboxes, governments are asking how this tool can be used to support and enhance broader economic development. Mr. Bruno Lanvin, INSEAD, pointed out different mega-trends in e-government development and the future challenge for governments of balancing these trends:



Mr. Bruno Lanvin, Executive Director, eLab, INSEAD.

- From cost reduction to better government.
- From rationalisation to economic growth facilitation.
- From central to local.
- From government- to citizen- to client-centricity.

Also the issue of how to ensure sufficient competencies and skills to further develop public service delivery is a growing concern in many countries. The need for engaging private sector competencies and skills to complement government efforts was discussed including how public-private partnerships could be used. Mr. Tim Young, USA, and Ms. Anabela Pedroso, Portugal, both underlined the challenge of the ongoing competition for qualified and skilled employees between the public and the private sector.



Ms. Anabela Pedrosa, President, Agency for Administrative Modernisation, Portugal.



Mr. Tim Young, Deputy Administrator, Office of E-Government and Information Technology, Office of Management and Budget, USA.

In conclusion: many of today's challenges to public sector transformation remain. E-Government will still be a key tool to ensure the implementation of user-centric services (whether or not these are online). Governments will progressively streamline front- and back office functions to facilitate service integration across the public sector.

Based on lessons learned, four themes for a future agenda emerge:

- ***Increasing coherency and integration of the public sector through innovation and change:*** The public sectors in OECD countries are quickly becoming more coherent and integrated. Eliminating redundancies and ensuring the sharing of resources where possible will dominate the e-government agenda towards 2020. This requires an unprecedented change of mindsets and traditional silo-thinking towards ownership of the public sector as a whole by each civil servant.
- ***Putting users at the steering wheel of the public sector:*** Focusing on users and putting them at the centre of public sector activities diminishes silo-thinking and increases civil service providers' awareness of user needs and demands. E-Government will enable governments to hand-over major parts of public sector development and operations to users directly, since competencies and skills of society at large are improving and affecting an increasing number of people. Collaborative involvement of users in service design and operation could allow them to build their own set of public services adapted to their personal needs at different stages of their lives.

- ***Local service delivery – strengthened co-ordination and management:*** Allowing front-line personnel to deliver public services efficiently and effectively requires a well-functioning and fully coherent and integrated back-office. E-Government enables governments to reprioritise resources, moving more personnel from administrative duties in the back office to front-line duties helping users directly where necessary. Both local support in the front office and effective co-ordination and management in the back- office are vital. Building-up competencies and skills locally will become imperative. Monitoring and evaluations through the use of relevant measures and indicators will be important coherency tools.
- ***Globalisation of public services:*** Globalisation is affecting all countries' public sectors. Regional cross-border seamless services are increasingly apparent. This extra pressure for international collaboration and co-operation leads to increased global integration. International collaboration is already underway in the European Union, and continues to increase, making both shared e-government services such as cross-border electronic identification systems and health care a real possibility.

Participating countries

The following countries were represented at the OECD E-Leaders Conference 2008: Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Egypt, European Union, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the USA.

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