



## **European action plan eGovernment presented**

**E-government services in Europe are not always as advanced as in the Netherlands. The European Commission wants to speed up the developments and actively promote knowledge exchange. An action plan with 21 actions will be discussed with the Member States early June.**

People who live abroad after retirement. Young people who want to study abroad. Companies that participate in international tenders. They will all benefit if Member States make their digital services accessible to all Europeans. If you can send data or a signature digitally, also across the border. The new EU action plan for eGovernment aims to accelerate developments in this area. The Directorate of Paul Timmers, Director of Digital Society, Trust & Security at the European Commission, was responsible for the development of the Plan of the European Commission.

### **What is the current status of E-government in Europe?**

"The differences between Member States are still quite large. Some countries provides opportunities to arrange a lot digitally, whereas others countries are at the complete beginning when it comes to E-government. Most Member States have recently introduced the electronic identification and digital signature. They are not used as effectively as in the Netherlands in most countries. From July 2015 a European law requires to recognize the digital signature; it sets a standard. "

### **Are Member States solving their national issues first?**

"Yes, they naturally look at their own digital services and then they will look across the border. Everyone chooses their own systems, which makes exchanging data difficult sometimes. Europe provides funding to allow systems to connect with each other, but it would be better to ensure that all systems are compatible from the beginning. This is also possible for completely new developments for which European innovation funds are available."

### **What does the new plan say?**

"The Action Plan provides Member States with a common agenda for the digitalisation of the government. Common points include that data only needs to be provided once and that the services are accessible for citizens and companies from other EU Member States. The plan is not yet finalised and still offers room for new ideas and insights. One of the questions is what Europe can do with Open Data and common services."

*'Europe can be world leader in E-government'*

### **Can the EU enforce developments?**

"No, the EU has no power in this area, except in very specific areas. Think of European requirements on the accessibility of governmental websites for disabled people. It is primarily a matter of convincing each other: an efficient internal market would need the possibility that you can do business with governments in Europe digitally. That is in everyone's interest. "

### **June 2 and 3, there is a conference in Amsterdam on E-government. What do you expect?**

"The action plan was only adopted a few weeks ago by the European Commission. The meeting provides the first opportunity to discuss the plan with the Member States. The conference will focus on the implementation of the 21 actions mentioned in the plan. How to start with these actions as soon as possible? I hope there is support from experts and operational people from the Member States. High quality services often cover different policy areas and requires technical and organisational knowledge. During the conference, many practitioners will be present: The Netherlands elaborates on the implementation of the once only-principle: the principle that you only have to send your data once. "

### **What will happen next?**

"During the next Presidency, in the second half of this year, Member States will give their feedback to the plan. In practice it means that we will evaluate the plan annually through a benchmark. And of course we look forward to the dynamic further development of the action plan. We do not have to be modest: Europe's ambition can be to be a world leader when it comes to high quality citizen-centric E-government"