NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations
Subject: 6th European Ministerial eGovernment Conference and Exhibition: Borderless eGovernment Services for Europeans (Poznań, 17th - 18th November 2011)
- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find, in annex, a note from the Presidency on the above-mentioned topic.
6th European Ministerial eGovernment Conference and Exhibition: Borderless eGovernment Services for Europeans (Poznań, 17th - 18th November 2011)

The 6th European Ministerial eGovernment Conference, which was organised jointly by the Polish Presidency in the EU Council and the European Commission, was set up to debate how to make best use of the opportunities and to overcome the challenges connected with the development of eGovernment services for the benefit of citizens and businesses.

The goal of the conference was to discuss the achievements and to set the directions for the coming years in eGovernment policy in line with the provisions of Europe 2020 Strategy, Digital Agenda for Europe as well as the European eGovernment Action Plan 2011-2015 and relevant Council Conclusions in order to provide the stakeholders with stimulus to further develop the electronic public services with a view to complete the digital single market, to facilitate the mobility of citizens and businesses and to support the competitiveness of the European economy.

The title of the conference: Borderless eGovernment Services for Europeans recognized the need to develop cross-border eGovernment services provided to the European citizens and businesses regardless of their country of origin in order to increase the quality of living in Europe, reinforce the mobility of citizens and businesses and to provide benefits for the economy.

The conference brought together approximately 800 delegates from around the world representing national, regional and local administrations, the European Commission, international and regional organisations, industry, civil society, academia, eGovernment experts and practitioners.

The event was attended, among others, by Mr Michał Boni, Minister of Administration and Digitisation of Poland, Mr Piotr Kołodziejczyk – Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Administration and Digitisation of Poland, Mrs Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Digital Agenda and Mr Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Interinstitutional Relations and Administration.
The conference consisted of 3 plenary and 15 parallel sessions, which were divided into three thematic tracks: Policy, Interoperability, People's concerns.

During the conference the issues like: open government, interoperability between public administrations, electronic identity, pan-european e-procurement, cross-border e-justice, user empowerment and quality assurance, trust in eGovernment services and respect for privacy and data protection with regard to the use of public e-services, efficiency and effectiveness of e-government solutions as well as the innovative technical approaches to eGovernment such as cloud computing and service oriented architecture were discussed among others.

The participants paid attention that still most of the public e-services face challenges when it comes to its cross border effectiveness, which is to the detriment of the mobility of businesses and citizens in the UE. The need for further development and deployment of cross-border eGovernment services was emphasized.

The need to provide public services with fewer resources especially in the time of economic crisis and financial constraints was stressed. In this context the participants underlined that the use of ICT in public administrations can contribute to the improvement of effectiveness and efficiency of public administrations by reducing the administrative burden and improving organizational processes. That is why the economic hardship demands ambitious reforms in public administrations and more investment in development of eGovernment and cost-efficient innovative solutions.

Mutual recognition of national eIDs and cross-border interoperability at all levels (technical, legal, organizational, semantic) were considered as prerequisites for wide-spread cross-border e-services deployment.

Also citizens’ concerns and expectations related to the use of ICTs and electronic services were raised. Participants discussed the ways to reduce the problem of digital exclusion. The need to make the best use of the potential of ICTs to increase participation and involvement in policy making processes was highlighted.
The meeting of ministers responsible for eGovernment issues was held on the first day of the conference. The ministers focused on international recognition of electronic documents, trans-border public administration services and interoperability of public e-services. The continuation and expansion of large scale e-government pilot projects was also discussed.

The Ministers recognised the need for mutual recognition and acceptance of electronic identification across borders which will allow people to interact and transact with governments and businesses across the EU. The Commission should be informed of which official eIDs are in use in the Member States. Ministers also agreed that the legislation related to electronic identification should be simplified.

The benefits of cross-border services to the increased efficiency of public administrations, mobility of citizens and businesses in the single market and economic growth were underlined.

The Ministers concluded that cross-border e-services should be built from components that can be shared and re-used. The Large Scale Pilots have already provided building blocks which can be re-used for the development of cross-border e-services. The Ministers considered the need to evaluate the proofs of concepts and the market potential of the components developed by the Large Scale Pilots. The key challenge is how to move beyond the pilot environment towards real take-up of these services. The proposed Connecting Europe Facility was seen as an important instrument to support the long term sustainability of the cross-border services.

Possible domains of 5 key cross-border public services to be available online by 2015 have been put forward for consideration like: business startup and operations, public procurement, employment, health, personal mobility.

Regarding the interoperability issue, it was agreed that purely technical interoperability is no longer a policy problem and more attention should be paid to other interoperability challenges like semantic, organizational and legal. These issues need to be addressed as policy considerations and not technical concerns.
It was recognised that interoperability is a key service design factor and main driver for public take-up of services. Interoperability requires political support from Member States and better coordination.

During the conference the letter of intent between Poland and Germany was signed. It is considered as an important step towards closer cooperation in sharing experiences connected with the introduction of electronic identity documents in Poland and Germany.

The conference was accompanied by an exhibition showcasing the recent European developments in the field of eGovernment services and applications. More than 50 projects from 22 countries were showcased. The European Commission presented the Large Scale Pilot projects.

While providing a platform for high-level political debate and the exchange of best practices, the conference has given a strong incentive to stimulate further activities and concrete actions in the area of eGovernment.