



### *The eEurope 2005 Mid-term Review*

This Review ([http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2004/com2004\\_0108en\\_01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2004/com2004_0108en_01.pdf)) outlines trends and predominant requirements for authorities in addressing issues of services for citizens and equity of access:

#### **Services for citizens and businesses**

##### *e-Government*

Benchmarking of key government services fully online has shown growth from 17% to 43% between October 2001 and 2003. However the review notes the need for better ICT tools and interoperability, and integration of front and back office. Moreover while supply is seen to grow, demand lags behind; understanding of local demand and potential drivers is important. In order to support further development, further exchange of best practice is championed.

Similar issues are prevalent in the field of e-learning, as well as the importance of support from highly trained teachers/tutors, and content that signifies new approaches to learning.

##### *e-health*

In terms of e-enabled health services, there is considerable weight attached to bandwidth, security and privacy, and user-centred service provision. Most member states now have e-health plans, with many calling on expenditure of more than 3% of the health budget. Key e-health actions are identified as electronic health cards, online health services and health information networks.

### *e-business*

In electronic business, an overarching theme is the need to move beyond e-commerce towards full integration of ICT into business processes. Secure and effective e-payment systems are also major requirements.

## **Faster more secure internet for all**

### *broadband*

Availability and take-up of broadband is increasing across Europe. The EU approach to infrastructure development is technology neutral, both in terms of regulation and policy. The report recognises that competition in broadband is weak, despite the majority of connexions using DSL. This is a key issue in determining how prices are set for citizens. In addition, where broadband rollout is not commercially attractive, there is the real danger of falling short of an 'information society for all'. The implication is that it is crucial for the public sector to engage with providers in addressing these concerns; facilitating competition and increasing coverage of poorly provided areas in terms of supply.

A lag of take-up behind availability is noted, the emphasis in this instance being on a lack of attractive broadband content which constitutes a bottleneck. The review highlights the need for better knowledge of barriers to providing open and interoperable digital content and public services; indeed on a variety of platforms.

### *security*

Fears about security are another important barrier to the use of e-services, with almost 80% of citizens inhibited in making online purchases for this reason. The review acknowledges the value of standards and certification in creating trust in the Information Society.

### *e-inclusion*

In the fundamental issue of inclusion, the eEurope review puts forward the requirement for greater focus on the future potential of new platforms to increase accessibility and to encourage a wider range of people online. This would include looking at local and wide area wireless solutions and the switchover to digital TV.

Further key issues include the use of data to assess the extent of regional imbalances; EU-level e-accessibility standards, including e-procurement, based on the implementation of Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) guidelines and common labelling for accessible web pages; and the uptake and use of ICTs by groups at risk of exclusion to be stimulated by awareness and digital literacy actions and provision of appropriate content and services.

### **Key issues arising**

The conclusions of the mid-term review provide a succinct frame of reference for the steer on e-government and promoting inclusion from Europe.

The major priorities are given here:

- Interoperability, standards and multi-platform access – especially multi-party agreements (i.e. not just technical solutions).
- Reinforcement of the pan-European dimension – potential for cross-border learning & exchange.
- Move to a demand-driven approach – emphasis on service delivery, end-user value for all and functionality.
- More attractive content is a prerequisite for further broadband development.
- New business and service delivery models to get more out of the shift to e-services – more productivity and efficiency gains can be realised when embedded in effective re-organisation of processes and service delivery.
- Requirement for greater monitoring and quantification of e-inclusion, especially in order to assess the extent of regional imbalances, and potential for multiplatform delivery to widen accessibility.