

## **EPSU Response to EC public consultation on eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020**

(16 February 2016) EPSU has responded to the European Commission's official public consultation regarding the next European-eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020. EPSU firmly believes that the development of digital public services has to be an open transparent and non-commercial process in which everybody can participate and develop. The introduction of "digital by default" and "once only" measures should be an option for public administrations and citizens and not an obligation (1).

While this public consultation has been an important first step, it has primarily been directed at business organizations and employers associations who have long been able to shape this process in line with their own interests.

We believe that involving civil society, trade unions and workers representatives in public and local administrations is necessary not only to allow for further successful and balanced consultations, but to produce a fairer outcome for all sections of society. It's vital therefore that the Commission should aim to invite EU Social Partners to the debate to discuss the future of public services and their development.

A holistic, integrated view of public services which understand them for what they are, as services for the general wellbeing of society on which we all depend, coupled with a locally rooted process would help to make the needs of users more central to the process. The reality remains that local and public authorities are underfunded and the introduction of sufficient IT solutions expensive. We want to see far more investment in improving the digital skills of public sector workers and citizens more generally. The user-friendliness of IT-solutions is important for all people, not only business.

In addition to all of this, a greater understanding of "digital poverty" is needed so that measures to support people without broadband connections/computers can be put in place. In many rural areas for example, where it is most difficult to get access to broadband, greater flexibility regarding state aid rule allowing for investment and

development needs to have a much higher priority.

We remain firmly committed to the ongoing transparency of European-eGovernment services, as well as improving the availability of open data to all citizens.

(1) “Digital by default” refers to the policy of mandatory digitalisation of public services.

“Once Only” is a policy in which citizens and businesses supply certain standard information only once, and this information is shared between departments internally.

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