



E-GOV4YOUTH

Digital Governance

WP2

EGOV4YOUTH Research Report

30.09.2024



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report represents the main deliverable under Work Package (WP) 2 of the EGOV4YOUTH project. It synthesises and summarises the work conducted by the six project partners, EILD, Exeo Lab, TalTech, UBBSLA, Vernian, and Yyouth. Following a brief recapitulation of the research goals and methodology, the report is divided into three main sections;

Task 2.3 of Work Package two provided crucial background research of the e-government initiatives present in each partner country. A total of 24 best practices (4 per country) that in some aspect relate to youth participation in e-government were analysed. Based on the best practices identified by each partner country, common themes of e-government best practices across the different countries were identified.

The qualitative data analysis of work package 2 pursued a two-pronged approach: First, to understand how European youth members – classified under our methodology as being between 15-30 years of age – feel about their respective country's e-government efforts in its current form, as well as about the future of e-government. Second, to juxtapose this against how European public authorities – at the local, regional, and national level – perceive their own performance in the area of digital transformation, to what extent they consider youth in their service provision, and how that consideration is expressed.

The results of both sections reflect the diverse history of the European continent and often present us with a sliding scale of values which has a direct effect on the citizenry's responses; from high trust in government to low trust; from the optimism of the youngest respondents to the practical experience of the older ones; from rural to urban settings; from federal to more centralised modes of governance.

While concerns of the youth and best practices of public authorities differ across the continent, there is also plenty of common ground: Interest in digital transformation is high on both sides, and it is perceived as a new mechanism that can potentially bring people and their governments closer together again. A closer, more human relationship between both parties can contribute to a positive sense of belonging, it can serve as an impetus to be an active participant in society and democracy.

The surveys and interviews conducted by the project partners raise different focus points that correspond to different steps in a country's digital transformation journey: At the start of that journey, digital skills promotion and the build-up of an attractive online service portfolio are of great importance. Further along the e-government trajectory, high user-friendliness and strong cybersecurity are of increasing importance. What unites all countries is the aim for more transparency; trust-building measures such as the display of how a user's data is being used by the public sector would go a long way in helping citizens trust their government with digital data more.



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Project Overview

The EGOV4YOUTH project aims to empower youth through e-government by promoting active citizenship and social and civic engagement of young people. More specifically, the project aims to narrow the digital skills gap among NEET youth (those not in education, employment, or training), fostering enhanced collaboration between youth and Public Administrations (PAs) in local decision-making processes. The project focuses on the Key Areas of the European Strategy (Engage, Connect and Empower) and supports strategic connection between young people and PAs. By developing E-GOV competencies and tools, EGOV4YOUTH strives to effectively address the evolving needs of young Europeans.

The project has partners from six different countries. Exeo Lab (Italy), Vernian (Cyprus), Yyouth (Norway), TalTech (Estonia), EILD (Greece), UBBSLA (Bulgaria). The project is funded with support from the European Commission.

EGOV4YOUTH project has the following deliverables and results:

- **E-Gov4YOUTH research report** - a transnational survey coordinated by Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech) across six member states.
- **E-Gov4YOUTH training program** - the program aims to increase young people's civic engagement by bringing them closer to institutions and actively involving them in shaping local development strategies through E-Governance tools and technologies. The program will be validated with support from key stakeholders and piloted across all partner countries, engaging 60 young participants. The training curriculum will be structured into 6 modules totalling 39 hours, utilizing a blended learning approach.
- **E-Gov4YOUTH Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)** - The MOOC contains six e-governance-related modules and enables young recipients and other interested parties, such as adults, professionals, and public administration operators, to access the training program free of charge at any time within 5 years after the project.
- **The EGOV4YOUTH Platform** - will provide an interactive space where young people and public administrations can effectively collaborate on initiatives and projects for local community development.
- **MOUs With Local PAs**

This document is one of the project deliverables ("E-Gov4Youth research report") listed above. The following chapters summarise the transnational survey conducted in six member states and offers a comprehensive analysis of the needs, expectations, and challenges young people face in relation to e-governance services.



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WP2: Quality Indicators

WP2 - Quantitative indicators:

- young respondents: at least 150 in total (min. 25 per partner country)
- local PA representatives interviewed at least 30 in total (min. 5 per partner country)
- number of international E-GOV best practices for young people identified and thoroughly analyzed, including through interviews: at least 20

WP2 - Qualitative indicators:

- % of young people showing interest in participating in E-Gov services: 70%
- % of young people who know at least 3 E-Gov services: 70%
- % of young people who are interested in using at least one E-Gov service after the interview: 80%
- % of young people interested in participating in local development through E-GOV systems: 80%
- Satisfaction of young people in using E-Gov services: 70%.
- % of PA operators interested in new E-GOV initiatives for young people: 70%
- % of specific suggestions made by young people or PA officials to improve the effectiveness of the project: 70%
- % of PA operators with experience in developing E-GOV services: 40%
- % of young people who say they feel more involved in society through the use of e-government services: 70%
- N. of good practices identified as having a high impact on the project: at least 1 per country
Italy



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Analysis of E-Government Best Practices (Task 2.3)

Introduction

This section determines key themes and insights from an analysis of 24 e-government best practices across Estonia, Italy, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Norway and Greece. It focuses on finding common themes in the types of services/initiatives popular in participating countries as well as providing insights on several key differentiating aspects of best practices including cost, duration and scope. Overall, this section served as background research for the qualitative data analysis based on data from interviews with youth and public authorities from all consortium member countries.

Methodology

The purpose of this report is to analyse the 24 best practices in the area of e-government initiatives for youth reported by participating countries. In the initial phase, consortium members were tasked with conducting comprehensive desk analyses to identify 4 Best Practices that promote the participation of youth in democracy and public decision in their country. For the purpose of this analysis, activities qualified as best practices if they have completed two or more activity years and if the contribution of public authorities to the implementation of the activity is substantial. A template was used to guide participating countries in collecting data on the best practices.

All participating countries successfully identified at least four best practices following the criteria. Generally, all the collected data adhered to the same guidelines and were uniform, except in the reporting of price. Some differences in approach were apparent in this aspect, as some countries reported the cost of a best practice for the individual rather than its implementation cost for public authorities.

Key Themes

EARLY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

This category includes programs and initiatives which deploy digital solutions to varying extents to promote early civic engagement/involvement and democratic participation of citizens. Best practices recorded under this topic area differ in the size of the target group and their focus on youth. Youth Government/Parliament initiatives such as the National Youth Council and European Youth Parliament in Italy and the Youth Parliament in Greece for instance aim to explicitly expose high-school/university students to the processes of democratic decision-making. These **BPs also use minimal levels of technological solutions** and are primarily in-person events. Other BPs falling under this theme are initiatives focused on stimulating discussions and policy debates such as Arvamusfestival (Opinion Festival) in Estonia and Oslo Snakker (Oslo Talks) in Norway. Like Youth Parliament initiatives, these BPs are mainly in-person and use digital solutions for support mechanisms (e.g. organizational, streaming purposes). However, they target a wider group of citizens from all age groups. Lastly, this theme also includes **initiatives and solutions which facilitate two-way communication between state organizations and citizens** such as Citizens Voice in Cyprus and ParticiPa in Italy. These BPs are predominantly online platforms and systems aimed at providing



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citizens an opportunity to give direct feedback to executive powers through voting, proposals, meetings and other forms of feedback.

Advantages

- BPs under this theme have generally low operation costs. As the primary aim is connecting individuals and facilitating discussion, the costs associated are not high and are primarily organizational in the case of in-person civic engagement events and setting up a website for online feedback forums.
- These initiatives are especially attractive and inclusive to youth. By generating discussions and involving all citizens in shaping and debating policy matters, they are particularly empowering to youth.

Disadvantages

- Due to the periodic and short-term nature of most of the recorded BPs under this category, their impact may be more temporary.
- These initiatives usually reach smaller target groups and are more exclusive, as many reported practices under this theme are in-person and some even selective.

TRAINING AND INFORMATION PLATFORMS

This category includes best practices that use or include online platforms for interactive, accessible training/information. These are generally targeted and accessible to a broader population but can also be specific to a group of citizens. Initiatives under this theme vary in their topical focus. For instance, several countries recorded practices that provide citizens training and information on digital skills and systems such as the National Digital Academy for Citizens in Greece and the Digital State Academy learning platform in Estonia. Best practices in this category can also differ in the depth of the information/training they offer. For instance, the leadership and managerial skills training program for female employees in Greece involves in-depth vocational training material totalling 100 hours whereas the Ole Valmis! application merely offers general knowledge and instructions on how to behave in force majeure situations.

Advantages

- Countries where such projects were identified as best practices have been able to **reach a sizeable part of the target group**, as given their online nature, they are generally accessible across the country and non-exhaustible.
- The period required for implementation of these initiatives is contingent on the depth of the BP: countries can **use this best practice to score quick wins**, like in the case of more general information platforms, or long-lasting impact through investments into more in-depth and extensive training programs.
- These types of best practices may also be particularly effective in reaching youth, as they are the group most acquainted with remote learning and searching for information online.



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Disadvantages

- Across all the recorded BPs in this topic area, base implementation costs are relatively high. While implementation is fast, it generally requires high initial investments for developing and managing the platforms as well as producing training materials.
- The entirely-online nature of all reported BPs also means that the success of them reaching target audiences **depends on internet connectivity, mobile device availability as well as a certain level of digital competence** and readiness to learn/look for information online. This should be taken into consideration by countries which are still working on the build-up of physical internet infrastructure and where digital gaps are still prevalent.

ADMINISTRATIVE/SERVICE PLATFORMS

This category includes best practices that deploy digital channels and platforms to administer some service/sector. These initiatives are more complex than training and information platforms as they encompass a wider array of functions including providing information, facilitating interactions between the relevant stakeholders, managing data and providing relevant services. Several countries reported platforms that have digitalized the administration of a specific service sector. For instance, Shkolo is an online platform that digitizes the entire education system, including all school activities (e.g. electronic diary, online parent-teacher communication and e-textbooks). PREVENTION.BG on the other hand administers and manages the volunteer network in Bulgaria providing a variety of resources and services such as events calendars, discussion forums and online consultations. This area of best practices also includes baseline central e-government platforms which offer access to government services like the i-Voting system reported by Estonia.

Advantages

- These BPs usually become widely used baseline services with a long duration and can therefore be seen as long-term investments into modernizing certain sectors or the provision of particular services.
- Although developing and implementing these best practices is costly, it opens opportunities for effective public/ private sector collaboration. For example, Shkolo is a private initiative supported and managed by the Ministry of Education and Science in Bulgaria.

Disadvantages

- These BPs aim to provide comprehensive functions in administering/providing services in a specific area, so they **typically take longer to set up and depend on pre-requisites**. For example, developing Estonia's i-Voting system required functional data exchange platforms to be in place. The **high levels of investment needed for building and managing the digital infrastructure** also make these best practices more costly.
- This type of best practice is centred around the concept of digitising a service/sector, meaning their use is entirely contingent on widespread internet connectivity and digital device availability. While implementing such BPs, countries should simultaneously ensure that no section of the target group is left out due to lack of access to digital means.



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INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT YOUTH

This category of best practices includes initiatives that to varying extents deploy digital solutions to subsidize and facilitate certain activities for youth particularly. For instance, the Youth Pass Platform in Greece is a practice aimed at encouraging youth to engage in tourism and cultural activities through a yearly direct cash-transfers to a selected number of individuals. The European Digital Youth Card, however, provides discounts to youth in over 100,000 businesses to promote mobility and provide financial support to young people. Best practices under this category can deploy digital solutions to varying extents.

Advantages

- Given the direct focus on facilitating and subsidizing certain activities for youth, these initiatives are **popular among the target group** and **directly promote inclusion of youth to society**.
- The cost of these types of practices for the government depends on the level of subsidy the initiative offers. For example, direct cash transfers are more expensive whereas the European Youth Card which provides students with discounted fees for travel is less costly. This type of initiative is therefore more flexible, and **can be tailored to the budgetary constraints of the public administration**.
- These practices also give governments the flexibility to subsidize/facilitate activities for youth based on the specific needs or constraints of the youth in their country, such as in the case of Greece, which developed the e-registration option for youth due to low youth engagement in voting.

Disadvantages

- Depending on the level of subsidy, these BPs can be limited in the scope of individuals they reach due to budget restraints such as in the case of cash transfers. The notable exceptions to this are services that are free and non-exhaustible such as the Online registration services for voting for Youth reported by Cyprus.

Conclusion

This section of the report analysed key trends and aspects of the 24 (4 each) e-government best practices reported by participant countries and found four primary themes: best practices that incentivize early civic engagement, training and information platforms, administrative & service channels and initiatives that directly support youth. Public administrations should take inspiration from the different types of best practices depending on the policy goals, budget constraints and target groups. For instance, **early civic engagement initiatives are relatively fast and inexpensive** to implement yet particularly empowering to youth. Long-term digitalization of government services and platforms, however, is much more costly but benefits all citizens by modernizing existing outdated systems of service provision. Further research will provide a more detailed understanding of the attitudes of youth and public administrators towards these best practices through qualitative data obtained from interviews.



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Youth Surveys (Task 2.4)

Introduction

The survey was conducted in partnering countries from June 2024 to August 2024. The survey covered the following areas: principles of E-Government, tools and technologies, civic participation and engagement, open data and transparency, security/ethics in E-Government, tools and resources for local development. The survey question template is added to this report (Annex 1). The following chapter summarises the main findings of the youth surveys.

Facts and numbers

The total number of survey responses obtained was 174, which exceeds the goal set out by the quality indicators of the work package. Division of the survey respondents is shown on Fig. 1.

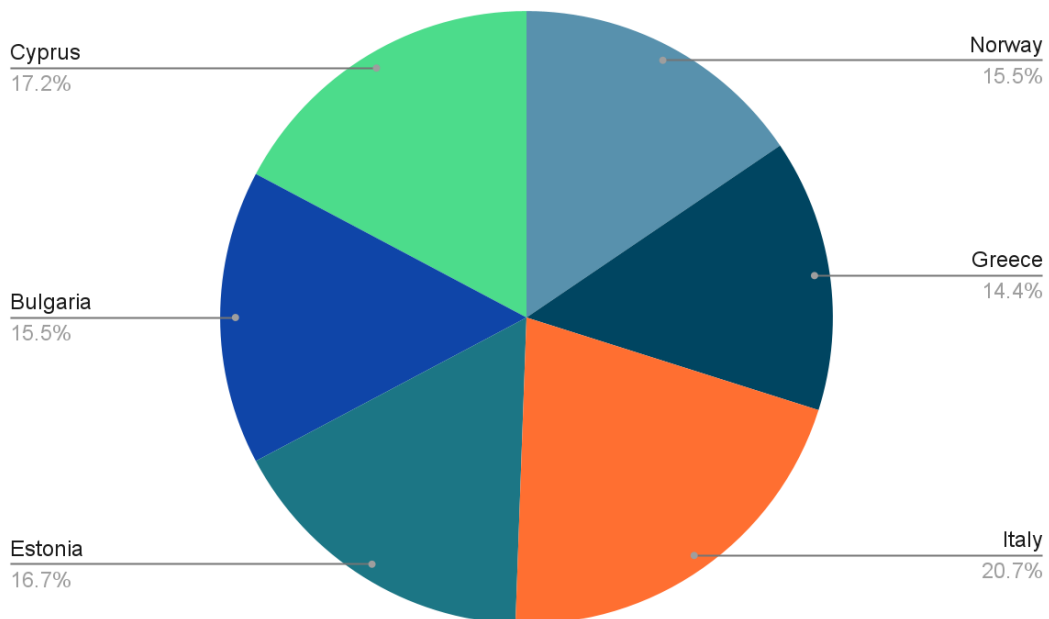


Figure 1. Division of survey respondents



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AGE

Survey respondents included youth from the ages 15-30. To gain a clearer understanding of the individuals, four age groups were distinguished between: 15-18, 19-22, 23-26 & 27-30. In Greece and Cyprus, a large majority (72% and 76.7% respectively) of respondents fell into the oldest age group 27-30, while no respondents were aged 15-18 as this age group was out of the limits of the target communities of our partners. This was due to the fact that the youngest age group 15-18 are usually out of the limits of the target groups and target community of the partner organisations in these countries.

In Bulgaria the distribution was 40.7%, 33.3%, 15% and 11%, in Norway 55.6%, 7.4%, 11.1 & 25.9% and in Italy 33.3%, 36.1%, 8.3% & 22.2% from older to younger in all cases. Estonia had the most equal distribution of respondents in each age group - 17.24%, 31.03%, 37.93% and 10.34% respectively from young to old. Overall, significantly less responses were received from the youngest age group.



Figure 2. Overall distribution of respondents age in Task 2.4



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AWARENESS



Before introducing respondents to the main part of the survey, which also contained a familiarisation with the term “e-government”, they were asked whether they were at all familiar with the term.

Overall, **50% of respondents were able to name at least 3 services** that come to mind when hearing the term E-Government. This is **20% lower than the expected benchmark** set out by the project qualitative indicator.

On a national level in this section, **Greece stood out with 100% of respondents reporting awareness** of the term; this is a stark contrast to the e-government frontrunners Estonia and Norway which had 72.4% and 40.7% of respondents confirming they were aware of the term respectively. Overall, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Estonia reported similar percentages of respondents familiar with e-government, with 70%, 77.8% and 72.41% respectively. Italy and Norway scored the lowest in this regard, as only 52.8% and 40.7% of youth respondents were aware of e-government respectively.

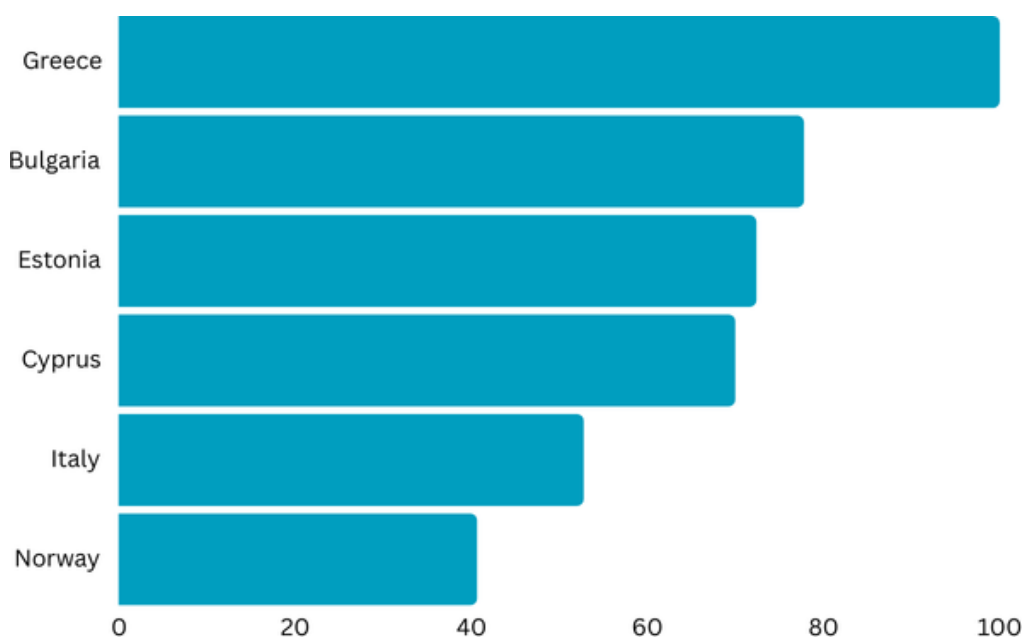


Figure 3. Percentage of awareness of the term “e-government” per country



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KEYWORDS

In all target countries, youth respondents were able to name several keywords associated with the term e-government. Among the most common associated concepts were the issuance and processing of documents electronically and digital administration of government services.

Youth in several countries also brought out “online voting” as a key concept associated with e-government. This stands out as a surprise because online voting is only available to citizens and residents of Estonia, indeed, it **may indicate that online voting could inspire greater interest in democratic participation among youth**. In the Estonian case, respondents additionally referred to specific digital services/tools present in Estonia such as the online ID verification platform “Smart-ID” and “Digilugu”, the online healthcare portal.

EXPERIENCE

In terms of experience with using online government services, Greece and Estonia lead with 100% of respondents stating they are experienced. However, while 86.2% stated their experience was positive and none claimed it to be negative in Estonia, only 64% found their interaction with e-government to be positive in Greece while 12% said it was negative. This situation reflects Estonia’s leadership role in the area of e-government service provision.

The **lowest experience with e-government services was reported by youth in Italy and Bulgaria**, where only 66.7% and 59.3% had interacted with the government online. In both cases half of the respondents with experience reported their experience to be positive, while the other half said this experience was neutral. **Negative experiences with e-government were only reported by Greece (12%) and Cyprus (7.4%).**



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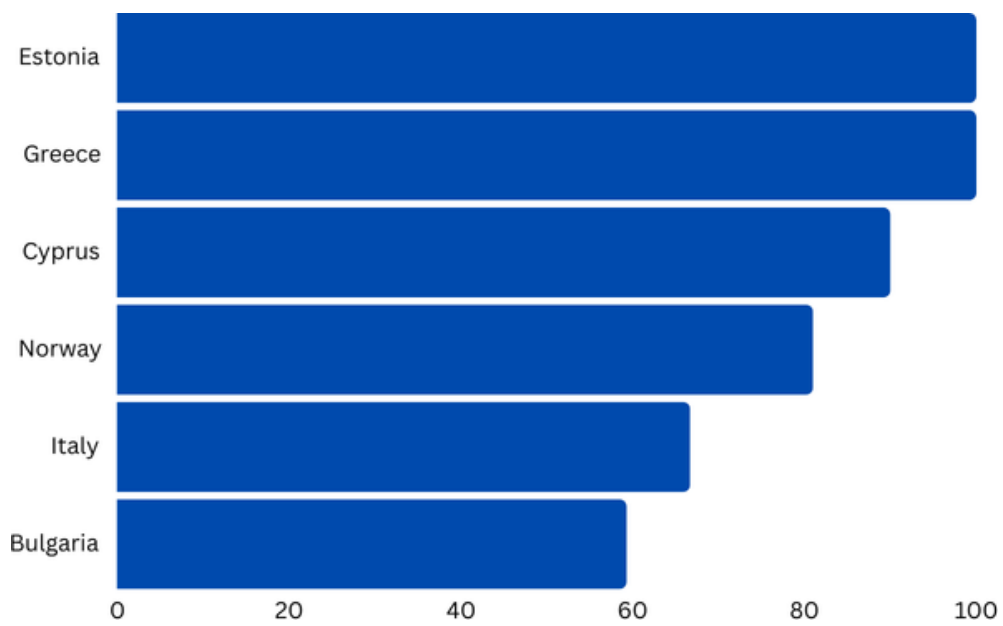


Figure 4. Percentage of youth that have experience using e-government services



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Opinions

This section constitutes the main part of the survey and includes statistics on the preferences and opinions of youth regarding e-government.

PREFERENCES

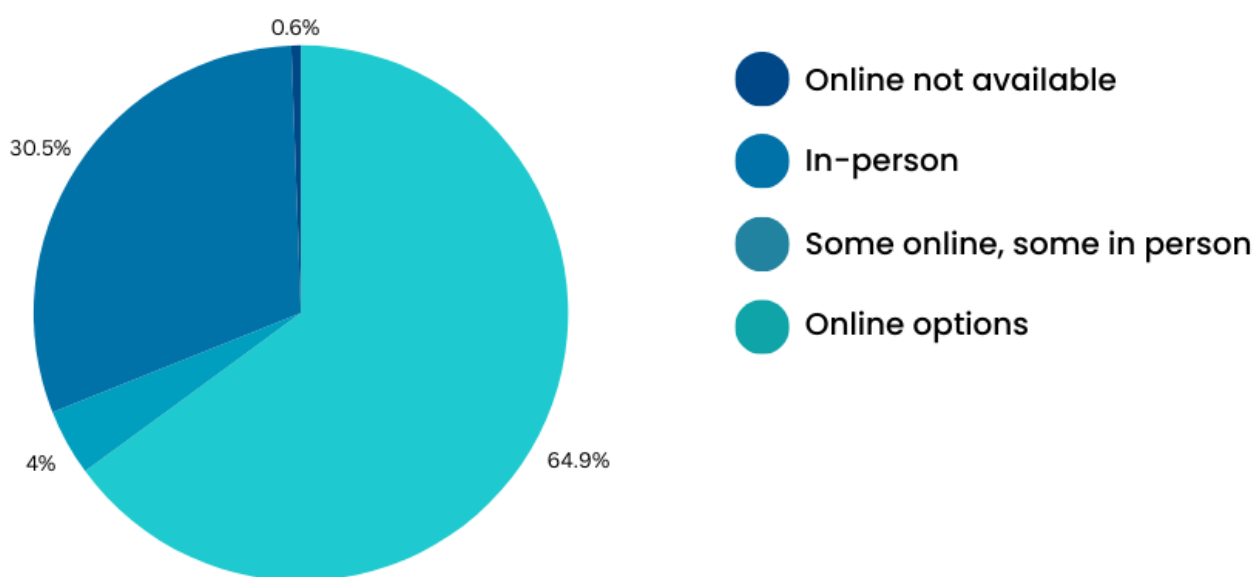


Figure 5: Youth preferences for interacting with government services

As seen in the graph above, a majority of respondents from the partner countries prefer using online options or a mix of both online and in person services. Based on this it can be said that over 90% of respondents demonstrate an interest in e-government services, which is well above the 70% goal established by the project indicators.

On a national level, unsurprisingly, in highly digitised countries Norway and Estonia, 81.5% and 82.7% of respondents prefer to use online options. Moreover, **in Estonia only one person indicated a preference for entirely in-person interactions.** This percentage was slightly higher in Norway, where 18.5% preferred in person services.

In Greece 72% preferred online services while 16.7% favoured in-person ones. 28% marked a mix of both as their preference. However, out of these, 83.3% prefer more online than offline services. In Bulgaria, 74% of young people prefer to only have online interactions with government authorities.



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INTERACTIONS

In most countries, the vast majority of respondents reported interacting with the government at least once a year. **In all countries young people most reported interacting with the government 2-3 times per year** and only a few respondents overall reported not interacting with the government at all. This is largely in line with the expected usage pattern of e-government services for younger age groups who may, as an example, declare their taxes, change their address, or register for a social benefit, as opposed to older user groups whose usage of specific services such as e-health environments significantly increase.

TRANSPARENCY

Respondents were asked about their perceptions of the level of transparency in how their government uses personal data to provide services.

In Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria, slightly over half of the respondents were neutral about their governments' level of transparency. In the case of Greece and Cyprus, the rest of the responses were generally very mixed, with some perceiving the government to be very opaque while others very transparent. **In the case of Bulgaria, the perception leaned more towards a lack of transparency in data usage.**

Norway and Estonia stand out with the greatest numbers of respondents perceiving the government to be transparent or very transparent in how data is used to provide services. These countries also had the smallest percentage of neutral responses (30.8% and 41.38% respectively) and almost no respondents perceiving the government to be opaque.

However, it is notable that in all countries a significant percentage of respondents selected "neutral" to answer this question. Given the nature of the question, it is unclear whether respondents demonstrate neutrality or indifference to the question overall, or simply believe the government is neither opaque nor necessarily transparent in how it uses personal data for service provision.



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USER-FRIENDLINESS

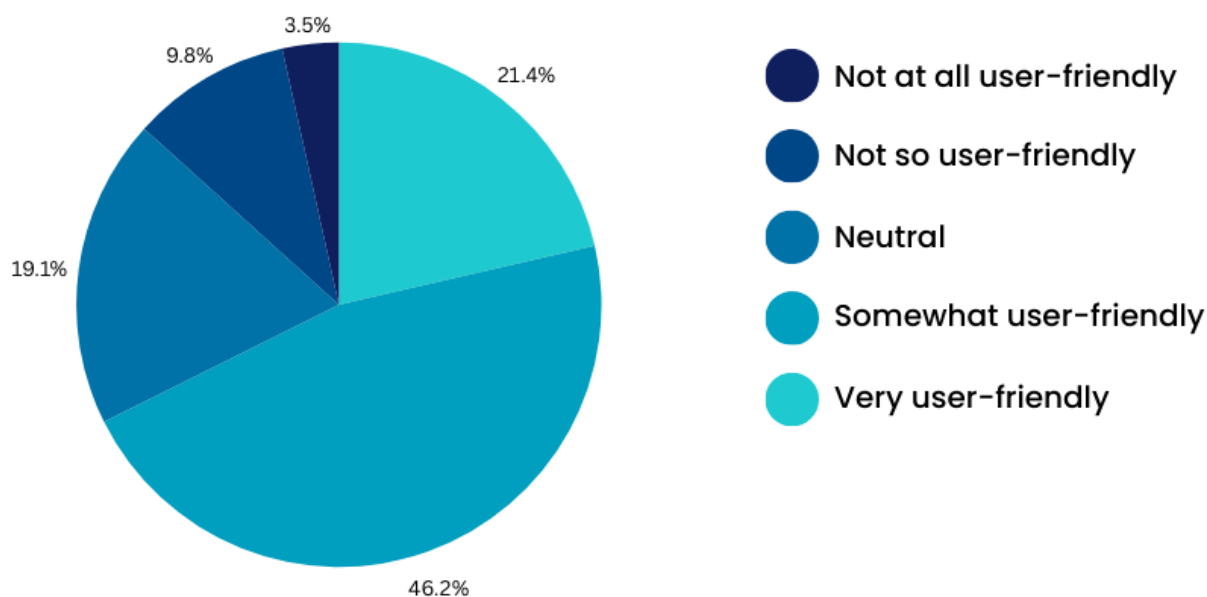


Figure 6: Perceptions of user-friendliness of e-government services

The graph above depicts the distribution of youth respondents' perceptions of the user-friendliness of e-government services in their country. As seen, a **majority of 67.6% perceive existing e-government services to be either somewhat or very user-friendly**. Based on this it can be said that satisfaction of young people with the usability of e-government services falls slightly short of the 70% set out as a benchmark indicator by the project.

In most countries, the greatest share of respondents found government services to be somewhat user-friendly, which, while positive, indicates that **significant effort needs to be made by public authorities to further improve the user-interface** of the offered online services. Greece and Cyprus shared a somewhat similar distribution of perceptions on user-friendliness, as 48% and 46.8% claimed government services were somewhat user-friendly and roughly 16% believe these services are not so user-friendly. However, while 16% also believe these services are very user-friendly in Greece, almost no respondents portrayed this view in Cyprus.

Survey responses in Bulgaria stood out in this regard, as 63% of respondents found e-government services to be very user-friendly and 22.2% somewhat user-friendly, **making Bulgaria the country with highest satisfaction with user-friendliness of services**. In Italy 61.1% believe services to be user-friendly, with the rest being split between neutrality and perceiving e-government services as difficult to use.

E-government frontrunners Norway and Estonia share similar distributions, reporting 26.9% and 24.1% of respondents viewing services as very user-friendly respectively. However, while 55.17% also consider these services as somewhat user-friendly in Estonia, in Norway this number was only 38.5%. Respondents dissatisfied with user-friendliness were also more common in Norway.



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INTEREST IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Respondents were asked about their interest in getting involved with governmental decision-making processes through online means such as through platforms to suggest ideas/propose policies, vote online on local and national matters and take part in consultations for drafting laws. The figure below depicts the distribution of interest among all respondents. As seen, **nearly 80% (79.3%) of youth respondents reported being at least somewhat interested in participating in local development through e-Government systems.**

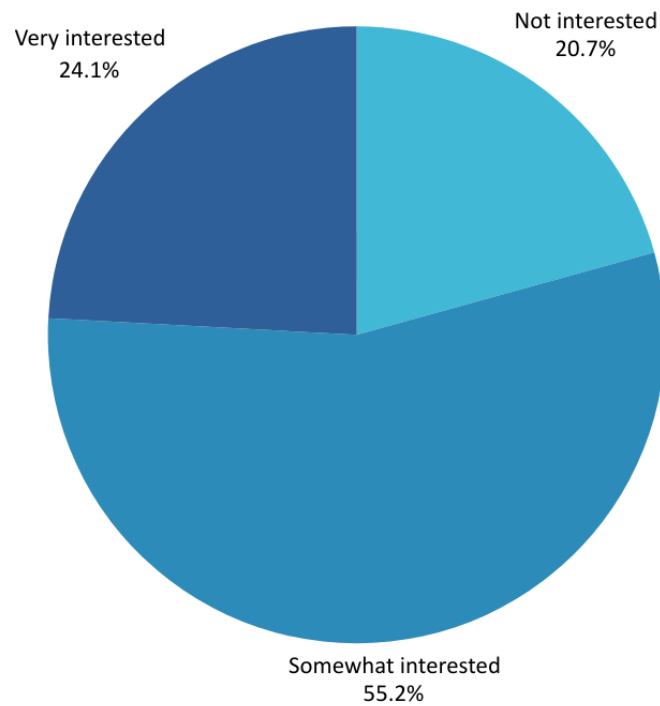


Figure 7. Young people's interest in getting involved with governmental decision-making processes through online means



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CONCERNS

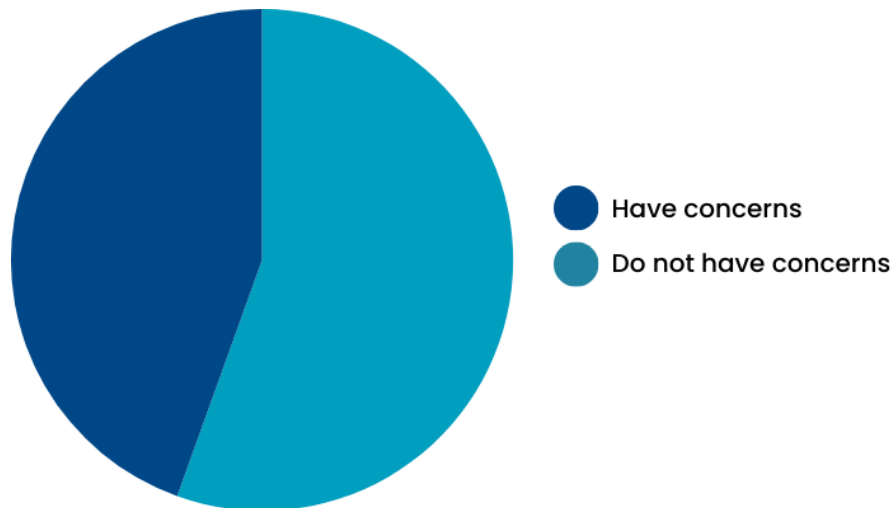


Figure 8: Respondents answers to “Do you have any concerns about using these e-Gov services?”

Overall, slightly under half of the respondents (45.5%) reported having concerns when interacting with e-government services. Among the respondents who indicated having concerns about e-government services, **data privacy stood out as the most common concern in most partner countries**. In Greece, an overwhelming 94.7% of youth respondents showed this concern, which seems to contradict the 52% who claimed to have neutral emotions on government transparency in personal data usage. **In Italy, difficulty in accessing e-government services exceeded concerns about data privacy**, potentially reflecting the still largely uneven access to e-government services across the country.

Some contrast can also be seen between respondents' concerns about e-government in different countries, which could be related to general trends present in the countries. While lack of trust in government was among the most popular concerns in Bulgaria and Cyprus, only one respondent indicated such concern in Estonia, reflecting the high trust in government in Estonia.



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DATA USAGE AWARENESS

In most countries, a significant number of respondents indicated unawareness of how their personal data is used by the government for e-government service provision. The greatest percentage of unawareness regarding data usage was seen in Greece, where 76% claimed to be mostly or entirely unaware. Roughly half of the respondents in Cyprus, Bulgaria, Italy and Estonia demonstrated unawareness. Most awareness was seen in Norway, where 61.5% indicated they were aware most of the time or always.

CHALLENGES

When asked about challenges faced in using e-government services, responses varied significantly between countries. In Greece, limited-service availability and security considerations were the most reported obstacles while in Cyprus difficult user interface was marked as the greatest challenge. In Estonia and Norway, limited-service availability, security concerns, lack of knowledge and difficult user interface were marked by some respondents, however, response rate was extremely low overall.

These learnings will be of great relevance to public authorities in the respective countries because they point to the prioritisation that would drive greater e-government acceptance. As an example, creating a greater portfolio of available services requires different resources and efforts than improving user friendliness across a portfolio of already existing services.

MOTIVATION

Among motivations for e-government use, **time-saving and convenience were undisputedly the most popular choices** among youth in all countries. In Greece, 100% of respondents chose time-saving as their motivator for using e-government services. This choice was nearly as popular in Cyprus (96.7%), Estonia (96.6%) and Italy (83.3%).

Slightly fewer respondents picked convenience as their motivator, however it appeared to be the second most popular reason in all countries. For instance, in Estonia and Cyprus convenience was chosen as a motivator by 89.7% and 83.3% respectively.



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In Norway and Estonia, respondents additionally marked influence on local decisions as a motivator, with 33.3% and 17.2% of respondents choosing this option. This could potentially reflect the nature of e-government service availability in these countries, which allow for greater direct influence and interaction with government decision-making, such as i-Voting in Estonia.



Only 14% of respondents overall, including all countries, found higher involvement in local decision making to be a motivator for using e-government services. While on the one hand this could simply be due to other motivators such as “time-saving” being more influential in the context of e-government, on the other hand it could reflect that a significant number of youths are not motivated by democratic participation options overall. Larger efforts should therefore be made by public authorities to encourage youth to engage with government and democratic decision making in the first place.

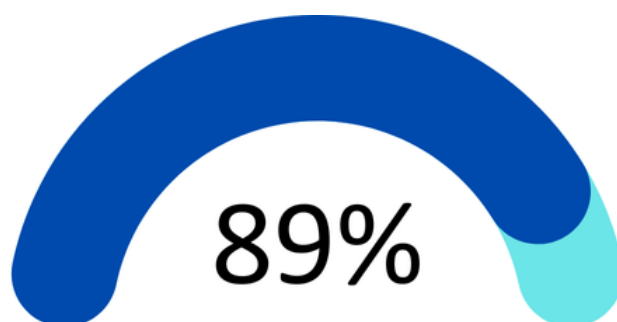


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Future Directions of e-Government

This section of questions intended to understand young people's vision for the future of e-government, including associated concerns.



of young respondents are interested in using at least one e-government service in the future. This exceeds the benchmark 80% set out at the beginning of the project.

EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS E-GOV PLATFORMS

To understand the expectations of youth regarding e-government services, respondents were first asked to mark all features that would be important in an ideal e-government platform for online services with options being user-friendliness, multilingual options, clear and concise information about government services, secure online forms and applications, interactive features for public participation, real-time tracking of service requests, accessibility features for people with disabilities and integration with social media platforms.

Out of these options, **user-friendliness was chosen as the most important feature for e-government services in all partner countries** (100% in Estonia, 96.3% in Norway, 92% in Greece). In Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Norway availability of clear and concise information about available services was additionally marked as a must-have by most respondents. Notably, user-friendliness was raised as the most important aspect even in countries that enjoy a very mature e-government environment; it is thus clear that this area merits plentiful investments and that the mere provision of online services, even with a mediocre user experience, is not sufficient.

Some features differed in popularity between countries. For instance, while security was chosen as an important feature by Cypriot respondents, accessibility features for people with disabilities was only very popular in Norway (81.5%), secure online forms in Estonia (86.2%) and real-time tracking of service requests in Greece (92%) and Italy (66.7%). **The existence of multilingual options as a necessary feature was also only popular in Norway (81.5%) and Bulgaria.**



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WHAT IS LESS IMPORTANT

Some options stood out for receiving fewer votes. For instance, in several countries including Italy, Greece, Norway and Cyprus, integration with social media platforms was the least popular option as an important feature of e-government services. In Bulgaria, accessibility for people with disabilities was among the options to receive fewer votes whereas in Estonia, least popular was the existence of interactive features for public participation on e-government platforms, which is slightly surprising given that several respondents suggested youth engagement in e-government should be addressed by demonstrating how the youth voice can have an influence later on in the survey.

The availability of multilingual options and interactive features such as surveys were also rather unpopular in most countries. Nevertheless, **even the most unpopular features received a significant percentage of votes** in all countries.

IMPORTANT SKILLS TO PARTICIPATE

Respondents were also asked to select skills and knowledge that in their view are important for young people to have to effectively participate in e-government activities. Overall, technical skills were recognised across all partner countries as an integral skill, as this option was chosen by at least 70% of respondents in all countries.

In Norway and Estonia, the highest percentage of respondents (85.2% and 82.8% respectively) believed **knowledge of local government processes was integral to engaging with e-government**. While some respondents also chose this option in other countries (70% in Cyprus, 61.1% in Italy and 40% in Greece), other skills were seen as more important. Problem-solving skills were not chosen as essential by youth in any partner countries.

KEY CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF E-GOV

When asked about the biggest concerns about the future of e-government, **protection of personal data and privacy were again at the forefront in all countries**.

In Italy, the perennial concern about the deepening urban and rural divide is also present in regard to e-government, and exclusion of the elderly was brought up as well. This could reflect the country's ongoing struggle with ensuring wide-ranging access to e-government and digital technologies overall.

Several respondents across various countries also brought up concerns regarding the capacity of public institutions to offer consistent and secure e-government services in the future. Cypriot respondents mentioned concerns about the **lack of consistency in e-government service offering** between different authorities as well as a lack of follow-through commitment by different authorities. Similarly, Bulgarian respondents brought up slow implementation as a potential inhibitor. In Estonia, **concerns about a lack of resources in the public sector** to protect data were mentioned – these remarks are particularly poignant at a moment in time where the portfolio of



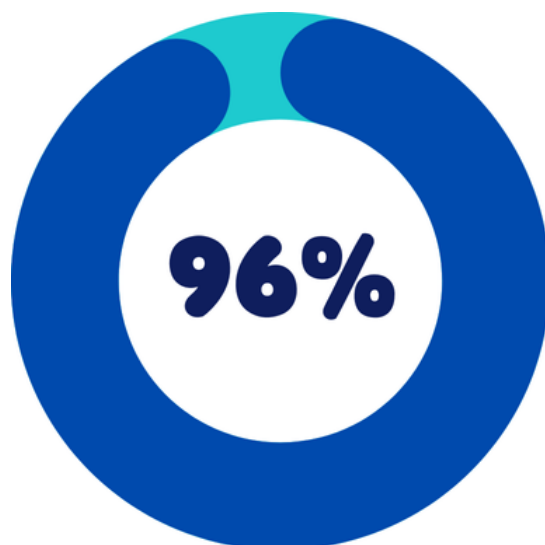
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the Chief Information Officer's Office is moved from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication to the Ministry of Justice.

In several countries, concerns about the government's misuse of data and information were also mentioned. In Greece, respondents demonstrated worries about techno surveillance referring to both government and private sector influence, while in Norway words such as misinformation and disinformation were more prevalent, thus pointing to both the possibility of domestic and foreign influence. In Italy and Estonia, worries about the misuse of artificial intelligence were specifically brought up. More precisely, in Estonia, a few responses indicated concerns about a potential **race to the bottom with regards to the implementation of AI**.

PROPOSALS FROM YOUTH



of youth respondents gave specific, elaborate suggestions when asked to propose ways to encourage greater participation of young people in e-government activities. Many respondents brought out the need to more efficiently disseminate information about e-government service availability and purpose in the first place. Among the most popular comments was the importance of social media campaigns in attracting youth involvement in government activities in general. Additionally, **Estonian respondents brought out the need to introduce e-government as a facilitator of interactions with government at an early stage and more systematically in schools.**

Several respondents across countries also referred to the importance of creating a sense of ownership in youth and demonstrating to them the value in participating in e-government. For instance, respondents in Cyprus and Norway suggested that more direct participation and engagement opportunities should be developed, to increase young people's sense of inclusion in decision-making processes. Italian respondents suggested engagement could be increased if youth were involved in the development and shaping of e-services from the start as well as by **organising more hackathons and competitions to incentivize participation.** Interestingly, respondents in several



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countries including Greece and Bulgaria also suggested that youth engagement could be increased through introducing reward schemes for participation.

Overall, all these proposals go in line with the general agreement across countries: Digital transformation is seen as a net-positive contributor to the quality of life of citizens, provided that user-friendliness is taken into account, online services save time and stress, cybersecurity is a constant focus, and the usage of citizens' data is treated in a transparent manner.

National Authors' Notes

This section reflects on the conclusions and notes made by survey conductors.

FACTORS AFFECTING AWARENESS

Firstly, interviewers were asked to reflect on the results of the survey to see whether educational level or occupation appeared to affect an individual's awareness of e-government in any meaningful way. In several countries, correlations between these factors appeared to be negligible such as in Greece and Norway. In contrast, **Italian authors reflected that both the level of education and employment status appear to significantly influence how acquainted the youth were with e-government**, as working professionals with at least a university degree demonstrated more awareness. In Bulgaria, it was similarly found that university-level educated respondents were more likely to know e-government, however, in this case it seemed to be irrespective of working or studying status. Additionally, it was concluded that higher education generally indicated greater awareness in Estonia and that **employees are more aware of e-government than unemployed youth and students in Cyprus**.

FACTORS AFFECTING INTEREST AND ATTITUDES

It was also interesting to see whether the level of education or occupation affected youths' interest in e-government. Several countries found that a higher education level often went together with higher interest in participation in e-government. In Cyprus and Norway, it was even found that individuals with an MA degree had higher interest than BA graduates. Cyprus and Italy additionally found that working professionals demonstrated greater interest than students and unemployed respondents. In the case of Estonia and Greece, results on this were inconclusive.

When looking at whether education or occupation affected individuals' attitudes towards e-government, most countries did not spot any significant trends. In the case of Bulgaria, authors believe that the similar attitudes could be caused by the limited availability of online services in the country. Only in Italy it was noted that the higher the



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education level, the more nuanced concerns about e-government were raised by respondents. For instance, **individuals with lower levels of education were more likely to bring out general concerns such as data protection and security whereas individuals with higher levels of education named more intricate and Italian context-specific concerns such as accessibility, institutional trust and inclusivity.**



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PA Interviews (Task 2.5)

Introduction

In this section, interviewers reflected on their experience preparing for and conducting interviews with public administrators as well as considered the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology overall. The interviews were conducted in partnering countries from June 2024 to August 2024. In total, 31 public authorities were interviewed (at least 5 per country), which is in line with the goal set out by the project quality indicators. Moreover, nearly all public authorities that were interviewed either oversee some aspect of development and implementation of e-government services within their institution or have experience shaping the policy framework and strategies around e-government. The interview questions template is added to this report (Annex 2).

Interviewers were first asked to describe the process of contacting public administrators in their country. Overall, it can be said that a common challenge was the time period in which the interviews took place, as due to summer holidays many public administrators were either unreachable or less willing to meet in person. All countries reported introducing the project goals and objectives as a first step, to familiarise public administrators with the role of the interviews and create trust. In general, all public administrators were first reached either by LinkedIn, email, call or text. Multiple countries also pointed out the role of previous contact with public administrators in reaching them in the first place. This was for instance the case for Norway, Estonia, Italy. Interviewers also pointed out that selection of public administrators to contact was based on their involvement with the topic of interest as well as ensuring the widest possible variety of interviewees.

Interview Method

Interview methods depended largely on the availability and preferences of the public administrators contacted. Greece and Bulgaria brought out that interviewees did not mind having in person interviews, but given the summer period and differences in location this was not possible. In most cases, interviews were either held online via channels like Zoom, through phone or even by simply filling out the questionnaire. Only Bulgaria reported having two interviews in person.



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OVERVIEW OF THE INTERVIEWEES

The institutions chosen to interview varied vastly per country. In the case of Italy, all interviewees were mayors and members of municipal councils. All interviewees were directly involved in the management and implementation of e-government services. Variety was obtained through geographical diversity.

In Greece, two interviewees represented municipalities, one a university, and two represented two different chambers of commerce. Similarly, all interviewees were based in different geographical locations, representing both high-density urban regions and low-density rural areas.

Cyprus was the only country to hold six interviews. Among the interviewees were a representative of the Cyprus Productivity Centre, a representative of the Youth Board of Cyprus, a Human Resource Development Authority, a University of Cyprus representative and representatives from the Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry and the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy. In this case, all PAs were first selected based on their involvement with e-government and engagement with the youth group.

In Bulgaria, an effort was made to contact a variety of public administrators. Accordingly, the interviewees included a representative of a small municipality, a representative of a large municipality, two ministry representatives and an authority from the National Statistical Institute.

In Norway, representatives from the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, a national library, Statistic Norway, the Oslo University Hospital and a municipality were interviewed.

In Estonia, the interviewees worked at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, the Ministry of Interior, the Information System Authority and two separate institutions within Tallinn City Government. Three of the five interviewees oversee some aspect of technology implementation/policy within their institution.

Key Findings

IMPLEMENTATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

E-government implementation projects and strategies were reported by PAs in all partner countries and all interviewees demonstrated an understanding of the importance of digitalising access to services within their institution and country. However, the scope and depth of e-government implementation projects varied depending on the institution as well as the country at hand. Most commonly, PAs reported efforts of their institution to offer information and access to services through digital platforms/websites of their institution.



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In Norway, the majority of services accessible to citizens and delivered by the government at any level are currently digital already, which was reflected in the interview responses, as all interviewees elaborated on a variety of digital tools and services offered by their institution. A clear example is the health sector in Norway, as the representative of the Oslo University Hospital pointed out that digital services are used for almost 100% of the registered/legal residents in Norway. A similar case was apparent from interviews with Estonian and Cypriot PAs. Given the highly digitised level of public sector service delivery in Estonia, several interviewees highlighted that **the focus of their authority primarily lies in improving existing digital service quality through for instance bundling services around a certain life event and working towards a more proactive provision of services rather than establishing digitalisation in the first place**. In Cyprus and Greece similarly, all public administrators mentioned specific and intricate e-government services and programmes already in place. In Cyprus, interviews with both ministry representatives emphasised a focus on extending and enhancing the currently existing digital services. Therefore, in these countries it was clear that efforts are largely centred around improvement rather than establishing basic e-government services in the first place. In Greece also all authorities were able to name e-government platforms used to offer services, such as municipal platforms offering digital services for public consultation/deliberation on municipal matters and an e-services platform allowing access to academic records, communication and administrative tasks at the University of Ioannina.

Interviews with Italian municipality representatives revealed **shortcomings in the current state of implementation of e-government services in Italy**. While many initiatives for digitalisation have been introduced on a national level including the introduction of Public Digital identity System and a platform for payments to the public administration among others, the interviews reflected that a significant downfall is the continuously lacking digital skills among large segments of the population. Emphasis was put on the **importance of accompanying the implementation of digital services with more systemised digital literacy programmes**. Similarly in Bulgaria, although interviews showed that e-governance in state and local administrations has made progress in recent years, **the process of implementation of e-government in local authorities is slower than at a national level**.

SECURITY AND PRIVACY

When asked about measures taken to ensure security and privacy in the offered e-government services, most commonly PAs mentioned compliance to data protection legislation and standards such as the GDPR. **In general, all public administrators demonstrated a high-level of understanding and importance put to security and privacy questions in e-government initiatives**.

In most cases, PAs also demonstrated an awareness of the responsible body/institution for security-related questions. In the case of Greece and Italy, all interviewed authorities reported having their own DPO to monitor and undertake actions responsible for security issues with the support of their Technical Departments. In other cases, PAs referred to cooperation with external legal entities and institutions to ensure compliance with security norms, such as in the case of Estonia, where for instance the Ministry of Interior consults with the Ministry of Justice and the Data Protection Inspectorate.



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Several PAs also brought out the importance of cybersecurity and encryption measures. For instance, representatives from the NAV (Norwegian Welfare and Labour Administration) and Oslo Municipality in Norway both referred to their institution employing high-level IT protection measures, ensuring all data is encrypted. In Estonia, the encrypted nature of the X-Road data exchange platform, the backbone for most e-government services in Estonia, was emphasised as a baseline for reducing risk of digital identity fraud. In the case of Italy, several municipality representatives recognised the need to improve cybersecurity measures through for instance adopting new encryption techniques, implementing advanced monitoring systems and working more closely with external experts to conduct regular security audits.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Most countries reported a variety of training and education initiatives deployed by different public authorities that are targeted at improving digital literacy and awareness of e-services among citizens and businesses. In this aspect, the interview results from Bulgaria stood out most, as the interviewers concluded that **individual Bulgarian institutions currently do not make enough efforts to educate locals on how/why they should use e-government services and that insufficient promotion of e-government services is among the main drawbacks of e-governance.**

Ministry representatives from several countries referred to extensive national level training programs and workshops to help citizens and businesses better understand and utilize e-government services. In Cyprus for instance, the Cyprus Productivity Centre representative referred to trainings covering a wide range of topics, including navigating online portals, accessing government services and using digital tools which are offered in cooperation with the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy and organizations like the HRDA (Human Resource Development Authority). Some authorities also reported being more centred around training business clients, such as the Information System Authority in Estonia.

Several countries also reported **training initiatives at a local government/municipality level.** For instance, in Italy the municipality of Tito implements weekly courses at the municipal library, aimed at facilitating citizens' access to and use of digital services. Similar initiatives are led by the District Grunelokka in Norway, the Municipality of Ioannina in Greece and the Tallinn City Government in Estonia.

Notably, few PAs mentioned programmes specifically aimed at youth. Instead, most mentioned projects and training initiatives focus on the elderly and marginalized minority group, with the exception of the ONEK's (Youth Board of Cyprus) series of workshops on e-government tools directed at 16–35-year-olds in Cyprus. However, this could be explained by the specific focus of the interviewed institution on improving the youth contribution to policy making.

MEASUREMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Regarding measurement and evaluation of e-government services, interview results varied significantly between countries and authorities. In all countries, the most commonly reported measurement for e-government service



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quality and success was some type of user satisfaction survey. However, the type of surveys used as feedback for e-government service success varied in their specificity to particular services and in the measurements used to complement.

For instance, in several countries like Estonia and Italy, local government/municipality representatives reported relying primarily on more general, standardised feedback forms, such as annual questionnaires asking users for the level of satisfaction with a variety of services. In contrast, the Information System Authority representative described a more intricate quality control assessment, consisting of a combination of end-user surveys with internal quality controls, monitoring of KPIs on a project basis. **Several institutions also make efforts to monitor service quality through a combination of other indicators with user-satisfaction questionnaires.** For instance, the Statistics Norway (SSB) measures the number of visits to their website and conducts an annual survey about user-satisfaction.

Some countries found this aspect of e-government service provision to be a challenge among their public authorities. Interviews with Italian municipality representatives showed that measurement of success of e-government initiatives has proven to be a complex task, as the approaches to evaluation are still largely unsystematic and rudimentary. A lack of coordination between data administrators in the provision of services was also concluded in Bulgaria, where instead of a unified national approach to measuring and evaluating the progress of e-government, leads to uncoordinated and poor e-service provision. In several countries, the funds obtained to fund digitisation is also used as a metric of success. For instance, several municipality representatives in Italy emphasised that an ability to attract funding is the primary measurement for the municipality's technological progress.

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

Public authorities in all countries demonstrated awareness of the importance of accessibility and inclusion measures.

In Greece and Cyprus interviewees pointed out that digital accessibility issues are primarily designated to the Hellenic Ministry of Digital Governance and the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy respectively. The interviewed authorities therefore suggested that accessibility to technology in rural communities is mostly the central government's priority and responsibility. Moreover, the Greek authorities pointed out that while individual institutions continue to work on enhancing the accessibility of their portals and digital services to people, ensuring a nation-wide access to digital services requires horizontal actions taken by the central government.

In the case of Italy, representatives from the municipalities interviewed recognised that accessibility to e-government services continues to be a major obstacle. The digital gap continues to be a problem for many towns, especially in rural regions with senior populations. A number of representatives pointed out the necessity to provide phone support or in-person help in addition to e-services to residents who have trouble using digital platforms. Representatives also admitted that projects and initiatives to improve digital literacy among marginalized populations are still in their early phases and pointed out the importance of more structured collaboration with NGOs, social services, and educational institutions in the future.



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In Estonia and Norway, all interviewed PAs reported some measures taken by their public institution to ensure accessibility such as digital accessibility checks on a project basis, adaptations of websites to blind people or targeted digital training courses for vulnerable communities. Accessibility and inclusion measures were also mentioned by most Bulgarian PAs. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Economic Affairs representative in Estonia brought out **concerns about the “Digital First” policy being overly focused on improving digital services at the risk of excluding minorities without digital literacy.**

COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

In general, all interviewed organizations highlighted the importance of collaboration with other public and private institutions in the context of providing e-government services. Only in the Bulgarian context no specific cooperation examples were given during the interviews.

In Greece, all public authorities reported several cooperation mechanisms and projects in the area of e-government. For instance, the Municipality of Ioannina collaborates mostly with the Digital Citizens Academy. In Estonia and Italy, PAs specifically brought out the importance of collaboration with academic institutions. Among the Estonian interviewees strong collaboration mechanisms were described by the Information System Authority representative, others such as the Ministry of Interior official noted that collaboration with universities could be more effective and systematic. In the Italian context, engagement of academic institutions in introducing state-of-the-art research and technology breakthroughs to the public sector was brought out as particularly advantageous in promoting innovation. Nevertheless, through interviews with different municipalities it became apparent that the extent to which such cooperation networks are well-established differed vastly between municipalities. It was brought out that several towns frequently struggle with scarce resources, lack of knowledge, or red tape that makes it difficult to establish fruitful collaborations.

In Bulgaria, promotion of cooperation between institutions in e-governance is the responsibility of the national agency “E-Government”. Municipalities exchange documents between institutions in the country electronically through the system of secure electronic services. **Some suggestions for collaboration and innovation included implementation of a collaboration platform and partnership tools for information sharing in the field of cyber security.** In Cyprus this responsibility is carried by the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy (DMRID), which is the designated single authority with horizontal responsibility to establish an efficient collaboration with the private sector. The representative from this institution added that the government has successfully implemented this multi-stakeholder approach.

In terms of adoption of innovation to e-governance, a particular emphasis on adoption of AI technologies stood out in all countries. In Cyprus, several organizations interviewed either already use or are willing to integrate new technologies for the benefit of e-government, such as AI, Blockchain, etc. Additionally, the DMRID is in the process of revising the AI Strategy and establishing an AI Action Plan. Similarly in Greece, most public authorities reported AI implementation initiatives in different areas and levels of governance. For instance, the University of Patras is exploring the use of AI to enhance e-learning offerings with the support of an internal AI Institute while the Municipality of Ioannina is discussing the potential use of AI in e-government services, although this process is still



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in the planning stages. Only the Municipality of Katerini explicitly reported that it was not thinking of AI implementation into digital service offerings at the moment.

In Estonia, several PAs similarly reported implementation projects of new technologies, in particular the use of AI for both internal administration and work of agencies as well as in the services it provides (e.g. automation of existing digital services). In Norway, four out of five interviewees indicated plans to integrate new technologies, such as AI in e-government efforts. For instance, it was brought out that NAV is exploring the intersection of AI technology and law, while Oslo University has plans to develop an AI service desk that directs users based on their personal information, helping to facilitate administrative tasks and improve efficiency. In Italy, many municipalities also expressed interest in incorporating new technologies like AI and machine learning. However, although Italian municipality representatives showed enthusiasm about the promise of new technologies, **a strong sense of caution was also apparent about the threat that such technologies could pose on the human connection**, particularly in situations where judgement, empathy and community involvement are important. In particular, two hazards linked to over-reliance on technology were mentioned: the fear of depersonalization and the potential loss of public confidence.

ACTIVE YOUTH PARTICIPATION & DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

In general, based on interview responses from all countries, **youth participation projects do not appear to be among the top priorities of public administrators when talking about e-governance**. While slightly over half (55%) of the authorities mentioned some initiatives taken by their authority to engage youth, in several cases public authorities were either unaware of specific e-Government initiatives for young people or did not address the matter at all. **This result therefore falls notably below the project goal of 70% of PA operators being interested in new E-Government initiatives for young people.**

The feedback received from interviews with Greek public administrators reflects the general landscape in Greece, which is that there is some minor activity such as campaigns and social media posts targeted at youth but no significant programmes that could be considered as activating youth participation. Similarly, promotion of active youth participation in e-government and democracy processes is still at an early stage in many municipalities in Italy. While some representatives mentioned specific initiatives, such as surveys to involve citizens in decision-making processes or the use of digital platforms to facilitate communication with the administration, there is a lack of structured and continuous programmes to actively involve young people. Among the municipalities interviewed, most recognised the need to develop further tools and platforms to promote greater youth involvement and educate the younger generation in civic participation through these channels.

Little to no youth-targeted action was reported by Bulgaria and Estonia as well. In Bulgaria, when asked about youth participation initiatives, PAs merely mentioned institutions' higher use of social media platforms to disseminate information about their activities. In Estonia, the interviewed public administrators did not report on youth-specific participation promotion efforts at all. However, this may be either because other authorities would primarily drive these efforts, or because it is not seen as a salient issue as youth participation in digital services is already high and stable in Estonia. **The most specific and elaborate youth participation initiatives were brought out by Norwegian respondents.**



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Country-specific Trends

In this section, we have compiled the results and analysis from both to create country specific trends and context. Overall, through a combination of best Task 2.3 and 2.5, 5+ e-government best practices that have a significant impact on the project goals were identified in all partner countries. This exceeds the goal metric of at least 1 good practice per country set out at the beginning of the project.

GREECE

Greece undoubtedly stood out for a high level of e-government awareness among youth, as 100% of survey respondents indicated acquaintance with the term and a high preference for using, which could be a result of the significant internal advertisement of e-government services by politicians. However, it is important to note that no responses were received from the youngest age group, 15-18, therefore it is difficult to predict whether results would have been different if secondary school aged youth were included in the analysis.

Despite high levels of acquaintance with e-government, respondents also indicated several major concerns regarding digital government such as 94.7% being concerned about data privacy. This could be explained by a limited trust in government in Greece as well as lacking effort from the public administrator side in cultivating trust and transparency measures as well as focusing on engaging the youth, which was reflected in the interviews with public administrators. Moreover, the stark contrast in awareness of e-government with the relatively low percentage that believe that existing services are user-friendly (48% somewhat user friendly, 16% very user-friendly) could reflect a trend whereby intense advertisement of e-government by politicians is mostly not followed by similarly high quality of services.

Greek interviewees were sceptical about the extent of Greek public administrators' efforts to meaningfully engage youth. While some activities such as social media campaigns are being conducted to engage youth, this action is not sufficient to be considered as activating youth participation in the e-government initiatives and democratic participation overall. The exception to this trend were initiatives mentioned by two public officials, from the University of Patras and the Athens Chamber of Tradesmen. The interviewee from University of Patras mentioned efforts to encourage students to participate in the internal elections of the university digitally and the representative from the Athens Chamber of Tradesmen reported an initiative to offer members and especially young entrepreneurs mentoring and consulting services to boost entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, the interviews demonstrated that more efforts should be placed into meaningfully including youth in democratic participation through digital means.

Overall, although research results revealed that trust in government is limited and there is a general great worry about data privacy among youth, the majority of youth believe regardless that e-government is an essential tool for democracy and civil participation. **This sends an important message to the government authorities to invest more in ensuring transparency and encouraging through cultivating trust.**



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CYPRUS

Although Cyprus does not rank high in levels of digital transformation, research results revealed great efforts to implement digital services from the side of public authorities as well as significant willingness of youth to adopt such services. According to the digital economy and society index (DESI), Cyprus ranks 20th out of the 27 countries of the European Union, according to data from 2022.

According to the human capital measure of the DESI index, one in two Cypriots lacks basic digital skills and only 63% interact digitally with public services. Considering this context, it is positively surprising to find that according to our research, 70% are acquainted with the term e-government and 90% of youth respondents have used digital government services. **This could reflect that technology adoption is primarily a problem among older citizens and people who do not have higher education.** It is also relevant to note, that no respondents fell into the age group of 15-18, therefore it is unclear whether youth of secondary school age are aware of e-government services.

Despite relatively high engagement with digital services, many youth respondents indicated strong concerns about data privacy, lack of trust in government and transparency in data management. Interestingly, interviews with public authorities showed that although each organization implements its own measures to secure users' personal data. Therefore, it can be said that **developing more transparency in data usage and demonstrating more clearly to citizens how their data is protected should be a key objective for the Cypriot public authorities.**

Overall, a clear message from all organizations that took part in the research realize the need to implement and promote even more e-government in Cyprus. The organizations, regardless of difficulties of acceptance and use of e-government by citizens, are determined to continue upgrading and further developing electronic tools.

BULGARIA

Both interviews with public authorities and survey responses from youth reflected a relatively slow developing e-government in Bulgaria. In the case of Bulgaria, report writers were positively surprised by the high level of awareness which just marginally beats the 70% of Cyprus, where the report writer was shocked at the low number. This difference in perspectives reflects the state of Bulgarian e-government efforts.

In Bulgaria, the percentage of youth that claimed to have interacted with online government services was just over half. Together with the fact that among the most common challenges stated by survey respondents when asked about e-government services were lack of knowledge and limited-service availability, this statistic illustrates a significant need of focusing on awareness-building. Some respondents even brought out that e-government services are introduced too slowly in their country, when asked about concerns regarding the future. Therefore, it is evident that youth are both unaware and slightly sceptical about the benefits of e-government.

The slow progress of e-government implementation was also apparent from interviews with public officials. Despite the reported improvements in the implementation of the main centralised government systems in Bulgaria, according to interviewers, digitalization, and ability to take advantage of e-government remain a challenge in key policy areas, for both state and local authorities. Nevertheless, interviewees demonstrated high willingness and commitment to developing a more extensive e-government.



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Interviews also reflected a lack of coordination in data protection and security as well as interoperability measures across different institutions. This lack of coordination and transparency is also reflected in the perceptions of respondents as roughly 60% of respondents believing that e-government is an important tool for democracy, only 18.5% believe that these services are transparent at the current moment and a majority of respondents were not aware of how their data is being used by the government. Therefore, another important consideration for public administrators in Bulgaria would be to ensure greater transparency and more systematised data protection measures.

ITALY

Despite significant efforts to develop e-government services in Italy over the past years, a key concern revealed both from youth survey responses and interviews with public administrators, is the significant digital divide, both in physical infrastructure and digital skills.

Italy faces a drastic digital divide, with disparities in digital infrastructure across urban and rural areas and income levels. This highlights the challenge of ensuring equitable access to e-Government services for all citizens. There is mixed awareness of e-Government services among the population, with some engaged and using them regularly, while others remain unaware or underutilized. This suggests a need for better government outreach and education efforts. The preference for online services over in-person interactions indicates a growing trend towards digitalization, aligning with Italy's efforts to streamline administrative processes through digital platforms.

The perception of e-government service availability and government transparency in Italy is influenced by factors such as limited availability, fragmented services, and uneven development across regions. This was clearly reflected by youth questionnaires, where Despite 66.7% of youth claiming to have interacted with online digital services, the most popular concern brought up by Italian youth in regard to e-government were “Difficulty accessing services”, “Limited Services availability” and “disparities between urban and rural areas”.

Moreover, despite progress in digital government services, there are still gaps in comprehensive provision. While transparency initiatives exist, their effectiveness and visibility may not significantly change public perception. This could explain why only 22.2% of respondents perceived the government as either transparent or very transparent in how it uses data.

Looking ahead, it is suggested that e-government initiatives continue to be monitored and evaluated, but with a stronger focus on the implementation of effectiveness measurement tools and the adoption of standardised data collection practices. **It would be useful to develop a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) that can be used by municipalities to monitor the progress of digital services and quickly identify areas in need of improvement.**

Furthermore, it is recommended to further promote collaboration between municipalities by sharing best practices and organising workshops or thematic meetings. This would not only foster the adoption of innovative solutions, but also help create a support network between administrations that may face similar challenges.



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NORWAY

Norwegian research results to a great extent reflect Norway's leadership position in e-government service provision while also revealing significant challenges and important considerations regarding youth engagement. On the one hand, interviews with public administrators reflect Norway's high level of digital government service provision in almost all areas of public services from welfare and health to education.

On the other hand, survey results from Norwegian youth revealed that despite the high degree of digital government service provision in Norway, there is relatively low awareness of e-government among youth (40.7% acquainted with the term) which could be explained by a lack of education or relevance to potential users. Moreover, despite Norway's comprehensive digitalization of services, 55.6% of youth claimed to face challenges when using e-government services and only 38.5% considered e-government as a tool for democratic participation. These findings could reflect that there may be gaps in user education as well as communication and youth engagement strategies.

The cultural focus on privacy was reflected by both public administrators, and youth respondents. All public administrators described well organised data protection measures in place across public administration and placed a high priority on compliance with cybersecurity and data protection legislations. **The prioritisation of data privacy was also evident given the high awareness of youth on how their data is being handled.** Moreover, no youth respondents believed the government to be opaque in how it uses personal data, conveying the general high trust of citizens in public institutions in Norway.

Therefore, given the high level of e-government service provision and a trust in government and perception of benefits of e-government among the youth, it can be said that a higher focus should be put on even greater measures to encourage youth to discover and use the existing digital services as well as demonstrate the benefits in doing so.

ESTONIA

Estonia is well known globally for a highly developed e-government, where the vast majority of public services are available to citizens online. The 100% interaction rate of youth respondents with e-government services reflects the high digital literacy among Estonian citizens and 89.7% claiming to use e-government for convenience reflects the existence of a vast and user-friendly online service portfolio.

Additionally, the success of the Estonian e-government model has often been at least partially attributed to the high level of trust the citizens hold in their government. This was reflected well by the youth surveys, as only one person indicated a lack of trust in government and only 6.9% believed the government is opaque in how it uses personal data.

Additionally, **both youth and public administrators appear to be acutely aware of risks related with e-government and perceive data privacy and cybersecurity matters to be of primary importance.** All interviewed PAs demonstrated a high level of awareness of security concerns as well as collaboration between different institutions in ensuring the highest level of security and compliance to data protection regulations.



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Notably, given this high level of digital literacy and e-government use in Estonia among the entire population, including youth, several youth respondents brought out that the focus of the government should be on measures to engage youth in government interactions in general. In other words, to further increase youth engagement in e-government, public administrators should focus on promoting democratic participation and further demonstrating how youth can meaningfully participate in governance.

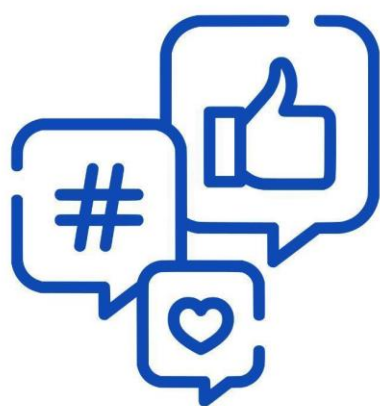


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ANNEX I “T2.4 - SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS TARGETING YOUTH”

QUESTIONNAIRE



E-GOV4YOUTH

Digital Governance

Youth involvement in e-Governance

(estimated time for survey completion: 15 mins)



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Introduction

The questionnaire is implemented as a part of the **Erasmus+ EGOV4Youth** project Research Phase (WP2) and aims at collecting information and insights on youth involvement in e-Governance. The comparative research among partners' countries seeks to identify synergies and overlapping aspects of youth involvement in e-Governance.

All information provided will be used only for the project purpose with research findings being presented in the **EGOV4YOUTH** research report, and other materials for internal use as part of the **EGOV4YOUTH** project available for Project Partners. The report will provide a comprehensive overview of the barriers and potentials of digital technologies with regard to the topic of youth involvement in decision-making processes for local development. The report will focus on two key perspectives, one of them is young people perspective. The **EGOV4YOUTH** partnership will analyse the actual knowledge and capacity to use E-GOV services, reasons why they use these services, perceived levels of security and transparency, interest in collaborating with institutions through surveys, consultations or other innovative forms of online involvement in democratic life. In addition, the interviews will analyse the target group's knowledge of local development and expectations regarding possible developments of E-Governance services in this area.

The collected information will be used to gain valuable insights on the overarching aspects of youth and democracy promotion initiatives for the Desk Research to be conducted by Tallinn University of Technology partner as a part of the comparative analysis aimed at identifying synergies and overlapping aspects between the interests and concerns of youth vis-à-vis the scope and capacity of public authorities to provide youth and democracy promotion support. TalTech protects and processes the personal data according to the following principles: <https://taltech.ee/en/privacy-policy>

Legal Basis for Processing

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. We are collecting your data based on your explicit consent.

Your Rights

As a data subject, you have the following rights:



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1. **The Right to Be Informed:** You have the right to be informed about the collection and use of your personal data.
2. **The Right of Access:** You have the right to access your personal data and supplementary information.
3. **The Right to Rectification:** You have the right to have inaccurate personal data rectified or completed if it is incomplete.
4. **The Right to Erasure:** You have the right to have your personal data erased under certain conditions.
5. **The Right to Restrict Processing:** You have the right to request the restriction or suppression of your personal data under certain conditions.
6. **The Right to Data Portability:** You have the right to obtain and reuse your personal data for your own purposes across different services.
7. **The Right to Object:** You have the right to object to the processing of your personal data in certain circumstances.
8. **Rights in Relation to Automated Decision Making and Profiling:** You have rights related to automated decision making and profiling.

Consent

By clicking "I Agree" below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood this consent information, and you agree to participate in the survey under the terms described.

I Agree

I Do Not Agree

Thank you for your participation.

Withdrawal of Consent

You can withdraw your consent at any time. If you decide to withdraw your consent, we will stop processing your data and erase it from our records, unless we have another legal basis for keeping it.

Contact

To withdraw your consent and if you have any questions please contact: anastasiia.dudko@taltech.ee

TIP: E-Governance refers to the use of digital technologies and online platforms by (central & regional) government institutions to enhance the delivery of public services, engage citizens, improve transparency, and streamline administrative processes.



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Section 1 – Background Information

1. What is your age range?

Select one:

15-18,

19-22,

23-26,

27-30.

2. Country:

- Greece
- Norway
- Italy
- Estonia
- Bulgaria
- Cyprus

3. Education Level:

- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate
- Other (please specify)

4. What is your occupation?

- student
- unemployed
- employee
- other (please specify) _____

5. How comfortable are you using technology (smartphones, computers, etc.) on a daily basis?

- Not comfortable
- Somewhat comfortable
- Comfortable



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- Very comfortable

6. Do you have access to a reliable internet connection at home?
(Yes/No)

Section 2 – Experience/Knowledge Questions

7. Have you ever heard of the term "e-government" or "e-Gov"?
(Yes/No)

8. If yes, what comes to mind when you hear "e-Gov"?
Briefly explain.

9. Have you ever used any online government services in the recent past?
(Yes/No)

10. If yes (to question 9), could you select below what describes best your experience:

- Positive
- Negative
- Neutral/Mixed

11. How often do you interact with governmental services (e.g., applying for permits, paying taxes etc.)?

- Never
- Once a year
- 2-3 times a year
- Monthly
- Weekly

12. When interacting with governmental services, would you ideally prefer to use online options (websites, apps) or in-person methods (offices)?

- Online options
- In-person
- Some online, some in person



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- Online option is not available in my country

13. If you answered “some online, some in-person” to question 12, which ones would you prefer to use?

- Online options
- In-person options

Section 3 – Opinion Questions

TIP: *Digital services are often seen as creating a closer connection between citizens and government, thus strengthening transparency, accountability, and trust in democracy.*

14. On a scale of 1 (*not important*) to 5 (*very important*), how important do you think e-Gov as a tool for Democracy?

(Scale 1-5)

15. How transparent is your government about how it uses your data to provide services to you?

- Very transparent
- Transparent
- Neutral
- Opaque
- Very opaque

16. How user-friendly are these services in your opinion?

- Very user-friendly
- Somewhat user-friendly
- Neutral
- Not so user-friendly
- Not at all user-friendly

17. Do you have any concerns about using these e-Gov services?

(Yes/No)

18. If answered yes to question 17, what are some potential security concerns you might have when using e-Gov services?

Select all that apply:

- Data privacy
- Identity theft



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- Difficulty in accessing services
- Lack of trust in government
- Other (please specify) _____

19. Are you aware of how your data is used while providing e-Gov services?

- Yes, I am aware
- Most of the time I am aware
- Most of the time I am not aware
- No, I am not aware

20. How interested are you in getting involved with governmental decision-making processes online (e.g., suggesting ideas, voting on proposals, taking part in consultations for draft laws etc.)?

- Not interested
- Somewhat interested
- Very interested

21. If you answered “not interested” to question 19, why is that the case?

- I don't feel like my voice matters
- I don't know about any such initiatives
- I don't know how to get in touch with government
- Other (please specify) _____

22. Do you face any challenges when using e-government services?

(Yes/No)

23. If you answered yes to question 21, what challenges do you face when using e-Government services? (Check all that apply)

- Lack of knowledge
- Security concerns
- Lack of transparency
- Difficult user interface
- Limited services available
- Other (please specify) _____

24. What motivates you to use E-Government services? (Check all that apply)

- Convenience



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- Time-saving
- Transparency
- Security
- Influence on local decisions
- Nothing / I don't want to use digital services at all
- Other (please specify) _____

Section 4 – Looking Ahead Questions

25. Imagine an ideal e-Gov platform for governmental services. Please select ALL features that would be important to you in such a platform. (*Select all that apply*)

- User-friendly, easy to navigate, interface
- Multilingual options
- Clear and concise information about the government services
- Secure online forms and applications
- Interactive features for public participation (e.g., surveys, fora)
- Real-time tracking of service requests
- Accessibility features for people with disabilities
- Integration with social media platforms
- Other (please specify) _____

26. What skills and knowledge do you think young people need to effectively participate in e-Gov activities? Select all that apply:

- Technical skills (using online platforms)
- Critical thinking skills
- Communication skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Knowledge of local government processes
- Other (please specify) _____

27. To what extent would you like to be included in government decision-making through digital means?

- Not at all
- Rarely and briefly (e.g. with a quick survey)
- Occasionally (e.g. online gathering every 3-4 months)
- Frequently (e.g. Monthly online consultations)
- As much as possible



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28. Have you ever participated in any digital democracy promotion activities provided by the local, regional, or national authorities in your country?

(Yes/No)

29. How can young people be more encouraged to participate in e-Government activities?

Open-ended, briefly explain:

30. What are your biggest concerns about the future of e-Government?

Open-ended, briefly explain:

31. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding e-Government and youth involvement?

Open-ended, briefly comment:



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ANNEX II “T2.5 - SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS TARGETING LOCAL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS”

2.5 - SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

01/05/2024 - 31/07/2024 / 30 local PAs interviewed (5 per partner country).

In order to include some of questions in our Google form survey to local/regional PA:

According to personal data, my suggestion is to be anonymous questionnaire, but to include at least the following info:

- The name of the represented local/regional Institution (PA name)
- The position held in this institution (position)

List of sample questions:

- What steps has your local/regional authority taken to encourage the use of e-gov by citizens and businesses?
- Are there specific initiatives or projects currently underway to improve e-service delivery? If so, what are they?
- How does your local/regional authority ensure the security and privacy of data collected through electronic services?
- Are any training or workshops offered for citizens and businesses to help them better understand and use e-gov?
- Does your local/regional authority plan to introduce additional e-services in the future, and if so, which ones?
- How does your local government measure the success of its e-government efforts, and what improvements can be made based on those measurements?
- Are there partnerships with other local/regional authorities or organizations to share e-government best practices and resources?
- How does your local authority ensure that e-services are accessible to all citizens, including those with disabilities or those without access to technology?
- Are there plans to integrate blockchain technology or other innovative solutions into your local/regional e-government efforts?
- How does your local/regional authority collaborate with the private sector and academia to improve e-service delivery?



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Some suggestions - adjustments

- 1. What steps has your local/regional authority taken to encourage the use of e-gov by citizens and businesses?*
- 2. Does your local/regional authority plan to introduce additional e-services in the future, and if so, which ones?*
- 3. Are there specific initiatives or projects currently underway to improve e-service delivery? If so, what are they?*
- 4. How does your local/regional authority ensure the security and privacy of data collected through electronic services?*
- 5. Are any training or workshops offered for citizens and businesses to help them better understand and use e-gov?*
- 6. Does your local/regional authority collaborate with the private sector and academia to improve e-service delivery? If so, in what way?*
- 7. How does your local government measure the success of its e-government efforts, and what improvements can be made based on those measurements?*
- 8. Are there partnerships with other local/regional authorities or organizations to share e-government best practices and resources?*
- 9. How does your local authority ensure that e-services are accessible to all citizens, including those with disabilities or those without access to technology?*
- 10. Are there plans to integrate blockchain technology or other innovative solutions into your local/regional e-government efforts?*



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