



KeepMePostedEU input to the next Ministerial Declaration on digital government

June 2017

Although we acknowledge the importance for the Ministerial Declaration on digital government to set goals for efficient e-government services in Europe, we believe it should not advocate for digital-only government services. It is important that the Declaration supports the citizen's right to choose how to communicate with their government, thereby supporting inclusive government services.

In view of the next Ministerial Declaration on digital government aiming at defining future EU policy on digital government and to be approved by Member States in October 2017 in Tallinn, the supporters to the KeepMePostedEU campaign would like to submit the following comments:

We fully acknowledge the benefits of public administrations embracing new communication tools in order to provide more efficient and modern public services. However, we would like to point to the importance of a right for citizen to choose how they receive important administrative or financial information without any disadvantage in terms of access.

The policy proposals refer to the principle of 'digital by default' but elude the important principles of social inclusion and accessibility for all.

One out of five European households still have no access to the internet¹. Furthermore, vulnerable groups such as senior citizens, rural communities and citizens with specific disabilities are disadvantaged when it comes to internet access and skills. Financial circumstances may also make it difficult for households to acquire the necessary equipment to access information online. Moreover, surveys among citizens across Europe show that more than 60% of them prefer physical means of communication for reasons of track keeping, filing, lack of trust in electronic communication and data protection.

Securing the right to choose how citizens access public administration is fundamental for the social inclusion of all European citizens.

Moreover, citizens are increasingly being forced by private companies, in particular service providers - utility companies, banks, insurance companies - to communicate by electronic means regardless of citizens' willingness or ability to use these communication means. Therefore, we believe that the Declaration should not send a wrong signal in proposing a single approach but should ensure that the right of citizens to choose how they communicate with their government is not taken away.

Yours sincerely,

KeepMePostedEU supporters

Note:

KeepMePostedEU is a European initiative promoting the citizen's right to choose how they receive important information - paper, digital or both - without being penalised. KeepMePostedEU is not an anti-digital campaign but a pro-citizen-choice campaign promoting the inclusion of vulnerable citizens at European level. More than 50 Members of the European Parliament are already supporters of the campaign: <http://www.keepmepostedeu.org/supporters>
To become a supporter: <http://www.keepmepostedeu.org/keep-in-touch/>

¹ Eurostat, 19%: level of internet access by households in 2014 in the EU28, September 2015