

Roadmap for Inclusive eGovernment in the Western Balkans

Building e-services accessible to all

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Western Balkans Network for Inclusive eGovernment

Roadmap for Inclusive eGovernment in the Western Balkans

Building e-services accessible to all

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METAMORPHOSIS 

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1. Introduction and objectives

1.1 Introduction

“Inclusive eGovernment is about using digital technologies to provide public services which improve people’s lives, encourage participation in the local community, strengthen democracy and help those at risk of exclusion from society.” – European Commission ¹

Regional Inclusive eGovernment Roadmap is a product of the Western Balkans Network for Inclusive eGovernment Project, supported by the East East: Partnership Beyond Borders Program of the Open Society Institute, and led by the Metamorphosis Foundation. The project activities included information gathering, analysis and networking, through the activities of project partners, the Third International Conference e-Society.Mk (29-30 November 2007 in Skopje) and six workshops in the country capitals (23 November – 20 December 2007) which facilitated exchange of know-how and experiences between stakeholders from the region and from the European Union.

Most of the stakeholders in the process of building Inclusive eGovernment in the Western Balkan countries, considered that their countries have established very few mechanisms for e-inclusion and interoperability, even though the interest in eGovernment

Research activities within Western Balkans Network for Inclusive eGovernment included measuring the levels of sophistication and inclusiveness of e-government services in Macedonia, ² Serbia, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, conducted using the EU-level Capgemini methodology, as well as qualitative research on the level and scope of Inclusive eGovernment efforts by the national governments, with a goal to develop Regional eGovernment Roadmap to facilitate joint efforts by the countries aspiring to soon join the EU.

The six workshops on inclusive e-government were organized project partners from the respective countries, providing review of draft research results, awareness raising and networking between stakeholders including government officials, IT and human rights experts, as well as representatives of NGOs dealing with inclusion of disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities, from the host countries and their neighborhood, with around 20-50 participants per event.

Location		Date	Organizer
Skopje	Workshop	23 November 2007	Metamorphosis Foundation
Tirana	Workshop	26 November 2007	Comport
Skopje	Conference	29-30 November 2007	Metamorphosis Foundation
Belgrade	Workshop	11 December 2007	Belgrade Open School
Zagreb	Workshop	13 December 2007	ZaMirNet
Sarajevo	Workshop	13 December 2007	OneWorld SEE
Podgorica	Workshop	20 December 2007	Institute for Strategic Studies and Projections

Table 1: Western Balkans Network for Inclusive eGovernment workshops

The Third International Conference e-Society.Mk: Inclusive eGovernment³ took place in Skopje, Macedonia on 29th and 30th of November 2007, providing overview of eGovernment developments in the Western Balkans, including e-sophistication, best practices and applications case studies, the latter two based on cooperation with the EU-funded We-Go Project.⁴

The conference served as a forum for networking and advocacy enabling awareness raising on the advantages and requirements of eGovernment development. It had 324 participants (6% high level representatives of the public administration, 17% other PA reps., 62% from the business sector, media and the civil society, and 14% from the academia) coming primarily from Macedonia, Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, as well as from Austria, Slovenia, Estonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Czech Republic, and the U.S.A.

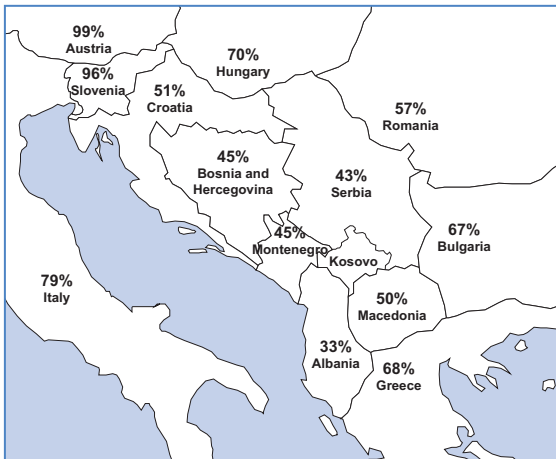


Figure 1: Map of the Western Balkans and surrounding EU countries with their online sophistication levels presented as percentages⁵

The level of online sophistication of e-government services in all countries where research has been completed so far are comparable, for instance: Albania 33%, Serbia 43%, Montenegro 45%, Macedonia 50%, Croatia 51% (see Appendix 1: Research Results for details) and most of them need to develop under similar circumstances and face similar obstacles, lagging 5-7 years behind the levels of EU. The potential benefit from mutual cooperation is great, both to the states—which have so far mostly invested in revenue-generating services such as e-taxes—and their citizens who need more efficient, transparent, accountable, and participatory governance.

1.2 Objectives

This Regional Inclusive eGovernment Roadmap contains research-based⁶ conclusions and recommendations for policymakers from the Western Balkans region towards achieving the satisfactory level of inclusiveness of eGovernment services in order to put the citizens in the heart of information society development, and strengthen the relations between the citizens and state institutions.

These guidelines stress the need for regional networking and building synergy in this field for both within the context of the process of Euro-integration and bettering the lives of the people. These developments will significantly contribute to building stable democracy in the Western Balkans.

The main objectives to be pursued by the Regional Inclusive eGovernment Roadmap are:

- Countering digital exclusion when public services are provided online
- Creating and implementing ICT-enabled inclusive policies tailored to local needs and context.

The supporting objectives paving the way towards achieving the main objectives include:

- Improve modeling and measurement of eGovernment demands by final users, identifying the differences in needs and patterns of use.
- Disseminate information and identify good practices, to stimulate peer-learning and, where possible, convergent interventions by stakeholders.
- Facilitate coordination of policy actions across states from the Western Balkans region, the EU and individual EU Member States, thereby improving coherence and exchange of information towards achieving full technical interoperability.
- At internal level, provide a coherent policy framework consolidating a number of ongoing and planned actions on ICT and other areas (employment, education, enterprise...), which one way or another affect eGovernment services demand by final users.
- Enhance structured cooperation between national institutions, as well as with EU Directorate General for Information Society (DG INFSO), as well as with other DGs (EMPL, EAC, ENTR...), which could contribute with inputs on eGovernment aspects of various thematic initiatives.

The Regional Inclusive eGovernment Roadmap also takes account of the options for administrative actions presented in the report on the *Analysis of European target groups related to inclusive eGovernment*,⁷ prepared by the European Commission on behalf of the ad-hoc subgroup within Western Balkans, and regional initiatives, especially the eSEE Initiative of the Stability Pact.

1.3 Expected outcomes and instruments

Based on the identified needs of the Western Balkan countries, in concurrence with the European Commission Action Plans and Strategies, the expected outcomes and instruments which need to be used as part of the roadmap include:

Horizontal actions

- Establishing a coherent system for monitoring the development of eGovernment services in the Western Balkans. This action need to support the objectives above on understanding and dissemination of information, based on a methodology compatible with the one used in the EU at the time of the research, and if possible connected to it. This system does not have to rely on a specific functional entity or government body, and can be implemented through externally contracted targeted studies.
- Refining benchmarking of eGovernment demand by final users in the Western Balkans region, on national and regional levels, to support the objective referring to improving modeling and measurement (see section 1.2).
- Enhancing multilateral communication between all stakeholders from the Western Balkans countries, led by the governments, and including the nongovernmental, academic, and the business sector, on both formal and informal levels. In the past, some of these actions were provided by the Stability Pact eSEE Initiative.

Thematic actions

- Even though the countries develop in similar circumstances, national and local contexts often vary and the specific thematic actions must be developed in a very flexible manner, adaptable to political priorities, and taking into account multilateral feedback – including the feedback received by the EC during the process of accession to the EU.
- Development, enhancing and raising the levels of inclusiveness of basic eGovernment services and contents—which most directly contribute to quality of life—must be promoted and monitored.
- Capacity building and digital competencies, in particular looking for agreement on one or several 'e-curricula'.⁸ [линк до курикулумите од We-Go на нашиот сајт]
- Widespread access to advanced ICT networks and terminals, notably in continuation of national broadband strategies, especially in direction of providing access to all, both in the homes or through establishing Public Internet Access Points—also known as e-Points, Telecenters, Digital Clubhouses—to address the needs of people in rural or impoverished areas where opportunities for access are limited due to technical or financial reasons.
- Targeted initiatives on socio-demographic groups, taking into account factors of inclusion/participation or relevant environments, e.g. the elderly, women, migrant groups, the disabled, education, geographical location (factors), public services, work, educational system (environments).

Financial support instruments

- Clear dedication of budget resources for the purpose of increasing inclusion levels of eGovernment services from the national budgets, and the budgets of local government units (municipalities, city governments).
- Funding provided by the EU through:
 - CIP (Competitiveness and Innovation Programme)
 - R&D programmes
 - Structural funds (European Social Fund and regional funding)
 - Various programmes, e.g. eContent, eLearning, etc.

Legal instruments

- Directives on universal services, containing articles on users with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups, terminal equipment, public procurement, etc.⁹
- National legislation related to the services provided by the government on both central and local level needs to be updated with the clauses stipulating provision of governmental services through ICT, and in all cases when e-services are used they need to be accessible for all. In particular, this needs to be ingrained within the laws regulating the work and development of:
 - public administration,
 - information society (such as e-commerce laws),
 - education,
 - non-discrimination laws,
 - health, social policies and social benefits, esp. for people with disabilities.
- The authorities must provide access to the eGovernment services for all the citizens, starting with providing timely and relevant information about their existence, as well as constant updating of the content of the services as integral part of their daily workflow.
- Standardization based on interoperability and clear, open standards, as a basic building block for providing mutual compatibility on regional level and catching up with the member states of the EU. Preference for standards leading to greater accessibility of e-services should be enshrined in the legal documents guiding the design and development of e-services.
- Reorganization of all the processes within the value chains of the governmental institutions in order to increase the efficiency and quality of their services. This process must be based on transparent and consistent mapping and redesign of the services, leading to automation and adopting organizational culture incorporating the basic values of inclusion and embracing change as means for constant improvement. This process must be accompanied with capacity building, enabling civil servants to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for provision of the above services.
- Raising public awareness about the human rights related to inclusion whose realization depends on proactive commitment of government institutions on local and national levels.

2. Inclusive eGovernment on the world development agenda

2.1 Global Bodies on inclusive eGovernment

World Summit on Information Society

The **World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)** consisted of two international conferences in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005), and their follow up activities, focused on use of information and communication technologies for development within a context of development of information society on a global level. One of its chief aims was to bridge the so-called global digital divide between the rich and the poor countries through increasing the Internet access in the developing world.

The WSIS was organized by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) as part of the United Nations efforts for global development. All Western Balkan countries participated in this process, formally accepting its conclusions and recommendations.

Declaration of Principles, Building the Information Society: a global challenge for the new millennium,¹⁰ adopted at the World Summit on Information Society in Geneva (12-13 December 2003) expresses the “common desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential” (para 1).

Addressing the issue of uneven distribution of the benefits of the information technology revolution between the developed and developing countries and within societies, this Declaration stresses the full commitment of its signatories “to turning this digital divide into a digital opportunity for all, particularly for those who risk being left behind and being further marginalized” (para 10).

*Geneva Plan of Action*¹¹ stresses the multi-stakeholder approach in developing the information society in general, and requires addressing “the special requirements of older people, persons with disabilities, children, especially marginalized children and other disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including by appropriate educational administrative and legislative measures to ensure their full inclusion in the Information Society.”

Another important element of building the information and communication infrastructure is encouraging “the design and production of ICT equipment and services so that everyone, has easy and affordable access to them including older people, persons with disabilities, children, especially marginalized children, and other disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, and promote the development of technologies, applications, and content suited to their needs, guided by the Universal Design Principle and further enhanced by the use of assistive technologies.”

*Tunis Commitment*¹² reiterated the unequivocal support by member states for the previously adopted WSIS documents, reaffirming the need to ensure that *everyone* can benefit from the opportunities that ICTs can offer, stating that states “shall pay particular attention to the special needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups of society including

migrants, internally displaced persons and refugees, unemployed and underprivileged people, minorities and nomadic people, older persons and persons with disabilities” (para 20).

In terms of applying the multi-stakeholder approach, *Tunis Commitment* also stressed the role of public-private partnerships (PPP) to be initiated by the states: “We reaffirm our desire to build ICT networks and develop applications, in partnership with the private sector, based on open or interoperable standards that are affordable and accessible to all, available anywhere and anytime, to anyone and on any device, leading to a ubiquitous network” (para 28).

These WSIS principles were also reaffirmed in the final deliverable of the WSIS, the consensus statement of *Tunis Agenda for the Information Society*,¹³ which also called for the creation of the Internet Governance Forum,¹⁴ which in turn was used as basis for establishment of the Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability.¹⁵

Convention on the Rights of persons with disability

UN Convention on the rights of persons with disability (2006)¹⁶ is intended “to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.”

The Convention defines both the rights of persons with disabilities and the specific obligations of states parties towards them. These rights include the rights to live independently and be included in the community, to personal mobility, habilitation and rehabilitation, and to participation in political and public life, and cultural life, recreation and sport. The convention binds the state signatories with specific obligation to raise awareness of the human rights of persons with disabilities, and to ensure **access to** roads, buildings, and **information**.

Western Balkan states that have signed this Convention include Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, but only Croatia has ratified it so far. Even though the Convention has come into force on May 3, 2008, after its ratification by 20 countries, the apparent lack of interest by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo is worrisome, as is the lack of confirmation of accepted commitment by ratification in the national parliaments of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Signing, ratification and implementation of the *Convention on the Rights of persons with disability* by updating the national legislation would demonstrate true commitment of the respective governments for all their citizens.

2.2 EU: Member State and Commission statements on inclusive eGovernment

European Union and its member states have repeatedly stressed the need for creation of inclusive eGovernment systems, which would take into account the needs of all citizens, and especially the disadvantaged groups. This need is clearly addressed in the following documents:

- *i2010 – European Information Society for Growth and Employment*, COM(2005) 229 final, June 2005¹⁷

- *Ministerial Conference Declaration*, Manchester, November 2005¹⁸
- *Directors General of Public Administrations on accessibility of public sector web sites*, Newcastle, December 2005
- *The eGovernment Action Plan: No Citizen Left Behind*, April 2006¹⁹
- *Council conclusions on eGovernment for all Europeans*, Luxembourg, June 2006²⁰
- *Riga Ministerial Conference Declaration "ICT for an Inclusive Society"*, June 2006²¹
- *A Roadmap for Inclusive eGovernment*, November 2006²²
- *Framework Program for Competitiveness and Innovativeness*, May 2007²³
- *Lisbon Ministerial Debate on e-Inclusion Policy*, December 2007²⁴

2.3 Regional inclusive eGovernment Pledges

Inclusion was not addressed in the eSEE Agenda,²⁵ developed within the framework of the eSEE Initiative²⁶ of the Stability Pact. The need for inclusion was taken into account in the eSEE Agenda Plus,²⁷ which was signed by representatives of the governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Kosovo.

3. Issues for the inclusive eGovernment roadmap

3.1 Inclusive eGovernment issues

Increasing body of evidence confirms the notion that eGovernment can provide more inclusive services in an effective, appropriate and accessible manner, as the new technologies employed provide opportunities for personalization and tailoring the e-services to specific needs, especially the needs of disadvantaged and otherwise excluded groups. Most successful applications of this kind also incorporated coordination of wide range of actors, both from all the levels of public sector—international, European, cross-border, national, regional, local—and also by including all other societal sectors, for instance through public-private partnerships.

In addition, most citizens are willing to use eGovernment services and new technologies in general, enabling them to save time, money, and other resources. For instance the penetration of accessible and easy to use new technologies such as mobile phones has reached significant levels in the Western Balkans. Research conducted in Macedonia in 2005 suggested that, regardless of low level of internet penetration at the time, most citizens would use government services if they become available online.²⁸

In particular, ICT solutions used to support socially excluded people provide a range of options for better service delivery by reorganizing the back office systems of the public institutions by creating information systems that provide alignment of all elements of the organizations (human, hardware, software, communication infrastructure, and data). These options, particularly in the Western Balkans context, should include a wide range of technological solutions, not just use of Internet, for instance mobile phone technology.

Additional important issues influencing the development of inclusive eGovernment in the Western Balkans context include the whole process of transition, which has several important aspects besides the political transition from socialist/communist to capitalist market economy.

The first such aspect is the aspect of transition from centralized to decentralized forms of governance. Even though the system implemented by Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia incorporated decentralized elements, after its dissolution most of the successor states first employed extreme centralized concentration of power immediately after gaining independence, and then thanks to the processes of European integration started to slowly roll back towards decentralized form of government.

Another important aspect is transition from a culture of secrecy and treating information as a resource to be hoarded and guarded to a culture of openness, accountability and transparency, promoting active citizen participation. This aspect was present in the region before the advent of communism, but reached new lows under totalitarian regimes.

The multicultural and multilingual diversity in the Western Balkans also needs to be taken into account, as this strength can be turned into weakness when the governments fail to incorporate it on policy and implementation levels, for instance by addressing linguistic needs of minority populations. Use of digital solutions to address these needs provides significant cost reduction compared to non-digital technologies, but most importantly, contributes to increasing the internal cohesion of the countries in the region, as well as providing venues for cross-border communication and cooperation.

3.2 Target Groups

In different environments, different factors affect the levels of inclusion in society, from economics, education, geographical circumstances to cultural and technical barriers to products and services. Addressing these factors in a systematic manner is essential for a fully inclusive Information Society.

Inclusive eGovernment systematically addresses the needs of all groups that are at risk of exclusion from the Information Society, and groups that do not have equal opportunities to benefit from it. Primary targets of ongoing efforts on world level include disabled and elderly people, but also many other groups including those with low levels of education, low digital skills, the unemployed, ethnic minorities, people living in isolated areas, etc.

The need for Inclusive eGovernment solutions remains greatest among the people whose lives include overlapping participation in more than one of those categories, resulting in more difficulty in upholding their rights and managing their duties as citizens of their respective states, especially when confronted with the complicated administrative and bureaucratic establishment.

For instance, in the Western Balkan countries, the Roma populations have been singled out as particularly disadvantaged on multiple levels, and to address their needs the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015²⁹ program has been initiated.

This roadmap focuses on the needs of the citizens as individuals and as members of socio-demographic and community groups in context of access to eGovernment services which should satisfy their real needs. In 2006, the EU's working group on Inclusive eGovernment developed the following general categorization of disadvantaged groups:

1. Families and children at risk, including single parents, violent families, large families
2. Young people at risk, including teenage pregnancies
3. Homeless, poor housing, frequent moving
4. Unemployment and job problems
5. Older persons
6. Disabled
7. Poor education and training, including low literacy
8. Criminal or other illegal behavior (including ex-prisoners, substance abusers, etc.)
9. Victims of behavior causing physical/mental suffering or damage (including of crime, domestic abuse, etc.)
10. Ethnic, cultural and language minorities, including foreigners, not all of whom are disadvantaged but eGovernment can increase their isolation
11. Geographically deprived, in disadvantaged areas due to poor infrastructures and/ or low socio-economic development
12. Health and long term care disadvantages.

Rationale behind the list is to reflect as much as possible actual user behavior in day-to-day life situations and the problems they face, and not to provide final or totally comprehensive taxonomy, bearing in mind that both national and local circumstances

can result in other ways of classification, and that the rapidly changing circumstances can generate new and unforeseen challenges for inclusion.

However, the need for development of general and inclusive methodology for segmenting and targeting disadvantaged users has been acknowledged both on the EU level, and in the region of Western Balkans, whose countries aspire to become EU members in near future. According to the *A roadmap for Inclusive eGovernment* (2006): “Some recognition of core group types, however, is advantageous when sharing experiences and implementing the roadmap and a general methodology for assessing where eGovernment can help the disadvantaged and with which measurement of the progress is also possible.”

3.3 Issue focus

In *A roadmap to Inclusive eGovernment* (2006), the Inclusive eGovernment ad hoc group and the European Commission DG Information Society and Media eGovernment Unit propose a synoptic map of the overall inclusive eGovernment terrain, summarizing the main issues which an inclusive eGovernment roadmap needs to take into account (Figure 2).

The synoptic map uses two dimensions: the first dimension defines the eGovernment value chain and the second dimension maps the two main approaches – design for all (top down) and special services based on the needs of specific groups (bottom up).

Both approaches are relevant in the Western Balkans context. The first approach is especially important because of the identified need to incorporate interoperability from the outset of the design phase. Most WB countries still need to adopt EU-compatible set of standards guiding the development of ICT solutions within the public administration, and interoperability has proven to be major factor in the EU countries that have showed significant gains after 2001.

In addition, the standards for security and privacy are also a top priority in the regional context, as the population strives to recover the heritage of culture of secrecy and total state control over the private lives of its citizens. Incorporating transparent policies and procedures from this area during the design and implementation will improve the levels of trust and confidence of citizens in the eGovernment services offered to them. Projects addressing this need, such as Information Security Initiative from Macedonia,³⁰ based on expert contributions related to necessary change management, can be considered best practice examples.

Considering the provision of specific assistance or services tailored to specific groups, a top priority would be introducing the multi-stakeholder approach for the analysis of the local needs, engaging both the responsible government bodies, and the NGOs which deal with the needs of such groups, and have often much more direct experience, institutional memory and hands-on approach related to working with the final beneficiaries. However, both the governmental institutions and the NGOs in most cases would need capacity building as prerequisite to commence effective actions, as they often lack technical expertise to augment their existing efforts.

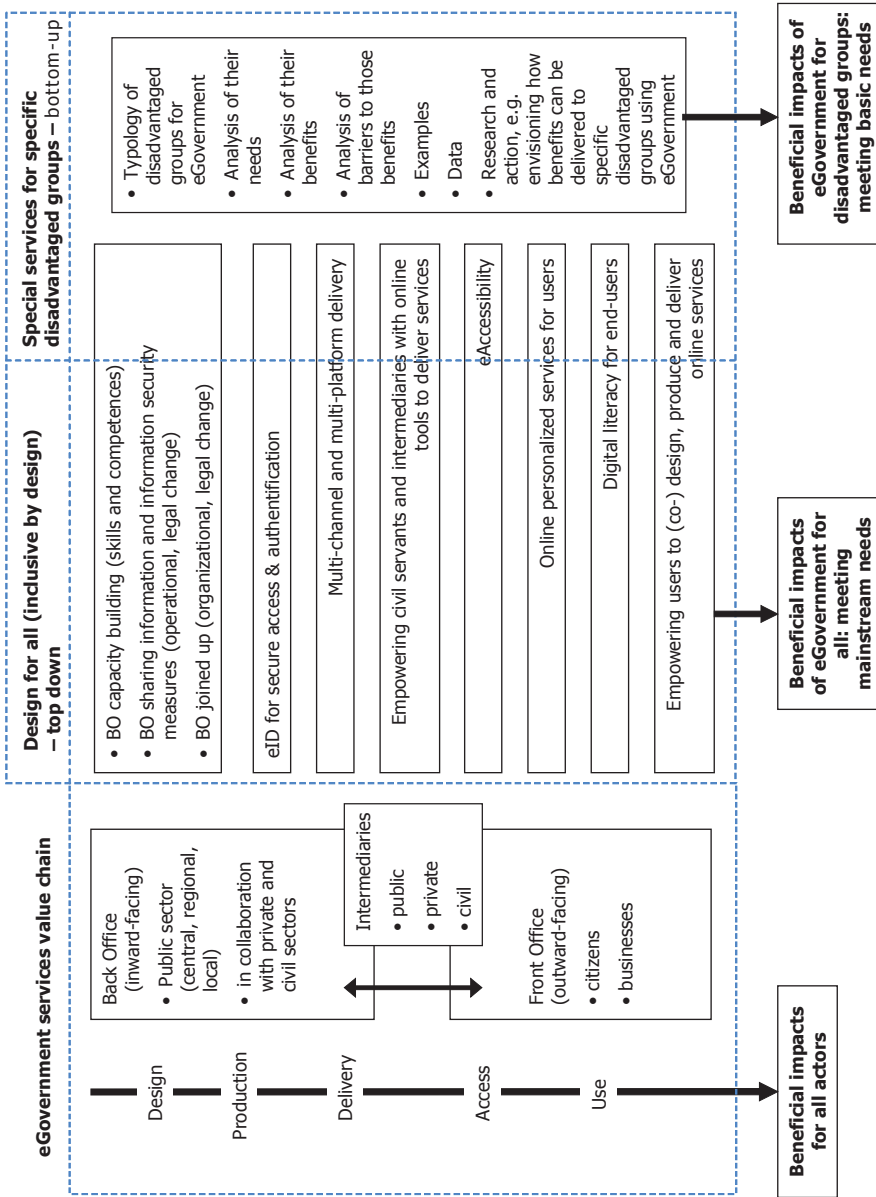


Figure 2: Synoptic map of eGovernment terrain: key issues to be addressed (source: i2010, eGovernment Action Plan: A roadmap for Inclusive eGovernment)

4. The inclusive eGovernment roadmap

Even though circumstances may differ on national level, the activities leading to establishment of inclusive eGovernment services in the Western Balkans countries follow a similar pattern. They are based on the need of overcoming the legacies of the past totalitarian systems and the ills of transition, and the desire and commitment of the peoples of the region to improve their daily lives based on the development of democratic societies and integration within the European Union.

Phase 1

Assessment of existing national eGovernment related policies and strategies, using them as baseline.

- If the documents do not incorporate commitments for building and maintaining inclusive e-services, then this dimension should be added to them appropriately.
- If the documents do incorporate such commitments, both decision makers and the general public should be made aware of these accepted obligations.

Phase 2

Alignment with the internationally accepted framework for development.

- Signing and ratification of all the relevant international documents, esp. the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disability by the national governments and national parliaments, respectively.
- Harmonizing the legislation with the relevant EU directives, or enacting such legislation where it does not exist. Note that the EU directives are not blueprints for laws, and that laws which were based on just translating the directives have proven totally non-consequential in the region and elsewhere. The directives provide guidelines for the national laws, which need to be enacted through a regular legislative process based on the local context.

Phase 3

Updating the national legal frameworks, through a transparent, inclusive and participatory public process:

- Incorporating the stipulations from the international documents on UN and EU level.

Phase 4

Legislative changes should also include adopting sets of standards for eGovernment development on national level. As in the case of Recommendations for ICT standards in the civil service of Republic of Macedonia,³¹ these standards must be based on the European Interoperability Framework for Pan-European eGovernment Services,³² following the general principles of: accessibility, multilingualism, security, privacy, subsidiarity and use of open standards.

Applicable standards include:

- W3C Web Accessibility Initiative - WAI Guidelines (www.w3.org/WAI)
- ISO/IEC TR 19766:2007 Information technology -- Guidelines for the design of icons and symbols accessible to all users, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.

- ISO/IEC TR 19765:2007 Information technology -- Survey of icons and symbols that provide access to functions and facilities to improve the use of information technology products by the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- ISO/IEC 17799:2005 Information technology -- Security techniques -- Code of practice for information security management
- ISO/IEC 27001:2005 Information technology -- Security techniques -- Information security management systems – Requirements

Phase 5

Establishing mechanism to provide continuous monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of inclusive eGovernment principles based on criteria and indicators used on EU level.

Phase 6

Allocating resources—funds (based on national budget, local sources and international funds, including public private partnership initiatives) and human capacities—for implementing inclusive eGovernment projects.

Realization of inclusive eGovernment projects, through transparent and participative process, accompanied with precise measurement of the expenses and the impact.

5. Appendix 1: Research Results

5.1 Online Sophistication of eGovernment Services

The 20 basic public services whose online sophistication level has been monitored during 2007 are given in Table 2 below. These services have been defined by the European Commission and monitored by Capgemini for EU and Croatia, and the respective project partners for the other countries.

Each service is graded on a scale from 0 to 4, using the following criteria:

0. no information available on line
1. relevant information available
2. one way interaction provided
3. two way interaction provided
4. transaction opportunities provided - service is fully available in electronic form.

Some of these services consist of sub-services, for instance Security Benefits consists of unemployment benefits, child allowances, medical costs, and student grants, or the Personal documents service consists of ID, Passport, and driver's license; while Certificates include birth, marriage, and death certificates. The grading of such services is done by grading each individual sub-service first, and using their sophistication levels to calculate the average.

European commission has defined maximum possible grade for each of the 20 services. Most services have maximum grade 4, but some, like Certificates and Job search, can have maximum grade 3. In order to provide better results for comparison, in this report the research network members used the Capgemini's maximum grade system, where job search has maximum grade 4.

The online sophistication for an elementary service is calculated in percents (%) as the ratio between the grade and the maximum attainable grade. The online sophistication of a basic service, like social security benefits, is the average of the four elementary services unemployment benefits, child allowances, medical cost reimbursement, and student grants. The final online sophistication level is the average of the sophistication of the 20 basic services.

Citizens		Alb.	Cro.	BIH	Mac.	Mon.	Ser.
1	Income taxes	100	50	50	50	50	50
2	Job search	25	75	67	75	75	75
3	Social security benefits	25	44	25	31	50	25
4	Personal documents	33	38	33	67	33	33
5	Car registration	25	25	50	50	25	25
6	Building permissions	25	34	25	25	25	25
7	Declaration to the police	0	33	33	11	33	33
8	Public libraries	50	75	50	75	25	75
9	Certificates	0	19	67	67	33	67
10	Enrolment in higher education	25	30	50	7	75	25
11	Announcement of moving	0	33	50	50	33	33
12	Health related services	0	87	25	0	25	25
Business		Alb.	Cro.	BIH	Mac.	Mon.	Ser.
1	Social contributions	25	50	25	75	50	25
2	Corporate tax	100	50	50	100	50	50
3	VAT	100	100	75	100	50	50
4	Registration of a new company	0	75	50	50	50	50
5	Submission of data to stat. offices	0	33	67	0	67	67
6	Customs declaration	25	75	25	50	75	75
7	Environment-related permits	25	50	25	33	25	25
8	Public procurement	75	50	50	83	50	25
Totals		33	51	45	50	45	43

Table 2: Levels of online sophistication of the 20 basic e-government services in the Western Balkans collected during 2007. All figures are percentages on a 0-100% scale.³³

The research identified that—so far—the state authorities in the Western Balkan countries worked more proactively and showed significant interest in developing eGovernment services from the income generating cluster, while showing less initiative in developing e-services focused on the needs of the individual citizens.

Interoperability was pointed out as major concern and as a core element of the eGovernment development process both within the individual countries and on a regional level.

5.2 eInclusion Related Experiences from the Western Balkans

Based on the preliminary research of impact and realization of projects implemented in the Western Balkans region, the general conclusion is that inclusion is not a top priority of the decision makers and the policymakers responsible for eGovernment development.

So far, most governments from the Western Balkans have not initiated specific activities or projects to create more inclusive eGovernment in regard to the front office, and often fall short at the more basic level of ensuring technical interoperability in the

back office. In the cases when projects with elements of inclusion have been conducted, the data on the impact is scarce and second-hand, based on media reports at best.

For instance in the beginning of 2007 the Government of Republic of Macedonia initiated the following projects addressing the needs of several target groups which are defined as at risk of exclusion (See section 3.2), but failed to disclose any information but basic quantities of beneficiaries. These projects included:

- Computer for Every Child,³⁴ aiming to provide computers for all students in the primary and secondary schools in Macedonia, but disregarded the needs of children with disabilities who are integrated within the education process for use of assistive technologies.³⁵
- ICT Education for Everyone,³⁶ which outsourced training of basic IT skills to over twenty thousand citizens to local private education facilities. However, the tender did not stipulate requirements to address the needs of people with disabilities, and no evidence of addressing these needs in practice through this project has surfaced so far.
- Digital Clubs for Bridging the Digital Gap – opening of 15 public internet access points specifically advertised as providing services to young people (younger than 26) and the elderly, which function as free internet cafes on first come first served basis. No official information is available on where these clubs are situated, and it seems that no prior training for addressing the needs of the elderly (such as adjusting the accessibility options from the operating system) or providing any other services but basic internet access (such as training) has been conducted with the employees.

6. Notes and References

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No data was available for Kosovo at the time of the research.
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- 7 The report Analysis of European target groups related to inclusive eGovernment is available in the Library – Inclusive eGovernment section of the Europe's Information Society Thematic Portal. URL:
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