

## ICT for Societal Challenges: Public and R&D sector as innovators

**Date:** 10 June 2013  
**Place:** Estonian Liaison Office for EU RTD, Square de Meeûs 1, 1000 Brussels  
**Time:** 12.00 – 15.00 (including sandwich lunch)  
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### Rationale

The Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE), the first flagship initiative under the “Europe 2020” growth strategy, acknowledges that ICT technologies play a key enabling role in fostering innovation, economic growth and addressing Europe’s societal challenges. Digital Innovation will enable Europe to address its Societal Challenges and will provide Europeans with a better quality of life through, for example, easier access to public services and better health care.

Research and Innovation is a priority area in DAE, with the clear objective of leveraging more private and public investments to ICT-based innovations, notably in areas of public interest. The European Commission aims to accomplish that by increased support for joint ICT research infrastructures and innovation clusters, and reinforced coordination between the EU and Member States and in private-public partnerships. The Member States are encouraged to leverage public and private spending for developing innovative and interoperable solutions in areas of public interest.

In the DAE, the Commission has set priorities for developing practical e-identification and e-authentication cross border services and is advising the Member States to follow suit in making public sector services fully interoperable, overcoming organisational, technical or semantic barriers and supporting the use of official citizen documents for online authentication services. The eGovernment offers a cost-effective, accessible and time-saving service for public administrations, citizens and businesses. User-centric, personalised, multi-platform eGovernment services are being actively developed by the European public sector, but are still fragmented and underused due to the lack of limits the use of public citizen portals.

The Research and Innovation strategy "Innovation Union" views ICT and technological innovation as a prerequisite for achieving world class science, and is also setting out ways for future R&D-programmes to focus more on societal challenges. For example, the EIP on Active and Healthy Ageing was created, which aims to improve the uptake of interoperable ICT independent living solutions through global standards, to help older people stay independent, mobile and active for longer. Another good example of innovative partnerships is the Knowledge Innovation Communities (KICs) initiative, with the EIT ICT Labs emerging as a vital hub for European leadership in ICT innovation.

In Horizon 2020, Europe's next Framework Program for Research and Innovation, ICT-technology will have a cross-cutting impact for all of its' three key priorities and the overall sustainable development of Europe as an innovative and secure society. H2020 will support the ICT research and innovation that can best deliver new business breakthroughs, but is also contributing to R&D that provides innovative solutions for healthcare and inclusive societies. In order to maximize the potential for innovation of the activities funded from Horizon 2020, the Commission and Member States need to work together closely, defining the appropriate areas for policy and technological advancement that R&D activities can effectively support.

Estonia has proved itself as an innovative country in developing ICT-based services for the citizens and society, and has largely succeeded in developing a cross-border, secure, and interoperable public service system. Best case studies include the eGovernment, a data exchange layer for seamless data transfer between public information systems, e-ID card and mobile-ID identification systems, digital signature. The National Information Systems' Authority ([EISA](#)) has the responsibility to coordinate the development and administration of the public sector e-services in Estonia. EISA is also committed for international cooperation and transfer on know-how for the support of international public information services, advising several countries (e.g. the United Kingdom, Brazil) in the uptake of ICT-solutions for an e-society, for example Mobile-ID and M-parking.

Also, in the field of life sciences, Estonian research groups are playing an increased role in developing ICT solutions for managing and analysing huge amounts of research data from interdisciplinary databases. Being a member of [ELIXIR](#), the ESFRI project for pan-European biological research data infrastructure, the University of Tartu and the Centre of Excellence for Computer Science ([EXCS](#)) have developed software solutions for bioinformatics, algorithmics, and data mining. ELIXIR provides the European community with vast access to biological data and bioinformatics services, and is an excellent example of ICT-based innovation in research for the better life quality of European Citizens.

To further maximize Europe's innovation potential and bring together all stakeholders from the Innovation cycle, knowledge about existing ICT-solutions and effective policies in Member States must be shared and jointly elaborated. A continuous dialogue is needed between the Commission, Member States and stakeholders from the research community on how to make public e-services more widespread and securely available, and how to combine these with R&D-applications, using technology and e-identification.

DG Connect of the European Commission aims to lead the development of EU Digital Public Services, focusing on cross-border excellence and the use of the eGovernment Action plan 2011- 2015 as a tool for innovation in public administrations within the Digital Single Market. Also, DG Connect is engaging to foster large scale innovation actions by engaging MS, regions, industry, professionals, users and other stakeholders on specific actions that include ICT-enabled innovation and deployment.

In March 2013, DG Connect launched a public consultation on directions for ICT-driven public sector innovation in the EU, asking stakeholders to give input on key drivers and enabling technologies for the upcoming programming period. In April 2013, DG Connect published the brochure "[ICT for Societal Challenges](#)", highlighting some of the many EU initiatives and co-funded research and innovation projects which address these societal challenges. Those actions also indicate the need for exchange of information and best practices between the Commission and Member States.

### **Objectives of the seminar**

The seminar aims to highlight ICT-s importance in providing effective public services for integrated and secure communities, and demonstrate how R&D in ICT is allowing science to impact the development of the services for society. Involving experts from the Commission and Estonia, the seminar aims to outline priorities for the policy in Horizon 2020, and share concrete examples of best practices with the audience.

The seminar will address the following two questions:

1. How can the Horizon 2020 instruments contribute to the actions EU is taking to support ICT policy initiatives, especially supporting the creation of public e-services and enabling the use of research databases and applications for addressing the Societal Challenges?
2. What are the best practices and policies for developing effective, ICT-based solutions for public services and how can R&D for ICT enable the use of research results for the benefit of the society?

The expected result of the seminar aims at advancing the discussion on what are the beneficial ICT-solutions and policy practices worth pursuing in the public and R&D sector, and how to accelerate Europe's and Member States advancement towards a Digital Innovation Union with a secure and sustainable society.

The follow-up on the seminar will include a memo with the conclusions from the seminar, in addition to the presentations of the speakers, to be disseminated among the participants and other relevant stakeholders.