

EU

The European Union (EU) has taken the leading initiatives aimed at promoting digitization in Europe through a joint approach at the European level since the late 1990s. In doing so, the EU especially emphasizes cooperation and active participation by each member state to ensure the EU fully benefits from the economies of scale. The European Commission's Information Society is driving the initiatives on two fronts, focusing on creating synergy through mutual cooperation. One stays focused on putting forward policy proposals regarding research directions and applying research outcomes to various fields to ensure that research efforts lead to the creation of actual services. The other front mainly relates to research on infrastructure technologies needed for digitization to improve policy efficiency.

The EU's digitization policies began to take shape with the "eEurope: An Information Society for All" initiative launched in 1999. This was followed in May 2000 by the "eEurope 2002 Action Plan" in which targets to be achieved by 2002 were set out in the areas of Internet penetration, education, public services and health services. This was again succeeded in 2002 by the "eEurope 2005 Action Plan." The focus of the eEurope 2005 initiative was on deploying and expanding Internet access in order to drive productivity enhancement, promote modern public services, increase opportunities for participation in decision-making and create jobs. The Commission is currently promoting the "i2010: A European Information Society for Growth and Employment" initiative announced in June 2005.

i2010 Initiative

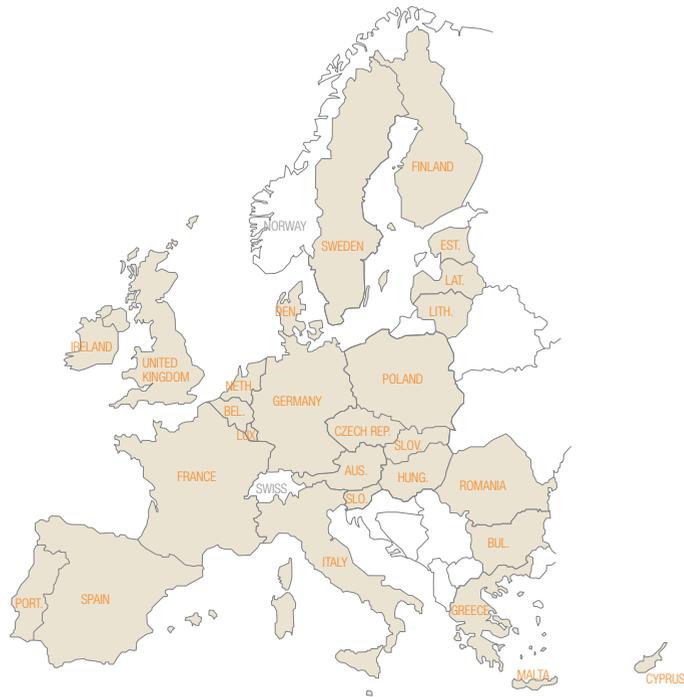
i2010 was developed under the vision of bringing together various information and communication technology (ICT) policies of the European Commission in a cohesive and effective manner so as to contribute to facilitating economic growth in Europe and attaining goals of the Lisbon Strategy. The initiative aims to build information society by widely deploying ICT in the public sector, businesses and homes and use ICT as a driver for obtaining sustainable growth. It has three objectives as follows: 1) to establish a single European information space; 2) to increase innovation and investment; and 3) to ensure inclusive European information society.

In April 2008, the EU published, in its mid-term review for i2010, results of the initiative, which included increased use of Internet in Europe, promotion of online public services, and growing awareness of the importance of ICT by the member states, among many others. Specifically,

major achievements found were: a new regulatory framework for audiovisual media services is in place; proposals to reform the regulation of electronic communications have been executed; a single market for mobile phone use across borders is in operation; discussions on boosting online content are under way; and the new e-Inclusion initiatives are under way. The Commission is planning to further expand broadband and next-generation networks, narrow the information gaps among member states, increase research and investment for innovation, and strengthen activities for e-Inclusion and e-Accessibility initiatives in the years ahead.

e-Government

Under the i2010 initiative, the EU adopted "e-Government Action Plan" in April 2006, mainly aiming at raising administrative efficiency and increasing e-Procurement among 25 member states. The e-Government Action Plan addresses five priority initiatives that must be launched



by 2010 and set the goal of benefiting all European citizens through cooperation among member states.

Those five priority initiatives aim to: 1) raise efficiency of public services; 2) implement e-Procurement across the EU; 3) ensure all citizens of member states have secure access to services using EU ID management scheme; 4) promote use of ICT for the public to participate in various policy-making processes effectively; and 5) urge development of detailed plans regarding a strategy to provide multiple platforms for government services.

Meanwhile, the EU has assessed online public service levels each year since 2001, emphasizing online public services as an important means to implement the i2010 e-Government Action Plan and the Lisbon Strategy. According to its 2007 assessment, Austria was ranked no.1 with 100% of fully online availability and 99% of online sophistication, followed by Malta and Slovenia.

Infrastructure

As of 2008, businesses in the EU devote

20% of investment to ICTs, and the sector accounts for 26% of overall research expenditure. Moreover, around 60% of basic public services are now fully available online, and ICT is now a part of daily life of many EU citizens as evidenced by the fact that more than half of them use the Internet regularly.

The European broadband penetration is also growing fast. The penetration rate reached 20% of the population in January 2008, a threefold increase since 2004. However, the pace of growth has slowed in recent months and gaps between the highest and lowest performers are further widening in terms of take-up, speed and price from 8.5% in 2003 to 18.7% in 2005 and to 28% in 2008.

The number of subscribers of mobile phones among EU member states already exceeded total population at 103.3% in 2006 and continues to grow. The penetration rate of mobile phones in Europe where 553.5 million units of wireless phones are used stood at 111.8% as per number of citizens in 2007.

Sweden

Noticing the ICT sector has a great potential for adding value, Sweden is promoting digitization as a means to resolve social and economic problems. A bill called “An Information Society for All” was passed in June 2000, which laid the foundation for instituting Swedish ICT policies. The bill aims to make Sweden the first country to be an information society for all and targets eight areas to be promoted. These include economic growth, employment, regional development, democracy and equity, quality of life, gender equality and cultural diversity, efficient public administration and sustainable society. To attain these objectives, the Swedish government is focusing on enhancing confidence in ICT, competence in the use of ICT and accessibility to ICT services.



e-Government

Sweden’s e-government model is based on the rationale that a 24-hour access to public information and services must be provided; democracy and citizen participation in the policy-making process must be enhanced; and various service channels must be provided so that no citizen is excluded from the new opportunities offered by e-government.

To address deficiencies of the 24-hour public administration strategy, the Swedish government announced the “Action Plan for a Modern e-Government” in January 2008, with the vision of achieving the world’s simplest and most efficient administration by 2010. The plan includes a number of action areas aimed at improving the legal, technical and economic conditions for the authorities’ contacts with the citizens and businesses, and puts emphasis, among many others, on making information handling of administrative agencies more efficient, on increasing information security and on introducing automated ICT support for case handling and procurement.

Furthermore, regulations on safe information exchange between government agencies such as the Swedish Administrative Development Agency, or Verva, are in

place since January 2008. The regulations are intended to have government authorities use proper and consistent security measures when it comes to the development and operation of public electronic services with the objective of ensuring confidentiality and reliability of electronic information exchange between administrative agencies, enterprises and the citizens.

Use of ICT

Meanwhile, Sweden is ranked 4th in the EU in broadband penetration rates at 31.2% of its population. It is also found that 75% of its people use Internet regularly, and 57% use Internet banking, which indicates that ICT is deeply embedded into the lives of Swedish people. In the e-health field, the Swedish government launched “National Strategy for eHealth” in 2006 to improve laws and regulations for extended use of ICT, create a common technical infrastructure, facilitate smooth information flow across organizational boundaries and develop information and services that are easily accessible to citizens. As a result, Sweden remains one of top performers in the e-health field.

Denmark

The Danish government launched national digitization initiatives in order to cope with its limited resources and aging population and to live up to the high expectations of its citizens and their demand for transparency and quick service delivery. "Towards e-Government: Vision and Strategy for the Public Sector in Denmark (2002-2006)" initiative announced in January 2002 marks the beginning of a joint cooperation between municipal and state levels of administration and provides the basic concept behind the Danish approach to e-government. A refined and more complementary strategy came out in 2004 with the "The Danish e-Government: Realizing the Potential (2004-2006)" initiative to provide high-quality services to citizens and businesses and to implement more effective and systematic administrative services by facilitating digitization in the public sector.

In particular, Denmark is highly rated in its successful efforts to deliver citizen- and business-centric services through a number of websites including the citizen portal (www.borger.dk), business portal (www.virk.dk), public procurement portal (DOIP) and national healthcare portal (www.sundhed.dk).



e-Government Strategy for 2007-2010

In June 2007, The Danish government unveiled "e-Government Strategy for 2007-2010" under the agenda of "toward the better digital service, increased efficiency and stronger collaboration" that had three priority areas aimed at better digital services, digitization to facilitate increased efficiency and stronger collaboration to create digital cohesion.

To improve digital services, it is planned that the citizen portal (www.borger.dk) and the busi-

ness portal (www.virk.dk) will form the framework for a citizen-centric and tailored approach to public sector services by 2012. Likewise, it is planned that accessibility will be further enhanced by providing various channels among citizens, businesses and public authorities, and websites and service accessibility will be further improved by introducing compulsory accessibility requirements, in connection with the compulsory use of open standards in the public sector.

To increase efficiency through digitization, efforts will be made to automate and streamline as many administrative processes as possible so that more service requests from citizens and businesses can be handled digitally. In parallel, digitization and efficiency gains will be quantified and documented to ensure that efforts remain focused on performance improvement.

To obtain stronger collaboration to create digital cohesion, new standards will be set and closer collaboration rules will be ad-

opted to increase cohesion across the public sector. Moreover, a joint solution for authentication and authorization will be put in place, allowing citizens and businesses to gain easy and secure access to all relevant public services.

Use of ICT

Broadband penetration rates in Denmark reached 35.6% of its population, the highest among the EU countries, and the percentage of population using e-government services was also the highest at 58%, about twice as high as the EU average. Denmark is also one of top performers in terms of use of e-health and e-commerce, and is viewed as utilizing ICT most actively and efficiently. ■■■■

About the Article

This article is reorganized based on *The National Information White Paper* published by the National Information Society Agency (NIA) in Korea. The white paper has been published every year since 1993 in order to help both IT experts and the public better understand the national informatization trends.