



Expert Group Meeting

Preparatory Process for the
United Nations E-Government Survey 2018

AIDE-MEMOIRE

Organized by the
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations
(Division for Public Administration and Development Management)

10-11 May 2017
Conference Room E – United Nations Headquarters, New York

1. SPONSORSHIP AND PURPOSE

The Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) is organizing an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) for the preparation of the United Nations E-Government Survey 2018 which will be held at United Nations Headquarters (Conference Room E) in New York from 10 to 11 May 2017.

The purpose of the meeting is to provide a platform for experts to (a) exchange views on challenges, emerging issues and trends related to e-government and its assessment, (b) identify emerging issues and areas relevant to the United Nations E-Government Survey 2018 from a sustainable development perspective and (c) reflect/review/update the current methodology of the Survey with a view to ensuring that the survey contributes to the implementation of the SDGs and Targets. The experts will provide advice and recommendations on whether and how to adjust the focus, approach and methodology of the 2018 and future editions of the United Nations E-Government Survey. They will take into account the feedback and suggestions received from Member States during the online consultations held earlier in the year.

2. BACKGROUND

In March 2001, at the Third Global Forum on Reinventing Government with the theme “Fostering Development through E-government”, participants from 122 nations congregated to share best practices, information and ideas related to e-government¹. The response far exceeded general expectations given the embryonic development of e-government and the limited understanding of its scope and potential at that point. The Forum was followed by the first attempt of UNDESA to benchmark e-government development through a research publication in 2001 entitled “Benchmarking E-government: A Global Perspective -- Assessing the UN Member States,” which analysed the approach, progress and commitment on the part of the UN Member States².

The 2016 United Nations E-Government Survey, launched in July 2016, marks the eighth edition of the flagship publication of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in benchmarking e-government development achieved by all Member States of the UN.

The ultimate objective of the survey has been to promote the use of e-Government as a way to support development and improve people’s well-being. The survey is based on the understanding that the e-government improves the quality and access to government services; supports participation, transparency, and accountability; helps to improve coordination in government; contributes to social equity as well as to managing the risk of disasters or reducing carbon emissions. Thus, as reflected in the 2003 edition, the survey aims “to be a tool at the disposal of the government, which, if applied effectively, can contribute substantially to promoting human development”.

¹ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs UNDESA, "3rd Global Forum on Reinventing E-Government," <https://publicadministration.un.org/en/3rdglobalforum>.

² Note: The assessment of e-government was based on state-provided information on their online services.

The survey pursues this objective by giving an indicative assessment of the diffusion of e-government through a performance rating of national governments relative to one another. It is not designed to capture e-government development in an absolute sense.

The Survey presents the ranking of e-government development across 193 Member States by assessing e-government development according to a quantitative composite index based on Online Service, Telecommunication Infrastructure, and Human Capital indexes. The idea is to provide decision makers with information that enables them to identify how they compare with others in e-government development, understand their areas of strengths and challenges, as well as consider suggested options on how best to move ahead. The Survey is a flagship recurrent publication of UNDESA and has been published at regular intervals since 2003.

In preparation for each new edition of the Survey, great attention is given to reviewing its thematic areas, as well as to updating the questionnaire used to assess the online presence of countries. The number of new questions and themes is limited in scope in order to avoid major discrepancies with the previous editions and allow for comparative analysis over time.

3. CONTEXT

The 2018 Survey will be geared to contributing to the follow-up of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 with [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) and 169 targets addressing the multiple facets of development. Leave no one behind and eradicating poverty are overarching principles of the Agenda.

The survey also related to the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). In December 2015, the General Assembly conducted a ten year review of the implementation of the Summit. The [WSIS+10 outcome document](#) called upon all governments and other stakeholders to integrate ICTs into their approaches to implementing the SDGs. [E-government](#) is one of the action lines under ICT Applications that was adopted in 2003 in the [original WSIS Document](#).

Other major developments need to be reflected upon in preparing for the 2018 Survey:

- There has been an evolution in the conceptual approach to e-government with a growing number of countries and researchers focusing on “digital government”.
- ICTs are being used in highly innovative ways to deliver health, education and other services, support urban planning, gather and analyze data and big data. The use Government makes of ICT to deliver public services and other functions appears to have expanded way beyond the use of their portals.
- New technologies have emerged, with cloud computing and the internet of things. The use of mobile devices has grown exponentially. All this has deep implications for societies, economies, legislation, regulations, systems, privacy and security.
- Social Media are being used by millions of people and internet is spreading rapidly. Meanwhile, in many countries, much use is being made of SMS and traditional phones.

4. FOCUS OF THE EGM:

The methodology of the e-government survey has evolved over the years as the context and use of e-government evolved and its understanding improved. In the second edition of the Survey (2003), the methodology that was used in the 2001 publication was strengthened substantially and quantitatively to produce the e-government development index (EGDI). The conceptual framework of the EGDI is based on a holistic view of e-government development that incorporates three components: provision of online services through a quantitative survey assessment, availability of telecommunication connectivity and the level of human capacity.

This same methodology has been adopted in the subsequent seven editions of the Survey. The 2004 and 2005 editions of the Survey captured the state of a country's readiness for e-government. However, in 2008, "readiness" was not deemed to adequately reflect the need for concrete implementation on the grounds; the publication changed its focus from assessing readiness to assessing actual development. In 2014, it was considered that the view of "e-government maturity" no longer holds as e-government goals and targets are constantly evolving to deliver and surpass what the public expects.

The questionnaire used to assess online services of a country is structured according to key thematic areas. Although the weight of the Online Service Index is equal to the others, there is greater opportunity to improve quickly in this area and affect the overall ranking since improvements in human capital and infrastructure may take longer. In order to capture e-government development, the survey questionnaire is updated prior to each biennial Survey. Most of the questions are binary as to whether a particular feature is present on a website (yes, or 1) or unavailable (no, or 0) with few range questions.

The Survey has also given a lot of attention thus far to assessing central government portals including the national portal, e-services portal and e-participation portal, as well as the websites of the ministries of education, labour, social services, health, finance and environment and other related ministries as applicable. It should also be noted that the survey looks mainly at the supply side and not at the usage of the services and people's satisfaction. Its component on services draws mainly from an analysis of portal, rather than from information provided directly by governments. UNDESA/DPADM recognizes that the analysis contained in the survey has very much focused on line services development at the expense of the other two components of the EGDI, namely the Telecommunication Infrastructure Index and Human Capital Index.

This EGM will reflect on the relevance of the methodology and suggest improvements to better measure e-government and how it contributes to the implementation of the SDGs.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE EGM

The EGM aims to stimulate a discussion on how e-government can advance sustainable development and on major issues, new developments and innovative practices that should be reflected in the *United Nations E-Government Survey 2018* and on possible improvements in the methodology of the survey. It will aim to make proposals on the content, approach and methodology of the 2018 Survey.

More specifically, the participants will address below questions:

- How can the survey best contribute to the realization of the SDGs for all segments of society? How can ICT and e-government best advance the SDGS and targets and leave no one behind?
- What does e-government mean today?
- What are the main modalities for delivering services to people via ICT and internet? What have been the critical trends in ICT and e-government and what are the main issues and challenges today?
- In today's context, should the focus, approach and methodology of the survey be adjusted so that the survey realizes its objective (to promote the mobilization of ICT and e-government for realizing the SDGs)?
- Is the purpose of the survey still fully relevant today? Are other publications addressing the same objective?
- Is the survey looking at the right thing? Is the EGDI still relevant? If so how can it be adjusted?
- What are the limitations of the Survey's scope and its methodology? And, depending on the answer, how should its focus and methodology be adjusted?
- What should the Survey focus on in general – both in 2018 and in future editions? Is the focus on central government portals still warranted? How can the survey capture the most recent trends?

6. EXPECTED RESULTS

This two-day meeting will be tightly structured, with a clear focus on seeking advice and recommendations for updating the Survey themes, methodology, questionnaire and indicators. The EGM is expected to achieve the following outputs:

- Provide options for the approach to the 2018 e-government survey such as changing the Survey methodology, focus and approach more radically; or keeping largely the current approach, but introducing improvements the E-Government Development Indicator and to the survey as a whole or Reflect on the future approach/methodology for gathering information and data for the survey, and whether to collect information from governments and other sources rather than only relying on an analysis of the government portals

- Recommendations on possible enhancements to the Survey methodology and E-Government Development Index (EGDI) including its three sub-components (online service index, telecommunication infrastructure index, human capital index) and E-Participation Index ensuring their consistency across the years
- Reach a common understanding on how e-Government promotes sustainable development and on current e-government challenges and innovative approaches to address them
- Suggestions on key thematic areas, relevant issues and e-services that can advance sustainable development and should be considered in the United Nations E-Government Survey 2018 in line with SDGs and Targets

7. ORGANIZATION

7.1. Participants

The Expert Group Meeting will be attended by a number of governance and public administration experts (including e-government), as well as experts in related areas drawn from a variety of fields, including academia, the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations.

7.2. Recommended readings for participants

To aid the meeting’s deliberations, experts are encouraged to read and review, prior to the meeting, the [United Nations e-Government Survey 2016](#), and possibly previous editions which are available online, as well as selected key documents listed below.

- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and [Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [Outcome of the expert group meeting on e-government survey held in 2015](#)
- [WSIS+10 outcome document](#)
- [Background Paper on “Expert Group Meeting on Advancing a Sustainable Information Society for All”](#), in preparation of WSIS+10 GA High Level Meeting, June 2015
- [Sustainable Development Goals Indicators](#)
- Think Piece 4 for the Small Island Developing States Symposium (February 2017), on [“Mobilizing ICTs for delivering on the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway”](#)

7.3. Structure of the meeting

The Meeting will be organized over the course of two days with plenary sessions and working groups. Experts will be invited to share their knowledge and views. To facilitate discussions and exchange of views, an overview paper will be prepared and presented in the plenary session of the first day.

7.4. Official languages

The official language of the Expert Group Meeting will be English.

7.5. Online communication

A mailing list will be created for participants to have discussions before and after the meeting.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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