



Extract from the report to the
Public Accounts Committee on
the user-friendliness and user
involvement in the development
of e-government services in Denmark

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I. Introduction and conclusion

1. This report concerns user-friendliness and involvement of the users in the development of e-government services in Denmark. In their joint e-government strategy 2011-2015, the Danish government, Local Government Denmark (the interest group and member authority of Danish municipalities) and the Danish Regions¹⁾ propose that the citizens' take-up of e-government services should be accelerated. Close to 80 per cent of all relevant communication between the citizens and the public sector should take place online by 2015. Using the e-government route will be – or is already – mandatory in some areas and the citizens are, for instance, obliged to submit notifications of change of address online.

When the government requires its citizens to use e-government services, the government is obliged to ensure the user-friendliness of said services, which is also key to increasing the take-up.

2. Rigsrevisionen launched the study in March 2013 at the request of the Danish Public Accounts Committee.

The Public Accounts Committee asked Rigsrevisionen to examine whether the extent to which users are involved in the development of e-government services suffices to ensure their user-friendliness, whether the authorities ensure satisfactory take-up of e-government services and whether the authorities have opportunity to improve the user-friendliness of the solutions after their launch.

3. The objective of the study is to provide an assessment of the authorities' efforts to ensure that e-government services are user-friendly. The report answers the following questions:

- Have the authorities involved the users in the development of the e-government services?
- Have the authorities conducted post-launch assessments of the user-friendliness of the e-government services, and do the contracts with the suppliers of the solutions stipulate that improvements of the solutions can be implemented post launch?
- Are the e-government services user-friendly, and is the take-up satisfactory?

4. The study included the following five e-government services:

- NemID (EasyID – the Danish public sector common digital signature solution), The Danish Agency for Digitisation (the Ministry of Finance);
- TastSelv Borger (E-tax self-service), The Danish Customs and Tax Authorities (the Ministry of Taxation);
- The Danish electronic land registration system, The Court Administration (the Ministry of Justice);
- online notification of change of address, the municipalities;
- online application for assistive devices, the municipalities.

Involving the users

The involvement of service users in the development of e-government services, depending on the nature of the solution and development phase, i.e. planning, development or operational phase.

User-friendliness

A user-friendly solution is characterised by being easy to use for a specific purpose in a specific context.

¹⁾ Denmark is divided into five regions, Capital Region of Denmark; Region Zealand, Region of Southern Denmark; Central Denmark Region and North Denmark Region.

MAIN CONCLUSION

The Danish e-government Strategy emphasises the importance of ensuring that e-government services are user-friendly and can be used by all citizens. The authorities have both before and after the launch of the three digital services provided by central government had focus on their user-friendliness; target audiences for the solutions were clearly defined before the launch, and the users were in some cases involved in the development of the solutions through participation in tests of their user-friendliness. However, Rigsrevisionen is of the opinion that the user-friendliness of the services can be improved if the authorities meet all the requirements of the Danish Agency for Digitisation concerning user-friendliness, and test the user-friendliness regularly.

Before the launch

To ensure the user-friendliness of the e-government services provided by central government, the users were involved in planning and developing the e-services before they were launched. The two municipal services are based on standard IT solutions and the municipalities have therefore had only limited influence on the scope of user involvement. The public sector is not required to test the user-friendliness of e-government services before they are launched, but Rigsrevisionen sees these tests as effective tools in securing the user-friendliness of online solutions. The user-friendliness of two of the three digital solutions was tested in the development phase.

After the launch

The Danish Agency for Digitisation recommends that the authorities should collect information on the users' experience with the e-government services after their launch. This is, however, not a requirement. User satisfaction surveys were conducted for the three services launched by central government, and procedures have been established for following up on the results of the surveys. Yet, the user-friendliness of the three solutions has not been tested post launch. Rigsrevisionen's examination showed that it can be difficult for the individual municipality to improve the user-friendliness of the digital solutions post launch because the municipal solutions are standard solutions, which means that changes are implemented at fixed intervals determined by the IT supplier. The contracts with the suppliers of the three digital services launched by central government do not include any requirements concerning implementation of on-going enhancements of the user-friendliness of the solutions post launch. Neither do the contracts, on the other hand, prevent the authorities from enhancing the user-friendliness post launch.

Take-up of e-government services

The take-up of *NemID* and *TastSelv Borger* is considered satisfactory, as the targets set by the authorities either have been achieved or are close to being achieved. No target has been set for the take-up of the digital land registry service, because the Danish Land Registration Court only accepts electronic registrations. Measuring the digital take-up of notifications of change of address at this point would be premature; the most recent measurement from spring 2013 shows a take-up rate of 72 per cent and the target set for December 2013 is 90 per cent. Rigsrevisionen has established that the Danish Agency for Digitisation's measurements of e-government service take-up do not include assisted digital users.

Communicating with citizens who are unable to use digital services

As regards the digital solutions referred to in this report, face-to-face services have been made available to the citizens who are unable to use digital services.

Yet, Rigsrevisionen has established that the guiding principles developed by the Danish Agency for Digitisation, which are aiming to support the authorities' implementation of the mandatory e-government services, do not address whether the authorities have made assisted digital services available to citizens who are unable to use digital services. Rigsrevisionen has also established that not all the requirements set for e-government services are available to the public.

Rigsrevisionen recommends that

- the Danish Agency for Digitisation should consider how the scope of the requirements defined for the user-friendliness of mandatory e-government services can be expanded to include also digital services that are not mandatory;
- testing user-friendliness should be included among the cross-government requirements of user-friendliness and be incorporated in the shared government IT project model;
- the Danish Agency for Digitisation's assessment of new mandatory e-government services should include the authorities' development of assisted digital services for citizens who are unable to use digital services, and whether the authorities publish the requirements set for mandatory e-government services;
- the Danish Agency for Digitisation should require the authorities to follow up on the users' experience with the e-government services on a regular basis, and subsequently – if required – enhance the user-friendliness.

The e-government user-friendliness requirements are divided into five overall categories; language, design and flow, data and functionality, and accessibility. The requirements stipulate, among other things, that the language must be easy to understand, that error messages must be in Danish and that it should be clearly indicated when a self-service transaction has been completed.

The requirements were defined and formulated following a workshop with the participation of web designers, usability experts, IT suppliers and representatives of public authorities.