

SERBIA DIGITAL AGENDA OBSERVATORY 2022

Country Report and Roadmap for Digital Agenda Advancement in Serbia



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1. Introduction

a. Executive Summary

The global pandemic caused by COVID-19 accelerated the shift to all things digital with lightning speed. E-government services were not an exception to that. In the previous 2 years there was a 31% increase in the number of registered users of the e-Uprava portal of the Republic of Serbia. There were a little over 5 million payment slips created via "Plati" e-service, proving its relevance for the citizens. As a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were 1,465,357 digital green certificates issued. These are very good results, however there is still significant room for improvement, especially in areas of improving user-centricity and product- and project-management. Insights gained through the research for the report, as well as certain official benchmarks indicate this. For example, certain indicators from the Action plan for implementation of the Development program of e-Government 2019-22 did not meet its targets yet¹. User-centricity and more widespread usage of e-services must be at the forefront of focus in both short- and long-term activities of all relevant stakeholders of Digital agenda.

Achievements related to adopted regulation are very satisfactory. Relevant strategies, laws, programs, and action plans are in place. However, a certain number of important action plans are expiring by the end of 2022 – Action plan for implementation of the Development program of e-Government, Action plan for implementation of the Strategy for development of digital skills and Action plan for implementation of the Strategy for the Development of AI, to name a few. One of the more pertinent tasks of the new Government will be to prepare and create new action plans of high quality and substance related to topics that are of crucial importance for further development of Digital agenda.

According to the eGA's National cyber security index, Serbia improved by 3 places compared to the previous report (18th vs 21st). Almost every single criterion contributing to the overall index improved and is evaluated very good. The only one that is still with a low grade is Contribution to global cyber security, evaluated with 33% of fulfillment. Although the evaluation is very good, special attention needs to be paid to the quality and practical implementation of certain elements. For example, Serbia is evaluated with 100% in the area of protection of personal data, despite the fact that there have been some serious breaches of personal data with the digital green certificates².

e-Participation of citizens and civil society organizations is formally available. Portal for civil e-consultancy process is established and working. However, there are still further improvements to be made in terms of instituting two-way communication going beyond the formal requirements of the process.

b. Methodology

This report is based on a baseline survey conducted in mid-2020. Therefore, it is not only a cross-section of the state of development of the digital agenda and e-government in Serbia, but also highlights the main innovations that have occurred in the last 12 months.

1 <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d30dcael-436f-11ec-89db-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>
2 <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-59801978>

The research methodologically included the following activities:

- Desk research – an overview of existing reports, strategies and action plans;
- Conducting and analyzing interviews with relevant representatives of state institutions, media and civil society representatives;
- Implementation and focus analysis within which three e-services that citizens of the Republic of Serbia can use were tested.

In addition to desk research, 7 in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of state institutions, media and the civil sector, as the report was also informed about their views on the development of the Digital Agenda in Serbia. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were conducted online. Each of the interviews was audio recorded.

The last part of the research consisted of a focus group conducted with 8 participants. The main task set to the participants was to test 3 e-services available through the e-Government portal. The moderator discussed with the participants their user experience, objections and suggestions aimed at improving the tested e-services.

The research methodology was devised by e-Governance Academy (eGA). eGA is a non-profit organization, analytical and advisory center from Estonia, which creates and transfers knowledge and best practices, and strengthens the decisions of central and local government in the field of digital transformation: e-Government, e-democracy and national cyber security.

The research was done in the period between March and May 2022.

2. Preconditions for the implementation of the e-governance

The main preconditions for successful Digital agenda and e-governance implementation remain internet penetration, internet and smart device usage, and a number of citizens using e-Government services. However, to meet these conditions, it is particularly important to further improve the digital literacy of both citizens and public administration bureaucracy and possess a high level of political willingness to pursue the development of e-government services by developing both e-services and internal capacities of public administration.

In 2021, internet penetration among individuals in Serbia was 81.5%. In comparison with 2020, it recorded a slight increase of just 0.5 percent. There is not a big difference in internet penetration between rural and urban areas. In urban areas, internet penetration is 85.6% while in rural areas that number is 74.7%.³

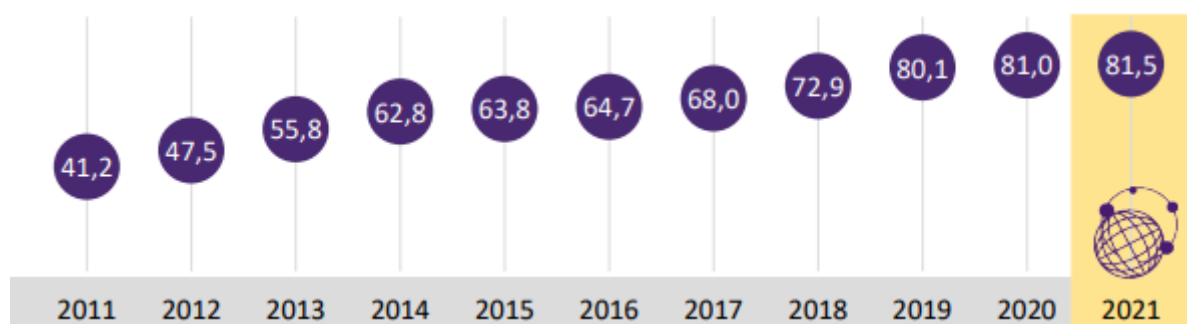
Among the population without internet access, the most frequent answer to the question of why they do not have the internet at home remains the lack of necessity. However, in comparison with the 2020 Report, we should note that a lower percentage of respondents cited expensive internet equipment as a reason – a decrease from 18.7% to 7.8%.

³ Statistical report: Use of ICT in Republic of Serbia 2021. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia; <http://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2021/Pdf/G202116016.pdf>

There was a slight decrease in the percentage of the population who never used PC (17.6%), however, differences between the less and more educated populations that never used PC remain persistent. The same downward trend applies to the access to the internet as well as the division between less and more educated population segments using the internet.

When it comes to the devices used to connect to the internet, mobile phones are widely used to access the internet. More than 90% of people across all age categories use mobile phones to surf the web. Unsurprisingly, since 95.5% of the population uses mobile phones, it drives an increase of the data transfer over mobile networks. During the Q4 2021, mobile internet data transfers amounted to 174,6 million GB which is an increase of approximately 10% in comparison with the Q3 2021.⁴

When it comes to the internet connection speed, the majority of the population with internet access possesses sufficient connection bandwidth to perform tasks related to the use of e-government services. More than 60% of the population possess connections faster than 50 Mbit/s while 36,5% possess even faster one, >100 Mbit/s.



Households' access to the internet

According to the 2021 Report on the usage of ICT in the Republic of Serbia, 40% of the population present on the internet uses e-government services instead of contacting public administration in person or through other means. This represents an increase of 3% in comparison with 2020 when 37% accessed e-government services over the internet.⁵ Additionally, in 2021, of the population that used the internet for e-government, 37% of them used e-government services to obtain information from public institutions' websites, 26% to download certain documents such as forms or certificates, and 20,6% to send filled out forms to the authorities. In 2020, numbers were 34%, 25,2% and 23,9% respectively.

In August 2021, the Office for Information Technologies and eGovernment, sponsored by the Ministry of Labor, launched an initiative dubbed "Digital Expedition". The main goal was to raise awareness of contemporary practices and trends in the digital world through interactive lectures, discussions, and workshops. This way citizens had a chance to learn more about cybersecurity and digital hygiene, e-government, and e-commerce. A total of 16 cities were visited as part of the project. During the visits there were 597 newly registered e-Citizens, while parameters for two-factor authentication were attributed to 1,132 citizens in total⁶.

4 https://www.ratel.rs/uploads/documents/empire_plugin/Pregled%20trazista%20Q4%202021.pdf

5 Str 25. <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2020/Pdf/G202016015.pdf>

6 Data received from Office for ITE

3. Political will and strategy

The government remains dedicated to the e-governance development and transformation towards a digital economy. Also, the Government's efforts are supported by international development institutions such as UNDP, World Bank, and international donors, most notably, the EU. Overall, the digital agenda in Serbia is complementary to the broader efforts of developing the digital economy and will serve as an enabler on that path.

However, when examining digital agenda as a concept in Serbia, there is a lack of definition of what digital agenda exactly means as well as what is the scope of such a term. Usually, the digital agenda is used jointly with the other terms such as information society, digital society, and e-government. Most often, information society corresponds with the term digital society while e-government should be used exclusively to denote electronic services provided by the public administration. The interviewees and participants of the focus group also had very similar, but at the same time different views on what is Digital agenda. The most common association with Digital agenda is e-government and e-services, while there are also more structural association like "all-encompassing cross-sectoral approach to total digital transformation of the entire society", "harmonization of practices and legislation with the EU", "mutual communication of the public administration" and "multi-layer process consisting of infrastructure level (mainly related to telecommunications), basic legislation from various sectors (e.g. electronic signature, e-government, personal data protection), private sector level (companies and startups) and institutional level". Maybe the simplest and the most accurate view is that "Digital agenda is a project with a clear goal of making life much easier for citizens in Serbia".

Although e-governance was not among the main goals of the Prime Minister's expose in 2020, it was outlined as one of the priorities for the new Government. Building upon the previous successes such as the adoption of the Law on eGovernment, Central Population Registry, the building of the State Data Center, just to name a few, the new Government would try to finalize the creation of the eGovernment by adopting missing essential laws, such as the Law on Digital Archive, and by enforcing the use of eGovernment mechanisms on all levels of public administration. However, after the 2022 parliamentary elections, it remains to be seen how high on the new Government's agenda e-governance would be. Due to the complex geopolitical environment, there is a possibility that it could fall on the list of priorities and, consequently, slow down further progress.

An important landmark was the establishment of the Center for the 4th Industrial Revolution in cooperation with the World Economic Forum in February 2022. Anchored in the Office for Information Technologies and eGovernment, the Center will focus on artificial intelligence and bioengineering.⁷ Also, the Serbian Government published a Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2020-2025⁸ in which one of the main goals is the improvement of public administration by utilizing artificial intelligence. Using machine learning, deep learning, and big data processes, authorities aim to further improve the quality and efficiency of existing e-government services as well as to achieve process automatization that improves overall public administration capacities. Action plan for implementation of the Strategy for the Development of AI 2020-22 is in its final year. There are still no official plans and announcements for creating a new action plan, it

7 <https://www.ite.gov.rs/vest/sr/6107/uspostavlja-se-centar-svetskog-ekonomskog-foruma-u-srbiji.php>

8 https://www.srbhttp://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/Strategija-reforme-javne-uprave-u-Republici-Srbiji-za-period-od-2021.-do-2030.-godine-1.pdfija.gov.rs/extfile/sr/437310/strategy_artificial_intelligence-condensed261219_2.docx

probably waits for the new Government to be constituted and functional. The most notable achievements of the current Action plan are the creation of the national Institute for artificial intelligence research and development⁹, introduction of master educational programs for artificial intelligence (three started at faculties in Novi Sad, Niš and Kragujevac, and two more will be chosen and financed additionally)¹⁰, establishment of the National data center in Kragujevac and establishment of the Working group for creating proposals of guidelines for development and ethical application of AI¹¹. A comprehensive report on the status of Action plan implementation is not available, so the level of achievement of other measures and activities is difficult to track.

4. Coordination of e-government implementation

The Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications is, among other things, responsible for performing activities in the field of information society and its development. Alongside the Ministry, other government bodies that are executing e-government and digital society agenda are the Office for Information Technologies and eGovernment and the Ministry of Public Administration and Local-Self Government. Although all three stakeholders are overlapping in the domain of digital society, the impression is that institutions remain compartmentalized in their efforts.

In the organizational chart of the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications exist the **Department for the Development of the Digital Agenda**. Under the Sector for Organizational Development, Project Management, and European Integration, the Department is in charge of the coordination of the development planning process, project management, e-commerce business environment improvement, cooperation between public institutions and the private sector in the fields of electronic communications, and information society.¹²

The Digital Agenda in Serbia is defined by the following documents: Information Society Development Strategy up to 2020, 2010–2020 Electronic Communication Development Strategy, and 2017–2020 Information Security Development Strategy.

In addition to the Agenda, two important laws are further defining the e-governance domain – Law on Electronic Document, Electronic Identification and Trust Services in Electronic Business, and Law on Electronic Administration. These two laws regulate the work of state bodies and organizations, bodies and organizations of provincial autonomy and local self-government units, institutions, public enterprises, and other legal and natural persons entrusted with public authority using information and communication technologies, ie conditions for establishment, maintenance and use interoperable of information and communication technologies. Further, commitment to the development of e-government and digitalization was also expressed by the establishment of the Office for Information Technology and e-Government.

9 <https://www.ivi.ac.rs>

10 <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/drustvo/4429506/master-program-vestacka-inteligencija.html>

11 <https://mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/rESENJE-RADNA-GRUPA-smernice-eticka-primena-vestacke.pdf>

12 <https://mtt.gov.rs/tekst/sr/91/sektor-za-poslovni-razvoj-upravljanje-projektima-i-evrposke-integracije.php>

5. Legal framework

Legal framework that defines the scope of the digital agenda in Serbia did not change during the period March 2021 to March 2022. It is defined by the following laws, strategies and action plans:

- Law on Electronic Administration¹³ (Zakon o elektronskoj upravi)
- Law on Information Security (Zakon o informacionoj bezbednosti)
- Law on Electronic Communications (Zakon o elektronskim komunikacijama)
- Law on Electronic Document, Electronic Identification and services of trust in electronic business
- Personal Data Protection Law¹⁴ (Zakon o zaštiti podataka o ličnosti)
- Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance¹⁵ (Zakon o slobodnom pristupu informacijama od javnog značaja)

Strategies:

- New Generation Network Development Strategy until 2023¹⁶
- 2020–2025 Artificial Intelligence Strategy¹⁷
- 2020 – 2024 Digital Skills Development Strategy¹⁸
- 2021– 2026 Information Society and Information Security Development Strategy¹⁹
- 2021 – 2030 Public Administration Reform Strategy²⁰
- 2020 – 2022 Electronic Administration Development Plan²¹
- 2020 – 2027 Smart Specialization Strategy²²

Action plans:

- 2021 – 2025 Action Plan for the implementation of the 2021 – 2030 Public Administration Reform Strategy²³
- 2020 – 2022 Action Plan for the implementation of the 2020 – 2022 Electronic Administration Development Plan²⁴
- 2020 – 2022 Action Plan for the implementation of the 2020–2025 Artificial Intelligence Strategy²⁵

13 <http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/zakon-o-elektronskoj-upravi.docx>

14 <http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/zakon-o-zastiti-podataka-o-licnosti.pdf>

15 <http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/zakon-o-slobodnom-pristupu-informacijama-od-javnog-znacaja.pdf>

16 https://mtt.gov.rs/extfile/sr/789/2A_Strategija%20razvoja%20mreza%20-%202023.pdf

17 https://www.srbija.gov.rs/extfile/sr/437310/strategy_artificial_intelligence-condensed261219_2.docx

18 <https://www.srbija.gov.rs/extfile/sr/448245/strategija-razvoja-digitalnih-vestina-RS-2020-24-0215-cyr.zip>

19 https://www.ratel.rs/uploads/documents/empire_plugin/Strategija%20razvoja%20informacionog%20drustva%20i%20informacione%20bezbednosti%202021-2026.pdf

20 <http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/PAR-Strategy-in-the-Republic-of-Serbia-for-the-period-2021%E2%88%922030.pdf>

21 <http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/Program-razvoja-eUprave-u-RS-2020-2022.pdf>

22 <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2020/21/3/reg>

23 <http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/Akcioni-plan-za-period-od-2021.-do-2025.-godine-za-sprovođenje-Strategije-RJU-u-Republici-Srbiji-2021-2030..pdf>

24 <http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/AP-za-sprovođenje-Programa-razvoja-eUprave.pdf>

25 <https://www.srbija.gov.rs/extfile/sr/469953/akcioni-plan-za-razvoj-vestacke-inteligencije-za-period-2020-2022-cyr.zip>

6. State of the e-services (based on questionnaire and user cases)

General notes

E-government services have been developing steadily for the past several years. The COVID-19 pandemic served as an accelerator to more widespread acceptance and usage of e-government services by the citizens. However, there is still significant room for development and bringing e-services even closer to the citizens.

Two main areas that can potentially enable e-government services to reach the next level are user-centricity and product management. These topics were emphasized in interviews and focus groups as something that is crucially needed in order to have better e-government services overall. Although very common-sense, user-centricity and product management is something that is a long-term commitment, and needs to be embedded structurally in all levels of government. It will require serious focus, work and dedication to be implemented successfully and in a permeating way.

Encouraging fact is that certain institutions are aware of this need. For example, Office for ITE is using concepts such as agile, design thinking, user personas etc. which is a very significant indicator of future approaches. Another good example is the Team for public administration reform and e-government at the Office of the Prime minister, which uses similar concepts as Office for ITE, together with co-creation concepts. This was applied in creating and introducing the e-service of issuing parking tickets and parking spaces for people with disabilities. Still in its nascent stages, these kinds of approaches need to be promoted and implemented in the entire e-government structure.

E-services testing

Services provided by the Republic of Serbia in electronic format are centrally situated on the e-Government portal <https://euprava.gov.rs>. The exact number of services available to the citizens cannot be found easily and in one place. Even though new services are being added regularly to the portal, this dynamic is not very frequent so the assumption is that the total number of available services can be counted and shown without much effort. By doing a simple manual listing from the portal, the total number of available services to the citizens in April 2022 was around 50 (fifty).

The most popular and frequently used services were first and foremost the ones related to COVID-19 (issuance of digital green certificate, appointment of PCR testing, expressing interest for vaccination against COVID-19). These services were a significant factor in motivating citizens to use e-Government for the first time and consequently increase the total number of citizens using e-Government services. Besides these services, the most popular prominent services are registration of a child for enrollment in kindergarten, scheduling appointments for issuing ID cards and passports, replacing driver's licenses, obtaining certificates of impunity electronically, gaining insight into debts basis of property tax, as well as to check their data in the central population register.²⁶

The total number of e-Citizens (number of registered accounts on the Portal for electronic identification) on April 12th 2022 was 1,320,305. On average, an additional couple of thousands

26 <https://eid.gov.rs/en-US/who-is-ecitizen>

of new e-Citizens are registered daily so it is relatively easy to calculate an approximate number of total e-Citizens at a given moment in time. Several other representative indicators of e-services usage are shown in the table below²⁷:

Service	Quantity
Users that activated at least one e-service	1,175,319
Unique payment slips created via "Plati" service	5,090,332
E-delivery of documents via "e-Dostava" system	585,969
Newborns registered via "Bebo, dobrodošla na svet" service	311,185
Applications for kindergarten enrollment via "eVrtić" service	186,573
Digital green certificates issued via eUprava portal	1,465,357

Although services related to COVID-19 represent an important uplift for e-services usage, they are essentially an ad-hoc event. Therefore, the focus in e-services testing was on other services which will be needed by the citizens more frequently for a longer period. Three services that were tested are:

1. Becoming an eCitizen
2. Pay (Plati)
3. Scheduling an appointment for issuance of ID card / passport

Becoming an eCitizen

eCitizen is any person who has a user account on the EID Portal. Any citizen of the Republic of Serbia who has a valid biometric document (identity card or passport) and has reached the age of 16, as well as foreign citizens with or without a regulated residence in the Republic of Serbia can become eCitizens.²⁸ This service is promoted as one of the most prominent services on eUprava portal as well, being positioned on the home-page carousel among ten other top services from the portal.

²⁷ Data obtained through interviews with the Office for Information Technologies and eGovernment and eUprava portal.

²⁸ <https://eid.gov.rs/en-US/who-is-ecitizen>

Besides being promoted as a prominent service, it really represents a foundational service for the usage of all other eGovernment services, whether simple or complex. However, it caused confusion among the focus group participants from the beginning. "What do you mean by such a request?", "Where should we click?", "Do you mean to simply log in to our account or should we do something else?" were mostly the initial counter-questions of the focus group participants when they were given the task to test the service to become an eCitizen. Also there was feedback that "They often change a lot of things on the portal and citizens cannot keep up with the changes and understand them". Some of the participants went to the eID portal, did not know where to go after that, and then could not return to the home page of eUprava portal. The group needed to be prompted exactly to the carousel containing the "Become an eCitizen" link, none of the participants managed to understand what page needs to be clicked and what service needs to be activated. Furthermore, neither of the participants mentioned eID (electronic identification portal) which is also a go-to place for becoming an eCitizen.

The confusion was reinforced when the participants clicked on the "Find out more" button for becoming an eCitizen.

The screenshot shows a news article on the eUprava portal. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Usluge', 'Životni događaji', 'Vesti', 'Pomoć', and 'Kontakt', and a user profile icon labeled 'Moja eUprava'. Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail: '← Povratak na listu vesti'. The main heading is 'Postanite eGrađanin' with a date of '28. oktobar 2020.' and a 'Čitaj mi' button. The article text states: 'Od danas na preko 360 lokacija u 150 gradova i opština svi građani mogu besplatno da preuzmu parametre za dvofaktorsku autentikaciju (eID) i na taj način koriste usluge elektronske uprave.' There are two sub-sections: 'Šta znači prijava dvofaktorskom autentikacijom?' and 'Šta je potrebno da biste koristili ovaj način prijave?'. The first sub-section explains that eID represents a medium level of reliability and that users need a qualified electronic certificate and a mobile app. The second sub-section states that users need to register on the portal with their name and password, and then they can download parameters for the ConsentID app at 360 locations. At the bottom right, there is a 'Vrh strane' button and a chat icon.

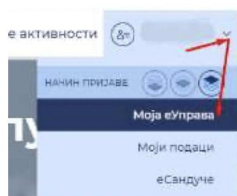
The page immediately dives into stating that the citizens can "download" the parameters for two-factor authentication (eID) free of charge and thus use e-government services at over 360 locations in 150 cities and municipalities. "I am familiar with the existence of ConsentID application, but I have problems with my mobile phone so I cannot use the application on my phone at all", "This is mostly like e-banking, I suppose", "In our support center people do not even reach the point to ask these kinds of questions due to their confusion on the topic of ConsentID and similar things". General reaction and understanding of an ordinary citizen is much better when there is one-on-one explanation of what two-factor authentication is. However, if the understanding and actions are only left to depend on reading the instructions on the eUprava portal the results will be discouraging.

After opening the document with instructions on how to install and use the ConsentID application the situation is even more uncertain.

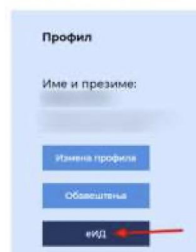
Osnovni korak (preduslov) je da imate parametre za podešavanje aplikacije. Do ovih parametara moguće je doći na jedan od dva načina:

1. Korisnik koji **ima kvalifikovani elektronski sertifikat**, loguje se na svoj korisnički nalog na Portalu eUprava.

Na stranici **Moja eUprava** izabrati opciju „eID“



Moja eUprava



U donjem desnom uglu odabrati opciju „IZDAJ PODATKE“.

Potvrditi na dugme (kao na slici), a u donja dva polja **biće upisani podaci koji su neophodni za INSTALIRANJE ConsentID aplikacije na telefon**.

Издај податке

Подаци неопходни за издавање еИД-а у мобилној апликацији на телефону.

Детаљно упутство за коришћење апликације ConsentID

2. Korisnik koji **ima kreiran** korisnički nalog na Portalu eUprava **korisničkim imenom i lozinkom, ili nema uopšte kreiran korisnički nalog**

Kreiranje korisničkog naloga i izdavanje parametara za dvofaktorsku autentikaciju građani mogu preuzeti na [šalterima za izdavanje elektronskog identiteta](#).

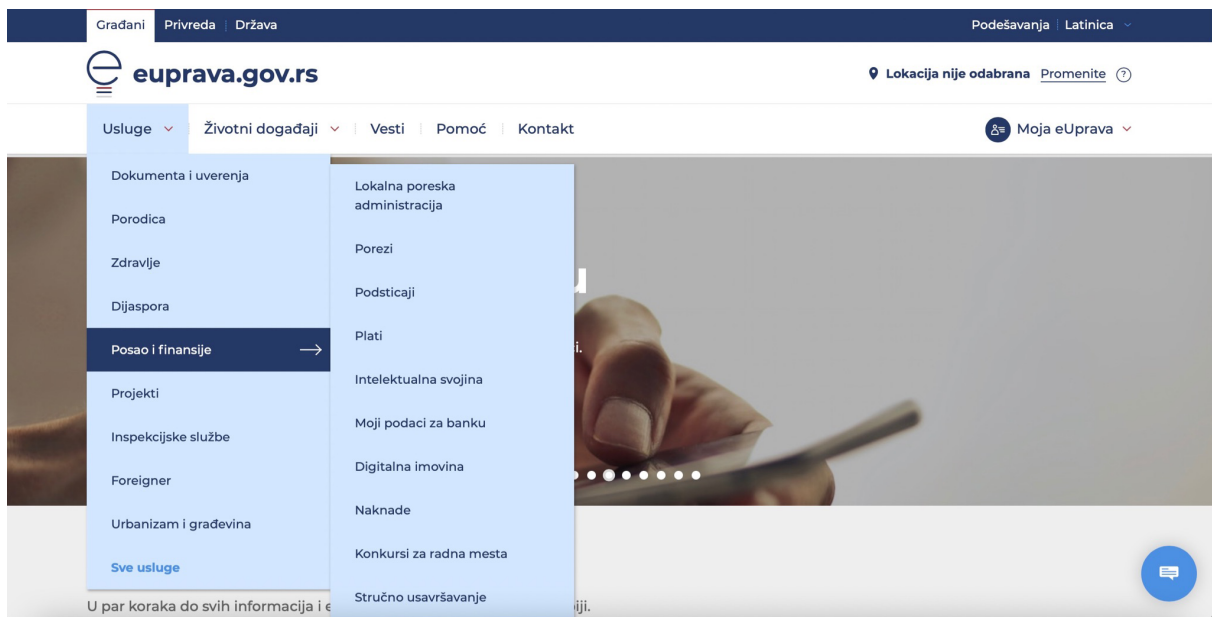
“Now I really don't know what I am supposed to do”, “The one thing I am maybe certain in is that I have to go somewhere physically and receive some parameters for something that I am not quite sure how to use yet” are some of the most representative impressions of the participants during the examination of this page of the portal.

It is very clear that there is still work to be done on addressing and demystifying the basic notions of registering on eGovernment portals, as well as different levels of authentication and access to e-services. For example, there is not a clear understanding which services are or are not available depending on the level and type of registration. The most basic definitions such as eCitizen are not yet fully understood among the majority of the population.

Pay (“Plati”)

The Pay (Plati) service to Citizens and Economy enables an efficient and reliable way of paying taxes and fees for services provided by public administration bodies. The system creates a unique payment slip (payment order) for each service and a unique reference number. Currently through this service you can perform payment of fees and charges (Ministry of Interior) and calculation and payment of tax on the transfer of absolute rights in the procedure of transfer of ownership over a used motor vehicle (Ministry of Finance – Tax Administration)²⁹

When asked to find the service on the eGovernment portal, only one of the focus groups participants managed to find it without any additional help. Other participants hovered between “Services” and “Life events” menus trying to find the “Pay” service without success.



After finding the exact location of the service it is very clear “what is available as a possibility with this service”. Nevertheless, the step in which a concrete service for which the fee/tax needed to be paid appeared to be a rather lengthy one. The reason for this is a long list in the drop-down menu. For a person who is not equipped with basic digital skills this could present a problem. Several participants in the focus group found it time-consuming to search for the concrete tax/fee to be paid. Additionally, several participants highlighted the fact that it is possible to enter the mandatory data only in Cyrillic.

“I do not understand what is meant by “number of register” field?” is one of the dilemmas that the participants had. This was quickly resolved in a very positive manner by clicking on the field and receiving a very clear visual instruction on what needs to be the input, as shown below.

Подаци о саобраћајној дозволи

🔔 Молимо извршите унос података о Вашој саобраћајној дозволи

Регистарска ознака возила:

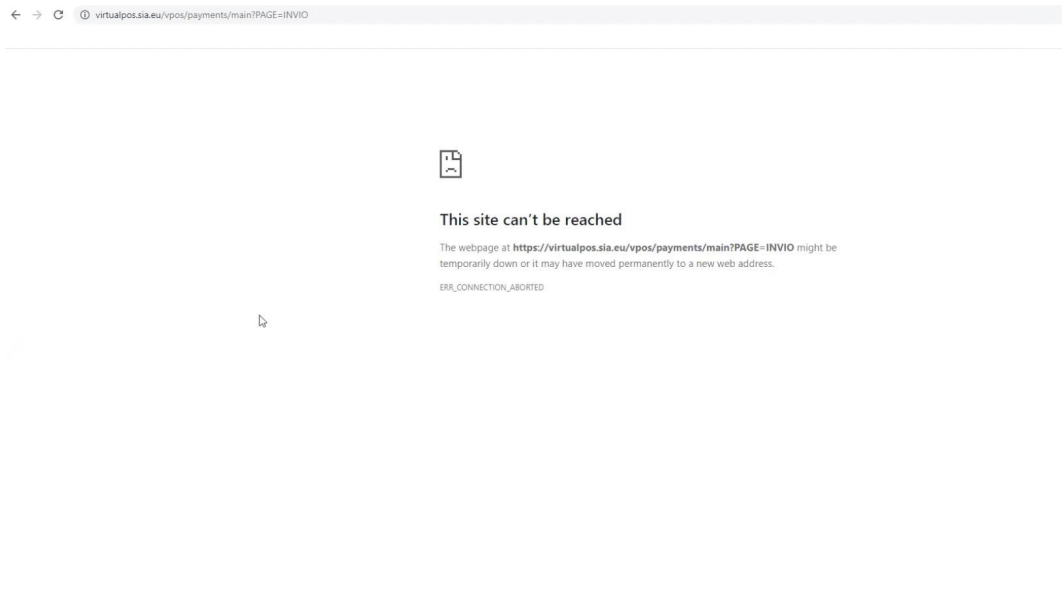
Број регистра:

Серијски број саобраћајне дозволе:

< Назад
Напред >

However, after inserting all the requested data there was a message that “the inserted data are non-existent”, although the participant double-checked the input of the data. “The only thing I am suspecting to be wrong is the registration plate number – I do not know whether it should be in Cyrillic, Latin, all characters joined or something else.”

One of the participants had a premature ending of the process on the payment step. “When I tried to realize the actual payment it did not go through. I do not understand the reason for it, maybe there is a problem with compatibility of the banks which are shown on the payment page...”.



Scheduling an appointment for issuance of ID card / passport

This is one of the most used services on the eUprava portal. It has been tested within the previous reports and the aim was to see whether there were any improvements to the service.

The most common proposal for improving this service is to create it as an end-to-end service, enabling the citizens to perform the entire process electronically, including the delivery of the documents at a chosen location rather than going physically to a police station to pick up the document. This cannot be created at the moment for different justifiable reasons, of course. However, it could be potentially something to be researched and tried in the long-term.

The first comment was related to selection of the location in the top right corner of the page. “When I selected the location of my municipality, this service was not available to me, which is strange since I live in one of the biggest municipalities in Serbia. However, when I de-selected the location and left it undefined I managed to find my municipality for this service.”.



Another participant of the focus group experienced the same issue with a worse result – the municipality could not be found as a provider of the service at all, which left the participant wondering what the reason for that could be. No additional feedback could be obtained for this problem, and it left the matter unresolved.

Entire process is relatively straightforward and smooth from an end-user standpoint, however it did not show any significant improvements compared to previous periods. Both the reservation, as well as the cancellation of appointments is done very easily and good enough to get the job done.

One more feedback was that in the municipalities with higher number of inhabitants, such as Novi Beograd for example, it is possible to schedule an appointment only for one day in the following 30 days. "I do not know if that is the real situation or if someone like agencies are booking all the available time-slots and nothing is left for ordinary citizens."

7. Digital skills (literacy)

During the month of September in 2021, Deli space for creative action conducted a research "eServices in the city of Nis"³⁰. Interested citizens of Nis participated in this research, and the aim of the research was to gather information on the use and quality of existing eServices.

This research included over 200 respondents. As many as 82.20 percent of respondents answered that they did not know how many eServices exist in the city of Nis, on the other hand, 52.34 percent of respondents answered that they used to use eServices instead of physically visiting public institutions. From Deli prostor, they say that this data unequivocally indicates that the information provided by citizens is minimal, but that on the other hand, the openness and interest of citizens in using eServices is at a high level. Accordingly, the conclusion is that with certain efforts invested in the process of support and education, it is possible to accelerate the change of old and the adoption of new habits, says Deli prostor.

In another research conducted by Synchro Hub from Pančevo during April 2021 41 percent of respondents (from a total number of 638 respondents) said that complicated process of use represents an obstacle for regular usage of e-services.³¹

8. Access to services, awareness-raising

Information from the end of first quarter of 2022 on the e-Uprava number of users says that there are approximately 1.2 million registered citizens, out of whom 150.000 belong to the category 60+ years old.³² Estimates are that Serbia currently has a population of 6.9 million people meaning that approximately 17.8% of the population has used e-government services at least once in their life. Unfortunately, there is no detailed information about habits and frequencies of using e-government that would help us to understand better interaction between citizens and e-government.

It is mentioned earlier in the report that there are approximately 50 services available on eUprava portal in total. On the other hand, other sources say that there are around 900 services available on eUprava portal³³. This difference most probably stems from different ways of defining what *one unique service* is. Based on the manual inspection of the eUprava portal, it seems that one service was counted as a *separate service* for each municipality. If this definition of one unique service is applied, then the total number of 900 services can be derived. For example, the issuance of a health card (zdravstvena knjižica) can be done in all municipalities in Serbia – is this cca. 180 services, or just one service available for multiple municipalities?

30 <https://jugmedia.rs/centar-za-podrsku-eupravi-otvoren-u-nisu/>

31 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xy0S0l2GV1M>

32 <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/drustvo/4734123/starije-generacije-nove-tehnologije.html>

33 <https://www.ite.gov.rs/tekst/sr/77/portal-euprava.php>

According to the research³⁴ NALED conducted, approximately half of the population is familiar with e-government services while 18% of citizens still have not discovered it as a possibility. The large majority (83%) of citizens that are familiar with eservices are satisfied with them. Although almost 40% of them use the internet to find relevant information about needed administrative services, just 14% of them use e-service as a solution. 70% of people still obtain those services by going to the institutions in person. Additionally, as reasons for not using e-government services, they are citing over-complicated process(es) and the belief that it is easier to do it in person. The three most used services on e-Uprava are Covid-19 related e-services, appointment booking, and submission of certificate requests. Interestingly enough, 46% of respondents prefer accessing e-Uprava by mobile or tablet compared with the 23% of them who prefer PC or laptop as a primary choice. However, the fact that username and password are the preferred way for registration at e-Uprava means that most users are unable to access services that require a higher level of security. Almost half of the respondents would welcome help on the platform in form of clearer instruction, e.g. video step-by-step explanations, page to submit questions, or direct customer support. Also, in this research, they identified the pain points of e-government adoption in the hesitancy of rural population towards e-services as well as the lower level of digital literacy of both citizens and public servants, particularly among the older population.³⁵

Frequent problem with obtaining access to digital signatures is the fact that citizen IDs issued before 2014 are incompatible with digital signatures. Therefore, citizens that are in possession of such an ID are either forced to pay for the issuing of a new ID or to use other means to obtain a digital signature. However, the expiry period for most IDs is 10 years, we could expect that in 2024 most citizens could obtain digital signatures on their IDs.

However, one of the successful initiatives was eSanduče, the application and the portal of the utility provider Infostan Tehnologije, showing that a different approach could be beneficial. After an intensive campaign in cooperation with the payment providers, eSanduče has now been used by more than 200.000 users. Their approach showed that a customer acquisition campaign by providing certain benefits, such as discounts on a monthly bill, as well directly engaging with customers at the branch offices to help them open an account is equally important as the functionalities of eSanduče. Also, it should be noted that the Serbian eCommerce Association declared eSanduče as the best e-commerce solution in the public administration field.³⁶

In August 2021, on the eUprava portal three new eservices were rolled out. eCertificate (eUverenje) service allows both citizens and legal entities to obtain a certificate confirming that no criminal proceedings are being conducted. In addition, legal entities can obtain certificates confirming they were not convicted in the past³⁷.

Also, the Ministry for Environmental Protection digitized the very first services it offers to the private sector. In February 2022, 13 e-services were rolled out with the ambition to increase their number by the end of the year in line with the Ministry's Green Agenda.³⁸

Currently, the Ministry of Health is working on the development and adoption of a new Program for the digitization of the healthcare system for the 2022 - 2026 period as well

34 Ipsos Strategic Marketing, Opinions on the e-Government Services, July 2021 https://lei.rs/sajt/publikacije/Istra%C5%BEivanje_stavova_gra%C4%91ana_o_eUslugama_u_Srbiji.pptx

35 <https://naled.rs/vest-privreda-tri-puta-vise-koristi-e-upravu-od-gradjana-5585>

36 <https://www.beograd.rs/lat/beoinfo/1790631-aplikacija-esanduce-dobila-nagradu-za-elektronsku-trgovinu-u-javnom-sektoru/>

37 <https://bizlife.rs/tri-nove-usluge-na-portalu-euprave-stede-tri-odlaska-na-salter/>

38 https://euprava.gov.rs/eUsluge_Min_zastite_zivotne_sredine

as the subsequent Action Plan. Although the Ministry rolled out eZdravstvo portal, it still lacks functionalities that would integrate both primary and secondary health care systems to achieve seamless communication.

At the end of 2021, the Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure established a working group dedicated to the development of the eProstor portal. The project's main goal will primarily be the formation of a digital database of spatial and urban plans, with the creation of a key set of data on existing and planned land use. This would further improve the existing ePermits (eDozvola) process that is already in place.³⁹

Also, the Post of Serbia is working on the establishment of two electronic services – ePismonoša (qualified electronic delivery service) and eNotar.⁴⁰

The Ministry of Agriculture published a tender for the development of the eAgrar portal solution that should enable more efficient management of the Register of Agricultural Holdings and more efficient management of subsidies in agriculture and rural development. The expected kick-off for the first phase of the new platform is July 2022.⁴¹

9. Cyber security

Cyber security should be perceived in two ways. First is the physical security of the servers and storage points of institutions and e-government services providers that should have necessary levels of protection. Currently, cyber-crime is seen as the main threat, with malware, phishing, ransomware, and, to an extent, Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) as the most common attack types.⁴²

Second is the security of the citizens' data that has been managed and/or stored by institutions.

Often, sensitive citizens' personal data is made available to third persons during the process of using eservice. For instance, in the fall of 2022 after introducing mandatory COVID Green Digital Certificates for accessing closed venues, persons that were verifying certificates could access the private data of persons whose certificates had been checked. Later this fault within the system had been corrected, however, it showed vulnerability and the importance of securing data on all access levels.⁴³

10. E-participation, e-democracy – is there unified structure for governmental websites?

As mentioned in the previous Digital Agenda reports, the right of citizens to submit initiatives, petitions, and proposals is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. In accordance with the Law on the National Assembly, the National Assembly, i.e. the deputies, consider initiatives, petitions, and proposals. Citizens can submit initiatives, petitions, and

39 <https://vojvodinauzivo.rs/pokrece-se-projekat-eprorstor-formirana-radna-grupa/>

40 <https://naled.rs/vest-odrzana-prva-sednica-saveza-za-eupravu-u-2022-godini-6071>

41 <https://www.euronews.rs/biznis/agrobiznis/31990/e-agrar-pocinje-sa-radom-u-julu-subvencije-na-klik/vest>

42 <https://www.pwc.rs/en/publications/cybersecurity-ecosystem-report.html>

43 <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-59801978>

proposals in written or *electronic form*, in which case they may use a form available to citizens on the website of the National Assembly.⁴⁴

The Law on referendum and people's initiative was adopted in November 2021, marking the first change of this law in 23 years. It introduced for the first time the possibility of submitting initiatives in electronic format, regulated with articles 59 and 62.⁴⁵

Although having its setbacks after it was announced by the Government of Serbia in June 2021, the portal for e-consultations started operating functionally.⁴⁶ This portal represents a centralized location for participation of citizens or civil society organizations in policy making processes in Serbia. The functioning of the e-consultation processes is regulated by the Law on the planning system, which was evaluated positively by the interviewees for this year's report. However, the main objection and problem related to the process of civic participation in policy making is the substance behind the formal process. For example, there were cases where official comments were made on certain legislative proposals and there was no feedback whatsoever in the following steps of the process. It seems that the electronic process can be more efficient in unilateral communication compared to live public discussions for new regulation proposals. Therefore, most of the civic organization prefer to be engaged through "analogue" and "offline" options within these mechanisms.

Another layer of confusion related to the process of civic dialogue is the formal ownership of the process, which lied with the Ministry for human and minority rights and social dialogue, a newly established ministry in the last Government. The process of inclusion of civil society organizations in creating public policy proposals is regulated by Guidelines for the involvement of civil society organizations in working groups for drafting policy documents and drafts.⁴⁷ It remains to be seen how this process will be managed by the newly elected Government.

Finally, a tool that is available for creative e-participation of citizens and civil society organizations is the Open Data initiative, led by ITE office in partnership with UNDP Serbia. The latest data show that there are almost 2000 data sets made available by 110 organizations. There are a little bit over 1600 users of the portal that created 36 use-cases based on the available data sets.⁴⁸ This figure can be certainly considered low, and there is significant space for development in this area.

11. ROADMAP for the DA advancement in Serbia in upcoming years

Now that a sufficient number of e-government services has been rolled out, efforts of the Government and other interested parties should be focused on customer acquisition, mapping of pain points on a journey when e-government services, and education of public servants that are the main point of contact when accessing government services.

Since the Government chose a top-down approach to developing e-government services, more focus should be placed on the e-government implementation at the local public administration levels. Often, the main obstacle to the adoption of new services is unfamiliarity with new functionalities or not being incentivized enough to implement them.

44 <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/gradjani/pitajte/inicijative,-peticije,-predstavke-i-predlozi.1098.html>

45 <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/cir/pdf/zakoni/2021/2003-21.pdf>

46 <https://ekonsultacije.gov.rs>

47 <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/zakljucak/2020/8/1/reg>

48 <https://data.gov.rs/sr/dashboard/>

Strategic, legislative, and administrative framework

- Re-iterating from last year's report – ensure proper and substantial implementation of current regulation, strategic frameworks and planned deadlines.
- Focus on several important Action plans that have a duration until the end of 2022. Those include, but are not limited to: Action plan for implementation of the Development program of e-Government, Action plan for implementation of the Strategy for development of digital skills and Action plan for implementation of the Strategy for the Development of AI. These action plans need to be prepared and created following a clear vision related to Digital agenda and e-governance.
- Promote and bring closer strategic, legislative, and administrative framework and documents to as wider audience as possible. Focus should be on every segment of the society since the COVID-19 pandemic showed that even the senior citizens can use e-services with ease.
- Significantly improve the training programs, competences and skills related to user-centricity, project management and program management within the public sector. These competences and skills are crucial in advancing the Digital agenda and e-government to higher levels of performance.
- Ensure a proper feedback loop and communication between government institutions and citizens and civil society within the e-participation mechanisms in creating public policies.
- Regular publishing of achievements and results related to Digital agenda and e-governance. This needs to be done in a simple and straightforward manner so that every interested organization or individual can interpret and understand the progress and significance in an easy way.

E-government and citizen information

- Strategic and operational focus needs to be put on user-centricity. Ensure inclusion of citizens and relevant citizen groups in development and creation of new e-services. Focus on co-creation approaches in e-services development.
- Engage experts from the areas of design thinking, service development, customer experience, co-creation, product development and management to share and increase the level of knowledge and e-service outputs.
- Share best practices and examples that are already done and have proven results within e-services creation. For example, the approach for creating and introducing the e-service of issuing parking tickets and parking spaces for people with disabilities can be replicated and re-used for other e-services.
- Increase the number of use-cases related to open data by organizing challenges and including more relevant groups into them (for example mixed teams of students, startups and established companies). Establish cooperation with various organizations dealing with data science, machine learning and AI to improve the quality of use-cases. Focus should be on e-services alleviating everyday life and activities.
- Invest in promotion and actual locations where citizens can be easily onboarded to use e-services. Replicate examples such as e-services/e-government onboarding points at vaccination locations.
- Establish regular channels of communication with the citizens, be it through satisfaction surveys, communication through e-mail, social networks or some other channels. These channels of communication need to be top-of-mind for the most general public, with very fast response times of high quality.

Cyber security

- Focus on more qualitative aspects of cyber security. For example, it is not sufficient to have personal data protection legislation in place, there need to be systems, infrastructure and processes related to personal data protection ensuring that serious breaches of privacy do not occur.
- Ensure basic trainings for employees in the public sector related to cyber security, e.g. phishing attacks and similar risks.

