

Speech by Mr Damjan Mancevski, Minister of Information Society and Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia, at the 12th Conference on Payments and Market Infrastructures: Open Doors to the Changing Payments Landscape, 3-5 June 2019, Ohrid, North Macedonia

We live in an era of digital revolution. The implementation of information technology has become an essential factor for economic development, which directly affects the development of any sphere of society. The world we live in today, where we already identify ourselves with our binary identities, has imposed the need to change many processes. Not only changing the way we think and how we use the benefits of fast forward technological development, but also regulating everything that can be achieved by utilizing ICTs.

The process of digital transformation is a long and arduous one. However, in the past several years we have taken serious steps towards remedying this and promoting the “digital first” approach. To do so we needed to establish the foundations, both technical and legal.

As digital policy decision makers, we are dedicated to providing equal access to public services for our citizens and businesses. However, the greater availability of services and opportunities via digital channels brings greater challenges. In order to facilitate this economic growth, but also to bridge the gap with the EU, we need to provide a strong digital infrastructure, compliance with legislative requirements, as well as an open and safe cyber space. We need to think about security, cyber threats, sustainability and resilience of Government services and processes, electronic identification, and protection of our citizens, businesses and data available online in order to ensure the existence of digital operations.

The first pillar of the **Digital Agenda** of the European Union, and thus the beginning of the **digital transformation** of the North Macedonia, is harmonization of the domestic legislation with the EIDAS Regulation. Hence, a law on electronic documents, electronic identification and trust services has been prepared. The purpose of this law is to provide mechanisms and services to increase the confidentiality in the electronic transactions, thus providing legal safety and encouraging the use of electronic identification. The implementation should enable the newly registered trust service providers in the country that demonstrate that they meet relevant requirements, to offer trust services regionally, and on the global market. Our role as a Government in this manner is to facilitate regional and EU level agreements, in order to bridge the gap with the EU MS and achieve recognition of Macedonian service providers.

From a technical standpoint we had to establish the **base registers** and enable safe and reliable environment for standardized data exchange between the institutions. All of these building blocks had to be regulated with common guidelines and standards. This is where the **National Interoperability Framework (NIF)** comes in. It is a framework that regulates the legal, organizational, semantical and technical aspects of interoperability in the Republic of North Macedonia and is based on EU's EIF 2.0.

Based on this framework we have built a modern interoperability platform which enables safe, secure and reliable exchange of information between the government institutions. This enables the Service delivery platform to exchange needed data and documents, by consumption of available services from the existing backend platforms and solutions in the government institutions.

An integral part of the interoperability platform is the **Service Register**. It is a centralized register of all internal and external web services from backend systems for data access or transactional services from the institutions which are part of the platform. It manages the access privileges for every service and "actor" on the platform.

Another key register closely coupled with the interoperability platform is **the Register of Administrative services**. It is a central repository of all institutions, data, proofs and procedures related to administrative procedures. It is a sort of "master key" collection for the configuration of all administrative procedures as stipulated by the respective Laws. This tool enables us to maintain a standardized overview of the process flows and required documents/proofs for all administrative procedures.

Combining these two registers enabled the establishment of the **National Portal for e-Services**. Using the interoperability platform as a base we were able to identify key services on the platform and build electronic services for the citizens. The Portal can be regarded as a front-end solution facing the citizen utilizing the before-mentioned building blocks for service orchestration and delivery. In other words, it is an online service delivery platform for creating, administering and publishing e-Services using the national building blocks.

Payment for the services provided through the national portal for e-services is enabled through the financial instruments recognized by our system, so far. More precisely, by direct electronic funds transfer and by creating virtual temporary accounts for clearing payments to the competent authorities that are budget users. Using our electronic identity in the whole process of payment, and to move forward in the process of building trust between the digital world and our financial system, we had to implement the last year addendum of the EU antimoney laundering directive into our legal system, so that we can prevent the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering.

The growing digital economy is a tremendous opportunity for economies in Europe and the rest of the world to come together. Beyond taking care of the conventional goods and services sector, to look at the new rules that will enable the digital economy to grow, flourish and integrate.