Recommendation 16:

E-participation — **Participative access to public sector services (political participation)**

Using 'e-participation' to meet the societal need 'Participative access to public sector services (political participation)'

Status quo:

In general it can be observed that the main challenge regarding the use of e-participation technologies to promote the political participation of the citizens is not a technical one.

There are already many e-participation platforms in several EU states up and running, e.g. in Estland, several Scandinavian countries, UK, Germany, Spain to mention just view. Sometimes these applications are used on a national level and sometimes on a local one (e.g. in Frankfurt, Reykjavik, Gothenburg). Additionally there are running e-participation platforms on a European level, like the European Citizens Initiative or the Online EU Public Consultations among others.

Recommended actions:

Technical challenges:

- anonymity or real name policies; the challenge of fake profiles
- Reduction of complexity; improvement of user-friendliness & user-experience; appealing and yet simple, attractive and easy to use system
- Appropriateness for the targeted participants
- Accessibility

Non-technical challenges:

- *transparency, accountability*: Create a process how to guarantee that the opinions of the citizens are taken into consideration in the policy process
- *personnel resources*: as moderator for e-participation applications, as user support or help desk
- *promotion*: encouraging citizens to participate
- *cyber security*: e.g. prevent manipulation by organized groups, privacy, data protection, confidentiality, secure system
- *guidelines*: Develop guidelines for safe and acceptable use
- *e-identification*: harmonized rules for identification requirements

Participative access to public sector services (political participation):
Our informants mentioned establishing trust in governance, voicing their opinions, accessing timely and accurate information, unlinking public sector and politics as some of the key needs under this header.
One informant expressed his opinion as: "A clear point of authority to be established (often have to roam offices because it is not clear the authority for a particular task)."

E-participation:
*E-Participation refers to the ICT supported participation in processes involved in government and governance. Such processes may concern administration, service delivery, decision making and policy making. According to a more detailed definition, e- participation is the use of ICT to broaden and deepen political participation by enabling citizens to connect with one another and with their elected representatives.**

* Macintosh A (2004) Characterizing E-Participation in Policy-Making: In the Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS-37). Hawai.