

Presidents, prime ministers, ladies and gentlemen

The first naturally digital generation will be almost middle-aged by 2025. Yet, most digital states are still to be born. How long do people in otherwise developed countries have to manage the cyber world without the support of their states? For how long must people of Europe live without universal, time-stamped, digital signatures accepted all over our Europe? We provide passports, a safe means for identification, to our citizens in analogue world. We recognize these passports cross-border and globally.

What about cyber world? Are our citizens protected by our states, because they have the means to identify each other online, securely, safely and in real time? Not yet. This is why you have gathered in Tallinn today to seek urgent solution to the situation where our people and our businesses are online, but our states have left them alone there.

We often deplore the power of internet giants, yet give our citizens no other option than to rely on Google for safe identification and therefore safe communication and transacting online. Even those who provide for home markets the digital id-s, are not able to help their citizens to transact and communicate with it cross border. There are even a few cases where digital signatures are mutually recognized by law, but unfortunately not practically applicable online. This must change.

Digital society could do so much to help those living in rural areas – they face the heaviest burden of travel to government offices. They would also help those with lower incomes – digital services are cheaper to use than those on paper. They are a big equalizer, as big businesses and rich people have their means of managing big bureaucracies, but simple people suffer in their hands. Digital services mean also that people with irregular working hours or high family care burden – usually also vulnerable groups of society – can access government services 24/7 and remove the stress of having to take time off to administer their lives.

I am President to digital society which has full support of its government. This support is mainly in four elements:

- Law base to make transactions in analogue world and in digital world legally equal
- Digital identification for safe use and exchange of information on a universal platform
- Digital government services using the same universal platform
- Possibility to create private digital services through the same platform as the government does.

Why we built a digital nation?

In Estonia, we built our system of e-government so that it would meet people's expectations and be affordable to middle-income country. It also made government accessible from abroad, making state somewhat portable for our freely moving citizens.

Our society has undergone a disruption so that Estonia's people and businesses now have a fully digital environment for their dealings with the state and with private partners. The disruptive innovation from Estonians is not technology itself. The innovation lies elsewhere – in the process of bringing businesses, people and government together to help all people, young and old, to benefit from digital services.

It took quite some effort to get everyone across all generations to use it. But we eventually managed it, even for the older people, who soon realized the advantages of using a PC to communicate with their

pension office or their bank, for example, rather than getting on a bus. And private sector services were also cheaper online, for example banks offered theirs free.

Digital ID is part of every regular ID card from 2001. Digital identity is created automatically at birth, by the way, when a doctor enters the details of a birth into medical records, without having to press any extra button. So the doctor is effectively a civil registry manager, but does not even realize it. Later on, the parents can use their own IDs to add a name for the baby with an already created e-identity. They can then start to apply for social services, places at kindergarten and so on, from their maternity hospital room. A new digital citizen is born.

Both private and public entities use the same platform - the national digital ID - for safe identification, which makes the number of available services unlimited. Today, some services are also open to citizens of other countries, called e-residents.

There is no obligation to go digital, every service can also be offered on paper. But here in Estonia, since it is simple, cheap and available, everybody has done so.

We must go for inclusiveness, not high end. We must go for reliability, not complex. We must aspire for scope and scale, to make digital government platform attractive for businesses to add their own services. That means it must be scalable, built as a star – in the nucleus identification only takes place, and every two rays, be they people, business or government office, can connect with only one link between them – the identifying link. It cannot be built as a train, where identification happens in first wagon and reaching the last wagon means walking through endless number of carriages – such a model would not be scalable.

The initiatives contained in the European Union's Digital Single Market strategy can help to progress towards cross-border digital services on an EU-wide basis, based on the principles like once-only or digital by default. The e-government action plan aims to get rid of complex, paper-based and duplicated processes to make Europe's single market a reality in the digital age. The other initiatives aim to give people a clear digital advantage, they focus on innovation, growth and job creation through a strong digital single market. The joint call to have this in place by 2018 is very important, because we have to maintain the pressure for final agreement on all these proposals.

These sorts of benefits would not be possible if people did not have trust in the digital environment. They have to be sure that their data does not get lost, stolen or manipulated. That is why ensuring privacy and cybersecurity has been a pre-requisite for building our digital government.

In Estonia's view and experience, commitment to privacy and cyber security make the progress of digital society possible. It is an area where we work hard because as a country, we want to stay online – not go back offline.

In the Estonian system every citizen has a complete overview of who has accessed their data that is in the state servers. To snoop is a criminal offense. Guaranteeing and safeguarding trust is no easy task. It requires investment, time and constant effort as risks and technology advance. We can say that Estonian cybersecurity know-how and arrangements are battle-tested.

We continue to face cyber incidents and deal with cyber criminals. All this experience has shown us how best to mitigate many of these risks and threats. This can only be done by cooperating with both the private and public sectors. We also teach our people cyber hygiene.

It is not without similarities to our regular street space - there are risks, and we handle them, to keep our citizens safe, but we do not abandon neither citizens nor streets because there might be crooks out there.

Having explained how digitally disrupted society works and called upon you to give the same opportunities in cyber world to all European citizens, I would now talk about adaptation to such a disruption. We must immediately start also thinking about how we as a society will function once digital.

We must not take technological development simply as something limited to the better industrial processes and therefore to job losses. In fact, remarkable amount of jobs created by technology development are surprisingly neutral to the occupations or educations in their nature. One might call them egalitarian opportunities even. They are not reserved to wise, well-educated and tech-savvy. Think of a youtuber, or someone selling handicraft online, or renting their property via Airbnb.

We see our people offering services or selling goods globally, residing in one country or travelling the globe without concrete residence. Such a person would require a safe dock for social, educational, health services. They may want to consume those services wherever they happen to find themselves.

Imagine trying to come to terms with every digital job nomad on where they need to pay their taxes? Yet we want them to pay, and be somehow connected to our society's social security network. They want too, but the effort to stay in one place, one job, permanently or with certain allowed gaps in order not to lose benefits – simply does not fit their understanding of work and life. We force them out with inflexibility, unless we offer them easy flexible opt-ins. I see we need to tackle this as quickly as possible.

That's the next societal disruption, changing the perceptions about jobs and social models built upon the old perceptions. The disruption is already happening, but the governments all around the world are still grappling with the previous one – the digital disruption to their services model.

Europe has competitive advantage globally – we already have some understanding of free movement of people, social services and pension schemes, to name but a few. We can build on it for our 21st century societies. For that, the leadership support and sponsorship at the highest level is a key to driving the digital agenda and making it a top priority. We have to pace up the tempo to keep us ahead!

Thank you for listening!