

Press Release

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E-government in Switzerland: Population wants more digital services – public administrations not ready yet

Just under half of the Swiss population is satisfied with the existing range of e-government services of public administrations. However, the authorities still have some catching up to do, both in terms of the range of digital services they offer and in terms of data protection and IT infrastructure, [as shown by a recent Deloitte survey at the population and public administration level](#). Larger gaps are still apparent at the municipal level in particular. For the expansion, it will be crucial to ensure that investments in e-government services are no longer just made in isolation. Greater collaboration with private companies could provide a breakthrough.

Digital public services can make people's lives easier and simplify their interactions with the authorities while also making the processes and interfaces within public administrations more efficient. Entering a company in the commercial register quickly, applying for a place at university and for a grant at the same time, completing a tax return, filing a complaint or maintaining electronic health records so that authorised healthcare professionals can access medical information – these things are all achievable with digitalisation and represent just a few examples of how digital services can make things quicker and easier for individuals, companies and public authorities.

According to the 'Digital Government Survey 2023' by the auditing and consulting company Deloitte, just under half (48%) of the 1,000 people aged 18 and over who participated in the survey are satisfied with the current range of e-government services and believe they are available to the required extent. By contrast, two-thirds (65%) of people in Switzerland think it is important to be able to access all public services and conduct all interactions with the public authorities online. 58 per cent are even calling for proactive digital services, such as for automatic ID card renewals.

More focus on the customer

Even those working in public administrations do not believe the range of digital public services currently on offer meets the requirements of the population: 43 per cent of the 239 public service employees who participated in the survey said that their administrative unit offers digital services, although, at the municipal level, only one third (34%) said the same. 'The population is ready for the digital transition, but public administrations are still lagging behind. The time has come for public administrations to pay greater attention to the needs of all citizens and take a more customer-focused approach to providing public services. Public administrations need to catch up and offer digital solutions consistently. Bold and decisive steps are now needed,' says Rolf Brügger, Government & Public Services Partner at Deloitte Switzerland.

Although the situation can differ greatly from one to another, municipalities are generally lagging behind in implementing digital offerings and e-government services. Looking at all administrative units together, 55 per cent of the survey respondents said that data protection requirements are consistently met within their own unit – but the figure was only 29 per cent at the municipal level. Furthermore, 47 per cent of all public service employees said that they had received comprehensive data protection training, but at the municipal level, only a third (33%) reported the same.

Public administrations trusted by the majority

Most people trust public administrations, as shown by the survey: 52 per cent of all respondents believe that their data is in good hands with them. This sentiment is particularly prevalent among the younger age groups. However, there is less trust when it comes to the security and crisis resistance of the authorities' IT infrastructures: Only 41 per cent of the respondents agree here, and the higher their level of education, the more critical their response. 'Data protection, modern IT infrastructure and trust among users are key drivers of digital transformation. A proactive and cooperative approach to these issues by policymakers, companies and public administrations is essential for becoming fit for the digital future,' says Brügger.

With regard to the legal basis for the digitalisation of public services, the population wants to be on the safe side: The respondents would rather see new laws being created (50%) than existing ones being reinterpreted to accommodate digital solutions (35%). Those in favour of a 'digital first' approach were primarily young adults, people living in towns and cities, and university graduates.

Funding is a sticking point

Although there is trust in the services and a clear desire for more digital offerings, the public is largely against expanding e-government services by raising taxes, reallocating public funds or imposing additional charges. Two-thirds (65%) of the respondents are not prepared to pay higher taxes in the next five to ten years for the digital transformation of public authorities. Only slightly more than a third (36%) think that the federal government, cantons and municipalities should divert tax money from other public areas to digital transformation. Only 16 per cent of the respondents said they would be prepared to pay more for digital services. It does not seem to be clear that digitalisation incurs costs initially and that technological transformation requires investment. Efficiency gains and cost reductions – and thus a rise in customer satisfaction – can only be achieved further down the line.

The results of the survey show that policymakers should play a decisive role in speeding up the digital transformation of public services. 'In order to implement digitalisation in a purposeful and effective manner, public administrations must work together at the federal level and beyond. The initiatives need to be funded and driven forward collectively. If silos can be consistently avoided and the different administrative units can all work together with a consistent focus on the public, the existing resources can be used to unlock additional and untapped potential,' says Brügger.

Private sector could lend a hand

The question of how to fund digital transformation without raising taxes or imposing charges is only one of the many challenges – a further one is the lack of investment in the skills and expertise of existing public service employees. According to the survey respondents, well-trained employees are the most important factor for successful digital transformation. 'Both these challenges can be tackled by public administrations working together more with private companies to provide e-government services,' says Brügger. In fact, the willingness to use e-government services from private providers has clearly increased since the Deloitte survey in 2021. 'Our latest results suggest less mistrust towards private companies and could indicate a paradigm shift among the public,' adds Brügger.

For Reto Savoia, CEO of Deloitte Switzerland, providing digital public services is also important for keeping Switzerland attractive as a business venue: 'Efficient and highly digitalised public services are crucial for Switzerland to stay well ahead of the competition as an international business location and to leverage the country's capacity to innovate fully. The clearly unresolved issue of financing is of great importance in this respect, but I am convinced that close collaboration between the public sector and private companies will facilitate the transition and generate the necessary acceptance.'

About the ['Digital Government Survey 2023'](#)

To analyse and understand the behaviour and preferences of Swiss citizens regarding e-government services, an online survey was conducted in February 2023 involving more than 1,000 participants between the ages of 18 and 80 from all three parts of Switzerland. 239 of the respondents were public service employees. Also read our 2021 study ['Drivers and Barriers to E-Government Services'](#).



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