



State Comptroller | Annual Report 72A - Part One | 2021

Ministry of Cyber and Digital Matters

"Ask Once Policy" to Improve Government Digital Service to the Public



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Background

The technological development in the world has led to an increase in the consumption of digital services by citizens and businesses. This trend has created an opportunity to streamline the service processes that government ministries provide to the public. This is done, for example, through the implementation of "ask once policy", which means receive information¹ from the citizen only once and sharing it between government bodies for the purpose of providing various services, without the citizen being required to submit it again and again. In 2016, the government decided² to adopt ask once policy in government ministries and their support units, in order to improve government service to the public and reduce the bureaucratic burden.

1 Data stored in a government database or a certificate issued by a government office.

2 Resolution 1933 of 30.8.16 on the subject of "Improving the transfer of government information and making government databases accessible to the public."



Key figures

X 50

The cost of in-person service operation (receiving the public in government service bureaus) compared to the cost of digital service operation³.

55%

The rate of increase in the number of logins to the personal area on the GOV.IL website in March 2020 (during the Corona crisis) compared to February 2020 (before the Corona crisis).

68 of 100

Satisfaction level of service recipients from government ministries, according to a survey conducted by the ICT Authority in 2019.

70%

Proportion of OECD countries required to implement an ask once policy in government services by virtue of legislation or government decision.


3,545 services

Number of government services mapped in 40 government ministries by May 2020, for the purpose of promoting services digitization and ask once policy implementation.

261

Number of different government services for which the citizen is required to provide a photocopy of his/her identity card.

Audit actions

 From March to December 2020, the State Comptroller's Office conducted an audit on the implementation of the ask once policy. The audit focused on the following issues: process of mapping government services; setting goals for reducing the amount of information and approvals required from the public to receive a service; development of a system for managing the work of the committees for the transfer of information (Moed system); and the creation of the "Government Information Highway" system. The audit was conducted at the Government ICT Authority. Supplemental examinations were performed at the Digital Israel Headquarters, the National Cyber Directorate and the National Insurance Institute.

³ Government ICT Authority "2019 activities at a glance"



Key findings






- Ask once policy implementation:** There is still a long way to go before the full implementation of the 2016 government decision, which stipulates that as of 2021 a government ministry shall not request from the public a certificate issued by another government ministry for the purpose of providing a service. Thus, for example, it appears that a photocopy of the identity card (a certificate issued by a government body - the Population Administration) is required in order to receive 261 different services in the government; a photocopy of the Graduation certificate (a certificate issued by the Ministry of Education) is required to receive 188 services; and a photocopy of a business license (certificate issued by the Ministry of the Interior) is required in order to receive 68 services.
- Mapping of government services:** Government offices have validated 933 (26%) out of 3,545 services mapped in 40 offices. In the absence of full validation of the services during the mapping, the ICT and Digital Israel did not have a complete and reliable picture of the total number of services provided by each office to the public, and accordingly - of the rate of services in which the ask once policy is implemented.
- Reporting about the ask once policy implementation in 2018:** 19 (56%) of 34 ministries included in their work plan reports to the ICT Authority data on the number of services in which the requirement to provide information was reduced that year, and eight of the ministries (23%) indicated which services were involved.
- Setting goals for information transfer in 2019:** Nine (30%) of 30 ministries that set goals in their 2019 work plan for implementation of the ask once policy reported a planned implementation for five or more new digital services, as required by ICT guidelines.
- Computer system for managing the work of the transfer of information committees⁴ (Moed):** The system is intended to streamline the process of transferring information between public bodies. It was found that among the entities that have not yet connected to the system were those that handled many requests for information transfer in 2019, including the Ministry of Health (43 requests), the National Insurance Institute, the Ministry of Defense (40 requests) and the Tax Authority (13 requests).
- Time for processing applications in the Moed system:** In 2019, the average processing time was more than half a year (191.7 days), and in 2020 - more than three months (97.8 days). This is despite the fact that rapid process of transferring

⁴ The role of the committees for the transfer of information between public bodies is to handle requests from the public body for information from another public body and to handle requests received by the public body to provide information to another public body.



information between government bodies is a necessary precondition for improving service processes in general, and for implementing the ask once policy in particular.

-  **Working procedure of the information transfer committees:** The procedure did not determine the required frequency of the committees' convening, even though low frequency of convening was one of the reasons for the delay in processing requests for information transfer. In addition, the privacy protection regulations have not yet been amended to reflect the provisions of the procedure regarding the work of the committees, as stipulated in the 2016 government decision.
-  **Secure technological infrastructure for information sharing (Government Information Highway system):** In mid-February 2021, the installation of the information highway in four (15%) of the 26 bodies where it was planned for 2020 has not yet been completed, due in part to technological difficulties.
-  **Risks Survey:** Although the Information Highway system has been defined as essential infrastructure both in terms of information security and cyber protection and in terms of the continuity of services to the citizen, the system information security risk survey and preparation of the disaster recovery site has not yet been completed.



One should commend the action of the ICT Authority to lay the methodological basis for implementing ask once policy in digital services, through the use of the government forms infrastructure, the government identification system⁵ and the information highway.

The activity of the ICT Authority for the establishment of the Moed system and the inclusion of 39 government bodies in this system by October 2020 contributed greatly to the ability to identify bottlenecks in the process of transmitting information within the government, in order to improve it.

Key recommendations








The ministries' deep commitment and their full cooperation with Digital Israel and the ICT Authority is required in order to carry out a comprehensive and optimal validation of the services in the mapping and in the unified catalog⁶. The ICT Authority and Digital Israel must set individual schedules and goals for government ministries to progress in their

5 The system is designed to enable secure online identification for the purpose of receiving services from government bodies.

6 Based on the mapping of services, the payment service, the form service and the service pages on the GOV.IL website.








actions to validate the government services. The ICT Authority must also monitor the extent to which the ministries meet the targets and report this to the government.

-  The National Insurance Institute must continue to work in cooperation with Digital Israel to map the services it provides to the public, in order to reflect a broad and comprehensive picture of government services and to promote the exercise of rights by the citizens. Furthermore, it is proposed that the ICT Authority and Digital Israel examine the possibility of integrating in regard to mapping additional public bodies that provide many services to the public, such as local authorities, hospitals and health funds.
-  It is recommended that the ICT Authority and the government ministries jointly examine what actions are required from the offices to implement the ask once policy in regard to service by phone and in person. This is especially necessary for disadvantaged populations, who may be in need of many services and assistance in exercising their rights, and do not use digital service methods.
-  Since the Moed system is intended to streamline the process of information transfer in the government in order to improve the service to the public, the ICT Authority and the bodies that have not yet connected to the system must take the necessary steps to implement their connection. Furthermore, the ICT Authority must examine, in cooperation with the information requesting bodies and the information holding bodies, ways to shorten the processing time for all stages of requests for information transfer, and complete the steps for the development of an online form that will provide an effective working interface with external public bodies.
-  The Ministry of Justice must complete the wording of the amendment to the Privacy Protection Regulations (Conditions for holding and storing information and arrangements for the transfer of information between public bodies), 1986, in accordance with the 2016 government decision, in order for the regulations to reflect the provisions regulating the work of the committees in accordance with the work procedure set out in the decision. All this for the purpose of its promotion with the Minister of Justice and the Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee.
-  It is proposed that the ICT Authority examine the possibility of increasing the support envelope in the process of implementing the Government Information Highway system, including reinforcing the work teams on its behalf and on behalf of the supplier for installation and training, and that it shall complete the information security risk survey and establish a disaster recovery site. In addition, the bodies required by the 2020 government decision⁷ to externalize information via the Government Information Highway system by April 2021, and have not yet implemented the system, must cooperate with the ICT Authority and examine ways to complete the required actions in this regard.

⁷ Government Decision 260 of July 2020 on "The Program for Accelerating Digital Services to the Public".

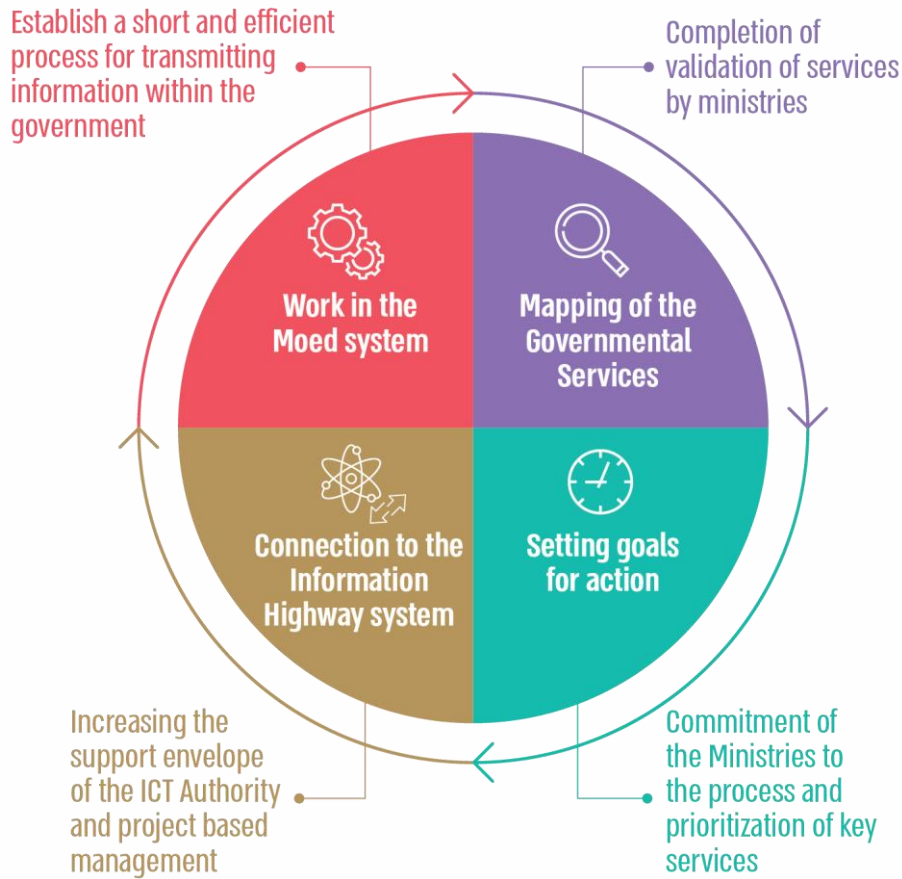


Examples of certificates that the citizen is required to provide in order to receive government services.

Type of Certificate	Number of services in State Offices requiring the certificate	Government Entity issuing the certificate
 ID	261	Population and Immigration Authority
 Graduation Certificate	188	Ministry of Education
 Business Permit	68	Ministry of Interior
 Marriage Certificate	36	Population and Immigration Authority
 Death Certificate	29	Population and Immigration Authority



Steps required to complete the ask once policy implementation



Summary

The government decided in 2016 to adopt "ask once policy" to improve government service to the public and to reduce the bureaucratic burden placed on it, thus promoting strategic government goals, such as improving the realization of civil rights and reducing social disparities. The findings of this report show that there is still a long way to go before a full implementation of the government decision that states that as of 2021 a government office will not request from the public a permit issued by another government ministry for the purpose of providing a service.



The success of the policy implementation depends on joint action, both by government ministries and their support units - in implementing the policy in the provision of their services, and by the ICT and Digital Israel, which serve as the coordinating and guiding body, including by providing tools and methods for implementation, removing barriers and facilitating bureaucratic and technological processes. In the absence of full cooperation on the part of government ministries and their support units and the allocation of resources required for this activity, while adhering to set deadlines, it will not be possible to promote the implementation of the policy for extensive services.

The ICT Authority and Digital Israel must prioritize the issue and act with the central services and government ministries that control many services. As well, it may be productive to use methods such as running a broad-based governmental project involving many various bodies, to further this issue. Moreover, in order to realize all the benefits inherent in implementing the ask once policy, it must be implemented in all service methods, including in-person and telephone service methods used by disadvantaged populations that need many services.