

PRESS RELEASE

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Two out of three people find digital services are lacking in their home town

- People want digital services to cover all areas of life
- Smart Country Convention opens today in Berlin

People have high expectations of what a digitalised city should offer, but the reality is often disappointing. Two-thirds (64 per cent) of Germans say their home town is “not digitalised”. Only three out of ten people (30 per cent) say digitalisation is making progress in their community. These are the findings of a representative survey commissioned by the digital association Bitkom, which polled over 1,000 people aged over 18 in Germany. The survey is being presented today at the Smart Country Convention in Berlin. “Germany has a long way to go before it becomes a ‘smart country’. Thus, it is all the more important to take big steps now, and quickly. The relevant technology exists, however national, state and local governments have yet to make full use of it”, said Achim Berg, president of Bitkom. “In order to protect the environment and reduce the burden on the public sector, cities and municipalities need adequate funding and expertise, and for decision-makers in politics, local government and business to cooperate with local communities. With the Smart Country Convention we have created a platform that will accelerate digitalisation of the public sector and public services.”

Dr. Christian Göke, CEO of Messe Berlin, said: “What is special about the Smart Country Convention is that it embraces every sector. We are convinced that in addition to the existing hierarchy of industry exhibitions and trade fairs there is an urgent need for an event that reaches broadly across sectors on the subject of digitalisation of local government and public services. Whether it affects cities or rural areas, citizens’ service centres, public transport or energy suppliers, a smart country stands for intelligently interconnecting all areas of life. That is why it gives us great pleasure to welcome both the Federal Ministry of the Interior as patron of the event, and Denmark as our partner country. In addition to their participation the leading organisations representing local government and the Association of Municipal Companies (VKU) are also partners of the event.”

Lars Frelle-Petersen, deputy director general of the Confederation of Danish Industry, said: “We are delighted to be the partner country of this big event, the Smart Country Convention in Berlin. Denmark has made substantial progress with digitalisation in the public sector and private enterprises, and in 2018 the United Nations declared us world leaders in digitalisation. As a result of close cooperation at all government levels and the incorporation of private sector solutions, the large majority of Danes make use of digitalised public services because they are time-saving and make life easier.”

What improvements do Germans think their home town needs most? The answers are mainly housing (81 per cent), local government (79 per cent), policing (77 per cent), traffic/transport (74 per cent) and education (72 per cent). Eight out of ten Germans (79 per cent) agree that towns and communities where services are inadequate could benefit from digitalisation. 62 per cent say that digitalisation is a big opportunity for improving the quality of life in both urban and rural areas. More than one in two people (57 per cent) say the idea of living in a town or community that has digitalised services appeals to them.

Reducing the burden on local government – more specialists in rural areas

People in urban and rural areas expect different things from digitalisation. In urban



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areas people see streamlined local government as offering the biggest benefits, because digitalisation can simplify and accelerate processes (74 per cent). One in two envisage digitalisation resulting in less traffic (57 per cent) and pollution (47 per cent). Six out of ten (62 per cent) expect digitalisation to solve typically urban problems.

In rural areas the focus is different. The biggest hope there is that digitalisation will make local communities more attractive to specialists such as doctors and IT professionals. Six out of ten people in Germany (59 per cent) agree with this assessment. Over half believe that digitalisation will help to improve public transport (57 per cent) and create equal opportunities in both urban and rural areas (51 per cent). For two out of five Germans (41 per cent) digitalisation has the potential to solve typically rural problems. Berg: "Many rural communities have difficulty accepting the digital transformation. In those areas it requires two things in particular: political resolve and strong partners able to implement it."

Majority for making decisions online

People have a good idea of the kind of life a digitalised city can offer and want to be a bigger part of it. Almost everyone polled (94 per cent) wants a greater degree of participation. The idea of making suggestions online in order to improve the quality of local life is very popular (74 per cent). Two-thirds (68 per cent) would like to report things that do not work in order to point out problems in the public sector. One in two (52 per cent) would like to participate online in planning and decision-making in politics and local government. 47 per cent would take the opportunity to submit their ideas on how taxes could be used in local budgets.

Three out of four Germans would prefer to deal with local authorities online

Digital services are the preferred way of communicating with local authorities. Four out of five Germans (86 per cent) are in favour of authorities warning of severe weather events by smartphone. Three-quarters (75 per cent) would like to deal with the authorities and local government over the internet, e.g. for registering their place of residence or applying for child support. Two-thirds (66 per cent) would cast their votes using the internet. One-third (33 per cent) would make their personal data available for access by the authorities. "We need to step up the pace on our path to a digitalised state. People no longer want to stand in line at local government offices and waste valuable time filling in forms. Denmark is an example of how almost everything can be digitalised from A to Z and where local government has become more citizen-friendly", said Berg. "Many of the services currently available are still unnecessarily complicated. Germany needs a nationwide eGovernment offensive."

From 20 to 22 November 2018 the Smart Country Convention will be taking place in a bid to help accelerate the digitalisation of local government and public services. The event is co-organised by the digital association Bitkom and Messe Berlin. The three-day event will gather all the relevant players representing local government, politics, the digital economy, associations and science. Combining a congress, workshops, expo and networking events, the Smart Country Convention will examine the digital transformation of cities, communities and the public sector. The focus will be on eGovernment as well as the digitalisation of public services in the fields of energy, transport, safety, waste disposal, water supplies, education, healthcare and housing.

The **Smart Country Convention** is a new event which focuses on the digitalisation of the public sector and is co-organised by the digital association Bitkom and Messe Berlin. The three-day event will take place annually in November on the Berlin Exhibition Grounds and gather all the relevant players representing administrations, politics, the digital economy, associations and science. Combining a congress, workshops, expo and networking events, the Smart Country Convention will examine the digital transformation of cities, communities and the public sector. The focus will be on digital administrations as well as the digitalisation of public services in the fields of energy, transport, safety, waste disposal, water distribution, education, healthcare and housing.

Bitkom represents over 2,600 companies in the digital economy, over 1,800 of whom are direct members. With their IT and telecoms business alone, annual turnover is

190 billion euros, including exports worth 50 billion euros. Bitkom members in Germany employ a combined workforce of over 2 million. Among Bitkom's members are 1,000 SMEs, over 400 startups and practically every global player. They market software, IT services, telecoms and internet services, manufacture appliances and components, represent the digital media or other parts of the digital economy. 80 per cent of these companies are based in Germany, 8 per cent each are in Europe and the US, and 4 per cent in other regions. Bitkom supports and is a driving force behind the digital transformation of the German economy and campaigns for a broad societal involvement in digital processes. The aim is to make Germany one of the world's prime locations for digital business.

About Messe Berlin

Based on turnover and growth, Messe Berlin is among the world's ten leading trade fair companies. Each year it develops, markets and hosts hundreds of live events in Berlin and around the world. Its wide-ranging portfolio includes IFA, InnoTrans, ITB, FRUIT LOGISTICA and the International Green Week, all leading global trade fairs, as well as major conferences and outstanding events such as the street celebrations at the Brandenburg Gate. Messe Berlin has around 90 foreign representatives who market events in over 170 countries. Each year some 30,000 members of the media from all parts of the world obtain accreditation for events on the exhibition grounds in Berlin where the company has its headquarters. Thus, Messe Berlin acts as a driving force of the metropolis that is Berlin. Its aim is to be an outstanding host for visitors to every event at Messe Berlin, to give individuals an optimum boost for their business and to ensure fair conditions for everyone. This approach is reflected in the company slogan: 'Messe Berlin – Hosting the World'. www.messe-berlin.de