
News and Briefs: A new programme to support electronic cooperation among European Public Administrations

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On 23 October 2009, the new programme “Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administrations” (ISA) came into force. It aims to foster electronic cooperation among Public Administrations in the EU Member States.

This ISA programme adopts a practical approach in supporting easier communication between administrations across Europe. ISA will run from 2010 to 2015 with a financial envelope of €164 million.

The ISA programme will facilitate electronic cross-border and cross-sector interaction between European Public Administrations, enabling the delivery of electronic public services and ensuring the availability of common solutions. Its priorities will be based on a European interoperability strategy, currently being developed by the Commission with the support of Member State administrations. The actions to be launched will fall under four areas of activity:

- Common frameworks in support of interoperability (policies, strategies, specifications, methodologies, guidelines, and similar approaches and documents)
- Reusable generic tools (demonstrators, shared and collaborative platforms, common components and similar building blocks for user needs across policy fields).
- Common services (operational applications and infrastructures of a generic nature to meet user requirements across policy areas)
- Analysis of ICT implications in the implementation of new EU legislation.

The ISA programme is managed by the European Commission in close cooperation with the EU Member States represented on the programme’s management committee. This committee is expected to establish sub-groups of national experts to oversee and guide the implementation of the various actions while ensuring coordination and alignment with national initiatives.

Source: ePractice.eu portal, <http://www.epractice.eu>

E-Petitions in the official site of the Prime Minister's Office in the UK

The E-Petitions service of the UK Prime Minister's official website allows citizens to submit petitions directly to the Prime Minister and to see and sign petitions made by others. Users can also see which petitions are rejected and why and also the most popular petitions.

The challenge behind this service has been to build a stronger connection between citizens and the Prime Minister. The beta version of the service is now online, incorporating 15 major changes all of which have been based on users' feedback. It is interesting to note that one of the petitions submitted managed to reach 1.8 million signatures. The E-Petitions service is very popular in the UK and many times traditional media refer to it as a good initiative. It has connections to major social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube and offers, among others, an interactive tour to the office of the Prime Minister in a quite amusing and interesting way. There is also the Number 10 TV, which provides the opportunity to see podcasts with the Prime Minister answering to questions of the citizens.

According to the site, the e-petition system has been designed to be transparent and trustworthy. There are some terms and conditions of use, and no petition will be rejected unless it violates these terms.

The site is working in partnership with mySociety, which is a charitable project that runs many of the UK's best-known non-partisan political sites, like TheyWorkForYou and HearFromYourMP and is strictly neutral on party political issues.

Source: UK Prime Minister's official website, <http://www.number10.gov.uk/>

Sweden moves towards the "third-generation eGovernment"

On 19 October 2009, the Swedish E-Government Delegation ('E-Delegationen' in Swedish) released the report entitled "Strategy on the work of the Public Agencies in the field of eGovernment".

The submission of such a strategy to the Government was the first mission assigned to the E-Government Delegation ('the Delegation') after its establishment in March 2009. It will, thereafter, manage the implementation of the strategy until the end of 2014.

The strategy proposes ways of increasing the efficiency of the Swedish Public Agencies and the innovation potential of society, in general, through eGovernment.

Several of the proposals require the adoption of a Government decision to become applicable. The strategy document will now be referred for consideration by agencies and other organisations.

The starting point for the Delegation's work has been based on the principle of developing and managing eServices that are driven by the very needs of citizens and

businesses, so as to simplify people's daily life, cut red tape and contribute to the growth of Sweden.

The e-Delegation's suggestions cover the following aspects:

- eIdentification: the creation of a single and unified eID solution to access government services; this solution could be used in the framework of private sector services eventually. The Tax Board (Skatteverket), through a newly established committee, would coordinate the management of eIdentification and issue regulations on eID cards and the electronic data exchange between the public authorities.
- Launch of an internet forum where citizens and businesses would be given the opportunity to take part in the shaping of future eGovernment.
- Several of the existing Public Agencies would be mandated to quickly and effectively develop specific eGovernment services. The public authorities should interact among them and with the private stakeholders with the aim to jointly develop common eServices.
- Better technical/legal rules and regulations to promote the use of eIdentification and eServices.
- The Public Agencies should select open standards first and always consider open-source software.
- Some Public Agencies would be in charge of systematically monitoring the development and the testing of IT, so as to create the conditions for informed technological choices across the public administration.
- Clearer management and funding mechanisms for eGovernment projects. Specific funding should be earmarked for those strategic projects that could prove beneficial to third parties.
- Effective support service and shared service centres: the Tax Board and the National Police are currently participating in a pilot scheme aimed at developing the so-called "administrative support activities" applied to financial and human resources. Once the expected costs savings are confirmed, further support will be established and more authorities will join. Each Public Agency will develop its own IT services strategy.

Source: ePractice.eu portal, <http://www.epractice.eu>