

# Position Paper *eGovernment*

## Executive Summary

Across the world, ICT is changing the relationship between society and government. Individual citizens, and the businesses and communities to which they belong become more sophisticated in their own use of ICT. Attitudes to information, to the ability to organize complex social interaction, and to truth itself are changing dynamically.

ICT also has a massive impact on both the internal machinery of government and on its ability to serve its constituents in ways which are secure, responsive and focused.

There are plenty of challenges. We are approaching a state of near-ubiquitous access to digital media and this raises public expectation of both central and local government. It also presents a new generation of security concerns with the rise of cybercrime and the risk of privacy breach.

As traditional and virtual worlds collide, we observe an environment filled with opportunity, but one which is also clearly tough to govern.

Our conference brings together some of the world's most experienced and forward-thinking minds in ICT and government. By participating in this track, you will explore and contribute to the debate surrounding the underlying principles of eGovernment and its effective implementation. We shall balance theory and practice, exploring new ideas and examining practical instances of eGovernment in action at local, national, and international level.

Working together on this track, speakers and delegates will examine ways of ensuring that short-term investment leads to quantifiable and immediate gains in the efficiency and quality of public service. But we will not hide from longer-term question and debate, asking how ICT will influence the ongoing relationship between citizen and government.

Governance, Trust, the Network Society and Infrastructure are intrinsic challenges in every eGovernment initiative and strategy, and on this track, we'll consider them all.

Debate does not occur in a vacuum. We are ambitious for this eGovernment conference track. We will consider some of the great analytical and academic work already achieved in this area – but this track is about communication and discovery – not lectures and slides. We will not present a ready-made vision. Rather than that, we invite you to join your peers in crafting a vision for e-Government, building on deep theoretical knowledge and shared practical experience. Participants will be inspired; will innovate; and will co-author new and valuable approaches to e-government.

## Introducing the *eGovernment* track

Position papers generally take a position. This one takes a different approach: rather than stating a pre-determined position, we provide a framework which will form the basis of the position determined by delegates and speakers at the conference itself.

*Challenges of Change* is all about involvement and collaboration. This paper will help WCIT 2010 presenters and delegates think about their *own* position with regard to e-government, and will enable them to share their ideas with the track organizers in advance and during the conference. It seems only right that we should practice what we preach, and use Web 2.0 to capture diversity of opinion and stay up to the minute with ideas as they happen.

Regard this paper as a framework for our track. It is structured in two primary components:



- Firstly, it examines what we believe to be the two primary challenges of eGovernment: **improving government**, on the one hand, and **challenging government** on the other. This component comprises four common themes, and will consider eGovernment theory.
- Secondly, we will examine practical real-world examples. These reflect overarching EU e-government policy – and we encourage delegates to consider these as potential opportunities for reworking and reuse.

With both of these themes, we will explore in depth the relationships between government and ICT:

**Improving government** – how can ICT contribute to more efficient and effective government? National and local government must move forwards, but is justifiably suspicious of techno-hype. Across the public sector, people are also under enormous pressure to drive out cost. How can ICT help slash red tape, improve service delivery and reduce costs? These issues have been scrutinized in recent years but they are still absolutely critical. The question now, perhaps, is, “Are current eGovernment investments paying off, and how can we improve that ROI?”

**Challenging government** – how does ICT change the relationship between government, citizen and businesses? The challenge is to respond to a society which is increasingly horizontal; in which governments have lost their primacy over information and its dissemination; and where networks and single-issue groups become ever more effective. Privacy, trust and new governance models will be discussed and re-assessed, along with the effect of ‘Open government’ on eGovernment.

*Note:* the eGovernment track combines an examination of the big issues of eGovernment developments with a practical showcase of best practices. It is not designed to push specific e-government solutions.

### *eGovernment – four structural themes*

*“We must go – don’t know when we can get internet - they take 1 of us, they will torture and get names - now we must move fast”<sup>i</sup>. A Twitter entry from Iran gives voice to opposition.*

*“South Korea is seeking to change the thrust of its e-government initiatives in response to the current economic crisis: part of a job-creation program that will involve spending 1.2 % of its supplementary budget on IT projects”<sup>ii</sup>. eGovernment initiatives to help solve economic crisis.*

*“Post-election unrest has been widespread and hard to monitor in real time. Some concerned bloggers are trying to help”<sup>iii</sup>. Ushahidi shows how crowd sourcing (also known as citizen journalism) can contribute to improved safety.*

*“Government’s record year of data loss”<sup>iv</sup>. eGovernment has its downside.*

These examples give just a hint of the impact ICT can have on the relationship between government and society – this is eGovernment<sup>v</sup>.

*So what will happen in the coming years as eGovernment gains momentum? Can we even imagine what the relationship between government and society looks like in 2015 and beyond? How will society deal with privacy and security? It is time to shift the debate away from the increased penetration of eGovernment and towards the possibilities and impact of eGovernment both for citizens and governments.*

From within the dual context of improving *and* confronting government, the eGovernment track addresses four themes which will help us think about answers to these questions. This will act as a foundation for our shared vision for eGovernment.

### *Theme 1: Governance*

eGovernment puts a strain on existing governance - and this becomes critical when considering the issues of both improving and challenging government. In governance, ICT now takes up position

right alongside HR and finance. With the rise of e-Government, we see the increased importance of related professional roles, with CIO foremost among them. E-government touches a nerve at the most senior level - just think of the eTsars (UK) and CIO's now in place at all Ministries (Netherlands). How can we help these people succeed in establishing the new link between the primary business of government and ICT?

Another element of governance which must be considered concerns the formal constitutional divides on which much government depends: there is a clear constitutional separation, for example, between central and local government. ICT and eGovernment cross these boundaries constantly. Why develop, for example, a citizen registration system at municipal level when a central system would cost less and do more? Similar divisions between ministry and ministry and have a real impact on the drive to exploit ICT as a foundation for shared services – technically it should pose no great challenge, but in terms of culture and governance, where do you begin?

Once systems are in place, how do we make them work together? Interoperability is critical. Again ministerial division and the separation of central and local government complicate the issue. How can we design governance models which support a chain of equals and still progress us towards the benefits of an information-based society.

New governance models are needed if we are to benefit from shared service approaches. Austria, for example, bit the bullet and appointed one Government CIO while Denmark is already profiting from structural reforms which empowers its municipalities.

So are our governments up to the task? How do we take eGovernment beyond basic service automation? Will Web 2.0 lead us to a new breed of Civil Servant 2.0 too?

### *Theme 2: The Trust Triangle - 'service + privacy + security'*

All government is built on compromise (or balance) and eGovernment is no different. This need for balance is particularly acute in the construction of the relationships between service, privacy and security<sup>vi</sup>. These relationships are made particularly sensitive because of the high degree of public interest in all three – and the risk of loss of confidence which is a consequence of any breach.

Keeping everyone happy is an impossible challenge, but you can keep everyone 'happy enough' if you get the Trust Triangle right. How best to balance the quality and focus with which service is delivered with the need to protect and respect individual privacy? And how best to do so in a way which does not compromise overall societal security? The trust shown by the citizen towards the government will increasingly depend on this triangle as eGovernment gains pace.

But how will we arrive at an acceptable working formula? A true "2.0" approach would be to leave it up to the citizens to set the balance between service delivery and privacy. Or should government adopt a position of benign paternalism and decide how to shield its citizens against too much exposure to risk?

It's a fascinating debate: nobody wants Big Brother, but just about everybody is willing for the state to take the mandate for security.

The Trust Triangle isn't just about the relationship between citizen and government – it's about business too, especially with the continuing rise of public/private sector initiatives. Technology is key to creating working solutions, but that's only part of the picture: changing cultural norms and attitudes is far more challenging.

### *Theme 3: The Network Society*

With every day that passes the impact of ICT on society increases (50,000 i-phone apps created since 2007!). In many ways, however, the real revolution lies in the emergence of online communities which become societies in their own right.

Individuals and organizations have the means and power to self-organize. This wave holds huge potential for government and for the democratic process itself. But the openness of the media changes the landscape too – communication is not just two-way, it's any-way. Recent Dutch government initiatives to promote immunization against cervical cancer with young girls, for example, were seriously derailed by rumor on social networking sites about its safety<sup>vii</sup>.

Governments always need to re-invent themselves to fit the times in which they live. With eGovernment, it's the same. How will ICT change the art of government? What effect will Web 2.0 (or Web n.0) have? Where are the opportunities for innovation in government and society? Will eGovernment mean less government, as public/private partnerships take off? How could ICT affect our fundamental understanding of sovereignty and the nation state?

#### *Theme 4: Hard and Soft Infrastructure*

No rails – no trains. It all starts with infrastructure. This issue not only covers 'hard' infrastructure such as networks and storage, but also the 'soft' infrastructure of knowledge and skills. Although infrastructure and skills differ greatly from country to country, the gaps are closing. As the quality and quantity of infrastructure increases, the demands which eGovernment makes upon it will continue to grow accordingly. While technology debate will always be ongoing (fiber vs wireless broadband, cloud vs local, etc), using what is available now with innovation and flair can drive eGovernment forwards.

Education becomes one of the keenest focus areas – this is not just about schools, it's about society as a whole. We need to ensure that ICT becomes a force for the creation of shared opportunity and not an issue of division. As we consider ICT in the public sector at a national and international level, how can we ensure that our existing educational facilities are fit for the future? How can we ensure that everybody has the opportunity to become a digital native and that everybody has the opportunity to exploit ICT in their own experience of lifelong learning? We cannot afford to split society between the digital haves and have-nots.

Ensuring that eGovernment infrastructure is adequate, affordable and sustainable is a shared responsibility for government and business. ICT infrastructure is as much a part of the essential framework of society as water and power, and needs to be managed with the same attention to sustainability and interoperability. Open standards and Open Systems become an essential part of the proposition, but these also need to take into account the competitive reality of the technology business. So who should take the lead? Business? Government? Or will public/private partnership hold the key?

And remember, the West doesn't hold an intellectual monopoly here. Look at how mobile internet is helping African farmers benefit from timely market price information, for example.

#### **eGovernment in Action (or eGovernment Showcase)**

We want our eGovernment track to inspire – to spark a new wave of innovative thinking for our delegates. In part one of the track we will brainstorm serious issues of principle and strategy. In part two we will focus on best practice using a real world showcase. Our showcase will deliver pointers on how to transform old ways into new: these are the *challenges of change*.

We are issuing an open invitation to delegates to contribute their own examples and topics for the showcase. We will illustrate best-practice from the perspective of our two track themes: **improving government** and **challenging government**.

We shall be putting the showcase together in the weeks ahead, but are pleased to be able to announce that as our host city, Amsterdam has already agreed to give us a taste of how eGovernment is improving the quality of life for Dutch citizens and visitors.



WCIT 2010 eGovernment Showcase	<i>Inspiration</i>	<i>Innovation</i>	<i>Transformation</i>
<i>Improving Government</i>	Your case here?	Your case here?	Your case here?
<i>Challenging Government</i>	Your case here?	Your case here?	Your case here?

## The European Challenges of Change

The European Union (EU) faces some very particular challenges of change relating to eGovernment. With 27 member states (each with its own languages, cultures and governance systems) - 27 different approaches to eGovernment are emerging. For the EU to benefit as a single market, its eGovernment systems must be interoperable. This interoperability is not just technological – it's about process, law and culture too.

The output of this *Challenges of Change* track will feed directly into the EU agenda and policies. Since the Lisbon Treaty was signed in 2007, the EU has striven to advance interoperable eGovernment throughout Europe. Its focus is on work and social inclusion. This endeavor is complemented by the framework for EU eGovernment as described in the i2010 strategy and eGovernment action plan. Both stress the underlying importance of citizen inclusion in effective government.

In the years ahead, with 2015 set as a milestone, the EU ICT policy agenda shows three priorities:

1. Focus on eGovernment to support the Internal Market
2. Empowering citizens and businesses through eGovernment
3. Enabling administrative efficiency and effectiveness with eGovernment<sup>viii</sup>.

These priorities *will be/are* adopted at the Ministerial eGovernment conference 2009 in Malmo, Sweden. In pursuit of these priorities the EU has identified ten building blocks:

- ◆ User-centricity
- ◆ Enabling services
- ◆ Benchmarking
- ◆ Participation
- ◆ Innovation
- ◆ Organizational change
- ◆ Key applications
- ◆ Interoperability/Harmonization
- ◆ eInclusion
- ◆ Green IT

The current EU presidency resides with Sweden, and their policy agenda is fully aligned with EU Commission's vision, placing an increased focus on knowledge-development and green IT<sup>ix</sup>.

Our eGovernment track for WCIT 2010 adopts these priorities and building blocks, including the focus on knowledge development and green IT, and will provide relevant input to the EU.

## Conclusions

In building a vision for eGovernment, practitioners and theorists must think hard about balancing the opportunities and challenges.

Managing economic crises, sustainability and Open Government are dominant themes across the public sector today, and eGovernment must prove its worth in this context. We must ask how eGovernment will affect both **improving government** and **challenging government**. As professionals and citizens with a particular passion for eGovernment, we must work to minimize the risk that this essential component of contemporary government is not marginalized in political debate. We cannot afford it to be sidelined by, for example, a banking crisis. Postponement and delays cannot be an option.

As we said at the beginning of this paper, we are inviting delegates and speakers to the eGovernment track of *Challenges of Change* to be active participants in both the more theoretical first part of the track and the more directly practical side of the second. In both activities we will focus on the overarching themes of how eGovernment translates into **improving government** and what it means in terms of **challenging government**.

In both areas, the intellectual, political and business skills of the WCIT 2010 participants will come together to produce, we believe, a landmark in eGovernment vision and positioning.

## Attachment: Dutch Showcases

At this moment, showcases are being gathered from all over the world to enrich the eGovernment program. However, we already want to give you a taste of what you can expect at WCIT2010 by showing some of the best eGovernment examples the Netherlands has to offer.

### *Nationaal Uitvoerings Programma (NUP)*

Don't worry – you won't need to speak Dutch. NUP is the Dutch eGovernment national implementation program. The Netherlands has three levels of government. Each is constitutionally distinct and each has its own priorities. A coherent eGovernment strategy must enable and encourage collaboration between these different bodies. To date, all parties have agreed a common framework and are now initiating numerous exciting pilot projects.

### *Digital Client Dossier (DCD)*

The DCD is a Social Security initiative. By sharing information across different governmental organizations, people seeking benefits can now provide their details just once. This speeds up applications and creates logical links which would otherwise be lost: the goal is to ensure that the DCD contributes directly to getting people back into work. Trust is critical to success. At first, different organizations couldn't stop re-keying data – if they didn't type it, they didn't believe it. Re-use is now mandatory and we are already seeing the benefits. The privacy of applicant data across different organizations was also a critical trust issue.

### *Reducing the Administrative Burden*

The Dutch government approach to reducing administrative burden for both businesses and citizens is an internationally accepted best practice. The Dutch government aims to minimize government related red tape for society as a whole, and in this, ICT plays a substantial role. Clever automation and workflow optimization, speed information and processes across different government offices. Measurement is essential for evidence-based eGovernment improvement, and the Dutch have a methodology to assess the administrative burden of any new regulation.

### *Smart Cities – Amsterdam*

By 2050, 70% of the world's population will live in cities (it flipped the 50% in 2007). For cities to cope with this magnitude of growth, in terms of infrastructure, sustainability and governance, we must exploit ICT to the full. Find out how Amsterdam are already progressing with their Smart Cities initiative.

### *SURF*

SURF is the Dutch foundation for innovation in higher education and science. The SURFnet infrastructure is outstanding. This hybrid network is one of the fastest and most advanced in the world, interconnecting 180 advanced research and education organizations. It's not just about speed: security, authentication and authorization, and media-rich group communication all feature.

## Works cited

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- <sup>3</sup> From 'The World' (BBC) podcast on <http://www.pri.org/theworld/?q=node/15330>
- <sup>iv</sup> David Harrison [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk), 6 January, 12:01AM GMT
- <sup>v</sup> <http://go.worldbank.org/M1JHE0Z280>
- <sup>vi</sup> See for instance: Edwin Lau, *Egovernment for better government*, OECD, 2005
- <sup>vii</sup> See: <http://vaccinatie.hyves.nl/> (in Dutch) a Facebook like group is set up to oppose the governments' vaccination plans
- <sup>viii</sup> 'Preparing eGovernment post i2010', i2010 High Level Group 24 February 2009
- <sup>ix</sup> 'a green knowledge society, an IT policy agenda to 2015 for Europe's future knowledge society', SCF Associates Ltd, September 2009