

# Public services 2.0

Web 2.0 from the periphery  
to the centre of public service delivery

●●● **Report from the ePractice workshop**  
**Brussels, September 2009**





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### Web 2.0 from the periphery to the centre of public service delivery

Report from the ePractice workshop <http://www.epractice.eu/publicservices>

Brussels, September 2009

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**The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.**



## FOREWORD

The Internet provides us with a new generation of instruments that greatly facilitates social networking, information sharing and collaborative work. It opens new possibilities for governments, which range from the joint production of public services in cooperation with citizens, social organisations and businesses, the wide distribution and re-use of government information to the introduction of new forms of democratic participation.

Governments around Europe are aware of these new possibilities and have actively started exploring them. This will be reflected in the Malmö Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment of November 2009 – political document which sets the European policy agenda on eGovernment for the next five years. The Declaration will introduce important concepts in policy debate on eGovernment. One such concept is the empowerment of citizens and businesses, through technologies that involve them in the design and operation of services. The other is the maximisation of public value through the joint production of services to the public by governmental, private and civic parties.

Like the EU Member States, the European Commission embraces the new technology for all the opportunities that it offers. Web 2.0 technologies are not a trend anymore, but a reality. However, 'Government 2.0' is still at a very early stage and in order to deliver its promises, many conditions need to be fulfilled. Society needs to be ready for its take-up and, in particular all citizens, businesses and organisations must be capable of using the new technology in order to fully and equally reap its benefits. The use of Web 2.0 technologies for public service delivery may require not only technological innovation but also organisational, legal and social innovation.

We have to prepare for this challenge cautiously but this must not stop our enthusiasm, our willingness to experiment, to discover and to learn. This workshop on 'Public services 2.0' –organised in collaboration with ePractice.eu portal – is part of that endeavour and I thank the organisers for their benevolent effort which is a reflection of the Web 2.0 spirit.



Mechthild Rohen

Head of Unit

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## 1. A WORKSHOP ON PUBLIC SERVICES 2.0: WHY AND HOW?

In its early development, web 2.0 applications such as blogs and social networking appeared, to many as the apogee of ego, vanity and navel-gazing. This perspective has now clearly been dismissed by the wide emergence of web-based collaborative applications, which create social value and bringing societal benefits from the users' perspective – the prime example being Wikipedia. In the government context, initiatives such as PatientOpinion.org, Farmsubsidy and Theyworkforyou.com all seek to challenge, disrupt and improve on traditional models of public service delivery from the outside, built on the web 2.0 principles of openness, transparency and sharing. Several studies<sup>4</sup> have started collecting and analyzing the innumerable initiatives in this field, but with the election of Barack Obama and his strategic choices in the field of IT have substantially placed web 2.0 at the centre of policy debate.

Web 2.0 citizen-government collaboration is now on the agenda of every government, but governments still struggle to accept the inherent lack of control typical of web 2.0 initiatives: if we look at government-led initiative, they adopt often a “façade”, opportunistic approach rather than a strategic choice. Web 2.0 is considered as a new technological tool to be used for engaging citizens, or as a new theme to be added to the list of priorities, while in reality it is a deep cultural change and a **deep cultural change and power shift** in strategy and delivery, where the centre stage is being taken by the networked citizen.

There is a permanent gap between the innovation culture underlying web 2.0 initiatives and the way that government approaches ICT innovation in public services. In Table 1 we outlined some of the key differences.

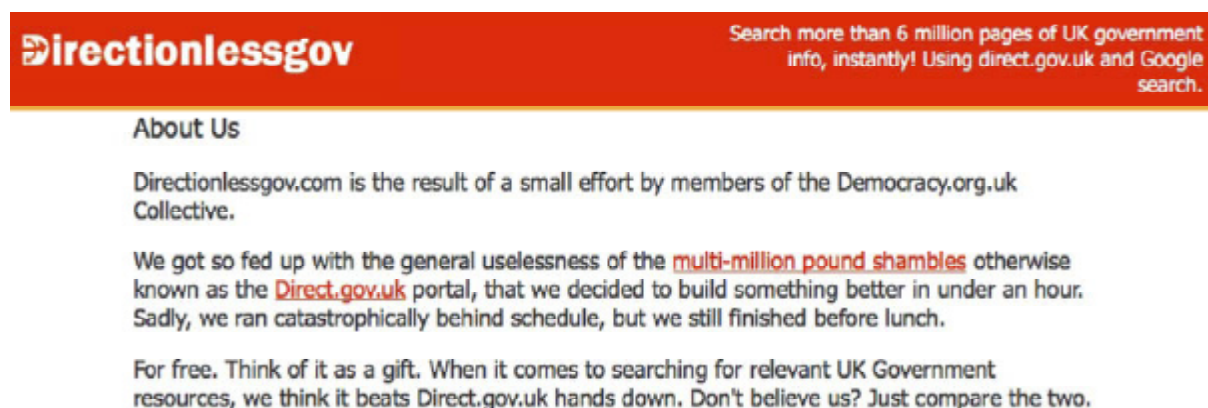
**Table 1: Difference between government and web 2.0 bottom-up initiatives**

<b>Traditional Government IT projects</b>	<b>Web 2.0 bottom-up projects</b>
Control	Emergence
(Aiming to be) user-centric	User-driven
Planned ex-ante	Flexible
Long-term (> 1year)	Short term (<6 months)
Large investment in tech (> 100K euros)	Small investment in tech (<10K euros)
Failure is a mistake	Failure is part of learning process
Aim for efficiency	Aim for transparency
First release late in the project	First release and users feedback from early stage (sometimes the developer is the user)

<sup>4</sup> See e.g Osimo, D. (2008a). Web 2.0 for government: why and how? Technical Report. DG JRC; IPTS Seville JRC [online] Available at <http://ftp.jrc.es/EURdoc/JRC45269.pdf> (last retrieved January 2009)

This difference is likely to generate criticism to government and conflicts in the near future. It is becoming increasingly difficult for policy-makers to justify large-scale IT projects of uncertain delivery while at the same time small bottom-up initiatives are delivering fast results. While one could not think of reducing investment on fundamental initiatives, such as data interoperability in the public sector, other more citizens-oriented initiative are more exposed to strong criticisms, especially in the face of the traditional concerns over government incapacity to deliver successful IT projects and permanent low take-up of services to citizens.<sup>5</sup> The simple juxtaposition of the cost of high-profile government led projects and civil society initiatives are likely to induce sneering. For example, in March 2006, following the launch of the UK direct.gov services, a group of developers got together to create a better service at zero cost, as described in the figure below.

**Figure 1: The rationale of the Directionlessgov project (source [www.directionlessgov.com](http://www.directionlessgov.com)), as an example of the perceived gap between government and web 2.0 initiatives**



**Directionlessgov** Search more than 6 million pages of UK government info, instantly! Using direct.gov.uk and Google search.

**About Us**

Directionlessgov.com is the result of a small effort by members of the Democracy.org.uk Collective.

We got so fed up with the general uselessness of the multi-million pound shambles otherwise known as the Direct.gov.uk portal, that we decided to build something better in under an hour. Sadly, we ran catastrophically behind schedule, but we still finished before lunch.

For free. Think of it as a gift. When it comes to searching for relevant UK Government resources, we think it beats Direct.gov.uk hands down. Don't believe us? Just compare the two.

One can easily detect is a certain snobbery in the web 2.0 community towards government IT initiatives “not getting it”, with the underlying consideration that government is incapable of delivering high-quality results in IT, and should only work for making public data available for reuse: the citizens and the market will take care of delivering the service. In the words of Robinson, government “rather than struggling, as it currently does, to design sites that meet end-user needs, it should focus on creating a simple, reliable and publicly accessible infrastructure that «exposes» the underlying data.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Despite many years of investment in provision of online services, still just above 10% of the EU citizens use them in 2008 (EUROSTAT)

<sup>6</sup> Robinson et al. (2009) “Government Data and the Invisible Hand “ Yale Journal of Law & Technology, Vol. 11, p. 160, 2009 available at [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1138083](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1138083) ; See also Di Maio A. ( 2008) “The Real Future of E-Government: From Joined-Up to Mashed-Up” Gartner

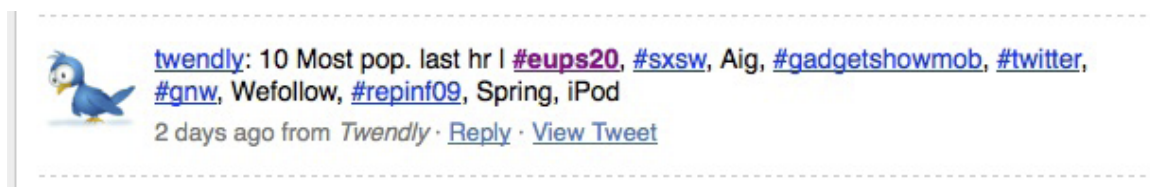
This cultural gap between government and the web community is producing sub-optimal results for both. In order to bridge it, the authors of this report are often called to present and evangelize government on web 2.0, but it is becoming quite clear that presentations and speeches are not sufficient. In order to accelerate change, a more hands-on approach is necessary, not showing slides of what can be done but through hands-on demonstration and inspiration on what is being done already, its impact and challenges.

From this shared awareness, in December 2008 emerged the need and the idea to organize a high-profile and hands-on meeting between some of the best web 2.0 projects in Europe and government people. Similar events have been held at local and national level, but it was now long time for an EU-level event: firstly, challenges are similar in different EU countries, thereby making the exchange of experiences particularly meaningful and useful; secondly, we are at a particular moment of re-design of European policies, when a new ICT policy is being discussed following i2010.

The workshop was therefore held on March 16<sup>th</sup> in Brussels. The goal was really to 1) raise awareness towards European governments on the importance and size of the gap with current web 2.0 initiatives, and 2) to start a discussion and collaboration between similar initiatives taking place in different EU countries.

The workshop was organized in a purely web 2.0 style: the organisers proposed it to the European Commission ePractice managers, which were quick in understanding the interest; it was organised with no budget, on a voluntary basis, in one month and a half. The result is that 20 speakers came to Brussels on their expenses to share their experience; more than 100 people were present. The event was broadcasted live on [www.ustream.com](http://www.ustream.com), and a lively conversation took place on Twitter through, to the point the hashtag #eups20 was the number one tag on twitter worldwide for several hours (see below).

**Figure 2: screen capture showing the workshop tag #eups20 as the most popular topic of discussion on twitter**



The present report aims to take stock of the discussion. The structure reflects the articulation of the workshop:

- The micro level section looks at individual web 2.0 projects in fields such as government, health, inclusion, transport, trying to extract the commonalities and lessons learnt from each presentation.

- The meso level analyses initiatives aiming at stimulating and generating the bottom-up initiatives described in the micro level. These initiatives bring together relevant people and create community effect to accelerate the natural, bottom-up development of such initiatives. They are often carried out not by government but by trusted third parties embedded in the web 2.0 community.
- The macro level perspective concerns mainly what are existing government policies put in place in order to enable and facilitate change.

## 2. THE MICRO LEVEL

The first session brought together some of the most interesting European bottom-up projects, in different fields such as transparency, political participation, health, inclusion, transport. Project clearly demonstrated that a deep change is ongoing. Cheap and easy tools are enabling people to come together and make change in their lives with or without the government. We are seeing the rapid emergence and spread of bottom up innovation in public service provision based on real need but at no real cost. Many of the tools available are free to use and highly customisable, meaning that anyone with even a basic level of understanding of the web can articulate and collaborate online. The only cost involved, therefore, is that of time.

Individuals can set up free or inexpensive tools such as a blog or a wiki in a matter of minutes, and making use of these tools regularly can be woven into work or play with very little time commitment. Open source technology such as Pligg, a content management system, is used by Open ProPolis, which has developed a tool for public sector workers in Spain to suggest ideas for improving public health services (Las 1001 Ideas).

In many ways the web does not discriminate between individuals and organisations and in this sense free tools that can be quickly set up are also available to governments – levelling the playing field in the relationship between individuals and institutions. With only staff time to consider as a cost of engaging online, the barriers have never been lower for governments to have conversations with citizens on their own turf.

Governments are now faced with a challenge to their previously uncontested power. They must manage changing relationships with an increasingly demanding public, better able than ever before to voice views, concerns and wants.

Given this, government requires new and nuanced coping strategies. It is faced with the dilemma of whether to hold onto past top down rigid business models or to recognise that the world is evolving and support groups and individuals showing the initiative to deliver services once firmly within the responsibilities of government.

This evolution is characterised by a number key **values** or characteristics that are in stark contrast to the existing government order: Collaboration, Information sharing, Individuality, Informality, Peering, Community, Openness, Facilitation, Small-size, Hacking and experimentation, responsiveness to individuals' needs, Risk taking, Innovation, Entrepreneurialism.

The values and characteristics of the social web are shared by a new breed of companies, hackers, and highly motivated groups and individuals. If government is to evolve with the web and meet the needs articulated by citizens it must release a degree of control and recognise that other people, the people closest to the social or individual need, may also be better placed to develop and deliver services on behalf of government.

An example of this is Google Transit, which allows citizens to plan their own journeys using Google maps and data on public transport. Google's position allows it to provide this tool for journeys across international borders, showing that national governments are not in the best position to provide transport information to citizens.

Similarly DebateGraph allows people to participate in debates about public policy issues with access to multiple data sources and a neutral way to analyse opinion in order to form their own opinions about important issues, circumventing the government-created 'spin'.

While Google could hardly be called a small organisation, their approach to projects reflect a broader theme characterised by size (generally small scale such as DebateGraph), cost (low), their risk taking (likely to take risks but gamble with low stakes, following the principle of "if you fail, fail quickly"), trial and error – and often not the ones funded from mainstream government funds but instead often from "innovation" or "creative" funding.

Above all, these are projects that rely on **passionate people**, obsessed even, with focus and drive. The projects themselves are often very close to a clearly identified need, an itch that people need to scratch and as such are needs-led, rather than technology-led.

Patient Opinion is a site that allows users of British health services to rate their experience of the service and describe their experience in their own words. The idea was developed by a doctor who clearly saw a need and who still practices while running the site.

There are major benefits to this new model of public service delivery. It **reduces the risk of experimentation** for the state – small grant funding, delivered outside of its responsibility, and if it works it can herald the great success it has been part of and whole heartedly adopt the initiative and scale it up if so fits! For example, Gordon Brown recently attended the UK Catalyst awards to 'congratulate' the social entrepreneurs who won awards (such as UK project by On Road Media called Savvy Chavvy, a social network for young people from the

gypsy and traveller community), even though he acknowledged that “We’re trying to see how we can foster a new generation of activists and campaigners and entrepreneurs, even though some campaign against the Government itself.” ([http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/science\\_technology/savvy+chavvy+wins+uk+catalyst+award/2356787](http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/science_technology/savvy+chavvy+wins+uk+catalyst+award/2356787))

Within this picture, the role of the state and European funding is very different to its traditional large-scale, one size fits all, top down approach to IT-led projects. Support in kind is as valuable as grants - business mentoring to help develop financial sustainability, hacker support to develop technology and space to work are all more valuable than money in many cases. This means that government must take on a facilitative and enabling role - it has to tread lightly, foster connections, provide opportunities for relationships to be made, convene interested parties, provide small (but adequate) funding rather than large and long term commitments.

**EU countries have been slow to shift their funding approaches** – The Institute for Public Policy in Romania wanted to develop a site to show EU citizens how MEPs voted but could not get funding from the EU despite applying (they were told their project was ‘irrelevant’), instead eventually getting money from the US.

Rewired State in the UK was a practical example of the benefits delivered by an experimental approach with no funding from the government. 85 hackers attended an event on a Saturday to show what could be done in 8 hours with government data for the benefit of citizens. The venue for the event was provided by the Guardian newspaper along with some real and dummy data, and £3000 was given by Channel 4 and Sun Microsystems to cover costs (which it did, with money to spare). The government provided very little in the way of resources (although many attendees worked in departments) but the benefits it received were vast – 26 projects were presented by the end of the day, 6 of which were offered further funding to continue.

Opening up to an approach similar to Rewired State or the IPP in Romania not only requires a significant shift in funding models, but also in the skill set of governments. Competencies in facilitation and human network development are crucial to make the most of the opportunities for innovation. Skills in procurement and contact management also need to shift to accommodate a new eco-system of small suppliers. Tools such as [www.epractice.eu](http://www.epractice.eu) go some way towards helping government understand what projects are happening and share learning across boundaries, however knowledge sharing and network development skills are in short supply.

Governments could even adapt to undertake some engagement tasks themselves – employing those with technical skills to undertake small development projects and to oversee the implementation of scaled projects.

Crucially, however the experience of all examples highlights the huge challenges around data. Open data is the foundation of many social web projects, enabling citizens to make better use of public services and information. Information silos and worries about data security and protection have forced a lock-down of the **most basic data**, which presents a significant stumbling block for many projects.

Farmsubsidy.org takes data on EU farming subsidies and analyses it to give EU citizens information on payments and beneficiary countries. Along with followthemoney.eu it provides scrutiny of EU financial and policy decision-making, providing evidence to help citizens keep their MEPs accountable.

However gathering data for projects such as farmsubsidy.org proves at best difficult and at worst impossible. Many of those responsible for government data are bound by archaic or ill-conceived rules as well as fear of data scandals that have seen leaks of sensitive data with bad consequences. This climate of fear around releasing data can effectively hamper the progression of projects that should be lightweight and low-cost, causing significant delays and cumbersome workarounds.

If public services are to evolve in line with the web, new approaches are needed quickly. Cultural change, improved funding models, different skill sets and open data are all needed to ensure that low-cost, low-risk projects can be quickly developed to meet citizens' needs. The Leviathan is no longer an effective model of meeting these needs and the distributed social web is much better placed to help people collaborate on a new generation of public services.

### 3. THE MESO LEVEL

One of the key questions stemming from analysing the wide array of bottom-up projects described in the previous chapter, and the public value they create, is: what can be done to stimulate this? Is this simply an organic spontaneous growth, or can appropriate measures be put in place to encourage their development?

In fact, the need to define a meso-level does not come from a theoretical perspective in political science, but by the simple recognition that a set of initiatives already exists, that try to stimulate these bottom-up projects:

- Social Innovation camp: a two day workshop bringing together developers and social activists to create new applications for solving collective problems<sup>7</sup>
- Kublai project: a network project to bring together creative people to launch local development projects in southern Italy, where traditional regional development projects appear ineffective<sup>8</sup>
- Rewired State: a 8 hours day meeting of hackers who built 26 working applications on top of government data, with the only reward of personal satisfaction, fun, beer, and attention from government<sup>9</sup>
- IBBT Inca award: a competition for applications with social purpose, built on purpose in one month. 20.000 Euros of reward will be distributed among the best applications<sup>10</sup>.
- IBM habitat jam: a mass collaboration to design the future of urban sustainability, worldwide<sup>11</sup>

These initiatives have several common points, revolving around the issues of money, people and how (not) to manage both.

The originating assumption is that traditional policy tools to stimulate public innovation do not work very well in the context of public services 2.0. First, in these initiatives **public money is not the main tool to stimulate innovation**. Money is the outcome, rather than the pre-condition of the initiative. The availability of funding attracts the wrong kind of participants, the opportunists, and the consultants “able to building any kind of project by paying lip service to the right buzzwords”, as Alberto Cottica put it in his

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.sicamp.org/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.progettokublai.net/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://rewiredstate.org/hackthegovday> . The initiative is described in the previous chapter.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.inca-award.be/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.globaldialoguecenter.com/exhibits/backbone/index.shtml>



presentation. The inability to attract the right kind of people is indeed a crucial problem of funding mechanisms: for example, the panel evaluation of the EU ICT research programme admits that there are major barriers to involving the most innovative and growth-oriented SMEs.<sup>12</sup> In many cases, traditional government funding mechanisms are at odds with the values of creative people and companies.

Instead than focussing on money, the presented initiatives focus on attracting the **right kind of people**. The absence of money as the main motivator ensures that participants are mainly involved because of enthusiasm, commitment, passion. With little money and lots of passion you can achieve dramatically better results than with lots of money and little passion. Sometimes, money is a risk, rather than an asset, as it sends the “wrong signals to the wrong kind of people” (quoting from Alberto Cottica presentation). Creative people look for meaning before money. This is a well-known phenomenon: Titmuss demonstrated in 1970 how the UK model of non-profit blood collection ensured better quality and quantity of blood than the US for-profit model.<sup>13</sup>

But as Anna Maybank said, what is new today is the scale of the possibility, as made possible by the dramatic **reduction in the cost of collective action**, as described by Clay Shirky. Technology tools are much less expensive, due to overall reduction in prices, open source software and software as a service. Technology diffusion makes it much easier to ensure colaboration without the need for formal organisation. Barriers to entry in organising and designing collaborative effort are now very low.

The reduced costs means that it is now possible to start up project without public funding, in order to demonstrate what can be done. Funding is then necessary to make the project stand on its feet and ensure up scaling, full deployment and sustainability. This is why in many of the presented cases, the final result is a “working and fundable project” submitted to the attention of the funders. The community acts as a producer of the project, and as a filter to improve and select the best projects. Only at the end of this process comes the funding possibility. Money follows results, not the opposite: it is the public policy equivalent of the new “publish then filter” model, versus the traditional “filter then publish”<sup>14</sup>: create-then-fund. RewiredState, at the end of the development cycle, presents the projects to the government for purchase. Social Innovation delivers the award at the end of the week-end of work, looking at the best working projects. Kublai acts as a collective platform to improve projects proposals from ideas to fully-fledged business plan, which can be presented to different funders. INCA funds the best applications after they have been developed, not the best project ideas. This create-then-fund approach is effective in this context because it **crowds away the experts in proposal-**

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<sup>12</sup> Aho et al., 2008, Information Society Research and Innovation: Delivering results with sustained impact. Evaluation of the effectiveness of Information Society Research in the 6th Framework Programme 2003-2006. Brussels May 2008

<sup>13</sup> Titmuss, 1970. The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy

<sup>14</sup> Shirky, 2008,

**writing, and attracts the “doers”**. Secondly, it is more open to **unpredictable outcomes**, which is more in line with the nature of bottom-up projects, which often take unexpected turns following the behaviour of users. Thirdly, such an approach **accepts failure** as a normal part of the learning and innovation process.

The meso-level initiatives are necessary **new interfaces that bring together different people** who would not meet in existing structures. Innovation generally stems from cross-fertilisation of different communities and expertise: government and developers (Rewired State); social innovators and developers (Social Innovation Camp), creative people and structural funds officers (Kublai), researchers and hackers (INCA), urban citizens and policy makers (HabitatJam).

Another important lesson learnt is that these initiatives grow in an organic, not planned fashion. There is no structured management approach. These social processes are successful when viral, and it is impossible to rigidly plan ex-ante and top-down. A different approach is necessary. The “right people” are mainly attracted informally, through word of mouth, and reputation mechanisms are crucial to make it work. This is why these initiatives are seldom managed directly by government, but rather by **trusted third parties** and individuals. Government have to learn to act indirectly, by leveraging networks. Secondly, while a control approach does not work, a great deal of work goes into the careful preparation of a **favourable context** for innovation to happen. All the resource that is not spent in technology and in attracting people is dedicated to organizing the event. Rewired State collected a great list of public data; Social Innovation Camp works for months before and after the event to make it effective; Kublai developed a wide array of synchronous and asynchronous tools to leverage creativity. These meso-level events share a feeling of enthusiasm, community and energy which is greatly enhanced by the synchronicity of events: intense one day gathering, short term development times such as the one month given for the INCA award.

These viral and creative activities cannot be artificially induced, but are not totally spontaneous: they have to be carefully designed and implemented. In other words, public policy has to evolve **from a planning to a design** approach, focussing on setting the favourable context for innovation to happen rather than defining the innovation path ex-ante.

These initiatives are therefore more the result of craftsmanship than of industrial planning: it is therefore not clear if and how they can be up scaled and achieve large-scale impact. Yet they are already very much able to show a radical difference in results from traditional government-led initiatives.

#### 4. THE MACRO LEVEL

What can governments and the European Commission do to create favourable conditions for innovation in public services, and what are they themselves doing to improve their own citizen-facing services?

We have seen gradual progress in e-government initiatives over the past decade, but most of these have focused on putting key services online and publishing web sites for government and its agencies. Will we now see more rapid progress towards opening up governmental processes and data, discussion and engagement with citizens and involving users in service improvement? Will this build on the successes we have seen on the micro-level in civil society or will governments want to build and own their own end-to-end services?

Richard Stirling from the UK Government Cabinet Office gave a wide-ranging presentation looking at the Power of Information (POI) Review and its impact in the UK. He covered the history of the initiative from the first review in 2007 through to the establishment of the taskforce in 2008 and the final report in 2009, available at <http://poit.cabinetoffice.gov.uk>. He explained the focus of the POI as covering four main areas:

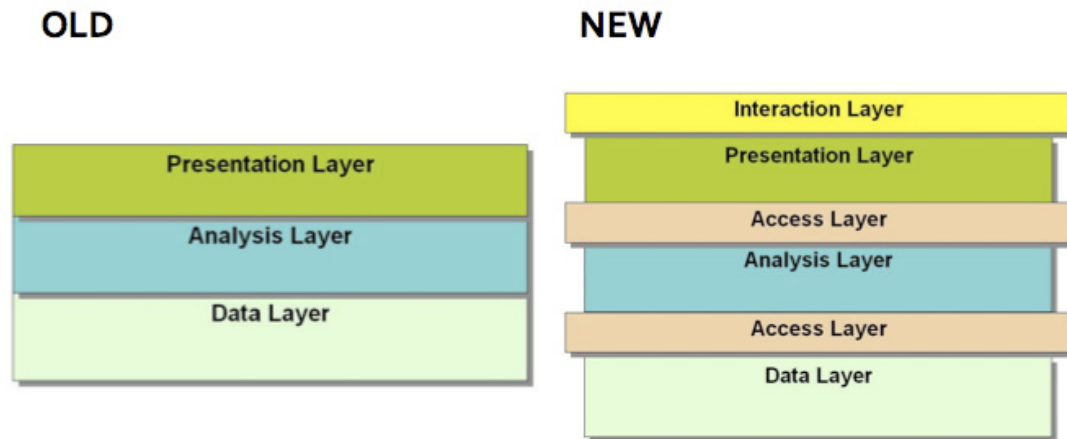
- Open discussion between citizens and government: how to make sure civil servants are exposed to discussion elsewhere and empowered to respond
- Open information shared with civil society in forms that mean they can build additional services and value, along the lines of data.gov in the USA
- Open feedback on services to encourage improvement
- Open innovation, working across the firewall with non-governmental agencies and individuals to develop new services

Richard also identified some of the challenges government faces:

- Lack of skills internally
- Not many examples to learn from
- Issues of hierarchy

In addressing these challenges, the POI team are keen to pursue experimentation to demonstrate the value of the approach, build networks outside government and, more generally, seek to bring in external talent to help accelerate the process.

Figure 3: The Power of Information model of government data (source: <http://poit.cabinetoffice.gov.uk>)



The issue of open data was picked up by José Alonso, eGovernment lead at the W3C, who emphasised the need for most government data to be opened up in “free, open, raw” formats so that citizens can add value to otherwise hidden information. Quoting Walsh and Pollowck, he noted that “the coolest thing to do with your data will be thought of by someone else”.<sup>15</sup> He charted the history of open data from HTML scraping to RSS/ATOM, RDFa, XML and the Semantic Web, and suggested that we do not need to throw away existing systems, but rather build on top of them.

Internal capacity within government remains a limiting factor on its ability to confidently engage with citizens. This is worsened by the backward nature of much internal government IT culture, which has focused on preventing access rather than enabling it, and a long history of working in a space protected from citizen oversight or interaction.

Davied van Berlo from the Dutch government initiative “Civil Servant 2.0” and Chris Smissaert from “Government 2.0” shared their experiences of pushing forward the agenda in the Netherlands. Davied talked about helping civil servants engage in new ways and described how their online social networking project is bringing civil servants together across departmental boundaries to allow them to learn from each other about new ways of engaging with citizens. Davied made the important point that if we are to improve government’s ability to engage, then we must start with civil servants and first of all give them a greater role in the process. Chris showed some very interesting plans for public-facing sites, widgets and other interesting engagement tools for the Dutch Ministry of the Interior.

<sup>15</sup> [http://m.okfn.org/files/talks/xttech\\_2007](http://m.okfn.org/files/talks/xttech_2007)

This session provided some useful insights into the operational barriers to progress, such as how we can up-skill civil servants and empower them to engage with citizens, use open data and open innovation to create new services and generally encourage more feedback and discussion. But there are other, bigger issues that continue to relegate these issues to the periphery of government. For example, billions of Euros continue to be spent on major outsourcing of government projects and services, which have a high failure rate. The way that budgets are set and procurement organised is something that needs to change if we are to move these projects to the centre of government activity. This presents a real challenge for policy makers.

The consensus of the panellists was that mainstream adoption is still some way off if we continue on the same trajectory - cultural barriers, IT back-office integration and structural issues with the way government services are delivered will continue to inhibit progress towards the goal of truly “2.0” public services in the European Union.

It is likely that the more rapid and direct progress being achieved by the new US administration will serve as a beacon for the European Union, and it will be interesting to observe how much real progress they can make in the next three years.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The workshop was certainly a success in terms of quality and quantity of participation, in person and in remote. The best summing up of the atmosphere was probably expressed by a remote participant: “a truly immersive experience [...] I had already participated in webcasting and videoconferencing, allowing chat interaction, but this time I got the impression of a vibrant community, in which the followers-at-distance was as important as the followers-in-presence.”<sup>16</sup>.

Some clear common points emerged throughout the sessions and can be identified as key conclusions.

Firstly, all speakers emphasized the need for opening up government data. Regardless of the technical discussion, it is still the case that these bottom-up initiatives are implemented without the awareness, and in many cases with passive resistance from government to provide the data. Most of the time and resources is dedicated to scraping the data and making the usable and machine-readable. Releasing government data would bring about several key benefits, such as better government accountability, more engaged citizens, more citizens-oriented services and new opportunities for technological innovation. In this sense, the 8 principles of Open Government Data<sup>17</sup> and the W3C note<sup>18</sup> on making government data accessible remain key references. It is clear that the new US administration is also setting a new standard by launching the data.gov catalogue of government data; by placing transparency at the centre of its e-government policy, as expressed in the President Memorandum of transparency<sup>19</sup> which was the first act signed by President Obama; and by mandating agencies to release funding data linked to the recovery bill in fully reusable format.

Secondly, a new innovation model for public services emerged. Rather than relying in large scale, long duration projects that struggle to meet the needs of the users, the web innovation models are smaller, with rapid development cycles and short feedback loops with users (permanent beta). The technological costs are kept to the minimum, thanks to free and open sources software, and low costs of hardware, software and hosting. Most projects would fail and not be sustained in the long term, but the related cost of failure is very low. Simplicity and “good enough” are the technological principles adopted by these projects, which then devote more resources to design and usability.

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<sup>16</sup> Eleonora Panto’ entry on the ePractice blog <http://www.epractice.eu/en/blog/288588>

<sup>17</sup> [http://resource.org/8\\_principles.html](http://resource.org/8_principles.html)

<sup>18</sup> W3C (2009) Improving Access to Government through Better Use of the Web. <http://www.w3.org/TR/2009/NOTE-egov-improving-20090512/>

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/TransparencyandOpenGovernment/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/TransparencyandOpenGovernment/)

This new innovation model is at odds with the current funding instruments, which instead rely on long-term planning, extensive preparation, large budget and long deployment. New funding instruments, more small scale and flexible should be used. In particular, collaborative efforts and competitions, such as INCA and Rewired State, proved very successful in stimulating developers to create public service-related applications based on public data.

Connected, talented and motivated individuals are the key requirements for this innovation model to bring societal benefits. Web 2.0 initiatives and the workshop itself was the fruit of passion and motivation for doing “stuff that matters”<sup>20</sup>. Government should tap into these resources, into the existing networks<sup>21</sup>, to create public value. Citizens open control and feedback on public services (such as in Farmsubsidy and PatientOpinion) is a powerful tool to ensure good governance, because it acts on the incentives to good government and induces cultural change. Citizens also provide insights and intelligence to improve public services, such as in the 100 Ideas for Public health implemented by OpenPropolis.

But history shows that change is unlikely to happen without the engagement of civil servants. The UK and Dutch government have launched initiatives to facilitate civil servants engagement in web 2.0 initiatives, with full respect of general government guidelines. A significant number of civil servants is fully committed and enthusiastic about web 2.0, but this is still a minority. If government employees are to have an active presence online basic web skills should also be developed such as an understanding of infrastructure tools like blogs, wikis and microblogs, along with learning about writing skills and online content creation. No small challenge when for example ‘it is estimated that some 11 per cent of the local government workforce are below level one in literacy’.<sup>22</sup>

As well as motivation, strong literacy and IT skills are needed to participate actively and to receive benefits from public services 2.0. Initiatives such as On Road Media are key in ensuring that social media and web 2.0 become a factor of inclusion rather than of further exclusion. Such interventions on media literacy are needed both towards citizens and civil servants, and Commissioner Reding recently highlighted the importance of becoming literate in new media.<sup>23</sup>

In conclusion, it appears clear that web 2.0 in public services is becoming more structured, from micro to meso and macro-level initiatives, and is moving from the

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<sup>20</sup> Tim O’Reilly, <http://radar.oreilly.com/2009/01/work-on-stuff-that-matters-fir.html>

<sup>21</sup> For example the network projects presented in the meso-level section

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=5905375>

<sup>23</sup>

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1244&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

periphery to the centre of policy debate. Yet it is also clear that web 2.0 initiatives are still exceptional and marginal in the government context, and that progress is too slow so that the gap with web-based innovation is widening, rather than closing up.

Government are not in a position to decide on the direction of this evolution, as progress is being shaped by broader underlying forces such as generational trends and citizens' expectation. But government can influence the speed and nature of this change, and make sure that it is less traumatic and confrontational, and more shared and inclusive. Citizens and workshop participants on their side have to assume a shared responsibility to push the public services 2.0 agenda forward.

2009 is an important year for the EU ICT policy. A new ICT strategy will be put in place and a new e-government action plan. The participants to the workshop agreed, at the end, to engage themselves for the workshop conclusions to be included as a key priority of the future EU e-government strategy. Collaboration is launched, around the common "tag" across platform<sup>24</sup>:

eups20

But the key platform for action is not technological: rather, it is the **energy, competence and passion** shared by all the participants to the workshop.

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<sup>24</sup> Content published on different web platforms (blogs, twitter, wiki, video, presentation tagged eups20) is aggregated at <http://www.pageflakes.com/eups20/>



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank first of all the speakers of the workshop, which not only offered their time but also covered all their travel cost. This is an exceptional effort, which is unlikely to be repeated, but justified because this was the first event of this kind.

The participants, live and through twitter and videostreaming, participated actively and provided real insight and added value, as well as clearly felt enthusiasm. Apologies to the numerous people who could not attend due to space limitations.

The European Commission proved to be uniquely sensible to the theme. The people managing the ePractice initiative facilitated our work and provided all organisational requirements as well as good suggestions and insight into the content. The attention and time dedicated to the workshop by senior officials is a very positive sign for future policy development.

## FURTHER MATERIAL

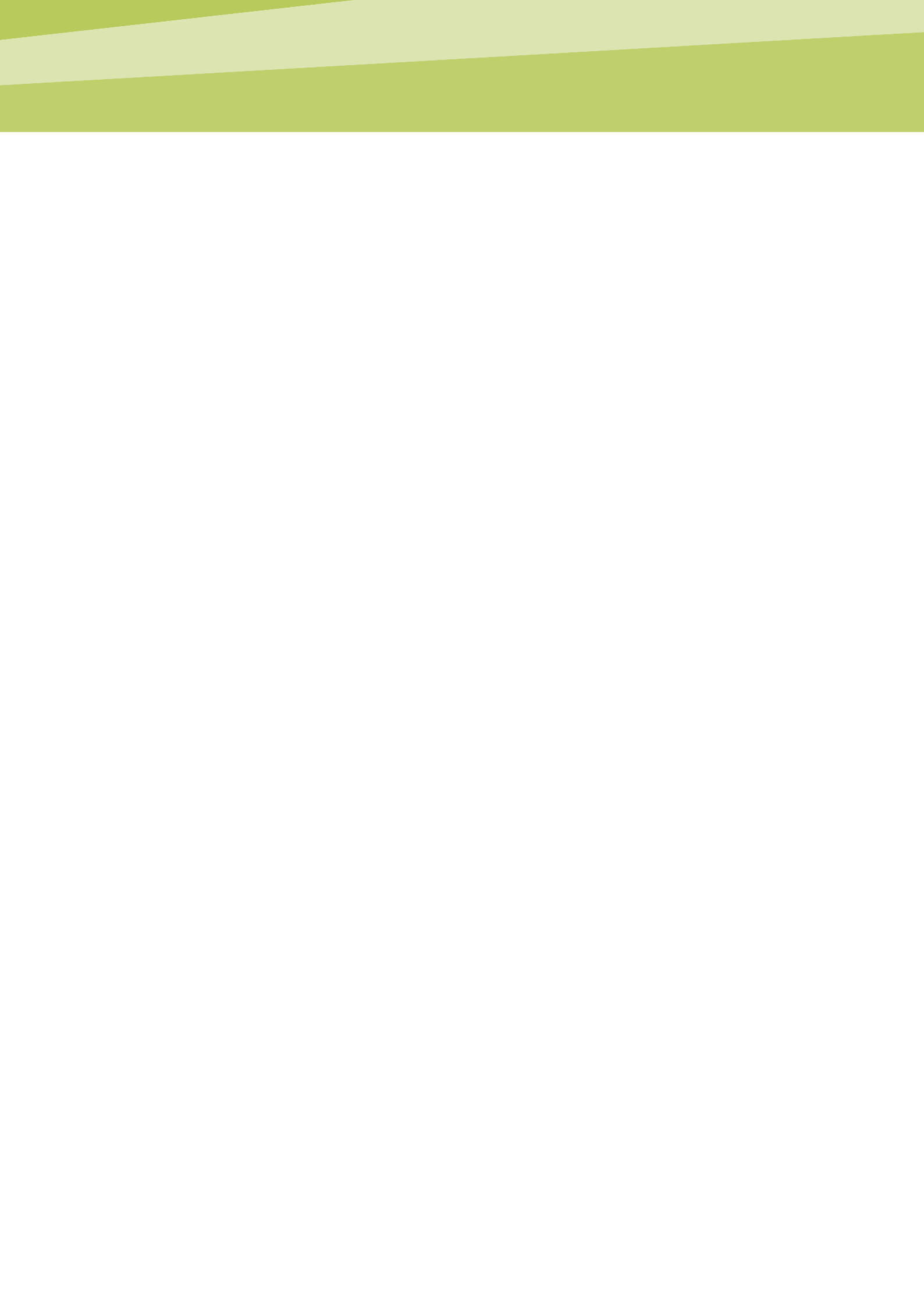
All presentations are available at <http://www.slideshare.net/event/public-services-20>

All videos are available at <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/public-service-2.0>

All the workshop material (presentations, photos, video, comments) is aggregated at [www.pageflakes.com/eups20](http://www.pageflakes.com/eups20)

## ANNEX I: AGENDA

10:00 h	Welcome and introduction	David <a href="#">Osimo</a> ( <a href="#">Tech4i2</a> )
10:10 h	Keynote	Mechthild <a href="#">Rohen</a> (Head of Unit, EC DG INFSO eGov)
10:20 h	The micro level: projects implementing web 2.0 innovation: (10 minutes each, pause after 5 for Q&A)	<p>Chaired by <a href="#">FutureGov</a> (Dominic <a href="#">Campbell</a> and Justin <a href="#">Kerr-Stevens</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jack <a href="#">Thurston</a>, founder, <a href="#">Farmsubsidy</a> (EU)</li> <li>- Adrian <a href="#">Moraru</a>, IPPC (RN): How MEP vote</li> <li>- David <a href="#">Price</a>, founder, <a href="#">Debategraph</a> (UK)</li> <li>- Emma <a href="#">Mulqueeny</a>, <a href="#">Rewired State</a> (UK)</li> <li>- James <a href="#">Munro</a>, director, <a href="#">Patient Opinion</a> (UK)</li> <li>- Carlos Guardian, OpenPropolis (ES): <a href="#">1001 ideas para sanidad publica</a></li> <li>- Nathalie <a href="#">McDermott</a>, <a href="#">On Road Media</a> (UK)</li> <li>- Simon <a href="#">Hampton</a>, Director European Public Policy, Google (EU): <a href="#">GoogleTransit</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Antoni Riu</a>, <a href="#">P.A.U. Education</a> (EU),</li> </ul>
12.30 h	<b>Lunch and movie projection "<a href="#">Us Now</a>" presented by director Ivo Gormley</b>	
14:30 h	Keynote	Ken Ducatel (Head of Unit, EC DG INFSO)
14:45 h	The meso level: programmes to stimulate web2.0 innovation	<p>Chaired by David <a href="#">Osimo</a>, (<a href="#">Tech4i2</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anna <a href="#">Maybank</a>, <a href="#">Social Innovation Camp</a> (UK)</li> <li>- Alberto <a href="#">Cottica</a>, director, <a href="#">Kublai</a> project (IT)</li> <li>- Wim <a href="#">De Waele</a>, Director, <a href="#">IBBT</a>: the innovative and creative applications award (BE)</li> <li>- Duus <a href="#">Ostergaard</a>, the IBM Innovation <a href="#">Jam</a></li> </ul>
16:15 h	The macro level: government policies to enable web2.0 innovation	<p>Chaired by Lee <a href="#">Bryant</a> (<a href="#">Headshift</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Richard Stirling, Cabinet Office, UK, <a href="#">Power of Information Taskforce</a> and Showusabetterway.org</li> <li>• Trond Arne <a href="#">Undheim</a> and Jose <a href="#">Alonso</a>, chair eGov group, <a href="#">W3C/CTIC</a>: Open Government Data</li> <li>• Davied <a href="#">van Berlo</a> and Chris <a href="#">Smisssaert</a>, the Dutch government initiative "Civil Servant 2.0" and "Government 2.0"</li> <li>• Round table with government representatives</li> </ul>
17:45 h	Closing session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yves <a href="#">Punie</a>, JRC <a href="#">IPTS</a>, research perspectives on the impact of web2.0</li> <li>- Wrap up and conclusions</li> </ul>



# Public services 2.0

Web 2.0 from the periphery  
to the centre of public service delivery



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**Brussels, September 2009**

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