

Conclusions

of the International Workshop on

“eGovernment and its Spatial Dimension”

Sofia, Kempinski Hotel, 9th of June 2006

The International Workshop on “eGovernment and its Spatial Dimension” took place in Sofia on the 9th of June 2006. The workshop was organised by the South-East European Research Centre (SEERC), CITY College, and locally organised by URSIT Ltd. Furthermore it was organised under the auspices of Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform, Bulgaria. It was hosted at Kempinski Hotel in Sofia.

Registration for the workshop was free. There were 80 people who registered and attended the workshop. Attendees came from several European countries: Greece, Hungary, Romania, UK, Germany, Austria, Romania; the majority of them were from Bulgaria.

The event commenced by welcome speeches from Dr. Angel Ivanov, Deputy Minister of Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform, Bulgaria, Mr. Nikos Zaharis, Director of SEERC, Dr. Dimitris Dranidis, Lecturer at CITY College, and Mr. Ulrich Boes, URSIT Ltd. The opening speeches emphasised the importance of eGovernment in the South Eastern Europe region, the important role of spatially enabled information systems in eGovernment and the necessity of organisation of such events that will assist in the creation of collaboration networks between organisations from different countries, increase people awareness in eGovernment projects, and evaluate the status of eGovernment in the countries of the region.

The first session of talks was chaired by Dr. D. Dranidis. The speakers in this session were: Dr. Alexander Ognianov, Chief expert from the Ministry of State Administration and State Reform, Bulgaria, Dr. Lazo Roljic, Associate Professor in IT and MIS from the University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Economics, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Mr. Ivo Landek, Assistant Director from the State Geodetic Authority, Croatia.

Dr. Alexander Ognianov’s talk was entitled “e-Government in Bulgaria”. Dr Ognianov started his talk by presenting the vision of the Ministry for eGovernment: *“Effective, modern and transparent administration, able to meet the high expectations of the Bulgarian citizens, the business and the EU for good services and high professional ethics”*. As the benefits of eGovernment in his talk he emphasised the contribution of eGovernment to limitation of corruption. Bulgaria currently has implemented 58.7% of the 20 indicative services of eGovernment (EU 84%). The current status of e-services however has to be reorganized. The three pillars of successful reorganization are the establishment of an active legal framework and ordinances, the re-engineering of the state administration and the establishment of centralized and high-tech information systems. Major eGovernment tasks in 2006 include: new laws for eGovernment and e-commerce, update of eGovernment

strategy and new action plan for 2006-2010, development of technological infrastructure, introduction of a centralized Human Resource Management information system and a centralized e-learning system, establishment of centralised and also regional information structures, and support for geo-spatial e-Services.

Dr. Lazo Roljic' talk was entitled "The Status and Perspectives of eGovernment in Bosnia and Herzegovina". Dr. Lazo Roljic started his talk by providing several definitions of eGovernment according to different bodies and organisations. He continued by presenting best examples of e-Government Realization from several European Countries such as Slovenia, Austria, Italia, Serbia, and Croatia. Then he presented the Administrative structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Currently there are a lot of operative problems in public administration and the development of e-Government in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in its initial phase: information-delivery. Public administration is far from being citizen-centered. In 2004, the Strategy for Information Society Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina was designed in accordance with the European initiatives and documents. One of the five development pillars of an informational society in the Strategy is the e-Government section. Problems of e-Government implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina are: a low level of technical equipment of public administration, the staff is poorly educated about information technologies, and the Action Plan realization is very slow.

The next talk with the title "Review on development of SDI as a basis of E-Government in Croatia" was presented by Mr. Ivan Landek, Assistant Director, State Geodetic Authority (SGA), Croatia. Mr Landek presented the current legal framework in Croatia; the government of Croatia has adopted a decree on Introduction of Geodetic Datums and plain cartographic projection in 2004. State Geodetic Administration is responsible for the implementation of Croatian SDI, the definition of standards and specifications, and the production and dissemination of basic spatial data sets/bases. SGA's strategic goals for 2006-2010 are the establishment of a fully digitalized authority, delivery of services according to the needs of citizens, contribution to general welfare, and modernization of the business model. SDI is integral part of Croatian government policies for information systems and public information availability. A new law on State Survey and Real-Estate Cadastre, which will be adopted this year, contains chapter about NSDI: definition, content, tasks, subjects and participants, bodies, and deadlines.

The next session of talks was chaired by Mr. Ulrich Boes. The speakers in this session were: Dr. Poulicos Prastacos Researcher, Head of the Regional Analysis Division from the Institute of Applied and Computational Mathematics, Foundation for Research and Technology -Hellas (FORTH), Heraklion, Greece, Dr. Robin Smith GIS Analyst from The Informatics Collaboratory of the Social Sciences (ICOSS), University of Sheffield, UK, and Mr. Kostas Kaggelides Technical Director from Gnomon Informatics, Thessaloniki, Greece.

In his talk with the title “e-Government projects in Greece developed in a research environment” Dr. Poulicos Prastacos presented several projects with spatial components that the Regional Analysis division developed during the previous years. A health map of Greece was presented that was developed for the Regional Health Authorities and could be used to assist decision making through its extensive search capabilities and the development of indices and production of thematic maps. The final product was successful and it was used for one year but then abandoned mainly because data were not being updated. A second project involved the development of an AVL system for Health Emergency Services in Crete. This is fully developed and functioning since 2003 with the assistance of IT companies “associated” with FORTH. A recently started project concerns the SDI-Development of a Portal for Coastal Zone management capable of distributing the data and the resulting information (from satellite pictures and GPS, related to the coastal zone) to several administration levels. Another spatially enabled tool developed by FORTH and tested in several European cities is GipsyNoise. The aim of this Environmental modelling noise mapping tool is to assist decision makers to evaluate noise reduction plans. The last project presented aimed in disseminating in real time traffic data to citizens. The talk concluded that pilot projects could play an important role in informing the public sector for the strengths of eGovernment.

The next talk with the title “Local-to-Global: e-Government, digital participation and the GINIE Project” was presented by Dr. Robin Smith. The presentation discussed issues surrounding e-government and geographical information (GI) from three perspectives. The first explored how geography can contribute to e-government, partly through its ability to join up and present information in a unique way, including sharing information from a local level to higher levels of decision-making. The second examined how access to GI and Spatial Data Infrastructures (SDIs) relate to e-government, with particular reference to evidence from the Geographic Information Network in Europe (GINIE) project. The last perspective discussed online public participation as another form of e-government which impacts on the previous two, as desires to develop meaningful, useful user-oriented online facilities are being developed to tackle major social and environmental problems.

The last talk of the workshop was held by Mr. Kostas Kaggelides and had the title “Applying an eProcurement system in Healthcare: Benefits, Criteria for Success & Obstacles (the EPOS paradigm)”. The presentation drew conclusions from the experience gained from the OPUS and EPOS EU projects on vertical Public Procurement solution for the healthcare. There was a presentation of the procurement field (concepts and technologies) with special emphasis and focus on the idiosyncrasies of the public procurement. Interconnections with technical, organisational and legal issues were discussed along with a presentation of the current status and the state of the art of the supporting technologies. The EPOS system was briefly presented.

All the above presentations were followed by numerous questions from the audience and led to productive discussions.

The aims of the workshop were firstly to study the status of e-government in the countries of South-East Europe and secondly, but equally important, to demonstrate the spatial dimension of e-government. I strongly believe that both of the aims were fully accomplished. It is a common belief that the development of e-government applications and services plays a very significant role in South East Europe. Building e-government is also part of the European accession process and will ensure that the accession countries will not be digitally divided from the rest of the European Union. Furthermore, it is acknowledged by the European Union that countries of South East Europe should exploit support from EU funding in order to promote investment in infrastructure development for e-Government applications and services. Furthermore, public policies could be improved if the spatial dimension of the data is taken into account. Geospatial referencing systems can be developed and incorporated into e-government applications to take advantage of the spatial character of data and thus influence the way policies are being formed so that the aims of e-government are better achieved. This fact was demonstrated in almost all presentations of the workshop.

Once more, given this opportunity, I would like to thank everyone who has helped to make this workshop possible. I would like to thank especially my colleagues at SEERC and CITY College who contributed during the last months in the preparation of this event. I would like to thank also URSIT Company for the local organization of this event. Last but not least I want to thank all our distinguished invited speakers for putting every effort to make this event unique and relevant to our intended objectives.

In conclusion I am expressing the hope that this workshop was the first of many gatherings on a subject, which is very important for South Eastern Europe. Hopefully this event will lead to building a network of individuals and organizations, which put e-government and its spatial dimension high in their research agenda.

Dimitris Dranidis

Co-Chair of the International Workshop on "eGovernment and its Spatial Dimension"

On behalf of the Organising Committee