

E-Forum E-Democracy Work Group 4 Report Initial Results

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1 Introduction

Objectives:

Our over-arching objective is to provide recommendations about initiatives that need to be undertaken by government to make e-democracy a successful reality. To achieve this ambitious objective, the members of the group will work together to identify examples of emerging e-democracy practice in all levels of government and attempt to identify the specific issues and constraints that hinder e-democracy development. In doing this, gaps in experience and knowledge will be identified which will provide valuable information as to where future research funding in e-democracy should be directed.

Expected Results:

1. An agreed a set of key dimensions by which to characterise e-democracy projects.
2. A set of e-democracy applications across Europe which describe a range of innovative e-democracy practice, described using the above key dimensions.
3. Areas where future research funding in e-democracy should be directed, which will be achieved by analysing the gaps in experience and knowledge from the above descriptions of e-democracy practical applications.

2 Key Dimensions

In this section we identify the key dimensions with which to characterize e-participation initiatives. We have identified 13 such key dimensions and we present them here as a basis for discussion and further elaboration.

2.1 Stage in Policy-Making Process

This key dimension considers *when* to engage citizens. In order to discuss where ICT is most appropriate in the policy process, we consider the 5 high-level stages involved on the policy life-cycle. Each of the stages is described below.

1. **Agenda setting:** establishing the need for a policy or a change in policy and defining what the problem to be addressed is.
2. **Analysis:** defining the challenges and opportunities associated with an agenda item more clearly in order to produce a draft policy document.
3. **Creating the policy:** ensuring a good workable policy document. This involves a variety of mechanisms which can include: formal consultation, risk analysis, undertaking pilot studies, and designing the implementation plan.
4. **Implementing the policy:** this can involve the development of legislation, regulation, guidance, and a delivery plan.
5. **Monitoring the policy:** this can involve evaluation and review of the policy in action, research evidence and views of users. Here there is the possibility to loop back to stage one.

2.2 Level of participation

This key dimension considers to what level citizens are engaged. The OECD report (2001) argues that democratic political participation must involve the means to be informed, the mechanisms to take part in the decision-making and the ability to

contribute and influence the policy agenda, specifically it usefully defines the following terms.

Information: a one-way relationship in which government produces and delivers information for use by citizens.

Consultation: a two-way relationship in which citizens provide feedback to government. It is based on the prior definition of information. Governments define the issues for consultation, set the questions and manage the process, while citizens are invited to contribute their views and opinions.

Active participation: a relationship based on partnership with government in which citizens actively engage in defining the process and content of policy-making. It acknowledges equal standing for citizens in setting the agenda, although the responsibility for the final decision rests with government.

These can be considered as three levels of participation that can be used to characterize e-democracy initiatives.

2.3 Actors

This key dimension identifies the stakeholders along with their respective roles and the target audience.

Stakeholders in off-line participation initiatives will typically include decision-makers, champions of the particular policy, various experts related to the policy content. In any e-participation this grouping will be increased and stakeholders will include a multi-disciplinary team to support the socio-technical nature of e-participation. In any project description it is necessary to understand the specific roles the stakeholder played.

The type of target audience is identified, identifying for example, whether it is a geographical community of interest or a subject-based community of interest.

2.4 Resources

This key dimension describes the financial and other resources required to use ICTs to support participation. However, the true costs may be difficult to determine because many may be funded from specific R&D budgets of national governments.

2.5 Technologies used

This key dimension considers the application of the technology, e.g. e-consultation or e-referenda as well as the underlying technology, e.g. NLP, speech technology. There is also a need to identify whether it was an in-house development, collaborative development with external agencies or commercially available of the shelf software.

2.6 Rules of engagement

This key dimensions describes the amount of personal information requested along with any privacy statement on how it will be used. It is important to appreciate if and how users are made aware of how the personal information they enter will be used and who will have access to it.

Also, it describes any “conditions of use statement” so that the full rules of engagement can be appreciated.

2.7 Duration & sustainability

This key dimension considers for what period of time the initiative lasted. Firstly it describes whether the e-participation initiative was a one-off pilot, part of a series of

experimental studies, a regular participation exercise or an on-going well-established initiative. Secondly it describes exactly how long each engagement lasted, in terms of days, weeks or months.

2.8 Scale

This key dimension describes the general size of the target audience and its geographical spread. It also describes the level of government and number of government agencies involved.

2.9 Accessibility

This key dimension considers how many citizens participated and from where. It identifies both the channel and the locality, for example whether it is from a cyber café, public library, town hall, etc., along with any special measures that were put in place to support access by people with disabilities and to address the digital divide in general.

2.10 Promotion

This key dimension identifies the promotional channels that were used to inform the target audience that the on-line participation exercise was happening. It includes both traditional channels, such as press releases and news broadcasts and more interactive “on-line” style promotion, such as “tell a friend” postcards and clickable logos advertising the participation on related websites.

2.11 Was evaluation undertaken?

This key dimension is concerned with if and how the initiative was evaluated and the results of that evaluation. There is a clear need to share approaches to evaluation of e-participation and establish agreed frameworks that will allow us to understand the success or otherwise of any e-participation project.

2.12 Outcomes

This key dimension is concerned with the results from the initiative. It is important that the successes and failures are documented along with the constraints and benefits of using ICTs.

2.13 Critical factors for success

This key dimension captures any political, legal, cultural, economic, or technological factor that stand out so as to make the e-participation a success. This dimension provides a place to give some background as to why the initiative achieved what it did. However, it can be also used to record what would be done differently if it were to start again.

3 Emerging Examples of E-democracy Practice

In this section we describe some emerging examples of e-democracy practice using the above key dimensions. The report currently contains 12 case studies provided by 7 European countries.

3.1 E-Voting in Austria

Type: **Internet-based voting system**

Developer: **Institute of Information Processing and Information Economics, University of Economics and Business Administration, Vienna**

Funding: **Non-commercial research prototype**

3.1.1 Stage in decision-making and level of engagement

The project develops a system for secure Internet voting using National ID Cards, the first test election was conducted in May 2003. The aim is to increase voter participation in certain, well-defined segments of the electorate, namely:

- Where paper-based absentee voting is already enabled by the Constitution
- In groups with a high Internet diffusion rate
- Where effective voter turnout is low

The groups identified by these criteria are professional bodies and Chambers (e.g., Chamber of Commerce and Student Union, both having participation rates below 30%) and Austrians living abroad (participation rates well below 10%¹).

3.1.2 Actors

The first test election was conducted in May 2003 parallel to the Student Union election at the University of Economics and Business Administration (Wirtschaftsuniversität, WU). The Student Union is an official body of representatives governed by the Student Union Law, which also sets the rule for the elections. All parties represented in WU's Student Parliament supported the test election.

3.1.3 Resources

The project was supported by the Anniversary Fund of the City of Vienna and WU internal research grants. One permanent staff (Prof. Prosser) and three project assistants were involved. Programming started in 2002, the prototype implementation was finished in early 2003.

3.1.4 Technologies and Rules of Engagement

The algorithm, upon which the system is based, was designed by Prof. Alexander Prosser. Since the algorithm was published, it is open to the discussion of the scientific community. The prototype is a Web-based application implemented in Java 1.4; the server side is implemented in php scripts and MySQL database.

The system implements a two-stage voting protocol:

- **Registration:** Using their National ID Card voters submit a digitally signed application for e-voting; once the registration server is able to identify the voter and to authenticate the signature, a blindly signed election token is issued, which is stored on the National ID Card. The voter is struck off the conventional voter registry ensuring a person can vote but once. Due to the blind signature the election token cannot be traced back to the voter.
- **On Election Day,** the token is the only credential supplied by the voter. Upon checking the authenticity of the token, the ballot box server issues an electronic ballot sheet, which is then filled in by the voter. The ballot sheet is encrypted with keys issued by the election committee (representatives of the candidate parties) and inextricably linked to the token. Upon receiving the token and the encoded ballot

¹ In the General Elections 1999 the Electorate abroad consisted of approx. 380,000. Yet, only 24,000 votes were cast from abroad (this figure includes Austrian residents, who were temporarily abroad at the time of the elections). Out of these 24,000 votes 8,000 were invalid, which has been ascribed to complex mail voting procedures.

sheet, the ballot box server again checks the authenticity of the token and whether it has already been lodged. If the token is valid, the encrypted ballot sheet is stored.

After the election closed, the list of ballot sheets is published and thereby its state publicly documented at a stage when it is still encrypted and hence untamperable. Then the members of the election committee supply their hitherto secret keys to open the ballot sheets and make them accessible; also these keys are published.

The system uses the National ID Card in two ways:

- As a means of identification and to authenticate the application for issuing an electronic election token.
- To store the election token.

However, the National ID Card has to fulfil two criteria:

- Pin-protected files have to be written by standard card readers/writers; this is to protect the election token stored on the card from unauthorised access. This property is currently fulfilled by all commercial implementations of the Austrian National ID Card.
- All information identifying the cardholder has to be protected from unauthorised access as well; this is to prevent the ballot box server that reads the tokens from the card to access the personal information. Only recently, was this property included in the Austrian National ID Cards specification; commercial implementations can be expected to follow as soon as the next generation of cards are rolled-out.

3.1.5 Duration and Sustainability, Scale

The project originated as a pure research project and it will also be continued as such. However, it has drawn considerable interest from several organizations in Austria, hence a number of election projects can be expected to “spin-off” the original project.

3.1.6 Accessibility

980 persons were eligible to participate in the Student Union test election in May 2003. Since National ID Cards were not sufficiently available, the two roles of the card had to be replaced:

- Students identified themselves using their login account for the University network
- An arbitrary Storage Media was used.

Virtually every Internet PC could be used to participate; problems only arose with public Internet terminals without external storage media. Feedback received indicates that most participants registered and voted from their homes or PC labs at WU.

3.1.7 Promotion

WU’s Student Union plans to use the system as a real voting media in the next upcoming elections in 2005, hence the test election received extensive coverage in the Student Union newsletters. The institute sent a mailing to every eligible student with information and a detailed user description.

An e-mail-based helpdesk was available during the entire test, on the election days also a hotline was available.

3.1.8 Evaluation

The fundamental hypotheses of the project are

- H1. E-voting increases voter participation
- H2. The distribution of votes among the candidate parties in e-voting is the same as that in conventional, paper-based voting

H3. It is technically feasible to guarantee the General Voting Principles in Internet voting.

The test election conducted in May 2003 provided a first opportunity to review the hypotheses:

412 out of 980 eligible students registered and 355 cast a vote, which is a participation of 36%. The voter participation at the real election, which was conducted in parallel only reached 26%. The distribution of votes among the candidate parties was almost exactly the same in both media. Hence H1 and H2 were supported. More elections have to follow to provide deeper insight and a bigger sample.

No fundamental technical problems arose; however, some lessons can be learnt for the future:

- Some students lost their election tokens due to unreliable media or forgot the password (both problems will be solved by the use of National ID Cards).
- Public Internet terminals without external storage media cannot be used, hence, the program logic has to check for the availability of any external storage media at a very early stage in the process.
- The current system uses cryptographic functions offered by Java 1.4. While this Java version is currently being offered by several browsers, Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE) does not support 1.4 and it seems somewhat doubtful whether future IE versions will support 1.4. In this test election, students received a CD containing the Java 1.4 run time environment to be installed if they used their own PC, in addition, all student PCs at WU had been upgraded to 1.4. However, this procedure seems hardly viable for a broader audience. The solution will be to replace the cryptographic library functions of 1.4, which are not available in Java 1.1 (supported by Microsoft IE).

A complete evaluation report of this test election will be available at <http://e-voting.at> in June 2003.

3.1.9 Critical Factors for Success

It can be said that an e-voting system will only be acceptable in Austria, if the General Election Principles, in particular voter anonymity, can be technically guaranteed by the system. A system relying solely on administrative or organizational measures to protect voter anonymity will hardly be acceptable. Like any other system processing personal data in Public Administration, an e-voting system also has to be approved by the Privacy Protection Commission (Datenschutzrat).

At this stage, an electronic Voter Register does not exist in Austria, however, the migration of the Central Register from a paper-based to an information system is currently underway – an electronic Voter Register can be derived from this system.

The National ID Card provides an excellent platform for voter identification and authentication; it is also a secure storage media. The redesign, which protects personal information stored on the card will enable its use for secure, anonymous Internet voting.

3.2 Colourful Flanders - Thinking today about the Flanders of tomorrow

The aim of the 'Kleurrijk Vlaanderen' project is to stimulate the debate on the future of Flanders and to involve as many people as possible in this debate. In order to achieve this, the project team makes use of an extensive website (www.kleurrijkvlaanderen.be) on which the online part of the debate takes place on web forums. On the website, citizens can also find lots

of (links to) background information concerning the discussion topic under consideration. The site is also used to announce IRL (In Real Life) events that either initiate or close a certain topical debate.

The Colourful Flanders project team tries to structure the debate through the use of two analytical frames. First, there is the generic, ongoing, societal debate on the online forums. The framework for this debate is the *Pact van Vilvoorde* (Pact of Vilvoorde), a declaration of intentions in which 21 targets for the 21st century are formulated. These targets cover a broad range of themes, and they are used by the project team to engage citizens in the ongoing debates. Second, there are the thematic debates, initiated by the project team for a certain period of time (4 to 6 weeks), covering the following themes: mobility, work, culture and society, customer-friendly government, environment, lifelong learning, innovation, care, democracy, Flanders in the world, spatial/environmental planning, business, and sports. Here it is the thematic classification in 13 subject matters that structures the debate².

In conclusion, the discussions on the Colourful Flanders website are structured and informed by:

- the 21 targets of the Pact van Vilvoorde > the generic, ongoing online debate
- the 14 themes > the online thematic debates, restricted in time, with a real life event at to initiate and end the debate.

3.2.1 Stage in decision-making

The stage in the decision-making cycle in which the project engages citizens is mainly that of 'option analysis'. In a preparatory phase of the project, the classification in 13 themes was developed, and expert groups had established the 21 targets of the Pact van Vilvoorde. The themes and targets clarify the scope of the debate, and could be seen as the result of the 'agenda setting' phase. Subsequently, when the Colourful Flanders project engages citizens to take part in the debate, they are being asked to think about the way in which thematic policy (e.g. sports or environmental planning) or the 21 targets can be realised by 2010/2020. When looking at the degree of specificity of the targets, it becomes clear that what is expected from citizens is that they think about different options or alternatives in order to realise the targets that are presupposed. These are some of the targets:

- By 2010, Flanders will be one of the most attractive European regions for the establishment and development of business activities.
- By 2010, traffic safety will be improved and Flanders will have cut back by half its lag viz-a-viz the current European leaders
- By 2010, the increase in the quality of life will make sure that half of the Flemish population considers itself as a regular participant in the cultural life.

The fact that certain themes and targets are presupposed before citizens are involved, implies that the 'agenda setting' phase has to a certain degree already been completed. Citizens are being invited to think about ways in which certain targets can be realised. Therefore the Colourful Flanders project can mainly be situated in the 'option analysis' phase of the decision cycle. It has to be noted however, that citizens can also make less structured, open-ended, remarks and can try to put new issues on the political agenda. Therefore there are, at least formal, opportunities for citizens to try and influence policy already in the 'agenda-setting' phase. Besides, the number of policy domains covered by the classification in 13 themes and the 21 targets of the Pact van Vilvoorde practically coincides with Flanders' jurisdiction, implying that there no real restriction of subjects in the agenda setting phase. In conclusion, when considering the eConsultation dichotomy in table 1, the Kleurrijk Vlaanderen project can be classified as an 'Issue Based Forum'.

² There is also a 14th theme called 'thinking about the future'. This is a project-wide theme in which the information needed to take part in the discussions is set out. It also deals with the concept and theory of 'thinking about the future'.

3.2.2 Level of engagement

The Colourful Flanders project can be characterised as a ‘deliberative eConsultation’ initiative. It is deliberative because the final objective of the project is to stimulate the public debate on policy issues, and it is a consultation because government is consulting its citizens on ‘policy issues that have been formulated by policy-makers, interest groups or experts’ (excerpt 1). In the preparatory phase of the Colourful Flanders project, six ‘expert vision groups’ were established that formulated the 21 targets of the Pact van Vilvoorde. Next to that, an independent think tank called Forum 21 was set up. The forum’s objective is to ask pertinent questions that can stimulate the debate on Flanders’ future. On the political level, input for the Colourful Flanders project came from the *Kleurennota*, a vision text from the Flemish government.

3.2.3 Actors

GOVERNMENT AGENCY – The agency responsible for the Colourful Flanders project is the Colourful Flanders project-team. It can be situated in the Department of Coordination from the administration *Kanselarij en Voorlichting*. This is a horizontal department: the Colourful Flanders project has a coordinating function across the different vertical departments. In terms of the new organogram of the Ministry of the Flemish Community the project can be situated in the *Diensten van de Minister President* (Services of the Minister President).

TYPE OF TARGET AUDIENCE - There are two target audiences. First, there is the generic communication to the broad target audience: the entire population of Flanders (about 6 million people). Once someone has registered herself on the project website, they become part of the ‘Colourful Flanders Club’ and eMail communication is used to keep people coming to this ‘club’, so to speak. The communications strategy (concerning the ongoing online debates) for this broad population is called ‘generic communication’.

The second audience consists of more specific target audiences in the Flemish population. These can be citizens, civil society organisations, business organisations etc. The communication strategy for these audiences is tied up with the 13 themes, and takes a project approach. Different projects (online discussions for an established amount of time, preceded and ended by real life events) are set up and the Colourful Flanders team targets its communication to individuals and organisations that have a stake in the theme that is being discussed. This communication strategy is called ‘subject related communication’.

INTERMEDIARIES - The project team is actually a communications cell: information on the website is provided by all the departments and political cabinets of the Flemish administration. In this way, the project team is itself an intermediary between citizens, administration, and the political level. It plays an active role: in consultation with administrations and cabinets it tries to find interesting and provocative topics for discussion. When a discussion is finished, it summarizes citizen’s input and offers this to the chairman of the Flemish parliament. He makes sure the information is handed over to the parliamentary committee that is most relevant.

CHAMPIONS - Patrick Dewael, minister-president of the Flemish government, is recognised as the champion of the project. It is said that the original idea of a consultation project was his, and that he is also responsible for the revitalisation of the project since march 2003. He has also made sure that his ministers of the Flemish government consider the project as an important one.

3.2.4

The Colourful Flanders project team consists of:

- 1 project manager (university studies)
- 2 members of staff (university studies)
- 1 webmaster (IT & graphic skills)
- 1 editor (university studies)
- 1 administrative function

The six core employees of the project can make extensive use of knowledge inside and outside the Flemish administration for all kinds of purposes, such as the organisation of events, the publications of the project, and also for juridical advice. Inside the administration, different departments regularly submit their own ideas and question for consideration in the debates.

TIME

11/07/2000 Start of the Colourful Flanders project.

2001 The expert vision groups > Pact van Vilvoorde (21 targets)

2002-2003 Online discussion with the public

June 2004 End of the project

The so-called 2nd phase of the project is most relevant here: this is the phase in which the online discussion forums engage citizens in the debate (2002-2003). The total budget for this phase is 2,38 million Euro, of which 1,4 million is used to buy advertisement space.

SOURCE OF FUNDING – Flemish government

3.2.5 Technologies used

An extensive website with a tabulated structure (see fig 1.in the Annex). The site's homepage offers tabs to the 13 thematic debates, as well as some fairly specific questions which lead you to the respective forum discussions. The homepage also has a news section and a links section, as well as some 'buttons' to order government brochures.

Next to the homepage, the primary section of the site is the forum section, where the different debates are taking place in the form of an asynchronic thread, allowing people to respond to an argument at any time, and making sure they can always follow the 'history' of a certain debate. The forum section is broken down in the 13 themes, e.g. environment, lifelong learning, innovation, democracy, etc. Each thematic page has different subsections, the discussion forum being the most important one. There are also sections for background information on the theme at hand, an overview section (with all the questions from the eNewsletters), an events section, a press section, an archive of the previous debates, and a 'point of view section' where position statements from civil society organisations on the theme at hand are presented.

The website allows for personal registration. When you provide your e-mail address, you can choose to receive the eNewsletter. This is an e-mail from the Colourful Flanders team, sent weekly or bi-weekly, which contains about 10 specific questions with links to the project's forums on the website. Some of these e-mails are called 'Flashes'. These are mails with just one or two messages, inviting you to join a new thematic online debate or announcing some real live event.

The eNewsletter is designed to engage as many people as possible in the forum debates. It is subdivided in four or sections. At the end of each section there is a hyperlink to the forum, leading straight to the discussion to which the question or remark refers. These are the possible eNewsletter sections:

- *Focus/Question of the week*: A question, formulated by the Colourful Flanders project team, inspired by a press article, a recent book, recent research or a citizen's contribution to the previous discussion forum. The question can also refer to one of the 21 targets of the Pact van Vilvoorde. The questions are often supported by hyperlinks to additional sources of information, making sure citizens can adequately inform themselves before making a contribution to the discussion forum.
- *Topical*: A question or a position statement on topical issues. There is also often a link with the 21 targets.
- *Point of View*: The point of view of someone who was involved in an earlier discussion on the forum is picked up and reformulated in the eNewsletter. The project team provides this question or position statement with some background information, and citizens are asked to respond.
- *Dossier*: Questions or position statements referring to broader societal themes. For example, this can be an OESO report saying Belgian people should work longer.

- *Event*: announcement of a Real life event, opening or closing a thematical debate on the website.
- *Call*: the eNewsletter often ends with an open question, inviting citizens the add new ideas or themes to the debates.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR END-USERS

No special requirements besides internet access and the necessary skills to use a PC and work on the internet. It has to be said that the online debates have an offline equivalent: at the beginning of a thematic debate paper brochures (including a 'discussion card') are distributed, giving citizens the possibility of taking part in the debate by post.

UNDERLYING TECHNOLOGY

- SQL (central Microsoft server with database)
- CMS (contract management system)
- Active Server pages (used for the discussion forums)

The technology is fairly straightforward. It is a mix of commercial off-the-shelve products and customised products (e.g. the CMS)

3.2.6 Rules of engagement

People can register with on the Colourful Flanders website. The three-step registration procedure requires the following information:

- Step 1. eMail address
- Step 2. eMail address + password
- Step 3.
 - Step 3.1. personal information (name, address obligatory)
 - Step 3.2. personalisation: which of the themes are relevant to you?
 - Step 3.3. in which 'role' do you participate? > citizen, civil servant, academic, student...

The registration procedure, however, is not obligatory: one can also take part in the discussions anonymous. Besides, one can easily register under a different name. This implies that there is no authentication policy: you never know if somebody is really who they say they are.

On the discussion forums on each of the subjects, there is a page with discussion 'rules' in which the disclaimer states that:

- the Flemish government rejects liability for information contributed by a third-party.
- The information on the website is not necessarily correct
- All government organisations are themselves responsible for information they put on the Colourful Flanders website

3.2.7 Duration and sustainability

LONGER TERM

The Colourful Flanders project is set up as a long term project. The preparatory phase started in 2000, the discussions take place in 2002 and 2003, and the project ends in July 2004.

ONE-OFF PILOT

The Colourful Flanders project was clearly set up as a pilot project, a first experiment in a large-scale, long-term eConsultation project. At this time it is not known if the project will get a permanent character after July 2004.

3.2.8 Scale

Belgium is a federal country. The level of government involved in the Colourful Flanders project is the Flemish government (regional level government).

Flanders, the largest of the Belgium regions

SIZE OF TARGET AUDIENCE

5.972.781,00 in 2002 (according to the Administration for planning and statistics)

3.2.9 Accessibility

The moment of counting: 28/50/2003 > all the contributions since the start of the project are still available (active or in the archive section) on the site. The figure below gives the following information:

- Theme: the debates are organised around the 13 themes.
- Amount of 'Point of View' contributions. These are longer contributions to the discussion, often submitted by civil society organisations or academics.
- Amount of Forums dedicated to the theme under consideration.
- Amount of total contributions to the total of forums dedicated to the theme under consideration.

The project is a web-based one, so people can only access it via the internet.

3.2.10 Promotion

The online debates, introduced in 2002, were accompanied by an integrated promotion strategy (offline and online). Offline: adverts in magazines and papers. Online: links and banners on other government sites, esp. the Flemish portal. Adverts are meant to stimulate citizens to join the debates and are therefore often presented in the form of specific questions such as:

- Are you prepared to pay more for biological products?
- Does Flanders invest to much of its space in our economy?

3.2.11 Evaluation

An evaluation of the Colourful Flanders project as a deliberative project has not yet been undertaken. There has been a SWOT analyses of the operability of the project in 2002, which lead to some internal communicative changes but kept the rest of the project unchanged.

3.2.12 Outcomes

The project team itself, considers as an important structural outcome the fact that a discussion forum has been created that offers citizens an opportunity to ventilate their opinions on policy issues.

3.2.13 Critical factors for success

The further success of the project hinges on good relations between different partners: the Colourful Flanders project-team, the Flemish administration, the political leaders and their officers/advisors (called 'kabinetten'). These relations have to stay intact as they are now. A danger may be that one of the partners tries to use the Colourful Flanders project to promote their current policy plans. The discussion of the future of Flanders can, however, not be about the political problems of the day. That would be a perverse use of a long term discussion forum.

Continuous efforts have to be made to ensure that the Colourful Flanders project gets a positive evaluation, especially in the media. Journalists are quite often not impressed by user take-up figures and assume too easily that thousands of people will be involved in the discussions.

3.3 Electronic voting pilots in local government elections, UK

The way in which people in the United Kingdom cast their vote in democratic elections has changed very little for more than a century. Voting procedures are more or less the same as they were before the advent of universal suffrage, yet with the introduction of technology

every other part of daily life has changed out of all recognition. Electronic transactions are now part of people's everyday lives. The UK Government is leading the way with a national programme of electronic voting pilots enabling people to choose different ways in which to cast their vote. These pilots will prepare the ground for establishing e-enabled elections services generally, culminating in an enabled General Election sometime after 2006.

3.3.1 Stage in decision-making

The vision is one of a phased move to multi-channel elections in which voters are offered a range of means by which to cast their vote and choose the mechanism that most suits them. In the May 2003 electronic voting pilots the use of technology was more widespread than in previous years, with 17 schemes offering voters the chance to cast a vote electronically through a variety of channels. Moreover, each scheme covered a whole local authority area, whereas previous pilots in 2002 had been on a smaller scale involving one or two wards.

3.3.2 Level of engagement

All eligible voters within the participating local authorities were able to choose whether to vote for a local government representative electronically or by traditional means.

3.3.3 Actors

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), Local Authority electoral administrators and a number of suppliers were involved in delivering the processes which allowed the e-voting pilots to take place.

Local Authorities involved ranged from urban Metropolitan areas such as Sheffield and Newcastle to new towns such as Telford & Wrekin and the rural areas of Copeland. Several of the authorities were involved in the pilots programme for the second or even third time.

Overall, the e-enabled elections operated successfully with over 160,000 voters casting their vote by electronic means.

3.3.4 Resources

The UK Government has committed £30m over three years to e-voting pilot schemes in local elections, of which over £18M was spent last year. These funds are managed by ODPM, who also established a central framework of suppliers capable of delivering services for pilots from 2003 up to the 2005 local elections. Suppliers involved in the May 2003 electronic voting pilots were:

- Athena
- BT
- DRS
- Indra
- Opt2Vote
- Powervote
- Strand
- Unisys

Central to the procurement exercise was a Statement of Requirement document containing 61 separate requirements. These requirements covered a variety of areas including functional, security, project management, evaluation and manageability requirements.

3.3.5 Technologies used

A range of channels were used which offered the elector a choice as to how they cast their vote; the internet, telephone, text message, digital television and kiosks located in traditional polling stations or in public locations.

Voters using the Internet needed to enter credentials which had been supplied with their polling card. In some cases two mailings were used to deliver the voter credentials. The digital television channel operated in a similar fashion to internet voting except that the voter needed to navigate a menu system to access the e-voting service.

Touchtone telephones could be used to cast a vote with voters following voice prompt instructions after dialling a free phone telephone number. Voting by text message was not free and the subscriber was charged at their usual rate to send a single message containing their vote.

Kiosks were used in different ways including being available at the traditional polling station and at community locations such as libraries and supermarkets.

The pilots also made use of the emerging Election Markup Language (EML) to act as the 'glue' between the channel and infrastructure suppliers. EML is a specification for the structured interchange of data among hardware, software, and service vendors who provide election and voter services.

3.3.6 Rules of engagement

Overall management of the pilot programme rests with ODPM but suppliers and local authority electoral administrators, as is right, were major players in the pilot programme. All suppliers had signed up to the Statement of Requirement document and electoral administrators ensured that electoral procedures were fully complied with.

3.3.7 Duration and sustainability

The electronic voting schemes were more wide spread than previous years. Approximately 6.4 million people in the pilot areas were eligible to vote in the May 2003 local government elections. Future pilots are planned and the UK Government has committed £30m over three years to fund such pilots.

3.3.8 Scale

The pilots in 2003 involved a broad range of technologies, but on a much larger scale than 2002. Fourteen pilots featured remote electronic voting; three pilots featured electronic voting through kiosks in polling stations and a further three pilots featured electronic counting of paper ballots. Two pilots offered for the first time, interactive digital television. Future pilots will need to address the issue of scalability if they are to help move towards an e-enabled national General Election.

3.3.9 Accessibility

The Electoral Commission engaged Scope, the national disability charity, to conduct a disability access audit of the 2003 electronic pilot schemes. Scope undertook a mix of user evaluation, focus groups and technical access evaluations on all the electronic pilots. Scope's overall assessment was that access to electronic voting systems would benefit from the use of

consistent terminology across systems, and standardisation of some elements such as the length of voter identification codes.

3.3.10 Promotion

In general, there was substantial promotion by the local authorities, although this did vary among the pilots. Some e-pilots benefited from extra funding for promotion from ODPM although the general policy was that promotion was the responsibility of the local authorities and their suppliers.

3.3.11 Evaluation

On 31st July 2003, the Electoral Commission published *The shape of elections to come*, an evaluation of the 2003 programme of voting pilots.

This report can be found at <http://www.electoralcommission.gov.uk/about-us/may2003pilots.cfm>

3.3.12 Outcomes

The Electoral Commission have made a number of recommendations in their evaluation of the pilots and the UK Government will respond to these in due course. Further pilots are proposed to prepare the ground towards an e-enabled General Election sometime after 2006.

3.3.13 Critical success factors

Establishing and maintaining public confidence in the security and privacy of the electoral system appears to be fundamental in achieving legitimacy for e-voting.

3.4 Brent – Your 24 hour council, UK

The London Borough of Brent website, <http://www.brent.gov.uk/>, allows online transactions which include,

- Receipt of e-mail alerts about consultations, developments or events,
- Information about council representatives and allows contact by e-mail,
- Tracking of planning and licence applications in the Borough,
- Payment for services online, and
- Submission online of council forms, applications, enquiries and complaints.

3.4.1 Stage in decision-making

The website allows feedback, complaints and enquiries on council decisions.

The Local Democracy Page includes,

- Forums in which people can contribute to the decision making process in the Borough,
- Reports and minutes of Council meetings
- The Councils Forward Plan,
- An interactive map of Brent indicating Wards,
- Information on the calendar of Council Committee meetings
- Information on voting and registration,
- A guide to democracy and representation.

3.4.2 Level of engagement

Citizens are able to monitor council decisions, contact local representatives by e mail and submit responses to local consultations, including the regeneration of the area around the historic Wembley Stadium.

3.4.3 Actors

This is local government website which supplies information and interacts with residents in the London Borough of Brent.

3.4.4 Resources

There is a small Internet team within the local authority but context management of the website has been delegated to each of the service areas.

3.4.5 Technologies

The website includes,

- online discussion forums,
- a secure transaction process using SSL and encryption,
- an extranet containing secure areas, and
- a translation facility.

3.4.6 Rules of engagement

The use of personal information is covered in the websites privacy statement and secure transactions are conducted using SSL and encryption.

3.4.7 Duration & sustainability

Brent was one of the first UK local authorities to set up a council website in January 1995 and was awarded Website of the Year by the LGA in 1999. Website statistics for April 2003 show an average of 82,822 hits per day.

The Council's community information system, BRAIN, won the LGA's Modernising Government 1999 award and IPR Best use of E-Media 2002. It provides a central reference facility for all community and voluntary groups in Brent and includes an artists gallery and a mapping system. Authorised groups are given a password and can update their own pages over the Internet.

3.4.8 Scale

The London Borough of Brent covers an area of 4,421 hectares and has a population of 263,464 (census 2001), of which 198,712 are between 16 and 74.

3.4.9 Promotion

Numerous links to other websites which reciprocate.

3.4.10 Evaluation

IPR Best use of E-Media 2002 – BRAIN website
2002 National Audit Survey judged Brent as amongst best local authority sites (joint second).

3.4.11 Outcomes

Local residents can monitor what's going on and contribute to activity in their area and the local authority can gauge public opinion on a number of issues.

3.4.12 Critical factors for

Responsiveness of local authority to residents taking part in forums or e-mails to representatives. Keeping content topical.

3.5 E-Petitioning in Scotland, UK

The Scottish Parliament wished to better support the electronic participation agenda of the Parliament. Therefore they established an e-petitioning system to fit into the normal business of the Public Petitions Committee of the Parliament. The Public Petitions Committee website is at www.scottish.parliament.uk/petitions. The e-petitioner tool has the functionality to create petitions; to view/sign petitions; to add background information, to join an integrated discussion forum; and to submit petitions.

3.5.1 Stage in decision-making

The system can be used at most stages in the policy-life cycle. To date it has been used to amend new policy that was being debated by the Parliament and to amend existing policy to better cater for citizens needs.

3.5.2 Level of engagement

This initiative addresses the e-empowerment level of citizen participation as it uses an electronic petitioning system to petition the Scottish Parliament.

3.5.3 Actors

There are 2 sets of stakeholders for the e-petitioner system. The first set comprises the MSPs (elected members of the Scottish Parliament) and the parliamentary officials who are responsible for the petitioning participation agenda of the Parliament. The second set of stakeholders are the various CSOs and individuals who wish to petition the parliament and influence the political agenda - a number of such stakeholders have used of the system to electronically petition the Parliament.

3.5.4 Resources

The system was initially designed and developed by Napier University and BT Scotland in 1999. From March 2000 to 2003, the Public Petitions Committee accepted e-petitions from the system on a trial basis. In November 2002 representatives from the Public Petitions Committee, the web development group of the Parliament and the University re-designed the system to ensure it met with the current working practices of the Parliament. It now forms part of the Scottish Parliament web pages. Both Napier University and BT invested considerable resource in designing and developing the original e-petitioning tool.

3.5.5 Technologies used

The e-petitioner tool has functionality to view a petition text online; read additional information on the petition issue online; those deciding to support the petition can add their name and address to the petition online; all citizens can join an integrated online discussion forum and add comments for or against each e-petition.

To be able to quickly demonstrate and try out the e-petitioner functionality the first version of the system was developed using forms and CGI scripts. It was available from both Explorer and Netscape browsers. Once e-petitioner was accepted for trial use by the Scottish Parliament, the system was updated to make it more robust and to reflect feedback from users and the Parliament. The current version of e-petitioner is hosted on the University's Windows NT Server and uses Active Server Pages and an SQL Server database.

3.5.6 Rules of engagement

As the system is collecting names and addresses, there is a very clear privacy statement which is in line with the practices of the Parliament. This states: “**Note:** *Your details will be held in computer readable form to allow the principal petitioner to administer and submit the petition you have signed. Only your name and country will be visible from this site. Your full name and address will be submitted to the Public Petitions Committee.*”

Terms and conditions of use are also clearly displayed, these are: “*Any users of this website who wish to make a comment are requested not to use offensive or abusive language, and not to make advertising statements or include text of a disruptive nature. The providers of this system reserve the right to remove comments, but accept no liability for the comments posted to these web pages.*”

3.5.7 Duration and sustainability

In December 1999 the Scottish Parliament agreed to allow an electronic petition from the e-petitioner system on behalf of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature to be the first electronic petition to collect names and addresses electronically. This was a special arrangement between the University and the Public Petitions Committee of the Parliament, and allowed both parties to start to evaluate the use and civic impact of electronic petitioning in Scotland. Following the initial success of e-Petitioner, the Public Petitions Committee suggested a more thorough integration of e-petitioner with their pages on the Parliament's website. In Spring 2003, e-petitioner was 're-branded' to provide a seamless integration between the tool and the Scottish Parliament website.

3.5.8 Scale

This is at the Scottish national level as it is the Scottish Parliament as the devolved parliament for Scotland within the UK. It addresses the devolved issues effecting the population of Scotland of just over 5 million people spread over just under 8million hectares of land.

3.5.9 Accessibility

Accessibility is in line with recommendations made by the Parliament. The e-petitioner system is accessed from the top-level pages of the Public Petitions Committee of the Parliament website.

3.5.10 Promotion

The system is directly promoted from the Scottish Parliament web pages. Also each e-petition has attached to it the facility to “tell a friend” through an e-postcard.

3.5.11 Evaluation

Evaluation was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and began in October 2000 and lasted 6 months until the end of March 2001. The effectiveness of e-petitioner was measured through observations of users, semi-focused interviews with Parliamentary committee members and through an online questionnaire. A further evaluation of the new system is underway.

3.5.12 Outcomes

The e-petitioning system is providing an online voice for communities of interest. A petition can collect a varied number of signatures but all are considered by the Public Petitions Committee. The “hottest” petition topics collect not only names and addresses but also generate considerable discussion in the integrated online discussion forum with issues raised both for and against the petition topic.

3.5.13 Critical success factors

The elected member of parliament (MSP), who was the Convener of the Public Petitions Committee, and the Clerk to the Committee have been very supportive and enthusiastic about e-petitions. Management procedures are in place to incorporate the submission of e-petitions into the normal workflow of the Committee.

3.6 Consultation in Kalix, Sweden

Kalix (www.kalix.se) is a town of about 18 000 inhabitants in Sweden. The town won a national award as “e-democracy town of the year” in 2001, very much because of their “Consultations”, two of which have so far been conducted. The first concerned the remodelling of the town centre. It rendered a lot of attention in the press, in Sweden and internationally. A second consultation dealt with tax levels, and it is seen as an annual event. A “Consultation” includes a full policy cycle: agenda setting, policy making and decision, and technologies used include tools for all the kinds of communication involved.

3.6.1 Level of engagement:

The initiative addresses both methods for increasing citizen engagement and remodelling of political procedures so as to better cater for citizen involvement. Citizen participation is solicited by several means, not only electronic, and citizen input has had real influence over local political decision making.

3.6.2 Stage in decision-making:

The consultation model has been used at the agenda-setting stage, and at the decision-making stage (advisory, as Swedish law allows only advisory referendums).

3.6.3 Actors:

Initiator, and project owner is the political organization in the Town Hall. High-level political leaders championed the project by personal engagement, and guaranteed that citizen input was taken into proper consideration in the ensuing professional political process. Technical main actor was a consultant company who has e-consultations as their main product. Public interest and participation increased considerably compared to the experiences from using traditional political processes.

3.6.4 Resources:

The Consultation uses a mix of Internet technologies, adapted and integrated by Votia Empowerment Inc. (Votia.com). The investment is considerable but made over several projects. All e-processes of a consultation are run by Votia. On the organizational side, the consultation is integrated in the normal operations of Town Hall. The cost for one Kalix-size consultation is estimated to \$100 000, including both technology and work. As the technical system is owned by the consultant company, it has been used in several consultations in other organisations.

3.6.5 Technologies used:

Technologies include web pages, mail chat, e-voting and statistics modules. The technologies are designed to meet the needs of all the communication processes involved in a Consultation: Web pages for general information to the public about rules and procedures for the consultation and for specific information about the project/issues to be debated, e-mail for questions and comments, chat for interactive discussions, e-voting for casting votes, and statistics modules for assessing participation. The latter were restricted due to privacy laws.

There are parallel physical procedures for those not able or willing to participate electronically.

3.6.6 Rules of engagement:

The consultation is integrated in the political system and obeys the laws of privacy, which means, for instance, that background demographic data can not be collected for evaluations of participation. Different sets of citizens have been consulted at different times. One of the consultations included also children from the age of 12.

3.6.7 Duration and sustainability:

The context of the Consultations includes a series of efforts to renew town politics. Starting 1998, the work in the Town Hall has been changed by the implementation of a network organization which means people in different departments working with similar issues are cooperating. The thrust is to make the political will able to influence work in the Town Hall at an earlier stage. Hence, when the first Consultation took place it was one ingredient in a broad programme for renewal of work procedures and making them more open to the public. The history since shows great commitment to pursue the idea.

In terms of actor-networks, the Kalix story so far shows a quick and quite dramatic expansion. It started as a project of the new political majority, largely driven by one party, the Greens, and in particular by one person, the party leader. Early on, the administrative staff was enrolled by means of changed procedures in the City Hall. As the first Consultation was successful in terms of turnout, possible opposition by the political minority, and indeed by at least one party within the majority coalition, was neutralized – there was really no way they could oppose something that was generally lauded both within and outside of Kalix. By acting rapidly on the outcome of Consultation 1, popular credibility was won. Not only did enquiries show that even those who did not participate thought it was a good idea, also the turnout in Consultation 2 was dramatically increased. This means the initiators today have a local network that can be considered very strong as it not only has a lot of supporters, but also has neutralized the potential opposition.

3.6.8 Scale:

This is a full-scale local government effort. The system reaches all inhabitants of Kalix, some 20 000 people, and could technically be scaled.

Accessibility:

Accessibility is in line with Swedish government recommendations for web sites, as well as general Internet usability best practice. The consultation is reached from the front page of the City web. Information pages are open to anybody. Participation in discussions and voting is regulated by a password distributed by physical mail to authorised participants (different sets in different consultations depending on issues to be discussed).

The system is accessible from any standard web browser, and requires no installation of help systems on the client side.

3.6.9 Promotion:

The system is promoted from the Kalix main web page. Also between Consultations there is information about past and coming ones, including evaluation reports, in a dedicated Consultations section of the city web. During consultations there has been ample coverage by the local press.

3.6.10 Evaluation:

The Consultations have been evaluated in several ways. 120 citizens were interviewed by Votia Empowerment after the first consultation. Incoming comments have been analysed by

Market Watch Scandinavia. There are at least 5 student theses from 4 Swedish universities. The Kalix consultation is also analysed in at least 4 academic publications, by Swedish and US researchers.

3.6.11 Outcomes and Critical success factors:

Participation has been great in comparison to history. Consultation no 1, on city planning, gathered 7 % participation to be compared with the normal 10 people. Consultation no 2 achieved a turnout of 51 %, which is more than in EU elections. Commitment among local politicians is high, and Town Hall procedures have been remodelled to include consultations. Most important for success are no doubt two things: personal commitment by the Municipal Commissioner and a well working technical system provided by a consultant. It is clear that the city itself could not have handled the technology in such a professional way.

3.7 Bollnäs “community network”, Sweden

Bollnäs is a town of some 25 000 inhabitants in central Sweden. They have implemented what in design is like a community network, but one that is organised and run by the City and with the Municipal Commissioners and their politics at the centre. The context of Bollnäs’ e-democracy activities contains a number of innovations in the democratic procedures. The inhabitants can make written proposals (electronically or physically) to the Town Council, the Executive Board, and to all City Committees. Also, the meetings of the Council, the Board, and the Committees are open to the public. Citizens can email directly to the two municipal commissioners, with a guaranteed answer. On the web site, there is “the Dialogue”, an open forum, running since 1998, containing discussions in several pre-defined categories. Meetings of the City Council are video broadcasted live on the web. Viewers can send questions via email during the break halfway through the meeting, which are answered after the break. In the following we concentrate on the electronic discussions, as they are the most interactive activity.

3.7.1 Level of engagement:

The initiative addresses both enhancing citizen engagement and adjusting political procedures so as to better cater for citizen involvement. Citizen participation is solicited by several means, not only electronic, and citizen input has had real influence over local political decision making.

3.7.2 Stage in decision-making:

The electronic discussions are used on an on-going basis at the agenda-setting stage, as are the Citizen Proposals. The electronic discussions are also used at the monitoring stage, as questioning of implemented policy is frequent. The broadcasted and the partly e-interactive City Council meetings are obviously at the decision-making stage.

3.7.3 Actors:

Initiator, and project owner is the political organization in the Town Hall. High-level political leaders champion the project by personal engagement and a great level of participation in the electronic discussions, and guarantee that results are taken into proper consideration in the formal political process. Partly marginalized are the party organisations, which normally play the most important role in Swedish politics. City civil servants play an important role as many discussions concern details of city services.

3.7.4 Resources:

The Electronic discussion forums use simple mailing list technology, set up and maintained by the City. The City Council broadcasting uses streaming technology in a cooperation with Telia (formerly Swedish Telecom).

3.7.5 Technologies used:

Technologies include web pages, e-mail, and video broadcasting. The democratically innovative focus is on the mail system used for open discussions (<http://dialogen.kommun.bollnas.se/wwwdialog/admin.nsf>) and for the e-interactivity in the City Hall meetings. All operations are conceived and run by the municipality itself, both the technical system and the processes in which they are used, as it has been considered important to develop knowledge in-house.

3.7.6 Rules of engagement:

The "Dialogue" is open to anybody. There is no check that you live in Bollnäs or have any relation to it. However, there is a registration requiring name, telephone number and email address. Registration is done online by the user herself and checked only later. Also, postings are monitored for decency, and abuse results in the account being closed. Rules are not stated up front, but available on request. Normal social rules for mailing lists are followed and are assumed to be known by users.

3.7.7 Duration and sustainability:

The Dialogue has been ongoing at a stable level of activity since 1998. Discussions attract up to a couple of hundreds of citizens, but usually take the form of statements, questions and answers rather than deliberative debate. There have been attempts to increase the commitment level on part of the citizens by having more structured discussions ending by voting or polling, but this has so far not happened.

3.7.8 Scale:

This is a full-scale local government effort. The system reaches all inhabitants of Bollnäs. It could technically be scaled, but the forms for discussions can not easily using the current low-tech media.

3.7.9 Accessibility:

Accessibility is open and discussion style follows Internet normal practice. This assumes some familiarity with this on part of the citizens. Connectivity in Bollnäs is high. Participation in discussions is regulated by a password, but registration is made online by the user herself, checked afterwards, and only questioned if the list is abused. The system is accessible from any standard web browser, and requires no installation of help systems on the client side.

3.7.10 Promotion:

The system is promoted from the Bollnäs main web page. There is a dedicated Dialogue section of the city web.

3.7.11 Evaluation:

The Dialogue has been evaluated in several ways by independent academic studies. The contents of the discussions have been analysed, as has the functioning of it in a political perspective.

3.7.12 Outcomes and Critical success factors:

Participation has been good in comparison to traditional means for public participation, but not huge. At most a few hundred people have made postings on an issue. Commitment among local politicians is high, and Town Hall procedures have been adjusted to include the Dialogue as a standard means of communication. Most important for success is no doubt the personal commitment and the frequent and qualitative participation by the two Municipal Commissioners. One inhibiting factor for increasing quality of discussions is the simple technology used.

3.8 Norrmalm “Insight” tool, Sweden

Norrmalm is a district with some 60 000 inhabitants within the City of Stockholm. The district has a comparatively long history of e-democracy trials, starting 1999, including some “consultations” using web technologies, and procedures for handling citizen proposals. Here we focus on a self-developed tool for helping citizens keeping in touch with the local political life. The tool, named Insight (Swedish: Insyn) can be described as a software agent monitoring documents produced by the district administration and notifying the citizen on documents and events of interest based on keywords and topics chosen by the citizen.

3.8.1 Level of engagement:

The initiative addresses both remodelling of political procedures so as to better cater for citizen involvement and citizen engagement. Citizen participation is solicited by several means. The Insight tool promotes awareness, there are recurrent discussions on selected topics on the web, and polls are held 2-3 times per year.

3.8.2 Stage in decision-making:

The Insight tool is used at the agenda-setting stage, as are the Citizen Proposals. The polls are obviously at the decision-making stage.

3.8.3 Actors:

Initiator, and system owner is the political organization in the District Hall. High-level political leaders championed the project by personal engagement, and guaranteed citizen input were taken into proper consideration in the formal political process. City civil servants play an important role as many discussions concern details of city services.

3.8.4 Resources:

The Insight agent was developed by people working in the administration, but as a private effort. The tool has since become used in other Stockholm districts.

3.8.5 Technologies used:

Technologies include web pages, e-mail, and the Insight tool. All operations are run by the municipality itself, both the technical system and the processes in which they are used.

3.8.6 Rules of engagement:

The system is open to anybody. There is no check that you live in Norrmalm or have any relation to the district. However, there is a registration requiring name, telephone number and email address. Rules are not stated up front at registration, but available on request. The system is accessible from any standard web browser, and requires no installation of help systems on the client side.

3.8.7 Duration and sustainability:

The Insight tool was installed in 2002. The first consultation was held in 1999. Both are now ongoing on a routine basis.

3.8.8 Scale:

This is a full-scale local government effort. The system reaches all inhabitants of Norrmalm. It could technically be scaled.

3.8.9 Accessibility:

Accessibility is open and discussion style follows Internet normal practice. This assumes some familiarity with this on part of the citizens. Connectivity in Norrmalm is high. Participation is regulated by a password, but registration is made online by the user herself and only questioned when the list is abused.

3.8.10 Promotion:

The system is promoted from the Norrmalm main web page. There is a dedicated “Insight” section of the district web.

3.8.11 Evaluation:

The Insight tool has not yet been evaluated by external evaluators.

3.8.12 Outcomes and Critical success factors:

Participation in consultations has been good according to comparisons with traditional means for public participation, but not huge. Critical success factors have been the local district commissioner, local technological skill and innovation, and the City of Stockholm e-democracy efforts inviting the districts to innovate in this domain.

3.9 SAGA – Standards and Architectures for eGovernment Applications, Germany

SAGA is a document which presents standards, processes, methods and products of state-of-the-art IT development for eGovernment applications in a concise form. It is developed and constantly updated with the help of IT experts, who meet on a regular basis in the SAGA Online Forum. The website is www.kbst.bund.de/saga.

The SAGA Online Forum is only one example of online forums in the German Federal Administration.

3.9.1 Stages in the Policy-Making Process

The development and update of the SAGA document involves several stages in the policy-making process:

Agenda Setting and Analysis: After the agenda was set by the Federal Government with the eGovernment initiative BundOnline 2005 and its implementation plan in 2001, the SAGA working group started to analyse the agenda items and organised the online forum in May 2002.

Creating the policy: To ensure a good workable document, the involved IT experts in the forum now meet on a regular basis to take stock of existing standards and constantly update the document.

Implementing the policy: The results of the forum are published in follow-up versions. These versions serve as a recommended basis of technological procedures for eGovernment in the federal administration.

Monitoring the policy: The versions are constantly updated. This involves reviews of the standards in action, research evidence, the integration of newly developed standards and views of experts as well as other users.

3.9.2 Level of engagement/participation

Information, consultation and active participation are the key targets of the SAGA Online Forum. The IT experts share a wide range of information, prepared by the SAGA working group. The working group consults the experts, moderates the forum and writes up the results. The IT experts are actively involved with their comments and expertise in developing the document. There is also an opportunity for users of the standards as well as interested citizens to comment on the topic.

3.9.3 Actors

The forum was initially designed and developed by:
KBSSt (Koordinierungs- und Beratungsstelle der Bundesregierung für Informationstechnik in der Bundesverwaltung im Bundesministerium des Innern/Federal Government Co-ordination and Advisory Agency for IT in the Federal Administration) – with SAGA working group
BSI (Bundesamt für Sicherheit in der Informationstechnik/Federal Office for Information Security)

Init AG (internet agency)

Booz, Allen & Hamilton (consultancy)

Fraunhofer Gesellschaft (scientific institute)

The target participants are IT experts. They are mostly known to the working group in advance and are directly invited to participate. Furthermore, users from the federal administration and interested citizens are invited to comment.

3.9.4 Resources

The online forum is funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior. Resources involve costs for staff, technical equipment, budget for promotional measures and publishing.

3.9.5 Technologies

The SAGA online-forum technology was developed collaboratively by the working group and an external internet agency, in consultation with governmental and scientific bodies and a consultancy company.

3.9.6 Rules of engagement

There is a set of standard rules for every participant. Besides, the IT-experts need to register in advance.

3.9.7 Duration & sustainability

The working group was founded in spring 2002, after the Federal Government launched the eGovernment initiative BundOnline 2005 in September 2000 and its first implementation plan in 2001.

The SAGA Forum has been online since May 2002.

Version 1.1 is the up-to-date released publication of SAGA and dates from February 2003, after a pre-running version 0.9 was published and subject to intense discussion in June 2002. SAGA is updated at regular intervals, amended to reflect the latest developments and results.

3.9.8 Scale and Accessibility

The SAGA experts are situated in different parts of Germany and meet online on a regular basis.

Experts, users from the federal administration as well as interested citizens have access to the same website and get specific information and the chance to post their comments. Users and interested citizens are, however, not part of the registered expert online forum. Nevertheless, their comments and questions are well cared for and included in the results.

More than 150 comments were processed after the publishing of version 0.9 and around 95 of these comments resulted in amendments to the document, published as version 1.1.

3.9.9 Promotion

SAGA is promoted via brochures, internet and events. It is included in speeches, interviews and other promotional articles of the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The different versions are spread via specific internal channels within the federal administration, as well as publicly on the internet.

3.9.10 Evaluation

There is a constant process of reviewing and updating SAGA in accordance with new technological developments.

Additionally the project group “Internet and Democracy” at the Federal Ministry of the Interior has written an evaluation report on online-forums in the federal administration in general, where the SAGA Forum is only one example. Alongside the evaluation report, there were guidelines developed for the future organisation of online forums to involve not only experts, but a far greater range of citizens. Website: www.kbst.bund.de (Schriftenreihe der KBSt, Band 58, Juni 2003).

3.9.11 Outcome The evaluation report shows that organizers of online-forums are highly satisfied with the results and the Federal Ministry of the Interior plans to promote online-forums as a standard tool in the policy-making process.

3.9.12 Critical factors for success

There are five success factors, identified by the evaluation report – in accordance with further scientific reports and data:

Goals: Setting specific goals not only determines which audience to target at what point in the decision-making process; it serves as the cornerstone on which the forum’s overall structure rests. An online forum intended to gain expert feedback in formulating a decision will need to fulfil other requirements than a forum designed to inform and solicit comments from the general public.

Preparation: While it should go without saying that adequate preparation is essential, preparation is especially important when it comes to direct contact with the public. The sooner the forum’s specific goals have been defined, the sooner one can begin identifying measures to reach potential participants. Moderation and provision of appropriate information materials can be planned well in advance; the same is true for the technical design. The various functions should also be tested ahead of time and adjusted as needed to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

Moderation: The results of our evaluation constantly stressed the importance of moderation in ensuring the usefulness of discussion contributions. Consistent participation, targeted discussion and a rigorous presentation of responses and results can only be achieved with the help of reliable and knowledgeable moderators. Results prepared in this way can be integrated more effectively into the political decision-making process.

Technology: Online forums are not computer games. They make new forms of discussion possible, but they are not a technological end in themselves. The software should allow everything to run smoothly. User-friendliness for participants and organisers should have a high priority – for example, forum pages that can be navigated quickly and easily.

Integration of results: Online forums make sense only if participants’ contributions are integrated into the decision-making process. Online forums that take this into account and

clearly demonstrate how forum results will be integrated enjoy active participation by highly motivated, informed citizens who are in contact with policy-makers and provide valuable input for the decision-making process.

3.10 Digital democracy in Hals municipality, Denmark

Det digitale demokrati i Hals Kommune

For a period of two years Hals Municipality launches various ICT experiments with the objective of developing and renewing the local democratic process.

Purpose:

- to increase citizen participation in the local democracy
- to develop the ICT-qualifications of the citizens.
- to improve the political dialogue between citizens, politicians and the local administration.
- to gather knowledge about the potentials and limitations of ICT in terms of democratic participation and governance

3.9.1 Stage in decision-making

The Town Council of Hals Municipality strengthen the processes of communication between citizens and local authorities through digital media on several stages in the decision-making process:

Agenda setting:

The debate module at the web-site www.hals.dk allows citizens to bring up political problems of their concern. It can be topics related to on-going political discussions or completely new topics. By way of example may be cited from the last few month's debate: Bathing safety at the beaches, Extraordinary speed restrictions at certain roads, Industrial buildings near housing sectors, Artistic ornamentation of open spaces, and Conduct of cases in the social services.

Analysis:

On some agenda items the Town Council asks all citizens in the municipality to give feedback, to voice their experiences and opinions through the debate module at the web-site. The Town Council define an issue and set the questions – or present a range of solutions. It can be small agenda items such as opening hours of the recycling stations and larger agenda items such as which development project to give priority in the tight municipality budget. In both cases a short introductory text, illustrations and links to background material will be presented at the web site to qualify the digital political discussion. The hyper-structure of the Internet makes it possible to direct the individual citizen directly to the issues and materials he or she wants to read and discuss. Is it done properly it will also widen out his/her interest by offering additional information and discussion possibilities when he/she have reached his/her primary goal.

Creating the policy:

The working method used is to invite specific groups of citizens to take part in the defining of the challenges, opportunities and political vision. The groups are asked to make policy outlines and plan drafts for their specific area. Plans and drafts that the Town Council can incorporate in their over-all plan for the municipality. Until now we have done that related to defining a youth policy of the municipality and related to the long-term plan for the physical development of the municipality. E-mails and digital conferences are used for the on-going process in the group – web sites are used for presenting preliminary results of the group work to the other citizens of the municipality. Later in the process the Town Council asks the

citizens outside the working groups to comments on policy outlines and plan drafts presented on the web-site.

Implementing the policy:

Web sites are used to inform the citizens about the process of implementing new policies.

Monitoring the policy:

The debate module and the monthly chat sessions with the major and committee chairmen at the web site www.hals.dk is open for comments on every policy – new and old.

3.9.2 Level of engagement

A well-in-formed population is the back-bone of every attempt to make citizens take part in and feel ownership to political decisions. On this back-bone we then build up two-way relations and active partnership. Our aim is to let Information, Consultation and Active participation walk hand-in-hand. To *"ensure that the Town Council do not adopt objectives, actions and economy, which do not meet the wishes of the citizens, the needs of the users and the everyday experiences of the institutions."* This means that the politicians want the citizens to take part in the decision-making process, to voice their wishes, needs and everyday experiences. They stress the processes of communication between citizens and local authorities based on mutual respect, openness and dialogue. At the same time the quotation stress that it is the Town Council who in the end decides which ideas and wishes to build on when they make their final adoptions.

3.9.3 Actors

Stakeholders:

The project is developed by Hals Kommune (the Municipality of Hals) in close co-operation with Sven Allan Jensen A/S and Aalborg University.

Co-operation partners:

- WebHouse Aps
- Fujitsu Siemens Computers,
- Vivarto Technologies,
- Vester Hassing Antenneforening
- LOF og AOF Hals
- Ældresagen, brugerråd

Roles the stakeholders play:

Hals Kommune (the Municipality of Hals) form the geographical and organisational frame for the experiments, why both politicians as well as the local administration is deeply involved in the project. The major and the shadow major are members of the steering committee along with two top ranking officials. A large number of municipal officers, teachers, librarians etc. are engaged in putting the different experiments into execution.

Sven Allan Jensen A/S (a private company advising local authorities on city, country and traffic planning) is represented on the steering committee and involved in the execution of "Den digitale kommuneplan" (the digital municipality plan).

Aalborg University, the Department of Economics, Politics and Public Administration is represented on the steering committee and deeply involved in the evaluation process.

WebHouse Aps - a private company deeply involved in the development of specific software solutions backing the digital democratic process in Hals Municipality.

Fujitsu Siemens Computers and Vivarto Technologies (private companies) deliver hardware and software solutions.

Vester Hassing Antenneforening – a voluntarily run society serving the local community with a high speed Internet infrastructure.

LOF og AOF Hals – local adult educational institutions (privately owned) offering a variety of IT-related courses.

Ældresagen, brugerråd - senior citizens societies running computer centers and organising IT-related courses for senior citizens.

Target audience:

All the people living in the Municipality of Hals is the target audience of "Det digitale demokrati".

Some of the experiments have a smaller target audience, for instance people related to a specific age group town, institution or society/club.

3.9.4 Resources

The project has a budget of 16.5 mill DKK. We have received financial support (5.5 mill DKK) from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation through Det Digitale Nordjylland [The Digital North Denmark³]. The companies, institutions, societies and people involved have added approx. 6.5 mill DKK. Aalborg Universitets Jubilæumsfond (a fund connected to Aalborg University) have added approx. 2 mill DKK. The last approx. 2.5 mill DKK is funded by the the Municipality of Hals primarily indirectly by holding a large number of municipal officers and administrative facilities at the project's disposal secondarily through direct financial support.

3.9.5 Technologies

We have chosen different ways of making e-consultations:

- a web site, www.hals.dk, with news and background information, an open debate forum, and a monthly chat session with the major and committee chairmen.
- closed e-conferences for specific groups.
- a web site for a specific small urban community www.ulstedby.dk
- mail distribution.
- e-polls (used once in a while as a way to attract attention to a political issue, but never as a governing tool).

The cooperation with the commercial software companies and developers is a delicate matter. Off-the-shelf products may be cheap, but as soon as an even small change to the software is needed it courses a lot of trouble and/or cost a lot of money. The web site www.ulstedby.dk is developed from the ground by the citizens of Ulsted with the help from a web designer. It is a very learning process which cause great ownership, but it too proves to be a rather expensive solution, as the citizens - un-experienced with web-design - often change their minds during the process of design.

3.9.6 Rules of engagement

In reality www.ulstedby.dk and www.hals.dk are open to everybody – also people outside Ulsted and Hals Municipality. There is neither any registration nor any personal information collected. In the terms of conditions the participants are asked to follow the laws concerning public communication and to present themselves by name. This openness makes the debate vulnerable to attacks from outsiders, but until now there has been no incidents. A few have written a contribution without adding their names. This just caused the other contributors to ask him/her to remember to add his/her name.

The youth conference is a closed conference only for young people living in Hals Municipality. The participants therefore have to register them self, when they enter the conference.

For the school conference everybody have his/her own password, which is the same password, they can use for all major public digital services used by the Danish authorities.

³ **The Digital North Denmark** is a regional IT project, which is to run over 3 years with a funding of DKK 170 mill granted by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. The object is to explore the potentials of the network society for all citizens of North Denmark.

The password is related to the civil registration number, why it is very easy to know who should be allowed to enter the conference or specific parts of the conference.

3.9.7 Duration & sustainability

The e-participation initiatives in Hals Municipality described here are parts of a series of experimental studies made as regular participation exercises. Some of the experiments have turned out so well that the politicians are ready to make them last beyond the fixed timeframe of 2002 and 2003. Others are still waiting for their final break through or for their final verdict in the assessment report that will be made in 2004.

3.9.8 Scale

In its design the project is partly a democracy project, partly an educational and skill developing project.

The experiments with digital democracy consist of multiple levels within three different arenas:

- The local community level.
- The institutional level.
- The municipality level.

The three arenas involve many different groups such as: sports clubs, scouts, centre for the elderly people, schools, church, citizens society, youth club, adult educational institutions, local library, youth council, city planners, politicians, local administration etc. and a large series of experiments, which makes the project unique in a national perspective.

The question is: Will the citizens' attitude to democracy and IT change during the course of the project?

The local community level

The local community level covers communication among citizens. A small urban community in Hals municipality, Ulsted, with approx. 1100 inhabitants, has been selected as the field of experimenting.

Planned activities:

- A web site with local information, bulletin board and debate forum.
- IT-'islands' scattered all over the town of Ulsted.
- Local associations and clubs improve the communication with their members and the surrounding society by the means of web sites, e-mail contact etc.

The question is: Can IT prove instrumental in promoting participation in the democratic process within the community, or will the contrary happen with the invasion of technology in people's homes?

The institutional level

Ulsted Skole, a primary and lower-secondary school is the setting of the digital democracy at the institutional level. Pupils, teachers, parents, school board and school administration as well as educational working groups communicate via e-mails and digital conferences.

The question is: Can the communication among parents, teachers, the school board and the remaining school prosper from using information technology as a tool?

The municipality level

At the municipality level we offer citizens of the Municipality of Hals (population: 11.304) means of following the political decisions and raising questions and issues via the Internet. Thematic debates on various subjects such as local plan revision, youth policy, budget etc. are launched through the year and each month the Major and the Committee Chairmen chats with citizens about large and small matters of their concern.

The questions are among others: Can youth policy obtain a content and develop by involving young citizens of a municipality in the process via the Internet? Can better results be achieved by putting modern technology to use when submitting a new town plan for hearing?

3.9.11 Accessibility

A number of prerequisites must be met in order to initiate the experiments. In order to stand up to these, part of the project is focused on preparing the community for participating in the experiments.

For one thing, this happens via a part project on infrastructure. To increase the access to and the speed of the Internet Vester Hassing Antenneforening has laid out optic fibre cables. To provide computers and Internet access to all citizens regardless of their financial situation, we have made an agreement with Fujitsu Siemens Computers that makes it possible to offer the citizens computers and necessary software at limited costs. An IT-supporter helps new computer owners in their first hesitating steps with the technology.

'IT-islands' scattered around in Ulsted, at the library, in a food shop, in the sports hall, in the parish building, at the centre for senior citizens, in the sport and youth clubs etc. take care that people who choose not to buy a computer have free and easy access to the internet anyway.

Secondly it happens via a massive educational effort to make sure everybody can take part in the Digital Democracy, regardless of any educational background. It is done in cooperation with adult and youth educational institutions, associations for the elderly and handicapped people and the local library, which offer a wide range of IT introductory courses and evenings.

It is still a minority of citizens who participate actively in the open debate forum and chat sessions at www.hals.dk, but the number is growing. In some focus interviews done by researchers from Aalborg University the participants express that they feel more relaxed by writing a contribution on the Internet than by voicing their opinions – if at all - through a reader's letter in the daily newspaper. The Internet is fast – and you do not have to be extremely well educated or write perfectly to join in – is some of the remarks we have received.

Most people participate from their personal computer at home. Especially the young people seems to move more freely from school or public library computers to personal computers at home.

3.9.11 Promotion

To make sure that the digital dialogue processes get commonly known in Hals Municipality it has been necessary to adopt a multi-medial strategy. More than 50 % of the population is not used to collect information or to discuss on the Internet, why they would never realize this opportunity if it was only advertised on the net. In Hals Municipality both posters, leaflets, newspaper advertisements, direct mail to associations, mouth-to-mouth communication and press-releases have been used besides web site banners, direct e-mails and digital bulletin boards.

3.9.11 Evaluation

Throughout the project a comprehensive follow-up research will be performed by researchers from Aalborg University, the Department of Economics, Politics and Public Administration. They will follow and evaluate on how the increased use of ICT affects democratic governance and participation in different arenas and at different level. See a presentation of the research in English at the [Aalborg University, project web-site "Digital local democracy"](#) (PDF)

3.9.12 Outcomes

The general impression is, that it takes a lot to make this new medium part of the everyday life of ordinary citizens. Quite a few citizens talk enthusiastically about these new digital possibilities and keenly follow the debate on the web site. When it come down to actually contributing to the digital discussions the numbers drop drastically. It will probably be a matter of a five or ten years before almost everybody use this medium with confidence. The provisional experiences in Hals Municipality show it is possible to speed up this process, but that it really need a lot of manpower, as the most effective promotion is the one done by meeting the citizens in their own nest - meeting them in their clubs and societies, at the centre for the elderly, at the library, in the schools and where ever they meet in the local community. In spite of huge technical problems we have succeeded in creating a local political awareness among the group of young people who took part in our testing of the e-conference software. A promising prospect for future experiments in that field.

3.9.13 Critical factors for success

Critical factors for success of the digital dialogue processes seems to be:

- Do the citizens know they exist?
- Do they have access?
- Do the technology work properly?
- Do the topics discussed interest the citizens?
- Is the topics presented in an enticing way?
- Is it clear to the citizens what kind of influence he/she has on the decision-making process?
- Are the citizens comfortable by voicing their opinion in writing in a publish sphere?
- Do the politicians dare to put forward political issues in an early stage in the decision-making process?
- Do the web-editor/moderator have the necessary skills and time to prepare a digital debate with background material and everything?
- Do the web-editor/moderator have the freedom to edit the material delivered by politicians and administration in order to present it in an enticing way?

3.11 Democracy on the Web – www.nordpol.dk, Denmark

In 2000 the County of North Jutland launched a large digital administration project. One of the ambitions of the project is to re-enable the democratic process in the region in a time of ailing civic interest and participation in the democratic fora. The task of the Democracy project was to create an electronic forum for the democratic dialogue among citizens and politicians with a particular aim towards November 20, 2001: The next County Council Election Day.

Since the election in 2001 the web site www.nordpol.dk has been used as a forum for dialogue between the members of the County Council and the citizens of North Jutland.

3.11.1 Stage in decision

The stage in the policy-making process is both “Agenda setting” and “Analysis”. In the debates initiated by the County the citizens are asked to contribute their ideas and knowledge concerning specific political issues.

At the same time the discussion forum on the website offers “free space” where the citizens are invited to enter the issues they would like to discuss with the politicians.

3.11.2 Level of participation

The objective of the nordpol.dk project is to render visible the decisions made on a regional political level, and to involve the citizens in relation to the process of democracy. The project is mainly designed for consultation – a media for dialogue - where the County defines and manages the larger debates.

The topics of the dialogues are current issues in the decision making of the politicians. The ideas and comments from the citizens are used as a source of knowledge and inspiration for both the administration and the politicians and integrated in the political planning.

The project also offers information on how to engage in the ongoing decision making in the county and the possibility to follow the daily workflow via the County website: www.nja.dk.

3.11.3 Actors

The target group of the Democracy project in its widest definition is the citizens and the politicians. In the first debate concerning the County Council Election the first time voters with their tradition for small polls were a specific target group as well.

The guidelines for the design of the project were created in focus group meetings with “adult” citizens, politicians and first time voters. Here the groups were asked to define their requirements to a web site representing the democracy of North Jutland.

3.11.4 Resources

The web site was designed in close cooperation between the project group of the County of North Jutland, and the KMD, the large Danish IT enterprise. Also the KMD contributed as a partner in relation to the user survey and in defining the design of the web site.

Building the web site - Total cost: 58,250 euro.

The project group in the County of North Jutland consists of three people all working part time on the project.

Kirsten Rosted, project manager (krh@nja.dk)

Christine Maria Andersen, project assistant (cma@nja.dk)

Bente Toldbod, public relations consultant (bt@nja.dk)

3.11.5 Technologies

The web site - [see the English version](#) - was structured with a forum for debates as the central element.

Adding to this it offers:

- A presentation of the politicians
- A Chat Room
- A Calendar of political arrangements
- News sites, where the daily news are available from e.g. the regional broadcasting station
- A quiz with prizes to win
- An Info page with e.g. information on how to influence the political decision-making
- A Search function

The choice of design, colour and graphics was based on a wish to create a page with a sympathetic, inviting and friendly image, which will not put off young people at the first click

3.11.6 Rules of engagement

There is no registration of the citizens on the nordpol.dk website – again to make it as easy as possible to contribute to the debate. The contributors can leave their name and e-mail address.

The rules of the debate are specified on the website.

The politicians have been provided with a special log-in facility partly to avoid “fake contributions”, partly to give a better overview through a graphic distinction between contributions from politicians and citizens. Contributions from the politicians are marked with a dot and a link to the profile of the politician.

3.11.7 Duration & sustainability

The first project period was September 10 to November 20, 2001 - a democratic forum with a particular aim towards The County Council Election Day.

Since the election in 2001 the web site www.nordpol.dk has been an established forum for dialogue between the members of the County Council and the citizens of North Jutland.

3.11.8 Scale

The project owner is the County of North Jutland – the regional level of government.

The target audience is the population of North Jutland – approximately 500,000 people.

3.11.9 Accessibility

The citizens can participate in the debate from any computer on the web, also computers in libraries or community centres, that can be used free of charge.

3.11.10 Promotion

The first project period was intensively profiled in North Jutland as part of the county’s campaign to draw attention to the county council election. Nordpol.dk was profiled through radio spots, TV and cinema commercials, on bus advertisements and posters and in relation to teachers of social studies on the youth educations.

Profiling campaign - Total cost: 123,000 euro.

The succeeding debates have had a small profiling campaign, but as the target groups are quite specific, the major part of the campaign relies on direct mail.

3.11.11 Evaluation

The first project period was evaluated by the project group. Compared to similar attempts to engage citizens in political dialogue the dialogue was quite successful.

Engaging the first time voters in the debate proved quite difficult, though. The first time voters stated that they read the contributions in the debate, but didn’t write any. The main feature on the website for the first time voters was the descriptions each political candidate had made stating their political viewpoints.

3.11.12 Outcomes

During the election debate in the first project period of September 10 to November 20, 2001 the www.nordpol.dk experienced 23,000 visitors and 450 contributions for debate.

The succeeding debates have varied from very few to about 100 contributions. The debates with very specific target groups has had the best outcome, for instance a debate about improving the conditions for the handicapped (target group: the employees working in this area, the families, interest groups and of course the handicapped) and about changes in the education for adults (target group: employees, students, other education centres and so on).

With more specific topics for debate, the target group of the debate is of course narrower. In a period of two months the handicap-debate had 7,300 visitors and 95 contributions for debate. In a period of one month the education-debate had 94 contributions and 10,586 visitors.

3.11.13 Critical factors for success

Our experience so far is that a successful debate demands:

- A clear and very specific topic for the debate.
- A directly engagement of the citizens – through user groups, existing networks, direct mail and so on.
- Launching the debate in the beginning of the decision-making process, so the citizen has the best opportunity to influence the outcome.
- A clear objective for the debate and a description of how the contributions of the citizens are used in the process.
- Visible and active participation from politicians.
- A user-friendly web-site to diminish the technology barrier.

3.12 Send e-mail to the Parliament – Czech Pilot 2000

This pilot was a contribution to development of an open dialog between citizens and government with the main objective to provide both, citizens and state administration, (respective, voted political representatives), with modern and user-friendly Internet based tools for the development of e-democracy

3.12.1 Stage in decision

The effort of the activity under this project was to **involve citizens** to a direct and active participation in a social dialog and, on the other hand, to **promote** in a practical way possibilities of the **Internet**.

The last but not the least was the effort to activate the use of the Internet from the side of politicians and **state administration**.

In terms of key dimensions of this report, it was an attempt to involve citizens into the process of developing the policy and to support so called “informed democracy”. It can be used at all stages in the policy-making life cycle.

3.12.2 Level of engagement

As the beginning it was a very simple web site created for citizens, where everybody could find a list of all public representatives in the Czech Parliament, structured by region and by political party. People were encouraged to send e-mail directly to their regional political representative in the Czech Parliament.

Citizens from the whole Czech Republic were invited to use the Internet application to make comments on policy and related issues and also ask questions. Information about public places with Internet access, like Internet.cafes or public libraries, was promoted by media.

3.12.3 Actors

BMI Association, private non- profit organisation, as the organizer.

EMC group, PR agency, as a promoter.

The Library of the Czech Parliament, as public administration body, who has guaranteed the security of data and information flow.

Capitol Internet Publisher - private company, which created the application and offered the technical support and the web site.

3.12.4 Resources

The application was placed at the separate web site and was free for use for everybody. The only price was the price of the internet access.

The creation of the application was done as an example of Public&Private Partnership to show the possible was of future co-operation on this field.

3.12.5 Technologies

The pilot was based on a special know-how and technologies of the private company, Internet Capital Publishing, who developed the user-friendly interface with simple navigation, which could be used by everybody.

Although, those time it wasn't created and analysed by WAI standards in order to make it accessible for people with disabilities.

3.12.6 Rules of engagement

There were no special rules for sending of e-mail to Parliament representatives in order to encourage as many people as possible to use the application. The messages were, of cause, moderated from the point of eligibility of basic moral rules and those (very few) with unacceptable content were excluded at the beginning. This moderation was undertaken by the Library of the Czech Parliament.

The statistics of replies from politicians was made and promoted by media and some kind of ranking list of "popularity" of politicians, based at the number of e-mails arrived, was done.

3.12.7 Duration & sustainability

The pilot was created originally for one month, March 2000, but under the agreement of all participants the application was free for use for the whole year till March 2001 and after evaluation also till the March 2002, but without deeper analyses in the later stage.

Other possibilities appeared for voters to express their views and the reform of the whole system of public administration came.

3.12.8 Scale

The target audience was the widest population all over the Czech Republic. It was possible, because the pilot was promoted at the media wave of the national annual campaign Month of Internet.

The level of government: Parliament of the Czech Republic.

3.12.9 Accessibility

About 700 people sent messages in Spring 2000, mostly in March, when the web site was promoted.

Citizens were able to use any Internet access point. Actually, there were mostly used public places with Internet access, like Internet cafés and public libraries, also promoted by media. A simple questionnaire was added for people (age, profession, education, region, the place of internet access).

According to the results, the most of questions were sent by young people between 18 – 25 and the most frequent access place was at work, which reflected the real situation with Internet accessibility in the country.

3.12.10 Promotion

The launching of the application was supported by thematic articles in media, the web site was promoted in advertising in media, people were invited to use the application at www.mail-poslanci.cz.

The overall promotion was done under the umbrella of the annual campaign Month of Internet, which involved about 30 % of adult population of the Czech Republic (according to the analyses of Market agency). It involved adverts in printed media, dailies and some magazines and promotion on national radio. Also more than 119 libraries participated in the pilot as public Internet access places.

3.12.11 Evaluation

The evaluation was done with a help of a professional agency **Deloitte&Touche**. The analysis of all questions were done and also some demographic analyses of citizens, who used the application, was made.

Most of the questions dealt with the regional topics (26 %), the second (16%) were connected with legal system and the next was telecommunication issues (15%). It is interesting that 10 % of questions were related to the person's rights and only 3 % were about European Union. The simple demography of participants was done according to the age, profession, education, region, the place of internet access. It was not surprise that most of them were among students and qualified professionals.

3.12.12 Outcomes The complete evaluation report was presented to public in articles, at the final press conference to the Month of Internet campaign, but the main expected result was, that politicians started to consider Internet seriously as possible channel of efficient communication with their voters.

3.12.13 Critical factors for success

It was expected by organizers, that the pilot could only show the way and give an impulse for both sides- citizens and politicians- for seeking of better forms of interaction. The overall number of 630 eligible questions could be considered as quite enough for the pilot, but not enough for the normal dialog. The target was not to evoke the massive flow of questions, but to show the possibility of regular communication of citizens and politicians, if necessary.

The level of penetration of Internet in the Czech Republic in 2000 could be considered as one of critical factors, the number of users in March 2000 was about 1 million users whereas the population of the Czech Republic is about 10 million people.

The other factors, which were not analysed, are connected with sociological aspects, as the political "mature" of citizens, their education for democracy engagement, etc.

4 How to contribute further case studies

If any readers of this report wish to contribute examples of e-democracy from their country, please describe your case study using the key dimensions defined in section 2, completing the “sample template” provided below. Then email your case study description to: a.macintosh@napier.ac.uk

4.1 Sample Template

4.1.1 Stage in decision

4.1.2 Level of engagement

4.1.3 Actors

4.1.4 Resources

4.1.5 Technologies

4.1.6 Rules of engagement

4.1.7 Duration & sustainability

4.1.8 Scale

4.1.9 Accessibility

4.1.10 Promotion

4.1.11 Evaluation

4.1.12 Outcomes Critical factors for success

5 Further Information

For information about this report and the work of the e-democracy working group, please contact:

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