Conference summary report on Reinforcement of eGovernance in the Danube Region

Government Innovation and Digital Agenda in the Danube Region

Center of Excellence in Finance (CEF) is a regional training institution in South East Europe (SEE) with a focus on public financial management and central banking. It is based in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The CEF delivers high-quality, practical and learning-centered specialization programs and training events; promotes networks of professionals; and stimulates regional cooperation. Together with the City of Vienna, the CEF is coordinator of priority area dealing with institutional capacities and cooperation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

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Reinforcement of e-Governance in the Danube Region conference, held on 20 February 2015 in Ljubljana, focused on e-government innovation of policy makers and practitioners in the Danube region and challenges e-government implementers are facing.

Effective digital government strategies are an important tool for countries seeking to maintain public trust, restore economic growth and long-term sustainability. They improve public sector performance, leveraging the power of innovation to build and maintain trust in government services.

The overall objective of the conference was to increase visibility of the digital agenda in the Danube Region.

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Challenges:

• E-governance should bring public administrations closer to citizens and businesses, be a strategic driver for improving public sector efficiency, support effectiveness of policies to create more open, transparent, innovative, participatory and trustworthy governments and create fundamental shift from citizen-centric to citizen-driven approaches.

• The challenge is not to introduce ICT into public administration but how to adapt public sector digital processes, operations and frameworks to the rapidly changing dynamics and relations between people and organisations enabled by the digital environment.

• New digital environment raises new risks and challenges that require governments to re-examine their governance approaches in light of new possibilities and expectations.

Proposed solutions:

• Centralization and modernization of ICT solutions used by public administration and its connection to businesses, civil society and general public; use of solutions that are quite common outside the public administration (flexible focus groups, big data and search tools, total mobility, common platforms of data and communications).

• Better legislation that supports more flexible organization of public administration, addresses areas of human rights, personal data protection, formal procedures based on ICT solutions, and administrative burden reduction.

• Modern human resource management that needs to move forward from organizational activities to competency-based management achieving higher quality of public services.

• Public administration organization has to shift from silo to flexible matrix approach and focus group organization where increasing number of areas and resources would become horizontal and used by all areas of work; in addition, they will be dependent on common platforms of work, communication and execution of tasks; interoperability must become cross-cutting instrument the way the public administration works.

• Partnership with citizens, business, academia and civil society in user needs specifications and IT solution development.

• Collaboration in e-Danube region is of great importance. Sharing best practices and innovative solutions as well as common efforts for developing cross-border e-services.

Top priorities of Slovenian e-government development:

I. Modernization of e-government portal for citizens and business.

II. E-procurement; e-health; e-justice.

III. Enhancing trust and privacy protection.

IV. Modernization of central infrastructure, establishment of state cloud.

V. New concept of procurement for innovative IT solutions.

VI. Open government, open data.

VII. E-participation in decision making processes.

VIII. To become a living lab for innovative solutions in the process of modernizing public administration in the EU.
The future of information society is not a distant place we are going to, but a place we are creating. And because our future is digital society, its creation is our great responsibility.

We all agree that next generation internet, ICT infrastructure, digital services and digital single market will boost our GDP, job growth and global competitiveness.

The Digital Agenda for Europe 2020 provides a clear objective as well as the roll-out of digital services with a focus on interoperability, operating costs and linking up infrastructures.

The access to the internet and the use of its services are generally perceived as a human right in the 21st century. Internet depends on the broadband infrastructure that is why we should take into account the fact that the economic and overall development of the modern digital society is directly linked with the development of high speed broadband infrastructure.

Slovenia is committed to achieve and exceed the objectives of the Digital Agenda for Europe. In this context we are sharing similar challenges as addressed in the Danube Region Strategy aiming to develop the knowledge society.

Slovenia will become the modern digital society by 2020. We will take all actions necessary for faster development of inclusive digital society, to enable general digitalization, digital entrepreneurship for digital growth and for development of high speed broadband for all.

In years to come, the open public data and open research data will be the driving force behind data driven innovation. For faster development of fully functional, user oriented and integrated e-services, we will provide cloud infrastructure to all interested parties.
To move Europe forward in its competitiveness, productivity and overall prosperity, the need for public sector modernization and enhancement of e-participation in decision-making processes was highlighted.

Ms Irena Lukač, EU Strategy for the Danube Region, Priority Area Coordinator 10, Center of Excellence in Finance, stressed that:

“We need capable public administrations that have to improve their quality and optimize governance mechanisms for international cooperation. Support for e-government implementation is a key strategic tool to achieve wider governance goals. EU Strategy for the Danube Region can and should act as a facilitator for coordinated and effective policies which take into account shared problems and cross-border implications.”

Mr Blaž Golob, Director, GoForeSight Institute, stated:

“The EU Strategy for the Danube Region can help activate the national, regional and local levels of governments, businesses and civil society to push for all sorts of agendas, including digital agenda.”
Session I: Challenges for Capacity Building and Development in the Danube Region

…the power of the macroregional strategies in enhancing cooperation, building partnerships and promoting good quality public services…

Mr Csaba Hende, DG Regio, European Commission
State of Play - EU Strategy for the Danube Region
Macro regional strategies, such as the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, are based on a simple principle of how certain challenges can be tackled much more effectively and less costly when dealt in cooperation and when policies are coordinated and implemented using a transnational approach, by building partnerships and inclusion of all relevant stakeholders.
Ms Andreja Jerina, National Coordinator, EU macro regions, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovenia

The Role of Macro Regions

Modern, innovative, efficient public administration is the key to unlocking Europe’s growth potential. And that is what EU macro regional strategies are about - demonstrating a clear vision, strong leadership and effective implementation capacity, promoting a dynamic business environment and good quality public services, and making the most of the EU funding available. Research showed that the macro regional approach encourages stakeholders to overcome not only national frontiers, but also barriers to thinking more strategically and imaginatively about opportunities available. Also, the aim of a macro regional strategy is to mobilize new projects and initiatives, creating a sense of common responsibility.

Mr Nand Shani, Regional Cooperation Council

E-Governance Development in South East Europe

South East Europe 2020 Strategy has a major focus on economic growth, job creation, competitiveness, with regionally adjusted Europe 2020 policy goals, making it more realistic and credible. E-SEE Initiative strives towards information society development in South East Europe. One prioritized intervention is: create an enabling environment for cross-border e-services.
Session II: Public Sector Innovation and e-Government

…the power of the ICT enabled modernisation towards building the government WITH the people, not FOR the people…

Dr. Zoran Stančić, DG Connect, European Commission

A European Commission Vision for Public Sector Modernisation

ICT is a key enabler of the transformation of public administrations towards innovative, open, collaborative, modern, and efficient administrations with better public services, less administrative burden, greater transparency and participation of citizens. This is a process of changing the mind-set, a process that can be achieved by using a step-by-step approach and in cooperation with citizens. It is important to share experience and to compare and research what can be done.

Expected economic impact of ICT enabled public sector modernisation:

• E-invoicing in public procurement could generate savings of up to EUR 2.3 billion per year.
• Switching from paper to fully automated invoicing can cut the costs of receiving an invoice from EUR 30 - 50 to EUR 1.
• E-procurement: contracting authorities that have made the transition to e-procurement report savings of between 5 % and 20 % of their procurement expenditure.
• E - prescription: in Italy, electronic medical prescriptions save EUR 2.5 billion per year.
• A recent study from the European Commission shows that the digital by default strategy at EU28 level could result in around EUR 10 billion of annual savings.
Dr. Alenka Žužek Nemec, IT Directorate, Ministry of Public Administration, Slovenia

ICT Driven Innovation and Modernisation of Public Administration, the Case of Slovenia

Establishing a friendly, effective, efficient and modern public administration by understanding users’ needs requires having a direct contact with citizens and businesses. Slovenian public administration has already achieved success stories in e-government development in the past, namely e-VEM, e-Democracy, e-Social Security and Supervizor. We believe that, even with tight budget and limited staff, we can follow the new Public Administration 2020 Strategy towards creating a cloud enabled government with user focused public services.

Ms Cornelia Amihalachioae, e-Government Center, Moldova

ICT Driven Innovation and Modernisation of Public Administration, the Case of Moldova

Moldova e-governance transformation aimed to improve users’ satisfaction, cut endless lines for public services, improve transparency and accountability, and combat corruption. Automation is not enough today. We want to reinvent the government by creating customer-oriented culture in the public administration. Currently, we have great e-governance infrastructure, now we need leadership to add value to this infrastructure, capacity to uptake and capitalize on it.

Prof. dr. Andras Nemeslaki, National University of Public Service, Hungary

Empirical Analysis of Public ICT Development Project Objectives in Hungary

Research of Hungarian public ICT development programs showed very little participation of social partners, local governance and improvements of user skills through public information campaigns. So the next big challenge for Hungary is to move towards e-governance and increase local participation.
Session III: From e-Government to e-Governance

…the power of a two-way communication between the government and the society for e-governance development…

Mr Vladan Kojanić, member of ReSPA network on e-Government, Serbia

ReSPA Regional Comparative e-Government Study

Regional Comparative e-Government Study showed that e-government development can improve cost savings, money and staff, lead to greater productivity and simplification of procedures, better working conditions, better decisions, more effective services, greater innovation and change, and help tackle current economic crisis. Main barriers in e-governance development in Western Balkans countries are lack of administration motivation or even resistance, lack of skills and overall awareness, and lack of financial resources.

Ms Nele Leosk, e-Governance Academy, Estonia

E-Estonia: Strategic Decisions for Success

Estonian experience in e-governance development shows that cooperation and coordination is the key, with technology as being the simplest part. New innovations take time for people to start using them. The case of implementation of internet voting in Estonia showed that it took 10 years for 31 % of people to vote electronically. Therefore, using step-by-step project based approach is crucial.
Mr Simon Delakorda, INePA - Institute for Electronic Participation, Slovenia
Participatory Democracy as a Substance of e-Governance

In participatory democracy, citizens or civil society are not recognised only as users of e-governance services, but also as co-operators. They are actively involved in the creation of services and can also reflect on the quality of e-governance solutions. Digital non-governmental organizations can contribute to how e-governance is being understood and implemented in the society and can contribute greatly in developing e-governance services that are tailored to the needs of users.

Prof. dr. Robert Müller-Török, University of Public Administration and Finance, Ludwigsburg
From paper to e-Governance: an e-Government Reality Check from a German Perspective

Most basic government services in Germany are still at a technological level of twenty years ago, because we lack legal requirements which prohibits us to effectively use digital services. How to move forward, how to move directly form a paper-based administration to a modern e-governance regime? First we need a master plan for e-governance, then adaptation of legislation, hard work and sufficient funds.
Session IV: City as Enabler of Digital Development in the Danube Region

…the power of knowledge, expertise and innovative practices of cities in enabling digital development in the Danube Region…

Mr Miran Gajšek, City of Ljubljana
Cities as Generators of Smart and Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development, the Case of Ljubljana

How to coordinate social cohesion and inclusive growth, economic cohesion and smart growth, and territorial cohesion and sustainable development? By good management and good planning of territorial units. The city of Ljubljana has a sustainable development strategy which we started implementing in 2014. We still have to work harder to reach the EU 2020 goals, especially in territorial and functional concentration and smart specialization.

Ms Julia Glidden, 21c Consultancy
The Smart City as a Data City: Taking us Back to the Future

The greatest assets of every smart city are its citizens and open data and what they can do together. The options are limitless. However, these changes can be overwhelming for the city. It is important for a city to start with a few smart e-projects where IT, innovation and data do not have to be high-tech. Thus it can slowly develop towards a smart city as an IT driven and sharing city, as a collaborative platform that facilitates people-to-people exchange and sharing of time, resources and needs.
Urban development is becoming a key element of regional policy in the EU, since 75% of the EU population lives in cities. Cities have great development opportunities in the 2014 - 2020 period, as EUR 330 million will be available to fund innovative actions in the field of sustainable urban development. Cities in the Danube region have an opportunity to cooperate through Urban Platform Danube Region (www.updr.eu), an online platform for information exchange of cities, which also provides the cities with a common voice in the framework of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

Prof.dr. Alexander Prosser, University of Economics and Business Administration, Vienna

Demopolis, e-Governance Renaissance for the Danube Region

In order to make use of all the e-government solutions that were presented at the conference, you have to have public sector civil servants who are able to use them. Today, training for the public sector is not sufficient. Universities do not prepare students for work in such an environment. Good teaching consists of theoretical knowledge, but today students also need to learn on case studies and some IT-specific contents.

Mr Blaž Golob, GoForeSight Institute / SmartIS

Smart City Platform - Tools for Smart Mayors

Operations of public administrations in Europe are too complex. Digital transformation is needed for the companies to grow and for people to change the way they live, work, communicate and play. Technology-driven solutions can solve problems in key areas such as health, education, employability and environmental sustainability. The Smart Mayor Manager with its Smart Voice helps mayors to govern the city more effectively and efficiently and to manage it in a smarter manner by enabling bottom-up communication with its citizens and businesses.
Conclusions

Participants agreed that modern, efficient public administrations are essential to the economic prosperity of the EU and of the Danube Region.

- Recycle and share, collaborate and coordinate: EU Strategy for the Danube Region can be a roof under which cross-sectorial, cross-border, synergetic policy making and exchange of practice can develop. We need to share and learn from our successes and failures.
- E-government is not limited to the richer countries; in fact some of the most innovative e-governance applications are happening in developing countries. In the Danube Region there are champions in e-governance and countries that have infrastructure in place, but lack complexity in services and content.
- Crucial factors of success are: creating partnerships, taking risk and being dynamic! High-level political support and leadership are needed, as well as sufficient capacity of institutions and public officials, adequate e-governance programs and ICT infrastructure.
- Challenges in e-governance remain: delivery lags behind the plans! Unsupportive legislation, lack of financial resources, pace of technology change and digital divide are still persistent.
- E-participation: Danube region lags behind. Open issues such as digital inequality (exclusion), privacy, internet neutrality, open government data need attention.
- E-government is not a one-time effort; it is instead a step-by-step process relying on growing levels of capability, complexity, knowledge and infrastructure.
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