



## **IST STREP PROJECT**

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A life-event oriented framework and platform for one-stop government  
(OneStopGov)

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# **Minutes of the of the workshop “Customer-centric service provision”**

**22 April 2008, Prague**

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**Abstract:** The present document includes the minutes of the workshop “Customer-centric service provision” held on 22 April 2008, Prague in the context of the Eastern European eGov Days 2008.

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# 1 Introduction

The “Customer-centric service provision” workshop was organized by the OneStopGov project ([www.onestopgov-project.org](http://www.onestopgov-project.org)), coordinated by the Research Institute of the University of Macedonia, the SemanticGov project ([www.semantic-gov.org](http://www.semantic-gov.org)), coordinated by the Center of Research and Technology Hellas/Institute of Telematics and Informatics and the LD-CAST project ([www.ld-cast.com](http://www.ld-cast.com)), coordinated by ELSAG DATAMAT, Italy. The workshop was chaired by Professor Konstantinos Tarabanis and Dr. Efthimios Tambouris, University of Macedonia.

The objective of the workshop was to identify how current eGovernment research projects address the challenge of improved service delivery, with a focus on customers’ needs. Moreover, the workshop represents a good occasion to share project experiences and to consider the state of the art of the technologies supporting interoperability among organizations.

## 2 Part A: Project Demonstrations

The workshop started at 12:30 where relevant introductions and an official welcome were given by Dr. Efthimios Tambouris, project Manager of the “OneStopGov” project. Each participant was introduced in relation to affiliation and academic interests to eGovernment.

Following the introduction, the following projects presentations took place:

- “OneStopGov” by Ilias Trochidis, University of Macedonia
- “LD-CAST” by Alessandra Catapano, ELSAG DATAMAT
- “SemanticGov” by Nikos Loutas, CERTH
- “Pledge” by Luis Alvarez Sabucedo, Universidade de Vigo
- “BRITE” by Ansgar Mondorf, University of Koblenz
- “R4eGov” by Maria Wimmer, University of Koblenz

The projects were presented in respect to the following agenda:

- General Introduction/Objectives
- Platform/System Architecture
- Citizen-Centric Rationale (where the platform was not finished)
- Expected Results
- Platform Demonstration (OneStopGov, SemanticGov, LD-CAST)

### 3 Part B: Discussion

Following the project presentations, Dr. Tambouris introduced the discussion on Topics of common interest. Participants of the discussion were the presenters of each project.

The discussion was moderated by Dr. Tambouris against the following aspects:

- Technological Aspects of citizen centric provision
- Organisational Models used for service provision
- General Organisational Aspects of citizen-centric public service provision
- Best Practices and lessons learnt

The discussion started at 15:00 and finished at 17:00 with some general remarks, discussion and conclusions.

Each project representative provided its point of view on the topics listed above and questions from the audience were addressed at the end of each item discussion.

#### 3.1 Technological aspects of customer-centric public service provision

An overview of the first item for discussion was made by Dr. Tambouris. The questions were relevant to the existing technologies, to the considerations of alternative technologies, the existence of models for public services etc. In addition, this item for discussion included the advantages and disadvantages of each technology used, good practices, standardisation issues, and open source software. A summary of relevant technologies is shown in the table below:

Modelling processes/workflows		OneStopGov	SemanticGov	Pledge	Brite	R4eGov	LD-CAST
	BPMN	x				x	
	UML						
	BPEL	x				x	x
Semantic Web Languages							
	OIL						
	DAML						
	DAML+OIL						
	OWL		x	x		x	x
	RDF					x	
	WSML		x				
	SAWSDL			X			
	SWRL			x			

Semantic Web Service frameworks							
	WSMF		x				
	OWL-S				x		
	WSMO		x				
	IRS-III		x				
	METEOR-S						
	XBRL				x		
	OXML (proprietary format of Software AG)				x		
	f-logic				x		
Web services							
	WSDL	x	x	x	X (XML)	X	X (XML)
Front end/Portal							
	Liferay portlets		Liferay portlets				
Security							
							Federated AAI

Mr. Mondorf: According to the presenter, the BRITE project uses ontologies and focuses on interoperability. He stressed that in some cases, it might be useful to use ontologies that describe better 3-4 concepts or expressions, in comparison to XML transformations.

Prof. Wimmer: Technology consists of an important issue and the ability to practice applications and see where ontologies are used in governments. It might be difficult to transfer ontologies to real applications due to restrictions from tools. Prof. wimmer noted that we need to redesign existing technologies, which might be quite time-consuming.

Dr. Tambouris: The OneStopGov project did not adopt ontologies to solve problems but rather opted for traditional workflow technologies to check the convenience of serving its purpose. It would be still relevant to make a thorough comparison of both technologies in terms of eGovernment requirements. Dr. Tambouris also noted that the domain and its needs should be

taken into consideration to see if technologies are sufficient to cover the requirements of the service provision in question. In addition, it was stated that if researchers had a universal model for public service technologies, the benefits would be enormous and interoperability problems would be avoided.

Mr. Loutas continued with his statement on the SemanticGov project which extends on an existing model which was developed by researchers and not Public Administrations. He added that it would be quite difficult to persuade Public Authorities to follow a specific model of ontology. In terms of research though, normally the competencies of the partner Public Administrations are taken into account.

Mrs. Catapano: From the experience of the LD-CAST project, ontology benefits would be useful, but first the best place where they can be adopted must be evaluated. A great effort has been spent to understand advantages and disadvantages of adopting traditional workflow technologies versus ontologies ones and identifying a suitable solution within the LD-CAST project that introduces more flexibility in business service modelling and execution. In LD-CAST they focused on service discovery guaranteeing a first level of flexibility in the business process modelling activity integrating both these technologies, workflows and ontologies. She noticed that the problem relevant to technologies is on a higher level.

Mr Sabucedo: According to the presenter of the Pledge project, re-engineering is indispensable in Public Authorities. Experience indicates that concepts are different between a research team and the Public Authorities. Ontologies could raise some problems, since they are not intended to provide support to citizens and engaging final users in platforms is important. There is currently a gap as the information that the final user has at his disposal is on the user interface. Therefore, the ontologies can be a sufficient tool, but not the solution.

Mr Mondorf commented that in some types of bureaucracies, some technologies would be useless unless organisational re-design is addressed. Therefore, ontologies need to define a common language. The regulatory framework of each Public Authority is also essential due to misalignment of administrative level.

Mr. Sabucedo added that in different countries or regions services are different and Mr. Loutas added that ontologies are not capable of solving problems among regions or countries.

Prof. Wimmer also stated that ontologies can go beyond a common understanding, but process ontologies could better address some problems.

## **3.2 Organizational models used for customer-centric service provision**

Organisational models were the next issue on the agenda. Dr. Tambouris raised some important points relevant to the organisational models, such as the level of intervention needed, e.g. improvement or re-engineering, benefits of standardised services. The main questions addressed at the project representatives were the following:

- What are the different organisational models for customer-centric service provision?
- Is the differentiation between front-office and back-office sufficient? How about middle-office?
- The role of multi-channel delivery
- What are the main challenges?
- What are the compromises one has to do between data protection and efficiency?
- Good practices
- What are the next steps?

Another issue would be the usefulness of defining use-cases or mega-processes, as well as data protection and the existence of a trusted third-party.

Mrs Catapano opened the discussion by stating that the appropriate channels to reach the end users are very essential, as relevant to the LD-CAST project, businesses are interested in multi-channelled service delivery. The target users are skilled in a very different way (from high technological background to totally Internet-ignorant) and it is essential to find the most suitable communication channel to reach them. This matter has been carefully taken into consideration in the definition of the project business plan. She noticed that the need is still on re-engineering current services and not just improving them. Additionally, processes at some trial sites might be very complicated.

Mr. Loutas: Mr Loutas commented on middleware, stating that at present, most of the projects follow some kind of middleware and a connection of middleware could be allowed. A trusted agency would be needed to allow users to define the desired level of personal data details available in their profile.

Dr. Tambouris: Relevant to multi-channel service delivery, Dr. Tambouris referred to multi-channel service delivery which would be favourable but has implications since it increases the requirements and interoperability among channels must be guaranteed. Dr. Tambouris then differentiated between the two basic organisational models: the entry-point access via one portal or agency or the Public Authority which is responsible for connecting with other Public Authorities. In these two cases, the value chain changes. There are currently a number of organisational challenges, and there is a trade-off between efficacy and data protection. For example, an appropriate question would be to leave the citizen to decide the level of detail but the legality of this is questionable.

Prof. Wimmer differentiated between the citizen side and the company side of customer-centric service provision first needs. On the one hand, key technology is interacting with standard technologies but according to Prof. Wimmer one needs to understand the benefits of mobile technology. Furthermore, legal and organisational aspects must be compatible.

Mr. Mondorf: In the presenter's experience, in some cases, companies might prefer electronic channels, so there is a difference between citizen-centric service provision and company-centric service provision. There are missing methodologies on how companies can work together on common mega processes.

The audience raised some key issues relevant to the discussion. First it was noted that re-engineering would be important from the citizen side. Offering fine granulated services on a new basis is essential. One-stop shop government cannot exist if it requires documents, but more dynamic services must be devised. At present, ontologies help define how services fit between each other but they can also be used for new paradigms.

Mr. Sabucedo responded that Public Authorities have rigid rules which cannot be discarded. Dr. Tambouris added that life-events is one alternative of the user interface and that one portal can have multiple organisational modes, such as by sector, age of the user etc. A mechanism is thus needed to orchestrate or integrate the investigation of user needs. Web 2.0 functionalities can add value in terms of tagging life-events but still a model for the public sector needs to be discovered. The end user has to gain some value immediately while tagging might benefit one but not help other users.

### **3.3 General organizational aspects of customer-centric public service provision**

The next item on the agenda was initiated, ie general organisational aspects. General organisational aspects of customer-centric public service provision are linked to the following aspects:

- Customer-centric public service provision vs “traditional” public service provision

- Changes needed to achieve the objectives and additional considerations
- Challenges of shifting to customer centric public service provision and the available alternatives
- National infrastructure necessary to achieve this change
- Good practices and next steps

Mr. Mondorf mentioned that specific to the BRITE project, one of its major aims is to provide pan-European services and lower barriers for citizens and decrease transaction costs.

Prof. Wimmer remarked that customer-centric service provision is differentiated, since one of its aspects is convenience. The traditional way of carrying out services is perceived as burdensome, while customer-centric focuses on convenience, transparency and opportunity costs. As far as national infrastructure is concerned, Prof. Wimmer added that there are common elements and the responsibility for interoperable infrastructure remains.

Dr. Tambouris noted that there is a difference between existing citizen-centric public provision, as customer centricity denoted the need of services that make sense. An important change in the orientation is needed in terms of legal, cultural and technological aspects.

Mr. Loutas responded that customer-centricity needs a “black box” view, as currently citizens carry data from one Public Authority to another. He added that there are transferable elements from other areas such as eCommerce or eBanking which are advanced working environments.

Mrs. Catapano then addressed these issues by noting that first, the issue of infrastructure must be addressed, as interaction with various service-providers is often difficult and that regulation on Pan-European relevant services would be an important step towards general organisational issues.

Mr. Sabucedo’s point of view was that the future involvement of the system should be focused on citizen needs and not solely on Public Authorities needs. Thus, national regulation could evolve to a more sophisticated system of European Interoperability.

A member of the audience noted that the service finder should not be a service for the citizen but it has to be more hidden so that citizens can gain utmost convenience.

Prof. Wimmer concluded that many eGovernment portals and infrastructure are already in place in the majority of European countries. Political and strategic issues must be raised at a higher level to solve general organisational dependencies.

### **3.4 Best practices and lessons learnt**

The discussion concluded with the best practices unit. Each project representative provided a general statement of lessons learnt and how best practices can benefit in terms of what each project has learnt so far, the challenges for customer-centric public service provision, general recommendations and transferable practices.

Mr. Sabucedo addressed the question that when dealing with Public Authorities which level of change is necessary? Digital gap poses an additional barrier and internal laws and procedures must be compromised for the sake of efficiency.

Mrs. Catapano noted that an indication of the project is that companies’ needs are very similar across Europe. There is thus a standard way needs are identified but the available services to satisfy those needs are different. She remarked on the use of tools such as ontologies can contribute to this process and provide a good framework to perform in this change of opinions among some project partners.

Mr. Loutas agreed that the needs of citizens can be considered somehow similar throughout Europe too and one challenge posed is how to interoperate in data representation. Specifically he

noted that on the one hand SOA technologies is a challenge applied in other domains. On the other hand, barriers in legislation and data privacy have to be clarified.

Dr. Tambouris also observed that eGovernment is moving towards a means-oriented paradigm. Therefore the appropriate question is how to organise the needs of link them to a standard service. He specifically referred to the OneStopGov project adopted workflow technologies in order to be more stable and focus on the understanding of the life-events. Stakeholders have different needs, for example researchers, Public Authorities. In a pan-European dimension, different needs require different environments and that poses additional challenges. The need is obvious for interdisciplinary methods of identifying optimal solutions. Currently, orientation is not explicit and eGovernment solutions are not comprehensive.

Prof. Wimmer noted that it is quite important to agree on methodology and measurements to see how projects proceed.

Finally Mr. Mondorf concluded that the identifiable problem at the moment is that in the concept of the BRITE concept, business registers want practical results but projects mainly research the technologies.

The discussion concluded with some notes by the audience. One of them is that current developments in the eGovernment domain as described in the workshop are advancing however they denote a shift in the power balance and in most of the cases Public Authorities are resistant to change.

Finally, concluding issues were discussed, such as how could researchers identify, formalize and organize customers' needs and try to address them either by mapping them to existing public services or by developing new ones. At this point, a common agreement was reached, that a lot of issues still remain open and a lot of challenges are still there for future researchers to address.