

Chapter II

The Demand for E-Government Standards

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ABSTRACT

The chapter provides an overview and subsequent analysis of the demand for e-government standards in the EU. It describes the requirements for e-government standards in the EU, based on a number of ongoing national initiatives. A recently developed typology of service standards is used to structure the need for e-government standards demand in various dimensions. It turns out that the rather complex organisational structure of governmental organisations is the most important driving force for developing e-government standards.

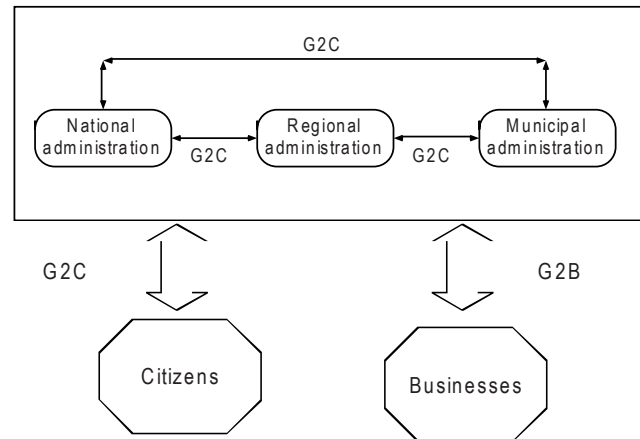
1. INTRODUCTION

Like e-business, e-government covers an extremely wide range of topics, ranging from, e.g., electronic voting via e-taxation and geo-spatial data to e-education and e-health care. Also, the users are similarly diverse, including European, national, state and municipal authorities, and a host of specialised agencies. Many of these entities have already developed solutions for their individual tasks and problems, which are hardly

ever compatible with anyone else's. In a sense, this situation is similar to the one that was observed in the e-business sector a couple of years ago. Priority aspects to be addressed include interconnectivity, data integration, access, and content management (Borras, 2003)¹. These aspects are also crucial for e-businesses.

The different 'expressions' of e-government services are also similar to those in the e-business domain – functionality required for G2G² is roughly equivalent to B2B functionality, and G2C

Figure 1. The different expressions of e-government



to B2C. G2B lies somewhere in between, but is closer related to B2C (see also Figure 1).

According to the Dutch Programme for Open Standards and Open Source Software in Government (OSSOS), benefits of open standards in e-government include (Werle, Iversen 2006):

- Reduction of dependence on external software suppliers and an increase in the range of choices;
- A way to combat monopolies in the software market in order to prevent abuse of dominant market positions;
- Enhancement of the quality of government information systems in terms of accessibility of information, transparency of action, security and future-proofness;
- Reduction of the cost of software implementations;
- Improvement of the exchange of data between government domains.

Some other aspects of e-government are also worth considering:

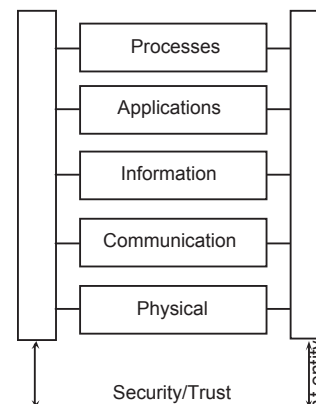
- Security aspects are extremely important, even more so than in e-business,
- There is considerable commitment to the use of standards (and open software; this holds despite the fact that many systems based on

proprietary technology have already been implemented),

- Some national governments have implemented national 'standards' which are not necessarily open, and which do not necessarily provide for interoperability with European/international standards³.

Overall, the majority of standards-related e-government activities focus on the identification of suitable existing standards, and to the provision of guidelines regarding their implementation and use. Also, these activities focus on the three lower layers of the interaction architecture (see Figure 2). So far, very little has been achieved in

Figure 2. An e-government layered interaction architecture



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