

Chapter 7

E-Readiness Assessment Methods and Tools

MEASUREMENTS OF E-READINESS

E-readiness assessments are largely investigated at country-level across a number of sectors, and tend to adopt quantitative approaches that assign to countries' numerical scores depending on how well they have performed on specific components of e-readiness measures. A weighted average is calculated based on the relative importance accorded to these components in order to determine the level of e-readiness of countries (Rizk, 2004). The results of e-readiness rankings of countries are regularly published annually by some agencies. For example, the Economist Intelligence Unit (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2001) annually publishes a comprehensive list of countries on the basis of their measured e-readiness. The ranking categorises countries on the basis of their overall e-readiness, as calculated from 89 indicators

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across six weighted dimensions, namely connectivity, the business environment, consumer and business adoption, the legal and regulatory environment, supporting services, and social and cultural infrastructure. The result of the calculations is the classification of the world's largest economies on the basis of their perceived adopter category.

Globally, a number of countries have already attained significant levels of e-readiness, while others are at various stages of implementation. Countries that have attained significant levels of e-readiness are invariably situated in the developed world, and include among others, the United States, Canada, Singapore, Sweden, Japan, Finland, Britain, Norway and Australia. Most countries in the developing world are still striving to implement relevant infrastructures to attain levels of e-readiness sufficient enough to partake in the emerging global information economy.

MACRO E-READINESS ASSESSMENT TOOLS

There are several macro e-readiness assessment tools and methods that have been developed by various organisations. These organisations include, but are not limited to: Computer Systems Policy Project (CSPP); Centre for International Development, Harvard University, 2004; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2004; United Nations Development Programme, 2004; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2004; and SADC E-Readiness Assessment Task Force. Some of the most commonly used macro e-readiness tools include, among others: the Readiness Guide for Living in the Networked World developed by the Computer Systems Policy Project (CSPP); Network Readiness Index of the Harvard University's Centre for International Development (CID); E-readiness Rankings of the Economist Intelligence Unit; and the Technology Achievement Index of UNDP.

Each of these tools uses a different definition of e-readiness and methods for its measurement. Moreover, the e-readiness assessments are very diverse in their goals, strategies and results (Bridges.org, 2003). On average, however, the tools measure the level of infrastructure development; connectivity; Internet access; applications and services, or network speed; quality of network access; and ICT policy. The tools also measure:

- The ICT training programs in place
- Adequacy and availability of human resources
- Level of computer literacy
- Relevant content.

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