Chapter 10
Social Computing and Cooperation Services for Connected Government and Cross-Boundary Services Delivery

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ABSTRACT

Connected Government requires different government organizations to connect seamlessly across functions, agencies, and jurisdictions in order to deliver effective and efficient services to citizens and businesses. In the countries of the European Union, this also involves the possibility of delivering cross-border services, which is an important step toward a truly united Europe. To achieve this goal, European citizens and businesses should be able to interact with different public administrations in different Member States in a seamless way to perceive them as a single entity. Interoperability, which is a key factor for Connected Government, is not enough in order to achieve this result, since it usually does not consider the social dimension of organizations. This dimension is at the basis of co-operability, which is a form of non-technical interoperability that allows different organizations to function together essentially as a single organization. In this chapter, it is argued that, due to their unique capacity of coupling several technologies and processes with interpersonal styles, awareness, communication tools, and conversational models, the integration of social computing services and tools within inter-organizational workflows can make them more efficient and effective. It can also support the "learning" process that leads different organizations to achieve co-operability.

INTRODUCTION

Under the pressure of the current global economic crisis, many governments boosted the e-Government's strategic role in supporting the economic recovery (Ubaldi, 2011). The European Union identified e-government as a fundamental element of the Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE) and considered it as one of the seven Flagship Initiatives stated in the EU's 2020 strategy for smart,

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sustainable and inclusive growth (EC, 2010). One of the main objectives of the DAE is the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to foster the establishment of a Single Internal Market involving all the Member States since this could have a relevant impact on the EU's economy. Actually, the full development of the Single Market by 2020 is expected to increase the EU's GDP by an extra 4% that corresponds to a € 500-billion gain (EPC, 2010). The EU's strategy for attaining this objective identifies four drivers (EC, 2012):

- Developing fully integrated networks in the Single Market;
- Fostering mobility of citizens and businesses across borders;
- Supporting the digital economy across Europe;
- Strengthening social entrepreneurship, cohesion and consumer confidence

Among these, crucial for the attainment of the objective of the Single Market, is the mobility of citizens and businesses across borders. According to a European Commission's estimate (EC, 2013), there were approximately 1,790,000 immigrants and commuters between EU Member States in 2009 with an estimated growth of 22.7% by 2020 (reaching 2,196,035 individuals per annum in 2020). Besides fostering economic growth, mobility of both citizens and enterprises among the Member States can contribute substantially to strengthening the European citizens' perception of living and working in a Single Market. However, this objective can be achieved at the condition that entrepreneurs can set up and run a business anywhere in Europe independently of their original location, and that citizens are allowed to study, work, reside and retire anywhere in the EU. To guarantee these conditions to European citizens and entrepreneurs, the public administration agencies in the Member States should be able to provide seamless, interoperable and sustainable cross-border public services.

The availability of cross-border services could have a significant impact on citizens and enterprises mobility across the EU Member States. In EC (2013), it is estimated that there would be a total demand of 1,262,887 users for cross-border services besides 140,000 branches and immigrant business start-ups between EU Member States that could utilize cross-border business services. However, to deliver cross-border services, the public administration agencies of different Member States are required to connect seamlessly across functions, agencies, and jurisdictions to deliver effective and efficient services to citizens and businesses. This would allow European public administration agencies to act as a single organization, so that citizens feel that a single (virtually integrated) organization is serving them rather than a number of different public authorities, possibly from different Member States. From this point of view, to satisfy the demand of cross-border services and to strengthen the European citizens' perception of living and working in a Single Market (which are crucial for the attainment of the objectives stated by EU's 2020 strategy), the Member States should transform their government systems toward the Connected Government model (Pallab, 2010) at both the national and the European Union level.

Connected government is usually considered as a multi-dimensional construct (Kaczorowski, 2004; Pallab, 2010), including dimensions such as:

- Citizen centricity, as the guiding principle for the public sector transformation processes, whose goal is to create greater value for citizens, not only for citizens as users/consumers or beneficiaries, but also for citizens as taxpayers, as participants in the democratic processes, as policy makers and employees in public administration