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Administration to Business (A2B)

Presentation

E-government has become a privileged tool for companies, and more specifically, for entrepreneurs, as it allows them access to a series of services which permit the start-up of companies in a faster, less expensive manner. For this reason the EU is promoting this as a necessary element to make Europe a more attractive place for investment and work, where knowledge and innovation drive growth and expansion. This pamphlet analyses the steps taken in Europe, Spain and Galicia in relation to Administration to Business (A2B).

The European strategy promotes e-Government

In 1998 the European Commission expressed for the first time in the “Green Paper on Public Sector Information in the Information Society”² the need to establish the foundations for the development of e-government at all levels of administration (European, national, regional and local).

This document emphasised that information is fundamental to the correct operation of the domestic market and the free

circulation of goods, services and individuals; and that a lack of access, either administrative, legislative or financial, hinders economic agents in their ability to freely take informed decisions. This situation is of especial relevance to SMEs, as they have less available resources (time and money) to dedicate to searching for information which is often fragmented or spread out across several different administrative levels.

¹ EGovernment: technology and quality. Ibermática 2004.

² Public sector information: a key resource for Europe. Green Paper Concerning Public Sector Information in the Information Society. COM (1998) 585.

i2010 e-Government Action Plan

The promotion of e-government in Europe resulted in the i2010 e-government action plan, an initiative announced for 2010. This initiative³ states that in 2006 the success and potential of e-government has already clearly visible in several of the EU countries. An example of this is the electronic invoicing system used in Denmark, which saves Danish taxpayers some 150 million euros per year and 50 million euros for companies. It also gives the example of disabled individuals in Belgium who can obtain via Internet, in just a few seconds, services which used to take some three to four weeks to obtain. It indicates that this convenience and the savings in time and money can be extended to a whole series of public services for the greater benefit of all European citizens.

The plan is structured around five main e-government objectives, with specific, quantifiable goals for 2010⁴:

_ No citizens should be excluded or left behind: to promote inclusion via e-government, so that by 2010 all citizens can benefit from innovative, secure services and easy access.

_ Efficiency must be a reality: by 2010 users must be highly satisfied; there will be transparency and responsibility, lower administrative costs and improvements in efficiency.

_ Implement key services of real importance for citizens and companies: by 2010 all public procurements must be available by electronic means, with a target percentage of real use of some 50%.

_ Make key tools available so that by 2010 citizens and companies can benefit from authenticated access to public services which is practical, secure and interoperable in the context of the European Union.

_ Reinforce participation and the adoption of democratic decisions, so that by 2010 effective tools exist for public debate and participation in the taking of decisions.

A2B

Online public services, both for citizens and for companies are a result of a combination of two important factors:

_ Advances seen in the Information Society in relation to the modernisation of the public sector and its services to citizens (A2C) and to companies (A2B)

_ The requirements of a changing European Union which demands a new, innovative focus for the provision of public services.

E-government permits faster, more transparent administration where the time needed for company start-up and the costs involved are reduced to a large degree, with free resources offered online.

The online public services offered by public administrations to businesses (A2B) are fundamentally the following:

- _ Social security payments for employees
- _ Business income tax: declaration, presentation...
- _ VAT: declaration, presentation, payment...
- _ Registration of new companies
- _ Sending of data for official statistics
- _ Customs declarations
- _ Environmental permits (including the presentation of reports)
- _ Public procurements and tenders

| COUNTRY | SOPHISTICATION | | AVAILABILITY | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | April 2006 | October 2004 | April 2006 | October 2004 |
| Germany | 74 | 66 | 47 | 47 |
| Austria | 95 | 87 | 83 | 72 |
| Belgium | 74 | 67 | 47 | 35 |
| Cyprus | 66 | 52 | 35 | 25 |
| Denmark | 85 | 81 | 63 | 58 |
| Slovakia | 51 | 40 | 20 | 15 |
| Slovenia | 87 | 68 | 65 | 45 |
| Spain | 79 | 73 | 55 | 55 |
| Estonia | 90 | 78 | 79 | 63 |
| Finland | 85 | 83 | 61 | 67 |
| France | 85 | 74 | 65 | 50 |
| Greece | 62 | 61 | 30 | 32 |
| Holland | 79 | 70 | 53 | 32 |
| Hungary | 81 | 50 | 50 | 15 |
| Ireland | 84 | 84 | 50 | 50 |
| Iceland | 78 | 76 | 47 | 50 |
| Italy | 80 | 72 | 58 | 53 |
| Latonia | 47 | 33 | 10 | 5 |
| Lithuania | 68 | 59 | 40 | 40 |
| Luxembourg | 57 | 53 | 20 | 20 |
| Malta | 92 | 67 | 75 | 40 |
| Norway | 90 | 82 | 72 | 56 |
| Poland | 53 | 36 | 20 | 10 |
| Portugal | 83 | 68 | 60 | 40 |
| United Kingdom | 89 | 84 | 71 | 59 |
| Czech Republic | 61 | 57 | 30 | 30 |
| Sweden | 90 | 89 | 74 | 74 |
| Switzerland | 62 | 60 | 11 | 6 |

Source: Based on the 6th study carried out by Caggemini for the European Commission concerning public Services via Internet.

Development of e-Government in Europe

According to information from the European Commission relating to public services via Internet⁵, countries in the European Union have a high degree of sophistication when offering services across Internet.

The European average for sophistication of use is around 75%, with availability of online services reaching some 52%. The following table shows information for each country from a study carried out by Caggemini for the European Commission in 2006. It also compares this information to data from a similar study in 2004, thus allowing us to determine the degree of evolution involved.

In relation to the development of e-government services to consumers and businesses, the European Union is currently financing two important projects:

_ INTELCITIES. This is a project for technological development and research, designed to increase expert knowled-

ge and experience for e-government, planning systems and the participation of citizens across Europe. The objective of the project is to create a set of new, innovative services for interoperable e-government, which will offer information to all citizens and companies concerning all aspects of life in the city via interactive, internet-based applications.

_ SAFIR. This project aims to give each citizen and user group the same opportunity for access at any hour of the day, allowing the updating of information in an interactive fashion by means of easy-to-use devices such as television, GSM technology, telephone, PDAs, etc. That is, access from any point using one's own voice and language, thus creating a wide demand for broadband services to support a high quantity of speech and image data. SAFIR will create a combined speech and graphics systems which both citizens and companies will be able to use to make queries, complete forms or even perform transactions.

³ i2010 e-government action plan: Accelerating e-government in Europe for the benefit of all. Brussels.25.04.06. COM (2006) 173 FINAL.

⁴ The i2010 e-government action plan was approved by the European Council in Feira in June 2000.

⁵ 6th study carried out by Caggemini for the European Commission concerning public Services via Internet This study examined the basic public services of 28 European countries. The report measures the degree of sophistication and availability of online public services http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/i2010/docs/benchmarking/online_availability_2006.pdf

eIDM: An unmissable opportunity for companies

According to the i2010 action plan, which is based upon the premise that efficient government is a necessary condition for competitiveness and innovation, e-government must reach a degree of development which will allow European citizens and entrepreneurs to benefit from so-called interoperable electronic identity management. These means that if a citizen or company wishes to travel or become established in another country which is a member of the European Union then access to public services such as health services, electronic vote, etc, is guaranteed. It also safeguards data privacy.

In this regard eIDM (Electronic Identity Management) is of especial importance as a tool for identifying users (citizens or companies) across Europe. It creates electronic identity management based upon interoperability and the mutual recognition of eIDM by each Member State. eIDM provides an unmissable opportunity for companies as it allows authenticated access to public services, which is practical, secure and interoperable throughout the EU.

The member states recognise the importance of the role of eIDM for ensuring that by 2010 citizens and businesses alike

will benefit from electronic resources which are secure and easy to use, and which respect data privacy. These will be issued at local, regional or national level and will allow identification for public services in any of the member states.

The states in the EU are already working upon the implementation of eIDM and the Commission has adopted the following strategy for 2010:

2006: To agree with the other member states a "road map" which establishes a series of objectives and milestones for eIDM in Europe by 2010, based on interoperability and the mutual recognition of national eIDM.

2007: To agree common specifications for interoperable eIDM in the EU.

2008: To perform monitoring of large-scale pilot projects of interoperable eIDM for cross-border services which meet a series of commonly agreed specifications.

2009: Digital signatures in e-government: to check their use in public services.

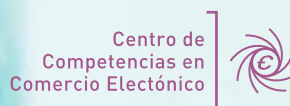
2010: Check the adoption by member states of the European eIDM system for interoperable eIDM.

The Danish and Estonian initiatives

_ Denmark: Digital signatures. Since 2003 Denmark has issued free digital signatures to its citizens, which they may use to access online public services in a secure manner. The issuing of digital signatures forms part of the e-government project launched in 2001. The steps taken in this country for the issuing of digital signatures are similar to those taken in other states for the development of digital identity card projects.

_ Estonia: Digital signatures and Identity Cards. In the year 2000 Estonia began to develop its free digital signature system, which

is currently as valid as the manual system, with companies and administrations obliged to accept all kinds of documents which have been signed using this tool. Citizens may access all types of banking or health services by means of a digital identity card, which includes a digital signature (amongst other uses). It even permitted voting in the 2007 elections to be carried out by Internet. Estonia has 1.35 million inhabitants, and around 940,000 of these possess an identity card including a digital signature.



The next article in this series will focus on **APPROACH TO ONE-STOP-SHOPS FOR ENTERPRISES. THE GALICIAN EXPERIENCE**