

Workshop report

1. Title

ICT: Tool for Transparency

2. Organizers and Panellists

Organizer: Gov2u

Greek NGO, founded in 2005 in Athens, Greece with the intention of harnessing the potential of ICTs as vital tools for the improvement of representative democracy. The main crux of our activities is the research, development and deployment of open source enabling technologies to facilitate legislative information gathering and dissemination. In parallel, we are involved in the targeted dissemination of knowledge and best practice through the organization of, and participation in, conferences, meetings, seminars and publications.

As a testament to the quality of Gov2u services, we are proud to announce that within only one year since our founding, Gov2u has been short-listed by Politics Online in the top20 who are changing the World of Internet and Politics.

Panelists

- Vasilis Koulolias, Executive Director Gov2u
- Marinos Papadopoulos, Attorney, J.D., M.Sc.
- Nikos Chouliaras, eGov Lab, University of Athens
- Dr. Eleni Varvarousi, Political Scientist
- Epameinondas Stylopoulos, Trainee Lawyer, LL. M. European Law Students' Association (ELSA - London Branch)

3. Discussion

The workshop focused on the theme of “security” and specifically on the use of ICT as tools for strengthening the relationship between citizen and Government and promoting Governmental efficiency and transparency.

Mr Papadopoulos in his presentation entitled “*A Contribution to Security: The misfit to technology of Government regulation in Greece on Spam*” stressed that government regulation in Greece on spam indicates a misfit to technology related to the issue of unsolicited commercial communication. While Greece has enacted regulation that considers EC Directives to cope with the problem of spam, said government regulation is not enough to protect consumers effectively.

Mr Chouliaras in his presentation entitled “*From e-government to e-governance; a systemic approach*” analysed suggested ways to develop successful e-government projects and analysed the need to clearly show benefits realization for both administration and citizens. An e-government project should not be seen as yet another IT project. It is only with a uniform and holistic approach that we will eventually lead in to the required administrative reform and improvement.

Dr Eleni Varvarousi in her presentation entitled “*E-Government and Transparency*” stressed that e-Government is fundamentally about visibility, accessibility and extensibility, and these are the core ingredients for transparency in government. However, e-government is just a tool, and transparency depends as much on how that tool is used as it does upon its mere existence. The development of e-government is only the most recent stage of modernizing government. The majority of countries are not using the full potential of e-government

online. Transactional services are still in their infancy with the majority of transactional services being offered through either integrated portals or national websites. The necessity of coordination and cooperation is widely demanded and depends on the administrative structures. Furthermore, e-participation limits itself to assessing the G2C aspect of participation. Most of the governments describe the target of ICT use and tend to neglect the questions of how the still-fragmented public administration could get there.

Finally Mr Stylopoulos presented his idea to develop an on-line simulation of the United Nations conferences (E-MUN program). The proposal concerns "on-line "discussions", which will be governed by the same rules as those of the United Nations conferences. The participants, via their computers, will be given the chance to represent a country by delivering small virtual "speeches" and by voting for or against other delegates' proposals.

The aim of the E-MUN program is dual and its elements are quite interactive: on the one hand, it aims at enabling every day people from all over the world to get acquainted with the instruments and the procedures of the United Nations; on the other hand, it tries to provide the United Nations with actual knowledge on the way that people think about global problems and needs, thereby enabling the UN for the first time to "hear" the thoughts of those people.

The aforementioned presentations were followed by dialogue on the topic. The main conclusion was that ICTs offer an effective governance tool for creating transparency, downsizing operations, reducing governmental corruption and strengthening the citizen-government interface. However it is important to ensure integration with traditional 'offline' tools providing access to information, consultation and public participation in policy-making, so as to reap the greatest benefit from ICT.

Engaging citizens online raises legitimate expectations that the public input will be used to inform policymaking. Governments and / or representatives from local authorities and the public sector need to adapt their structures and processes to ensure that the results of online consultations are analyzed, disseminated and used. Additionally, the active promotion of online consultation through traditional mediums is essential (i.e. through leaflets, stickers, banners etc) to draw the attention of a wider and more representative audience to the existence of such services.

4. Inventory of events and actors related to the issue under discussion

- European Union eParticipation initiative
- UN
- ITU
- European Union eParticipation initiative
- Transparency International

5. Possible follow-up

- Organization of similar event in the next forum in Brazil
- Publications on the outcome of the workshop and issues discussed in the Gov2u website and relevant scientific journals

6. Useful links

www.gov2u.com

www.e-gov.gr

<http://www.itu.int/osg/spu/publications/worldinformationsociety/2006/wisr-web.pdf>