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Project Title: Access to e-Government Services Employing
Semantic Technologies

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Abstract: The Project Presentation is a short description of the *Access-eGov* objectives, goals, approach, expected outcomes and the consortium. The purpose of this document is to use it for dissemination of *Access-eGov* and all the information included here is also included in the project web site www.accessegov.org.

Keyword List: eGovernment, semantic web, semantic technologies, ontologies, interoperability, accessibility

The *Access-eGov* Consortium consists of:

Partic. Role*	Participant name	Participant short name	Country
CO	Technical University of Kosice	TUK	Slovakia
CR	University of Regensburg	UR	Germany
CR	German University in Cairo	GUC	Egypt
CR	Intersoft, a.s.	IS	Slovakia
CR	EMAX S.A.	EMA	Poland
CR	Kosice Self-Governing Region	KSR	Slovakia
CR	Cities on Internet Association	COI	Poland
CR	e-ISOTIS	ISO	Greece
CR	Municipality of Michalovce	MI	Slovakia
CR	City Hall of Gliwice	GLI	Poland
CR	State Government of Schleswig-Holstein	SHG	Germany

*CO = Coordinator; CR = Contractor

Introduction

The Project Presentation is a short description of the *Access-eGov* goals, objectives, approach, expected outcomes and the Project consortium. The purpose of this document is to use it for dissemination of *Access-eGov* and all the information included here is also included in the project web site www.accessegov.org.

General Information

Access-eGov FP6-2004-27020 "Access to e-Government Services Employing Semantic Technologies" was selected to be funded by the European Commission within the

Information Society Technologies (IST), Sixth Framework Programme. This project addresses the strategic objective SO 2.4.13 Strengthening the integration of the ICT research effort in an enlarged Europe. The total budget of the project is €2,3 million with the contribution of the EC of €1,98 million.

The project has an expected duration of 36 months, starting at the 1st of January 2006 and ending at the 31st of December 2008.

Project Title	Access to e-Government Services Employing Semantic Technologies
Project Acronym	*Access-eGov*
Project Reference	FP6-2004-27020
FP6 Programme	Information Society Technologies (IST)
Strategic Objectives	SO 2.4.13 Strengthening the integration of the ICT research effort in an enlarged Europe
Start Date	January 1, 2006
End Date	December 31, 2008
Duration	36 months
Project Web Site	www.accessegov.org
Total budget (€)	2,279,243
Commission funding (€)	1,983,000

Project objectives

Access-eGov aims at increasing the accessibility of public administration services for citizens and business users by supporting the interoperability among existing electronic as well as "traditional" government services. For citizens and business users, *Access-eGov* will provide two basic categories of services.

Firstly, *Access-eGov* will identify - depending on the needs and context situation (location, etc.) of the user – traditional and/or e-government services (if available) relevant to the given life event (of the given citizen) or business episode (in case of businesses).

Secondly, once the relevant services have been identified, *Access-eGov* will generate a "scenario" consisting of elementary government services. In most cases these scenarios will be probably of a "hybrid" nature – i.e. a combination of atomic traditional and e-services - which will lead to a requested outcome (e.g. to get a building permit, register a new company, etc.). *Access-eGov* will also provide a virtual personal assistant, who will guide the user through the scenario (reminding him/her of deadlines, providing support information, initiating e-services, etc.).

Special attention will be paid to the e-Inclusion criteria to guarantee that *Access-eGov* will be accessible also to disadvantaged groups of users, for which the system can be considerably beneficial. In this respect, e-ISOTIS will bring in their (web) accessibility expertise.

Access-eGov will also provide services for the public administration, i.e. service providers, and this on all levels: local, regional, national, and European. As such it will enable easy introduction of a (new) e-service to the world of e-government interoperability.

Key issues

In "real life" situations citizens as well as businesses usually do not need just an atomic (singular) government service, but more often a (non-linear) combination of interrelated

atomic services. Furthermore, the set of the services leading to an expected outcome consists of electronic as well as "traditional" services (i.e. the government services, which are not available in an electronic form yet), thus these services can be put together into a "hybrid" scenario. While this is in fact not a problem in itself, citizens and business would welcome a portal-based solution providing them with information on all government services relevant to their case (whether provided on municipal, regional, national or European level whether delivered via an electronic channel or not yet). Even more, the users would appreciate unambiguous information what inputs (and when) are required for every government service in this scenario in order to complete their specific administrative issue. This means that the individual steps (services), leading to a solution of their administrative problem, should be presented stepwise to them, whether involving e-services or traditional services that require face-to-face meetings with public servants.

Access-eGov provides a solution whereby information about all government services registered in the system is available at each *Access-eGov* "access node", which represents a clear added value from users' perspective. On the other hand, to make an update of the provided government services easier (which is a critical requirement) this information is kept in a distributed system, delegating the responsibility for registering a new e-service and later its update to providers of these services, i.e. public administration (PA) institutions on different levels.

Both the service providers as well as its customers will benefit from such a transparent usage of eGov services, facilitating also further trans-national and trans-border integration of various eGov services.

The functionality of the *Access-eGov* system will be demonstrated through a number of distinct pilots. The Slovakian pilot will be specified and implemented by the Kosice Self-Government Region and municipality of Michalovce City. This pilot will be focussed on the land-use planning and processing a request for a building permit. The pilot aims at making this rather complicated process more transparent, efficient and easier to understand, hence saving time (and thus also money) for citizens and businesses.

The Polish pilot will be implemented in the Silesia Region in cooperation between the Cities on Internet and City Hall of Gliwice. This pilot will focus on the registration processes of a company.

The State Government of Schleswig-Holstein in Germany will implement an upgrade and field test based on the existing good practice, the so-called *"Zustaendigkeitsfinder"* ("Responsibility Finder"), by introducing a semantic layer (securing semantic interoperability between national and local governments). As a result of this, the quality of services to citizens and businesses looking for a government service provided by national and/or local governments will be improved and maintenance of this system (updating information on these services) will be made easier and more efficient.

In addition, the German University in Cairo, thanks to its location in Egypt, will arrange a challenging test case - for example, a person with an Egyptian citizenship searching for e-government services provided by an EU country or wanting to obtain a work permit in an EU country. It will include all tasks of an intra-European scenario plus additional challenges of language and cultural differences.

Technical approach

Technical solution of the *Access-eGov* system will build on principles of peer-to-peer and service oriented architecture, addressing the semantic issues through ontology-guided

mark-up of local e-government service interfaces. Component-based security infrastructure will provide a complete portfolio of necessary security services (authentication, authorisation, attribute management, access control, data protection) that are accessible through web service interfaces. All the *Access-eGov* components will be delivered as an open source solution.

These components will enable e-government service providers (on all levels of public administration) to easily introduce a new e-service to the world of e-government interoperability and then keep it updated. Once the service is registered in the system, it may be localised, contracted and invoked (in case of e-services) automatically through agents and other IT components. For service users (citizens as well as businesses) *Access-eGov* will increase accessibility and connectivity of the existing e-services across organisational and regional borders, provide information necessary for the use of traditional PA services and thus facilitate "integration" of traditional and e-services into "hybrid scenarios". And since not all users feel comfortable when dealing with a myriad of PA services, a virtual personal assistant will guide them through this scenario.

"Pre-Access-eGov world"   *"Post-Access-eGov world"*
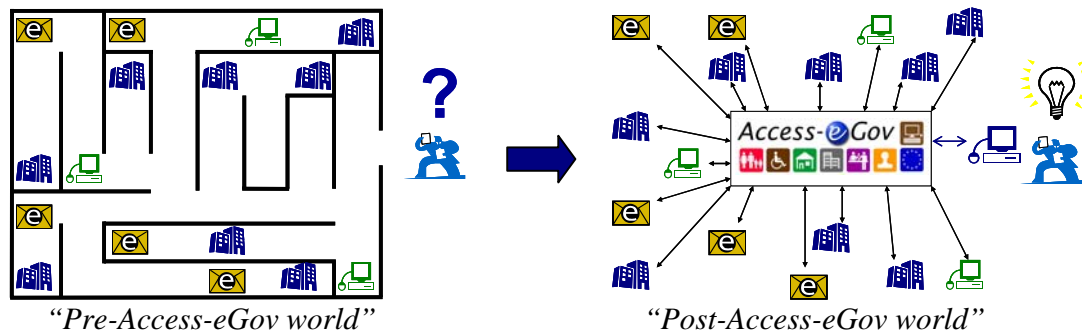
Potential impact
The impact is threefold when looking at involved key players:

Impact on governments
Access-eGov will enable virtual information spaces for administrative networks in order to provide users with integrated, interoperable services. Based on this, it will increase accessibility and facilitate connectivity of the existing e-services across organisational and regional borders, provide more information necessary for the use of traditional PA services and thus enable "integration" of traditional and e-services into "hybrid scenarios". This will lead to a higher level of servicing the citizens and businesses (including multilingual support).

Since *Access-eGov*, from the perspective of registering and updating information on the government services, is employing a decentralised approach, the added value of enhancing e-government services (through semantic mark-up) will mainly rest with the service providers (i.e. PA institutions) while the users (citizens, businesses) will benefit from centralised access to these services and their "integrated" use. Thus, the usage of the new technologies will be an incentive for all actors involved, to improve their e-government information management which may soon lead to a break-through of the Semantic Web for e-government.

Impact on SMEs

In the first instance the fact of improved accessibility, quality and speed of government services for SMEs will have direct impact on their competitiveness and thus also competitiveness of their country. This is especially true in case of the new EU member states where inefficiency of the public sector is one of the serious hindrances of the country productivity growth. In the second instance, *Access-eGov* will create new business opportunities for SMEs providing support services necessary for deployment and management of services based on the *Access-eGov* platform.

Impact on end users (citizens and businesses)

End users of the services facilitated by the *Access-eGov* platform will be the main beneficiaries of this undertaking. The impact on this group can be summarised in the following points:

- User-centred way of service delivery through:
  o A better transparency of existing government services whereby the *Access-eGov* user presents his/her problem and the system will provide him/her with adequate information, who (which PA institution) is delivering a relevant service, where (depending on the user's location), how, what is needed on the input's side of the service, what is delivered as an output, etc. and this through a workflow which is running in the back, ensuring the end-user does not skip any of the needed steps in completing successfully his/her information request.
  o "Integration" of government services on the front-end side using the semantic web functionality (semantics of services registered in *Access-eGov*).
  o Provision of a hybrid scenario consisting of several atomic (elementary) services, whether delivered online or delivered in a "traditional way".
  o A virtual personal assistant who will guide the user through the whole scenario.
- More accessible e-government services, also for disadvantaged groups (people with disabilities, elderly, etc.).

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