

e-SAVARIA: an electronic local government in Szombathely and its region

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SUMMARY

An innovation programme, called E- Savaria IT project in Szombathely, town with county rank- and its region, was launched among the first ones in Hungary with the aim of creating an e-local government, backed by the European Union. As a result, the IT services are expected to get updated, moreover, it renders electronic administration possible in the professional fields stated in the tender.

1. PRELIMINARIES

The local government of Szombathely, town with county rank, regards taking advantage of the services available through the information systems as an issue of great importance from the point of view of updating the system of public administration, thus the the IT Strategy of the City, as well as the IT Strategy of theRegion were drawn up in 2004 with the following objectives:

As a general aim, Szombathely, town with county rank is to create an open and efficient IT system, which provides a wide access and participation for the citizens and enterprises. It should also allow the justification of the parties regarding different decisions.

The local government has **three major purposes** as trends of greatest significance. **First** of all, the realization of the electronic administration of affairs and customer service, as part of the e-local government. During the realization of this project the requirements of the European Union regarding the electronic administration processes included in the Common List of Basic Public Services are to be followed.

The **second** objective is making the local government available on the web (www.szombathely.hu). This would mean a real window to the world, with a wide range of services including the one-point customer-service and the efficient introduction of the marketing of settlements. This sort of publication may be used efficiently in providing the public with information.

The creation of a skill-management basis is regarded as the **third** objective, which is to provide a base being able to increase the intelligence of the organization and due to the integrated skill-base formed supporting the process of decision-making in a really efficient way. This is expected to play a crucial role in the preparation processes of EU tenders, as well as in the follow-up processes of the effects of the projects.

The city matches its purposes with those of the Hungarian 'service-providing government', thus the local government of Szombathely intends to provide its clients – individuals and business executives alike – with quick and efficient administrative work and information, which cannot be hindered by limits of time or space.

The preparation of an IT strategy is not regulated by the law, however though, these days it is a must for a local government and its office wishing to run well. Szombathely had realised the need of it before other local governments did. The city has always been a pioneer in IT improvements, which has been recognized by several national professional conferences.

Taking their mere sizes into consideration we will see that the towns with county rank play a major role in their regions. Szombathely has always been happy with this role of hers, an attitude which is to be maintained in future, too, as stated in the town's IT strategy. The management of the city handles the information technology of the local government as part of the settlement's infrastructure being aware of the fact that lacking it would hinder the work of public administration offices.

The local government of Szombathely was successful in the tender (2004-4.3.1) regarding the establishment of the electronic local government, published by the Economic Competition Operative Program, so the end of 2004 saw the updating of the system, following the procedure of public procurement. The local government decided to involve the syndicate run by T-Systems Hungary Ltd. in the realization of the project. Within the syndicate Geoview Systems Ltd was in charge of the improvements of the applications by the local government, the Hungarian Telekom plc was responsible to provide the infrastructural background and the establishment of the data-transformation systems, while T-Systems Hungary operated as the primer contractor.

2. ADVANCES BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PRECEDING THE DEVELOPMENT

The city of Szombathely is determined to make the local population an information society, which is also proved by setting up the Information Professional Committee in January 2004 with the aim of co-ordinating the developments, tenders and projects. The local government began to use its Geographic Information System in 1995, which still contributes a lot to the technical administration. Co-operating with the joining enterprises, together with the internal system, the GIS system of the town was also established. Both of them are constantly operating, functioning as information and data providers. This is regarded as a milestone because the establishment of the GIS system required that the local government, its institutions, public institutions and the economic participants of the region join their forces. Moreover, the public utility service providers, the fire brigade, the police and numerous private enterprises also joined. As a further step, considering the communication opportunities of the information technology of the time, on Internet and ISDN bases, the communication surface of the city's GIS system was set up. The town could be found on the Internet, being among the first ones in the country. At the beginning it was based on the technology of home-pages, later on, though, the portal system of the town was set up, where the elements of service providing for the inhabitants were also found. Then, as new developments, the home-pages and Internet access of the region's settlements were also created, the improvement of which (e.g.: collective portal) is among the most important tasks of these days.

A mosaic of Szombathely, introducing the 2000-year-old history of the town, and a multimedia CD introducing the castles and mansions of the region came out in 1998.

Thus, based on the already existing systems, the Settlement Statistics Information System Supporting the Town Leaders' Decisions (IKTA 3) was started in 2000. We prepared a complex analysing system, which allows all the statistical data (the flow of workforce, the condition of the transportation) affecting the development of the town to be processed and analysed. Besides, the first modules of the electronic general assembly were prepared too, the application of which in practice is included in the e-local government project.

The formation of the **Internet/Intranet based city-net** was begun in 2001. The information base system backing a united team-work of the local government and its 66 institutions came into existence. The e-office is a base-system, an Internet/Intranet-based teamwork handling system with flexible controlling, managing and organizing opportunities. On the grounds of this network the e-purchasing base-module was also worked out in 2000. The alteration of this system was begun in 2004, during the establishment of the e-local governments, with the objective of the introduction of the electronic public procurement.

A digital system of the customer service was introduced in 2003, which allows the inhabitants to get informed about the public administration services online, and to down-load the necessary forms. This system was worked out on the base of the first two of the four EU base-level conditions.

3. THE REALIZATION OF THE E-SAVARIA PROJECT

3.1. Project-organization

The realization of a project of this volume required the establishment of the appropriate organization, whose operation made the establishment of the Regulations of the Project Operation necessary, stating the duties and authorities. It is an organisation of three levels. On the first level the Project Controlling Committee (2-2 people) can be found as the highest decisionmaker. The Project Managing Committee (2-2 people) is on the second level, being responsible for the operative realization of the project, and managing of the professional tasks. The third level is that of the Project Teams (10 teams), who take part in establishing the professional systems.

3.2. Target groups of the project

The electronic backing of the public administration processes and duties are carried out through an IT application of several elements built up on each other. The employees of the local government participating in the project and the members of the entrepreneurs' syndicate created the front-office and back-office systems in accordance with the new rules of the administration procedures. We have set up a new rule of the local government required by the official customer services, which is to regulate the electronic administration.

The innovations make the procedures of the administration and decisionmaking clear and understandable for the customers. The system- within the given compass –automatizes the realization of different tasks, and also links the activities taking place in the public offices.

The use of the electronic systems makes the operation of the local government offices much more efficient, clear, controllable and manageable.

The major duties carried out during the project

1. Supervision of the already existing procedures and transactions in accordance with the ISO quality assurance system. The procedures mentioned above were also prepared for a new service-providing system of the local government.
2. Filling in, authenticating and forwarding (2-way interactivity) forms, applying PKI.
 - a. Updating and extending the present **Digital Customer Service System**, achieving level 3 suggested by the recommendations of the European Union regarding the electronic administration services (eEurope program, Common List of Basic Public Services). Due to this, the forms will be available online for filling, authenticating, forwarding (2-way interactivity) using the electronic signature of assured quality.
 - b. Working out the base of the System of the Official Customer Service, focusing on updating and extending the **e-taxation system**, achieving level 3 suggested by the recommendations of the European Union regarding the electronic administration services (eEurope program, Common list of basic public services). Due to this, the forms will be available online for filling, authenticating, forwarding (2-way interactivity) using the electronic signature of assured quality. Moreover, establishing the basic elements of level 4 of services.
3. Updating the present **e-office (x-office)** by setting up a complex e-document-handling system, which is based on a module-system and possesses the appropriate levels of authorities. The main task of this is preparing, archiving and managing documents on office level, as well as registering internal and external documents.
4. Updating the present **GIS system** of the town applying the system of portals, which will allow the GIS data to be published within the compass of the digital customer-service system, in accordance with the rules of data-protection and data-supply. This measure will make the public maps of the complex technical base-map of the town available (e.g.: map of the public utilities, ortophoto). Besides, the public alphanumeric data of the town (e.g.: regulations, data regarding properties, construction work, demography and public utilities).
5. Establishing the **system of e-town-management**, which includes initiating and perhaps managing construction and town-management affairs via Internet. The establishment of the system will mean structured, clear, understandable transactions, where appointments are also available through Internet.
6. Establishing the bases of the **electronic, dedicated administration**. (PKI)
7. Establishing a united, web-based legal library applying internet technologies allowing the city, its institutes and its region to receive always up-to-date legal data. Thus, the users can go on with their operation having the necessary laws. Moreover, a number of further legal sources, information and publications will become easily available.

8. Owing to the establishment of the **collective-portal of the region**, a complex base-system of information came into existence to facilitate the communication among the settlements, enterprises and institutions. In addition, levels 1 and 2 of the e-administration (online information providing, forms, etc.) were realized by the collective-portal. At the same time, we intend to provide the public with up-to-date information in connection with the region.

9. Working out the professional conditions of the establishment of the **m(obile) local government**, and the practical conditions of its application.

10. The technical conditions (equipment) required to the practical introduction of the systems were supplied including the server, workshops and protection systems, just to mention the most important ones.

3.3. Major elements of the updated system

It is important to note that the updated systems may be applied via Internet (web) and in windows form alike.

Applications realized in the Pilot system

1. Town management
 - a. public area reservation
 - b. cutting down trees
 - c. permits for destructions
 - d. well-drilling
2. Construction management
 - a. permits for constructions
 - b. modifications to building sites
3. GIS
 - a. internal, general application
 - b. internal, professional application
 - c. external, web-based service
4. X-Office
 - a. e-mail
 - b. electronic documentation management
 - c. electronic legal library
 - d. customer service
 - e. task management
 - f. agenda
5. Administration
 - a. setting up a traditional and an electronic administration
 - b. setting up the system of identifying and registering the electronic client
6. Customer service
 - a. appointments
 - b. local clients' gate
-taxation

- construction management
- town management
- reports made by the public
- 7. Electronic signature, PKI certificate
 - a. employees (68 people)
 - b. external partners
 - tax-payers (28 people)
 - professional authorities (38 people)
- 8. Collective portal of the region (including 39 settlements)
Homepage address: www.e-kisterseg.hu , www.szombathelyi-kisterseg.hu

3.4. Milestones

The deadline of the realization of the project is 21 Oct. 2006. The schedule of the project established basic milestones, which are of special significance. Preparing the systems for operation was to be completed by 20 June 2005, by which date the applications had to be made. The second milestone was 1 Nov. 2005, the date of Ket. coming into force. After this date the systems are also displayed for the general public even on the service-providers' side. This is followed by the start of the operation and then the complex start means the finish of the project (31 Oct. 2006). At present the schedule of the project is being met. The establishment of the central regulations and conditions will make the completion of a customer service page possible.

3.5 Experiences

While working on the e-Savaria project, both the entrepreneurs and the local government gained lots of experience including the following:

1. The necessity of the support of the top management during the whole project
2. Forming an internal office project organization, and establishing an encouraging system
3. A constant documentation of the project
4. Risk-taking of pioneers
5. Establishing the conditions of the efficient work in order to be able to meet the deadlines and settle the accounts
6. Appropriate project management on both sides
7. Professional skills and ambitious staff
8. The present flexibility of the legislation
9. The flexibility of professional suggestions
10. Innovative procedures, their acceptance and application
11. Changes in the attitudes
12. Relations
13. Relations with the regions

3.5. Connecting developments

In the past decade the local government of Szombathely, town with county rank, has been doing its best to make the most of the IT opportunities, with the objective of more efficient public administration work. Besides the e-SAVARIA project, detailed above, the local

government also worked out the system of the electronic general assembly and the system of the internal electronic purchase. Moreover, now an electronic business card (CD card) is also available.

4. EXPECTED INFLUENCES OF THE PROJECT ON THE REGION

As a primer effect of the project, involving the enterprises and the public in the system of the electronic public administration is to be seen. Besides, the improvement of the efficiency of the public administration units of the region is expected as well. These objectives are intended to be achieved by improving the organization of the administration processes, and applying an up-to-date IT system. As a consequence, clear, thoroughly considered decisions will be made, which can also be scheduled. All this is to boost the flow of data and information. A significant improvement in the quality of the information will also be seen, just like the establishment of a client-friendly office. The data of public interest and public use will be available to the public, which, cutting the time spent on administration work, contributes a lot to the efficiency of the offices.

5. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The local government is determined to maintain the project. The structural conditions rendering the activities possible will have been established by the end of the project. Moreover, the 'owner's consciousness' is to be acquired by the local government, regarding both the project and its achievements.

The operation of the IT systems established due to the project will have to be carried on even after the financial support has been cut off. The operation of the achievements in the long run is guaranteed by the IT team of 11 people employed by the Local Government of Szombathely, town with county rank. This team includes IT experts, service organisers, GIS experts, quality managers and other officers.

The initial systems may be integrated later on with further **e-local government procedures** established on an identical platform. The present and future systems are to make the administrative work faster due to the rising number of services available directly. Besides, the administration will be made scheduled owing to the preliminary information acquired by the clients. We consider the possibility of taking the services closer to the citizens – enterprises and individuals alike - of major importance.

After the realization of the present project, further updating of the following systems are being planned:

- Services in connection with the health care, realizing levels 1-4 of the electronic social system in order to boost the transactions of the social management affairs.
- Realizing levels 3-4 of the electronic housing system in order to boost the transactions of the official housing affairs.
- Realizing levels 3-4 of the electronic health system in order to boost the transactions of the official health management affairs.

- Realizing levels 3-4 of the electronic authorities system in order to boost the transactions of general management affairs.
- Realizing levels 3-4 of the electronic education system in order to boost the transactions of official education management affairs.
- Realizing levels 3-4 of the electronic documentation system in order to boost the transactions of official documentation management affairs, in co-operation with the Ministry of the Interior.
- Realizing levels 3-4 of the mobile office system in order to boost the transactions of official mobile management affairs.
- Realizing level 4 of the electronic office system in order to boost the IT system of the town.
- Setting up a three-language portal system near the border.

Taking these objectives into consideration we can state that the project is to pride with further direct and indirect achievements in future, including the achievements detailed above as well as the experience and relations gained, and the changes in attitude.

The interaction between the office and the customers is going to increase the efficiency of the office, the system is going to facilitate the transaction of affairs for the clients, which allows a direct, quick and up-to-date administration. Thus, the time spent on office work –including informing and preparation as well – is going to be cut for both the customers and the authorities.

The financial support is guaranteed, given the fact that the local government is determined to support the project and its developments. The high number of professionals trained during the project also contribute to its success. In fact, the project is to be operated only after the completion of the program because the general future objectives and the direct achievements may only be measured and assessed following the complete implementation. The operation of the systems might result in **extra revenues** due to the introduction of the special services.

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