



Interviews with the winners

European eGovernment Awards
Winners 2009



4th European eGovernment Awards 2009

Interviews with the winners

The European eGovernment Awards is a European Commission initiative organised every two years, coinciding with regular high-level EU eGovernment conferences. The purpose of the Awards is to support the implementation of European eGovernment policy and strategies and facilitate good practice exchange. Since their launch in 2003, the Awards have been promoting the best ICT-based solutions for public services in Europe.

Winner of category 1 - eGovernment supporting the Single Market

EU-OPA, the European Order for Payment Application

Austria and Germany

Coordinating institution: Austrian Federal Ministry of Justice

Case description

EU-OPA is an IT application for the electronic processing of the European order for payment procedure. It simplifies, speeds up and reduces the costs of litigation in cross-border cases concerning uncontested pecuniary claims. EU-OPA is used with great success in Germany and Austria. It is suitable for EU-wide applications and has proven its value in cutting processing times in courts.

Read more at ePractice.eu: www.epractice.eu/en/cases/euopa

■ What is the value of being nominated for, and winning, such an award?

This innovative case had already been up for nomination three times previously (apart from in 2003), and never won, but remained hopeful that it would happen eventually. There were many visitors to the stand, and once the project was nominated a winner, we expect even more visits as the prize generates real interest.

The main value of the award is that it may encourage other countries to join the established payment procedure. As well as the partnership between Austria and Germany, France has now also joined. The application is open to all other European countries. One of things that distinguishes the system behind payment applications is that trans-European collaboration does not pose problems. On the contrary, collaboration has so far been quite smooth. There is a steering committee with representatives from the Ministries of Justice, which takes the main decisions and there is very good communication among partners.

Part of its success is due to the service's users, so we expect users will also be pleased with the award. We anticipate that winning the award will also have a positive effect on promotional work through a current case in the European Council. A working group on e-Justice has been established here, of which the *European order for payment applications* is already a part, and which other countries will be asked to join. This working group is focusing on making it easier for interested ministers or administration from other countries to obtain an application and take part in future projects.

- **Value in the lead-up process**

The awards process encourages good practice exchange. This includes the lead-up process to the ministerial event, during which we had the opportunity to look at interesting cases with which we were not familiar.

In addition, the awards process and communication and dissemination of activities around it brings momentum to the entire digitalization process. The award winners highlight this by showing the value of good eGovernment practices and innovations. They also exemplify what others could achieve.

It is important for good practice exchange and learning from each other. Introducing a new category this year, 'eGovernment supporting the single market' shows development as it helps support the full implementation of the European internal market.

Can good practice exchange and knowledge sharing be performed better? No, the current system and the awards process is the best way.

Winner of category 2a - eGovernment empowering citizens

Genvej

Denmark

Coordinating institution: Gentofte Municipality

Case description

Self-service access to all relevant public sector information and services: this is the founding principle of Genvej, an online service developed by the Gentofte Kommune municipality (near Copenhagen). Through its integration with a number of regional, national and private partners, including tax authorities and healthcare providers, Genvej directs users to data and eServices that are useful to them (related to online passport applications, school enrolment, healthcare, etc.).

Read more at ePractice.eu: www.epractice.eu/en/cases/genvej

- **What is the value of being nominated for, and winning, such an award?**

The key to winning an eGovernment award and to having a successful project is to have good project leadership, and a very visionary, ambitious and supportive local municipality, which has pushed for the implementation of this project. We have had this in *Genvej*.

We have managed to implement the project very quickly. It took just eight months from the idea to the finished project. That was extremely quick, and was due to the fact that everyone agreed that the project must be executed as soon as possible. Once support from the commune was in place, it was much easier to engage everyone to become part of the process.

And now, by winning the prize in the '*eGovernment empowering citizens*' category, we are able to push new initiatives forward even more quickly and forcefully. The directors in the municipality will be able to use this prize as proof that our efforts have been noticed and the solution has been recognized as useful. This does not only affect us in Gentofte, it also means that other EU administrations can learn from it. It will also stimulate those who have worked on the project and encourage them to continue the good work. The political board of the municipality is also pushing for a large number of further eGovernment activities and services in Gentofte, and Genvej can now lead the way. In many ways, it will be like an engine. Winning the prize may also help speed up the digitalization process, which we would like to go even faster.

The support received made it much easier for all those involved to develop and implement such a large project. *Genvej* can be linked to the more extensive citizen portal.

Would you have liked to have seen more awards categories? No, these four categories are all relevant and good. But it might have been interesting to focus less on the actual organizational process and more on the other aspects of successful eGovernment service implementation. However, that may be difficult to measure. For instance, looking more at the policy side of project; i.e. the level of political support a project may attract and assessing its value for implementation, support and success.

■ **Successful event and some recommendations**

One of the advantages of being in a nominated eGovernment project was the opportunity to attend an event such as the ministerial eGovernment conference.

Every day during the conference we had quite a decent number of interested visitors at our stand, even before we won. We have not yet had a chance to look at some of the other stands and projects and this would have been interesting.

If we were to make recommendations, then it would be that the set-up and design of the exhibition hall could be more interactive and open, to ensure that everyone within a certain category could engage even more with each other. There is a lot we can learn from other countries and their solutions. It might also be interesting if some cases were allowed some sort of live presence during the conference - this would attract more visitors and enable the projects to play a greater role in the programme and conference agenda.

Optimal good practice exchange should begin as early as possible; it could be right after the 52 nominees have been identified. If we had information about the other projects and contact details we could start collaborating even before coming to Malmö. This year we did not know the other cases and that meant we were not so focused on approaching projects that would have been most useful for us to learn from. We would have liked to have been more prepared.

That could also be achieved by bringing us together a few days in advance of the event and through workshops to ensure knowledge exchange, and maybe building up useful networks. This is extremely important in good practice exchange and in events such as these, where there is a unique opportunity for relevant networking. For instance, we have decided to stay in contact with other project nominees after the event.

Winner of category 2b - eGovernment empowering businesses

MEPA, the Public Administration eMarketplace

Italy

Coordinating institution: Consip SpA

Case description

MEPA is an eProcurement solution in which any Italian public administration can buy goods and services purchased below EU thresholds (i.e. low-value procurement not requiring formal tendering procedures). Suppliers are qualified according to non-restrictive selection criteria. Public buyers may search for, compare and purchase the products. Suppliers, mostly SMEs, can optimise their selling strategy at any time by specifying different quality dimensions or by promoting new price conditions or new products in real time.

Read more at ePractice.eu: www.epractice.eu/en/cases/mepa1

We were not told that we were nominated, so this was a surprise and it could have been useful information. We try to promote the electronic market place in many ways, and by being able to say that we have been nominated in the lead up to the conference could have been useful for further promotion.

Immediately after winning we informed the Head of the Company, and a press release was issued, which was sent out and repeated by national press agencies.

We noticed, however, that many other eGovernment newsletters had already been informed. We therefore discovered that we did not need to do much as these stakeholders had already been notified, probably by the Commission and the team behind the awards. That was very satisfactory and efficient, and the quality was impressive. When we came back after the ministerial conference, the CEO of the company sent out an email to all 550 staff members to let them know of the prize.

■ What is the value of winning such an award?

It is personal satisfaction, but first and foremost it is a reward and recognition for the entire company and the staff who have been working on the MEPA project. It is recognition of our efforts.

It will help promote the company in other eGovernment areas in which we are already working. The prize will help our activities not only within eProcurement, but this kind of reward also highlights our competencies in other innovative areas of our work.

It is also an award for Italy. It shows that we are on the right track with what we are trying to do in Italy. The prize reflects actions by all stakeholders, so it is also very much a prize for the users; public administrations and other system users as well as suppliers. It is also a result for them, as we would not be here if they were not satisfied with the service and the solutions and used them.

- **Impact**

In terms of impact, there will be a positive psychological effect. The award may help push general public administration towards implementing more eGovernment solutions. Also, as public administrations are the end-users of this service, this recognition may help push innovations forward in other relevant service areas.

From an overall eGovernment level the award is recognition of the importance of making progress in the eprocurement area. And not only within eprocurement, but also other eServices. It shows that this kind of work is necessary for innovations in government.

- **Stimulate trans-European eGovernment services**

The MEPA solution stimulates trans-European eGovernment service roll-out as it can easily be implemented in other European countries. In fact it already is. We do not have to spend a lot of time promoting it to other European countries as we are already now being contacted frequently by foreign European delegations asking for information and training in using the solution.

Our expertise in setting up a whole environment around a commercial market place is very valuable and now that the project has been recognised I expect even more interest from other EU administrations.

- **The winning formula**

Our approach to the system was that it is not just an innovation process or a technical process; it is also a social process by which we have had an impact on the whole supplier culture.

We initially focused on user training and support. However, we quickly became aware that it was necessary to also address and change a culture. So from having focused on the technology and applications we realized that we also needed to understand user needs and requests; technological requirements but also cultural requirements and the social context of the service.

The work therefore had to be as aligned to users as possible. We visited a large number of suppliers. Over time, we learned that this was a key aspect for successful service. We initially focused on the application but the more we worked on it, the more we understood the importance of user-driven solutions.

We also found a resistance culture with buyers and sellers. We therefore needed to be supported by a legal framework, i.e. to make it mandatory to use the service. Making the system compulsory was necessary to achieve real impact.

Finally, it is crucial that the project is seen as a team effort.

- **Suggestions for improving transferability**

A critical aspect is the need to support the projects after the awards process to help disseminate and promote the service and thereby increase cross border take-up. That should really be a follow-up activity to the prize.

Being labelled a winner is so important it should be emphasised much more. If winners were supported by the consortium or by the Commission it could very much help push the service to the users. This might be through support for training sessions, events or workshops. Support could also come from administrations that have been implementing the winning service.

A strong way to create a community and real use and interest in the case would be if the projects were not promoted alone, that is, if support was given to all four categories – or to all the nominees in one category.

We have arranged a workshop in Rome on eProcurement shortly after the ministerial conference. We have invited the other nominees to attend and make presentations. The Commission will attend, and there will be administrations from across the country as well as other stakeholders to whom it will be useful to show the services. It will also be a beneficial opportunity for the other nominees to demonstrate their service to a wider audience.

These workshops are good ways to improve transferability across Europe and take full advantage of the winning cases. They underline to a new audience as well as the Commission that the solution works. Moreover, forming these partnerships is a practical, specific way to share best practices across Europe. As a group we are much stronger than we are individually. This means that nominees and winners can act as Ambassadors to promote eGovernment.

Winner of Public Price

SMS Information System

Turkey

Coordinating institution: Information Technologies Department, Ministry of Justice

Case description

SMS INFO offers a subscription service for lawyers and citizens. The service enables users to receive SMS messages containing legal information on ongoing cases, dates of court hearings, the latest developments in cases, as well as lawsuits or claims against them. The sending of an SMS does not replace official notification. It does provide instant information to the parties so that they can take all necessary steps in time to prevent the infringement and deprivation of their legal rights.

Read more at ePractice.eu: www.epractice.eu/en/cases/sms2008awards

■ What is the value of the prize in terms of increased promotion?

The prize will help us create awareness of security issues around payment applications and address these issues. It may also encourage project managers to collaborate and exchange knowledge on what works, also on a very practical implementation level. Winning our category will help us attract users and create awareness. We expect support for the system to be even stronger after the event and it will help us attract many new users.

Legal problems addressed by the service have yet to be resolved and we have chosen to focus on users by designing a reliable and useful central information system that assists them when tackling the justice system. This project aims at making the juridical process much more transparent and accessible.

For citizens the most important thing is time - and this application reduces time: it is one of its key advantages. Target groups are those working within the juridical system, as well as normal citizens and students. The service has been very useful for students as they are used to working with the internet and using electronic services but

also because UYAP affords them economic and easy access to follow their cases, e.g. disputes, at legal institutions. Many students across Europe would benefit from our eJustice system. Figures for eJustice show that it has had a real impact; the number of student cases now coming to the courts have risen by 60% as a result of this new service. And this is not the only benefit. The UYAP solution and system is the kind of initiative that gives our citizens a sense of trust in the legal system – it helps build confidence in judicial processes, which is very valuable. It also has a related impact of economic stability and hopefully growth.

- **Suggestions for transferability**

The '*National Judiciary Information System*' can be implemented across EU. The aim is EU-wide adaptation. In theory it could be implemented in all EU countries. It is therefore a project that reaches beyond the Turkish border; it is a project that supports peace, harmony and social cohesion.

- **What is the value of being nominated for, and winning, such an award?**

For Turkey it a special opportunity to show that we are building up an IT infrastructure and we support mature and user-orientated eGovernment projects that are in line with EU standards. We were hoping to win in the administrative category as we believe this service is so well-developed and can be implemented so easily within administrations, but we are also very proud to have won the 'public prize'. Winning this prize helps to showcase the many good initiatives and new projects in Turkey. It is a special opportunity to show that we would like to take part in more international and EU projects that encourage cohesion among European regions.

EUROPEAN eGOVERNMENT AWARDS CONSORTIUM

- CEPA (Center for European Public Administration), Danube University, Krems (www.donau-uni.ac.at/verwaltung)
- DTI (Danish Technological Institute), Århus/Copenhagen (www.teknologisk.dk)
- P.A.U. Education, Barcelona (www.paueducation.com)
- RSO S.p.A., Rome (www.rso.it)

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