

## One stop shops for Start-ups en e-Government.

On the first of July 2003 Belgium took an important decision concerning e-government and simplification of the administration.

Before this date setting up your own business required not only the necessary knowledge and degrees but also a serious dose of patience and perseverance in order to complete all mandatory administrative procedures. A factor adding to the complexity of these matters was that the red-tape led to different offices which hindered not only the communication but also the swiftness of the procedure.

Under pressure of organisations like UNIZO the process of starting a business was significantly simplified. Since IT-solutions offer a wide range of possibilities, a useful and progressive e-government solution was coupled to the simplification of starting up a business.

Government and private organisations worked together towards this goal. The government as a legislator, responsible for the IT-solution and as a supervisor of the process. The private organisations as providers of a service in the form of business counters.

The primary goal was to create a single point of contact where the entrepreneur could turn to in order to fulfil all the necessary administrative duties so the start-up would be swift, correct and efficient. In order to achieve this, a central database aggregating all data of all entrepreneurs, was necessary. This allows all authorities to consult the data without having to ask entrepreneurs to provide the same data over and over again. Parts of this database are public domain which prevents unnecessary questions and administration.

A number of lessons can be drawn from this project.

- In order to succeed such a project, all parties concerned, need to invest time in communication and making practical agreements amongst each other. This not only in the period preceding the project but also during the project.
- A good estimate of the global cost is necessary in order to set a realistic and economically viable price for the delivered service by the business counters.

On the one hand simplifying the administration for the starting entrepreneur (focussing mainly on reducing the complexity and amount of time needed to start up ad business) is so important and decisive that this project “one-stop-shops for start-ups” will be further adapted and improved in the near future. On the other hand the current result can already serve as a model within the unified Europe.

Rik Verhulst.