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Information Society Technologies: Content, Multimedia Tools and Markets

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MINUTES MEETING GROUP TO PROMOTE DIGITAL PUBLIC DATA LUXEMBOURG, 16 OCTOBER 2002

1. Welcome and Introduction by the Chairman

Role and Mandate of the Group

The Chairman, Horst Forster, Director, DG INFSO, welcomed the delegations and reminded the participants of its role and function. The Group is an informal forum for discussions and exchanges of information and good practices on issues related to public sector information (PSI). The aim is to go further in discussions and exchange of knowledge and ideas on Public sector information issues, including asset lists, access to information, metadata and charges.

2. Update PSI Directive Process in Council and Parliament

Presentation of INSPIRE

The Chairman explained the latest developments on the PSI Directive and pointed out that the Danish Presidency is strongly engaged in bringing the directive further. They would like to arrive at a political agreement in Council in December. The discussions in the Council working groups are advancing in line with the expectations of the Commission. The issue has been discussed twice in the ITRE Committee of the European Parliament. The rapporteur, Mr. van Velzen, backed by several other MEPs, indicated he may want to go beyond the Commission proposal. The voting of the Parliament in plenary session might take place in January or February 2003.

Mr. Marc Vanderhaegen, DG Environment presented the INSPIRE initiative under the 6th Environmental Action programme. INSPIRE is an initiative whose aim is to reduce the obstacles to the use of geographic information coming from different sources. There is a lack of political awareness of the obstacles and on their consequences. As a result, there are few coherent pan-European spatial data collections, no integrated metadata system and various pricing and licensing policies. INSPIRE seeks to improve data quality and availability at European level through improved co-ordination and infrastructure.

3. Information Policies and Asset Lists on PSI

The UK delegation presented their policies for the re-use of information, giving the following key points to start of the discussion:

- Informing potential users of available PSI: All government departments should set up an asset register of all published data sets with relevant information for re-use. Also unpublished data should be featured in the data registers, but the UK delegate's assessment was that the industry is over optimistic about its worth.

- Authorising re-use: click-use licensing system, open to the whole world and in principle free of charge. Widely appreciated by the information industry for being quick and free. Wide range of users, including organisations and researchers.
- Regulating the PSI market: follow-up and control of the government policy by the public sector bodies.

Looking ahead, challenges include extending the information policies beyond central government to also include local government.

The chairman raised the issue of the usefulness of linking asset lists at European level.

In general it was found to be useful, although probably only a part of the PSI has at present a pan-European range. The UK delegate found that this question should be addressed not to administrators but to representatives of the information industry. The DK delegate argued that as between providers of data, the focus of the discussions in this Group should be on how to assure access to the data based on availability and metadata, rather than listing the data.

4. Improved Access to PSI *Presentation: Government Action in Denmark*

The Danish delegation presented their policy on access to public data and focused on the following issues:

- The potentials of a digital administration is to have an efficient public administration and to ensure the ability for the reuse of data.
- For creating access to data key issues are legal, economic, technical and security issues aspects. The ability to integrate a digital signature needs to be considered.
- Re-users find information on public web-pages, searches and all XML based data and web-services exposed in info-structure base.

Replying to questions, the DK delegate stated that the general rule in Denmark is the rule of non restriction on re-use of Public sector information. Exceptions are only made on information containing personal data. There are no charges for information between administrations . As a rule, other administrations should face the same conditions as any other re-user of the data.

5. Metadata on PSI *Presentation: XML Records in Austria*

The Austrian delegate presented their current policy on quality of online information and pointed out the following strategies:

- The objectives for the Austrian initiative is to ensure confidence, quality and reliability of public digital data. The legal certainty and security of the available data has to be combined with the user friendliness.
- Austria is currently developing a metadata structure of online information which helps to interlink different data resources.
- XML specifications are available for certain data-types e.g. person data, payment data, delivery data, transmission data for online information, notification data.

On the issue of metadata, the chairman concluded that the possibility of setting up a working group on metadata standards in the context of this Group should be explored. However, it is important to take into consideration other initiatives in this area.

To better understand the PSI policies and conditions in the Member States, the chairman proposed a *tour the table* based on the issues raised in the discussion paper prepared by the Commission (asset lists; policy/legal initiatives; metadata; pricing).

B: The Belgian delegation pointed out that there is a government decision from April 2002 to set up a governmental portal by end 2002. The focus of this portal should be citizens, enterprises and on public servants. The structure of this portal will be following the needs of the users. The target is to have 70% of the public information dissemination via the portal. Examples given were public registers, data on elections, health and citizens' rights. The Belgian Official Journal will be only available online.

D: The German delegation explained the difficulty to get an overview on the current situation on PSI. There are no asset lists for PSI available. The main public targets are in the field of environmental and geographic information. Linking the different PSI sources is important but there is an uncertainty about the different definitions and the variety of data sources between countries. For accessing public data there is a draft Freedom of information act being prepared, but there is no co-ordination on access policies between national and regional level. Re-use of public data is in principle free. Pricing policies vary, different bodies act as they see fit. There are no effective guidelines on pricing, but the trend is towards marginal cost pricing.

DK: on the Danish situation, the delegation referred to its presentation at the meeting.

IRL: There are different asset lists available at the different web sites, but there is no aggregated list. The situation is clearer on a sectoral basis. Metadata and common standards are lacking. Charges are typically based on marginal costs, if it is not in a commercial environment.

IT: Currently there are no common asset lists available on PSI. There is an initiative to create a national portal for e-government. The access to public data for the citizen is regulated, but there is not specifically a Freedom of information act. It would be helpful to have European harmonisation of standards. There is no organic set of rules for pricing for PSI. In principle access to public information is free, but data bases, e.g. those established for legislation are available only at a charge.

GR: The Greek delegation referred to the written contribution sent by Greece (in annex). It was furthermore pointed out the consultations with industry is essential for defining the relevant issues.

The chairman explained that in the context of the Directive on PSI, a consultation with industry and other stakeholders was carried out, with many responses. Further links with industry could be considered in the framework of the Group.

FIN: The Finnish delegation referred to their written input (in annex). They clarified that there is no central asset list available in Finland. The existing public portals group data in subjects by area. All registers are regulated by law. In general, all documents are accessible, if not there must be a specific reason why a document is not accessible to the public. There are different initiatives for XML. Regional public bodies are independent, there is no central rules for the pricing policy and practices differ.

S: No central asset list for PSI. Each agency is responsible for their registers at the respective web sites. It would be useful to have asset list at European level. The Swedish strategy deals

with the access policy with a liberal approach. Re-use is allowed as long as copyrights are not infringed. In general there are no charges; if there are they should be orientated towards marginal costs (non-trivial amounts).

For the continued work of this Group, it is important to avoid duplication of the work of other e-government groups, the TAC Committee (IDA) etc.. It must be clear which programme is doing what. E-government issues should have added value. The focus of this Group should be re-use of PSI. It might be interesting to discuss more case studies and it is also important to know what is done in the content industry.

UK: Asset lists are being established, covering more than 70 organisations. Access to published material is free (if in standard format). Added value products are subject to charges on commercial basis. Metadata is developed in accordance with the Dublin core and ISO. There is need for harmonisation, especially on metadata, but little research is done in this area. Duplicating of work should be avoided.

AT: There is no asset list available in Austria. There are different portals for different purposes but there is no central portal for administrative governmental issues. There is no clear political action plan for implementation PSI. The pricing is generally free, but there are portals with costs charged according to regulations in national directives. Metadata is currently in a development phase.

The chairman concluded that the key objective of the Group should be to pave the way for increased re-use of PSI. He referred to the Swedish comments and highlighted the importance of continuing to share experiences in the present network of officials from Member States governments. In addition, an expert group could be set up to look in more detail and present cases for re-use. On standardisation/XML, it is at the moment unclear how relevant the issue is to this Group and thus how to continue on a European level. In future there could be meetings organised with special subjects, the knowledge and exchange from Member States and experts should be drawn out. Industry could be invited to make presentations to government audiences.

The next meeting of the Group to Promote Digital Public Data will be held in February 2002. Before that there may be meetings with experts on various topics. Within four weeks there will be a proposal from the Commission. The chairman asked for input of case studies for re-use of PSI to be presented in the next meeting.

6. Working Methods of the Group *Proposal to create Space on the CIRCA Extranet*

The Commission proposed to use the CIRCA, an extranet for sharing information. A short presentation of the system and the use was made. The Commission will come back with detailed information and instructions on how to use this tool in the Group.

Enclosures: Agenda
 List of participants
 Contributions on the discussion paper from Denmark and Greece



Group to Promote Digital Public Data

2nd Meeting with Member States Representatives

Wednesday, 16 October 2002, 10:30 – 17:00 hrs.

Bâtiment Euroforum, Salle Euroconférence
Zone commerciale "La Cloche d'Or"
10, rue Robert Stumper, Luxembourg

AGENDA

Chair : H. Forster, Director, European Commission

1. Welcome and Introduction
2. Update PSI Directive Process in Council and Parliament
3. Information Policies and Asset Lists on PSI
Documentation from France and the UK

COFFEE BREAK

4. Improved Access to PSI
Government Action in Denmark
The new Légifrance Portal in France

LUNCH

5. Metadata on PSI
XML Records in Austria
6. Working Methods of the Group
Commission Proposal to create Space on the CIRCA Extranet
7. AOB

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Meeting Group to Promote Digital Public Data

16th October 2002, EUFO, Luxembourg

Member State	Name	Organisation
AT	WILDER Birgit	Chief Information Office Austria
B	MOULIN Jean	SSTC - Services fédéraux des affaires scientifiques, techniques et culturelles
D	HOCHREITER Rolf	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie
DK	HJARUP Søren	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation
DK	FOG Aia Rebecca	National IT and Telecom Agency
EIRE	MCGLYNN Colm	Department of Finance
EL	MANGINAS Demosthenis	Permanent Representation of Greece
FI	KOIVUNEN Juhani	Ministry of Finance, Public Management Departement
IT	LUPO Caterina	AIPA
SE	SÖDERSTRÖM Lars	Ministry of Justice
UK	BRAZIER Adrian	Department of Trade & Industry - CII4
UK	WRETHAM Jim	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
CEC	VANDERHAEGEN Marc	European Commission - DG ENV
CEC	DIETRICH Bettina	OPOCE
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