

The e-Society Repository: Transforming e-Government Strategy into Action

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Abstract: The Centre des technologies de l'information of the Canton of Geneva's vision is that technology should serve society and citizens. The Observatoire Technologique's mission is to reflect this global strategic vision within the Information Society using tools called repositories.

Tackling complex problems such as an e-government programme requires a new tool, first of all to guide the construction of new IT projects and then to evaluate the results. The e-Society repository provides this framework through a set of 15 dimensions that are organized hierarchically into three increasingly larger sets. IT projects are examined in a decision analytic framework, to add a sound underlying structure and apply multi-criteria decision aid techniques to prioritise them.

These selected dimensions spans a large breadth of subjects. The first set of dimensions deals with issues directly related to e-government IT projects. Topics such as the secure handling of the relations with citizens and other services or the analysis of new technologies entering the information system are addressed. A second set of dimensions touches upon the administration internal exchanges. It includes dimensions such as data and process transversality, interoperability and knowledge management. The third set deals with the so-called e-Society. At this level, we consider the influence of social factors such as technological inclusion in order to avoid a digital divide in the community, the acceptance of new technologies and ethical issues.

Concrete results of this strategy are beginning to appear. An accessibility initiative is underway for all the State websites to ensure that they are usable by visually impaired persons, for instance. A blind person is in charge of this mission and works closely with the web publication team. An ethics committee reviews and advises on IT projects dealing with personal data and ensures that current legal aspects are also taken into account. A third illustration is a detailed analysis on the integration of Open Source technologies in a complex IT architecture and, now, the prototyping of a complete Open Source desktop.

The goal of the e-Society repository is to convey the global strategic vision for e-government in the State of Geneva. It is a reading chart, an aid in the preparation of an IT project. Topics such as inclusion, ethics, security, and systems interoperability are appropriately taken into account. This tool can be of great help when conceiving an IT project and is currently used as a framework for the realization of e-government projects within the State of Geneva. Indeed, the real needs of future users are considered as it does not focus on technological aspects alone.

Keywords: e-government strategy, cybernetics, Information Society perspective, e-Society repository, multi-criteria decision aid, IT projects selection, regulation.

Key questions: What are the key factors to bridge society and technology? How are practices and behaviours of governments being changed by new technologies? How can administrations transform their e-government strategies into real IT projects?