

ICA COUNTRY REPORT

Finland

1. Identification of strategic and operational goals

The IM strategy of Finnish government has been defined in a government Decision in Principle in March 2000. In January 2002 a working group of the Information Society Advisory Board proposed an eGovernment Action Plan for 2002 – 2003. These have been described in our ICA reports in 2000 – 2002.

New inputs are coming from the productivity programme launched by Ministry of Finance and from the programme of our new (June 2003) government.

The productivity programme has emphasized the need to rationalize the organisation and operation of administrative support function. The goal is to increase economies of scale. This includes e.g. sharing of IT platforms and applications. The programme is also stressing the importance of further automation and electronic transactions with businesses and citizens.

The new government programme has four cross-ministerial policy programmes. One of them is Information Society programme in which the development of eServices and use of ICT in government have an important role. The programme covers also use of ICT in health care and social services. This large sector is run by municipalities and state government cannot directly influence the way it is operated. The policy programme has not yet been accepted.

2. Organizing for e-Gov

A new act on electronic transactions with government came into force in spring. This clarifies the role of Ministry of Finance as the ministry responsible for steering the development of electronic services and information security in the public sector.

3. Funding

There has been extra funding for cross-ministerial projects like the portals in 2001 – 2003. In the budgeting system the agencies get one line for operative costs including personnel, IT, communication, offices etc. In general lack of funding is not considered to be a major problem. Government ICT expenditure has risen in average 5 – 9% per year since mid 90s.

4. Changing laws, regulations and policies

New acts of electronic transactions with government and electronic signatures came into force in the spring. The acts had no major impact as they were mostly improving and clarifying older acts and implementing an EU directive.

5. Identifying and building additional critical infrastructure

National electronic ID-card

National electronic ID-card has been in use since 2000, Population registration centre acting as CA. Population register centre also issues smart cards for company and public administration use. Counting both certificates, there are at the moment 13 000 smart cards in use. Starting from September the only type of national ID-card a citizen can get is the electronic ID-card with qualified certificate. Therefore the number of electronic ID-card holders is supposed to grow by 4000 a month (this is how many traditional ID-cards have been issued monthly). The national ID-card and social security card will be combined in June 2004. This will also increase the number of qualified certificates in use.

Authentication to services using national ID-card has been very rare, almost non-existent. Buying card-readers and maintaining software for the smart card has been too big of a challenge for citizens, considering that citizens in Finland very seldom have transactions with government due to centralized databases.

VIRVE, a national radio network for public authorities

VIRVE is a multi-agency radio communication network used by both governmental and municipal authorities based on TETRA –standards (TETRA is an open ETSI standard for mobile networks). First elements of the network were installed in 1998. Nationwide coverage was reached at the end of 2002. The primary users of the network are the authorities responsible for public safety on both national and municipal level. The most important user groups are the emergency and rescue services, the Police, the Frontier Guard, the Social and Health Services, the Customs Authority and the Defence Forces. Not all the authorities have switched from their old networks to VIRVE, yet. The network coverage is not yet as good as GSM coverage inside all buildings due to the lack of repeaters.

The development of the VIRVE –network has been funded by government, but starting from 2004 the operational costs will be charged from agencies using the network. The network is run by Suomen Erillisverkot (Dedicated Networks in Finland) own partly by government.

6. Communicating and marketing to the public

When launching the suomi.fi portal a remarkable effort was put into marketing: newspapers, radio, television and numerous Internet sites. Another marketing campaign is planned for this fall. It combines the marketing of suomi.fi (public portal), lomake.fi (eForm) and otakantaa.fi (governmental discussion forum).

7. Improving national portals

Public sector portal (www.suomi.fi) offers information and services of authorities. The search service of the portal includes also public sector contact directory and the web pages of municipalities. The separate public sector eForm portal (www.lomake.fi) and the governmental discussion forum “Share your views with us” (www.otakantaa.fi) will be integrated to the search service as well.

The business portal YritysSuomi.fi is now available also in Swedish and search possibilities have been improved.

8. Converging service delivery channels. Also called multi-channel service delivery

The channel policy is flexible. Channels are used according to customer needs and technical suitability. E.g. the Business Information System (www.ytj.fi) can be used to check the legal status of any economic actor with www, SMS or telephone. Queries from the Vehicles Register can be made with www (payment with network banking) or SMS (payment via network operator).

9. Authentication procedures

MOF has issued recommendations for agencies regarding the need for strong authentication in government web services. According to these recommendations strong authentication should be asked for only when citizens are using interactive services where they can update their own information in databases or institute proceedings that have substantial economical or jurisdictional influence. If strong authentication is needed, authentication methods using qualified certificates (PKI & smart card) and bank authentication are considered suitable. Bank authentication is based on user ids and every time changing passwords and has already 2.5 million users for Internet banking purposes.

10. Developing gateways which will process certain applications for all agencies and ministries (e.g., authentication and bill payments)

Lomake.fi (portal for public eForms) has centralized authentication services for the agencies which are offering their services through the portal. The Social Insurance Institution of Finland, Ministry of Labour and Tax authorities are developing together an authentication service for their interactive services. Qualified certificates and bank authentication is supported in both authentication services.

Bill payments for occasional users of eGovernment services are arranged using Internet banking offered by commercial banks. Bill payments can easily be integrated into the services. In case of regular payments the citizens use payment services offered by the banks.

TYVI is a concept where companies and associations can make declarations to the authorities and to other organizations that collect statutory data. Services are managed by MOF and run by private so-called TYVI operators. Most used services are taxation (used by 59 % of SMEs) data and pensions (used in 47 % of SMEs). Data transfer in TYVI format is integrated already to many accounting applications available in Finland.

11. Developing government wide architecture and standards

A framework architecture was published in 2001. The architecture is not very detailed.

The architecture gives guidance to agencies when they build systems. New work on architecture will start as part of implementation of the XML strategy in autumn 2003.

Standards recommendations to the public sector are published by the Advisory Board of Information Management in Public Sector. There are around 50 recommendations on e.g. classifications, data formats, information content and information services. In the works is e.g. a recommendation on electronic invoices.

12. Training senior managers and policy officials to think and act intergovernmental

The ISAB working group proposed in 2002 that the upper level management in public sector should improve skills in use of ICT to improve services and operations. Co-operation with other stakeholder was also mentioned here. Around 4000 managers were identified as the target group. After more detailed planning and public procurement Ministry of Finance made a deal with two training consultancies on a series of three days seminars. The first seminar was held in May and a few more are booked for September. It seems to be very difficult to get managers to training.

13. Organizing and managing information for sharing across the government

Information is shared widely in the Finnish state administration and also between state and municipal sectors. Information sharing has a long history and it has been established gradually by laws and agreements between agencies. The latest big change was the unique Business ID shared by Tax Administration and Business Register. Notifications on starting a company and changes are shared since spring 2001.

The owners and largest users of basic information have a working group called Rekisteripooli (Register Pool) for discussions and projects. Rekisteripooli has (with funding from the Future Funds) e.g. a project in which the IT architecture envisaged in MoF recommendations in 2001, is piloted.

14. Developing Government Without Boundaries (GWOB) systems that cross program, office, department, and agency/ministry lines.

XML

“The XML Strategy of Public Administration” has been drafted by an inter-governmental working group and approved by government information management board. The main targets in the strategy are: 1) guiding the use of XML by means of public sector recommendations, 2) establishing an XML-co-operation group for promoting standardization and the application of XML in practice, 3) the creation of model solutions for the electronic conduct of business, for use in Base Registers and for the exchange of data between different systems, 4) the establishment of guidelines for creating vocabularies, 5) promoting the co-operation between Finnish operators in this area, 6) promoting data security, 7) improving system development and creation of a data dictionary in order to support the re-use of confirmed data definitions. Realisation of the strategy has started.

OSS

Government Open Source software project started two years ago. OSS Office suite was tested in 13 agencies and recommendations were made after testing: Open Office is already a good office tool, but can only be recommended for use in an environment where little exchange of documents with other organisations exists, because of the closed file formats used in the dominant office package.

The possibility of using Open Source methods when building government systems was studied by an inter-governmental working group. The results, which include more best practices for developing IT-systems than actual OS issues, will be published as recommendations: 1) the use of General Terms and Conditions of Government Procurement of Information Technology should always be used, since they define that the customer always receives the source code and the right to modify it, 2) OSS should always be considered along with

proprietary software, 3) if the source code can not be purchased the source code escrow should be arranged, 4) agencies should invest in designing and managing a solid information architecture, 5) open standards and application interfaces should be favoured, 6) established OS operating systems and utility software are choices worth considering.

The OSS project continues it's work part of which is distributing information to agencies by organizing seminars on OSS, etc. Subprojects regarding migration cost evaluation and training are on hold waiting for results from EU's IDA OSS project, in which Finland also participates.

16. Obtaining feedback from the public

Most of the government web-sites have an option for users to give feedback about the services. Some of the sites have also regularly questionnaires for users. A discussion about government e-services was moderated at the governmental discussion forum otakantaa.fi a couple of years ago.

17. E-governance including E-voting and obtaining comments on proposed laws and regulations

The cross-governmental discussion forum otakantaa.fi (share your views with us) has been running in development phase since year 2000. The forum will be made permanent and bi-lingual starting this September. The main idea behind the discussion forum is to get the citizen capital in use. The topics in discussion are always connected to the preparatory work of drafting legislation. Background material and links are given to the citizens and a resume is always made after each discussion. The resume should be attached to the other documentation of the preparatory work. Citizens can participate anonymously but civil servants are encouraged to participate using their own names and the name of the organization they come from. Getting the civil servants motivated in participating is the most challenging issue of the discussion forum. Better quality and easier realization of legislation are used as motivating arguments.

Finland: Appendix 1

Fifteen Questions when considering current Priority Areas in e-Gov

1. If your country is developing a gateway to process authentication, bill payments, and other applications for all agencies/ministries, how will it relate to the national portal?

We have a portal for eForms as part of the national portal Suomi.fi. With the eForms portal Lomka.fi agencies can provide forms –based services. Authentication using qualified electronic certificates or Internet –banking passwords is handled by the service, when needed. The service also supports web payments. In general payments are not a major issue in Finland where all money transactions to and from government are handled by banks.

2. What level of uptake by the citizens is being achieved for your country's e-Gov services?

According to surveys 2/3 of Internet users have visited public sector sites within three months.

3. Which three or so on-line services are most popular with the public?

- site of own municipality
- sites on education and training
- labour service www.mol.fi
- social security www.kela.fi
- taxation www.vero.fi

4. Are integrated transactions being processed successfully at this time?

Yes

5. Which integrated transactions are most popular with the public?

E.g. applications to 3rd level education, notifications on property crimes (theft of car etc.)

Transactions over the net are 30 to 80% of total transaction volumes in business services - taxation, customs, application of research funding, environmental reporting etc.

6. What functions will your national portal perform beyond providing a search engine and linking to other sites?

eForms service
Public sector directory (LDAP)
Discussion Forum
News

7. How are cross-government systems being funded?

We have used some of the Future Funds for building the systems in 2001 – 2003. Operational costs are in the budgets of responsible agencies.

8. Are service delivery channels (Internet, ATM, etc.) being brought together into one access point? Which channels? When will the single access point be available to the public?

No

9. What authentication initiatives are underway? When will they be available to government employees? To the public? When implemented, will they accelerate the use of on-line e-Gov transactions by the public?

Electronic ID card and PKI services are available since 2000. This has had no impact on the use of eGovernment services. The certificates will in the near future be available also to the social security card.

Some agencies use the same PKI services for their internal needs. In these cases other layouts of the smart card are used.

We are using Internet banking authentication to provide reliable authentication of users in eGovernment services. Banks are used both to business as well as private users.

10. When will a governmentwide architecture be in place? What will it look like?

A framework architecture was published in 2001. A picture is attached. The architecture is not very detailed.

The architecture gives guidance to agencies when they build systems.

11. List a few (if appropriate) cross government, Government Without Boundaries (GWOB) initiatives.

Citizen portal www.suomi.fi

Business portal www.yrityssuomi.fi

Joint-up videoconference based remote services of Taxation, Labour and Social security. This is piloted in the archipelago of Turku.

12. Is work being doing to measure the results of e-Gov investments? Will this be a major priority in 2004?

We are starting to do it and it is a priority in 2004.

13. Is there a program to obtain feedback from the public about on-line information and services?

We have used the discussion forum www.otakantaa.fi to collect views. User surveys are conducted regularly by agencies. Ministry of the Interior yearly does a survey on the use and views of public web sites.

14. Is e-governance a priority at this time? If yes, is the emphasis on e-voting or on some other area?

The new (June 2003) government has a cross ministry policy programme on citizen participation [in democratic processes].

15. Does your government have a national identity card? How many employees have the card? How many citizens have the card?

Yes

The national ID card has nothing to do with government employees.

Around 500 000 citizens (of 5,2 M) have a valid card. Only some 16 000 of the ID cards are electronic ID cards.

Attachment to question nr 10

Overview of government systems architecture

