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Ref. The 11-th NISPAcee ANNUAL CONFERENCE:
“Enhancing the Capacities to Govern: Challenges facing the CEE countries”

“FOUNDATION OF E-GOVERNMENT CONCEPT IN THE SAMARA OBLAST, RUSSIA.”

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Introduction:

Development and wider dissemination of information and communication technologies is the main trend in the contemporary world development. Usage of modern technologies and transmission of information has a determinative significance for increased competitiveness of economy, widening possibilities of the integration into the global market, as well as for an increasing efficiency of management in all levels of public and private sectors of economy. Russia is keeping the right way in the sphere of e-government development.

Electronic government implies developing effective and wide-spread information and communications infrastructure, which will support the administrative activities and provide for effective interaction between the authorities and civil society. Electronic government is not only Internet at schools, electronic commerce, official authorities sites, the system of electronic documentation in the state institutions. Electronic government is aimed at enhancing the quality of services provision to the public and increasing the scope of personal

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responsibility of each public servant. To achieve this end, office work should be improved, the document forms should be standardized and on-line interaction between citizens, businesses and officials should be introduced. It's also important to upgrade the IT skills of public servants as well as individuals and businesses.

Information and telecommunications are becoming more instrumental in changing the life of the modern community. Therefore, it is natural that in the period of social-economic reforms federal target programs were elaborated in Russia, including «Electronic Russia», «Development of Unified Educational and Information Environment» and others. These programs are designed to accomplish a long-term goal of putting in place the concept of electronic government in the Russian Federation.

Chapter 1: The Federal Target Program «Electronic Russia»

The Federal Target Program «Electronic Russia» is aimed at developing e-government system in the Russian Federation. The program was elaborated in the spring 2001 and approved by the Russian Government at the beginning of 2002. The program was worked out by the Ministry for Economic Development and Trade in close collaboration with leading research centers and representatives of Russian IT-businesses. The Ministry of Communications and Information, as the coordinator of the program, held a tender to select the organizations engaged in the priority projects execution within the framework of the federal program. They embrace leading scientific and research institutions operating in the IT market for many years.

The year 2002 was crucially significant for launching the Federal Target Program «Electronic Russia» with prerequisites for efficient program implementation being put in effect:

- a set of research activities was realized. For example, to ensure the flow of documents between the federal and local authorities, the Ministry of Communications and Information worked out the standards of information communications system between the federal and local authorities;

- pilot researches were conducted. In the year 2002 several pilot projects were elaborated and realized, including the project «The automatic state registrar system of the Russian Federation», administered by the Ministry of Communications, Interior Ministry and Justice Ministry in conjunction with a number of regional administrations, as well as the e-commerce project initiated by the Minister of Communications and Information.

- the advanced domestic and foreign experience in the communications sphere was adopted in the projects.

Currently the Federal Target Program «Electronic Russia» is instrumental in speeding up the information communications technologies domestically and is perceived as an integral part of the national strategy of accelerated economic growth.

Emphasis should be placed on specific focuses of the program «Electronic Russia»:

1. Development of the up-to-date system of electronic documents flow between authorities;
2. Introduction of e-commerce system etc.

1.1 The system of electronic documentation

Establishing and developing the system of electronic documentation is one of the main directions of the Program. Such system will facilitate the work of authorities at all levels. At present the officials have to communicate with the counterparts via paper and couriers, which is expensive and inconvenient, papers could be lost or damaged and the whole process of documentation delivery is time-consuming. The new electronic system will integrate authorities of all levels and will provide them with useful information automatically. Besides, such system requires an effective control program, which could be an information feedback system, to ensure that the officials are equipped with information essential for their work.

On the one hand nowadays it's impossible to totally abolish paper documentation, on the other hand, a special law on electronic document is not in place, which provides for the mandatory availability of paper document alongside its electronic version. Provided the Program "Electronic Russia" and e-government concept is introduced, it envisages the electronic documentation system. At the same time, information security should be ensured in corporate and public networks. External communications standardization should also be introduced with integration of electronic documentation system with the office supplements facilitating this process.

Existing office management standards applicable in Russia do not take into consideration the peculiarities of electronic documents processing. Unified technical policy and methodology in the field of office management is not available. The current systems of office management do not provide for any changes in the process of document processing without information loss or interference in the system business logic. Therefore it is of importance to provide the management processes editing by means of routing circuits and dialogue windows. The administrator's function will be abolished because of automated documents processing.

1.2 Official Internet sites of the Russian authorities

Information portals of government bodies should become an integral part of electronic documents flow system or a part of electronic files. Mention should be made of a specific

project of the public Internet - portal of the Government of the Russian Federation, which is realized in Russia in the framework of this concept. Thus the final stage of such portals development implies not only communication and information exchange between citizens and authorities but also the full integration of public sector and individuals into unified network. Nowadays this is pursued both at the federal and sub-federal levels.

Increasing the number of official civil services sites is an important question for the regions. Samara Oblast is taking the lead in this process, as the local authorities are aimed at launching new official sites of all power levels. Nowadays the Samara Oblast possesses the official sites of the local authorities of different levels.

- 1) The official sites of the Samara Oblast Governor and Samara Oblast Duma (parliament) site;
- 2) The official sites of several Municipalities within the territory of the Samara Oblast;
- 3) The official sites of city districts in Samara Oblast.

Moreover such official sites should envisage the feedback and control civil system, which will empower the individuals in influencing the local government decisions.

In 2002 the round table discussions «Electronic government and electronic documentation» were held at the Forum «Technologies and Solutions for Electronic Russia». During the session the following issues were under discussion: the introduction of a nationwide distribution system of electronic documentation for the government bodies; shaping the state technical policy, which envisages stage-by-stage shift from paper to electronic documentation; and cost-efficiency due to unified electronic document system and increased communications efficiency between the authorities and external organizations and citizens.

The automated documentation system within the organization helps ensure the efficient work of Internet- and Intranet subscribers, business processes management; facilitate document processing and document versions; manage subscribers' rights, realize the concept of stage-by-stage shift from paper to electronic documentation and support the Russian traditions of office-work.

Document circulation between the governmental organizations provides an exchange of documents applying national encoding standards as well as unified data transmission system. Planning the collaborative work of governmental bodies makes it possible to shape the uniform work environment of the project, to ensure network planning of business process, to build up working teams, to monitor the performance and conduct teleconferences between working groups.

Availability of documents monitoring via Internet provides for the automatic processing of appeals from citizens and organizations within the departmental and interdepartmental systems of electronic documentation.

The Russian specificity entails long-term co-existence of electronic and paper office-work, which makes requirements to system of electronic documents flow more complicated. The shift from paper document circulation to electronic one should be introduced step-by-step both nationwide and locally. First of all, electronic archives (files) should be introduced, which will make it possible to receive the instant graphic image of the necessary document on the computer display. The second stage envisages the establishment of knowledge accumulation and management systems, as well as free information access and simplification of information exchange. The final stage of transition is targeted at replacing paper documents with their electronic versions.

The development of this activity is especially important for the Samara Oblast Authorities. Samara Oblast is an active participant of the e-government programs. It was mentioned hereinabove that Samara Oblast is creating the system of electronic documentation, this system will include several levels:

- 1) communication within the Samara Oblast Administration;
- 2) communication between the Departments of the Administration of Samara Oblast;
- 3) communication between the Administration of Samara Oblast and the Municipal Authorities;
- 4) communication between the local authorities of all levels and the citizens.

1.3 Information openness of the government activities

Producing an effective system of raising individuals' awareness in local authorities' activities is a key component within the Russian e-government system. This system entails rendering proper technical support as well as advanced IT skills. The Ministry of Education in conjunction with the Ministry of Communications of Russia started socially significant project, which is aimed at raising the level of info awareness and providing Internet access at schools. Almost half of all educational institutions will have been logged on to a global network by 2005. The Program «Electronic Russia» is charged with the following strategic objectives: increasing the number of Internet subscribers eight times by 2010, increasing the number of personal computers four times and doubling the market of information services by the year 2005. Such objectives are related to the process of maximum Internet penetration within the territory of Russia.

According to experts' appraisals about 12000 Internet subscribers should be registered annually. Positive experience has been accumulated by implementing the project of the

Ministry of Communications titled «Cybermail», public Internet access centers that will render services at the post-offices. Over 3000 similar centers have been established domestically and the program is still underway.

Nevertheless, the high rate of information provision and Internet access in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod is rather an exception than a rule.

For this reason in the coming year the focal point of the Program «Electronic Russia» will be placed on project implementation in the regions with support to regional initiatives being provided by the ministry of Communications.

The realization of the given direction will lead to a wide system of free up-to-date public Internet access center, which will provide citizens with useful information concerning authorities activities. The information openness makes all authorities' infrastructure more efficient and promotes the dialogue between people and authorities, which is beneficial for the both public servants and citizens. On a regional level such information openness will foster investment attraction.

Till recently almost all computer databases and electronic systems of different government ministries and departments have been organized by vertical or branch principles. For example if we deal with the information resource of a pension fund it contains only the data on pensioners of the Russian Federation, with the regional breakdown. Ecologists collect the relevant information on environment issues, tax specialists focus on their field etc. As a result, all the data are perceived separately which entails a lot of constraints in assessing the situation nationally and regionally and have a negative effect on decision-making process. To provide for efficient management of the region the latter should be perceived as a whole rather than a set of separate factors randomly pulled out from a context.

To put it differently, developments and processes, taking place in a region, should be considered as interrelated information. To achieve that, the already existing vertically integrated electronic systems should be projected horizontally. Thus, the data of the specialized systems should be compiled to provide comprehensive description of the region by giving the Internet subscribers an opportunity to evaluate the economic and social processes, which are under way in the region, by applying spatial projecting principle. The uniform information image of the region will allow to plan the budget revenue accurately, taking into consideration minor factors and, consequently, to improve funds allocation as well as to pursue the social and economic policy of the Oblast. It is obvious that in this case authorities will be immune to decision-making errors and from contingencies associated with them. The system of electronic commerce in procurement for public needs can serve as an example. In spring 2002 the Administration of Novosibirsk Oblast organized the first tender of this kind.

The total cost of medicines procurement decreased by more than 40 percent within a week with the full legal transparency of the process being provided.

Chapter 2: “Foundation of e-government concept in the Samara Oblast, Russia.”

E-government system is being built up in Samara Oblast as well. The Oblast of Samara is considered to be one of the most prospective and "advanced" regions in terms of quantity and quality of the projects applying for financing from the Program «Electronic Russia». The Samara Oblast Administration plays a key role in this process and shows commitment in the prompt computerization and information provision as well as social life and business process in the region.

It's important to emphasize that all the e-government activities are held with the support of the Commission for executive authorities informatization headed by the Chief of the Administration O.V. Margolin. The commission is formed of the Administration of the Samara Oblast personnel and specialists on information technologies from different organizations and representatives of the leading universities. The main objective of the Commission is the process of transformation of internal and external communications in the system of public administration with the help of new information and communication technologies to optimize administration and to provide public services and constitutional human rights.

The pivotal objective of the management reform in the region, which was started on the Governor's initiative, is targeted at an individual, i.e. enlarging the capacity of fulfilling his/her creative potential and aspirations. In order to achieve this purpose targeted interaction between the executive bodies and community has to be ensured. Meanwhile, Social departments of the Administration work independently from each other.

To address the problem of each individual, it is necessary to put in place relevant integration mechanisms. The current programs, which are being implemented in Samara Oblast, are designed to launch such mechanisms.

These mechanisms incorporate Intranet system on the premises of the Samara Oblast Administration, data transmission base, which is designed to unite the Intranet network with local authorities, located in remote districts, systematic electronic cadastre, which is scheduled to put together data on Samara Oblast.

The Samara Oblast project «Social passport» has been financed from the Federal Program funds. In the year 2002 the Administration of the Samara Oblast took part in the open competition held within the framework of the Federal Target Program. In November 20, 2002 as a result of this tender, the Administration of Samara Oblast received a grant to realize the project «Social passport».

Several departments of the Administration of the Samara Oblast were involved in the planning stage of the project, namely: Departments of Social Protection, Health Care, Science and Education, Culture, Industry and Commerce, Agriculture and Food Supply as well as IT-specialists. The company «Knowledge genesis» is in charge of providing the technical assistance to the project. The total amount of financing for the 2003-2005 project equals at 298 million roubles.

The main goal of the program is to simplify the process of social benefits distribution, which is currently applicable only in accordance with the citizens' applications. The new electronic system will ensure the distribution of budget funds allocated for social purposes not only between individuals, but also between the legal entities involved into the social programs. The social passport is a set of socially significant data about the person, determining his public, property and legal status, collected in conformity with the valid legal acts, available in electronic version and accessible both to the person and to all organizations rendering services to this person.

The social passport denies the former system of social servicing according to which the client should attend various departments for separate kinds of the social help or a privilege. Instead of this, citizens with the social passports will visit only one place near their residence, where the applicant could issue all kinds of the social help. Such system will balance budget expenditures with the individual needs of every person and it will guarantee control of budget expenditures and social payments.

Currently the Department of Social Protection of the Samara Oblast Administration is establishing the unified information system of the targeted social support to the citizens for the years 2003-2005. The total funds allocated for the project implementation are estimated at 46.5 million roubles:

- 2003 - 8 million roubles (development of strategy, main principles of the unified information system, equipment design, inventory of databases of the Departments of social sphere, analysis the mechanisms of creation the information resources of the Departments);
- 2004 - 25 million roubles (purchase of the license software and hardware);
- 2005-12 million roubles (realization of operational testing).

The project stages already completed include:

- software systems between the authorities and the community was purchased and created the for the electronic interaction, the databases of the Department of Social Protection and Health Department were connected to the developed system etc.

This year the Samara Oblast is also implementing a project of geoinformation system, which will make the process of allocation the building sites for new capacities easier. The system will

be useful for businessmen, who are interested in new sites to set up a business. Now a businessman has to find a suitable venue, site or premises himself, after that he has to collect all the documents and attest them in different kinds of institutions, such system is a waste of time and an excellent base for the corruption. And the new electronic system will provide all the information about the suitable building site in terms of transport system, location, geological advantages and cost efficiency. The system planned to be free of charge and easily accessible, which will prevent the possibility of corruption.

It is obvious that the e-government concept is a very important direction in the activities of the local authorities, which will have further development. At present the administration of the Samara Oblast promotes other projects, which may receive financing from the Federal Program «Electronic Russia» in the nearest future.

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