

Template for Country Reports on Portals

France June 2001 Service-public Government Portal

1. INTRODUCTION

Please describe briefly the current status and strategies on portals in your country. In addition, discuss whether the definition of portals, as suggested in the accompanying letter, complies with the ideas of portals in your country. In short:

- Status in your country

Our national administration portal www.service-public.fr was opened to the wide public in october 2000. It then has replaced the former government portal which mainly was a directory of all administration web sites. To date the new portal gives access to 5000 french and foreign government websites, to 11000 government services and 13000 officials, provide 2400 practical sheets, 600 dowladable forms and offers 1200 predefined answers to frequently asked questions. It is accessed by more than 550000 visitors (22% are foreigners) each month. 3000 emails are received in the mean time and 10000 people are registered in the mailing list.

- Visions and targets for the application of portals

Service-public was designed to achieve three main goals:

- **Providing practical services through a comprehensive guide to first level information (official forms, FAQ, cluster for citizens for professionnals & enterprises, rights & procedures, official surveys, official journal, public procurement advertisement...)**
- **Informing through a news letter on new regulations, new on line services, jobs offers within public services...**
- **Guiding trough two main directories one on public websites another on government services (email, organisation charts & job titles are provided).**

Users can use the search engine accessible from the site's main subjects headings. The research can be targeted on a specific administrative issue or as well on practical information. Many topics are directly accessible from the home page.

Service public of course gives access to sub portals on financial and fiscal matters www.minefi.gouv.fr, on social issues www.net-entreprise.fr, on employment www.anpe.fr,

- National strategies.

The main principles which have guided the portal project were the following:

- **concentrate on the user's needs not on the institutions requirements;**
- **focus on practical services to the public;**
- **identify the main user's needs and among them classify the needs for general information (laws, public surveys..) and the needs for practical services;**
- **Diversify access according to each target audience (citizens, professionnals);**

- **Ease access for people who may have handicaps;**
- **Information must be as far as possible exhaustive, of quality, coherent & neutral;**
- **Set up a public forum for claims & public debates;**

- Comments on the suggested definition.

We should rather consider “ a government portal as a collection of dedicated services that presents – and gives links to - informations, services provided by government bodies through a common web site interface. Informations & services are grouped in accordance with criterias related to user’s needs”.

2. DRIVERS OF CHANGE – DRIVING FORCE, INCENTIVES, AND MEANS

Certain means work as triggers, supporters, accelerators, or obstacles to the development of portals. It is expected that the operative means vary between the GOL countries. In general, means are special funds or subsidies, legislation, or administrative arrangements and co-operation that may trigger, support, or accelerate change. At the same time, the authorities may experience users demands that trigger the process. In this section you are invited to report on the drivers of change/ incentives/ means in use in your country.

2.1 User Orientation

Does your country conduct enquiries in order to monitor users satisfaction, expectations, and use of government electronic service delivery? If any, what are the “lessons learned”?

Prior to the launch of Service- public, during august and september 1999, an on line forum was set up. In the mean time an opinion poll based on questionnaires was fulfilled. The questions where focused on “ what are your expectations concerning public informations & services delevery”.

The responses were mainly:

- **put on line more services;**
- **give information on already existing services**
- **improve access to administration’s services**

Mid 2000 an inquiry was launch by the ministry of state reform to monitor public web site quality. Service public was very well quoted then because it was one of the most popular public web based application.

La Documentation Française which monitor the french portal is constantly listening to user’s claims and suggestions and will conduct next september an user’s satisfaction survey.

The lesson learned was that you have to be flexible and listen closely to the broad public audience which expectations are rapidly increasing often faster than the pace of new services provision.

2.2 Other Incentives

Please briefly present the means/incentives that may work as triggers, supporters, accelerators or obstacles to the development of portals in your country. Relevant subjects for the presentation would be:

- funding/financing arrangements

The project was financed by a Prime Minister office and the ministry of state reform.

Up to 60 people were involved during the development phase. All the ministries have provided their expertise.

- legislation that may work as accelerators, (e.g. electronic signature), or obstacles, (e.g. acts that require manual processes), etc

as accelerator:

- **1978 regulation on citizen's access to administration's datas;**
- **1998 action plan for the information society (digitalisation)**
- **free of charge access for raw administration's datas**

as obstacles:

- **privacy act (concerning personal datas)**
- expertise or Research & Development resources

Software houses, consultants and web designers were hired during the project life cycle.

- central co-ordination in public sector

An interministerial group was set up under the coordination of a Prime minister office to monitor the overall project. La Documentation Française was the managing body of the project.

- incentives/means for smaller communities or units with limited resources and web solutions skills

No special incentives nor means except advices and human expertise were devoted for smaller units.

- projects or co-ordination of portals within - or between - public sector/ private sector/ NGOs. (Terms of interest could be enabling the private sector, branding, charging for services, public advertisements, etc.)

Within the public sector others sub portals dedicated to taxes, social security & employment have been launched. Links to service-public have been put in place. Public advertisement are generally available on both of these portals.

But each of them have their own policy when charging for services (not for information) due to the fact that these subportals are those which in fact provide on line value added services.

- experiences to date with the current means.

3. PORTALS – FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND CHALLENGES

3.1 Status and development

Due to variations in government structures, culture, and political systems, one would expect there to be differences in the way that portals have developed.

Please briefly present the development pattern/direction of portals in your country. Relevant dimensions and keywords in the presentation could be:

- Development towards governmental top nodes (e.g. “one stop shop”) vs. diversification of portals and services, etc

The french administration system is a rather centralised one. A governmental top node was the most efficient solution to give access to the wide public to national regulation based informations and services.

Note that the portal is linked to most of towns websites which are providing local services.

- Services directed to specific usergroups vs. General services directed to a broader range of usergroups, portals with a customer focus or subject specific approach, etc

A lot of services (and it will be more & more the case) are dedicated to specific user’s group. It is the case notably for foreigners who wish to settle and work in France.

- Evolution based on guidelines from central government (“top down”) vs. evolution based on local/sector initiatives (“bottom up”) conducted processes, etc

Each departemental & regional public body web site is encouraged to link his own website with service-public. A government chart for designing public web site has been published.

- Integration of government services vs. maintaining specialised and/or sector specific services

Each ministry is responsible of the informations & services it is able to provide.

- Main dimensions to status and development of portals not already mentioned

Service public gives access to others ministries websites which really deliver the services. The remaining question is “ do the user’s get a right and prompt response to their questions”? How to trace the entire process to avoid claims? The language problem is a difficult one also in a country where 10% of the population may have difficulties understanding french.

We would like you to reflect on the development of portals in relation to your country's governmental structure and system. Finally you may highlight other (cultural, economic, etc.) vital aspects that may explain the development direction of the solutions.

- **E-europe action plan : how to link 15 or more EU members portals in order to ease free movement of people & companies.**

3.2 Applying metadata criteria (“cross-portals standards”)

Please briefly present your country's current policy/thinking about metadata standards, and whether your country has established guidelines or requirements for

- Quality of content on government web sites
- Information structures (Dublin Core, etc.)
- National standards for information meta labelling (xml etc.)

As said earlier a chart for government site was build. But it was more focused on the design than on the content. We are working on a new chart about the quality content.

XML is a promissing standart for data exchange between administrations and many experiments within ministries have been launched. The challenge is that the administration information diversity & complexity has to be hidden to the users in order to simplify the use of these informations.

3.3 Future challenges

Please indicate what you regard are areas that need further investigation , either as a domestic matter, or as a matter of international concern. One subject for discussion would be whether the identified challenges call for new working projects in the GOL network.

- **Pan european portal**
- **Multiliguism**
- **Tracing the overall process of service delevery**

3.4 Portals samples

Please supply a selection of relevant Internet portal site addresses that may illustrate central points in your country report. Please give brief information about each portal, the role and function of the portals, and other characteristics that may illuminate points in the country report.

See § 1 for portal addresses.