Country Report on Portals
(Hungary)

1. Introduction

- Status in our country

Last year in Hungary all central IT co-ordination and telecommunication regulatory issues were brought under the same roof in one responsible organisation within the government. To this end a new responsible post has been established by a governmental decree in which the Prime Minister appointed a Government Commissioner for IT and Telecommunication within the Prime Minister's Office reporting to the Minister of this Office. One of the first important measures taken by the Office of the Government Commissioner was the elaboration of a National Information Society Strategy followed by the definition of a comprehensive Electronic Government Programme. This programme is made up basically from two parts – that of modernising the working processes within the public administration and electronic service delivery to citizens.

- Visions and targets for the application of portals

As for the service delivery, the realisation of the Hungarian Governmental Portal was amongst the first projects initiated by the eGovernment Division of the Office. Until very recently in our country only individual home pages of various public administration institutions have been in use. The structure and content of the existing home pages of ministries and public organs have been rather different. In some sectors, for example in that of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry issued some regulations concerning the structure of the institutional home pages.

The Governmental Portal under construction will serve as collection place for all information and administration related possibilities in the public administration. It will provide a sort of entry page for all citizens wishing to be informed and to be served through the Internet. The different administrative systems of various public institutions will be interfaced to the Portal by an application server. The permanent information service will be assured by a governmental publishing system operated by all institutions, so that information provided by each ministry will be presented on the Portal in a unified form. The ministries will present their individual home pages on the Internet in the future too, but they will be accessible through the Governmental portal as well.

As for the beginning, from November 2001, the Portal will provide an exhaustive description for about 1000 administrative processes (where to go, what to bring with us, etc). In a later stage (first quarter of 2002) the service will be extended by the publication of some national registries through the Internet with a continuous future introduction of first applications of on-line administration services.

2. Drivers of change

The eGovernment Division mentioned above organised an opinion poll about the expectations of citizens concerning an electronic public administration, about their attitude for the idea of electronic service delivery. As a result it became obvious that the 80% of the population believes in a simplifying effect of electronic services, and more than 50% of them definitely requires the introduction of such services.

- Funding/financing arrangements

The Government Commissioner's Office has substantial means for preparing the country for the Information Society. Explicitly for the purposes of the Electronic Government Pro-

gramme for two years as much as 12 billion Hungarian Forints (appr. 400 million USD) have been earmarked.

- Legislation as accelerator

The law on electronic signature was enacted by the Hungarian Parliament this spring. According to it, with a few exceptions mainly in the area of family law, authenticated properly electronic documents can be accepted as official papers. Based on this law, the project for the realisation of a governmental PKI is underway.

- Central co-ordination in public sector

Since the date of its establishment in August 2000, the Government Commissioner's Office within the Prime Minister's Office bears responsibility for the co-ordination of IT and telecom in the Hungarian Public Sector. It is in charge of preparing the IT strategy of the government and is authorised by law to monitor all kind of governmental IT development projects from the point of view of their matching the governmental strategy.

3. Portals – Future developments and challenges

- Status and development

Accordingly to the conception of the Governmental Portal, it will contain a single central entry page with grouping of information and possibilities for on-line administration in accordance with the citizen's course of life (for example birth, marriage, education, etc). While the Portal will reference other governmental home pages too, unlike the American model it won't be organised around the sources and types of information.
The Office is planning to elaborate some recommendations for local governments as well, but without any obligation to use them.

- Applying metadata criteria ("cross-portals standards")

In line with the portal development we are planning to elaborate meta-records of web pages and all other contents appearing on the Portal, which would make possible to locate them by the Governmental Information Locator System with the name KIKERES (see the Appendix on the system KIKERES).

Appendix

KIKERES: Cadastre of Public Sector Information on the Internet

In Hungary many public administration agencies operate Internet Web sites providing citizens with quite a lot of public information. There are well-functioning or promising services, which make data of some national registries accessible on the Internet as for example company and real estate register data, statistical data and uniform article numbers. Nevertheless the overall picture is not that good concerning the management of the public sector data. In many fields the required data are not available at all, or not available in the format suitable for computer processing. It is difficult to find out about many type of data if they are existing at all, and if yes, where, under what conditions and of what quality are they accessible. One of the consequences is that sometimes the same data are generated by more then one public agencies, which means an inadmissible waste of public money. There exists problems also with harmonisation of the different data collection projects leading to inconsistency in those application areas, where data collected by various agencies should be integrated into a single system (e.g. regional development).

Having recognised these problems, the Inter-ministerial Committee for IT (ICIT) established the Data Management Technical Committee (DMTC) with the objective to facilitate a better exploitation of public sector information, to work out policy of management of these data, and to develop tools supporting this policy. The DMTC considered as its primary task to launch a project to establish a public administration data catalogue accessible for everyone through the Internet. The system received the name KIKERES (www.kikeres.hu) as the acronym of the full Hungarian name of the project. The system will practically provide the most important features – metadata – of the public information resources (databases, documents, collections, etc.) found in the public sector.

The KIKERES project was launched in 1999 with the support of the ICIT and under the control of the Prime Minister's Office, and was closed down at the level of a pilot project by the end of 2000. As a result of the pilot project, a freely distributed software package was implemented. Using this package any public administration institution can join the metadata service.

The basic principle of KIKERES is subsidiarity, which conforms to the operational principles of the modern public administration. It means that each agency enters, manages and disseminates its metadata by itself. To this end they only need a Web server, as the necessary software is delivered to them free of charge. If an agency cannot operate a Web server, it can manage its metadata on a Web server of another agency, e.g. on that of a superior body, regional organisation, etc. In this case entering and updating of metadata can be accomplished on-line through the Internet by means of a simple browser, or else the metadata can be sent off-line to the server. The metadata servers operating at the agencies are connected into a uniform metadata service through the governmental intranet and through the Internet. It is enough for the user, who wants to look for an information resource, to connect to one of the entry points of this loosely connected, distributed metadata service, and to enter the attributes of the required data, and the system will automatically query all or the required part of the metadata servers.

Another important feature of KIKERES is the flexibility of the metadata structure. A group of public administration, information technology and library experts defined the core set of metadata – the so-called basic profile – which is necessary and satisfactory for the description of the most types of information resources existing in the public administration.

The basic principle of the KIKERES is that the data providers describe the features of their information resources, while the users try to find the data most suitable for their needs. If these two groups do not 'speak the same language' the data users and the data owners cannot find each other and the system cannot achieve its goal. A common terminological database, the concept store, solves this problem. The concept store resembles the thesauri used in libraries. Among others it stores the definitions, representations, and relations

(synonym, antonym, generalisation, specialisation, grouping, etc.) of terms occurring in the metadata records. It is a multilingual system, thus it supports international use and can be a connection between the thesauri of the EU and Hungarian terminological systems.

The initial upload of the metadata and concepts of the KIKERES is currently in progress and will last until the middle of the next year under the supervision of the Office of the Government Commissioner for ICT according to the governmental resolution number 1113/2000 adopted in the meantime.