

## **Local eGovernment Applications – An example from Romania**

This short case study presents an example of eGovernment applications at the local government level. In a context where decentralization is becoming so widespread worldwide, eGovernment applications at the local level are becoming critical in enhancing the efficiency and transparency of local governments.

### **Background**

Under the RITI-Access project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), dot-ORG has been implementing a number of eGovernment initiatives in local governments across Romania. This case study focuses on one such initiative undertaken with the Giurgiu Local Council.



Giurgiu City Hall

In March 2003, RITI-Access and the Giurgiu Local Council launched a Document Management and Tax Automation Systems (DMS & TAS) project. This project is part of the Giurgiu “Integrated Informatics System” initiative that seeks to develop information and communication technology (ICT) applications to increase the efficiency and transparency of the Local Council. The DMS/TAS project supports the RITI-Access key objective of implementing innovative eGovernment projects.

The DMS/TAS project aims to strengthen the capacity of the Local Council on two levels. First, it implements innovative and user-friendly technologies and applications for daily activities of all local council departments. Second, Local Council employees are trained to effectively use the document management and tax automation applications.

### **Going from Paper to Electronic Systems**

#### Document Management:

In the past, the document management system was entirely paper-based. The registration office kept a log in which all documents were registered in handwritten form. Each department that needed a registration number for a document had to call the registration office by phone and reserve a number.

Local decisions issued by the Local Council were also only handled and archived on paper. In order to locate certain decisions, it was necessary to skim through the paper archive. This was, needless to say, a very time consuming task.

Documents transiting between different departments were handled on paper, or on occasions, on floppy disk. The few computers that were in the City Hall were not connected into a local network.

In order to schedule an appointment, people had to come to City Hall and submit their request at the registration office. At the Citizens Information Center (CIC), citizens had to fill in a request to access any information, and then they had to wait for an answer to be written on paper, as the CIC did not use any electronic system.

### Tax collection:

In the past, the bookkeeping of local taxes and fees was done using old MSDOS software called VENIS, dating from the 80s. This application had several disadvantages:

- it worked very slowly as the database was just a text document without any structure;
- the system did not allow consultations, updates or changes without the intervention of the owner;
- information about the tax debts was available only at the collection points where people were asked to stand in line to pay their taxes;
- taxes were paid only at one collection point located within the tax department;
- tax payments were not recorded in real time in the database, causing duplicate payments during the same day.

### **New system – Integrated Informatics System (DMS/TAS)**

Using the new Document Management and Tax Automation Systems the Giurgiu City Hall is now open around the clock for businesses and citizens, providing efficient services. Documents are no longer handled on paper and taxes are collected with a new application that solved all the problems generated by the old system. The Giurgiu City Hall developed a portal which can be accessed at [www.primaria-giurgiu.ro](http://www.primaria-giurgiu.ro) and provides FREE services for businesses and citizens, including:

- Registration online
- Schedule Appointments online
- Electronic archive with Local Council Decisions
- Forms and services online
- Information about the tax debts on the Internet
- Electronic payment of local taxes and fees
- Questions and answers online (forum)
- Useful information on the Internet



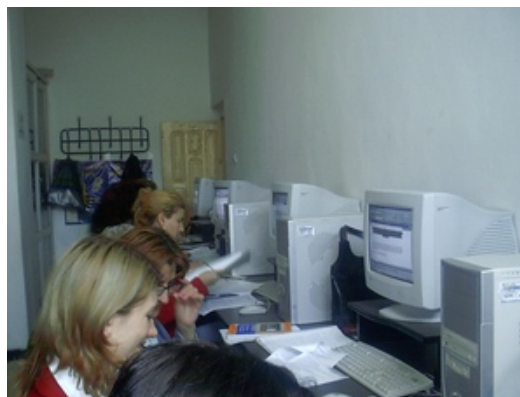
Registration Office

The DMS/TAS project has already had significant impacts on the businesses and citizens of Giurgiu and on the Local Council, including:

- More efficient tax payment and document management processes;
- Substantially reduced waiting time for taxpayers to make payments;
- Easy and quick access to public documents and information;
- Increased transparency in the budgetary process;
- Greater involvement by citizens in the decision-making process.

To provide efficient services for businesses and citizens, the Giurgiu City Hall employees attended several computer trainings.

The employees of Giurgiu City Hall received both ECDL (European Computer Driving License) training in order to familiarize themselves with computer basics and more specific training to use the document management and tax automation applications effectively.



ECDL training February - September, 2004

In order to implement the Integrated Informatics System, Giurgiu City Hall purchased high performance computers, connected the three main buildings (City Hall, Tax Department and Public Domain Administration Department) into a secured network and provided high speed Internet access to any computer used by the City Hall employees.

### **"Debut of the Year" Award**

The Giurgiu Project showed its first results in September 2004, at a conference organized by ANIAP (the Public Administration Informatics Systems Professional Association), focused on the Interoperability of the Informatics Systems. At this conference, the Giurgiu eGovernment pilot project received "The Debut of the Year Award", for implementing the Integrated Solution containing Document Management and Tax Automation Systems.



Based on these results, it is envisioned that the DMS/TAS project in Giurgiu will be replicated on a nationwide basis by other Local Councils.

### **Lessons Learned**

The challenge in implementing innovative technologies is shifting from the old system to the new one and – of paramount importance - changing the way government and citizens pay and process their taxes. RITI worked closely with the beneficiaries of

the system, explaining the advantages of using innovative information technologies and assisting them in replacing the old tools.

The Project Partners learned that promotion is critical in having significant impacts. Survey results showed that the Local Partner must enhance its efforts to promote e-Services to the citizens and business environment and to find the means to advertise the municipal website so that it can be effectively used.

### **Partners**

This project is the result of a collaborative effort between AED / dot-ORG's RITI-Access Project, the Giurgiu Local Council (local government), one of Romania's leading software firms, Sobis Solutions (selected through a public tender), and the Peace Corps. The Giurgiu Local Council contributed with a substantial cost share of over \$220,000, consisting of new equipment: 33 new computers, 17 printers, and 5 scanners, as well as training and office space.

For more information, please contact:

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