Digital Single Market: cross-border eGovernment services

From the very beginning, the first thoughts about European integration were directed at single market based upon four basic freedoms: free movement of persons, goods, capital and services. Over the last 20 years, there was success in creating single market in many areas thanks to gradual removing of technical and legal barriers. The possibility to work or study abroad or do business across borders has become as natural for younger generation as is e.g. ordering goods from a foreign e-shop. The ERASMUS programme enables almost 250 000 students a year to study or get an internship abroad, there are estimates of approx. 13 million Europeans working in another member state and for 21 million small and medium enterprises a significant part of their business is made internationally with companies from other EU member states.

On one hand, the decades of European integration have managed to remove many barriers in the physical, offline world and when we go to Portugal in the summer or the Austrian ski resorts in the winter we do no longer worry whether our ID card will be accepted without any problems at airports, in hotels or car-rentals. On the other hand, there are still many obstacles in the online world hindering the use of electronic services regardless in which state one currently is. According to a European Policy Centre (EPC) study the digital market may help to increase GDP by four per cent by 2020 and have the same financial effect as the single market programme had in 1992.

One of the areas where most of the obstacles have been successfully removed is online shopping. However, the electronic services of public administration are often limited and available only within the state borders and for its own citizens. The Digital Agenda for Europe strategy and the European eGovernment Action Plan 2011-2015, based on the Digital Agenda, are trying to change this. These documents are aiming at creating electronic services that will enable the businessmen to set up and operate a business anywhere in Europe regardless its original location and that will make it possible for the citizens to study, work, live and receive retirement pension at any place in the EU. In order to encourage the member states to provide these services the European Commission supports the so-called Large-Scale Pilots (LSPs).

The European Parliament and Council's proposed Regulation on Electronic Identification and Trusted Services on the internal market was introduced for the first time at the beginning of the last year. This legislation aims at supporting the cross-border use of electronic identification to the same scope as it is today with the above-mentioned ID cards. Another legislative act in preparation that should help with creating the Digital Single Market is the proposed regulation on electronic invoicing for public procurement. The proposal contains not only unified standard for electronic invoices but also the compulsory use of electronic invoicing for public procurement. Besides these legislative proposals there are other regulations in the European law that already envisage the Digital Single Market. In the area of e-Health there is especially the Regulation on application of patient's rights in cross-

border healthcare, which would e.g. make prescriptions mutually recognised across borders, as they are already prescribed electronically in many states, including the Czech Republic.

It is possible to ensure cooperation of national systems either by bilateral agreements, such as Poland and Germany did with the electronic identification, or through a cooperation of several states that will create standards and boundaries together to ensure mutual collaboration, also called interoperability. That is necessary not only in the technical environment but also in the legal and semantic areas. To support the collaboration there are, among others, the pilot projects that aim to verify the solutions and often also to remove the obstacles hindering the cross-border services.

Pilot projects

The European Commission's financial incentives have contributed to the start of five LSPs, where each has been dealing with one of the eGovernment areas.

- **STORK** – represents a key project in the field of electronic identification whose aim is to ensure mutual recognition of electronic identification. The importance of the STORK project is not only in the pilot projects, aimed at e.g. electronic identification in the area of electronic banking or electronic services of foreign universities, but also in the things like defining the so-called level of trust (QAA), where e.g. for access to free e-learning it will not be necessary for the user to be verified at the same level as for a change of data in the Register of Companies.

- **SPOCS** tries to simplify starting a business in another member state by interconnecting the so-called Single Contact Points that were set up by member states in reaction to the Services Directive. The problem is to connect those points and to enable electronic exchange of documents, which are the areas the SPOCS project is trying to solve.

- **PEPPOL** is aimed at cross-border public procurement and simplification of the communication between the supplier and the customer at all phases of the public procurement process and also the communication during purchases and payments themselves.

- **epSOS** focuses on the e-Health area, striving for sharing basic data about patients (like blood type) so the data can be available to doctors abroad in instances like a Czech patient getting injured while skiing in Austria. The epSOS project, currently comprising of more than 100 hospitals/practices and 160 pharmacies, is also dealing with the electronic prescriptions issue.

- **e-CODEX** concentrates on cooperation of member states in the field of electronic justice and on facilitating collaboration on the implementation of the European

Payment Order (EPO), European Arrest Warrant (EAW) or mutual recognition of financial sanctions and fines.

e-SENS: solution for Digital Single Market

The newest contribution to finalise building the Digital Single Market is the e-SENS project (Electronic Simple European Networked Services) that both builds on the results of the preceding five Large-Scale Pilots and reflects the current and proposed European legislation. There are more than 100 partners from 20 countries involved, including the Czech Republic that is represented by the CZ.NIC Association with its single identity service called *mojeID*.

Among the key results of the e-SENS projects is the building of the so-called universal building blocks that will be used for solving various cross-border services. The e-Delivery area will be solved universally, whether we talk about electronic justice, sending electronic invoices within the public procurement process or sending public administration's official decisions, comparable to the Czech Republic's data boxes. The same goals are set for the electronic identification area where instead of several solutions for different issues (e.g. social welfare benefits, healthcare etc.) there should be single identification, similar to the *mojeID* service. The service is already in use in shopping online in a number of e-shops, logging to news servers and portals, electronic services of libraries and recently also to vote in certified municipal public polls. That is the reason why the proposed Regulation on Electronic Identification and Trusted Services envisages that not only official electronic identity cards will be used for valid electronic identification, but also other tools issued by private or non-governmental bodies, provided that the member state in question will recognize them. In these cases *mojeID* then could be used to log in both to Czech servers and to foreign ones within the EU.

Among other building blocks of the eSENS project are the area of electronic documents whose formats should be, without any problems, processed by any administrative body and the area of electronic signature, where the public administrations are already required to mutually recognise qualified certificates issued by qualified certification authorities. In order to simplify the mutual cooperation mainly among the public administration bodies the last building bloc represents the so-called semantics area. These building blocks will be available for use to both the project partners and other entities as open source. Then it will be irrelevant whether it will be state institutions or e-Government systems developers.

To finalise the Digital Single Market, just as with the already-existing internal market, will surely take more than several months or even years, but it will be an endeavour for the long haul. The e-SENS project can play an important role in this process while helping solve issues arising from the growing mobility of people and businesses and dealing with current and future European legislation. Doing business across borders have become daily part of operation for many companies, like eBay or Amazon. Now it is time for the public

administration as well, as it will be in contact with more and more citizens who work and study abroad and need to deal with their ‚administrative matters‘.

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