

THE EUROPEAN
INFORMATION
SOCIETY GROUP

EURIM



Summary of the EURIM Transformational Government Policy Dialogue Hearings, 5 March 2008, 1530-1700 hours Committee Room 10, Westminster Palace

Parliamentarians present: Margaret Moran MP (Chair; Labour, Luton South); Tim Boswell MP (Conservative, Daventry); Philip Dunne MP (Conservative, Ludlow); Earl of Erroll (Crossbencher), Lord Archy Kirkwood (Liberal Democrat); Rt Hon Alun Michael MP (Labour, Cardiff South and Penarth); Chris Mole MP (Labour, Ipswich), Mark Todd MP (Labour, South Derbyshire).

Rapporteur: Dave Wright (EURIM)

1. Consideration of the draft integrated report of the Transformational Government Policy Dialogues hearings, associated issues and questions

1.1 MM suggested that the parliamentary team review the integrated report, and consider what might be added from the current session with John Suffolk; some re-writing of the report would be necessary.

3. Key issues

3.1 The team considered the following issues should be incorporated into and emphasized in the Integrated Report of the EURIM Transformational Government Policy Dialogues Hearings.

1. **The need to emphasise engagement with the citizen/user.** We need to add text and a recommendation on the complete virtuous circle of citizen engagement in service design, implementation and feedback. A partnership approach will enable design and access to be built in to the way that services are offered to citizens.
2. **The need to rebuild trust.** Government should recognise that citizens distrust them with managing their personal data, a situation compounded by recent well-publicised breaches of data security and official guidance. Rebuilding trust should include positive reasons for handling personal data, and incentives to citizens to engage with technology and different channels.
3. **The need to raise the EU procurement limit.** EU procurement directives limit the ability of funders to restrict funding to, or only invite tenders from, locally based providers or third-sector organisations. The directives apply to contracts above a certain threshold amount (currently £110,000), but for contracts up to this limit, national procedures must be adopted. A rigid rule that does not allow exceptions can be countered e.g. by the strategy of large departments bidding to win to contracts to then outsource to third sector contractors, but unintended consequences may result in the third sector being squeezed. We should argue for a higher threshold value in concert with others.
4. **The need for clarity of what the Government is saying in terms of the Gershon agenda and the diversity of delivery agenda.** For the report, there is a need to bring together the two strands of government thinking, one of which is to procure from SMEs/third sector, and on the other hand the need to get the advantages of scale into the same conversation. Perhaps the Compact Commissioner (DW: [Helen Baker is currently interim Commissioner for the Compact, between Government and the voluntary sector](#)), who is responsible for promoting compliance with the Compact requirements, which includes methods of procurement, grants, support, engagement with local authorities etc. may be able to advise.

5. **The need for continuity of scrutiny (pre- and post- legislative).** This should help to counter the disengagement between policy and delivery, and offset some of the disadvantages associated with the change of personnel, often including ministers, in the time between primary and secondary legislation. The certainty of accountability should focus minds on building in continuity from policy to delivery. We should add a recommendation for pre- and post- legislative, cross-departmental scrutiny – noting that select committees are also in silos! This needs to be addressed as a business process, both in terms of departmental and parliamentary responsibilities.
6. **The need for an evidence base** in terms of citizen involvement and dialogue, so that we know it has been tested somewhere. There is an OECD model which may serve as an example of testing performance and measuring inputs etc (see point 10). We need to show some citizen/consumer testing/involvement in service design, at the design test stage.
7. **The need for an holistic feedback mechanism**, with departmental officials receptive to MPs communications and concerns. The process should be focussed on the outcome for the citizen.
8. **The need to encourage citizens and MPs to act as champions and advocates of TG.** We might wish to emulate the approach of Service Canada, where it was recognised that politicians are uniquely positioned to help government become more directly linked to the community by acting as an important feedback mechanism, and as champions of a new way of service delivery that is more open, transparent, accountable, efficient and effective.
9. **The need to observe the '80:20' rule.** We tend to design systems around trying to address all possibilities, which vastly increases the risk and cost. A more reasonable/pragmatic approach would be to serve a large core of target users (80%) adequately through one relatively simple system, and devise a different set of systems for the more complex needs of the remaining 20%. An analysis of peoples' lifestyles for benefit payments would allow an efficient segmentation, and impinge on the diversity of delivery agenda – the 20% may be better served by a more appropriate third sector provider/channel than government.
10. **The need to consider and learn from other EU nations' parliaments.** There is an OECD web document 'E-Government as a Tool for Transformation', from the Public Governance Committee of the Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate. This gives an insight into the public sector transformation initiatives, processes, and experiences in the different OECD countries, and discusses a general framework for monitoring public sector transformation. It includes a checklist of the existence of e-government policies/strategies and their characteristics across OECD countries, and a model for identifying and describing a common set of transformation indicators. A copy of the draft document (March 2007) accompanies the email carrying this report.

4. Forward actions

4.1 We need an action plan targeting relevant ministers and officials so as to make the report part of an ongoing exercise in promoting TG. The EURIM budget has allocated funds to do some work around this, and we need ideas on how to take this forward.

4.2 We should compile a list of open ended **key questions**. We may not be clear about the message, but we can call attention to areas of difficulty that require action. Examples might include 'how do you create a synergy between aggregation for advantages of scale, and opening up procurement up to SMEs and the third sector?' 'How do we avoid the knee-jerk reaction by media and MPs to bad news about data loss etc.?'

4.3 The team should consider setting up an online 'greenhouse' to stimulate discussion, new thinking and innovative ideas.