



eGOVERNMENT

European Government Research Network

Deliverable D 7.1

Database of national experts on evaluation suggested by national agencies (M18)

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Summary

The ultimate goal of Work package 7 “Transnational RTD Activities” of the eGOVERNET project is to prepare for possible future common research programmes and joint calls for project proposals. Towards the foreseen degree of coordination and cooperation, the work package should establish a set of recommended harmonised routines for efficient evaluation and reviewal of projects and programmes of research for eGovernment, that could represent useful guidelines for the bodies that are funding and managing the research for eGovernment.

One of the first logical steps within the task (T7.2 - Create joint expert groups and propose procedures for evaluation and reviewal of proposed and on-going national research projects) is the establishing of an international database of experts on evaluation of eGovernment research projects and programmes. The intention is that such a database of national experts be used for evaluation and reviewal purposes truly internationally by the research funding and managing bodies from different European countries (as well as by the European Commission).

This report describes the background, the objectives and scope as well as the methodology adopted for establishing the Database of Experts on Evaluation.

The first chapter introduces the subject in the context of the eGOVERNET project and outlines the background of the motivation to establish the database. The second chapter deals in some detail with the objectives and scope of the intention, manifesting also the variety of aspects relevant to proposing and establishing a sensible and sustainable system of experts for ex ante and ex post evaluations of research projects at service to the European eGovernment research management. The third chapter describes the methodology and procedure of establishing and managing the Database of Experts on Evaluation as a Joint Expert Group of the eGOVERNET project. Finally the fourth chapter brings some concluding statements and considerations for future work.

1. Introduction and background

The main objectives of the eGOVERNET project are to support the creation of national eGovernment R&D programmes, to contribute to coordinating the design of national eGovernment R&D programmes and initiatives and also to encourage the integration of existing national eGovernment R&D programmes. The consortium of the eGOVERNET project represents organizations with responsibilities at national level for programming the eGovernment research, development and innovation activities. The partners have come together with a vision of coordinating the eGovernment research policies in their home countries and working towards a long-term strategy of research for eGovernment in Europe.

In the framework of the eGOVERNET project, eGovernment is defined as “the application of ICT, organizational change and skills to Public Administration in order to promote modernization and innovation in the public sector”. Clearly, in order to fully utilize the potential socio-economic benefits of eGovernment, not only full implementation of advanced ICT solutions, but also the institutional and organizational changes are necessary.

As a critical supporting factor to these complex processes, the research for eGovernment has become increasingly important over the last few years. (For detailed evidence, see “eGovernment research in the EU; overview report” - D3.2 - Work package 3, May 2007.) However, eGovernment research has been found to suffer from important prevailing shortcomings. The most significant one is the fact that the research activities in this area have been too fragmented practically in all respects (between countries, disciplines, and research phases). It is in fact precisely this deficiency which the eGOVERNET aims to address, overcome and possibly eliminate, thereby contributing to the enhancement of efficiency as well as to strengthening the impact of eGovernment research.

The purpose of Work package 7 “Transnational RTD Activities” of the eGOVERNET project is to prepare for possible future common research programmes and joint calls for project proposals. One of the important steps towards the goal is the establishing of a database of national experts on evaluation of eGovernment research projects and programmes. In the following sections we outline the more detailed objectives and methodology of this step and provide some conclusions for future work.

2. Objectives and Scope

As already mentioned, the ultimate goal of Work package 7 “Transnational RTD Activities” of the eGOVERNET project is to prepare for possible future common research programmes and joint calls for project proposals. As a significant advancing contribution to this foreseen degree of coordination and cooperation, the Work package should establish a set of recommended harmonised routines for efficient evaluation and reviewal of projects and programmes of research for eGovernment, that could represent useful guidelines for the bodies that are funding and managing the research for eGovernment.

One of the first logical steps within the task (T7.2 - Create joint expert groups and propose procedures for evaluation and reviewal of proposed and on-going national research projects) is the establishing of an international database of experts on evaluation of eGovernment research projects and programmes. The intention is that such a database of national experts be used for evaluation and reviewal purposes truly internationally by the research funding and managing bodies from different European countries. For example this means that RCN in Norway might use expert evaluators from Ireland to evaluate some of their research proposals and vice versa. (Although such practice is common in some other disciplines of research and especially at the level of fundamental (or basic) research, it has so far been only exceptionally exploited in the domain of research for eGovernment.)

The main expectation is that the validated database of experts shall significantly facilitate the introduction and functioning of international evaluating and reviewing processes in the area of eGovernment research and thereby it shall lead to improved evaluations of research projects and programmes in a broader context. At the same time it should contribute to

- promoting the quality of research for eGovernment,
- stimulating more efficient use of available resources, hence improving the funding of eGovernment research,
- increasing the knowledge and awareness of eGovernment-related research projects and programmes across the EU states,
- enhancing the interoperability at international level,
- developing pan-European eGovernment services,
- building up the genuine European Research Area.

Evaluation is a critically important component of the eGovernment research management process on two occasions, namely:

- when proposals and applications for the funding of research projects are being reviewed (ex ante evaluation),
- when the interim and/or final results and outcomes of the research projects (and possibly their implementation) are being assessed (ex post evaluation).

The evaluation of the results and outcomes of the research projects can serve (and should increasingly be used) as input for thorough assessment of a given entire underlying programme for research and development or an institutional plan of R&D. (The

eGOVERNET project also considers research programmes at the regional and local level, provided that they are funding eGovernment R&D.) In this mode the ex post evaluation of projects represents a valuable tool for improving the strategic planning of future phases of research and development and, more generally, feedback applicable in revising the relevant policies.

In accordance with the above mentioned operational definition of eGovernment, the scope of research for eGovernment as considered by the eGOVERNET project covers not only the research in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT) but also socio-economic and legal disciplines. In summary, we are interested in procedures for evaluation of projects within programmes and institutional plans including the research domains schematically depicted in **Figure 1**. The figure shows that the initiation and funding of research relevant for eGovernment may stem from different policies.

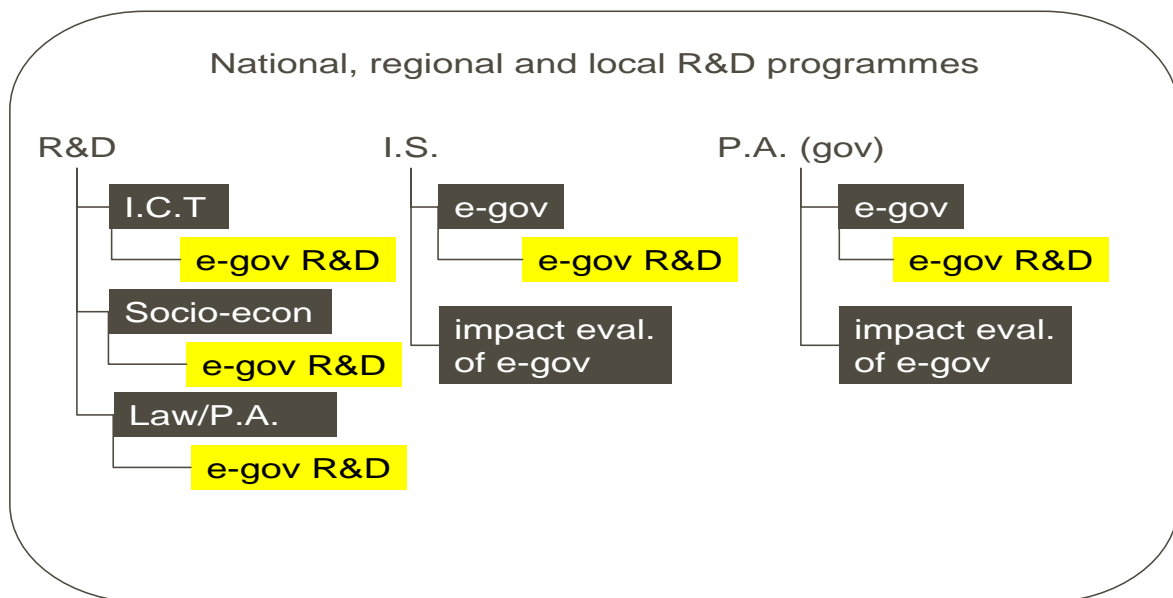


Fig 1 The domains of research for eGovernment covered by the eGOVERNET Project.

eGovernment R&D can be funded by different programmes and institutional schemes, typically originating from: Research and Development (R&D) policy; Information Society (I.S.) policy (implicitly or explicitly including the eGovernment policy), and Public Administration (P.A.) modernisation policy.

To complete the definition of the scope of the eGovernment Research that we are dealing with, we may recall that the considered research

- Includes different disciplines with equal relevance, with ICT as a key enabler,

- Includes different stages of research, from basic research up to action-oriented research and the innovative integration of existing solutions,
- Is carried out in both the public and the private sector (but the eGOVERNMENT project focuses on research funded through public sector programmes and institutions),
- Does not include the actual implementation of eGovernment,
- Does not include activities specific only to the health and education sectors, i.e. eHealth and eLearning.

3. Methodology

The scope outlined above predetermines the required types of expertise to be covered by the expert database. In the first phase (within milestone M 7.2 - First joint expert group established) we have for the first joint expert group selected experts covering basically the ICT research within the R&D policy funding stream of **Figure 1**. The main problem associated with establishing a sensible and sustainable system of joint expert groups constituting the database of experts at service to the European eGovernment research is to find the best experts who are at the same time willing to serve the purpose at a required level of commitment.

As sources of information for setting up the first joint expert group as well as for establishing the entire expert database we have used the pools of experts identified and approached by means of the following ways:

- By using the Who-is-who directory gradually built up within Work package 3 of the eGOVERNMENT project (see "European eGovernment research Who-is-who directory" - D3.1 - Work package 3, December 2006);¹
- By desk-top research performed on publicly available information sources;
- By gathering information and interviews held at the following meetings:
 - Workshop on "Needs for eGovernment Research Management", Warsaw (PL), 3 / 2006
 - 4th Eastern European eGov Days Conf., Prague (CZ), 4 / 2006
 - NATO Advanced Research Workshop, Borovec (BG), 6 / 2006
 - DEXA Conf., Krakow (PL), 9 / 2006
 - Economic Forum (Section IST & e-Services), Krynica Zdroj (PL), 9 / 2006
 - Brokerage (ATVN-EU-GP FP6) of eGovernment project proposals, Warsaw (PL), 10 / 2006
 - eChallenges Conf., Barcelona (ES), 10 / 2006

¹ The Who-is-who directory is a tool accessible from the eGOVERNMENT web site (www.egovernment.org)

Anyone can search this directory, and anyone can apply for personal data to be included, but there is a validation to make sure that people registering are relevant to the field. It is possible to search for people with evaluation experience. The database presented in this report will be separated from the Who-is-who directory, and not accessible for anyone. In this way it will be more exclusive in kind.

5th Eastern European eGov Days Conf., Prague (CZ), 4 / 2007

A series of eGOVERNET project Workshops (see Work packages 2 and 6);

Consultations with eGOVERNET project partners were conducted on the subject throughout a series of project board meetings and workshops, in particular then during the internal Working Meeting on Work package 7 held in Donegal, Ireland, in June 2007. Especially the following aspects and properties of the system of joint expert groups constituting the database of experts were discussed and clarified during the consultation:

- A sensible total number of joint expert groups in relation to the policy domains and research fields of **Figure 1**;
- Appropriate size of joint expert group(s);
- Optimum composition of joint expert group(s) as a function of type of stakeholder;
- Optimum composition of joint expert group(s) as a function of territorial coverage;
- Required degree of (potential) commitment of joint expert group(s) members;
- Types of information and data to be included in the database (contacts, affiliation, field(s) of expertise, etc);
- Suitable forms of presentation and publication of data on joint expert group(s), especially with concern to the protection of personal data.

As a result of the outlined discussions and consultations on the design and methodology of establishing and maintaining the Database of Experts on Evaluation (DEE) as well as on its sustainable future role and further aspects listed above, the basic principles have been consensually agreed by the project partners as follows:

- (i) No structure of the DEE shall be prescribed. The DEE will comprise of one large group, possibly called the Joint Expert Group of the eGOVERNET project (acronym JEG). However, retrieval by field of expertise as well as by other types of included data must be made possible.
- (ii) DEE shall contain data items as follows: expert names, affiliation (including type of sector), contact details and field(s) of expertise, and reference to relevant experience.
- (iii) The most practical way to compile and establish the DEE is to invite selected experts through the national eGOVERNET partner agencies by personal invitation letters explaining the DEE and JEG role as well as the implications of JEG membership.
- (iv) Regarding the degree of an expert's commitment, the JEG members should understand the mission of the DEE/JEG and be in agreement with being invited to evaluate and/or review both newly proposed and on-going projects of research for (or closely related to) eGovernment.
- (v) The DEE data (expert names, affiliation, sector, contact details and field(s) of expertise) will primarily be available only to eGOVERNET project partners and to the European Commission; at a later stage (yet to be decided) they should be made available to European national agencies funding and managing research for eGovernment.
- (vi) DEE will be held and maintained separately from the Who-is-who directory; the experts will be free to decide on whether they will (agree to) register at the Who-is-who directory.

Once included in the Who-is-who directory, their entries shall be tagged so as to make it possible to identify them as the members of JEG.

- (vii) The JEG should become a European-wide recognized brand name in the eGovernment (research and implementation) community, wherein the membership will be recognized as being respectable and prestigious. It should become one of the eGOVERNET project outcomes carrying the project message further on.
- (viii) The DEE/JEG cannot be a fixed and closed set, but must be continuously maintained and periodically updated. Newly emerging experts may be invited to join whereas, on the other hand, members who are repeatedly unresponsive to requests for evaluations and reviews may be excluded from JEG. The JEG members will be free to quit by their decision.

4. Conclusions and Further Work

Along with the maintenance, further developments and updates of the Database of Experts on Evaluation (Joint Expert Group of the eGOVERNET project), the DEE/JEG and its mission will be regularly discussed and reviewed both at formal and informal meetings of eGOVERNET project partners and stakeholders in order for a well-defined and updated version of the Database of Experts on Evaluation to be ready when the final exploitation plan will need to be written.

It may be possible to use the Database of Experts on Evaluation by the agencies of eGOVERNET partners and the European Commission for eGovernment research evaluations before the conclusion of the eGOVERNET project.

The Database of Experts on Evaluation will be updated and managed throughout the eGOVERNET project (and possibly by a follow-up project to eGOVERNET, if there is any).

The conception DEE/JEG should become one of the lasting outcomes of the eGOVERNET project and be then recognized as a useful tool in the context of EU-level management infrastructure for eGovernment research.