

Challenge of eCitizen

Steering Committee Meeting Memo

Venue: Odense, Denmark

Time : 23 March 2007

Present:

Mr. Pentti Taskinen, City of Turku
Ms. Teija Raninen, City of Turku
Ms. Katja Kaunismaa, The Baltic Institute of Finland (secretary)
Mr. Esa Kokkonen, The Baltic Institute of Finland (chairman)
Ms. Eija Uurtamo, City of Tampere
Mr. Veli-Matti Laitinen, City of Vaasa
Mr. Mikael Pasto, City of Vaasa
Mr. Roberto Resoli, Municipality of Trento
Ms. Vygintas Grinis, City of Kaunas
Mr. Erling Sørensen, IS Fyn

1. Opening

Mr Esa Kokkonen opened the meeting and welcomed the steering committee members.

2. Confirmation of the quorum of the meeting

As half of the steering committee members were present, the quorum of the meeting was confirmed

3. Approval of the meeting agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

4. Overview of the project progress in IV reporting period, July-Dec 2006

Ms Kaunismaa presented an overview of the project progress on the basis of the IV progress report. The slides used in the presentation are available in Moodle, Component 1.

Most partners have proceeded well according to their plans and have either finished or are finishing their major outputs in the project. The major joint output of the project, the eGovernment study, has

been finished and is now published also in the project website. Major outputs in each component were very shortly presented.

The overall cost report of the project is more or less in balance when the overall spending is looked at, but indicates problems in the cost division between budget lines. Compared to the original plans, too much has been used on salary, too little on external expertise.

These problems reflect more severe problems on component level. There are problems in cost division between budget lines especially in components 2 and 3. Furthermore, the predicted division of budget between the components is not being realised as planned. Component 2 seems to need more financing than planned, whereas components 4 and 5 need less. Ms Kaunismaa reminded the partners that component 5 and its main aim, awareness raising, are common to all partners and each partners must use a certain share of their budget in this component so that all plans and aims of the project can be realised. This is of course necessary to receive all the ERDF financing granted to the project.

There are also problems with some partner budgets – some partners have either used up or nearly used up their budgets, for example Sheffield and Bologna, whereas some partners have plenty left, for example Turku. After receiving the IV progress report, the JTS has sent questions to the LP about how the project can keep every partner active till the end of the project, and on the other ensure that all financing will be used up.

These problems have made it clear that there is a need to make a request for change for the project. This request needs to be made early enough so that the requested change will be in effect already for the current period. This change can include all necessary changes, between budget lines and components. Also the obvious problem of Vilnius dropping out of the project will be covered in the request.

5. Overview of the activities in V and VI reporting period, Jan-June & July-Dec 2007

Ms Kaunismaa presented short overview of the next activities in the project. The major joint activities for the rest of project are Tartu study tour and the final seminar. The Tartu study tour, to be organised as a joint effort of components 3 and 4, was discussed. It was decided that it will be organised in September. Many partners have troubles in this respect, as they have not reserved money to participate the tour. As there will be financing left over from Vilnius it was discussed that this money could be used for the tour. Also this must be included in the request for change.

Major joint outputs will be final reports for each component covering experiences and lessons learnt by each partner in each component. Each partner city needs to write a report for each component they are involved in, and it is the responsibility of the component's responsible partner to make a joint component report based on these partner reports. A model for component reports was presented to the steering committee. The model was approved, but it was also mentioned that it can be adjusted to the component's specific needs. The report model will be inserted into Moodle for possible further comments.

6. Problems regarding Vilnius' participation in eCitizen

Mr Kokkonen presented the problem regarding Vilnius' partnership in eCitizen. Vilnius has been very passive for the past year, and has not even submitted progress report for the past period, or an audited progress report for the III period. It hasn't provided the LP with the requested information on its progress in eCitizen in any form, not even after several contacts from LP. The latest information from Vilnius has been that they would like to resign from the project. Vilnius has promised to provide more information and its reasons regarding this but has not done that in the promised schedule.



It was decided that if the promised official letter is not provided in due time, the LP will send an official letter on behalf of the whole steering group, asking for Vilnius' reasons for resigning and giving Vilnius a week to respond. If they do not respond in time, the steering committee pre-decided to expel Vilnius from the project.

As a preliminary plan to divide Vilnius' unused budget, about 33 000 euros (ERDF), it was decided that it will be divided between partners according to the share that partners have of the overall budget.¹

7. Request for change in eCitizen

As explained earlier, the request for change will be made early enough for the changes to be valid already for the current period. Therefore LP will contact each partner in April to clarify their use of their budget during the last months of the project, as well as their need to use part of Vilnius' remaining budget for their expenses.

8. Final seminar of eCitizen

According to the project plan, the final seminar is supposed to take place in Tampere. However, Vaasa has expressed great interest to host the seminar. Other options, such as Brussels were also brought up.

Ms Kaunismaa presented an idea to organise the seminar as part of a two-day seminar in Tampere: the first day would be a local seminar with innovative methods of attracting citizens to participate in local decision making. The second day would be a large international expert seminar, where eCitizen final seminar would be embedded into the programme.

The venue, aim and ambition for the final seminar were discussed. It was mentioned that the idea of organising the final seminar as part of a larger international expert seminar (not necessarily in Tampere but in some other place), would guarantee larger participation and in that sense maybe wider audience for eCitizen results. On the other hand, it might also mean that eCitizen as a project would not be acknowledged as such but e.g. forgotten from the articles covering this seminar.

It was decided to leave this issue to be decided in the next steering committee meeting.

9. Other issues

Ms Kaunismaa reminded the partners that the executive summary of the eGovernment study should be translated into national languages.

After the latest progress report, the JTS has strongly reminded eCitizen project of the importance of following the publicity rules in Interreg III C programme also in local level activities. If they are not followed, the project will risk losing ERDF financing for its activities. As the results are being finalised and eventually promoted in partner cities, this question is more and more acute. Instructions for following the publicity rules are available in Moodle, Component 1.

Publicity of the project was discussed also on more general level. Vaasa brought up a need for a communication plan in the project, to help the partners to communicate the project results properly to the wider audience. In principle, on partner level it is enough to follow the communication plans of the city in this respect, naturally following also the Interreg III C publicity rules. Also, the awareness raising

¹ After re-contacting the JTS, it became clear that dividing Vilnius budget must have other grounding, based on real need and extra work done in the project. With good justification e.g. Sheffield and Bologna will be able to use the money to finish the project. Participating Tartu study tour might also be accepted as a reason to use this part of financing.

strategy made for Component 5 is supposed to help in promoting eCitizen results. However, a project level communication plan is a good way to collect the principles and instructions into one document and such a plan will be made available to partners in the nearest future.

Mr Kokkonen mentioned that eCitizen project has received a positive contact from the DG for Regional Policy. It has created a Regions for Economic Change initiative, including the so-called Fast Track network option around certain themes. Fast Track networks mean that the Commission would like to see about 30 themes to be promoted in these networks, for example building on the experiences and lessons learnt in on-going or just finished Interreg projects. eGovernment is one of these 30 themes, and eCitizen project has been suggested as the basis for a Fast Track network on this theme. All steering committee members agreed that their cities would like to continue as partners in this network. The procedures of actually starting up the network are still under discussion in the Commission. As soon as the details are known, they are delivered to the steering committee members.

Ms Kaunismaa told that she has been in contact with the organisers of the European Information Society Conference EISCO 2007 about the possibility to participate in the conference, either as part of the actual programme with a presentation or presenting the results in a stand. These discussions are still ongoing, but eCitizen should have a good chance to be included in the conference.

Mr Pasto mentioned that Vaasa will organise a virtual meeting in Component 3 utilising Skype. The meeting will take place in May. More detailed information will be delivered to partners via Moodle in April.

10. Next meeting

It was preliminarily decided that the next meeting should take place in Tartu in September, in connection with the study tour. The actual date and time will be informed to the steering committee members closer to the tour.

11. Closing

Mr Kokkonen closed the meeting at 15.00.

