Belgian social security (Belgium)

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eGovernment in Belgian social security, a successful combination of back office integration and an ePortal solution.

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An integrated workflow has consequently been developed between companies and social security institutions. A social security portal is available containing integrated services (information and transactions). The portal is intended for citizens, companies and public institutions. It contains numerous integrated services, over 4,000 pages of information and at the present time 16 operational transactions.

This case demonstrates the results of a strategic information management plan based on common strategic principles and on the use of common tools for data sharing and interchange. The case was cited as a best practice in the most recent web-based survey on electronic public services carried out at the request of the European Commission.

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E-government in Belgian social security, a successful combination of back office integration and an e-portal solution.

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Case description:

Background
Social security in Belgium is carried out by about 2000 public and private institutions, for which information is one of the main resources. The information needed by each of these institutions in order to calculate the contributions and the social security benefits is quite similar (identification data, data concerning professional and social status, data related to career history and wages). A lack of co-ordination and integration in the area of information management within the social security sector has led to the following problems:

- overloading the information burden for citizens and companies because of multiple requests for the same information. This has come about because various departments have always worked individually using their own systems, and socially insured people have had to go and fetch paper certificates from one social security institution only to deliver it to another in order to obtain their dues;

- suboptimal efficiency in the execution of social security, due to multiple encoding, validation and storage of the same information by many institutions;

- suboptimal support for social policy, owing to the absence of integrated statistical information across all sectors of social security;

- increased possibilities of fraud.

In order to solve these problems, a co-ordinated information management programme was introduced thirteen years ago. A social security network managed by the Crossroads Bank for Social Security has been
created, to which all 2000 social security institutions are connected. This network enables the forwarding of information collected from citizens and companies to any social security institution that needs it in order to complete a client transaction. Under the co-ordination of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security, the social security institutions thoroughly reviewed and automated their business processes in order to optimize the possibilities of mutual information exchange. This co-operation constitutes back office integration between all 2000 institutions.

Following the business process re-engineering within and between the social security institutions, electronic communications between companies and citizens were put in place. All exchanges between companies and the social security system are now fully automated. Paper exchange is no longer allowed. Companies can choose between several communication methods (FTP, transactions on a portal, vocal server). As for the citizens, they can still choose between electronic communications via a portal or paper based communication.

For these purposes, a coherent information model has been set up. The basic legal guidelines have been rewritten so that they refer to elements of the information model.

Objectives

The overall objective is to provide socially insured persons and companies with effective, efficient and user-focused services, which have a minimum of administrative formalities, by transforming internal and external processes and relationships through the use of technology, internet and new media. A holistic approach has been adopted by combining back office re-organization and integration with a revision of the front office.

1. Back office

The objective on the back office side was to re-organize all processes and relationships within each social security institution and between all 2000 social security institutions in order to obtain a situation where
- social security benefits are granted rapidly and correctly and, when possible, on the initiative of the social security institutions rather than on demand of a socially insured person;
- information already available in one social security institution and needed by another one is not collected again from the socially insured persons or companies, but exchanged electronically between the social security institutions concerned;
- sufficiently harmonized concepts are used throughout the whole social security sector in order to enable the re-use of information;
- social security institutions don't waste their time and resources executing the same tasks (e.g. encoding of information, validation of information, ) many times;
- integrated statistics from across social security sectors can be placed at the disposal of the policy makers.

2. Front office

The objective on the front office side is to deliver integrated electronic services to the many target groups (socially insured persons, companies, intermediaries,), when possible in a personalized and intuitive way via an access method (e.g. application to application, file transfer, portal,) chosen by the user.

The integrated services comprise information and transactions (e.g. direct electronic information exchange between the personnel administration software of a company and information systems of the social security institutions) and transactions on a portal site, with an integrated customer relations management system.

Personalization takes into account the specific characteristics of every user, based on a profile he explicitly delivers or on an analysis of his social security situation. Personalization involves, amongst other things, the fact that only relevant information and transactions are presented, a look and feel and the interface adapted to the user's wishes, and personalized support (e.g. contextual help, own language, adapted vocabulary, on-line simulations, ...).

Service delivery based on the logic of the users requires reorganization of the service delivery along life events (birth, marriage, etc.) or business episodes (starting a company, recruiting personnel, etc.), life styles (sport, culture, etc.), life status (unemployed, retired, etc.) or business sectors, or specific target groups.

Resources
The Belgian social security has built its e-Government solution on brand new web oriented architecture in close connection with integrated back office applications that have managed the exchange of information between social security institutions for over ten years.


A specific institution, the Crossroads Bank for Social Security, organizes, facilitates and controls the exchanges of information between the 2000 social security institutions. In order to guarantee the respect of the basic principles of privacy protection, every exchange of personal data has to be authorized by an independent Control Committee, designated by Parliament. Information is exchanged between social security institutions by structured messages, in an Edifact or XML syntax, from application to application. The same structured messages are used in a real time transactional mode as per file transfer in a batch mode. These messages consist of two main parts. A header contains routing and security information which allows the Crossroads Bank for Social Security to organize and control the information exchange without accessing the other data part that contains the functional data to be processed by the receiving institution. Institutions are connected to the Crossroads Bank for Social Security through point-to-point leased lines or through an extranet. The following open and proprietary protocols are supported: TCP/IP, X25 and IBM SNA. The Crossroads Bank for Social Security ensures protocol and syntax conversion from one institution to the other and controls and maintains integrity and security and guarantees the legitimacy of these exchanges. These legacy exchanges are active and constitute an existing back end network that can be invoked by the new web oriented applications in order to easily access remote information thus allowing designers and developers to concentrate on the front end part of new applications as well as on the use of new technologies.

2. The social security extranet

Every public social security institution is directly connected to an extranet. This extranet is a secure, TCP/IP based network that interconnects institutions and provides services such as:
- connection to the internet and other private networks such as the federal Metropolitan Area Network (FedMAN) and the TESTA network at European level;
- set of firewalls logging, controlling and allowing only authorized traffic;
- exchange of mails through a mail server, including S/MIME;
- anti-virus scanning of HTTP, FTP and SMTP traffic;
- anti-spamming facility;
- hosting of the social security portal;
- hosting of web sites;
- management of domain names (DNS);
- translation of IP addresses (NAT).

Communications between the social security portal and the distributed application servers within institutions run through this secure extranet.

3. The social security portal

The social security portal, which is accessible from the internet by employers and citizens is made up of the following components:
- a gateway allowing single sign on and supporting the SSL protocol;
- a portal server and a web server hosting static HTML pages and generic applications;
- a directory server that controls the identification of users and their access to protected applications;
- a central application server hosting interactive applications;
- a document server hosting instructions, dictionaries and on-line help;
- a customer relation management server for the management of the contact centre;
- a content management tool using standardized metadata and a standardized thesaurus enabling institutions to publish up to date information.

The available applications meet the J2EE specifications, using the following open standards: JDK 1.3, JSP 1.1, EJB 2.0, JMS 1.0.2, JDBC 2.0, JCA 1.0, JTA 1.0.1, SSL v3, X.509 v3 and LDAP v2.

The connection between the central application server and distributed application servers relies on following protocols: JRMP, IIOP, HTTP and HTTPS.

4. Other communication channels
Besides the portal providing a convenient user friendly interface, companies can also transfer their information to the social security institutions with XML messages via file transfer using the FTP protocol or the MQ Series tool. The description of these XML messages is publicly available under the form of XML Schemas downloadable from the social security portal. They are updated every 3 months. Users who are not so familiar with IT can even execute some transactions via a vocal server.

5. Integration with the federal portal and the universal messaging engine

At the federal level, similar e-Government initiatives are also under way, based on the experience of the social security sector. A federal MAN interconnects all federal ministries. On this MAN, a universal messaging engine (UME) is being implemented that allows message based communications between all federal ministries. It is based upon the open standards XML for the message syntax and HTTP for the communication protocol. A federal portal allows citizens and employers to get access to information and transactions managed by federal departments. The social security extranet and the federal MAN are interconnected. Information exchange between the social security sector and the federal ministries is organized through a bridge between the Crossroads Bank for Social Security and the UME. Transactions developed within the social security sector and information stored within the content management system of the social security sector are also accessible via the federal portal. An integrated user management is implemented by the interconnection of directories.

Activities

EC 2: Innovativeness
1. Strategic vision

The E-government approach within the Belgian social security sector is based on a clear vision of the use of information as a strategic resource. In that respect pure principles described below, are respected on five topics. The clear definition of these principles and their implementation by about 2000 institutions is quite innovative.

1.1. Information modelling

Information is modelled in a co-ordinated way so that the model fits as closely as possible to the real world. By doing so, changes to the information model due to changing legal environments are avoided. This modelling takes into account as much as possible the expected use cases for the information. It can be extended and adapted flexibly when the real world or the use cases of information change.

1.2. Unique collection and re-use of information

Information is only collected by a social security institution for well-defined purposes and in a proportional way to these purposes. All information is collected only once, as closely as possible to the authentic source. This way of proceeding avoids the frequently repeated identical questioning of the citizens or the companies by several social security institutions. The collection occurs via a channel selected by the person from whom the information is collected, but preferably in an electronic way, using uniform services such as single sign on, notification of receipt for each message, etc. Information is collected according to the information model and on the basis of uniform administrative instructions operating throughout all social security institutions. Ideally, the supplier of information has the possibility of controlling the quality of information before its transmission to a social security institution. This requires the public availability of software to check this quality. The collected information is validated once in compliance with an established distribution of tasks, by the most entitled institution or by the institution that has most interest in a correct validation. Information is shared with and re-used by the authorised users after the validation process.

1.3. Management of information

A functional task sharing is established indicating which institution stores and manages which kind of information in authentic form and makes this available to all authorized users. Information is stored in compliance with the information model. Information can be flexibly assembled according to ever changing legal concepts, which have to refer to the information model. Each social security institution has to report probable improprieties of information to the institution that is designated to validate the information. Each institution that has to validate information according to the agreed task sharing, must examine the reported probable improprieties, correct them when necessary and communicate the correct information to every
known interested social security institution. Information is only retained and managed as long as there exists a business need, a legislative or policy requirement or as long as it has historical or archive value and then it is preferably presented in an anonymous or encoded way.

1.4. Electronic exchange of information

Once collected and validated, information is stored, managed and exchanged electronically to avoid transcribing and re-entering it manually. Electronic information exchange occurs using a functional and technical interoperability framework which evolves permanently but gradually according to open market standards, and is independent of the methods of information exchange. Electronic information exchange can be initiated by the institution that possesses information, by the institution that needs information or by the institution that manages the interoperability framework, in this instance the Crossroads Bank for Social Security. The available information is used proactively for automatic granting of benefits, for prefilling when collecting information and for providing information to the persons concerned.

1.5. Protection of information

Security, integrity and confidentiality of information are ensured by integrating ICT measures with structural, organizational, physical, personnel screening and other security measures according to agreed policies. Personal data are used for purposes compatible with the purposes of the data collection and are only accessible to authorized institutions and users according to business needs, legislative or policy requirement. The access authorization to personal data is granted by an independent committee, after having checked whether the access conditions are met. The access authorizations are public. Every concrete electronic exchange of personal data is previously tested for compliance with the applicable access authorizations by an independent institution managing the interoperability framework, in this instance the Crossroads Bank for Social Security. Every concrete electronic exchange of personal data is logged, to be able to trace possible abuse afterwards. Each time the information is used for a decision, the information used is communicated to the person concerned together with the decision. Each person has the right to access and to correct his own personal data.

2. Some elements of implementation

Besides the strategic vision, some elements of implementation are also quite innovative.

2.1. The reference directory

The Crossroads Bank for Social Security is the hub between the 2000 social security institutions. Therefore it has a relational database called reference directory, that indicates

- for each citizen, in which social security institution he is known, for which capacity and for which period;
- for each kind of social security institution and capacity in which a socially insured person can be known in this institution, the types of data that are available;
- for each kind of social security institution and capacity in which a socially insured person can be known in this institution, the types of data which the institution needs and is authorized to receive to fulfil its tasks.

The Crossroads Bank for Social Security uses this reference directory

- to execute a preventive access control: i.e. to limit an institution's access to the allowed data and only for those persons on whom they have got a file;
- to route data requests to the social security institution that can deliver the data concerned;
- to automatically transmit the received data (e.g. change of an address) to the social security institutions that need the concerned data to fulfil their tasks.

2.2. The use of unique identification keys and social identity card

In order to facilitate the exchange of social data about citizens and companies, a unique key for every citizen and company is used throughout the whole social security system. The unique identification key for citizens is stored on an electronically readable social identity card. Based on this experience, a more general electronic identity card containing private keys and certificates used for electronic authentication and the generation of electronic signatures is now being implemented. Thanks to the use of a unique identifier and the social identity card, social security institutions are able to exchange information about the socially insured persons correctly and without risk of error through the network.
2.3. An integrated portal environment based on the user's logic.

The social security portal provides all the social security actors with complete, structured and up-to-date information on all aspects of social security (with links to the sites of the individual social security institutions) intuitively. The portal contains integrated transactions and an integrated information model, instructions, glossaries, XML-schemes and test scenarios for all electronic transactions with all social security institutions.

2.4. The use of an object oriented methodology.

All the information concerning the transactions is standardized for all social security sectors and requires co-ordinated management. The use of the object oriented methodology, applied to the technical documentation (glossaries and XML-schemes), has led to the creation of original and innovative applications. Throughout the technical documentation, each generic concept is defined in a unique way and is stored in a common electronic dictionary. The documentation concerning the transactions is divided into different specific electronic dictionaries which inherit from the generic concept and can be enriched by specific information. According to the heritage principle, each modification to one of the generic concepts is transferred to the entire documentation. This system guarantees a coherent and homogeneous management of all the administrative processes of the social security. The structured lists (postal codes, activity categories,) contained in the documentation are not only used in a documentary aim but also to test the declarations sent by the citizens and saved in the database. In order to accomplish both functions, the application was built according to the WOPM concept (Write Once, Publish Many) so that it becomes possible to generate automatically an identical structured table in different formats (XML, PDF, MS-Word,). This permits using the same source within interdependent applications.

EC 3 : Managing e-Government implementation

1. Within the social security sector

The Crossroads Bank offers within the social security a dialogue, reasoning and decision platform allowing the partner's expectations to be met. Various particular working structures characterize the co-operation model. The Management Board of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security consists of representatives of the socially insured people, the companies and the social security institutions. The Management Board approves the strategic, operational and financial plans of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security. All social security institutions are represented within a General Coordination Committee. This Committee is the concertation platform for the implementation of E-government initiatives within the social security sector. On the basis of an active collaboration between the various institutions, it defines the principles governing the development and operation of the services and identifies, prepares and develops concrete projects. Permanent or ad hoc working groups are instituted within the General Coordination Committee. They direct the work relating to the various projects conducted by the Crossroads Bank. In order to ensure optimal co-ordination of their functioning, the chairmen of the various working groups meet regularly as a Steering Committee.

2. Between the social security sector and the several government levels

In Belgium there are no less than 5 government levels:

- the federal level,
- the community level,
- the regional level,
- the provincial level and
- the communal level.

On top of these levels, the European level has to be added. Each of these government levels is competent for specific parts of public service delivery. Each public level and each agency having a mission of public interest necessarily develops its own dynamics concerning e-Government that enables the implementation of the initiatives from a decentralized approach. However, citizens and companies wish to receive integrated services throughout those levels and the agencies concerned. That is why it is important that a common vision exists between these levels and agencies and that the necessary co-ordination exists concerning the program and project management. In Belgium a co-operation agreement has therefore been concluded between the different public levels. Concretely the co-operation in Belgium develops through the progressive extension of a network of service integrators. A service integrator is an agency that is the motor and co-
ordinator of the e-Government initiatives at a specific level of the administration or in a specific sector of the public services. Concretely the Crossroads Bank for Social Security plays the role of service integrator in the social security sector.

Typical missions of a service integrator are:

- to stimulate and define programs and projects at the appropriate public level or in the appropriate sector of public services according to the common vision;
- to manage programs and projects at the appropriate public level or in the appropriate sector of public services;
- to extend basic services to sustain integrated services to the citizens, companies and their representatives, such as a physical network between all parties, a secure messaging system implemented on that physical network, business logic and work flow support and a portal environment with a content management system;
- the management of a reference directory (see the section "Innovativeness");
- the publication of the services furnished at the public level or in the sector concerned of public services in a service repository, that is publicly accessible, so that these services can be asked for by the interested people outside the public level of the concerned sector of public services.

The service integrators collaborate narrowly, among others in the following areas:

- they conclude between themselves agreements about the vision;
- they mutually co-ordinate the programs and projects;
- they connect their basic services to each other;
- they mutually agree on the work distribution concerning specific areas such as the development and the management of the basic services, so that on the one hand economies of scale are made and on the other hand the citizens, companies and their representatives get the guarantee that they don't have to make the same efforts several times towards basic services of different service integrators (e.g. by using the mutual directory services, one avoids the same citizen or enterprise having to register in several directories).

Output and Results

EC 4: Real practical results and impact

1. Back-office integration

The 2000 social security institutions are connected to the network managed by the Crossroads Bank. The network access is progressively extended to other institutions, amongst others to the institutions of the regions and communities and to private companies which offer services of general interest (e.g. public transport companies) and which need information about the social status of their customers. At the European level the Crossroads Bank for Social Security takes an active part in the implementation of the European network for the exchange of social data between the Member States. The Member States must be able to exchange data about migrant workers. In Belgium the Crossroads Bank for Social Security assumes the role of forwarding point for the electronic exchanges of European forms coming from foreign social security institutions and destined for Belgian social security institutions and vice versa. All institutions connected to the network can mutually consult their databases and exchange up to 170 different types of electronic messages. In 2003, 339 million messages were exchanged, which saved as many paper declarations or certificates. The cost is less than 5 eurocents per message. Besides considerably reducing red tape and costs, the network provides invaluable added value in terms of efficiency. For on-line messages, the time between the query and the reply is in 99.2% of cases less than 4 seconds. Basic concepts such as ‘wages’, ‘working days’, ‘days assimilated to working days’, ‘period of reference’, ‘place of residence’, are sufficiently harmonized throughout all social security sectors by an adaptation of the law. The use of the network also offers the possibility of an automatic granting of certain benefits. A concrete example is the automatic granting of old age pensions to unemployed people or to people suffering from an incapacity for work who come to the retiring age. Information available in the operational information systems of the several social security institutions is extracted and stored in data warehouses that can be used to deliver integrated statistics to support social policy. The most used data warehouse contains integrated information on the Belgian labour market (evolution) by combining information on employment, unemployment and social benefits. Last but not least, a better and more efficient way to combat fraud has been found. Two examples can illustrate this: illegal accumulation of benefits and other income can be more efficiently avoided; and it is no longer possible to declare different information concerning wages for the calculation of social security contributions on the one hand and the calculation of the several social security benefits on the other hand, because the information is collected only once and used for all purposes.
2. Service delivery to companies

Companies or their representatives (in particular social secretariats) can now carry out twenty-five electronic transactions, either from application to application (direct exchange of structured messages between the personnel administration software of the company and an application of a social security institution) or via the social security portal:

- quarterly multifunctional declaration of wages and working times to the National Office for Social Security, the institution that calculates the social security contributions;
- correction of the quarterly declaration to the National Office for Social Security;
- the immediate declaration of recruitment and discharge (the so-called DIMONA-declaration);
- consultation of the work force register;
- consultation of the directory of employers
- integrated electronic declaration of building yards;
- withholding of contribution in the construction sector;
- consultation of overdue payments of social security contributions by an employer;
- advance notification of temporary layoffs + validation book (2 transactions);
- declaration of an industrial accident, monthly report and resumption of work after an industrial accident (3 transactions);
- declaration of the beginning of a part-time job with retention of rights to unemployment benefits - private sector and education, municipalities or provinces – (2 transactions);
- monthly declaration of part-time work for the calculation of guaranteed income payments – private sector and education, municipalities or provinces – (2 transactions);
- monthly submission of work as an employee employed in a protected workplace;
- monthly declaration of the beginning of a part-time job with retention of rights to unemployment benefits – municipality or province – (2 transactions);
- monthly submission of hours of temporary unemployment;
- annual submission of hours of temporary unemployment;
- authorization request for the temporary removal of a pregnant employee (private sector).

The list of new transactions which will be possible in the coming years is long. Please consult the appendix 1 for more information on this subject.

The necessary procedures for user management have been put in place, such as the designation of local administrators in each company, combined with the allocation of a user name and password. Each employer has a personal page on the portal. The functioning also facilitates a method of interactive communication par excellence. The applications are not simply limited to the point where the administration requests and processes information. On the contrary, the traffic is very much bi-directional. Special attention is paid to user support for the portal site via instructions, on-line help for the applications, FAQs, permanent supervision of the functioning of the portal site and the Eranova contact centre (accessible 24 hours a day via telephone, fax, e-mail, contact form, 7 days a week). To document the extent and type of impact, it is interesting to describe briefly two of the transactions mentioned above.

The immediate declaration of recruitment and discharge (DIMONA)

At the very beginning of an employer-employee relation, the employer must enter an immediate electronic declaration of recruitment by which he communicates specific data (e.g. identification of the employer, identification of the employee, worker's starting date). At the end of an employment, i.e. when the employee is dismissed or whenever he leaves his employer, a similar obligation of immediate declaration of discharge applies. This immediate declaration of recruitment and discharge thus proves (also legally) the existence or (in the latter case) the ceasing of an employer-employee relation. The employer enters his declaration electronically to the National Office for Social Security (NOSS). The administration receives and confirms reception of the declaration. The administration verifies the identification data, gives a unique number to the declaration (DIMONA's number) and adds data needed by the employer. When all is validated, the employer receives the result via a DIMONA notification (push system). The newly created unique employer-employee link enables the employers to gradually get access to the social security network. Indeed, they can run an electronic consultation of the NOSS developed database on their workforce and possibly download their own data (call system). If necessary, the employers can also correct their declaration. Through the social security network, these data are automatically sent to the social security institutions that need them. These institutions can also consult the data. Thanks to the unique DIMONA guarantee of
identification and validation, control processes need not be repeated several times and data exchange is processed in a more dynamic and interactive way. DIMONA is a key to a uniform and correct identification of employees, used by all institutions of social security. At the time being, recruitment formalities are completed electronically for 98% of employees. The social security portal is one of the channels by which this declaration may be filed. This represents an enormous saving in terms of time and paper for companies. This declaration allows for the first time, a real interactivity between the employers and the administration.

GOTOT: Cross-border employment.

The GOTOT application is the first operational interactive application that exceeds the national level and that represents a high potential for the European e-cooperation. The GOTOT web application can be reached and tested through the social security portal (see appendix 2: GOTOT web application manual). GOTOT is an ICT application that takes care of the administration involved in the posting of workers abroad. The posting system allows a worker to work abroad during a certain period of time by order of his employer, whilst he remains subject to the social security authority of the country of origin. The posting is authorised by the competent authorities of the posting employer's country. Inside the European Union, the postings are authorised in the framework of the European regulation no. 1408/71. The employers and workers can submit their posting requests to the competent authorities (in Belgium the National Office for Social Security) via an internet application: in this way, Gotot provides a G2C (government to citizen) as well as a G2B (government to business) communication channel. The posting request is subject to several content controls and the applicant receives an acknowledgement directly of receipt for his request on his personal computer in which the requested posting is summarized. In a back office application, several content controls are carried out, after which the final posting form (inside the European Union, it is the form E101) is automatically printed and delivered to the posting employer. Agents of the competent authorities will only intervene in case of content problems; to do so, they have their own, internal application which allows them to treat the submitted posting requests (modify, approve, refuse).

The introduction of GOTOT has brought the following improvements in the treatment of postings:
- companies and citizens obtain direct, user friendly and quick access to the competent authorities;
- the time lapse from request to delivery of the document is three to four times shorter than before: it becomes easier for employers to send employees on urgent short term missions abroad;
- the posting requests are a lot more complete and correct: as a result the posting documents themselves are more accurate and complete, facilitating the task of inspection services abroad;
- the quality of the decisions taken by the competent authorities is improved: the application treats the normal cases automatically and the agents can concentrate their attention on the more complicated cases.

At the moment, the National Office for Social Security is working on the electronic delivery of posting documents: the whole procedure from the request to the delivery of the document will then be reduced to a couple of hours. Inside the European Union, the GOTOT application thus tallies with the promotion of the free circulation of people and services.

3. Service delivery to citizens

Information about the entire social security system is available on the portal via a question and answer system. For every piece of information, visitors can ask questions or make comments which are transmitted directly to the competent institution. The transactional aspect is currently being developed. In the short-term, citizens will be able to consult their personal data for specific social policy sectors. By the end of the year, a transaction will be launched by means of which citizens will be able to apply for their pension. Yet another example is the design of simulation environments, in which for example citizens who are considering taking early retirement can get an estimation of the amount of their pension.

EC 5 : Functionality

1. Efficiency gains

The system described leads to efficiency gains for all concerned parties and this in several respects:

in terms of cost: services are delivered at a lower total cost due to:
- a unique information collection using a common information model and administrative instructions;
- a reduced need for re-encoding of information by stimulating electronic information exchange between social security institutions and between these institutions and citizens and companies;
- a drastic reduction in the number of contacts between social security institutions and citizens or
companies;
- a functional task sharing concerning information management, information validation and application
development;

in terms of quantity: more services are delivered:
- all services and information are available at any time, from anywhere and through several devices;
- services are delivered in an integrated way according to the logic of the customer;

in terms of speed: the services are delivered in less time:
- social security benefits can be allocated much more quickly because information is available much faster;
- waiting and travel time is reduced;
- citizens and companies can directly interact with the competent social security institutions with real-time
feedback.

2. Effectiveness gains

Still more important than the efficiency gains are the gains in effectiveness. The use of ICT helps the social
security system to enhance the realization of its objectives. First, the implemented system makes it possible to deliver services
according to a higher quality standard. The service delivery is more correct, because of the implementation of validation procedures on
information and the automatic communication of changes of data to all interested social security institutions. The service
is delivered in a more personalized and participative way. The service delivery is more transparent to the
customer, who has the possibility of executing control over the service delivery process by accessing his
own files. Security and privacy protection is more or less guaranteed by the implementation of adequate
organizational, technical and legal measures. Secondly, a number of new services can be delivered. Social
security benefits are granted automatically and information concerning social security contributions and
benefits is sent automatically to companies and socially insured persons taking into account their specific
situation. Active search of non-take up of social benefits using data warehousing techniques is being started.
Personalized simulation environments are being developed. Thirdly, social policy is better supported by integrated, cross-sectoral statistical information and simulation
models.

Lessons and conclusions

EC 6 : Visibility

The vast co-ordination and the permanent co-operation between all social security institutions has permitted
the creation of a unique portal for the entire Belgian social security.

On the one hand the portal centralizes a large quantity of information on all the different aspects of social
security and takes into account the logic and the expectations of the end users: indeed, there is a distinction
between the part intended for the citizens and the part intended for the companies.

On the other hand the portal presently allows a lot of electronic transactions mainly directed at the
companies. During the course of 2001 and 2002 several information campaigns were organized throughout
the country in order to promote the new unique contact point for social security among the companies and
social secretariats and to show them examples of electronic transactions as well as to explain to them the
resulting administrative simplifications.

Today the automation of the Belgian social security system is mentioned as a best practice in the most
recent web-based survey on electronic public services ordered by the European Commission. This
automation is considered as a good example of the combination of back office integration and an e-portal
solution.

EC7 : Valuable learning points and transferability

e-Government within the social security sector is strategic in order to provide an optimal social protection,
i.e. an optimal tailoring of social security benefits to changing social needs in a financially feasible way with
special attention for prompt, efficient and high-quality services to the citizen.

e-Government results in a continuous optimization of service delivery and governance by transforming
internal and external relationships through technology, internet and new media. ICT is only a means.
Integrated e-Government has to be based upon a global vision of service delivery, multilateral agreements and interoperability. e-Government requires considering information as a strategic resource for all government activity (see the section ‘Innovativeness’), a change of the basic mindset (from government centric to customer centric) and a re-engineering of processes within each government institution, at each government level and across government levels.

To make the use of information as a strategic resource enforceable by citizens, companies and among government institutions, these principles should be formalized in legal texts, in order to introduce uniform definitions of the information elements and attributes and the definition of legal concepts that refer only to the defined information elements and attributes. The evolution towards the generalized use of ICT also requires adequate regulation of aspects such as the protection of human rights with regard to the processing of personal information, the protection against ICT crime, the ICT security, unique identification keys, the probative value of electronic information, the electronic signature, the equal access to public services, the transparency of administration, ...

e-Government needs co-operation between governmental institutions at several levels and co-operation between government and the private sector. A common vision is needed, but the implementation should be operated from a decentralized approach, but with co-ordinated planning and program management (think global, act local).

A good way to elaborate this co-operation is the creation of a network of service integrators (see the section Managing e-Government implementation). A service integrator is an agency that is the motor and co-ordinator of the e-Government initiatives at a specific level of the administration or in a specific sector of the public services. The service integrators collaborate narrowly, among others in the following areas:
- they conclude between themselves agreements about the vision;
- they mutually co-ordinate the programs and projects;
- they connect their basic services to each other;
- they mutually agree on the work distribution concerning specific areas such as the development and the management of the basic services, so that on the one hand economies of scale are made and on the other hand the citizens, companies and their representatives get the guarantee that they don't have to make the same efforts several times towards basic services of different service integrators (e.g. by using the mutual directory services, one avoids that the same citizen or enterprise has to register in several directories).

Adequate measures are necessary to prevent a digital divide. The best way to prevent such a divide is the automatic granting of benefits and rights.

e-Government initiatives are most successful when they have full support of policymakers at the highest level and combine a long term vision with quick wins. Therefore, it is very important to permanently interact with the policymakers on the vision, the objectives and the obtained results.

e-Government programs should also try to avoid or to limit a number of risks. Some important risks to deal with are
- the fact that an average public sector project is more complex than an average private sector project, due to interaction with a larger number of stakeholders (elected officials, public employees, members of interest groups, voters, tax payers, recipients of public services, other governmental institutions, other government levels,...) and its execution in a less stable environment;
- the race for quick wins doesn't stimulate development of well conceived systems based on re-engineering;
- the public sector tends, perhaps for reason of prestige, to favour tailor-made, high-risk, state-of-the-art solutions even when alternative, off-the-shelf, cheap, tried and tested systems are available;
- in the public sector, there is typically no financial margin of value to be added by innovation;
- intermediaries often perceive e-government as a threat to their competences;
- skills and knowledge are not always available;
- there is need for a radical cultural change within government, e.g. from hierarchy to participation and teamwork, empowering rather than serving, rewarding entrepreneurship within government, ex post evaluation on output, not ex ante control of every input.

References and links
https://www.socialsecurity.be
www.ksz.fgov.be

Contact Information
Organisation: Crossroad Bank for Social Security / National Office for Social Security
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    Chaussée Saint-Pierre 375
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Appendix 1: planning

Beginning 2005
- application for unemployment benefits
- declaration of fulltime or half-time early retirement
- declaration of the removal of a pregnant employee

At a date still to be fixed
- electronic data exchange between sickness funds and employers necessary to deal with an application for benefits in case of incapacity for work, maternity leave, complete or partial leave from work as a measure to protect motherhood, leave for fatherhood
- declaration of resumption of work after a period of incapacity for work
- declaration of an employee’s holiday days
- declaration of extension post-natal leave
Appendix 2

Gotot – web application – manual

The Gotot web application can be reached through the Portal Site of Belgian Social Security:

www.socialsecurity.be

Choose ‘FR’ for the French version
Choose ‘L’employeur’ in the left column
Choose ‘occupation’ in the left column
Choose ‘détachement à l’étranger’ in the left column
Choose ‘Demande’ (request) in the right column

A program is now downloaded to your computer: wait for the first screen of the program to appear

In all the screens that will appear there are 4 buttons at the bottom:

‘<’ brings you back to the previous screen in order to consult or modify the data you provided in that screen

’>’ takes you to the next screen on condition that the current screen is sufficiently filled in

’?’ takes you to the help function for the current screen

‘Quitter’ allows you to quit the application without saving your request

First screen (type of request):

Choose ‘Nouvelle demande de détachement’ (new request for detachment)

A pop up message explains which data you will need to make your request

Click ‘ok’ in the pop up

Continue with ’>’

Second screen (author of the request):

Fill in (fictitious data):

- Nom & Prénom : name and first name
- Société : name of your firm
- E-mail : ‘test@test’

Continue with ’>’

Third screen (sending employer):

Numéro d'immatriculation … : must be ‘99909’

Continue with ’>’

Fourth screen (period and conditions of detachment):

Date de début prévue (starting date of the detachment) : ‘01082003’
Date de fin prévue (end date) : ‘15082003’
N° de la commission paritaire (economical sector) : choose ‘100’
Qui paye la rémunération (who pays the salary) : check ‘L’entreprise d’envoi …’
Continue with ‘>’

Fifth screen (type of destination) :
Choose ‘Entreprise’ (preset choice)
Continue with ‘>’

Sixth screen (destination) :
Fill in (fictitious data):
  Dénomination (name) : ‘Destination test’
  Rue (street) : ‘x’
  Code postal (postcode) : ‘x’
  Commune (town) : ‘x’
  Pays : choose from the list : Allemagne
Continue with ‘>’

Seventh screen (employee to be detached):
Numéro d’identification (personal identification number) : must be ‘56070117352’
Nom (name : fictitious) : ‘Smith’
Prénom (first name : fictitious) : ‘John’
Nationalité (nationality) : choose ‘00150 Belgique’ from the drop down list
Adresse officielle … (official adress) :
  Rue (street) : ‘x’
  Code Postal (postcode) : ‘x’
  Commune (town) : ‘x’
  Pays (land) : choose ‘00150 Belgique’ from the drop down list
Le travailleur …. : choose ‘oui’
Dans quelle langue … : choose ‘Français’
Date d’entrée en service (date of employment) : ‘01012000’
Continue with ‘>’

Now you will receive the following screen in which your request is summarised :
Choose ‘Envoyer’ (send) to confirm your request

Answer from the server:

('Your request has been accepted en has received the receipt number 0000013404-18')

Press ‘ok’ to continue

Popup security information : press ‘Yes’

The return receipt is displayed on your computer

Popup ‘Veuillez bien imprimer cette page …’ (Please print this page ..) : press ‘ok’

The return receipt looks as follows:
Accusé de réception de la demande de détachement

Ce document confirme que vous avez introduit une demande de détachement valable auprès des autorités belges, sans toutefois donner de réponse quant à l'approbation finale de cette demande.

Votre demande a été reçue le 2003/03/25 et s'est vue attribuer le numéro d'accusé de réception suivant: 0000013404-18

Employeur détaché :
Numéro d'immatriculation à l'ONSS: 0000099999

Travailleur détaché :
Numéro d'identification à la Sécurité Sociale (NISS): 56070117352
Nom : Smith
Prénom : John

Données relatives au détachement :
Période : du 2003/08/01 au 2003/08/15
Destination Pays : ALLEMAGNE
Lieu(x) d'occupation :
[Destination test]

L'Administrateur Général,
par délégation,

P. Noulez
Conseiller

Pour obtenir de plus amples informations sur le traitement de cette demande,
vous pouvez vous adresser à:
Centre de Contact Bruxelles (tel. 02/511 31 51)
To print out the return receipt:
- click anywhere on the receipt
- File > Page Setup : portrait > ok
- File > Print > ok

At this moment the webapplication is still loaded on your pc: it allows you to introduce other, similar requests for detachment.

To leave the application:
Click the button ‘Quitter’ (‘Quit’) and choose ‘oui’ (‘yes’) to confirm