THE CITY, MOTOR OF E-GOVERNMENT

GCD POLICY PAPER ADOPTED DURING THE FIRST STEERING COMMITTEE IN ISSY-LES-MOULINEAUX IN 2002

The approach: Why a Global Dialogue?

The Global Cities Dialogue is an international network of Mayors, who believe that the development of the Information Society should be for the benefit of all the citizens, communities and peoples of the world, and committed themselves, in signing the Helsinki Declaration "Mayors of the World for a Global Cities Dialogue on the Information Society", to work tirelessly to realise this promise of equal opportunities and access for all.

The irruption of the Internet is not only an economic phenomenon. Access to the network bears in itself the seeds of a new society, the Information Society, which will progressively replace the industrial society that developed in the 19th and 20th centuries and marked the end of the millennium. A political reflection is required for the construction of this society, as elected politicians have the obligation of accompanying this evolution and of ensuring that nobody is excluded of its benefits.

This global dialogue shall be interpreted as a network of common reflection for the exchange of experiences between local politicians, who have to respond every day to the increasingly demanding requirements of their citizens. It is, in consequence, a political act; an alliance of common political wills, to remind that the Information Society is mainly and above all, a change of society.

It is also a political platform that shall allow us to make our voice sound loud in the making of this new society. We consider that the local territory is today a very pertinent level, as cities are the main melting pots for innovation and change, both for the formal and the informal components of our societies. Cities are essential in searching new mechanisms for global governance and in the transition towards the knowledge society.

This global dialogue between mayors shall also allow us to remind national governments that the most innovative experiences, observed in the ICT domain, are frequently put into place at the city level. As we are in permanent and direct contact with the citizen, we perfectly measure the impact of the initiatives launched in their direction.

The support and interest that we receive, since the origin, from high instances of the European Union, are guided by sharing a willingness to make our societies progress and contributing to a better governance. The co-operation agreement that we have signed with the Global Business Dialogue on e-commerce (GBDe), is also inserted in this perspective.

The challenge: What is changing at city level?

Information and Communication Technologies impose new ways of government to all political representatives. They offer, at the same time, new opportunities for the participation of the civil society in the democratic process. They are, in consequence, the tools for the required modernisation of administrations and of the relations between political representatives and the citizens.

All over the world, citizens are asking governments to be more open in their relation with the civil society. Access to information and knowledge in the making of political decisions is one of the main characteristics of a renewed system. A better-informed citizen is in a better position to exercise his/her rights, play his/her role, assume responsibilities, and define civic relations. Citizens expect secured services responding to their needs and a better "customer service" from their administrations.

Public authorities, both at national and local levels, are well aware of the key role they can play and of the responsibilities they have, in the making of the Information Society. Based on the use of ICT, e-government shall allow a considerable improvement of the quality of life of citizens, a reduction in cost and time, the participation of all and an enhanced citizenship and cultural identity.

Applying the principle of transparency shall permit the delivering of better services, and the creation of less centralised and hierarchical administrations, with administrators responding better to citizens´ needs. In the future, most administrative processes will be delivered in an electronic way and customers will be able to use secured transactions, including interactive exchange of information, data processing procedures, on-line filling of forms, and payments.

All over the world, there is real progress in the adaptation of our administrations to ICT. Local entities, in particular, have put into practice, for several years now, modern and performing tools in order to optimise the public service, both in the back and front office. Town Halls have entered a "customer oriented" logic of service to citizens. However, it remains a difficult process, in particular in large administrations.

e-Government is more a problem of modifying the relations with citizens than a technological challenge. Using ICT is only going to serve citizens if it is accompanied by a strong and durable political will of reforming institutions and changing administrative practices. This is not only a simple substitution of the counter by the screen, and implies a reflection on the administrative structures and practices. Beyond "pipes", local entities shall propose real content and real services.

The policy statement: What are our priorities?

1   On the basis of our daily experiences and of the developments of current trends and expectations, we propose that GCD member cities commit themselves to contributing in the development of the following priorities, proposing concrete actions to be included in future developments of the GCD Action Plan, at an operative level, and disseminating the policy messages through GCD events:

2   **Exploit the power of Local Leadership**: increase awareness and visibility on the role of political leaders and of the public sector as **motors of change**, translating expectations and experimentations into concrete realisations, which bring real benefits for users, citizens, companies and administrations.

3   **Fight the digital divide:** work together for the realisation of an **inclusive Information Society**, contributing to an improved access to new technologies and services, by all available means, not only the computer, but also mobile telephones, portable personal assistants, and interactive television, with a technology-neutral approach, and taking particular care of minority groups and persons with disabilities.

4   **Promote linguistic and cultural diversity** in the Information Society, trying progressively to extend the GCD to all the global regions of the world and promoting interaction in all geographic and cultural contexts.

5   **Promote confidence and security** in the use of networks: collaborating in the attainment of a **safe Internet**, which safeguards **privacy**, and allows **secure transactions** in interactive services.

6   **Use increasingly e-public procurement** as example and incentive for the wide deployment of e-commerce. Aggregate demand to gain scale and scope economies. Coordinate action to obtain a greater impact in the stimulation of the market. Promote the standardised use of electronic signatures.

7   **Stimulate the social dialogue**: promoting a greater participation of the **civil society,** improvement of the **democratic process,** and a **systematic dialogue and collaboration** with the private and not-for-profit sectors.

8   **Provide increasingly true inter-active services**: which are based on the principle of **"one stop shopping"** and are **user oriented** and centred on personal and business demands and not on the convenience of the providers.

9   **Modernise local government and administration:** adapting to technological and societal change and introducing **innovation** and **modernisation** on the basis of the identification and **exchange of best practices**.

10   **Promote lifelong learning and knowledge management** practices and tools for the adaptation of the human resources in public administrations to the new knowledge society paradigm.

11   **Request support from national and international** governments and organisations, in order to **enhance the role of cities**, where most people live and most economic activity takes place, **and of local governments**, as the most important interface with citizens and enterprises, in the realisation of the Information Society.