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ONE-STOP-GOVERNMENT IN BELGIUM

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This article aims at providing a broad view of the current developments of One-Stop-Government (OSG) projects in the federal state of Belgium. After an introduction explaining the federal structure of the country and presenting the main federal, regional and local policies in the field of OSG, the paper describes some current projects at those three levels and describes some of these initiatives. Finally, the authors analyse and assess the OSG projects conducted in Belgium.

1. One-Stop-Government concepts in Belgian public administration reforms

1.1 *One-Stop-Government "language" in public administration reform policy papers*

Introduction - Explanation of the federal structure of Belgium¹

* This research has been led under the frame of the COST A14 Action "Government and democracy in the information age" and of the Interuniversity Poles of Attraction Programme (IPA 4/31, Belgian Federal Service for the Science, the Technology and the Culture - SSTC) "Research and Interdisciplinary Evaluation on the Information Society: Networks, Uses and Roles of the State".

¹ VAN BASTELAER, Béatrice, LOBET-MARIS, Claire (CITA) and PIERSON, Jo (SMIT) in collaboration with Jean-Claude BURGELMAN, Yves PUNIE and Frank NEUCKENS (SMIT) (1999): Chapter 2: Development of Multimedia in Belgium. In: WILLIAMS, Robin and SLACK, Roger (eds): *Europe Appropriates Multimedia. A Study of the National Uptake of Multimedia in Eight European Countries and Japan*, STS-senter for teknologi og samfunn, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, rapport nr. 42, april 1999, ISSN 0802-3581-42, pp. 21-82.

Since 1993, the Belgian constitution states that Belgium is a federal state composed of communities and regions. Four legal reforms were implemented in 1970, 1980, 1988-89, and 1993 to reach this federal status. The Federal state is responsible for the general concerns of all Belgian citizens (finances, Army, Justice, social security, external affairs, development co-operation, monetary policy, responsibilities within the European Union and NATO, ..) while the division of competencies between communities and regions is defined along two main axes. The first axis concerns language and, more generally, culture. As Belgium has three official languages (French, Dutch and German), it also has three communities that are defined by the "people who compose them and the links that join these people"², that is to say language and culture. Therefore, Belgium is composed of the French-speaking Community, the Dutch-speaking or Flemish Community and the German-speaking Community, which is the smallest one. The division into regions is based on economic autonomy and independence. Belgium has three regions: the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region and the Brussels-Capital Region. These regions are competent for economic matters. In some respects, they can be compared with the American states or the German Länders.

Each entity (region and community) has a council (legislative body) and a government (executive body), except the Flemish Region and Community which have a common council and government.

The concept of One-Stop-Government (OSG) appeared on the political scene of the different federal entities several times: 1997 for the federal government, 1996 for the Flemish government and 1989 for the Walloon government but only on the form of a green phone, not with major projects regarding on-line administrations. In relation to the European agenda for the Information Society, the different governments launched agendas for action in the field of new technologies and administration.

As elections occurred in Belgium in June 1999 at the federal and regional levels, consequently, due to new coalitions at almost all these levels (including the liberal party, the socialist party and the green party, except for Brussels), new actions are taken and new policies will be followed in the next months. Some of these new action lines are de-

² http://belgium.fgov.be/pa/ena_frame.htm

scribed in the official policy declarations (see below) but it is of course too early to say if and how they will be implemented.

i) At the federal level³

In May 97, a Federal Action Plan for the Information Society at the level of federal authorities (*Plan d'actions coordonnées pour la Société de l'Information au sein des autorités fédérales, 1997-1999*) has been accepted by the federal council of ministers.

This action plan makes a clear distinction between actions devoted to the administration itself and actions open to the public, either citizens or firms. The action plan is mainly oriented towards the federal administrations, aiming for instance at organising the administrative databases managed by the different departments in a coherent information system and at improving the accessibility for the different departments to the appropriate information. This strategy wants to reverse the 'departmentalisation' and the fragmentation of the federal information system by creating a unique interface, Fedenet (the federal Intranet), centrally managed by a federal cell depending on the Prime Minister department and in charge of hosting the federal databases and regulating the accesses. As far as public applications are concerned, the action plan is quite 'cautious' regarding the use of new technologies as Internet, explaining that the actual rate of Internet diffusion amongst the Belgian population is too low and recalling that, as the 'protector of the general interest', the federal government cannot invest too much in technological applications that benefit only to a small number of highly educated people. This may explain the absence of projects and experiences of OSG on the federal scene, at least OSG based on Internet technologies. This can also explain that the first OSG application launched by the federal government lies on phone technologies.

The June 99 elections and the investiture of a new political coalition for the federal government could give an impulse to deep administrative reforms. The declaration of investiture '*La voie vers le 21ème siècle*' ('The way to the XXI century') places the reforms and the effi-

³ Plan d'actions coordonnées pour la Société de l'Information au sein des autorités fédérales, 1997-1999, <http://belgium.fgov.be/Frans/217/21704/infosoc/0000.htm>

Declaration of investiture '*La voie vers le 21ème siècle*'

ciency of the administration on the top of the political agenda of the future government. The first section stresses the necessity to restore and reform the communication between citizens and administration via the implementation of OSG based on information and communication technologies that could deliver a maximum of administrative documents and services. This high priority put on the reforms of administration must be analysed in the particular context of a general crisis of confidence that has affected the administration as a result of recent dramatic events.

ii) At the regional level

a. Flanders⁴

In 1996, the Flemish government adopted an action plan for the development of multimedia in Flanders (*Multimedia in Vlaanderen, Sterregio of de Informatiesnelweg - beleidsprioriteiten 1996-1999*). This document describes the priorities of the Flemish government on this subject for the years 1996-1999. Within the different action lines listed, one is mainly related to OSG: the tele-administration (*tele-administratie*) programme.

This programme has been launched by the Flemish government in July 1997. It has two main aims: to promote the use of ICT by the Flemish administration and to encourage the use of those technologies by funding 'bottom up' projects. In this perspective, the Flemish government launched a call for proposals dedicated to the Flemish administrations. Out of 48 projects proposed by the different administrations, seven pilot projects have been selected. One of the selection criteria was that the system should rely on co-operation between different administrative departments. A second criteria concerned the use of Internet technologies.

In its political agreement⁵, the new Flemish government also stressed its intention to develop One-Stop-Government (*geïntegreerd loket*) but does not detail any concrete action.

⁴ Multimedia in Vlaanderen, Sterregio of de Informatiesnelweg - beleidsprioriteiten 1996-1999, Teleadministratie, <http://www.vlaanderen.be/ned/sites/teleadmin/maart98/projecten.htm>

⁵ Regeerakkoord «Een nieuw project voor Vlaanderen», <http://www.vlaanderen.be/ned/sites/sites/regeerakkoord>

b. Wallonia

In 1997, the Walloon government adopted a Complementary Declaration for the Regional Policy (1997-1999) (*Déclaration de politique régionale complémentaire 1997-1999*)⁶. The fifth axis, related to telecommunications, involves some elements linked to on-line administrations and One-Stop-Government but it seems that most of these actions remain at the level of political intention. However, a new government has been elected in June 1999 and announced new measures in that field. In its *Contrat d'avenir pour la Wallonie*⁷ (the contract for the future of Wallonia), the Walloon government stressed the importance of one stop shopping and its will to develop such initiative, either virtual or physical. The new months will be interesting to follow regarding the actions that will be concretely taken at that level.

Besides these political action plans, the Walloon Region proposed, since 10 years now, a One-Stop-Government initiative with the Walloon *Téléphone Vert* (Green Phone - see below). Moreover, a new Web site is under construction to offer a unique entry point to the Walloon administrations while respecting the autonomy of the different ministries.

iii) At the local level⁸

Different initiatives are taken at the local level and can be linked with the development of digital cities. However, only few of them (Charleroi, Antwerp) are based on the One-Stop-Government concept and the different possibilities offered are rather heterogeneous, due to the important autonomy of the local municipalities. In the former govern-

⁶ Déclaration de politique régionale complémentaire 1997-1999 - Axe 5

⁷ Contrat d'avenir pour la Wallonie, <http://www.avenir-wallon.be/contrat.htm>

⁸ Note au gouvernement wallon, Programme de développement de télé-services du Ministre des Affaires intérieures et de la Fonction publique, 19 novembre 1998; STEYAERT Johan (1999): 'De gemeentelijke website in Vlaanderen', Actes de la deuxième Rencontre Réelle de Villes Virtuelles, CITA-FUNDP Namur, 28 juin 1999; VAN BASTELAER Béatrice (1999): 'Les villes virtuelles en Belgique francophone et germanophone', Actes de la deuxième Rencontre Réelle de Villes Virtuelles (2ème partie), CITA-FUNDP Namur, 28 juin 1999.

ment, the Walloon Ministry for Internal Affairs, which is responsible for the local municipalities, has recently launched a program for the development of teleservices in almost 45 pilot municipalities. The new minister will follow this policy but these initiatives are not really integrated in a whole OSG policy.

1.2 One-Stop-Government "language" in public administration literature

OSG is not very present in Belgian administrative literature, even if, as in other European countries, the discourses on electronic democracy and virtual administration are very fashionable. In a 1997 survey led by CITA and CRID (Centre de Recherche en Informatique et Droit)⁹ on the federal priorities regarding the development of teleservices, a matrix of teleservices applications has been defined. This matrix has been used as a framework to assess the major initiatives taken by Belgian Governmental entities.

Teleservices applications		
Informa- tional serv- ices	Information desk	General non interactive information on administrative organisation (who, what, where, when)
	Teleinformation	General information on administrative organisation (opcit.) and possibilities to get in line with the ad hoc services
	Teleloading	Possibility to load electronic administrative forms or documents
Transac- tional serv- ices	Teledeclaration	Possibility to fill in an electronic administrative form
	Teleprocedure	Possibility to electronically manage an entire administrative procedure based on multiple contacts between administrative departments and user
	Telepayment	Possibility to electronically pay a docu-

⁹ DIENG Dominique, GERARD Philippe, LAMOULINE Christian (1997): Quelles priorités pour l'Administration fédérale dans la Société de l'Information ? CRID-CITA, FUNDP Namur, novembre 1997.

Teleservices applications		
		ment, a service or a procedure supplied by the administration

Table 1: Source: Adapted from DIENG Dominique, GERARD Philippe, LAMOULINE Christian (1997): Quelles priorités pour l'Administration fédérale dans la Société de l'Information ? CRID-CITA, FUNDP Namur, novembre 1997, p. 22

The survey shows that most of the initiatives are conceived as platforms providing general information of public interest. OSG implementation, including interdepartmental co-operation and the possibility to electronically achieve administrative procedures and transactions, remains very rare. As we will see below, those OSG initiatives are more present at the local level or in specific public areas recently liberalised and of high stake regarding societal implications as, for instance, the management of the labour market and job placement.

This survey and the literature show that some major barriers impede the full development of OSG strategies in the different federal entities.

First of all the legal context remains uncertain and still constitutes a serious barrier for the implementation of OSG. The digital signature and the implementation of Certification Authorities are not yet ratified in the Belgian legislation, even if two legal texts aiming at legalising the digital signature for commercial and administrative acts are now under the parliamentary discussion. This slow adaptation of the Belgian legal context, compared to, for instance, the German one, can partly explain the delay taken by Belgian administrations to implement OSG.

The second factor is a financial one due to the important public deficit of the Belgian State. This situation raises important questions about the public investment the Belgian Authorities can concede to electronic initiatives requiring high costs for databases adaptation, hardware implementation and software development. As we will show below, the major initiatives approaching OSG concept in Belgium have benefited from additional funds provided by extraordinary budget related to specific programmes or from EU funds.

The third factor is organisational and is related to the difficulty of implementing horizontal structure able to lead interdepartmental initia-

tives. The verticality of the administration is very strong in Belgium and co-operation between administrations is far from the current administrative culture. This administrative culture represents an important barrier for OSG development, specially for the federal and regional administrations. The situation seems more open at the local level due to the physical proximity and the daily contacts between the different administrative entities.

The last factor that slows the development of OSG in Belgium concerns the scarcity of computational skills on the Belgian labour market. This scarcity constitutes a real difficulty for the public sector since the salaries proposed are not enough competitive to attract and keep high qualified people needed to develop and reform the information systems of the public administrations. Even if out-sourcing is a current practice in the public administrations, the presence of computational skills remains a necessity to define the administrative strategies and plans of action. Though, this presence is very difficult to insure and to maintain in most of the public administration.

All those factors can explain that the major initiatives developed in Belgium are very superficial as far as the administrative information systems are concerned. Most of the time, they offer an administrative informational window, but without deep reforms of the back-office management and of the information system. To some extent, it seems that those developments of informational windows, very marked by the Internet *goût du jour* pressure, have led the administration away from deep and needed administrative and informational reforms.

2. Current practice

2.1 List of the selected projects

Name of the project and level of development	Short description	Concerned administrations	1st cr.	2nd cr.	3rd cr.	4th cr.
Federal level						
SFI - BP 3000	Single window for	Federal govern-	X	X		X

Name of the project and level of development	Short description	Concerned administrations	1st cr.	2nd cr.	3rd cr.	4th cr.
http://belgium.fgov.be/Frans/217/21704/infosoc/ann3.htm	information on the federal authorities and departments through a Web site and a call centre (not operational now)	ment - federal information service (SFI: Service fédéral d'information)				
Regional level						
Flanders						
Infolijn http://www.vlaanderen.be/infolijn 0800/30201	Single window for information on the Flemish authorities through a Web site or a green phone	Flemish government - Coordination department	X	X		X
WIS-KISS VDAB http://www.vdab.be	* Employment stock exchange based on an interactive database accessible through Internet and 400 public kiosks * Automatic matching between job demands and offers, automatic sending of e-mails, teleservices * Initiated in 1994	Flemish regional employment agency	X	X	X	X
KMO-Loket http://www.kmolo.ket.be/	Single window for SMEs and self-employed people on advise premium, direct advises from companies auditors	Flemish government - Ministry of Environment and Equipment and Ministry of Economy, in collaboration with the Flemish Institute for self-employed people (VIZO)	X	X		X
IWT-KMO-network http://www.iwt.be/	* Electronic network providing information and	Flemish government institution for the support	X	X		

Name of the project and level of development	Short description	Concerned administrations	1st cr.	2nd cr.	3rd cr.	4th cr.
kmonet.htm	services on innovation to the Flemish companies. * Operational since March 1997	and stimulation of the industry research and technology transfer in the Flemish industry (IWT)				
EDISON http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edison/edison_engl.htm	* EDI exchange between 3000 schools administrative services and the Flemish department of Education * Initiated in 1991	Ministry of the Flemish Community - Education Department	X	X		X
Wallonia						
PB-Flow	* Workflow procedures and single window regarding planning permission, involving architects, a city authority and a regional administration * Fully tested but not yet operational	One architect City of Namur Walloon general administration for development planning and housing	X	X		X
Téléphone Vert 0800/1/1901	* Single window for information on the Walloon authorities through a green phone (call centre) * Initiated in 1989	Walloon government - Information and communication department	X	X?		X
FOREM-Hotjob-SIC http://www.hotjob.be	* Employment stock exchange based on an interactive database (CV, employment possibilities) * Similar to the VDAB system but not yet operational	Walloon regional employment agency		X	X	X

Name of the project and level of development	Short description	Concerned administrations	1st cr.	2nd cr.	3rd cr.	4th cr.
Local level						
Antwerp - DMA http://www.antwerpen.be	* Web site of the Flemish city of Antwerp, proposing different types of information on the city * Project included in a wider organisational strategy of the city and development of tele-services	Local authority	X	X	X	X
Charleroi http://www.charleroi.be	* Web site of the Walloon city of Charleroi, proposing different types of information on the city * Single window managed by a single administrative department * In parallel, single physical window for all the administrative procedures * System of single front-office and different specialised back-offices * Project included in a wider organisational strategy of the city.	Local authority	X	X		X

Table 2: NB. 1st criterion: the project must have moved beyond the mere concept phase (implemented, started to be implemented, backed by a high-level decision, institutionalised), 2nd criterion: the project must use IT and include organisational integration or similar administrative reforms, 3rd criterion: the

project must include transactions, 4th criterion: the project must involve at least two distinct units of government.

2.2 Federal level: SFI - Boîte Postale 3000

i) Project description

The SFI, *Service Fédéral d'Information* (federal information service), is a federal service responsible for the diffusion of information of public interest to Belgian citizens and to foreigners.

This service, structurally related to the administration of the federal Prime Minister, is the central point of a broad network of information, based on civil servants for information (*fonctionnaires d'information*), located in each federal department. The responsibility of this service is to organise and disseminate, namely via the Internet but not only, the information coming from the federal administrative departments. In that sense, the SFI can be considered as the unique kiosk of information regarding the federal authorities.

The SFI Web site displays general information on Belgium and on the federal competencies and authorities, via direct and indirect means (possibilities to order books and documents). The current interactivity of this Web site is quite low, it mainly provides electronic forms to order official SFI publications and other documents, and possibilities to communicate via e-mail with the information civil servants of the different federal administrations.

Currently, the SFI Web site can be considered as a classical governmental Web site. But the political will of the federal government is to make it evolve towards a more active and interactive kiosk of information to allow citizens to directly find the information they search or to directly find an answer to a specific demand or question.

Concretely, the objective is to complete the current Web site with a call centre named *Boîte Postale 3000* (Box 3000) following the same logic than the Flemish *Infolijn* or the Walloon *Téléphone Vert* (see below). BP 3000 is managed by civil servants belonging to the SFI who dispatch messages and questions to appropriate civil servants in the other associated departments. An integrated communication and information system will be created to allow an automatic dispatching of the questions to the concerned departments. Moreover, a single and central

database will be created and linked to the databases of the other administrative levels (Flemish government, Walloon government, French-speaking community, government of the Brussels region, ...). The aim is to allow citizens to use a single list of keywords that will be applied to the databases of the different administrative levels but on a transparent manner. This will provide a single window to the citizens that will be accessible via public kiosks, Internet, different types of networks,

¹⁰
...

A first experiment has been launched in 1998 regarding the EURO currency. For this experiment, the call centre BP 3000 required the collaboration of the Finance department, the Economics department, the Industrial department and the SFI. After an assessment of this first experiment, BP 3000 should address new services to the citizens, mainly 'residual questions', i.e., questions that need an interdepartmental co-operation and that cannot be answered by traditional and "passive" means of information as the Web sites of the different federal administrations or official publications.

ii) Problem area

The SFI and BP 3000 initiatives are central initiatives within the federal administration. They are clearly orientated to reduce the customer/citizen burden by promoting a single contact point with the federal administration. In that sense, these initiatives aim at improving the accessibility of public administration. But the level of services currently provided remains purely informational that is to say not transactional (except for the ordering of documents). The informational benefit of BP 3000 actually mainly concerns specific campaigns of information concerning public areas for which a high need of interdepartmental information exists. Typical public areas are for instance: the dioxin and food protection campaign, the EURO campaign, the Year 2000 information, some specific actions regarding humanitarian help as Kosovo, etc.

More generally, BP 3000 together with the different initiatives taken by the federal information service are the results of the law on the publicity of the administration, that obliges any administration to

¹⁰ <http://belgium.fgov.be/Frans/217/210704/infosoc/ann3.htm>

provide official information and to appoint civil servants responsible for the information in general (*fonctionnaires d'information*).

The organisational reforms undergone at the federal level, and particularly the central and new role played by the SFI as an information interface between administrative departments and the population, raise interesting problems of resistance and of political conflict between the federal departments and this new information agent¹¹. It shows in particular the organisational difficulty to implement an intermediate level between administrative departments and citizens, in this case the SFI. The status of this new intermediary and its structural link with the administrative departments raise huge questions regarding the departmental autonomy and the informational co-ordination role (information control, layout normalisation, etc.) that this new office could exert on those departments. In that sense, BP 3000 is a good illustration of the traditional conflict between vertical or departmental autonomy and horizontal initiatives.

iii) OSG-Root

As far as OSG root is concerned, those initiatives can be considered as first stop of information but remain interesting as they can be considered as a first stage of organisational reforms needed to implement a real OSG strategy.

Currently, the SFI initiatives mainly take the form of a public window of the administration. The production and the organisation of this window are highly specialised and very poorly integrated in the general informational environment of the federal administration. That means that currently, the lonely services concerned by the window are the information services, but those services have poor administrative and informational link with their departments and have to create, produce and display the departmental information by themselves.

iv) Status of the project

The SFI Web site is accessible since 1995. BP 3000 is still at an experimental stage: the first experiment has been launched in 1998. As observed before, BP 3000 is actually a federal window of information

¹¹ DIENG Dominique, GERARD Philippe, LAMOULINE Christian (1997): *op. cit.*

supplied by information produced and created by the information services. In that sense there is no automatic link between this Web Site and the departmental databases.

Many observers stress that a first step to develop a real informational service at the federal level should be to make a deep informational and administrative audit regarding the state of the databases and the forms used by those departments. Such an audit should allow a better integration of BP 3000 in current practices of the administration and the automation of some processes of information production and retrieval. First steps in that way have been initiated by the "Services Fédéraux pour la Science, la Technique et la Culture - SSTC) under the Agora programme¹². This Agora programme aims at helping volunteer administrative departments to make an informational audit and to define possible informational couplings between departments that could give rise to new integrated informational services. However, this programme is rather limited: it only concerns the scientific and economic information dedicated to the research and the public sectors.

2.3 Regional level - Flanders: *Infolijn*¹³

i) Project description

The Flemish *Infolijn* (Infoline) is a free of charge service that provides different types of information to the Flemish citizens. *Infolijn* is available via the telephone network (0800/30201), by traditional postal mail, fax, e-mail and via a Web site.

The main aim of *Infolijn* is to improve the diffusion of information regarding the Flemish authorities via a single window. In order to reach this objective, it mainly answers to the who, what and where questions of the citizens over the Flemish authorities (government and administrations) and, when possible, about other levels of authority. *Infolijn* provides first line information like the competencies, structure and tasks of these authorities and wants to answer to more general

¹² <http://www.belspo.be/agora/content>

¹³ <http://www.vlaanderen.be/infolijn/doel/index.html>

questions that citizens can raise via the different communication means listed below. Regarding second line information, i.e., information related to specific dossiers, *Infolijn* guides the citizens to the concerned department or person.

Infolijn web site is also a node of information referencing several other *infolijnen* implemented in other sectors, as health, education, leisure, housing, culture, etc.

ii) Problem area

To function efficiently and especially to provide up-to-date and accurate information, an intense collaboration between the different administrative services of the Flemish government is required. The main organisational aim of *Infolijn* is to reduce the administrative burden related to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

iii) OSG-Root

Compared to BP 3000, *Infolijn* must be considered as a more interactive and personalised information window and also as a information system better integrated into the general organisation of the Flemish administration.

Infolijn is based on a database including all the information listed above and that is accessible via an Intranet, the Internet and the teletext, as well as via the call centre. Each demand of information arriving at *Infolijn* is treated regarding the existing *Infolijn* database. If the question has already been treated, the answer is automatic. If not, the ad hoc department is consulted by the *Infolijn* service and the response is consigned into the database. Regularly, the database is audited by the different departments in order to update the existing information.

2.4 Regional level - Flanders: WIS-KISS VDAB¹⁴

i) Project description

WIS (*Werk Informatie Systeem*)¹⁵ or *WIS-vacaturebank* is an interactive database launched in 1994 by the VDAB (*Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding*), the Flemish public agency for employment that deals with the training of unemployed people and the job regulation by matching offers and demands.

The regionalisation of Belgium has led to the splitting of the national public employment agency (ONEM) into three regional structures (Wallonia (FOREM), Flanders (VDAB) and Brussels (ORBEM)) and to a change of status. As public agencies, these three institutions are linked to the regional governments by a management contract with results obligations and do not anymore have a monopoly on the job placement sector. This change of status has brought radical changes in the management of the agencies. Their organisation is now more "customer oriented" and in search of excellence to remain competitive regarding other private offices making the same job. The WIS-KISS project and the Hotjob-SIC project (see below) are motivated by this contextual background.

The WIS system works as a stock exchange for employment and is based on an Internet Web site. This Web site offers different facilities to the agency members and clients:

- Online CV services for employers and workers in search of jobs. These CVs are archived in a huge job database which can be searched according to keywords based on job classification codes;
- Online help to improve CVs and job descriptions and to better define the demands and offers;
- Intelligent retrieval of information by automatic matching between job demands and offers;
- Online mailbox automatically sending to the (internal or external) clients job offers/demands or training proposals corresponding to their personal requests;

¹⁴ <http://www.vlaanderen.be/ned/sites/teleadmin/juni1998/vdab.htm>

¹⁵ <http://www.watis.vdab.be>

Teleservices related to the employment procedures as teledeclaration, procedures for youth employment, specific help for SMEs, etc.

The system is accessible by the unemployed people via a personal mailbox through a broad network of 400 terminals located in the local agencies of the VDAB, in libraries, rail stations and cultural centres.

Firms and public administrations have access to the databases via the KISS system, a single platform of communication allowing information exchanges with the Internet, PUBLILINK (the Intranet of the public administrations, developed by a Belgian bank, the *Crédit Communal*), and ISABEL (an Intranet for firms developed by the banking sector).

In 1997, two millions of users¹⁶ (addresses) were connected to the WIS-KISS system. 97% of the employment offers and demands were accessible on the WIS and 60% of the job placements were concluded via this system.

The WIS-KISS system is the prolongation of different automation initiatives and reorganisation processes taken within the VDAB. First, the computerisation of the service followed, in 1994, by an analysis of the work processes and of the possibilities of ICTs regarding the organisation of work within VDAB. Then, public kiosks (*WIS-terminals*) were installed within the different VDAB agencies and mainly provide information on job offers. One year after, the database on job offers and demands was made available on the Internet¹⁷.

The CVs and the job offers are daily updated. Most of the CVs are said to be qualified CVs, this means that VDAB employees have verified and tested the content of the CVs to raise the quality of the information available on the database¹⁸.

ii) Problem area

The system, by allowing online encoding of CVs and offers by the clients (firms and unemployed people), discharges the employment officers from many non intelligent tasks. Accordingly, the tasks of job officers evolved towards more qualified and personalised advises to the clients;

¹⁶ Out of the 6 millions Flemish citizens.

¹⁷ <http://www.vlaanderen.be/ned/sites/teleadmin/juni1998/vdab.htm>

¹⁸ <http://www.vlaanderen.be/ned/sites/teleadmin/juni1998/vdab.htm>

The system improves the whole knowledge of the employment 'human network' by providing daily retrieval of the databases and automatic matching of information.

WIS-KISS system was mainly developed to improve the quality and the efficiency of the employment office.

WIS-KISS system was also developed as the strategic answer of the VDAB to the growing competition coming from private job placement agencies very active and efficient in the employment domain.

iii) OSG-Root

WIS-KISS can be considered as an OSG system developed on sophisticated databases technologies. It is based on a radical reform of the organisational and informational structure of this agency. The important point in this OSG project is that the implementation of WIS and KISS system has contributed to move this agency from an operational organisation to a knowledge organisation. The OSG is a reality because every point of the system being internal or external (enterprises, job demander or administrations) is equally informed by the ad hoc information. Beside the informational side of the system, the WIS and KISS is also a single entry point for multiple operations and transactions as CV making, job offers launching, recruitment training announcements, etc.

iv) Status of the project

Launched in 1994, the VDAB system is currently in its maturity stage. The transferability of the concept and its development should be achieved through the WATIS project launched in 1998. This European project is based on a consortium of four public employment agencies and four industrial partners in different European member states and aims at improving the system and opening it to European mobility aspects.

2.5 Regional level - Flanders: *Kmoloket*¹⁹

i) Project description

The *Kmoloket* (SME-desk) is not a pilot project within the *Teleadministratie* programme of the Flemish government but is hardly linked with this governmental initiative. *Kmoloket* aims at facilitating and simplifying administrative procedures for self-employed people, mainly regarding training possibilities and advises from companies auditors.

KMOloket is a single and secure (Belsign certificate) window on the Web for specific questions interesting the self-employed people. This project is developed by the Flemish government, and more specially by the Department of Economic Support (Ministry of the regional Economy), in collaboration with a public foundation, VIZO, *Vlaams Instituut voor Zelfstandige Ondernemen* (Flemish Institute for self-employed people).

The Web site is entirely managed by the VIZO's reduction paper cell in collaboration with Bureau Van Dijk (a private society specialised in management consulting) and Ino.com (an ICT company that is the result of the co-operation between the industry and the universities).

The final purpose is that *Kmoloket* became "The" website of the SMEs' world. The entrepreneurs will use this single window for the search of information and to fill in administrative procedures.

At the present time, the pilot project offers three services:

- A training's research service based on the consultation of the training database interconnecting the 22 VIZO centres. A self-employed person or a SME can easily consult the database of the VIZO's training sessions. He can get several information about the training (topics, place, hour/timetable) and also make contact with the organisation for the registration;
- An electronic registration service for auditors and consulting firms. An auditor or a consulting group can ask his recognition by the VIZO via the Web site. The system electronically collects all the

¹⁹ Van Den Bunder K. (1999): Virtueel ondernemer. In *Vlaams Tijdschrift voor Overheidsmanagement*, n°1, 1999. <http://www.kmoloket.be>

data related to the auditor or the consulting firm, regarding its experience, its area of competencies, its references, etc. These data are validated by a VIZO officer and then introduced into a structured database in order to complete the Web site. This part of the *Kmoloket* offers certified information to SMEs and self-employed people regarding auditor's and consulting services.

The last service is not yet achieved at present time. This service will give detailed information about all the governmental economics disposals and funds that could help SMEs and self-employed people to develop their business. Beside the information part of this service, *Kmoloket* will also offers an online service to help potential candidates to better fill in the different required forms and to appropriately present their projects of expansion or development. This service will be directly interconnected with the different administrative services treating with economic expansion disposals and specific helps for business development.

New developments of the *Kmoloket* are planed for the near future.

One of the interesting projects concerns the online help for the creation of a dynamic business plan. This dynamic business plan will be supported by an electronic form, integrating different modules of functions and calculus in order to help advisors and firms in the prospective analysis of a business.

Another example concerns the creation of a system of questions and answers dedicated to managers and students. This application would be connected with the project "Study of form's computerisation" started on the VIZO's paper reduction department.

These new projects are still under consideration.

ii) Problem area

The construction of *Kmoloket* as a virtual single window on Internet is clearly oriented towards a specific target: the SMEs area.

The goal is to improve accessibility to public information and services of economic interest for the SME or the self-employed person. Using this single window, the manager will find 24 hours a day any information concerning economic disposals developed by the Flemish Government and VIZO's own proposals. The goal is also to reduce the enterprise burden by eliminating multiple contacts with the public administration, multiple registrations, constraint of strict working

hours,... In that sense, this initiative aims at improving the access to the public administration. But the level of services currently provided remains purely informational, i.e. not really transactional.

The main problems raised by this initiative are the borders between the administrations. This VIZO initiative implies the co-operation between several administrations in charge of some parts of business development responsibilities. This co-operation remains highly problematic for the expansion and future development of this project.

iii) OSG-Root

Kmoloket is clearly the result of an integrated approach of public service delivery to the SMEs. It is based on a paper reduction process pursued by the administrations of the Flemish Government and particularly by the VIZO. *Kmoloket* will improve the relationships between the administrative levels concerned by the SMEs, the processing of administrative information, the offer of adapted solutions for each visitor and, in consequence, the performance of the Flemish industrial business.

It is based on a reorganisation of the information offered to the SMEs and involves different regional departments for the management of this single window for SMEs.

Kmoloket integrates technologic and organisational changes. Indeed, the technology currently used is Internet. One of the goals of this initiative is also to raise the number of SMEs connected to the network. On the organisational level, *Kmoloket* involves a new organisational concept based on flattening of the hierarchy, teamwork, skills improvements, administrative integration of the different knowledge and services and direct communication with the customers. The officers working for *Kmoloket* will be trained according to this new way of organisation.

iv) Status of the project

Kmoloket has been launched in 1997 as a pilot project led by the VIZO, the Bureau Van Dijk and Ino.com. The project was largely financed by the Flemish government. Two obligations were related to this funding: the use of the Internet technologies and the creation of value added services for SMEs.

At the beginning of March 1999, *Kmoloket* was operational with three services. However the third one about government's helps and funds is not yet fully working.

The next step of *Kmoloket* concerned the creation of more interactive services for SMEs like the dynamic online business plan.

2.6 Regional level - Flanders: IWT-KMO-Network

i) Project description

The *IWT-KMO-Network* (IWT-SME-network) aims at helping the Flemish companies, especially SMEs, for questions regarding innovation in general. The IWT-KMO-Network is devoted to technological and innovative issues raised by the SMEs since the *Kmoloket* project concerns the economic and business problems encountered by the SMEs. The *IWT-KMO-Network* is clearly oriented towards innovation aspects. It is co-ordinated by the Flemish government institution for the support and stimulation of the industry research and technology transfer in the Flemish industry (IWT: *Vlaams Instituut voor de Bevordering van het Wetenschappelijk-Technologisch Onderzoek in de Industrie*) in collaboration with the intermediary organisations working in the field of innovation.

In Flanders, as well as in Wallonia²⁰, a lot of structures have been created to support the innovation process. However, it is sometimes difficult for the enterprises, especially SMEs, to find answers to specific problems within the numerous existing organisations.

The objective of the *IWT-KMO-Network* is then to create a single window for SMEs concerning innovation. 37 intermediary organisations, that deal with innovation in the different sectors (diamond, steel, ...) or at a university level, contribute to this network and try to answer to questions regarding R&D (search for specific partners), technology (search for the most appropriate technological solutions for a specific problem), regulation and law, training, risky capital, ...²¹

²⁰ See the *Prométhée* project: <http://www.info.fundp.ac.be/~cita/ritts>

²¹ <http://www.iwt.be/kmonet.htm>

SMEs confronted to a specific problem can ask their question to one of the network members (one of the 37 intermediary organisations). If the organisation is able to directly answer to the question, it will not ask the collaboration of the other organisations. Otherwise, it will advise the SME to forward the question to the network. In function of the subject of the question, it will be forwarded to the most appropriate intermediary organisation, be answered as soon as possible and explained, if necessary, by the first contacted organisation²².

This project is one of the seven pilot projects of the *Teleadministratie* program of the Flemish government.

ii) Problem area

The central aim of this project is to help SMEs to get a better information on technological, legal and financial competencies existing in the region that could bring a solution to specific problems of technology transfer.

Regarding security and trust, all the members of the network signed an agreement protocol to respect confidentiality and the access to the network is secure and protected.

ii) OSG-Root

The project is said to allow an electronic processing of the questions or at least an electronic forwarding of the questions to the most appropriate organisations. The network aims at providing an interesting and unique interface between SMEs and various specialists (research centres, venture capitalists, lawyers, etc.) that can help SMEs in specific questions raised by innovation or technology transfer. Technologically, the project is quite simple and is based on a Web site identifying specialists and their area of competencies.

iv) Status of the project

The project is funded by the Flemish Government within the *Teleadministratie Programma*. A test phase started in February 1997 and a first prototype is operational since March 1997.

²² <http://www.iwt.be/kmonet.htm>

2.7 Regional level - Flanders: EDISON²³

i) Project description

EDISON stands for Electronic Document Interchange between Schools and the 'Onderwijsdepartement' (education department of the Dutch-speaking community). It concerns the EDI exchange of administrative information between the education administration, responsible for the payment of the teachers and the schools employees, and the schools.

At the level of the regional administration, EDISON is the result of different reorganisation steps. In 1985, the number of administrative forms was reduced from several hundreds to 45²⁴ and the layout of the documents was rationalised. Moreover, the processing of documents was centralised and this results '*in the schools having a single point of reference for all their documents*'²⁵. In 1990, the processing of the files within the education department was automated and centralised. EDISON, created in 1993, aims at the automation of the schools administrative services and of the education administration itself.

EDISON includes the management of the exchanges between the schools and the central Flemish administration, the use of electronic signature and the communication by e-mail.

This project is one of the seven pilot projects of the *Teleadministratie* program of the Flemish government. Within this framework, the objective is to integrate EDISON and Internet to provide a unique and user-friendly platform to the schools.

ii) Problem area

Surprisingly, the digital signature does not seem to be a problem in the EDISON project while it is said to be a major obstacle in other Belgian projects and even if there is still no specific Belgian law on this matter (but two laws are under parliamentary discussion).

²³ http://ond.vlaanderen.be/edison/edison_eng.html

²⁴ <http://www.vlaanderen.be/ned/sites/teleadmin/juni98/edison.htm>

²⁵ http://ond.vlaanderen.be/edison/edison_eng.html

Digital signature is necessary for EDISON 'because the information is used to process the payment of teachers' salaries and to calculate school subsidies'²⁶.

This legal aspect has been studied by a specific workgroup that prepared an interchange agreement in collaboration with the trade unions and the school government associations. Concretely, the procedure functions with public and private keys.

iii) OSG-Root

EDISON is clearly the result of an integrated approach of public service delivery in the education strand. It is based on a reorganisation of the education department and involves different levels of administration, mainly the regional one and the several different schools administrations. EDISON improves the relationship between these administrative levels, the processing of administrative information and, in consequence, the rapidity of payment of the schools teachers and employees.

iv) Status of the project²⁷

To some extent, EDISON began in 1991 when 1100 secondary schools were invited to send their statistical data in a file format on diskette. Due to the success of the project, it was made compulsory the year after and introduced in 3000 primary schools. Different workgroups then work to prepare EDI for all documents interchanged between the Education department and the schools. EDISON was then really created in 1993. In 1995, 22 schools were involved in the project. In 1998, the number increased and reaches 2500. The objective is to reach all secondary schools in the year 1998-1999 and all the primary schools in the year 1999-2000. This means 120.000 persons and one million students.

²⁶ http://ond.vlaanderen.be/edison/edison_eng.html

²⁷ http://ond.vlaanderen.be/edison/edison_eng.html,
<http://www.vlaanderen.be/ned/sites/teleadmin/juni98/edison.html>

2.8 Regional level - Wallonia: PBFlow

i) Project description

At the beginning (end of 1996), the *PBFlow* project was integrated in a much wider ambitious project, called *Périclès*²⁸, Program for Extending Resources in Information and Communication by a Local Exchange System, that aims at setting up an ICT infrastructure in the specific area of Namur, the capital of the Walloon region. Within *Périclès*, three applications were developed for the three main categories of actors/users of the region:

- The *serveur-citoyens* (citizens server or citizens application) for the private citizens which can be seen as the digital city part of the project;
- The *Syrecos* application, i.e. teleservices for training dedicated to SMEs, which is part of a European project;
- The inter-administrations application (*PBFlow* - planning permission) for the administrations, in collaboration with the Walloon Region.

These three applications were included in the global *Périclès* project in order to reach economies of scale and to allow the commercialisation of the generic technological solutions that would be developed in the project.

PBFlow is devoted to improve the planning permission procedure, a rather complicated procedure involving different levels of decision, mainly the cities and the region. Until now, this procedure has been very time-consuming and opaque. When an architect introduces a demand for a planning procedure, this can take several months and the architect will most of the time not know who is in charge of the procedure, whether and when his demand will be accepted.

PBFlow was developed as a generic tool to be applied for inter-organisational procedures. The choice of a specifically complicated

²⁸ see VAN BASTELAER Béatrice (1999): Chapter 11: *Périclès: The Difficulty of Designing a Global IT Project*. In: Béatrice VAN BASTELAER et Claire LOBET-MARIS (eds), *Social Learning Multimedia Developments at a Local Level. The Case of Digital Cities*, CITAFUNDP, University of Namur, July 1999, pp. 211-241.

procedure was deliberated. The idea was that, if the project succeeded for a complicated workflow procedure, it will even more be successful for simpler administrative flows.

The aim of the *PBFlow* application is thus to decrease the length of the procedure and to improve the efficiency and the transparency of this workflow, for instance by letting the architects know almost continuously how and by whom their files are processed.

PBFlow, which is integrated with the existing information systems of the different actors, includes the exchange of e-mails between the actors of the procedure, the electronic sending of the demand for planning permission by the architects (including draughts, pictures, statistic forms and other documents), the creation of different databases including progress report information, description of the actors of the procedure and of the tasks distribution and a lot of official documents and decisions²⁹. The application is also a classification and automatic archive tool.

ii) Problem area

The main problems raised by the development of this workflow application are organisational and legal. On the legal level, the planning permission procedure requires a traditional signature. As electronic signature is not yet allowed in the Belgian law, this requires that the electronic planning permission procedure has to be backed by a traditional paper procedure, preventing to achieve the efficiency argument of the *PBFlow* project as a parallel procedure is still necessary.

On the organisational level, this procedure is complicated as it involves different administrative departments at different levels: the town planning department of the cities and the Walloon regional administration for development planning and housing. Moreover, this procedure has always been considered as critical and opaque. Civil servants are often said to exert and show their power, in this case their restrictive power, on such procedure. This problem has been underestimated by the designers of the application and they had to cope with it during the development of the project.

²⁹ CIGER (1995): Schéma directeur pour une infrastructure en technologies d'information et de communication dans le namurois. Juillet 1995.

iii) OSG-Root

Regarding the roots of One-Stop-Government, this project, which involves two distinct units of government, aims at setting up an integrated approach to public service delivery in the specific area of the planning permission procedure, in a first time, and other inter-organisational administrative documents afterwards.

PBFlow uses a secure Internet client-server structure and will be accessible by Internet. The application is based on the integration of different information systems.

The OSG dimension of this project concerns the re-organisation of the back-office supported by sophisticated technologies of workflow aiming at shortening the management of this administrative flow through the different departments involved.

iv) Status of the project

PBFlow has first been developed in 1996 as a scientific pilot project including the University of Namur, the Walloon Region, the City authority of Namur and a local architect. After almost three years, all technical tests have been successful and contacts have been taken with private companies to sell the generic application.

Around the mid 1999, *PBFlow* changed its name into *AdmiPro* and aims now to be extended to other inter-administration procedures as a generic platform to support complex and inter-departmental workflows. However, currently, mainly due to legal restrictions at the level of the electronic signature, *PBFlow* or *AdmiPro* is not yet operational.

2.9 Regional level - Wallonia: *Téléphone Vert*³⁰

i) Project description

The *Téléphone Vert* (green phone) of the Walloon Region is a free of charge telephone number (0800/1/1901) proposed by the Walloon administration to the Walloon citizens (four millions of people). It follows the same logic as the Flemish *Infolijn*.

This system, which can be considered as one of the first mover experience in the field of OSG, has been initiated by the regional government in 1989. The management of the system is under the responsibility of the information service of the regional administration head office. This office is in charge of all the horizontal matters as information, human resources and financial control. The head office plays a co-ordination and control role on the vertical administrative departments in charge of specific regional competencies.

The organisation of the *Téléphone Vert* lies on a two levels structure: front-end and back-office.

- The front-end structure is based on a call centre gathering eight civil servants able to treat with the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Each civil servant is responsible for a specific matter (housing, exports, environment, etc.) and the demands are automatically dispatched between them.
- The back-office structure is based on an internal network of civil servants able to answer to more complex demands and to launch specific processes of services or transactions asked by the client.

Between the front-end and the back-office, a non structured informational base plays a co-ordination role. This informational base incorporates the FAQ responses, the major information regarding the

³⁰ * Interview with Cécile Dereume, co-ordinator of the Web site project at the information service of the regional administration head office (*Direction de l'Information du Ministère de la Région Wallonne*), August 25th 1999.

* Interview with Jacques Moisse, director of the information service of the regional administration head office (*Direction de l'Information du Ministère de la Région Wallonne*) and Cécile Dereume, co-ordinator of the Web site project, October 6th 1999.

governmental disposals and policies as governmental helps, special funds, programmes, etc.

Frequent meetings are organised between front and back offices in order to update the database and to actualise the knowledge of the front-end officers.

The Call Centre, which has developed information services in the main administrative areas covered by the regional authorities, can be considered as a single interface between the Walloon citizens and their administration. For instance, the *Téléphone Vert* provides information and services regarding³¹:

- Housing (public target: Walloon citizens): regional funds and helps for housing, construction and renovation of private houses, description of the administrative procedures for building and renovating, legal advises concerning relationships between owners and tenants, ...;
- Economic information (public target: SMEs and companies): regional helps and funds for innovation and investments, helps for employment, advises regarding legal and administrative obligations of firms, ...;
- Energy (public target: citizens, firms, administration): savings of energy, helps and funds to reduce the energy consumption in public and private buildings, ...;
- Debts (public target: citizens with important financial problems): first contact with the administration, information about helps and useful addresses to resolve the problems, etc.

The major goal of this initiative is to create a single interface of information and prime advises between the Walloon citizens and their administration. In that sense, this initiative is clearly a way to improve and facilitate the accessibility to the public administration. The political will is to foster this accessibility by providing a single interface able to give first line information and to guide citizens to the appropriate civil servants.

The administrative goal is to save costs related to the treatment of frequently asked questions and to suppress the burden of multiple and inefficient contacts between the administration and the citizens.

³¹ Ministère de la Région Wallonne - Direction de la communication (1998): Rapport d'activités.

The choice of the phone as the technological support of this OSG is due to the age of this interface (1989) but also to the weak rate of penetration of Internet amongst the Walloon population.

In order to reinforce the proximity between the regional administration and its clients, the regional Government has recently implemented twelve physical front-offices, some kind of "first stop of information" offering the same service of information than the *Téléphone Vert*.

ii) Problem area

This initiative is motivated by classical problems of accessibility and proximity between the administration and its "clients" due to the variety, the instability and the complexity of the administrative policies and procedures. These problems are partly explained by the newness of the regional administration.

This newness has two major consequences. First of all, the political competencies and the administrative areas of the Region are still poorly known by the citizens. To some extent, one could interpret the *Téléphone Vert* initiative as a marketing device aiming at promoting the regional competencies and at building a public image of the regional administration. A second consequence of this newness is, as quoted before, the high instability of regional policies and administrative actions. This instability is also due to the fact that the competencies of the regional Government, i.e. mainly economic and technologic matters, are, by nature, submitted to frequent changes and adaptations. This instability generates a broad need of information amongst citizens and firms. The success of the *Téléphone Vert* demonstrates that this initiative is an appropriate answer to the informational need of the population.

iii) OSG-Root

The *Téléphone Vert* of the Walloon Region answers to some of the OSG roots.

First of all, this interface lies on a strong co-operation between the main administrative departments of the Walloon Government. Secondly, the development of this solution has involved organisational reforms in order to build an efficient network of information centred around the Call Centre and based on the co-operation of several human

points of contact in the associated departments. Finally, this OSG has been reinforced by the implementation of physical front-offices, disseminated on the whole territory of Wallonia.

iv) Status of the project

The project is fully implemented since 1989 and is quite successful (see table below). This initiative has been recently completed by the implementation of twelve physical OSG. The present agenda is to build a Web site that could achieve the complete structure of the regional information system. The implementation of this Web site raises specific questions of sharing of responsibilities and information control between the horizontal structure represented by the Information service of the Head Office and the vertical structures represented by the different administrative departments.

Green Phone: Increase of calls/year from 1989 to 1996				
1989	1993	1994	1995	1996
8450	19.215	27.773	48.349	58.823

Table 3: Source: Ministère de la Région Wallonne - Direction de la communication (1998): Rapport d'activités.

2.10 Regional level - Wallonia: Hotjob - SIC³²

i) Project description

The FOREM (regional agency for employment and training) is a regional state agency. Its missions are, on one hand, to manage job placements area and, on the other, to define and organise specific training actions in order to improve the employment state in Wallonia. The structure of the FOREM is based on a regional head office in charge of general policy and technological support and 12 operational local FOREM agencies in charge of daily operations (job advises, training sessions, job placements, etc.). In a recent past, the FOREM was the regional branch of the federal employment agency ONEM in Wallonia. As explained above (for the WIS-KISS project), the ONEM

³² E-mail contacts with Thierry Vermeeren, project leader, August 1999.

has been split into three regional structures which have the status of a public service.

The Hotjob-SIC (*Système d'Information Client*) project has been set up by FOREM in 1999. The general aim of this system is to increase the intelligence of the whole organisation by the development of a unique platform of information connecting the different internal and external partners of the FOREM (enterprises, administrations, job seeker, FOREM agents, etc.)

This platform has three main levels supported by different technologies:

- A client interface for collecting information, based on Web tools and standards (html, xml, xsl);
- A database for treating and analysing the collected information and intelligent research agents;
- A client interface for diffusing information, based on different channels (Web, Email, Quick Time TV, Radio, etc.).

The functions of this new platform can be described regarding the services offered to the different partners.

The Job seekers side

CV Management: The Hotjob-SIC Web platform will offer a module of CV management for job seekers. Based on a standard form of CV and an international thesaurus of jobs and skills, this module will also offer an online help to complete a CV form and to improve the skill and competencies presentation. For instance, the job seeker can online test the relevance of his/her CV by launching a request concerning the different job announcements corresponding to his/her profile. If the response is weak, the job seeker can, for instance, improve his/her CV by extending his/her area of skills.

Offers-demands matching: The Quickjob module based on intelligent agents aims at browsing the whole database and at matching a Job seeker's CV with the most relevant job offers forms completed by enterprises or administrations. It can also indicate the ad hoc training sessions that could improve the job seeker skills. The result of this matching will be daily sent to the personal e-mail address of the job seeker.

The enterprise/administration side

Offers management: The Hotjob-SIC WEB platform will offer a module that help enterprises and administrations to fill in a standard form for job announcement. Here again different techniques are offered to the customer to improve the quality of their announcements, by testing the relevance of their job offers.

Offers-demands matching: The Quick CV module daily analyses the databases and automatically sends a daily information to the clients regarding the most appropriate job seeker CVs corresponding to their announcements. This information is daily sent via the e-mail box of the client.

The FOREM agents side

The front office help: The Hotjob-SIC Web platform and the Quick CV module will also support the human contact between clients (job seekers, enterprises and administrations) and FOREM agents. The functions described above will help the FOREM agent in its conversation with the client in order to improve the quality of its announcement and to increase the chance to get relevant results in the matching process of offers and demands.

The back office help: The Hotjob and Quick CV systems produce different statistical results that can help the FOREM agents in their different missions. For instance, statistics can show a regional skill deficit in some area of competencies. This can help the FOREM to better define their agendas of training and to personally identify the job seekers that could be concerned by those training sessions. Statistics and historical data can also help the FOREM agents to identify skills profiles that have no chance to find a relevant job. This can give raise to some information campaign launched by the FOREM and to training proposals offers to job seekers in order to re-qualify them.

In order to facilitate the access by the clients to this new system, 300 I-Mac connected to the Hotjob-SIC Web platform and the Quick CV system will be implemented into the twelve FOREM local agencies.

ii) Problem area

The problems that have motivated the set up of this project are various.

First of all, the dramatic situation of Wallonia regarding the employment and the important inadequacy between the job offers and demands have certainly played a motivating role in the set up of this project. Even if a technology can not solve this problem, it can certainly help to better manage it by diffusing relevant information regarding skills situation, training needs, job stability, etc.

The second factor concerns the change of status of the FOREM. The new status is based on a management contract that imposes some obligations to the agency regarding the quality of its management, the efficiency of its process and the obtained results. On the other hand, this new status confronts the FOREM to some private competitors, very efficient due to their more flexible structure. Those two factors are important since the subvention agreed by the Regional State to the FOREM depends on its results and its ability to compete with private agencies.

A third factor is related to some criticism developed by the FOREM clients (job seekers and offers) regarding the poor quality of the service and the bureaucratic way of doing of the agents.

Finally, the experience led by the VDAB in Flanders has also motivated the development of the Hotjob-SIC project.

As the WIS-KISS system, the Hotjob-SIC initiative is mainly developed to improve the quality and the efficiency of the employment office:

The system, by allowing online encoding of CVs and offers by the clients (firms and unemployed people), will discharge the employment officers from many non intelligent tasks. Accordingly, the tasks of job officers should evolve towards more qualified and personalised advises to the clients;

The system should also improve the whole knowledge of the employment 'human network' by providing daily retrieval of the databases and automatic matching of information.

The initiative is expected to radically change the organisational structure from a functional and specialised structure to a horizontal and client oriented one. The change also concerns the operational skills of the FOREM officers moving from operational agents to intelligent advisers. 700 agents have been highly trained to a new way of doing their job centred on a customer-oriented concept.

iii) OSG-Root

Like the WIS-KISS system, the Hotjob-SIC initiative can be considered as a true OSG project. It is based on a will of radical reform of the organisational and informational structure of the FOREM and aims at organising an efficient and intelligent employment network including all the concerned internal and external partners. In its achievement, the system will not only contribute to a better information of the whole network but also sustain the efficiency of the multiple transactions and operations related to the labour market management.

Like its Flemish counterpart (WIS-KISS), the Hotjob-SIC initiative could be considered as a "killing application" of the OSG concept. In that sense, the will of the FOREM is not only to develop this system for its proper need but also to "sell" the concept and the related software to other employment agencies.

iii) Status of the project

The project is at the first stage of its development. The agenda of the project is structured around three major phases.

- Phase 1 - 1999: Development of Hotjob and SIC concept and set up of a first application of Hotjob (online employment announcements). Training of the FOREM officers. The Hotjob Web site opened in November 1999.
- Phase 2 - 2000: Development of the full Hotjob and SIC system. Training of the FOREM officers. Offer of qualitative information to the external partners.
- Phase 3 - 2001: Experimentation of the Hotjob and SIC systems, analysis of internal and external uses, adaptation of the system. At the end of this phase, the project should be fully operational.

2.11 Local level: Antwerp DMA/MANAP³³

i) Project description

The OSG experience launched by the city of Antwerp in the 90's has as political background the overall *Strategish Plan Regio Antwerp* (SPRA, Antwerp Regional Strategic Plan). In this plan, the City Council of Antwerp and the Chamber of Commerce decided to set up a telematics programme. The main aims of this programme were the improvement of the international image of Antwerp and of its leading sectors (Harbour, Diamonds, etc.) but also the improvement of the administrative and community life of Antwerp in order to gain urban comparative advantages and to improve the quality of life of Antwerp citizens. Beside this plan, which was mainly motivated by economic factors, there were also political motivations expressed by the local authorities and aiming at improving the local democracy and the relationships between administration and citizens.

The main actor involved in this overall plan, are the City of Antwerp, the OCMW (the public Centre for Social Welfare), the Chamber of Commerce, the province of Antwerp, the labour unions, the harbour, and the diamond and banking sectors.

The telematics part of this strategic plan is taken in charge by Telepolis, a non profit -association which depends on and is financed by the City of Antwerp. Telepolis is an independent subdivision of CIPAL (Centre for Informatics in the Province of Antwerp and Limburg). This institution manages the computerisation of several municipalities in the provinces of Antwerp and Limburg. Telepolis employed 240 persons and the joint budget devoted by Antwerp to its telematics services is about 32 millions of EUROS.

³³ PIERSON, Jo (1999): Chapter 8 : Metropolitan Area Network (MANAP) - Digital Metropolis Antwerp (DMA). In: Béatrice VAN BASTELAER et Claire LOBET-MARIS (eds), *Social Learning Multimedia Developments at a Local Level. The Case of Digital Cities*, CITA-FUNDP, University of Namur, July 1999, pp. 211-241; PEETERS, Bruno (1999): *The Information Society in the City of Antwerp : a Political View*, paper presented at the COST Workshop on "One-Stop-Government", held in Bremen, September 31st, October 1st and 2nd 1999; <http://www.antwerpen.be>

The OSG experience led in Antwerp lies on three levels (Pierson, 1999):

The infrastructure level: the MANAP (Metropolitan Area Network Antwerp)

MANAP is the local backbone launched in 1993 in the Antwerp region. This led to a 65 Km long optical fibre network with three ATM core switches and a capacity of 155 Mb/s, due to be upgraded to 622Mb/s. Initially, MANAP linked the main administrative centres of the Antwerp area and enabled certain state hospitals to be connected to each other. The MANAP now connects the main nerve centres of Antwerp (100 LAN, 5000 telephones and 3000 PC's). This infrastructure has led to the emergence of several administrative and non administrative applications allowed by the new potentialities of the network. Amongst them, *telematics applications for better administration and DMA* (Digital Metropolis Antwerp), which are in line with the OSG concept.

The application level: Telematics applications for better administration and DMA (Digital Metropolis Antwerp)

DMA, the digital city of Antwerp, was created in 1994 and launched in 1995 on the Internet in the form of a Web site. It can be seen as a part of the general programme followed by the public authorities. The aim of this programme was to develop an intelligent city and to promote the use of telematics for the exchange of information, not only to fill internal needs, but also to improve the communication with the population. It should be noted that DMA is not only the Web site of the Antwerp administration, but is the Web site of the whole urban community of Antwerp, aiming also at improving the international marketing image of Antwerp and at reinforcing the urban community network by a better information about cultural, social, economic and politic events happening in Antwerp. DMA is then a collective platform, progressively built by several partners: the city administration, but also the press agencies, the associations, the firms, and the inhabitants being located in Antwerp or not. Regarding, the OSG concept, we will only focus on the *Besturen* (Government) quarter based on the Web pages created and managed by the City administration and town hall. In this *Besturen* quarter, the Web user can find different information and services. The

two figures below give typical examples of information and services at disposal in the *Besturen* quarter.

Type of services	Service	Users	Administrations
Tele-enquiries	Nuttige adressen, telefoonnummers & email-adressen in de Stad - Addresses, phone & email of city administrations	External ³⁴	City counsel
Tele-information	OCMW information: practical information files concerning the social welfare helps and the health services (emergency and current addresses)	External	City social welfare service (OCMW)
Tele-consultation	Databank beschikbare bedrijfspanden en -gronden - Database available business premises & terrains	External	Administration for economic development & SME policy for the city of Antwerp
Tele-loading	Meldingskaart - reporting card; standard form for reporting problems in the neighbourhood	External	City counsel - Department of Information

Table 4: Information Services and ...

Type of services	Service	Users	Administrations
Remote order	Bestelbon Gids voor de zelfstandige ondernemer - Electronic order form to receive the 'Guide for the self-employed'	External	Administration for economic development & SME policy for the city of Antwerp
Tele-declaration	"Solliciteer bij de politie" - Electronic form to sign up for the police selection procedure	External	Police training centre

³⁴ External means "outside the administration" and is opposed to "internal" which includes the civil servants and all the administration employees.

Type of services	Service	Users	Administrations
Tele-payment	No services	-	-

Table 5: ... Transaction services. Source: Adapted from PIERSON, Jo (1999): Chapter 8: Metropolitan Area Network (MANAP) - Digital Metropolis Antwerp (DMA). In: Béatrice VAN BASTELAER et Claire LOBET-MARIS (eds), *Social Learning Multimedia Developments at a Local Level. The Case of Digital Cities*, CITA-FUNDP, University of Namur, July 1999, pp. 211-241.

The access level

The access policy to DMA is open and structured on two major modes: the private mode and the public one.

The private mode

Every citizen, being of Antwerp or not, can freely access the DMA Web site at home via a free access provided by Telepolis To get access to all the services of the digital city, one needs to subscribe as an "inhabitant" (of Antwerp or not) by filling in an electronic form with his/her real name, address, birth date and sex, with special DMA nickname and password. The advantages related to this full subscription are a free mail address and space (Max 750 Kb) on the server for private home page. In addition, inhabitants can write article for digital news, send press releases and make announcements.

The public mode

People can also consult these digital information and use communication services for free at the cybercafés implemented in the public libraries but also at the "infokiosks" (interactive multimedia public boxes) installed in ten different public places within the different municipalities of Antwerp. These boxes can be considered as real workstation, allowing access to DMA and to the whole Internet, but also giving the possibility to print pages and messages, to send fax and e-mail. All these public interfaces offer the advantage of a high-speed MANAP connection.

ii) Problem area

The MANAP and DMA projects (in their administrative parts) have been developed in the overall framework of administration re-building, i.e., in Antwerp, a major reform of the administrative services has accompanied the set up of MANAP and DMA.

It is also important to stress that the DMA project was not only motivated by administrative purposes. It was also conceived as a marketing and community project. On the marketing side, the motivation was to improve the international image of the Antwerp's region in order to attract new investments and inhabitants. On the community side, the will was to create a virtual agora of information, allowing inhabitants and non inhabitants to be better informed about the Antwerp's political, cultural and economic life and reinforcing the urban social network by the use of new media of interpersonal communication.

iii) OSG-Root

The local reorganisation of the Antwerp's administration and the interconnection of the different services and locations of the public administration via the MANAP network clearly aim at an integrated approach of the public service delivery. The major OSG goals endorsed by MANAP and DMA are the simplification of the administrative life of the citizens via a single point of administrative entry (one central phone number and one single Web site), the improvement of inter-services communication via their interconnection to the MANAP network and to some extent the decentralisation of the public administration via the municipalities offices and the few transactions managed by the DMA *Besturen* pages.

iv) Status of project

MANAP and DMA are fully operational since 1997, but DMA is still open to new developments and changes. These changes concern improvements of the DMA interface in order to facilitate the navigation on the Web site but also the development of concrete steps towards more interactive services for citizens. The central questions related to this latter evolution concern the financial limitations encountered by the local authorities and the legal barrier still impeding fully electronic transactions.

2.12 Local level: Digital city of Charleroi³⁵

i) Project description

The implementation of OSG in the city of Charleroi is presented as a priority in the city policy whose aims at deeply changing the administrative services at the local level, mainly regarding the quality of the local public service and the methods of work. OSG in Charleroi is based on three main roots (Martin, p. 551):

- An organisational change at the level of the services structure with a distinction between back-offices (*centre opérateur*) and front-offices (*centre de délivrance* or *centre d'accueil*);
- A change in the mentality of the civil servants;
- A physical modification of the administrative offices.

In order to achieve these objectives, a deep reorganisation of the local services has been necessary.

More than 20 years ago, the Belgian local municipalities underwent what has been called the '*fusion des communes*' (municipalities' merger). This means that, within the cities and municipalities of Belgium, the local administrative services were centralised in a single place, often in the centre of the city. Before that, the citizen could reach its administrative office in each municipality or quarter of a big city. In order to reach economies of scale, most of these little administrative offices were closed and people were obliged to go to the centre of cities for any local administrative procedure. In Charleroi, for instance, which includes almost 220.000 inhabitants, there were 15 administrative offices disseminated around the centre of the city, in different municipalities. With the merger, these offices were closed or specialised in different administrative matters. This induces a lot of work for the central administration office and the necessity for the citi-

³⁵ MARTIN Bernadette (1997): Une démarche transversale dans le service public: le concept de guichet unique. In *Mouvement Communal*, n°11, novembre 1997, pp. 551-555; VAN BASTELAER Béatrice, in collaboration with Dominique DIENG, Anne DE BAENST-VANDENBROUCK, Anne DE VOS and Régine DESSE (1999): Compte-rendu de la deuxième Rencontre Réelle de Villes Virtuelles. FUNDP-Namur, juillet 1999.

zens to find the specialised office and to go to a lot of different places, sometimes very far from their place of living.

The reorganisation that takes place since some years now and the introduction of OSG in Charleroi are the consequences of the different problems induced by this merger. The idea is to use the 15 administrative offices disseminated in the city as different non specialised front-offices and as places of contact with the citizens and to process the citizens demand in specialised back-offices. This reorganisation is backed by a central information system which is connected with the front-offices. Citizens can now go to any of the 15 administrative offices and make a special demand that will be processed in back-office. Moreover, they will be able to receive the result of their demand in any of these front-offices, not only the one where the demand has been introduced.

This physical side of OSG is completed by an electronic one, based on the Web site. Currently, on this Web site, there is a unique entry point to the administration. All the demands that come from this unique e-mail address are processed by one person that forwards the message to the concerned administrative department, makes sure that an answer is provided and forwards the answer to the citizen. In the future, this process will be automatically processed and the demands will automatically go to the concerned departments, but always on the basis of a single interface. The new process will then be transparent for the citizens.

ii) Problem area

The implementation of OSG in the local administration of Charleroi mainly concerns the 'population service' and the register office that deal with certificates of births, marriages, deaths, divorce, ... The aim is to generalise the concept to other services but this needs the development of new applications by the computer service.

The main problems linked to the reorganisation of the local administration and the set up of OSG are organisational, mainly due to the fear of losing power and of losing control on the work and procedures and, of course, from the traditional resistance to change. The difficulty of understanding the demand of the citizen is also stressed (Martin, 1997). Indeed, the vocabulary used by the citizens is not always the 'official' one; this will probably raise some problems when

the demands will be automatically processed. This also induces that civil servants which used to be specialised in specific matters will have to become 'generalist' and to be trained to the different administrative subjects.

iii) OSG-Root

The local reorganisation of the administration of Charleroi and the set up of OSG procedures clearly follow an integrated approach to public service delivery, in the specific field of register office procedures. OSG in Charleroi is developed to answer specific problems linked to the merger of municipalities that happened in the years 70's but also to the increase of population in this area and thus, to the increase of burden for the administrative services.

Apart from the Web site that allows to receive many types of information via the single e-mail address, public kiosks are available in the city offices and provide information to the citizens such as the description of the procedures and of the necessary documents for a marriage for instance. This should allow citizens to directly find the 'good person in the good service' and to come with all the necessary documents in order to improve the processing of their demands.

Technically speaking, OSG in Charleroi is based on the internal network that allows the transfer of data between the disseminated computers and the central information systems. Moreover, an Intranet, based on the LAN, allows to share different kinds of internal information.

Finally, OSG in Charleroi is applied on the electronic level as well as on the physical level with this distinction between back-offices and front-offices.

iv) Status of project

OSG in Charleroi is fully operational since 1996-1997. Currently, on the Web site, the demands are still manually processed but this will soon be automatically made. However, the possibility to fulfil electronic forms through the Web site is still at the beginning.

Moreover, applications are developed to allow the use of OSG in departments other than the register office.

3. Best practices

The two cases developed in this part have been selected according to their maturity and their leading role in the shaping of new relationships between citizens and their administrations on the Belgian administrative scene. Even if none of them can be considered as true OSG experiments, both of them develop a pragmatic approach based on client-oriented concepts, a sustainable co-operation between departments and a realistic use of new technologies by citizens. These different elements motivated our choice.

3.1 Local level: Antwerp digital city - DMA/MANAP

i) Organisational co-operation

The DMA and MANAP projects take place in an important "re-building" process of the administration, based on polyvalence and de-localisation concepts. This reform has contributed to organise the whole administration around a single and complete information system that has integrated all the data managed by the different services. The different workflows of the administration have been revised in order to simplify them and to improve the accessibility and the responsiveness of the administration to any public demand or question. In order to implement this new organisational and technical way of doing, the project has been accompanied by large consultations of administrative officers' representatives and programmes of training.

The first result of this reform is a drastic simplification of the administration of Antwerp City, since, according to Bruno Peeters (1999), from 70 separated departments, the administration has moved to 9 integrated business units, based on a client-oriented approach; the second marking result of this reform is that 60% of the 6000 civil servants of the Antwerp City have been decentralized and re-located into the district houses, closer to the population.

ii) Integration in existing process

The Antwerp's project can be considered as a real administrative re-engineering process based on client needs for better integrated and

closer services. In Antwerp, the technology and its organisational potentialities have encouraged drastic changes into the structure and the functioning of the local administration. The innovation can be considered as a radical one, based on a drastic structural simplification (from 70 departments to 9 integrated business units) and an important process of administrative decentralisation.

The radicality of the change is proportional to the rapidity of the political decision process that conducted this reform. Indeed, according to Bruno Peeters, the reform has been prepared in six months and the final decision making process took only two days.

iii) Technological infrastructure

The project of Antwerp is supported by the city intranet (MANAP) that allows the connection of the 6000 civil servants to the main dataservers of the City via a LAN to LAN connection and their interconnection through secured e-mail services and workflow technologies. Via the DMA Web platform, the citizens can be connected to some information servers and can exchange electronic messages with other citizens, with civil servants or with members of the City Council.

In in this project, an important attention has been given to the citizens accessibility. As developed before, different patterns (private and public) of accessibility to MANAP and DMA have been set up. This focus on accessibility has given rise to the development of interactive multimedia public boxes, which can be considered as a real innovation produced by the City of Antwerp in partnership with Belgacom, the Belgian telecom operator.

iv) Legal framework

The DMA project is confronted to a legal barrier regarding its extension to transactional applications. As far as the digital signature is not yet regulated in Belgium, DMA can not develop further applications based on electronic procedures and transactions.

v) Financing

MANAP and DMA are for a very large part financed by the City budget via Telepolis. However, some multimedia applications have been submitted to the European Commission and have gained addi-

tional fundings within specific telematics applications programme of the EU. Antwerp is very active at the European level and, in 1997, the City received the Bangemann award for the City Information Highway (MANAP). Information about project financing is quite confidential. According to Bruno Peeters, the joint budget for telematics and informatics of the City of Antwerp is about 32 millions of EURO's for 1999. This represents around 2% of the global city budget.

vi) Reciprocal benefits

The Antwerp's project can be considered as a successful experiment for all the associated partners.

The administration of Antwerp has been completely re-shaped and is now more efficient and accessible to the citizens thanks to the integrated information system and the decentralisation allowed by the networking of the different districts of Antwerp. This new efficiency combined with the networking capacities of the MANAP have reinforced the attractiveness of the Antwerp region for business investments and SMEs implementation.

The DMA and MANAP projects have also contributed to shape a highly marketing image of Antwerp and its area. This image of modernity and dynamism has facilitated the integration of the City of Antwerp in different European networks of cities, procuring additional resources to Antwerp from European programmes.

The project has also had an impact on the local democracy since the citizens can consult all the decisions of the City council via the DMA Web Site.

Endly, the project has contributed to increase the technological or the Internet culture of the population. According to Bruno Peeters, one indicator of this success is the size of the virtual community of Antwerp, that counts, at this moment, more than 31,000 active participants.

vii) Coupling with other initiatives

The project of Antwerp City is fully integrated in a wider environment aiming at promoting the Region of Antwerp. The project is part of an overall *Strategisch Plan Regio Antwerpen* (SPRA - Antwerp Region Strategic Plan). This plan is based on the active cooperation between the City of Antwerp, the Chamber of Commerce, the Province of Antwerp, different representatives of industry, the Harbour of Antwerp,

and the labour unions. The close association of those partners and their shared will to develop and dynamise the Antwerp Region is clearly one of the success factors of the MANAP-DMA initiative. This strategic plan has given rise to many other telematics initiatives, progressively creating a virtual community in the Antwerp Region. Amongst these initiatives, let us stress some of them as the SEAGHA project offering a wide range of telematics services and EDI applications to support the logistical management of the SMEs in their commercial relationships with the Harbour of Antwerp. An other interesting project concerns the cultural community of Antwerp with the integration of Antwerp into the European PROMISE initiative (PROMoting Museum through technology based Information Services). Related to this cultural domain, Telepolis has also developed an application that connects all the databases of the public libraries of Antwerp with those of the Universities and of the Harbour authorities, creating a virtual library accessible to the citizens via the Web.

All those initiatives coupled to other Internet initiatives directly developed by the citizens on DMA (as commercial and cultural newspapers) contribute to the progressive set up of the virtual community of Antwerp.

3.2 Regional level - Wallonia: Téléphone Vert

i) Organisational cooperation

The organisation of the *Téléphone Vert* lies on twelve civil servants (*mandataires*) directly managing the calls arriving in the Call Centre of the Walloon Region.

Around those twelve civil servants, a network of correspondents has been created through the different departments of the Walloon Region. Those correspondents have two major roles: first, they are in charge of the informational update of the *mandataires*. This update of information is insured by a monthly meeting gathering representatives of the *mandataires* and the departmental correspondents. The second role played by these correspondents is to treat directly with more complex or specific calls via an automatic connection between the call centre and the phone numbers of the correspondents. The implementa-

tion of this inter-departmental co-operation has been progressive and politically marked by some difficulties to clearly position the informational mission of the call centre regarding the informational competencies of each department. One interesting phenomena in the success of this network of co-operation is the fact that it lies on a true human network of civil servants knowing each other very well and sharing the same will to make the administration closer to the citizens.

This co-operation has also been successful because this network has been progressively built, relying on the will of each department to cooperate, rather than being imposed to all of them by a central decision of the Government. This progressive process has contributed to make the *Téléphone Vert* accepted by a large number of departments.

ii) Integration in an existing process

The *Téléphone Vert* initiative has not changed the existing process of the Walloon administration. It has been integrated in the administration as a single informational interface between citizens and the regional departments. Before this initiative, the interfaces were multiple, each services playing this role regarding its limited competencies. This situation was very difficult for the client which was often obliged to contact many services before receiving the response to his/her question. This situation was even more uncomfortable for the citizens due to the youth of the regional administration and then the weak knowledge that citizens have about its distribution of competencies.

The integration of this initiative was, as quoted before, marked by some political difficulties to position this new interface into the administration. At the very beginning of the initiative, many departments were afraid of losing a part of their power and of the centralisation that this initiative could create in the regional administration. To treat this fear, the mission of the *Téléphone Vert* has been highly specified and negotiated with the different regional departments. This allows to clearly position the responsibilities of the *Téléphone Vert* as a front-end of information and inquiries, without any competency of advises and decisions. Another strategic element that has contributed to treat this fear was the bottom-up approach adopted to develop this initiative and its network of correspondents.

iii) Technological infrastructure

The technological infrastructure used in this project is relatively light and based on well-known technologies (call centres). Two points are interesting to stress here. The first point concerns the computer system used by the manager of the *Téléphone Vert* to supervise the rate of calls of each *mandataire* and to produce statistics and figures about the length of the wait, the length of the call, the re-directed calls to the correspondents, etc. The second point is related to the development of a new project. This project aims at structuring the existing informational (and informal) base in order to create a knowledge-base based on a sophisticated software of search and query in a conversational way. This knowledge base will be accessible to the *mandataires* and the network of correspondents but also to other civil servants working in the « physical » first stops of information of the Walloon Region. To constitute this knowledge base, the manager of the call centre works with a willing team of *mandataires* who are in charge of writing data records about the FAQ. Each data record is revised by a correspondent according to the type of question and the final format of the record is controlled by the manager of the call centre, before being implemented into the knowledge base. This knowledge base could become a very interesting interface with the public but it is not the current purpose.

iv) Legal framework

The *Téléphone Vert* does not raise any special legal issue. At the legal level, this initiative is only regulated by an administrative framework which clearly defines the specific responsibilities and duties of the call centre.

v) Financing

Financially speaking, the *Téléphone Vert* is entirely supported by the regional budget. There is a clear will not to call for additional funds coming from private sponsors or external sources. The supported budget is relatively light (twelve civil servants appointed in the call centre, the pay off of the infrastructure and the telecommunication costs).

The partnership with private operators is also very rare and the call to the private funds is only done to manage specific campaigns of

information, generating a number of calls that the *Téléphone Vert* can hardly manage. But here again, the will is to stay independent from any private influence. The objective is clearly to position the *Téléphone Vert* as an interface of public interest that can not be managed by private operators.

vi) Reciprocal benefits

Three important benefits are stressed by the manager of the initiative³⁶. As it will be explained here after, all these benefits are quite intangible.

The first benefit does concerns the rationalisation of the front-end information. The creation of one single interface between the administration and the citizens has allowed serious economies in the management of the public contacts of the regional administration. It has suppressed multiple contacts between the regional services and the citizens. The reverse of this benefit is, to some extent, a kind of specialisation of the public relations which does not encourage the regional services in general to be « client-oriented minded ».

The second benefit of this project is that it has made the regional administration better known by the citizens. This better knowledge is not only related to the use of the *Téléphone Vert* by the citizens but also to the large campaigns of information that regularly promote this interface and the administrative domains covered by the initiative.

The third benefit is a social one. According to the manager of the initiative, the *Téléphone Vert* is mostly used by persons face to high social difficulties concerning housing, financial precarity, unemployment, etc. The phone technology appears to be an appropriate media to keep a social contact with this population and to bring them useful information and addresses. For an important part of the population, socially excluded or victim of loneliness, the *Téléphone Vert* is becoming their « social line » with the administration. This third benefit is, for the manager of the initiative, the most important one and it encourages to carry on the initiative and to maintain the phone technology as a preferential media for close relationships between the administration and the public.

³⁶ Cf. interview with Jacques Moisse, director of the information service of the regional administration head office, October 6th 1999.

vii) Coupling with other initiatives

The *Téléphone Vert* is one of the strategies developed by the regional administration to be more accessible to the public. Other initiatives have been taken to reinforce this accessibility.

The first one is the creation of physical first stops of information (*Centres d'Accueil*) located in the major cities of Wallonia. These first stops provide the same kind of information than the *Téléphone Vert*, but citizens can also receive administrative documents and documentation needed to launch specific administrative demands.

The second initiative is the *Mobilinfo* of the regional administration. This bus goes from cities to cities, mainly on market days, and plays a role of mobile first stop. Its moving in Wallonia is organised according to the market days of the major medium towns of the Region.

These three initiatives are highly connected regarding the exchange of information and their connection to the network of the regional correspondents.

The last initiative is the Web site³⁷ and concerns the set up of a single Internet window for the whole administration. The Internet strategy of the region is relatively slow because of a deep political will to work with relevant technology for the Walloon population. The Web site of the regional administration has been recently restored in order to present a more integrated image of the administration. But the role that Internet could play in a foreseen future as an OSG platform is still under consideration. The objective is to give access to the major documents and forms via the Web site and to let the different responsible departments go further in the development of some teleservices.

³⁷ http://www.wallonie.be/Html/M4_Guichet/Guichet_1.htm

4. Assessment of One-Stop-Government in Belgium

4.1 What kind of One-Stop-Government concepts (based on the classification) are championed both by politicians and in practice in each country?

i) Informational window

The OSG concept developed in Belgian experiences lies largely on the Internet information windows developments. The very fashionable Internet technologies have contributed to create a true inflation of public Web sites aiming at offering information of public interest to the citizens and the other administration 'customers'. As strongly underlined before, the development of these windows has rarely been accompanied by a real administrative re-engineering aiming at reforming the work processes and the information system in order to make those windows really interactive and integrated into the whole administrative flow. The interactivity concept endorsed by those windows remains more technical than really organisational. Indeed, almost every Web site offers the possibility to send personal messages to officers but not the possibility to really develop an interactive and continued workflow process with the concerned administrative services in order to achieve a procedure. In that sense, a majority of the developed windows are conceived as a new intermediate informational and horizontal strata between administrative services and citizens, but remain poorly integrated into the whole administrative flow of those services. This poor integration appears also in the uncertain structural position of the new intermediaries in charge of the management and maintenance of those windows, regarding the vertical authority of the administrative departments.

To some extent, one can assess this intermediate stratum as a first step towards OSG development. But the analysis of the quoted experiences and projects suggests some reserves regarding this "darwinian approach". In fact, these initiatives consume a lot of human and financial resources and let few means to proceed to a deep administrative re-engineering (organisational and informational) needed to develop a

true OSG concept. In that sense, as stressed before, those informational windows, clearly marked by the Internet *goût du jour* pressure, seem to have led the administration away from deep and needed administrative and informational reforms.

ii) Local reality

The local administrations can be considered as first movers regarding OSG development in Belgium. This trend can be explained by some factors related to the status and the services delivery of the local administration.

First of all, local administrations appear more unified than the federal or the regional ones, regarding their authorities. The city councils can be considered as the top management of those administrations, and have all the necessary powers for the organisation of the citizen's offices and for the investment decisions. This is an important factor since, the political will to reform the administration is easier to gain with this type of unified management that at the federal or regional levels where reforms often need the co-operation between two or more tutorial authorities.

The second factor lies certainly on a certain competitive climate existing between the cities that contributes to dynamite them. The quality and efficiency of local administration appears more and more as a comparative advantage for local development for firms and citizens implementation. This concurrency has often led cities to develop information windows in order to foster their marketing images and "sell" their services to citizens and firms. But gaining comparative advantages needs deeper reforms and changes in the way services are delivered, reforms that could increase the efficiency of the services and decrease the load of the local taxes for citizens and firms. These two aims certainly motivate the local political will to set up OSG projects. This is, in fact, the case for Antwerp and Charleroi quoted before.

A third and evident reason lies on the fact that services delivery is a major issue for the local administration. Compared to the federal administration, that can be seen as a normative administration of control, the local administration and, to a certain extent, also the regional one, is much more service oriented, acting for its proper duties or on delegation from the higher levels.

The last reason is proper to the Belgian situation and is related to the '*fusion des communes*', the process of merging municipalities that took place in Belgium 20 years ago. This process was motivated by economies of scale based on the centralisation of the whole city administration in a single place and the closing of several small administrative offices located in the different municipalities or quarters of the city. The consequence of this merger process is a deeper distance between citizens and their administration due to the disappearance of the municipal administrations. This centralisation has led to an important specialisation of the city administration, increasing again the distance between citizens and their local servants. In this context, information and communication technologies coupled with OSG concept represent an opportunity to restore the proximity between citizens and their administration, physically by the re-implementation of "lightened" front-end offices in the municipalities but also virtually by the development of tele-services based on the Internet technologies. The cultural past of proximity between local administration and population certainly helps strongly these local administrations to invest in and implement this type of organisational changes. This cultural past makes the difference with the federal and the regional administrations.

4.2 In what policy areas is One-Stop-Government feasible?

Different conditions seem important to assess the feasibility of an OSG policy supported by ICT. These conditions help to identify the policy areas for OSG. To our point of view, there are five main conditions:

- The equipment and the ICT capabilities of the targeted public;
- The administrative load of front office activities and a client orientation of the administration;
- The time frame of the administrative process and the importance of just-in-time services for the targeted public;
- The administrative load of this area for the clients;
- The high degree of formalisation of the administrative process and activities.

Regarding those conditions, two areas seem important as far as OSG implementation is concerned.

i) The SMEs area

The SMEs area appears to be privileged regarding OSG development. The policies implied by this OSG development are, for instance, the administrative duties regarding fiscality, social security, specific helps for employment and economic expansion, specific funds and programmes for innovation and exportation. Currently, different quoted OSG pilot projects are developed to reduce the administrative load and the complexity of these different duties. But, as underlined before, those projects are developed separately without real co-ordination between them because of the absence of a co-operation tradition between the concerned departments and because of the different levels of power implicated, federal and regional. The multiplication of those OSG projects is questionable regarding the aimed followed by each of them: the simplification of the SMEs administrative life. Many observers and SMEs representatives defend the idea to create a unique regional electronic gateway delivering the multiple services needed by the SMEs. Such a strategy requires an important co-operation between vertical departments and between federal and regional entities. This represents a strong barrier for the implementation of such a strategy.

ii) The employment area

The employment area (the operational regulation of job offers and demands) is also an important field for OSG development. The time frame pressure and the necessity to work with an intelligent organisation, supported by important coupling of information provided by job demanders and job offers, make this area very attractive for OSG development. This is confirmed by the two OSG projects quoted above (WIS-KISS and Hotjob-SIC). The feasibility of those projects is reinforced by the uniqueness of the management of this administrative area but also by its openness to a certain competitive pressure related to the specific status of employment agencies in Belgium and the quality of equivalent services offered by private firms on the Belgian labour market.

4.3 What policy decisions have to be made and which organisational settings have to be chosen for successful One-Stop-Government projects?

i) Political will versus administration capabilities

OSG development in Belgium is rather experimental and pilot project oriented. Those experiments and pilot projects take generally place within specific and short term programmes launched by the political authorities in order to develop new online services. We emphasise two consequences of this way of doing.

First of all, the OSG developments in Belgium are generally conceived as "one shot" innovative projects transplanted on the administration but rather poorly integrated into the whole administrative functioning. In other words, the short term framework of those programmes can not support deep administrative reforms. This short term frame has often been criticised by civil servants as a source of important disturbance into the administration when they expect long term plan of actions and a real strategy of administrative reforms supported by appropriate financial and human resources.

The second consequence of this way of doing concerns the survival and the maintenance of the projects developed within these short term programmes. Generally speaking, those programmes give the first financial incentives to develop the projects but do not insure the necessary resources to maintain them on the long term. This gives rise to many opportunistic behaviours of private and public actors attracted by the additional funds coming from those types of programmes but poorly committed in the maintenance of the project on the long term.

These observations plead in favour of long term strategies supported by appropriate financial means and based on a clear implication of the administrative management. Those success factors are strongly present in some of the OSG developments presented above, as, for instance, the VDAB-WIS and KISS system or the cases of Charleroi and Antwerp.

ii) The verticality of the administration

A second important barrier for true OSG developments concerns the important verticality of the administrative organisation. This is related

to the functional specialisation of the Belgian administration, highly fragmented around several departments, each responsible for the application of one specific legal area or disposal. This fragmentation of the administration represents an important barrier for the development of OSG that demands co-operation between departments and a clearly "client oriented" administration. This customer orientation appears only present on the local scene and also in the employment agencies as explained before but, in both of those cases, the implementation of this new philosophy of administrative organisation has required deep reforms of the whole administrative system and, consequently, important programmes of training to adapt the human resources to this new way of functioning.

In other political area, the client oriented organisation appears more difficult to achieve and requires the development of new horizontal administrative intermediaries in charge of managing a co-ordinated front-end playing a mediating role between a targeted public and different fragmented administrative departments. An important point for the success of this strategy is the clarity of the status and of the administrative competence of this new intermediate structure regarding the specific competencies of the implicated departments.

iii) The legal framework

The legal framework is a third barrier to the development of OSG and, particularly, the transaction side of an OSG system. As already underlined before, the Belgian legal framework regarding the digital signature and the authorities of certification is not yet defined, even if two legal proposals are actually under parliamentary discussion. The clarification of the whole legal framework regarding the electronic supported administrative acts should contribute to create a positive and comforting climate for the development of OSG strategies.