Best Practices in the European Countries

GERMANY

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The views expressed do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the United Nations and of Italian Department for Public Administration, and Formez
Introduction

The programme "Modern State – Modern Administration" [www.staat-modern.de](http://www.staat-modern.de) was adopted on 1 December 1999 by the Federal Government who set the goal for efficient administration – an administration which performs better and costs less. Society's demand for new, and certainly better public services with at the same time a lower fiscal burden is omnipresent. For this reason, economic methods are finding increasing use in the Federal administration. This is firstly a matter of modern management, which creates innovation by delegating responsibility, and creates scope for performance through results-orientated monitoring.

The modern administration will:

- Perform better and cost less,
- Carry out its tasks under competitive conditions,
- Be transparent and open.

The modernisation programme of the Federal Government is therefore based on a new division of responsibility, with greater orientation towards the citizen and an efficient administration. The modern administration will be characterised by economic control tools, competition, the performance principle, cooperation with the private sector and utilisation of new technologies. Among this modernization programme, one of the project is BundOnline 2005, the e-Government initiative, launched by Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder on 18 September 2000. The Federal Government undertook to provide online all services of the Federal administration which can be provided on the Internet on [www.bund.de](http://www.bund.de). The modernization process is irreversible, so, the goal of the Federal Government is to offer all public services to citizens and enterprises quickly and unbureaucratically.

BundOnline 2005 will ensure that citizens, industry, academia, as well as other administrations, can use the services of the Federal administration more conveniently, faster and more cheaply. E-Government also means considerable savings. For example, a study by the Fraunhof Institute calculated on a basis of average values that traditional paper processing of cases and jobs costs on average Euro 7.50, whilst in electronic form it costs only 17 cents. Roughly 788,000 trade registrations, 705,000 trade deregistrations and 186,000 trade reregistrations were made in Germany in 2000. If one calculates for each applicant roughly 60 minutes for travelling, waiting, processing and returning, this means an annual cost of 240,000 working days.

Ultimately, e-Government enables staff at the administrations to have more time for citizens' interests, especially for those who wish to do their administrative matters not online, but in the traditional manner to which they are accustomed.

BundOnline 2005 will facilitate simplification of structures and procedures in the Federal administration across the board. The Federal Government is continuing the implementation plan every year. The implementation plan generally identifies different types of services. The principal elements of the implementation plan are:

- The service portfolio of the Federal administration comprised 451 services on February 2004, 189 of which are due to be implemented by the end of 2005.
- Basic components that can be used in all authorities, such as payment platforms or form servers, will be provided centrally.
- The Federal Ministry of the Interior is to coordinate further implementation.

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1 Die Bundesregierung “Modern State-Modern Administration” Progress Report 2002
2 Ibidem
3 Ibidem
The implementation plan hence provides for the provision of a central infrastructure which is to be centrally coordinated but locally implemented. 107 individual authorities and areas within authorities are directly involved in implementation. The actual implementation responsibility remains within the individual Ministries and authorities.

1. Specific services

The programme of the Federal Government to modernise the administration has taken the principle "Learning from the best" on board. From the diverse range of modernisation projects, the particularly successful ones have been selected and the reasons for their success and their transferability to other services of the Federation ascertained. By these means, the progress already made in electronic administration becomes particularly visible, as does the profound change it brings to the state and society, and the diversity of the areas of life involved in it.

a) Arbeitsamt Online (employment office) www.arbeitsamt.de

This is the public employment service that places people in the labour world every year without independent mediation by a staff member. This is made possible by "Arbeitsamt online", the placement service of the public employment services on the Internet. Each day roughly 250,000 people use the multifaceted offerings of this system. More than 450,000 situations vacant, 200,000 in-company training places and about 390,000 school training and further training offerings are accessible on average. In 2003 the website gave access to around 350,000 job offers and a database of over 2 million job seekers.

b) Student loans online www.bva.bund.de/aufgaben/bafoeg

The Federal Office of Administration is responsible for the administration and collection of loans in accordance with the Federal Training Promotion Act (Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz - BAföG). It administers a repayment volume currently totalling about Euro 5.8 billion. In the 2001 budget year, student loan recipients repaid loans amounting to roughly Euro 600 million. BAföG Online makes it possible to carry out the entire repayment of the loan by electronic means alone. Roughly 500,000 loan recipients, who in 2002 were in the repayment phase, are able to make all material and procedural applications via the Internet. The Federal Office of Administration processes all jobs without paper. This considerably reduces processing times, facilitates immediate telephone information, reduces the cost by Euro 4.5 million per year and reduces the burden of time-consuming routine work on the staff of the Federal Office of Administration.

c) Training loans online www.bva.bund.de/aufgaben/bildungskredit

Since April 2001 the Federal Administration Office has also decided on the approval of a training loan. Students and school pupils in an advanced stage of training may be given such a time-limited, low-interest bank loan to ensure and accelerate their training or to fund an extraordinary expense which is not catered for by a student loan. For this too, all applications may be made via the Internet. The Federal Office of Administration processes all jobs totally electronically, and achieves considerable simplification and savings, similar to the procedures applied in BAföG Online.

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4 www.europa.eu.int
5 www.eng.bmi.bund.de
6 Ibidem
d) ELSTER [www.elster.de](http://www.elster.de)
With ELSTER, the Electronic Tax Declaration, the Federation and the Länder wish to make the submission and processing of tax declarations more citizen-friendly and less burdensome by using modern means of communication. A central element of this procedure is standard software nationwide which amongst other things undertakes cryptographic encryption and transmission of tax declaration data, as well as decoding data received in tax notices. It is given free of charge to software manufacturers to integrate into their own software. The citizen is also given the official declaration form for income tax declarations “ELSTER form" free of charge.

e) DIGANT [www.bundesdruckerei.de](http://www.bundesdruckerei.de)
The Federal Printing Office prints up to 60,000 ID cards and passports, as well as 30,000 driving licences per day. The DIGANT digital application procedure makes it possible to apply for cards and driving licences electronically. This makes the administrative proceedings easier in many places; thus, for instance, orders can now be automatically summarised. The administration and care of the passport and ID card register is much simpler because multiple collations of data which used to be necessary are avoided and sources of error are hence consistently reduced. If citizens, the Federal Printing Office and the passport and driving licence authorities are equipped with the technology required for this programme, the applications, orders and dispatch can be monitored electronically.

f) DEPATISnet [www.depatisnet.de](http://www.depatisnet.de)
For Germany as an industrial location, it is important that patents are registered without excessive bureaucracy and that research can be carried out for and in patents conveniently and reliably. The German Patent and Trademark Office is offering this possibility with the new DEPATISnet service. Using the Internet, anyone may use the German DEPATIS Patent Information System to conduct research in the whole archive of the authority with 25 million patent documents, navigating reliably and quickly with classified degrees of difficulty. The Federal Government provides this archive and research system, developed for the patent examiners of the German Patent and Trademark Office, to the public free of charge. This does only not mean access to all German patents since 1877; in agreement with the patent offices of many other states, their documents are also accessible via the World Wide Web. Roughly one million new patents are added per year. The possibilities of this system will not have been exhausted until the step from information to a transaction is made also here. Therefore, the electronic patent grant procedure is currently being expanded.

g) Statistics shop [www.destatis.de/shop](http://www.destatis.de/shop)
Not only the political arena, but also enterprises, collective bargaining partners, academia, the media and individual citizens need statistical information. The Federal Statistical Office and the Statistical Offices of the Federal Länder have the statutory task of providing up-to-date, reliable and objective statistics on all relevant areas of life. Where they do not generally provide this free-of-charge in order to ensure basic supply of information, the Internet is now also used as a sales channel for specialised publications for a fee. DESTATIS uses commercial shopping software for the first time. The heart of the online shop lies in the electronic publications which can be downloaded 24/7 by the customer with no distribution channels right to their home PCs.

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7 Die Bundesregierung Implementation plan for the “BundOnline 2005” e-Government initiative 2001

8 Ibidem
h) Customs online 2005 www.zoll-d.de
The project, which was set up in the spring of 2001, aims by 2005 to provide online all services of the customs which can be placed on the Internet, whilst at the same time facilitating in addition to providing information by the customs, communication and the interaction of industry, trade and the citizen with the customs. The Internet presence of the customs will be expanded to become an information and knowledge portal www.zoll.de for industry, trade, the political arena and the citizen. Additionally, it serves the Customs Administration itself, especially since the administration can work more efficiently, and hence ultimately more cheaply, with constantly up-to-date knowledge databases which only need to be maintained once, centrally. The Central Customs Infocenter is responsible as a competent centre for contacts and information to answer all questions about customs arriving by e-mail, fax, letter, telephone or in person.
The staff of the Customs Infocenter have access, amongst other things, to internal customs specialist IT procedures. In addition to industry and private individuals, this service is frequently used by foreign associations and organisations, as well as by German representations abroad. The customs auction operates a virtual auction house to sell all items that have been seized, pledged or disposed of by the entire Customs Administration, such as motor vehicles, computers, jewellery, hi-fi equipment or carpets.

i) ATLAS
Germany as an economic nation must be able to carry out its commercial goods transactions with other countries without difficulty. Customs clearance and processing, continuing to be largely based on paper is an obstacle to this since long and thus expensive waiting times damage the domestic economy. With ATLAS (Automated Tariff and Local Customs Clearance System) the customs formalities are now completely electronically processed, that is from application via processing through to archiving. Here, an applicant can continue to use data that is already available in electronic form without having to transfer them to forms, which takes a lot of time. ATLAS also makes it largely unnecessary to submit documents to the customs office when ordering goods. This saves time-consuming couriers and postage. The citizen and enterprises are always up-to-date with the data they have transferred to the customs authorities and on the state of processing of their customs declaration.

j) E-Procurement www.e-vergabe.info
Because of its major significance for administration and industry, the project to award contracts of the Federal administration electronically (E-Procurement) is one of the guiding projects of the modernisation of the administration and of BundOnline 2005. Overall public spending in Germany reaches a value of roughly Euro 250 billion per year. Here, the award of contracts for different services is effected on principle through competition. Vastly differing items, such as delivery, service and construction – from paperclips through to motorways – are procured by more than 30,000 public clients. Higher quality and greater efficiency are hence of major economic significance. By amending the legal framework (the Code for Awarding Contracts, the Act on Adjustment of Provisions on Signatures and Formal Requirements) in the past year, it has become possible to carry out the submission of electronic tenders and to award contracts from announcement through to concluding the contracts via the Internet. The E-Procurement pilot project has been promoted to the tune of Euro 4.5 million so far, by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology in close coordination with the Federal Ministries of the Interior and of Transport, Building and Housing. The Federal Ministry of Defence and the Federal Ministry of

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9 Federal Ministry of the Interior BundOnline 3rd implementation plan on the e-Government initiative 2003
www.eng.bmi.bund.de/downloaden/25429/Download.pdf
Education and Research are now also involved in this project. At two Federal authorities, the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning and the Procurement Agency of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the stage is being set on the amended legal basis to pilot-test the electronic award of contracts at the start of this year. If the test phase is successful, it will be followed by widespread application within the Federal administration. The Länder and the local authorities will also benefit from the results of the project. Calls for tender, tenders and contracts can then be transacted with legal force, i.e. with an electronic signature, solely via the Internet with no media discontinuities. Because of the greater transparency in competition for public contracts, this should open up new opportunities for SMEs in particular.

The Procurement Agency of the Federal Ministry of the Interior links the electronic contract award module into a broader system. Under the designation "oeffentlicher-eink@uf online (public procurement)" (www.oeffentlicher-einkauf-online.de) all elements of the process chain in the procurement procedure are being digitised.

Core points here are:

- transacting all communication between the Procurement Agency and the authorities for which procurement is carried out, as well as industry and trade,
- internal processing of procurement at the Procurement Agency.
- calling up products on the basis of framework agreements via a virtual marketplace shared by the authorities.

This system will for instance considerably reduce processing and delivery times for authorities and enterprises; both will save administrative costs. In particular, cheaper offer prices should be expected as a result of the much higher number of providers.

k) IFOS-BUND www.ifos-bund.de

For the staff in the administration, traditional training and professional experience are no longer sufficient to be able to do their jobs successfully. Today, they must renew their knowledge in ever shorter cycles, as well as be familiar with the new technologies, in particular the Internet. The further training of staff in the Federal administration thus faces new quality requirements. The Federal Government will make the modern technologies useable for this area too. For this purpose, it has commissioned the Federal Academy for Public Administration in the Federal Ministry of the Interior to develop the "Interactive further training system for the Federal administration" (IFOS-BUND). In cooperation with the Federal College for Public Administration and the Federal Office for Security in Information Technology, a system is being created on the basis of Internet technologies which supports the whole further training process in the Federal administration. IFOS-Bund undertakes the entire training management process from ascertaining needs through seminar registration to issuing the participation certificate largely without paper. In doing so, in spite of the higher quality, it reduces the cost, whilst facilitating, – something of great importance – as a result of the direct dialogue with the agency defining the requirement, further training which is more targeted and needs-adjusted. With this flexibly expandable system the basis is being created for a virtual learning platform on which online learning offerings can be built up gradually. Such teach-yourself procedures executable in the office, at home or on the move, can not only replace or support attendance at courses, but also make them more efficient, for instance because users can adjust the transmission of knowledge to their individual needs and abilities (e.g. learning speed).

l) w3stat http://w3stat.destatis.de

Currently, roughly 70,000 enterprises are obliged to report data about their goods transactions within the European Union to the Federal Statistical Office regularly. Previously, roughly seven million datasets had to be transmitted at great pains on paper or magnetic data carriers. With
w3stat, the Federal Statistical Office has been offering a service since the beginning of 2000, with which these datasets can be transmitted online in seconds. More than 10,000 enterprises are already using this possibility. w3stat not only reduces the burden on the enterprises, however, it also improves the topicality and quality of the statistical data and simplifies processing at the Federal Statistical Office10.

**m) GeoDataCentre** [www.geodatenzentrum.de](http://www.geodatenzentrum.de)

Geoinformation is local and spatially-related data used to describe a Land. A modern information and communication society relies on such information in various fields. The digital geoinformation spectrum of use of ranges from traffic safety and traffic management via mobile phones, through to town and country planning, environmental protection and regional crime analyses. In the GeoDataCentre of the Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy in Leipzig, the data is combined, evaluated and updated. This data is now available online for the first time. A central geodata portal gives users 24/7 an up-to-date, complete overview of all geodata of Germany, provides information on their availability, quality and utilisation possibilities, and offers an extensive user service. 3,000 monthly hits show that this new service of the GeoData-Centre is used intensively.

**n) Environnemental data catalogue/German Environmental Information Network –GEIN** [www.umweltdatenkatalog.de](http://www.umweltdatenkatalog.de)

The Federation, the Länder and local authorities, research and industry, non-governmental organisations and the private sector are continually expanding the amount of environmental information available. Although a large proportion of this has been posted on the Internet, it has not been possible to use this immense pool of information because the data were neither combined nor structured; what is more, their topicality and validity were not guaranteed. As far back as 1991, the Federation hence initiated the establishment of an environmental data catalogue at the Lower Saxon Ministry of the Environment. It was primarily a so-called meta-information system which only provided information on "who" held "what" environmental information "where". It was also possible to access some of these data directly, and supra-agency research was possible in heterogeneous databases. However, the Internet provides much more information from the Federation and the Länder which cannot be accessed by these means. One of the special information offerings in the environmental field is the German Environmental Information Network (GEIN), a joint project of the Federation and the Länder for the public. Providing convenient access to environmental information from the Federation and the Länder is a goal which has been achieved by the German Environmental Information Network [www.bff-online.de](http://www.bff-online.de) as a practical information portal. A varied user service and many interfaces to other databases permit targeted, up-to-date, comprehensive research. The heart of the network is a Web-based information broker optimised to environmental issues. Meta-information structures the high-quality search result. The fact that GEIN [www.gein.de](http://www.gein.de) is a popular information service is shown by the continually high access numbers – roughly 9,500 qualified searches per month, by which roughly 55,000 pages of the GEIN broker are called up – and by the response from information providers and the press11. The result is a portal which presents both up-to-date environmental data and valuable background material such as press statements, research projects, relevant maps, facts or reference databases. Using this form of target group-related preparation of content for modern communication media, the administration has considerably increased its level of knowledge, and hence its ability to act – for example in protecting our natural resources.

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11 Ibidem
o) VAT identification numbers [www.bff-online.de](http://www.bff-online.de)
In 1993, the single European market also brought about free trade in goods between the EU Member States. National enterprises deliver to business partners in other EU States with no turnover tax; the goods are subject to so called intra-Community taxation of acquisitions. In order to guarantee to national enterprises that their delivery is exempt of turnover tax, they must have a VAT identification number issued by the Federal Finance Office and have that of their potential business partner confirmed. Previously, this was possible only by phone, fax or letter. The use of Internet technology has made this procedure much simpler. Only seconds after the query is launched, as a rule the result is available from the register of the EU Member State. Of the total of roughly 15,000 monthly queries of this kind ("simple validation query"). Since July 2000, this information can even be obtained on the move using a WAP mobile phone. The validation query will be expanded such that in addition to the validity of the VAT registration number EU-wide, the name and address can also be checked and where appropriate confirmed ("qualified validation query").

p) Central Register of Federal Properties
The Federal departments manage roughly 64,000 properties. The real estate not currently needed for administrative purposes and the real estate of the administration of the Federal Ministry of Finance is managed by the Federal Property Administration. Furthermore, the Federal departments manage their properties largely under their own competence unless the Federal Property Administration was commissioned to do so. With the competences thus spread in the field of property administration, in the past synergies were frequently unused, while overall planning and coordination were made very difficult. With the central register of Federal properties, the Federal Property Administration is now establishing a uniform Internet platform for all property administrations of the Federation. In three phases, the administrative affiliation, ownership and the current utilisation of all properties will be documented and the supra-departmental coordination, registration and covering of the need for space will be supported. Area-specific controlling information can be provided centrally, unused or unneeded properties are to be published on the Internet, and hence in future offered for sale or rent quickly and simply. The central register of Federal properties is hence a major element in the "property management" project. The benefits offered by these systems will in future be available to all agencies which manage or sell Federal real estate.

q) Electronic project organisation [www.fhms.de](http://www.fhms.de)
The electronic project organisation at the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology supports, in particular in the new Federal Länder, those small and medium-sized enterprises which are researching and developing new products or procedures with which they wish to open up future markets. With the electronic project organisation, the whole promotion management, from application via processing through to approval of the funding, takes place electronically. Each participant in the programme can manage their application data online, query the present status of application processing and communicate with the project organisations.

2.Framework

The service portal was built up to become a comprehensive e-Government portal. By these means, the weight of information-orientated offerings are shifted to electronic administrative services and opportunities for participation. Demand orientation is to replace supply orientation as a standard for information processing. A central form server for the Federation is being created. There are also
plans to establish a central online payment platform through which – as with a main cash office – the payment transactions for quite different facilities and products can be undertaken. In the last phase, combinations of electronic services will be provided that are designed to meet specific demand situations.

2.1 Cooperation between all state levels

The Federation, the Länder and the local authorities must provide the required online offering for their respective field of competence, while at the same time guaranteeing that shared standards create the required porosity between the levels of the administration. The Federal Government has therefore considerably increased its cooperation with the Länder and the local authorities in this field.

2.2 Electronic signature and encryption

Confidentiality of data and security of the network are preconditions for the development both of e-Business and of e-Government. Encryption and electronic signatures must hence ensure that unauthorised persons do not gain knowledge of the content of electronic communication. Therefore, legally and technically complicated circumstances need to be clarified. On 22 May 2001, the new Signatures Act (Signaturgesetz) entered into force, governing the required security structure in compliance with the EU directive. Furthermore, civil law had to be amended. In roughly 450 cases, the Act requires a personal signature for effective conclusion of a contract. However, to ensure that electronic communication is also possible in these cases, the Federal Government has launched a "Form Adjustment Act" (Formanpassungsgesetz) for civil law which has now been adopted by the German Federal Parliament (Act to Adapt Regulations on Form under Private Law and other Regulations to Modern Legal Transactions of 13 July 2001). In order also to adjust the administrative law of the Federation to the possibilities offered by modern electronic communication, a draft Bill has been prepared to govern the framework for legally-valid electronic transactions between citizens and the administration. A general clause determines the equal value attached to the written and electronic forms, as ordered by the law. In addition to the previously possible written, oral or otherwise issued administrative act, electronic administrative acts are being introduced. The draft also forms the basis for the parallel adjustments of the administrative procedure law of the Länder. In addition to the legal framework, the technology for electronic signatures and encryption must also be available. With this aim in mind, the Federal Government has carried out the SPHINX pilot project, with many partners from industry and the Federal Länder. The goal was to create a security infrastructure with which the products available on the market could integrate. This was to facilitate the exchange of encrypted, electronically-signed e-mails between citizens, industry and the administration on a blanket basis. After a successful test phase, the Federation has started to introduce products based on SPHINX in its administration.

2.3 Security in information technology

Security structures must prevent data from being spied on and systems sabotaged. In February 2000, Federal Minister of the Interior Schily therefore launched the "Secure Internet" Task Force. It consists of representatives of the Federal Ministries of the Interior, of Justice and of Economics and Technology, of the Federal Office for Security in Information Technology and of the Federal Criminal Police Office. Its task is to improve protection against Internet attacks and to work out the
necessary countermeasures. Additionally, at the Federal Office for Security in Information Technology a "Computer Emergency Response Team" for the Federal administration has been established, in short: CERT Bund. Its tasks consist, firstly, of preventingly finding security loopholes in the computer systems of the Federation. Secondly, it is also able to react quickly to dangers on a 24/7 basis. In an IT crisis of national significance, the experts are able to develop suitable reactions and countermeasures quickly. Industry would also benefit from this. The public administration, enterprises, banks and research should therefore be joined in a cooperation network of the CERT which ensures a constant exchange of information in a kind of "national early warning system". The goal is to create a network to be available with the CERT services to anyone, including citizens and SMEs, and where each CERT acts on its own responsibility for its own area.

3. Transparency and participation

Each Ministry has a website which provides information, services to citizens and communication structures which facilitate political participation. The Federal Ministry of Justice has also been providing the statutes and legal ordinances of the Federation free-of-charge on the Internet since April 2001. The project has a local structure. Separate sites have been set up for each Ministry involved. Centrally, it is possible to access all the sites via the homepage of the Federal Ministry of Justice. The Federal Ministry of Justice and the "Modern State – Modern Administration" staff unit offer on their homepages www.bmj.bund.de and www.staat-modern.de a complete list of all statutes and legal ordinances covered – currently more than 600.

3.1 Dialogue with the political arena and the administration

The policy of the Federal Government to use the new information and communication technologies such that the dialogue with the citizens is made stronger is finding a significant response.

- On line forums
The Federal Ministries and their authorities are also now using the Internet for online discussions with citizens. By these means they receive information and obtain a picture of attitudes which are highly interesting for them. Some invite citizens to discussion forums, to express themselves on major political topics. The "Modern State – Modern Administration" staff unit, for instance, established forums on the topics "Fewer and better statutes" and "Performance-related pay in the public service" on its website www.staat-modern.de, while the Federal Foreign Office established "The Future of Europe" at www.auswaertiges-amt.de.

- On line chats
Online chats with political authorities are now almost routine. The participants can ask questions over the Internet on the topic of the chat in question. The questions and answers can be seen on screen by all participants.

- Opinions on line
Ministries and authorities are using the possibilities offered by the Internet to develop a perception of attitudes on specific topics. Thus, for example the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government at www.bundesregierung.de asked for "Your Views" on EU enlargement to the East. On the topic of the agreement between the generations on www.sozialpolitik.com at the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs.

3.2 Participation

In order to permit citizens to influence the opinion-forming and decision-making process of the political arena and the administration, the Federal Government is following new paths. Thus, draft
Bills are made public online at a stage in which, a few years ago, they were still treated as confidential. The Federal Ministry of the Interior, for example, posted the Draft of the Act on the Freedom of Information on the Internet. Through virtual discussion forums, chaired chats, or e-mails, citizens were able to make individual or organised statements on the planned draft Bills. As a result, many suggestions could be taken into account in the draft stage. Increasingly, Ministries and authorities offer to interested citizens via the Internet the opportunity for cooperation in concrete projects. The "Reducing Bureaucracy" project group of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, for example, calls on to all Internet users to indicate bureaucratic obstacles for enterprises and associations via a separate e-mail address (www.bmwi.de) so that these can be examined as to their dispensability. The Federal Office for Security in Information Technology at www.bsi.bund.de involves industry via the Internet in developing the e-Government Manual, while the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation seeks the participation of experts in drawing up the list of real estate plans. The Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning in its Internet offerings "Town centre executive game" and "Cities of the future" invites all social groups to cooperate in these projects.

3.3 Online elections

The Federal Government wishes to use the Internet for the elections. Thanks to this system, voters submit their votes online and the election result is faster and available as a whole. Casting a vote over the Internet can however only be possible if there is no doubt that the constitutional principles of general, direct, free, equal and secret ballots have been adhered to. Since each state legitimises its exercise of power via elections, the legitimacy of the result must be beyond doubt. Errors could influence the election result, would lead to highly expensive new ballots and would irreparably damage public confidence in this election procedure. Risks are not acceptable. The Federal Government will hence thoroughly test the viability of online elections using a multi-tier experience process. A working party made up of computer specialists, lawyers and electoral organisers in the Federal Ministry of the Interior is analysing the requirements and conditions which online political elections must meet. Online elections are a distant, but realistic, goal. Also in the non-political area, there are a large number of elections at various levels, such as social elections, works council elections and shareholders' elections. The Federal Government is therefore examining to what extent electronic ballots could be carried out technically securely and with legal effect using PCs or mobile phones. In the "Elections on the Web" project (also known as "i-vote") promoted by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, the technical and legal problems have been tackled gradually, so that at the end an Internet election procedure will be available which is analogous to postal votes. The development of the election procedure has been examined by highly practical tests in order to be able to draw conclusions for further development.

Conclusions

The use of the e-governance is well developed in Germany at all levels. With BundOnline, Federation, Länder and municipalities adopting a common objective to work together in order to bring faster, more consistent and more efficient services to citizens and businesses. The benefit of information services consists primarily of an enhanced quality of the information supply to user groups. With the increasing use of the Internet by private consumers and public institutions, it is foreseeable that the number of users of information services will continue to grow and that additional economic benefits will result from the comprehensive supply of up-to-date information for citizens and the business community (for example, health education or information concerning subsidies for start-ups).