

## Editorial

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# Strong Political and Financial Support for E-Government Development

This first issue of I-Ways extensively reports on our new sub-title: *Digest of E-Government Policy and Regulation*. It is clear whether under the rubric of “information society,” “knowledge based economy,” or closing the “Digital Divide,” governments in both developed and developing countries are attaching high priority on E-Government programs, as are international donor organizations such as the World Bank, UN Development Program, Asia-Development Bank and many national assistance programs for developing countries. This is in part because E-Government encompasses many, if not most, economic and social advancement goals of all countries, rich and poor alike.

Because the E-Government programs and goals of many developing countries are not as well known as those in the OECD or European Union, our In-Focus section presents diverse examples of the specific priorities and practical applications of a number of developing countries. These range from the Azerbaijan customs clearance program to programs, the Morocco e-Procurement Program, to make Mauritius to become a “cyber island.” Many programs are highly targeted to address specific government objectives, such as the Bahrain e-Visas System and Bangladesh electronic birth registration information system.

For large countries and populations such as China, electronic services can be highly beneficial to reducing poverty and raising income levels. The Information Network for Dissemination of Agricultural Technology is a case in point. It employs radio, television, print, and Internet platforms to respond to farmers’ inquiries and provide current information on planting schedules, combating diseases, and scheduling harvests. The

Internet is proving to be vital to distributing information of all sorts to rural areas that have been unable to obtain, certainly on a timely basis, if at all.

The European Commission deserves special recognition, under the leadership of Viviane Redding, member responsible for Information Society and the Media, for the sound direction support given to “government for all Europeans.” The Commission, of course, must approach its mission on the basis of 25 member governments moving as synchronized and homogeneously as possible. Redding addressed one of the important services the Commission could provide: “Electronic identity is generating considerable interest. So let us do this and do it right with the aim of seamless information exchange for all who work in government or interact with the 450 million citizens and 20 million companies in Europe.”

In terms of leadership of national governments, a major report is provided in this issue on Australia and its recently announced new “E-Government Strategy: Responsive Government – A New Service Agenda. This initiative is to further the “Vision for 2010 that Australia will maintain its position as a leader of E-government, demonstrating how effective use of technology transforms government into a more efficient and client oriented sector of the economy”.

Future issues of I-Ways will further expand on this extensive introduction to E-Government which is rapidly becoming the central focus of social and economic development.

*Russell Pipe*