

SUCCESS STORY

E-SCISSORS FOR RED TAPE

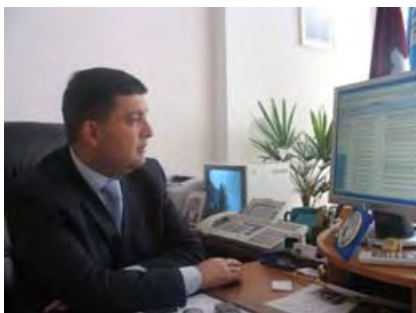
Vinnitsya is implementing a digital-divide-free E-Government system

There are two things that are ubiquitous and thus stitch the present-day world into one globalized whole, irrespective of ethnic, cultural, religious or other differences. These are the Internet and red tape. And though the latter seems to be invincible, certain applications of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICT) can at least ease bureaucratic procedures and help civil servants better serve citizens. The most amazing thing is when a civil servant is a pioneer of such ICT uses.

This is the case in Vinnitsya.



A visitor is using one of the e-government terminals installed in the Vinnitsya City Hall foyer



Vinnitsya Mayor Volodymyr Hroysman is one of most active e-government users

When the project on implementing individual e-government elements in Vinnitsya was made part of the city's Economic Development Strategic Plan, the idea had already been in the air for some time, initiated by a group of local government officers and NGO leaders and backed by the Mayor. Nonetheless, the project's inclusion in the Strategic Plan, which then became a local law, was important. That helped to justify earmarking money for implementation in the municipal budget and showed the city's commitment to cofinancing when it competed for a grant from the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF). As Vinnitsya Mayor Volodymyr Hroysman put it, "No strategy, no goal."

"What we have built is a G2C [Government-to-Citizen] model," says Vladyslav Telen, head of the Vinnitsya City Rada Information and Analyses Department. "Any person can receive maximally full information on operation of local authorities. Through the Internet or terminals [in the city hall foyer] you can access any non-confidential decision of the City Rada; send a request, application or complaint to any City Hall officer and monitor its progress online; apply to any department for explanation or information and then receive a reply by email or regular mail; obtain information on hospitals, schools, institutions of culture."

In brief, Vinnitsya's e-government system comprises an Internet portal, a City Hall intranet portal, a telephone hot line, and three terminals installed in the City Hall foyer. The latter, in fact, eliminate the so-called "digital divide," i.e., the gap between those who do and don't have access to the Internet. The city intends to install such terminals in every district Rada and in social security institutions.

The system is continuously under development, with more and more information being added to its database every day. Some of the system's elements are also useful to businesses and investors.

Although Vinnitsya's electronic government is based on the G2C model, it would be useless without a matching Government-to-Government (G2G) component. According to Mr. Hroysman, it allows the local government machine to work more effectively and efficiently. It also increases the responsibility of civil servants. In addition, it is a powerful monitoring and analytical tool.

To implement the system, the city used UAH 400,000 (about \$80,000) from its coffers and about \$60,000 in grant funds from IRF. Obviously, the Mayor says he wants the system to be used. To this end, its development is promoted in the media and accompanied by training activities. The Vinnitsya Municipal University – a training course for professional development of local government officers, as provided for by the Strategic Plan – will also pay attention to the use of modern information technologies.

As of mid September 2007, a total of 28 cities throughout Ukraine have adopted strategic plans worked out with assistance from the USAID Local Economic Development project, and about 20 more strategies are either pending approval or being drafted.