

# LIFELONG EDUCATION IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Stanislava Šimonová, Jitka Komárková

Institute of System Engineering and Informatics, University of Pardubice

## Abstract

*Nowadays, it is impossible to be successful without proper information. It concerns not only business but also public administration. Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become essential for our everyday lives because they are tools for treating information. A quite fast development of ICT brings new demands for new skills on all of the people. It means that people have to undergo further education. This is why lifelong education is more and more important for everyone including officers of public administration bodies.*

## Key words

*lifelong education in public administration, Government online, eGovernment, user-friendly education*

## Abstrakt

*Informace se staly samozřejmostí a nezbytností pro úspěšný život. Bez správné informace se neobejde nejen podnikatelská sféra, ale ani veřejná správa. Informační a komunikační technologie (ICT) se stávají běžnou součástí každodenního života, protože umožňují práci s informacemi. Vzhledem k jejich velmi rychlému rozvoji je nezbytné, aby se lidé – uživatelé ICT, celoživotně vzdělávali. Právě tato potřeba patří k důvodům pro neustále rostoucí význam celoživotního vzdělávání pro všechny včetně pracovníků veřejné správy.*

## Introduction

eEurope [8] is a political initiative of the European Union which should help to bring Europe to the new age – to the information society. The aim of the initiative is to accelerate the uptake of digital technologies across Europe and to ensure that all Europeans have the necessary skills and opportunities to use them. A public sector is said to be one of the European weaknesses because it doesn't play enough active role in introducing new services and applications. This is a reason why government online is one of the ten priority actions of the initiative.

## Government online

The main aim of public administration is to serve citizens. High and standard quality of provided services is one of the basic ethic principles of public administration [5]. Nowadays, there is a huge demand on speeding up administrative processes, making access to information easier and increasing transparency and efficiency of all of these processes respectively. Using information and communication technologies is an absolute must.

Unfortunately, involving new technologies in public administration is quite slow although it would improve quality of services provided by government. This is the reason why the 10th action of eEurope initiative is named Government online. The aim of this action is to begin to use Internet as a tool for:

- bringing government services closer to the citizen;
- cutting bureaucracy and reducing expenditures;

- creating jobs in value-added services providers;
- creating Europe-wide market information [8].

In the framework of eEurope Action Plan – Government online – electronic access to public services it is said that administrations don't adapt to the new methods of working and exploiting of information and communication technologies. The conclusion is that re-thinking of internal organization and of data exchanges will be required. One of the listed actions is to use open source software in public sector. Actions will result into further demands on public sector employees skills [1].

In the Czech Republic, there is Decision of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 525 of May 31, 1999 on State information policy - the road to an information society [3]. Free and direct access of the citizen to information, developing of information systems (IS) of public administration, data protection and improving of communication infrastructure of public administration are among the main priorities of the Czech State information policy.

One year later Action plan of realization of State information policy was adopted. Electronic public administration and education of civil servants are among the Action plan projects [2]. The task of civil servants education is deeper defined in another decision of the Government of the Czech Republic [4].

### **Structured education in public administration**

While talking about access to information we can recognize three types of civil servants [7]:

- common (end) user;
- management;
- information and communication technologies specialist.

*Common user (end user)* – usually an officer or secretary who is supposed to put rough data into information system and use output data for regular work. It is important to don't forget they work with data and they are responsible for the data quality and correctness. At the same time they are responsible for the protection of "their" data as well.

*Manager* (e.g. head of department) – usually a person who solves global and more complicated problems and tasks. This man needs information as a necessary support for running sophisticated analyses and making decisions. He often uses only outputs from information systems and tries to find relationships between various topics, trends of further development or some patterns.

*Information and communication technologies specialist (analyst)* – a person who proposes and designs proper structures and forms for data input and treating.

It is obvious that demands on skill levels (in the terms of using ICT) of these people significantly differ as is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Skill levels of employees of public administration**

Skill level	Type of user (employee)		
	Common (end) user	Manager	ICT specialist
No knowledge of using ICT	very often		
Basic knowledge of using ICT	typical state	typical state	
Basic knowledge of using ICT and IS	requested state		typical state
Advanced knowledge of using ICT and IS		requested state	
Knowledge of data structures, analyses and designs			requested state

One could say that some ICT courses can easily solve the problem and improve employees' skills in using ICT and IS. However, solution isn't so simple. At first, some structured content of courses must be defined to don't provide people too much information and information of no use. For example it has no sense to teach officers how to design information structure, how databases work, ... On the other hand ITC specialist is supposed to be able to use such services as E-mail or Internet so it's not necessary to teach him this stuff.

Portugal institute INA (Instituto Nacional de Administração) is an example of institute of further education in public administration. Some of tailored courses of the institute designed for the common users are listed in the Table 2 and for ICT specialists are listed in the Table 3.

**Table 2: Examples of INA courses for common users**

<b>Participants = common (end) users, i.e. officers and secretaries</b>		
Course	No. of hours	Content of course
Virtual libraries	20	new models of networked libraries
Multimedia Communication	30	exploitation of advantages multimedia
Producing Internet Pages	18	basic knowledge of creating WWW pages
Sources of electronic information (civil service area)	6	access sources of electronic information
Using the Internet	6	first „touch“ to Internet
CAD, 2D + 3D	35 + 35	computer aided design, architecture
An Introduction to Windows	12	basic knowledge of the operating environment
WORD for WINDOWS (basic + advanced)	24 + 12	Administrative Document Area
The EXCEL Spreadsheet (basic + advanced)	20 + 12	spreadsheet
PowerPoint for Presentations	16	making presentations
others		
Together <b>28 ICT courses</b> for common users.		

**Table 3:** Examples of INA courses for ICT specialists

<b>Participants = ICT specialists</b>		
<b>Course</b>	<b>No. of hours</b>	<b>Content of course</b>
Systems analysis and development	264	methodology, analysis and development of information technology projects
Local network management	60	management of diferent local networks
Communication and networks: data transmission and telematic services	32	characteristics of the communications networks and telematic services available
Distributed computer systems	60	distributed IS, client/server technology
Data warehouse – concepts	30	support systems for decision-making
IS security - design and implementation	24	security aspects of IS
Quality in software production	24	quality of IS, E.C. standards, ..
Computer programming	60	various languages
others		
<b>Together 36 ICT courses for ICT specialists</b>		

## Conclusion

The whole world is moving to the information society - the aim of eEurope initiative, State Information Policy of the Czech Republic and other similar initiatives. Although, it will take a long time and it will cost a lot of money to reach it. In the contribution some issues concerning further training of public servants are discussed. Well educated and prepared employees of public administration bodies (all of them, not only certain groups of employees) are one of the necessary conditions of fulfilling one of the priority actions of all these initiatives – Government online.

## References

1. Council and the European Commission: eEurope 2002 - An Information Society For All. Action Plan. Feira, 19. - 20. 6. 2000. URL: <[http://europa.eu.int/comm/information\\_society/](http://europa.eu.int/comm/information_society/)>.
2. CR Government Council for State Information Policy. Document Nr. 3161/2000. Action Plan of Realization of State Information Policy until the end of year 2002. URL: <<http://www.vlada.cz>>.
3. Decission of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 525 of May 31, 1999 on State information policy - the road to an information society. URL: <<http://www.vlada.cz>>.
4. Decission of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 601 of June 16, 1999 on The Concept of the Training of Public Officials. URL: <<http://www.vlada.cz>>.
5. Dytrt Z., Roudný R., Skipala J. at al: Ethics of business and public administration. Praha: Vuste Envis, 1997, 120 s.
6. INA - Instituto Nacional de Administração, Portugal. URL: <<http://www.ina.pt>>.
7. Šimonová S., Petráš J.: Ethic principles of teaching information systems in public administration. In *Ethics of business and public administration*. International conference Ethics of business and public administration. Praha: Vuste Envis, 1997. ISBN 80-902356-1-1, s.58-61.

8. The European Commission: eEurope - An Information Society For All. For the Special European Council on Employment, Economic reforms and Social Cohesion - Towards a Europe based on Innovation and Knowledge. Lisbon, 23. - 24. 3. 2000. URL: <[http://europa.eu.int/comm/information\\_society/](http://europa.eu.int/comm/information_society/)>.

**Kontaktní adresa:**

Ing. Stanislava Šimonová, Ing. Jitka Komárková. Ph.D.  
Institute of System Engineering and Informatics  
University of Pardubice  
Studentská 95  
532 10 Pardubice

E-mail: Stanislava.Simonova@upce.cz, Jitka.Komarkova@upce.cz

Ph.: 00 420 466 036 009, 00 420 466 036 070