Chapter 1

E-GOVERNMENT: EUROPEAN COMMISSION POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES

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1. INTRODUCTION

The use of ICT and new technological infrastructures to make public administrations more efficient, capable of delivering new services and getting closer to their citizens represents a major challenge for the European Union. In order to favor the development and adoption of technological solutions suited for these objectives, the EU supports public administrations at local and regional level to manage this transformation and to adapt their processes and practices according to the requirements of citizens needs and new technologies¹.

This chapter² will give an outline of what the policy context is in Europe, focusing in particular on two fundamental programs endorsed and supported by the Directorate General Information society: the first is eEurope 2005, which aims to bring Europe on line by the year 2005 in order to reach the Lisbon goals; the second is the European Research Area (ERA), whose objectives are to create a European internal market for research and to

¹ The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official European Commission’s view on the subject.

² The presentation of Ms. Rosalie Zobel to the “On Line Citizenship” Conference is available at the Website http://it.sun.com/eventi/on line_citizenship.
restructure the European research networks through improved co-ordination and new policies in supporting research initiatives.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

The Information society Directorate General manages a large research program, the IST Program, and also other policies related to the development of information society, e.g. telecommunications, on line security, confidence and trust in electronic networks, e-business and e-government infrastructure. The main objective for the IST Directorate is to reach the Lisbon Goal, to make the "EU the largest knowledge based economy by the year 2010." The EU has already made several important steps toward it: EU countries have managed to reach the single market, the single currency, and it is quite clear that applying the mind of policy makers to this goal, it can be accomplished in the way the Lisbon Strategy states.

There are many policies contributing to the Lisbon objectives: one of them is the eEurope 2005 program, and the second is ERA, European Research Area. The next sections of the chapter will be devoted to the illustrations of these programs and their action plans (fig. 1.1).

These programs and action plans will take place in the context of the enlargement of the European Union, which became effective in May 2004, with ten new countries joining the Union, a further three being candidates...