

# Comparative Analysis and Lessons Learned

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## A framework for comparison

In order to draw meaningful lessons from the experience of enhancing e-governance/e-government in Malta and Cyprus, it is necessary to compare their respective achievements. It will then become clear what was learned and how that knowledge can be used. The similarities shared by the two governments make them particularly appropriate cases for comparison. Both countries are islands, one in the western Mediterranean (Malta) and the other in the eastern Mediterranean (Cyprus). Both have significant development agendas and communities that have taken to the internet with considerable enthusiasm. As a result of this, both countries have availed themselves of assistance from the Commonwealth to further their e-government capabilities.

The Governments of Malta and Cyprus were presented with a series of questions that probed their planning and projects in the area of e-governance/e-government capability. This chapter will make a comparative analysis based on the answers given in the previous chapters and other material available on the two governments' websites, and will highlight the similarities and differences in the approaches adopted by the countries. It sets out what information was sought, lists the questions asked and, lastly, summarises the answers received.

## Information sought

- Mission statements
- Main priorities
- Anticipated benefits
- Challenging goals
- Difficulties in implementation
- Discrepancies between plans and results
- Stakeholders' responses
- Project mobilisation efforts
- Assessment of benefits
- Occurrence of drawbacks

- Lessons learned
- Advice for others

## Questions

The answers to the questions presented to the Governments of Malta and Cyprus are detailed in Chapters 4 and 5. The same 12 questions are presented in comparative form below. This has been done in an attempt to briefly cover a wide spectrum of concerns relating to planning and implementing e-government. The authors were mindful of the fact that the primary concern of the respondents was to enhance e-governance. Table 7.1 contributes to the analysis of how the two countries responded to the questions. Table 7.2 presents a summary of comparative indicators of performance.

1. What are the main objectives of your government's plans on e-governance (service delivery, administrative, public involvement, etc.)?
2. What are the priorities among these objectives? Is there a sequence of objectives, and which are receiving the most attention?
3. What benefits does your government anticipate will result from enhanced e-governance? Is the process driven by government or the wider society?
4. Which of your government's e-governance objectives has proved to be the biggest challenge (the most costly, time-consuming, complicated or disruptive)?
5. What are the biggest implementation challenges in achieving enhanced e-governance (suppliers, installation, training, testing, etc.)?
6. How does implementation compare with the government's official plan on e-governance? Have any of the timelines, milestones or priorities been adjusted as experience accumulates?
7. How have the political stakeholders (general public, politicians, bureaucrats, special interest groups, etc.) responded to the prospect of increasing e-governance? Has there been any resistance and who are the biggest users?
8. How is support within your government mobilised in support of enhanced e-governance (through planning committees, in response to feedback, etc.)?
9. Have all the anticipated benefits from e-governance actually been realised? Have costs been lowered, efforts co-ordinated, productivity raised, etc.?
10. Have there been any detriments or drawbacks to enhanced e-governance? Did any of the costs exceed benefits, was there sometimes an increase in complexity and was training or technology ever too expensive?

11. What important lessons have been learned from the process of enhancing e-governance? Is more money, planning or time needed?
12. What advice could be given to others who are contemplating e-governance? Are there elements that should be avoided or pursued?

## Responses

**Table 7.1. Responses to questions about e-governance**

<b>Summary of question</b>	<b>Malta</b>	<b>Cyprus</b>
E-governance objectives?	Enhance internal operations and public outreach	Service delivery, network integration, operational efficiency, transparency, e-democracy
Prioritise objectives?	Information dissemination, C2G interaction, governance efficiency	Effective service delivery that is inexpensive and convenient
Anticipated benefits?	Cost reduction, service availability, skill and data sharing, C2G interaction	Public sector productivity, within government and between citizens and government
Challenging objectives?	Benefits identification, cost reduction, data integration from legacy systems	Achieving cost savings and effectiveness (re-engineering) through internal co-ordination
Implementation challenges?	Functionality/infrastructure rationalisation, implementation and co-ordination of line services	Organisational changes, mindset re-orientation, skill-set enhancement
Alignment of goals/outcomes?	A staged implementation, with platform first, followed by mobile technologies for user transactions	Experience has taught the importance of organisational changes and promotion to public

**Table 7.1** (continued)

<b>Summary of question</b>	<b>Malta</b>	<b>Cyprus</b>
Stakeholders' responses?	Slow but steady public acceptance, enthusiastic politicians, special interest groups were co-ordinated	Focus on getting insiders' support, and providing one-stop shopping and cultural links for public
Mobilisation of support?	E-government unit managed project, evaluation and outsourcing	Comprehensive authorisation, inclusive planning and careful implementation
Realisation of objectives?	Complete: citizen focus, C2G communication, 24 X 7 service availability Partial: integration of services, store-front closures	Benefits realisation is in process: co-ordinated efforts, small staff, better flow of information, cost reductions
Any drawbacks or detriments?	More back-office infrastructure needed than anticipated, additional maintenance costs, longer duration	No drawbacks or detriments reported
Lessons learned from project experience?	Better marketing of services for uptake, more time needed to implement services	Most e-governance failures are organisational rather than technical
Advice to share for those with similar aims?	Get a champion, focus on visible deliverables, promote to public, emphasise benefits, encourage buy-in	Focus on leadership and commitment, co-ordinate change management, retrain staff for effective system use

## **Project planning**

As the above table reveals, there is a significant degree of overlap in the answers given by the Governments of Malta and Cyprus. An in-depth look at the full answers confirms this. These parallels are very encouraging because they demonstrate that both

governments are learning from the wider experience of the ICT community of practice about the design and management of e-governance projects, and that they are following through on lessons learned with actual implementation accomplishments.

In terms of 'e-governance objectives', the common themes that emerge are a combination of **improved internal operations** and **more effective responses to the general public**. These two themes have dominated virtually all e-governance projects worldwide, and are to a very considerable extent the entire rationale for e-government/e-governance. Improved internal operations, often referred to as back office, represent different aspects of increases in efficiency. Basically, the use of ICT has been advocated as a way of producing more services with the same resources, or producing the same level of services with fewer resources. More effective responses to the public involve better service delivery (relevant information, single window of access, etc.) and better public consultation (inviting public inputs and responding to feedback). As the answers reveal, all these aspects of e-governance objectives are on the agendas of Malta and Cyprus.

The 'prioritised objectives' are also similar for both governments. **Information dissemination** and **governance efficiency** (Malta) are equivalent to **effective service delivery** and **inexpensive and convenient operation** (Cyprus). This consistency is more than coincidental – it represents similarities of outlook among both the general public and public servants in modern democracies. By prioritising e-governance objectives in these ways, decision-makers in both governments are acknowledging that they are listening to their major constituencies and that their programmes for e-governance have been designed accordingly.

In articulating their visions of 'anticipated benefits', the governments of Malta and Cyprus again use somewhat different terminology to state basically the same goals. **Cost reduction, service availability, and skill and data sharing** (Malta) are in the pursuit of the same benefits as **public service productivity within government** (Cyprus), namely less costly and more effective back-office operations. Both governments are not only planning for these outcomes, but clearly expect to see these improvements manifest throughout the course of their e-governance projects. The other set of benefits that both governments anticipate is expressed by Malta as **citizen-to-government interactions**, and by Cyprus as **better relations between citizens and government**.

In relation to 'objectives that were particularly challenging', both Malta and Cyprus experienced problems with achieving **lower costs** and with **technology interoperability**. On costs, Malta identified the problem as **realising cost reduction** and Cyprus referred to the problem of **achieving cost savings**. On interoperability, Malta acknowledged the challenge of **data integration from legacy systems** and Cyprus pointed to the challenge of achieving **effectiveness (re-engineering) through internal co-ordination**. Malta raised the additional point of the challenge of **actually identifying what benefits were achieved**. This additional point is an issue that both companies and countries frequently raise, and it hinges on the **perceived inadequacy of an older accounting**

*paradigm* to acknowledge and accommodate additional measures of performance that apply to information networks rather than to factories. We will deal with this issue in more depth later in the analysis.

## **Project implementation**

The answers to the question about implementation challenges during the enhancement of e-governance focus on different aspects of the same problem. In the case of Malta, the issues mentioned relate to *alignment between technologies* and *integration of services*. In the case of Cyprus, the issues raised were *organisational retro-fitting* and *personnel development*. Both sets of issues involve the interface between *functionality* and *sociality*, between *technical considerations* and *human requirements*. Tackling either set of issues will soon lead to the need to deal with the other set, a situation both governments have undoubtedly encountered on numerous occasions.

In their assessment of the ‘alignment between goals and outcomes’, each country’s answers again emphasise different features of the same issue. This time the issue is the identification of *conditions of success* for the project. In both cases, there is recognition of the complementarity of reciprocal components that must be addressed, either sequentially or simultaneously. The conditions of success that Malta focuses on are those that need to be addressed sequentially, namely *phased building* of the project, first *infrastructure* and then *performance*. The conditions of success highlighted by Cyprus, on the other hand, are those which need to be addressed simultaneously, namely *joint attention to governmental re-organisation* and *public engagement* – both processes must be implemented together, so that the motivation to produce good results is reciprocal.

The answers to the question about the response of stakeholders refer both to specific groups and to the wider public. In the case of Malta, the specific groups (politicians and special interests) are keen to take up enhanced e-government services, whereas the general public is slower in its acceptance, moving incrementally. With Cyprus, it is the specific group (government insiders) who are slower on the uptake and who need encouragement, whereas the wider public is prepared to use enhanced e-government services, provided they are user-friendly (e.g. have a single point of access) and relevant to their concerns.

In relation to ‘mobilisation of support’, both countries emphasised a comprehensive approach rather than piecemeal attempts. The Government of Malta pointed to its use of an e-government unit for *project management, evaluation* and *outsourcing*. The Government of Cyprus referred to its integrated approach to *authorisation, planning* and *implementation*. Progress has obviously benefited from these all-embracing perspectives that were adopted to build the support needed.

## **Project outcomes**

What do the responses reveal about the ‘realisation of objectives’? The Government of Malta reports the full completion of citizen focus, C2G communication and 24 hours a day, seven days a week service availability, as well as partial completion of integration of services and store-front closures. The Government of Cyprus reports that realisation of the benefits of e-governance is ongoing, including co-ordination of efforts, lower staffing levels, better flow of information and cost reductions.

When asked ‘Were there any drawbacks or detrimental effects?’, the Government of Malta reported that more infrastructure was needed for back-office operations than was originally anticipated; the operating system required additional maintenance costs over and above those that were budgeted for; and the entire design and implementation took longer than planned. The Government of Cyprus did not report any drawbacks.

What lessons were learned from the experience of the project? Here too the essence of the answers was the same, but Malta spelled it out in terms of specifics, whereas Cyprus focused on the general theme. In both cases, the lessons learned were that ‘peopleware’ (personnel and organisations) presented a bigger challenge than hardware or software. Malta cited the advisability of making provision for better marketing of services for uptake, both within government and between the government and wider society. It also discovered that more time should have been allocated to implement the new services, again both within government and between government and the wider society. Cyprus concluded that most e-governance failures are organisational rather than technical; experience elsewhere shows that this too applies both within government and between government and the wider society.

When asked what advice they would give to those embarking on similar projects, both governments recommended that the greatest gains could be achieved by taking the larger view. Malta had four maxims:

- Encourage or appoint a project champion;
- Focus on visible deliverables, so that successes are easy to demonstrate;
- Emphasise benefits, so that motivation is focused on outcomes;
- Encourage buy-in from the stakeholders, as a way of mobilising their full support.

Cyprus came up with the same ideas, with three guidelines:

- Focus on leadership and commitment, so that there is as much alignment on the e-governance project as possible;
- Co-ordinate change management, because there will be a diversity of impacts as e-governance develops, and everyone wants to be treated respectfully and fairly;
- Retrain staff for effective system use, because as IT consultant Paul Strassmann

observes, the only real value of the electronic infrastructure is the service that trained operators can give to clients and citizens.

A few words remain to be said on the additional point raised by Malta about challenges posed by the project. Respondents mentioned that identifying benefits was problematic. Whereas industrial systems usually provide goods and services that can be sold, and hence valued monetarily, e-governance infrastructure improves the reach and quality of governance operations and services which, although highly valued, do not necessarily lend themselves to monetised assessment. Only after users have had a chance to experience the system at first hand for a period of time is there likely to be a consensus about its value. In the meantime, the most effective rationale seems to be the cost reductions that improved efficiency and productivity, and right-sized staffing, can bring about.

**Table 7.2. Milestones on the road to e-governance**

<b>Performance indicators</b>	<b>Accomplishments of Malta</b>	<b>Accomplishments of Cyprus</b>
Development of e-government organisational capabilities	Ministry for Investment, Industry and Information Technology mandated in 2000 to champion e-government	Data Processing Services Department formed in 1980, transformed into Department of Information Technology Services in 1997 to apply ICT to government
History of e-government strategic planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telecom sector advances</li> <li>• Legislative framework for e-government</li> <li>• Malta Government Network (MAGNET)</li> <li>• E-government vision and strategy</li> <li>• Organisational capacity building</li> <li>• E-government standards</li> <li>• Demonstration projects</li> <li>• Consultation with key stakeholders</li> <li>• E-government payment gateway</li> <li>• Local extensions (municipalities)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic study in 1987</li> <li>• Government Computerisation Plan in 1989</li> <li>• Revisions produce Government Computerisation Master Plan in 1998</li> </ul>

**Table 7.2 (continued)**

<b>Performance indicators</b>	<b>Accomplishments of Malta</b>	<b>Accomplishments of Cyprus</b>
Phases of e-government implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All knowledge workers online</li> <li>• Registration/authentication set up</li> <li>• Middleware/inter-operability skills</li> <li>• Multi-service delivery channels</li> <li>• Complementary mobile devices</li> <li>• Basic public services online</li> <li>• Communications strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Series of separate projects</li> <li>• Interconnectivity of projects</li> <li>• G2C and C2G service extensions</li> </ul>
Primary e-government targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver first-class government service</li> <li>• Increase citizen participation in government decision-making</li> <li>• Streamline public services and realise efficiency gains</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One computer terminal per desk</li> <li>• Paperless working environment</li> <li>• Global communications</li> <li>• Multi-channel e-government</li> <li>• Data integration and consistency</li> </ul>

### **Prospects for the future of e-government**

Although the Governments of Malta and Cyprus place different emphases on various aspects of e-governance, by and large they agree on the importance of acquiring and using it. Their plans for the future, also, coincide. Both governments' websites feature a history of what has been accomplished to date and an outline of what remains to be done. The high degree of similarity reflects, to a considerable degree, the constraints that all governments face in adopting an electronic infrastructure.

In the beginning, the goals and objectives were set through either a master plan or a series of mini-plans and, by implication, the vision for e-government enhancement. In the cases of Malta and Cyprus, they both developed a larger overview or broad perspective very early on.

Since funds and personnel were limited, certain sub-systems were built first and others followed. It is usually wise to choose projects with a high likelihood of success to get started and build momentum, and to use these to give a public profile to the process as a way of winning stakeholder support. Both Malta and Cyprus proceeded in this way.

The current phase of e-governance implementation in Malta and Cyprus is that of system integration and service extension. Legacy technologies have to be interfaced with newer ones, interoperability has to be achieved and the system has to be user friendly enough for both internal government operations and external public users. This phase is also well underway, and in the process there have been some unanticipated glitches that have had to be ironed out. However, that is now being done, with the result that both internal and external users of e-government are increasing the uptake of the services that are available.

The final phase, which is something to work towards, is the active communication and participation of both government officials and members of the public in policy consultation, regulatory implementation and system consolidation that can only come from extended usage and growing public confidence.

## **The role of international principles and practice**

The e-governance achievements of the Malta and Cyprus governments compare very favourably with international expectations. However, there was no policy to formally apply the elaborate procedures and check-lists recommended by the UN, OECD and World Bank, for the good reason that doing so would have been too expensive, too time-consuming and too labour intensive. There is a rule of thumb among systems analysts and project managers during the implementation of any process improvement implementation, of which e-governance enhancement is an example. The rule states that the extent to which formal methodology is applied depends directly on the size of the project: in large projects (in terms of budgets, personnel and equipment deployment), formalised administration techniques will represent only a small part of the project overhead, but can lead to significant economies. On the other hand, in small projects, such techniques would consume too many resources compared to any savings they might produce. In these circumstances, occasional outside reviews and helpful suggestions are probably the most effective methods of evaluating performance and keeping projects on track.

## **Lessons learned from e-governance projects**

In their own words, officials from the Governments of Malta and Cyprus reported the following lessons learned.

They were asked: what important lessons have been learned from the process of enhancing e-governance? Is more money, planning or time needed?

Malta replied:

- *Better marketing of services to increase take-up*
- *More time needed to implement services*

Cyprus responded:

*The important lesson learned from the process of enhancing e-governance is that most failures of e-governance projects are not technical failures, but organisational failures. As a result, to ensure successful implementation, one needs to place strong emphasis on:*

- *Strong leadership at different levels to provide a strategic vision*
- *Gaining management and user commitment*
- *Putting in place effective project co-ordination and change management processes*
- *Re-skilling of personnel, to anticipate the changes that accompany e-government initiatives and new roles*

## **Unifying theme of lessons learned**

We have summarised the lessons learned as follows:

- Better marketing of services for uptake
- More time needed to implement services
- Most e-governance failures are organisational rather than technical

In both Malta and Cyprus, the lessons learned were that ‘peopleware’ (personnel and organisations) presented a bigger challenge to implementing e-governance than either hardware or software.

## Notes

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