

REPORT by FINLAND

Finland is globally acknowledged as an information society and an information society development pioneer in many fields. Finland's social transformation into a knowledge-based society that extensively utilises information and communication technologies has been quick. In international terms, Finland's strengths include a high level of education, regional and social equality, a good administration culture, national databases and registers, the public nature of information, and citizens' strong trust in electronic services. The same applies to the information society skills of enterprises and citizens, Internet utilisation and use of electronic services.

Development of Multilingual Content and Systems

Although immigrants are a small proportion of the population of Finland, numbers are rising, particularly following the expansion of the EU. Currently, 2.9% of the population was born outside Finland, and 2.3% are speakers of a language other than the two official languages, Finnish and Swedish. The largest number of immigrants comes from Russia, and many of these are ethnic Finns, the second largest group comes from Estonia. The third largest group comes from Sweden. The fourth largest group comes from Somalia.

The Finnish public sector has prepared web quality criteria (<http://www.suomi.fi/suomifi/qualitytotheweb/index.jsp>). The purpose of the quality criteria is to serve as a tool for constructing, developing and assessing web services, and improve the quality of web services, particularly from the user's point of view, increase customer satisfaction and boost the use of web services. *The criteria includes also the requirement that the services are both served in national languages in accordance with the Language Act (Finnish/Swedish) but also in other languages if needed.* For the most part, criterias are also suitable for assessing corporate and other commercial web services. There is also a separate evaluation tool associated with the criteria, for examining and assessing how well the web services meet the criteria. The quality criteria have been drawn up in a cooperation project by the Ministry of Finance, with representatives from ministries, government agencies and government departments, local authorities and organisations representing the civil society.

According to *the Finnish Government's Information Society Programme for the years 2003 - 2007, particular attention was also given to electronic services for citizens and on making them as customer-friendly, easy-to-use and secure as possible.* In accordance with the Language Act, the services are in both national languages (Finnish/Swedish). This enable the services to be provided to citizens and other actors regardless of time and place, which will help to promote social and regional equality and make public administration more transparent. There has been already a wide range of electronic services available to businesses, but more services are to be introduced and the integration and contents of the existing services are to be improved (more in attachment I).

Facilitating Access to Networks and Services

The public administration offers a broad range of electronic services for enterprises and citizens. Finland has consciously selected a policy that is based on comprehensive, structural and operating model reform. The aim in recent years has been to improve public sector efficiency by reforming structures and operating models as well as utilising information management and technology.

In the 2000s, an international consulting company has published an annual survey of the development of electronic government in various countries. Finland has placed in the top ten in every assessment. According to the spring 2006 report, Finland is still one of the pioneers of reform. In particular, progressive national-level IT steering and active information society strategy and programme work have a positive impact on the ranking. Finland is also recognised as the global leader in the use of public electronic services (73% of Finns have used some public online service) and in positive attitude towards such services.

The implementation of the Information Society Programme, for years 2003-2007, has been divided into seven sections. The sections covered almost a hundred projects and measures that were managed by different ministries. The measures were carried out or initiated during the term of office of Prime Minister Vanhanen's Government, which ends in March 2007 (more in attachment I)

During the year 2006, a National Knowledge Society Strategy for years 2007–2015 was drafted as part of the implementation of Finnish Government's Information Society Programme. The Strategy outlines a national vision and strategic intent concerning the kind of information society we want in Finland. In addition to the current state of the Finnish information society, the strategy describes changes in the national and international operating environment. The Strategy includes a concrete implementation programme extending to the next Government's term of office and several proposals for measures, including possible responsible parties (more in attachment II).

Infrastructure

In January 2004, the Finnish Government adopted a resolution on *the national broadband strategy*. The Strategy was an essential element of the Government's information society policy. According to the national broadband strategy, *the aim was that every Finn will have access to high-speed, easy-to-use and affordable data transfer connections by the end of 2005*. In 2006, the number of broadband connections in Finland was 1,309,800, which is 1 million more than in 2000 (encl. attachment 1).

The majority of households and enterprises have a broadband connection or the opportunity to obtain one, but there are still deficiencies in geographic coverage. Speed has to be significantly increased and copper access connections replaced with optical fibre to make IPTV and other multimedia services possible. The same applies to service production in the public sector. According to the latest statistics, only 28% of broadband connections have a speed of 2 Mb/s or higher. Finland has a well functioning and nationally comprehensive mobile network. The fixed-line phone network still covers the majority of the country, but the technology is becoming IP based. First generation mobile data services are already in use, but faster services that enable mobile working are still under development. However, the functionality of information networks weakens fundamentally in abnormal situations, especially during extensive power outages, which increases the vulnerability of the society.

Development of public services

The ministerial group of the Information Society Programme highlighted the development of service production by using ICT as a central priority of the Programme. This concerns both

electronic services as well as development of traditional service provision and increasing productivity.

Development of public services requires new operating processes and ICT is an essential aid in this. Development of service production and putting services on an electronic basis lead to the re-examination of internal processes, organisations and conventions used in service production and stress the importance of cooperation. In a changing operating environment development and promotion of electronic service centre operations are emphasised.

As there will be increasing reliance on electronic services, the boundaries between the services provided by the Government and local authorities, and regional, national and, in the long run, EU-level services will become more and more blurred and lose importance.

For the last four years, the Government has cooperated with local authorities to ensure the enhancement of services, the supply of electronic services and their validity, quality and smooth functioning. Existing operators has been utilized, such as the Advisory Committee on Information Management in Public Administration (JUHTA), and projects such as ValtIT and KuntaIT. The role of public administration recommendations (JHS recommendations) will assume greater importance in a changing operating environment (more in attachment I).

Development of Public Domain Content

In the context of the national legal deposit system, the Finnish National Library is responsible for preservation of the published cultural heritage, irrespectively of whether it is in public domain or copyright-protected. Plans have also been made in order to build a system for preservation of the cultural heritage in the form of television and radio programmes.

The principle of open access has been embraced within universities and research, and it has been promoted in specific projects. The Ministry of Education and Culture appointed the Open Access Scientific Publishing Committee in 2004 to put forward recommendations for promotion of open access to scientific and scholarly publications in Finland. The Committee recommendations were addressed to higher education institutions and research institutes, research funding agencies, other organisations conducting research and scientific publishers. The recommendations are applicable in publication of open access journals and in open access online archives.

Reaffirming the Equitable Balance between the Interest of Rights-holders and the Public Interest

The driving force of the extensive update of the Finnish Copyright Act which took place in 2002–2006 was the EU Information Society Directive 2001/29/EC. The Directive was largely based on the 1996 WIPO Treaties, the WCT and the WPPT.

The copyright legislation was adapted into the special questions of the digital environment and the information networks. An essential part of the update was the review of the provisions on limitations and exceptions, in compliance with the exhaustive list of limitations and exceptions in the Directive. A special emphasis has been put on limitations on the use of works within archives, libraries and museums, as well as for the benefit of disabled persons.

The extensive list of limitations in the Copyright Act builds on the well established Nordic principle and tradition of openness and access to information and public documents.

Final Comments

Re. questions under "Final Comments" we refer to our replies above. Information for all and access to information have been a long-standing priority - and they still are. The Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace as such has not been of any significant importance to the work, which has been ongoing for years.

The information networks as a technological infrastructure create a lot of possibilities, but also challenges. It should be clear that interests of free use and other public interests on one hand and the economic interests on the other hand are not mutually exclusive. A full-scale exploitation of the information networks encompasses them both.

Finland played an active part in the preparations of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and continues to contribute to the implementation and follow-up of its outcomes. When it held the Presidency of the European Union during the latter half of 2006, it had the task of coordinating EU action in the post-WSIS processes in various fora. Finland is currently a member of the *Strategic Council of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development* (GAID) as well as of the *ECOSOC Commission for Science and Technology for Development* (CSTD) which both will have a key role in the WSIS follow-up. In all these fora, Finland continues to work for the effective implementation of the WSIS recommendations relevant to promoting multilingualism and universal access, which parallell Resolution 54 of the 33th General Conference of UNESCO. Finland is also an active member of the *Governmental Advisory Committee of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers* (ICANN), which is tackling the issue of Internationalized Domain Names (IDN).