

HOT TOPIC: e-government

E-Commerce Law & Policy explores e-government developments in four jurisdictions.

Asia

E-government provides opportunities to improve existing services, to offer new services and to collaborate internationally. There are also opportunities for less developed countries to leapfrog into e-government environments, avoiding legacy infrastructure, which often encumbers other countries.

Filipino Government agencies launched an online engagement portal for the country's overseas citizens to engage in local developments, including investment opportunities, charitable activities and expertise and skills exchanges.

Thailand's government is planning a nationwide network of Wi-Fi hotspots, is

promoting e-learning with tablet devices and has a comprehensive masterplan for ICT development.

Singapore topped global e-government rankings in 2012 and 2013. Its e-government deals with everything from immigration, taxes and communications to a real-time mobile app, which detects lightning across the

island.

ASEAN Member States have agreed to adopt a haze monitoring system which compares high resolution satellite data with land use maps to help locate fires and manage pollution.

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Belgium

In August, the federal, regional and community governments concluded a cooperation agreement to harmonise their initiatives for an integrated e-government.

The use of commercial cloud computing services by government institutions have been subject to in-depth

parliamentary discussions. To give governmental institutions a legally compliant framework to buy commodity services, the government has developed a G-Cloud framework.

Also, the Belgian Privacy Commission announced that it is preparing an opinion on using cloud services, in particular regarding the public

sector risks.

The Brussels Region is enacting a law regulating e-communications between public authorities and citizens/companies. Without having to change existing laws, local authorities can apply functionally equivalent alternatives, taking into account cost, efficiency and

security aspects. In a second stage, the relevant legal provisions will be amended. The uniqueness of this law is that local authorities receive a temporary mandate to deviate from existing legal provisions.

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Serbia

The legal framework for e-government in Serbia has improved with the enactment of two laws, the Law on Accounting and the Law on amendments to the Law on Tax Procedure and Tax Administration.

The Law on Accounting came into force on 24 July and

aims to further harmonise this area of law with EU legislation. It is now possible to sign official accounting documents with a qualified electronic signature, which will facilitate easier issuance and processing. Also, the archiving of accounting documents in electronic format has been regulated.

The Law on amendments to the Law on Tax Procedure and Tax Administration which will apply from 1 January 2014 introduces a new unified system for payment of withholding taxes whereby mandatory electronic filing will replace 35 individual filings. The savings in administrative costs are

estimated at 1.5 billion RSD. Finally, mandatory electronic exchange of data between the Tax Office and other government bodies with a view of improving tax collection was introduced.

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US

In the last few weeks, e-government has been 'ailing' due to the failed rollout of the universal healthcare website.

www.HealthCare.gov, which launched on 1 October, implementing President Obama's seminal healthcare restructuring law, has been plagued by glitches, outages, and poor performance. 'ObamaCare' relied on the

website to begin accepting American's enrolments. In fact, due to the website's issues, only six people were able to enroll for health insurance on the first day.

One North Carolina man reportedly entered his information and received eligibility letters for two individuals in another state. The site has also run slowly, rendering blank or frozen

screens, making it difficult for individuals to enter their information. The Obama Administration has now brought in experts to fix the glitches and claims the site will work properly by the end of November.

While many Americans are comfortable with doing business online, the HealthCare.gov situation may erode that confidence. It goes

almost without saying that private companies would easily be fined or hauled into an investigation if they exposed individuals' personal health information due to security lapses.

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