

**The Future Digital Economy  
Digital Content – Creation, Distribution and Access**

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**Presentation by Mihály Jambrik, Hungarian State Secretary,  
Ministry of Informatics and Communications  
31 January 2006**

**Session 6: New ways to access knowledge and content: Content digitisation by  
commercial players and public institutions**

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**Introduction**

Thank you Chair. It is my pleasure to participate in this panel and represent the views of the Hungarian Government on digital content issues. It was very interesting to listen to the views of the industry representatives on digital content.

My role here is to highlight the governmental considerations in this crucial topic. I will do this by introducing to you our work in Hungary in the field of a special component of digital content which is public sector information. More specifically, those elements of public sector information which are covered by our existing regulation such as contact data, budgetary information, organizational structure and so on. Other type of public sector information such as meteorological information is not covered in my presentation.

**Dilemma for policy makers (slide 1)**

Since the early 90s in Hungary we have an Act which regulates access to public sector information. Recently, the Hungarian Parliament has created a more specific regulation namely an Act on Electronic Freedom of Information.

When these acts were being drafted we had a serious dilemma:

To what extent should we oblige public institutions to provide information about their activities?

- Do we have to be radical and create requirements which are forward-looking, even revolutionary and create one of the most demanding regulations in the world?
- Or being more pragmatic and realistic and oblige the information owners to provide only limited amount of information for the time being?

As we wanted to apply a successful approach we chose the second option. In this case institutions can fulfill the requirements relatively easily.

In our experience the most stressing bottleneck for providing public sector information is the lack of organizational capacity and skills at information-owners. Therefore it is essential to provide them time to adapt and build up the fundamental organizational capacities and skills.

We are convinced that this approach is going to create the basis for further development of the existing requirements.

**Distribution mechanism (slide 2 – szervezetek száma, stb.)**

Focusing on the operational part, in Hungary all public institutions (such as ministries, municipalities and so on) are obliged to provide information to the public on their activities and they have to publish this information on the Internet. They can publish this information on their own website or on a central webpage.

We also have a central registry for public sector information available on the Internet which can be used to track all the information published.

I think that the choice of the Internet as a distribution channel was quite obvious. In this way all the interested parties can have access to public sector information all the time with relatively low cost.

### Challenges (slide 3)

Let me focus shortly on the challenges now. Since I am speaking only about information that originates from the state administration there are **no challenges** respecting **intellectual property**. If this system is expanded to other type of information intellectual property issues will have to be tackled.

As the distribution system is relatively simple the biggest challenge is **to involve all the public institutions** in the system (this means twenty-thousand organizations in Hungary only) and encourage them to develop the needed organizational skills for information sharing. You should think of all kind of institutions such as kindergartens and nurseries or museums and libraries as well. If the necessary organizational skills are in place the initiative will be successful and in the second stage we can require them to publish much wider range of information.

Another challenge which is worthwhile to mention is to ensure the **consistency** among the information that public organizations are publishing. It is also fundamental to guarantee the **searchability** of the information included in the system. Otherwise if this function does not work properly the usefulness of the system is questionable.

From governmental perspective it is also essential to provide **new financing models** to public institutions whose income derives from “selling” public sector information. Lets think of a meteorological institute which is making a great sum of money on selling meteorological data.

It is a sensitive area to make a clear **distinction between privacy and publicity**. Just think of a landregister. It is a basic right for the public to identify the owner of a piece of land. However, it becomes a privacy issue if somebody starts to collect specific information on certain individuals.

And lastly coming from country with significant minority population **language barrier** is always an issue. If we want to make available certain public sector information for **minorities** such as the Roma and Slovaks in Hungary this information should be provided in their languages as well. Being part of the European Union it is essential to offer public sector information in **the language of other European nations**.

### Role of public institutions and commercial organizations

As you could see in this system public institutions play the central role. However, commercial organizations can also be involved. They can use information provided by public institutions freely for information-brokerage purposes.

With this I finish my introduction now and look forward to the discussion.