Hungary, Information Technology, 2010

Open source aspects for realising an information society vision of Hungary

When preparing the attached document actually we were trying to answer the following questions. Under what conditions will IT be capable of meeting the challenge of modernising our society? The carrying out of what tasks the masterminds and organisations representing Inforum do consider to be essential for reducing the lagging behind of our country? The gap between Hungary and the developed states of the Union started to widen again, and the nightmare of a two-speed Europe became reality. Modernisation is a key task due to this as well.

In our vision there is a Hungary, a country which is able to surpass its past, which recognises that it has to step on the path of accumulation, profit generation, and becoming wealthier in order to be able to efficiently improve the quality of life of its citizens. A country, where success is not a disgrace, but a measure of profit and talent, and where jealousy will not be the main characteristic of our nation. A country, where for expressing an opinion, for creating a cultural masterpiece nobody has to be afraid neither from any political force, nor from any tax office, nor from any economic interest community. We would like: our country to start on its way on the path of knowledge, abilities, environment, culture, and honouring and appreciating the individuals and ownership. And this requires a significant civilisation and cultural shift.

Hungary has to find its place in Europe. It has to find the answer to the following questions: which will be the area, where our country will be the leading state of Europe, and which will be the production or service segment, where we may become leaders. The answer of Inforum is the following. Hungary cannot afford to invest today into immovable that do not produce material benefits directly. *It can afford to invest only into people, export capable production, domestic services attractive to (foreign) consumers, which may be also very well promoted through the international media. Hungary, a state of healing power, a state that improves the quality of life, thanks to its spas, attracts tourists, it encourages higher quality services, it dictates a cleaner environment, it encourages development in the area of creativity, innovation, high and adult education, information technology, high level medical education, pharmaceutical industry, tourism and our civilisation norms. It cannot be forgotten that as a result of the ageing of the European Union the European Commission set the target of "ageing well" for the developers of the IT companies, and it supports, promotes and funds this target. Should Hungary miss this opportunity? Our small country may become the paradise of healing in Europe, the wellness-centre of Europe, the central research site of sciences that deal with ageing and the improvement of the quality of life*.

No matter which path Hungary will choose, Hungarian Information Technology has to support its movement along its selected path. It is our joint interest: we are living here, we are raising our children here, we are paying our taxes here, and once we shall be buried here. But being aware of the global strength and the global role of IT, it is painful to see that Hungary dismisses enormous resources that are allocated to modernisation, economy development and efficiency improvements, when Hungary responds

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to IT challenges with delay, with the lack of trust or in certain cases with absurdly small amounts of support. And this raises the responsibility of politics. There is no evidence supporting that Hungarian politics as a whole understood the economy and society shaping essence of IT, in spite of the eight - civil and governmental - IT strategies that have been prepared since 1994. Seeing only the triumvirate of PCs, text editors and an obscure and threatening internet image, the politicians have not recognised yet that the key to governmental, local governmental modernisation, the reduction of bureaucracy, increasing the productivity of the economy, promoting primarily societal (digital) equal opportunities, solidarity and general improvements is destroyed by the accumulation of postponed tasks not taken seriously. Declaring the slogan "become wealthier" requires targets, methods and means, and in this regard Information Technology is a partner. In the areas of politics and governance there are only very few people, who do really see and do really understand the importance of the role of IT. People who are really committed to modernisation are the members of the e-Inclusion Committe of the Hungarian Parliament, the colleagues of the Electronic Government Centre, and some outstanding managers from among the bureaucrats of the National Development Agency.

The world is built on networks: on human, economic, communication contacts. Hungary cannot break out of these. Moreover, it has to build its international integration further in order to have a market for Hungarian services, and to have resources for the improvement of the quality of life. The presence of the international companies in Hungary ensures a contact, it ensures knowledge transfer, which may connect the domestic small and medium sized enterprises to the international circulation until they will be strengthened and they will be able to follow their own growth path. The purpose of supporting the domestic enterprises could be to make them capable of producing profit in the international arena.

The IT and communication technologies cannot be considered to be only services or public utilities. This structural approach has been already negated by time: the info-communication means and services are means for ensuring economic competitiveness and expansion, for increasing organisational efficiency, for renewing civilisation and ensuring social cohesion. The development and spreading of info-communication is not a particular task, but a central and strategic issue, it is the cornerstone of the development of the national economy. Therefore, it should be supported that all the state tasks of the info-communication sector be concentrated in one hand, within one ministry or the office of the prime minister in such a manner that it should also take care of the information and modernisation control of the activities of the other ministries as well.

In the summer of 2009, without generating any real echo, the IT profession prepared a proposal package containing the following tasks:

- Simplification of the administration procedure of state administration and governance.
- Further development of the steering, financial and management systems of health care, labour and pension-disbursal.
- Assisting the domestic development workshops and companies to international markets.
- Provision of IT training and assets for people above the age of 50: digital involvement of at least 1 million persons from this society group.
- Strengthening the utilisation of IT in the area of public and high education and in the area of adult and vocational training.

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- Accelerating the online, e-commerce presence of the companies not only on the domestic market, but on the international markets as well.
- It is necessary to support Hungarian companies in appearing with an increasing number of health care and life quality IT products and services.
- Continuously updated presence on the world wide web of the settlements, local services, local tourism and the interactive character of this presence have to be strengthened in as many languages as possible.
- It is necessary to establish the basis of accessing each settlement of the country through wideband internet.
- It is indispensible to further deregulate the legal provisions and to reduce bureaucracy, to execute the existing legal provisions that involve IT and societal modernisation.

Inforum participated in this work. However, according to Inforum it is possible to phrase a newer, more compact summary of the activities that are to be done. **According to the opinion of Inforum the key issue of the development of the information society is the improvement of the quality of life, and the key issue of developing the information economy is the increasing of market and profit. Fortunately these two areas are closely interrelated with each other.** A primary task is to dynamically develop governmental and public administration IT systems, domestic and foreign market growth, education, and the digital inclusion of the disadvantaged social groups.

Inforum sees two development directions that may be followed by domestic IT. These two directions are related to each other, although they are built on different logics. One of them is the direction of developing the profit focused information economy and the other direction is the development of the quality-of-life focused society.

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Profit focused developments and tasks to be carried out for developing the information economy:

1. Supporting export oriented developments

2. Expansion of the internal market

3. Long term investments

4. Development of electronic services

5. Establishment of comprehensive information rights, rethinking of copyrights, development of e-democracy

Quality-of-life focused developments and tasks to be done for establishing the information society and digital equal opportunities:

6. Information Society Inclusion

7. User-focused services

8. Digital culture, digital values

9. Civil-governmental-entrepreneurial-scientific co-operation

10. Taking over the European best practices, closing the gap

The above task groups are described in more detail in the attached (ppt) document.

These tasks have to be implemented in order to be able to catch up with the speed with which the countries of the European Union are rushing ahead of us. Hungary was not able to meet even the recommendations of the EU ministerial conference of Riga, which included accessible websites and the reduction of the digital divide to 50 % by 2008. However, the e-Inclusion movement initiated by Inforum in year 2007 made our lagging behind and our deficiencies obvious to everybody. At the end of 2009 a newer EU ministerial conference organised in Visby in Sweden already set the next generation of distant tasks for the next ten years (EU ICT policy strategy: Visby Agenda). This all happened at a time when Hungary had not achieved yet the previous goals. They defined these tasks based on the „Green Knowledge Society" study as follows:

1. *The knowledge economy: driver of future wealth*
2. *The knowledge society: participation for all*
3. *Green ICT: support for an eco-efficient economy*
4. *Next generation infrastructure: balancing investment with competition*

5. *Soft infrastructure: investing in social capital*
6. *SMEs and ICT: supporting Europe's small enterprises*
7. *A single information market: enabling cohesion and growth*
8. *Revolutionising eGovernment: rethinking delivery of public services*
9. *Online trust: a safe and secure digital world*
10. *Clear leadership: rethinking the EU's policy making process*

The IT development policy directions of Hungary and of the European Union are identical. However, it can be seen that Hungary needs more resources for catching up with those in the front (or at least with those, who are in the middle of the pack). It is a mistake to wait in vain for the EU to reduce its speed because of us. Therefore there is nothing else left, but we must also increase our speed. The tasks listed in the attached PPT file represent an effort made for this end.

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