

# Country Report on Portals: The Republic of Korea

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Korea has rather a long history of improving public services through the use of information technology. Key national database systems and online public services based on these were already made available in the early 1990s. For example, digitalization of personal details of all residents over 17 years old were completed in 1993, which is provided currently as an important infrastructure for e-government services. One of recent development towards e-government is the Electronic Government Act which became enacted from July 2001.

As is prescribed in the above e-government Act, the Korean government views an integrated government portal as a key instrument and pre-requisite for better and more customer-oriented information provision and government services. For this reason, like many other countries, the Korean government has been making consistent efforts for establishing government portals.

### **Current Status**

Korea takes a two-way approach to implementing government portal: on one hand the government information portal and on the other hand the government service portal. The former, which has a longer history, is focused on mainly providing government information and the latter on government services, i.e. online transactions between government and the citizen as well as the business. The two government portals, information portal and service portal, will also be linked together and integrated into a single government portal in the future.

In July 2001, the government information portal ([www.eGov.go.kr](http://www.eGov.go.kr)) has integrated three existing government portals ([www.korea.go.kr](http://www.korea.go.kr), [open.korea.go.kr](http://open.korea.go.kr), [minwon.korea.go.kr](http://minwon.korea.go.kr)) with improved search engine functions and directory services.

The government service portal, which is branded as G4C (Government For Citizen), is at present in the process of system implementation, which will be in full operation from 2002 though some part of the system will be available to the public later in 2001.

## 2. DRIVERS OF CHANGE – DRIVING FORCE, INCENTIVES, AND MEANS

### 2.1 User Orientation

Even though not from direct user surveys, services to be delivered on the government service portal G4C has in fact been determined by fully considering demand aspects, that is by reviewing current off-line transaction frequencies between government and

the citizen. As a result of the review, five government services such as resident registration, land and property, car and licensing, tax, and company-related services have been revealed to take 90% of government-citizen transactions. In this regard, the development of the government service portal has had a user-oriented characteristic from the start.

In addition, online surveys on usage frequency and user expectations about government services are being continuously performed on the government information portal ([www.eGov.go.kr](http://www.eGov.go.kr)). As an interim result, tax-related service has been ranked the highest in usage frequency and is followed by resident registration, and car and licensing.

## **2.2 Other Incentives**

The e-Government Act introduced above provides a legal foundation and works as an accelerator for e-government developments in Korea including the government portals. A new organizational framework that started with the establishment of the e-Government Special Committee in January 2001 as a part of the Government Innovation Committee, which is a President Advisory Group, also supports key e-government initiatives comprising the government portals.

Joined-up efforts and partnership between leading government departments might be another key enabler for the success of government portal. Specifically, the government service portal G4C was co-initiated by three key ministries: the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs who is in charge of public services and resources, the Ministry of Planning and Budget which controls and manages government budget, and the Ministry of Information and Communications which is leading the e-Korea initiative, the national master plan for information society.

Estimated economic benefits may also be a supporting accelerator. According to an experts' analysis, the government service portal in which 15.4 million dollars is invested in 2001 will save more than 923 million dollars annually through reduced service time, information sharing for ID certification, and so on.

Solid preparation including planning and benchmarking for the implementation of the government portal is also considered essential for success. In case of Korea, government invested enough time to make out the strategic planning for the government service portal system and government officials with project managers visited advanced countries for benchmarking portal systems including the First.gov of the United States and the UK Online Portal of the United Kingdom.

### **3. PORTALS – FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND CHALLENGES**

#### **3.1 Status and development**

Both the Korean government portals mentioned above– information and service – have been developed towards governmental top nodes as one stop shops for government information and public services respectively. Services on the portals have also been designed to be as general as possible directed to a broader range of the citizen and the business.

In this sense, it may be said that both the portals have taken the top down approach and they aim to integrate government services while maintaining existing sector specific or departmental services.

One of very challenging and useful services on the government service portal is the public services online map which will cover all the 4,209 public services providing the procedure, e-form, regional contact points, and so on of each service respectively. The online services map is being designed to be citizen-centric rather than supplier- or departmental-oriented as it is based on the life-cycle or life-episode approach. The online map will be open to the public later in 2001 on the government service portal.

#### **3.2 Applying metadata criteria (“cross-portals standards”)**

The Korean government is at present in the process of making a metadata standard which is planned to be completed till August 2001. In addition, the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs has established a guideline for government web sites including design and contents.

#### **3.3 Future challenges**

Back-office developments and support for government portals, especially for the service portal including transactions and payments, will be one of the most challenging and difficult parts for success of integrated, joined-up government portals. It will need government business reengineering and reorganization as well as simplification of existing stove-pipe government structure, which will inevitably confront resistances from most of existing civil servants.

Adopting an appropriate multi-channel strategy would be also essential for successful government portals. If the government portal were to be indeed customer-centric, the services provided on the portal should also be accessible other than by the web through several media channels including phones, digital TVs, as well as traditional public counters which may be more accessible and convenient to some users.

### 3.4 Portals samples

<http://www.eGov.go.kr>

This government portal was launched in July 2001 by integrating three existing government portals: the Government Gateway [www.korea.go.kr](http://www.korea.go.kr), the Open Government [open.korea.go.kr](http://open.korea.go.kr), and the Public Services Gateway [minwon.korea.go.kr](http://minwon.korea.go.kr).

This portal is focused on providing government information which includes the government web directory service of 430 government bodies and their contents, integrated public notices and gazettes as well as downloadable e-forms.

It will be linked to the government service portal G4C which will start its services from 2002 and will evolve into a single government portal both for information provision and public services.