

ELECTRONIC SERVICES OFFERED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS ON THE EXAMPLE OF JASIENICA COMMUNE

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Summary: E-services offered by local government units play an increasingly significant role in communication with local community members. Such services enable citizens to deal with many administrative matters without the necessity of paying an actual visit in the office. While completing their own tasks or tasks commissioned by central administration, local government units introduce a growing number of new electronic services which facilitate wider and wider scope of administrative activities. The aim of this article is presentation of the range of electronic services offered by one of Polish local government units: the Jasienica commune.

1. Introduction

For many years now we have been observing dynamic development of information systems which facilitate functioning of many areas of our lives. The range of institutions which have successfully implemented these solutions includes: banks¹, corporations, production plants and, in recent years, also local government units. Upon introduction of the National

¹ More in: P. Mrowiec, Weryfikacja czynników kształtujących rozwój obrotu bezgotówkowego na obszarze gminy miejsko –wiejskiej w świetle badań własnych, w: Ryzyko kryzysu we współczesnej gospodarce –mechanizmy i środki zaradcze (editor J. Ostoj), Published by Bielsko –Biała School of Banking and Finance 2011,

Computerisation Plan for the years 2007 – 2010, (Journal of Laws Nr 61, item 415) the expansion of public electronic services began. The development of these services was, and still is possible thanks to contributions from various external funds². One of the basic sources of financing local governments' IT projects, such as public electronic services, are funds from the European Regional Development Fund. It is one of the EU structural funds targeted at diminishing disparities in the level of development of regions belonging to the European Community. Within ERDF, the Polish voivodeships established Regional Operational Programmes and applied for financial resources to cover the costs of projects carried out in the period of 2007-2013.

2. Local government units

As of 1 January 1999, in accordance with the act of 24 July 1998, (Journal of Laws Nr 96, item 603) three-level administrative division of the country was introduced, this replaced the former, two-level system which had been in force since 1975. The act of 1998 defined 3 administrative units of the territory of the Republic of Poland: voivodeships (states); these are further divided into poviats (counties), and these in turn are divided into gminas (communes or municipalities). At present, Poland is divided into 16 voivodeships, 379 poviats, including 314 rural poviats, 65 cities with poviat rights, and 2479 communes including: 1571 rural communes, 602 urban and rural communes, and 306 rural communes (source: Central Statistical Office).

The administrative authorities of voivodeships consist of local government authorities and public administration bodies. A provincial-level elected assembly called voivodeship sejmik is elected in direct and general vote every 4 years. A voivodeship sejmik is the local government authority, the Office of the Marshal is the executive body which is headed by the Marshal elected by the sejmik. The Voivode, appointed by the Prime Minister,

² As well as other factors, see: J. Binda, E. Rak –Młynarska, P. Mrowiec, Lokalne uwarunkowania budowania społeczeństwa informacyjnego na przykładzie doświadczeń gminy Czechowice –Dziedzice, w: Nierówności społeczne a wzrost gospodarczy, Journal 23, (editor M. G. Woźniak), Published by Rzeszów University, Rzeszów 2011,

presides over the Voivodeship Office, represents central authorities and oversees the legitimacy of activities undertaken by voivodeship officials.

Poviats are local government units, and their mandate consists of the councils of the poviats. They are elected in a similar manner to the voivodeship sejmiks in direct and general vote every 4 years. The Poviat Starosty Office which is headed by the Staroste elected by the council of the poviat is the executive body. Among poviats we differentiate between rural poviats and cities with poviat rights also known as urban district poviats. Cities with poviat rights embrace cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, cities which were capitals of voivodeships in the old system before 1999, excluding Ciechanów, Piła and Sieradz, as well as some cities in big urban agglomerations such as Mysłowice, Jastrzębie-Zdrój, Jaworzno.

Communes as local government units of administrative division of the country are divided into rural communes embracing only countryside areas, rural-urban communes embracing both countryside areas as well as towns and urban communes embracing only urban areas. In case of communes the legislative power belongs to commune councils, and executive power is in the hands of village mayors (voysts) in rural communes, mayors in urban-rural communes and presidents in urban communes. The commune councils as well as village mayors, mayors and presidents are elected in direct and general vote every 4 years.

3. Computerisation of public administration

The first systematic planning document in the history of Polish computerisation, which described particular activities to be completed by public administration in order to give rise to the so called information society and to computerisation of Polish public administration, was the regulation of the Council of Ministers from 28 March 2007, regarding the National Computerisation Plan for the period 2007–2010, (Journal of Laws Nr 61, item 415). This regulation was prepared by the minister in charge of computerisation, namely the Minister of Interior and Administration. However, major contributions to the regulation were also made by other departments, local government, IT industry as well as non-governmental organisations and the Computerisation Council. The regulation came into

force on 21 April 2007, embracing 5 major, cross-sector IT programmes and 23 sector programmes connecting ten departments and central offices.

One of the most important ventures written down in the document was a project called “ePUAP – electronic Platform of Public Administration Services”. The project implementation was assigned for the years 2006 – 2008, and its main aim was to make the internet services delivered by local government units available to the public. The end product of the programme was construction of the “electronic Platform of Public Administration Services” called ePUAP. The institution responsible for implementation and completion of the programme was the department of computerisation of The Ministry of Interior and Administration.

The second programme written down in the National Computerisation Plan for the years 2007 – 2010 was “ePUAP2 - electronic Platform of Public Administration Services”. Its main aim was capitalizing on the experiences gained during completion of the first stage (ePUAP project), perfecting existing processes of electronic services and development of new ones, expanding the portfolio of electronic services on offer and increasing the number of entities using them in public administration. ePUAP2 programme has been implemented by the IT Projects Centre of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration within Priority Axis 7th of Operational Programme Innovative Economy 2007-2013

Implementation of ePUAP was completed, however, launching of the platform did not enable Polish citizens to access the electronic services offered by local government units. For that moment there were no legal regulations which would allow citizens to use ePUAP trusted profile.

4. Qualified signature versus ePUAP trusted profile

Qualified signature is a secure electronic signature verified by a qualified certificate. It is an electronic signature comparable and equal to hand-written signature on a paper document. Qualified signature has, due to applied technological solutions, certain features which a traditional, hand-written signature does not have. It is a series of data logically related to the content of the document being signed. Qualified signature may thus serve as authentication of the person who makes the signature, but also as verification

of the date of signature or authenticity of the data which are sent electronically.

A secure qualified signature was defined in the act of 18 September 2001 on electronic signature (Journal of Laws Nr 130, item 1450 as amended), as electronic data for authentication of the person who puts the signature.

The first obligation to use qualified signature put upon citizens was the necessity to replace trusted certificates used in Płatnik software, by a qualified signature. As of 21 July 2009, each entrepreneur who employs more than 5 employees and submits declarations for their voluntary or compulsory insurance in Social Insurance Institution, is obliged to affix all documents and declarations made in Płatnik software with secure, qualified, digital signature. The next step taken by the Social Insurance Institution towards promoting electronic methods communication was the introduction, as of 1 June 2012, of the trusted profile as a credible method of authentication of a citizen.

Trusted profile is a functionality of “electronic Platform of Public Administration Services – ePUAP”, which verifies identities of citizens in contacts with public administration. The functionality of trusted profile on ePUAP portal was defined in the act of 17 February 2005 on computerization of activities of entities who carry out public tasks (Journal of Laws Nr 64, item 565, as amended). Detailed rules of its functioning are put forward in the regulation of the Minister of Interior and Administration from 27 April 2011 on confirming, prolonging, using and cancelling of trusted profile on electronic Platform of Public Administration Services (Journal of Laws Nr 93, item 547).

The details specified in the regulation from 2011, allowed citizens to use the trusted profile on ePUAP, and thus, to authenticate themselves on ePUAP platform. So, as of 9 June 2011 citizens may use the trusted profile – a free of charge electronic signature. The legislator designated a number of service points where citizens may authenticate their identities and deal with all the matters related to their trusted profile. On 13 June 2012, there were 564 offices authorized to perform authentication procedures, among them tax offices, voivodeship offices with local branches and departments, local branches of Social Insurance Institution, consulates etc.

Thanks to the fact that obtaining a trusted profile is completely free of charge, trusted profile gains popularity, and the number of its users is increasing dynamically. Four months after activation of trusted profile functionality on ePUAP platform, nearly 20,000 profiles were created, a year later there were almost 70,000 profiles, and as for 19 January 2013, ePUAP portal had 93685 registered trusted profiles.

5. Local government administration electronic inbox

In accordance with Article 58, paragraph 2, of the Act referring to e-signature, from 1 May 2008, public authorities are obliged to register documents in an electronic form, including filing applications, petitions and other operations. The Article 63, paragraph 3a, of the Act of 14 June 1960 Code of administrative proceedings (Journal of Laws from 2000, No 98 item. 1071, as amended), states that electronic documents directed to the public authorities must be signed with a secure electronic signature.

In order to help local government units to meet the above requirement of registering documents in an electronic form, the electronic inbox service (ESP) was launched on the ePUAP platform on 30 April 2008.

The concept of an electronic inbox was defined on 29 September 2005 by the Prime Minister's regulation with the reference to organizational and technical conditions of electronic documents delivery to public authorities. The above regulation was issued upon the Article 16, paragraph 3, of the Act of 17 February 2005, with reference to computerization of entities performing public operations (Journal of Laws from 2005, No 64, item. 565). A trusted profile ePUAP operation was also regulated by the Act.

The electronic inbox is currently a mean of electronic communication that enables citizens transmission of the various electronic documents to public administration institutions, using widely available telecomputer systems, mentioned in the Article 3 point 17, the Act of 17 February 2005 on computerization of entities performing public operations (Journal of Laws, No 64, item. 565). Nowadays, every citizen who has an account on ePUAP platform can submit electronic documents to any public administration unit using electronic inboxes. Some units provide services in the form of electronic inboxes, on ePUAP platform, but there are some local units that

acquired electronic inboxes just because of the regulation requirements. Those units, possess actual inboxes in the alternative computer systems that integrate with ePUAP platform. The examples of such systems are e- local services platforms created by voivodeships marshals. In the Silesian voivodeship there is Electronic System of Public Administration Communication (SEKAP), and in Małopolskie voivodeship Digital Office, (Wrota Małopolski).

6. Jasienica commune

Jasienica commune is a rural municipality situated in Bielsko-Biała powiat, about 25 km from Polish- Czech border in Cieszyn. It covers the area of 91 714 km² and it is the most extensive commune in the Silesian voivodeship, including 14 parishes in its administrative borders. The commune population number is 22,476 residents, including those above 18 years of age, -17,686 people³. Jasienica commune is a part of the Silesian Euroregion, which associates towns and communes of Śląsk Cieszyński.

7. Electronic services in Jasienica commune

Jasienica commune, like all the local government units from 1 May 2008 introduced the electronic inbox service on ePUAP platform. Not only general documents can be submitted to the offices via Internet but also complaints, applications and enquiries. The development of electronic services in Jasienica commune started in the year 2009 by preparation of feasibility study and submitting an application for the competition within Regional Operational Programme of Silesian district for the years 2007-2013. The Priority II “Information Society”, Activity 2.2. “The development of the electronic public services”. On 7 December 2009 the commune submitted a project proposal to the Marshall Office in Katowice titled „e-Office in Jasienica commune” whereas on 25 November 2011 the agreement concerning the funding of the “e-Office in Jasienica commune” was signed. The total cost of project implementation equals to 1, 056, 736 Polish zlotys, including 845 389,20 (80%) funded by the European Regional Development Fund, and 211 347,30 Polish zlotys (20%) from the commune own resources.

³ (as for 31 December 2012)

The project included the purchase of computer equipment as well as network infrastructure, license acquisition and the implementation of Integrated Information System of the Commune Management including front office and back office. Within the network infrastructure the construction of LAN telecomputer system was carried out in the Commune Office building comprising of 178 category 6e access points. Within Integrated Information System of the Commune Management, the Electronic Management System of documents and tasks circulation (ESOD) was implemented together with analytic executive information system as well as e-Office System with integrative module. The project has been divided into two tasks- the construction of telecomputer network and equipment and software delivery, including the implementation and employees training. The first task has been performed since 25 September 2012, with a work completion date planned for 14 February 2013. Such a long time for work accomplishment is connected with parallel implementation of works relating to electrical and alarm network exchange in the whole Commune Office building. The second task is currently anticipating an open tender.

The deadline for the entire project realisation is planned for 31 March 2013, and the project realisation sustainability has been determined for 5 years. Throughout this period, Jasienica commune will be obliged to provide all the project electronic services to citizens. The most essential services include providing online tax accounts, electronic forms on ePUAP platform to citizens, as well as, the activation of mass payments including PayByNet electronic payments.

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