ePSIplus
Edited transcript of the Final summary made by Chris Corbin
At the Czech national meeting – 23rd January 2008.

First of all I would like to thank all of you, the presenters, the panel and those of you that have sat and listened and taken part and stayed to the very end – well done. A lot of material has been presented and discussed. It is only by coming together in this way and in subsequent meetings I hope that will enable us to all move forward to seize the economic opportunity that is before us.

Time is short as I only have a few minutes and your lunch is waiting so just a few points. You will appreciate that I have followed the meeting with the assistance of live translation and I may have missed a point or two or misunderstood the points being made. I should also explain one of my responsibilities here. Within the ePSIplus Thematic Network I am responsible to produce a report on the meeting, which I will do in due course. All the presentations will be put up on the ePSIplus web site tomorrow (24th January 2008) and also on the PSI Watch web site.

The first point that strikes me is that I have not heard a mention today as to whether a policy exists with respect to data sharing. Data sharing is important, as the public sector itself has to deliver the services to society in a seamless way often referred to as eGovernment in the discussions today. The re-use of data is but one form of data sharing and as such the policy on data sharing needs to be visible, delivered, adapted with experience and finally adhered to. It needs to deal with all the various ways that data is shared whether that be between public bodies, between public bodies and society to support the democratic processes (which we have heard much about today), between public bodies and society for statutory processes or by re-use.

The second point, which I found interesting, was the economic aspect of the Vysocina Region (please excuse my pronunciation) and that of the PSI policy lead from the Czech Government (Ministry of Interior). Judging by the presentation the relatively newly formed Vysocina region clearly understands the economic potential to be gained from the development of their region and appears from what we have heard to take this seriously as they were attempting to develop their regions economy – promotion of tourism for example, and the need to build capacity within the region. This is in stark contrast to the lack of a national lead on PSI where we heard early in the meeting from Mr Hernandez-Ros of the economic opportunity that the PSI Directive provides. What a difference!

Your country is like a number of others in Europe where there is a marked reluctance by central (or federal) government Ministries to take the lead on the PSI Directive and opportunity. It is almost as if it is too hot to handle - politically risky, needs resources that they may not be able to be obtain, not understood, for example. It is as if you Sir (referring to Mr Svoboda) that you find the 'potato' too hot and start to drop it. If you are unable to deal with it you should pass it back up the structure and if the Ministry cannot handle it then the Ministry (through the Ministers) find another Ministry that will take it and take the lead required.

Another interesting aspect was the views expressed during the meeting that the Ministry of Interior should do it all. This is clearly not practical, as we have heard of the issues of capacity and the skills needed – this is no different within the Ministry. We have also heard in the presentations that PSI is very broad so to expect one entity (The Ministry of the Interior) to understand that breadth and act upon it is rather impractical. Instead what should be done is that the Ministry should lead, develop and promulgate policy by involving other PSI stakeholders. It does not mean you Sir (referring to Mr Svoboda) have to do it all! That is unrealistic – but you must be the facilitator.

A further aspect that struck me from the meeting is the need to separate policy formulation and delivery within the public sector. The presentations appeared to focus very much on delivery (eGovernment delivery for example or what a public body was making available and how). I appreciate that due to the recent political changes in the Czech Government that there have been re-structures of the public sector bodies and as such this may have contributed to the loss of the PSI drive that was present earlier. This is an aspect that all countries experience from time to time and emphasises why it is important to have multi-stakeholder forums that are able to persist across structural changes within the public sector.

A number of issues that have been made during the meeting lacked supporting evidence. For example high prices! To help address the issues we need to provide the evidence and state with whom the issue is with and provide the detail of the issue.

The recent survey on the access law and its implementation - that is very welcome (addressing the panel member responsible for the survey and analysis); also highlighted the percentage of the Czech society (as well as the public sector itself in responding) that had exploited their rights under the access law or were aware of the law. The percentages I recall were low. The reason I mention this is that the access law probably has much more visibility than the PSI Directive and as such it is a reminder to us of the important need to raise awareness not just as a one off exercise but also as a continuous process if the economic opportunity is to be reaped.

Time is really short so just one final point. As this year – 2008, is an important year with respect to the PSI Directive and its review, I offer a couple of suggestions to you to try and take forward the PSI re-use agenda here in the Czech Republic before the Commission review of the Directive commences. The first is that a survey on PSI re-use should be done similar to that undertaken on the access law. The survey should be undertaken sooner than later. The second is that the Ministry of the Interior should form a multi stakeholder forum on PSI re-use and set off a series of meetings. These are small but easily delivered activities, which may clarify the current position here in the Czech Republic with respect to PSI.

I would like to thank you again and I look forward to seeing more meetings like this one taking place in the Czech Republic which I will observe with interest. Only by coming together will you collectively address some of the issues that you have reported on today. Good luck and thank you.

A question was then asked: Is there a Country that we could consider as a good example to emulate to save time?

Answer: Well yes there is – unfortunately I am British so this may come across incorrectly – but the UK is a good example. Now don’t take me wrong on this as the UK has many good

points but it also has many issues that have still to be resolved. However with respect to leadership, guidance, awareness raising the UK Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) is a model to follow. The OPSI is part of the National Archives and as such deals with the whole life cycle of PSI. The National Archive reports to the Ministry of Justice and one Minister within the Ministry of Justice has responsibility for PSI and PSI re-use, Data Protection, and Freedom of Information. The Minister is currently visible and leads. There is also an Advisory Panel for Public Sector Information (APPPSI).

Notes:
1. The above transcript has been provided after the event and has been edited to fill in the gaps and to assist with translation and comprehension.
2. A copy of the OPSI literature pack distributed to delegates at various meetings by the OPSI has been handed to EPMA and Mr Svoboda of the Ministry of the Interior. The information pack is also available on the ePSIplus web site and the individual components on the OPSI web site.