

## ***PLONEGOV***

Across the world several million local governments, cities, regions and public administrations are facing the same situations and challenges in terms of e-government. So why not unite their efforts? The PloneGov initiative is a collaborative software ecosystem, where government organizations, non-profits and the private sector, work together to share the cost of enhanced capabilities. The larger the community that shares the applications, the more potential benefits derived by each participant. Improvements to the software may be provided or funded by any organization. All participating organizations benefit from any one's contributions at no additional cost and with no restrictions.

The objective is to deliver tools for public administrations and on-line web services to citizens most effectively and efficiently by reducing or eliminating the duplication of effort between localities through sharing and collaboration. PloneGov enable governments to benefit from greater technological independence and together build tools that are truly suited to their own needs. PloneGov success results from a close collaboration between public organizations, open source communities and [Zea Partners](#), an international non-profit network for SMEs building open source solutions. Initiated by small towns, PloneGov is open to all type of collaborations. It already reaches cities, regions, parliaments and administrations. Truly international, the project currently has its centre of gravity in Europe and spans over 4 continents reaching more than 20 countries.

### **PloneGov, the strong points**

- **Plone:** all the applications developed within the framework of the project are based on a common technology, Plone. This tool, 100% open source, is available in 40 languages, and is internationally recognised for its stability and ease of use.
- **Collaboration:** With the support of SME's, administrations develop applications that they make available to their peers, others help to identify problems and find solutions to them, and others still participate in editing and documenting, and in testing. Everyone contributes according to the means that they have available. All assistance is welcome, and everybody benefits. With PloneGov the development of software that corresponds to a specific need is never undertaken repeatedly, thus eliminating unnecessary expense. The public administrations become more efficient, while also reducing costs.
- **Accessibility:** PloneGov respects standards in terms of accessibility (WAI) with the objective of aiding navigation on the Internet by persons with visual and motor deficiencies.
- **Effectiveness:** By developing management applications specifically adapted to the needs of public authorities, PloneGov enables their effectiveness to be considerably improved, their repetitive tasks to be automated, and public funds to be saved.
- **Economy of knowledge:** By offering the many companies and associations located within the territories of the associations taking part the possibility of having their own mini website, the public authorities are directly combating the gap between those who do and don't have access to the internet, encouraging promotion and activity within local economic and association life and participating in the training of the population.
- **Making the most of skills:** PloneGov enables full benefit to be made of the skills and human resources which public authorities and local businesses have at their disposal. It breaks down technological dependency and gives everyone his own autonomy.

**Case domain:** eGovernment

**Topic:** Efficiency & Effectiveness, Benchmarking, Inclusive eGovernment, eIdentity and Security, Services for Citizens, High Impact Services with Pan-European Scope, Interoperability, Regional and Local

***Policy context and strategic framework:***

The PloneGov initiative meets in several ways EU strategic objectives on eGovernment as defined in e2010 renewed Lisbon initiative and, because of its close interaction with innovative SMEs, with the European Small Business act. More globally, it is closely in line with the policies of international bodies as the United Nations or the WorldBank.

**Policy context 1 : e2010 Lisbon agenda**

PloneGov currently reaches all layers of public administrations in more 20 countries and is raising interest in a number of additional countries and regions. The project goals, activities and results are closely in line with the Lisbon agenda.

**No Citizens left behind**

- 100.000 cities and regions: PloneGov enables the smallest local government to benefit from eGovernment advantages.
- Promoting knowledge society: through cooperative portals, local communities enable their citizens and employees to really get into knowledge society as planned by Lisbon's objectives.

**Making efficiency and effectiveness in Public Services a reality**

- Thanks to PloneGov, local authorities can work in a far better way for a better value for money. Moreover, Plone, the software at the basis of PloneGov, makes it possible to constantly add new interconnectable and interchangeable modules. Such flexibility confers an exceptional adaptability to the project

**Putting key enablers in place**

- SME partners: small local enterprises are natural partners of the project, as their teams size and practices are similar to small local governments.
- Open source communities' partners: Plone community has a close relationship with PloneGov, to which it brings its experience.
- International: PloneGov project is open to international collaboration.
- Bottom-up strategy: PloneGov not only crosses borders, but reaches also beyond hierarchical divisions between different levels of power.

**Strengthening participation and democratic decision making**

- Participative democracy: the tools provided by PloneGov enable communities to favour a sound and sustainable participative democracy spirit via e-democracy.
- Digital divide: by reaching small local governments, the PloneGov is a solution to fight the digital divide in Europe (commerces, enterprises, schools, associations, etc.) and beyond (North-South collaboration).

**Implementing high impact key services**

More than 20 applications are already in production. Some examples are provided below, while additional applications and services are still under development:

- **Out of the box Municipal Internet site:** an easily reproducible Internet site, which is suited to the needs of cities (agenda, newsletter, RSS feed, geo-location, a mini website for companies and associations, etc.)
- **Meetings management:** additions to and management of the running order, list of those present, drawing up minutes, follow-up of decisions taken, generation of documents in PDF format, etc.
- **On-line services:** an ordering module for official documents, inter-connectable to an on-line payment system and, in Belgium, with another eID secured connection.
- **Electronic ID:** PloneGov takes e-privacy and e-security on board. For example, its technicians are familiar with Belgian e-ID

### **Policy context 2 : European Small Business Act (SBA)**

European Member States formally agreed the SBA in December 2008. The Small Business Act covers a wide range of policy areas to improve the environment for Europe's small businesses.

*“Now is the time, once and for all, to cement the needs of SMEs in the forefront of the EU's policy. The SBA brings the full weight of Europe behind SMEs - enlisting all the resources of Europe to help small business in their daily business and to clear the path for those that want to create more jobs and grow in Europe and beyond.”*

Günter Verheugen, European Commission Vice-President

PloneGov complements this act. Since its launch in 2007, the number of stakeholders involved has been steadily growing along with the budget invested by the Public Sector in services provided by innovative SMEs.

**Target users or group :** Administrative, Citizen, Civil Society

**Description of target users or group:** While being open to any public organization, PloneGov is one of the few projects, initiated by and focusing on the smallest local administrations while remaining open to any kind of collaboration. This original point has been highlighted by the EU-funded “Public Sector and Open Source Software” report:

*“The PloneGov model had a spatial and societal dimension right from the beginning, as it aims at integrating more and more municipalities and commercial partners across Europe”.* [www.publicsectoross.info](http://www.publicsectoross.info)

Thus, PloneGov target group is not restricted to a region, a language, a culture or a type of organization. In this sense, it aims at and to give anybody the opportunity to benefit from e-government's advantages. In order to manage these cultural and organizational diversities, the PloneGov participants are invited to regroup themselves by sub-projects commonly called “SubCommunities”. These thriving SubCommunities reaching 100's of Public Organizations are presented later in this document.

Additional information is also available on:

[www.Plonegov.org/SubCommunities](http://www.Plonegov.org/SubCommunities)

The technical configuration of Zope and Plone allows for developments by small interconnectable generic modules. Hence, the reutilization of some or other of these modules for other types of

organizations or other level of power than those small entities is possible. Indeed, the logic of software sharing lying at the basis of the project leads its conceivers to attract a growing number of participants. These may also turn into contributors and bring new competences that will enrich the project.

PloneGov is open to anybody who wishes to collaborate. As is the case for a traditional open source community, PloneGov needs end users that detect bugs, translators, developers, and managers. Few local government possesses all these competences and that is the added value of pooling them, to enable each of them to bring in its contribution according to its human resources and financial means. The community that derives from it learns from its cross-border contacts. This is why PloneGov reaches entities that differ as much as:

- 20 villages and cities in the Basque Country in Spain and France.
- 100 local governments in Belgium and France.
- Bern, the federal capital of Switzerland.
- 14 public organizations related to Health statistical analysis and services in Ireland.
- 10 Chambers of Commerce in Italy.
- 20 local governments, associations of towns and public agencies in Italy.
- The Walloon Government or the French Community Wallonia-Brussels in Belgium.
- 16 public organizations in the province of Kent in the UK.
- 5 Towns and cities in the State of Virginia, USA.
- The city of Rosario (1.2 millions citizens) in Argentina.
- A project for 8 national parliaments in Africa.
- And many more Public Organizations across Europe and the world.

**Scope Multiple choices are allowed:** Cross-border, International, Local (city or municipality), Pan-European , Regional (sub-national)

**Language(s):** Applications can be made available in 40 languages.

**Type of service:** IT infrastructures and products

**Overall implementation approach:** Partnership between administration and/or private sector and non-profit sector.

**Description of the way you implement and manage your initiative:**

As was noted in the EU-funded “Public Sector And Open Source Software” report:

“PloneGov is a new model of programming and maintenance capacities for public sector OSS activities.” [www.publicsectoross.info](http://www.publicsectoross.info)

The same study also describes PloneGov as the 4<sup>th</sup> model of programming and maintenance capacities for public sector open source activities in Europe. As a consequence, PloneGov project management is particular in many ways.

While in its beginning PloneGov was managed by a very small number of deciders, two years of significant growth in the number and in the diversity of its stakeholders and its SubCommunities required to differentiate the management strategies.

Today PloneGov is reaching hundreds of public organizations and aims to reach many more. Thus, the project management is structured to support the project goals and to foster

collaboration between a large number of stakeholders. The process for joining PloneGov is described on Plonegov.org home page, see link “Join Us” [www.Plonegov.org/support](http://www.Plonegov.org/support)

The PloneGov ecosystem is based on a successful collaboration between Public Organisations, Non-Profits and Businesses. The following paragraphs describe the organization structure, with a focus on the management of the technical projects and the international activities.

**Public Sector:** the process for Public organizations wishing to join PloneGov is described on the site. The only formal requirement is a written statement from the Public organization that they share the PloneGov vision and are open to collaboration:

- Stand-alone Public organizations may list their project among PloneGov references. It is a first step to raise visibility and attract similar organizations to form a SubCommunity.

<http://www.plonegov.org/references>

- Structured projects regrouping several Public organizations may join as SubCommunity (project). SubCommunities are independent projects or organizations having their own resources (name, budget, team, developers, code, projects, references in the Public Sector). These projects are usually taking place under the leadership of Public organizations. They focus their activities on technical management, development, regional promotion and services.

<http://www.plonegov.org/subcommunities>

By being listed on the PloneGov site, SubCommunities benefit from a higher visibility and the networking effect with other SubCommunities leaders. Most contacts take place directly between leaders members and are based on mutual interests (no guarantee of success). For example, some active SubCommunities are located in Ireland, Italy, Belgium-France, Switzerland, USA and South America.

**Non-Profits:** most Public organization having a local, regional or national focus, the participation of international non-profits bring in the necessary expertise to manage and foster cross border activities and/or interactions with SME and the open source community.

International activities of collective interests are managed by international non-profits as Zea Partners (operations) or the Plone Software Foundation (IP protection). These activities include operations and management, technical coordination, dissemination, communication, events, collaboration with other projects,... Both organizations maintain a close interaction with Public Sector representatives and SubCommunities leaders to ensure that the project operations meet the particular requirements of the Public Sector across Europe and the world.

**Technology choice:** Mainly (or only) open standards, Accessibility compliant, Open source software

**Technology solution:**

All the applications developed within the PloneGov project are based on a common technology, Plone. This tool, open source and available in 40 languages, is internationally recognised for its stability and ease of use. It is also supported by hundreds of SME in Europe and the world.

Plone is a content management system (CMS) which allows people with limited technical knowledge to provide with web-based content; a tool interfaced, itself, over the web, enabling users, for instance, to update the content of a website or intranet. Zope, the application server within which Plone runs, is also open source and includes basic modules such as access management and security, as well as a workflow system and a web server. Open source and open

standards are underlying conditions explaining PloneGov success and attractiveness.

### **Zope – a Web Application Server**

In the most abstract Zope is a development framework that can be used to build applications. The framework helps make developers productive. It does so by making it easier to develop, deploy, scale, extend and customize applications as it provides common programming services and patterns. Zope is a web framework: it is focused on the development of web applications (and web sites) that display their user interface and content in the user's web browser (such as Internet Explorer, Firefox or Safari). Zope consists of a number of programming components that help the web developer with user interface construction, data storage, user management, security, customization, extension, deployment and many other aspects of web development.

Zope is written in the Python programming language. The Python programming language is a dynamic, interpreted language with a reputation for ease of use while retaining development power. It was created in the early 1990s. Zope's popularity attracted many new developers to the Python language, and Zope has benefited much from developments in the wider Python community.

An open source community of developers and users quickly formed around Zope. This community has been active for a decade now, and has a very strong representation in Europe. While the community matured, its role changed. It is now a dynamic, international ecosystem of many SMEs and individuals that develop and build upon the platform.

### **Plone – a Content Management System (CMS)**

Plone is software that helps users build and manage website content. Such a software product is generically known as a "content management systems" (CMS). Plone is used by thousands of organizations and individuals around the world, including large enterprises, SMEs, governments, NGOs, educational institutions and more. Plone makes it easy for people with little knowledge of the technical aspects of website development to build and maintain powerful interactive websites that let them communicate, collaborate and build community. It is ideal for working groups or community-building efforts, as well as integrating portal services. Plone is internationalized to 40 languages, and complies with major accessibility standards such as WCAG.

The Plone project was started by 2 individuals in 2001 and has grown into a worldwide open source community consisting of:

Over 200 contributors who have developed the core codebase.

Hundreds more developers of add-on products that extend Plone's core functionality.

Over 1000 SMEs that offer consulting, training and hosting services around Plone.

Tens of thousands of live websites and their millions of users.

Dozens of local user groups around the world.

Ohloh is a web site that tracks statistics and activity on most major open source projects around the world. It places Plone in the top 2% of all open source software products for community size and activity. Plone has been an open source project active for a relatively long time as well, showing that the project knows how to continue to innovate and attract new users.

### **Important Considerations**

- **Plone:** all the applications developed within the framework of the project are based on a common technology, Plone. This tool, 100% open source, is available in 40 languages, and is internationally recognised for its stability and ease of use.
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benefits. With PloneGov the development of software that corresponds to a specific need is never undertaken repeatedly, thus eliminating unnecessary expense. The public administrations become more efficient, while also reducing costs.

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- **Making the most of skills:** PloneGov enables full benefit to be made of the skills and human resources which public authorities and local businesses have at their disposal. It breaks down technological dependency and gives everyone their own autonomy.
- **Tackling the digital divide:** by reaching small local governments, PloneGov is a solution to fight the digital divide in Europe and beyond.

***Funding source : multiple choices are allowed***

Public funding regional, Public funding local, Private sector, Charity, Voluntary contributions.

***Main results, benefits and impacts (qualitative and quantitative) for all stakeholders involved:***

As was noted in the EU-funded report Flossimpact investigating the economic impact of open source software in Europe:

*“PloneGov impact is unusual in terms of opportunity for innovation, standardization and economy of scale while gaining independence from large IT providers”.* [www.flossimpact.eu](http://www.flossimpact.eu)

**History and impact**

In 2007, CommunesPlone.org (Belgium, France) was strongly connected with two other Plone based eGovernment projects: UdalPlone (Basque country Spain-France) and PloneGov.ch (Switzerland). Due to their complementarities, the 3 projects merged on June 1, 2007 creating an open international project named PloneGov. The goal was to share efforts and existing applications between all participants and to reach more organizations.

In its early stage PloneGov included 16 towns from Belgium, 3 from France, 13 from Spain, 2 from Switzerland and 2 towns acting as observers from Argentina and Uruguay. In the period 2007-2009 many more organizations joined the project, which presently reaches 100s Public Organizations in more than 20 countries

PloneGov highlights the amazing potential of growth of its SubCommunities, which are Collaboratives groupings. For example: from 2 Belgian towns early 2005, the CommunesPlone project reaches now 100 towns and cities in Belgium-France, and 2 regional governments. In Wallonia (Belgium), the project reaches already 30% of the local governments. While UdalPlone reaches 30 local governments, PlinKit, a US collaborative focusing on public libraries reaches already 225 organizations and is planning to disseminate its project to 1000 public organizations by 2010.

A census made in May 2009 indicates that PloneGov, its members and SubCommunities, and a number of public organizations supporting the project are reaching 727 public organizations using

at least one application. According to the same organizations, the number of public organizations reached should have more than doubled by the end of 2010.

### **Economy of scale**

So far, the public organizations involved have financed the project, with little political or financial support. It confirms the potential of economy of scale allowed by pooling human resources and software developments.

For example, comparing market prices, the initial cost for a generic CommunesPlone web portal has been divided by 10 per local government. The price went down from 10 000 euro to 1 000 euro. While reducing the expenses for large towns, PloneGov also enable small towns to get a state of the art infrastructure compared to earlier unaffordable solutions.

This economy of scale not only contributes to attract new participants, but also enable them to invest their saving into the project and/or benefit from more applications for a given annual budget. On the other hand, PloneGov international coordination still relies mostly on voluntary contributions from entrepreneurs from the public sector, non-profit associations as Zea Partners and individuals. This active group has invested in PloneGov an immeasurable amount of (unpaid) overtime.

### **Entrepreneurship and training**

The lack of budget and political support has been balanced by entrepreneurship, openness to newcomers and collaboration. These conditions have stimulated an environment in favour of innovation and attractive to high potentials developers from the public sector and SME.

The Community behind PloneGov is strongly motivated and committed to develop the project. The enthusiasm of its members is a factor of promotion as well as the growing pool of application and services proposed to newcomers. The working methodology based on an open source community practices enables developers from the public sector (towns and regions) to work together, and to create generic tools adapted to their organization. The collaboration with SME experts in open source adds an additional value to the project in term of skills transfer. This methodology also benefits public employees who become more efficient within their own administrations.

As they invest in eGovernment and in collaborative portals, local entities enable their citizens and employees to get familiar with knowledge society as planned by Lisbon objectives. Indeed, while adding to the Internet site of the collectively, citizens, associations, SME and merchants get familiar with using new technologies.

For example, the town of Seneffe (Belgium) provides to all its local associations and SME a page on its portal and training to enable citizen to update it. On its side, the town of Sambreville (Belgium), reusing the default portal and the “town meeting management” tool, has provided an intranet to the local RedCross and a non-profit association.

### **Technical Innovation**

At the heart of PloneGov is the development of software for supporting eGovernment within local government associations. The PloneGov approach to collaboration encourages the local associations to influence the software development directly, helping to develop reusable solutions for worldwide local government organisations.

Software developed enables citizens' action, for example:

- Online complaint forms
- Publishing job vacancies
- Associations' directory

Other software specifically targets those working for the associations:

- Support for writing business letters
- Project management support

***Return on investment:***

In the case of an open source initiative as PloneGov, calculating the overall return on investment is a complex task as the project activities include, but are not limited to, software sharing. PloneGov addresses a number of additional issues as the opportunity of pooling resources to develop new software, the opportunity of sharing knowledge and experience to design new projects. So the benefits of collaboration are not only in the exchange of software, but also in the potential for collective design and development, allowing overcoming the limited resources of most public organizations.

PloneGov has been steadily growing over the last 2 years. The initiative decentralized structure of “SubCommunities” has enabled to generate both international project-based "vertical" SubCommunities (like CommunesPlone) and national technology-based "horizontal" SubCommunities (like PloneGov Italy or PloneGov Belgium), the later fostering cross-organization type exchange opportunities. Thus, the PloneGov innovative model has demonstrated its capacity of multi-dimensional (horizontal and vertical) growth.

All these interactions are complex and worth investigating socio-economically. These aspects, and in particular the socio-economic models of the fast growing eGovernment Collaboratives are areas of particular interest to FLOSS investigators. Some Research projects have been presented to deepen our understanding of these aspects.

Meanwhile, we propose to present a few examples to highlight the potential of the economy of scale and return on investment:

- at each PloneGov international workshop, all stakeholders involved found duplication of efforts and areas of collaboration resulting in cost savings and/or optimizing their investments.

- CommunesPlone total software value, based on an average cost per line of code, of its pool of 11 applications is currently estimated at 405 000 euro. Using open source software, the investment for the 2 main applications (website and online services, and the town meeting management system) totals 200 000 euro. For the same applications, the investment for buying proprietary licenses would have been 4 times more expensive (800 000 euro) without the possibility to freely share the same software to the additional 70 towns having later joined the project.

- The National Health Atlas (Ireland) is a database integrating geospatial data and statistical analysis. This set of applications represent a total investment over 1 500 000 euro. An international collaboration is currently investigating to transfer application components to an agency focusing on Animal traceability. While the initial investment to extract generic tools from the application will require to be covered by the second stakeholders, the benefits of sharing these open source modules to any additional player in any region across Europe becomes obvious.

These economy of scale explain the speed of development of PloneGov SubCommunities starting as a collaboration between a few public organizations (3 to 5) and then spreading solutions and methodology to dozens similar organizations.

***Track record of sharing:***

The PloneGov initiative is a collaborative software ecosystem. The larger the community that shares the applications, the more potential benefits derived by each participant. Thus, PloneGov has a very strong emphasis on **fostering collaboration** between organizations locally and internationally. All the activities taking place are focusing on reaching as many organizations as possible to share best practices, knowledge, methodologies, training and software.

This particular approach has been highlighted in the EU-funded “Public Sector And Open Source Software” report:

*“The PloneGov model had a spatial and societal dimension right from the beginning, as it aims at integrating more and more municipalities and commercial partners across Europe” [www.publicsectoross.info](http://www.publicsectoross.info)*

Developing collaboration, knowledge and software sharing lies at core of all PloneGov activities. All stakeholders benefit from these activities as they focus on their expertise:

- In the Public Sector, PloneGov project leaders get support to promote their achievements within their own organizations and thus get additional support from their management.
- SME directly benefit from the overall “PloneGov” visibility and are enabled to reach new prospects, thus growing the pool of organizations investing in the project.

The following paragraphs describe how PloneGov mechanisms for exchange and sharing:

- **Raising Plone based eGovernment projects visibility:** PloneGov enable open source experts from the public sector to raise their project visibility and connect with other experts. It has created an amazing pool of knowledge and expertise. In 2 years, PloneGov, its SubCommunities and collaborating projects have received 22 awards and nominations across Europe and the world.
- **The information available on PloneGov.org site is focused on decision makers and projects leaders.** It enables peer-to-peer Public Sector experts’ contacts. As a result it builds confidence on the technology, solutions and related investments independently from any commercial relationship.
- **Collaboration with Researchers:** PloneGov leaders maintain close interactions with EU-funded research projects investigating the socio-economic aspects of collaborative models (Flossimpact, Public Sector and OS, Flossinclude), the quality of FLOSS software (Qualoss and Flossmetrics) and a EU thematic network to measure e-Government impact and user satisfaction measurements (eGovMoNet).
- **Involvement in EU programs** as OSOR (the IDABC open source observatory) participating to workshop, publishing articles and cases studies on ePractice. Collaborating with similar ventures taking place in other continents as GOCC (the US equivalent of OSOR), or speaker at Worldbank conference for promoting open source eGovernment in emerging economies.
- **Workshops** focusing on project coordination, software sharing and knowledge transfer. In its 2 years existence, a number of events were organized to foster international collaboration. Beside an active participation to the open source community regular events, a number of PloneGov specific workshops took place in Brussels, Bern, Sorrento (Italy), Dublin, Paris, Washington DC, Ferrara (Italy), Argentina and Morocco, and Senegal in July 2009.
- **Promotion and dissemination:** in charge of the international project dissemination Zea Partners team presented the PloneGov initiative to more than 70 conferences and events over 15 countries in Europe, Africa and North America. These presentations were later relayed by open source advocates across Europe, South America (Argentina and Brazil) and Oceania (New Zealand and Australia).
- **News and articles:** 70 articles presenting the PloneGov initiative, the SubCommunities achievements and cases studies. The same content was relayed on other sites reaching complementary audiences as the Public Sector on ePractice.eu, OSOR.eu; or the open source community and SME on [zeapartners.org](http://zeapartners.org), Plone.org and Plone.net.

- **Lessons learnt:**

### **Benefits of a close collaboration between public sector, OS community and SMEs**

PloneGov is the base of development for an innovative economic ecosystem including several actors as local governments, SME and an open source community. Together with SME, the community assumes part of the initial investment in term of free promotion, community events to build up confidence, coaching, transfer of knowledge, etc. Local governments on their part open a new, potentially important market to the SMEs.

- The involvement of SME has a positive impact on the PloneGov initiative. The development of a network of potential suppliers reduces the risk of dependency and speeds up regional and international dissemination.
- Public Sector and OS communities share similar values on collaboration and work done in the public interest. These values are key in developing a trustworthy environment between actors from different working environment (public sector, SME, OS Community).

### **Added value of collaboration (mutualisation)**

A good knowledge of existing solutions avoids duplication of efforts. By pooling efforts, the technical coordination enables a better use of resources; reduce costs and speeds up results. The potential to attract new towns is big because over 100,000 EU towns and regions nearly all have the same needs.

- IT teams in local government are often small organizations with similar size to Floss SME. PloneGov facilitates collaboration between actors and the ability to exchange best practices from several backgrounds as local government, OS Community and SME. Results are a motivating working environment enabling innovation.
- In its early stage, in 2006, PloneGov/CommunesPlone, while already involving 15 towns in 2 countries, had low financial risk compared to traditional IT projects. The seed funding totaled 40 000 euro, dedicated to coaching/training on collaborative development. So far, financial resources result mostly from a better use of existing manpower (no additional budget) by pooling resources and focusing investment on a limited number of developments.

### **Difficulty to develop innovative approach within the public sector**

The open source software model of development is new to the public sector and often misunderstood by it. A risk would be to under evaluate the work required to sustain and manage a growing mutualisation project. Some activities (such as coordination and training) should ideally be taken in charge by a central body. This body should ideally a non-profit to guarantee its independence from suppliers. A bottom up project may raise opposition from traditional top down administrative structure.

- To maintain independence from suppliers while building up a project open to collaboration, PloneGov was modeled on the Plone Community organization and development practices. SMEs were involved and coached towns IT team on collaborative development practices. As more towns joined the project they bring in additional expertise and gave visibility to the project.
- A key factor of success was to model the project practices on the experience of an open source community. As the projects grows, new skills will be needed (e.g. for managing an open source project, coaching a community) these skills are new for most PloneGov members as well as to the authorities supporting the project.