

IT rationalisation in Eurostat: the global view

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I. Introduction

IT Rationalisation is a global process within an organisation mainly aiming at a higher level maturity of IT services to achieve the predefined goals, which can be different, but are generally to increase the efficiency of the IT and prepare it for the future.

At the MSIS 2014 (See Ref1), we have presented a paper on IT Rationalisation initiatives where Eurostat is involved. The focus of the paper and the presentation was mainly on the IT portfolio rationalisation process and its effect on the service culture. This poster presentation broadens the scope and examines the other components of the IT Rationalisation process in Eurostat.

IT Rationalisation in Eurostat

Eurostat, as a Directorate General (DG) of the European Commission, plays a crucial role in providing reliable, objective and high quality statistics to decision makers at EU, Member State and regional level in a cost effective and industrialised way. Eurostat works together with the national statistical institutes in the European statistical system (ESS).

In Eurostat the current wave of IT modernisation started in 2013. Initially it consisted of a new programme aiming at the consolidation of the statistical production IT portfolio with the objective to reduce the heterogeneity in Eurostat's software applications. Over the next five years till 2018, the number of internal Eurostat IT applications used for statistical business processes is expected to be reduced by 50%.

Later in 2014, discussions started to modernise the data and application hosting of Eurostat processing workflows.

II. IT Rationalisation: the global view

Introduction

There are several reasons why IT Rationalisation takes place:

Financial reasons: Budget cuts and resource constraints create a need to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

Technical reasons: Changes in the available technologies, eliminating legacy systems, evolution of the IT tools; end of the lifetime of the available server technologies, etc.

Organisational reasons: Centralisation of IT services, introduction of corporate tools.

Business reasons: Changes in the business workflow, new workflows.

Architectural reasons: Introduction of new technologies, standards and architectures (e.g. service-oriented architecture, following CSPA recommendations.)

In the global view we can identify the following interrelated aspects of IT Rationalisation:

IT Governance and Strategy

Business process harmonisation

IT Infrastructure rationalisation

IT Portfolio rationalisation

IT Hosting services rationalisation

IT Governance and IT Strategy

IT Strategy provides the framework for the rationalisation process and defines its strategic goals. In Eurostat, the newly adopted IT Strategy contains links to the IT rationalisation exercise. Two strategic goals define the target of the exercise (e.g. sustainable and cost effective data hosting and modernisation of the IT production systems) and there is a key initiative on execution and reporting.

Eurostat's current IT governance ensures that the decision workflows on IT projects take IT Rationalisation into account, and that the relevant bodies (Enterprise Architecture, Product Family managers) are consulted.

Business Process Harmonisation

The aim of Business Harmonisation is to prepare business workflows for IT rationalisation by analysing and simplifying the workflows and revealing the synergies among the different domains. The harmonisation tries to eliminate the unnecessary differences in workflows. Examples of business process harmonisation have been presented at MSIS 2013 (See Ref2.) The analysis of the business processes helps to initiate the catalogue of the common functions, which can then be implemented in the Service Oriented Architecture (SOA).

IT Portfolio rationalisation

The details of IT Portfolio rationalisation in Eurostat have been presented at MSIS 2014 (See Ref1). The process is ongoing and planning is respected. The experience shows that after rationalisation of the "low hanging fruits", the focus should be on re-engineering of the production flows together with the business units.

IT Infrastructure rationalisation

As part of the Commission, Eurostat relies on the central IT services that provide the basic IT infrastructure (PCs, network, printers, etc.) and support for office automation tools. The rationalisation of these elements is taken care of by the ITIC (IT Infrastructure Consolidation) project managed by central IT services. Eurostat has a local data centre which mainly hosts confidential data and the related processing applications.

IT Hosting services rationalisation

The rationalisation exercise in this context should provide a sustainable and cost-effective data and application hosting for Eurostat, taking into account the security and other business requirements. To assess the current and the possible future options, Eurostat has ordered a study from Gartner (See Ref3).

This aspect can be divided into different tasks:

Platform consolidation: To harmonise the hardware platforms among different servers Eurostat has started an exercise to move the computational platforms to Linux. The decision should take the sizing of the new platform, the architecture options, the licensing and other cost into account. This harmonised platform will help to rationalise the Hosting services.

Rationalisation of the Hosting services Sourcing

The planning of this aspect of IT Rationalisation can start with an analysis of hosting requirements. The different GSBPM phases (Collect, Process, Analyse, Disseminate) of the workflows have different hosting requirements with due regard to the needs for service availability; required network band-width; resilience; scalability; security and confidentiality. Typically, the services for the external world, e.g. data collection and dissemination have high availability and scalability requirements. The processing of critical workflows require high resilience, while the dissemination processes are low in confidentiality. In addition to the current internal services, the available options are the following:

PaaS (Platform-as-a-Service); IaaS (Infrastructure-as-a-Service); or evolved hybrid hosting. Public, private and private dedicated cloud environments can also be considered.

References

Ref1: Artur QUEIROZ and Mihaela VACARASU (2013) Streamlining Statistical Production Processes MSIS 2013;

Ref2: Pál JANCSÓK and Mariana KOTZEVA (2014) Is IT rationalisation a way to change service culture? MSIS 2014;

Ref3: Gartner (2014): Hosting study for Eurostat. Internal document.

III. Conclusions

The IT Rationalisation in a data oriented organisation like Eurostat is a complex process with many different aspects. The gradual implementation of the rationalisation steps with due regard to business constraints and opportunities is the key of success.