

Using IT to Improve Efficiency of Polish Courts: An Action Research Study

Completed Research Paper

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Abstract

The paper presents a research project on identification of good practices based on information technology to improve the efficiency of Polish courts. The research draws from New Institutional Economics – the theory that explains why efforts to improve the efficiency of institutions, specifically judiciary are essential for the transition economy. The methodology relies on action research. It includes theory based identification of areas for improvement and final formulation of good practices related to the use of information technology based information systems solutions (IT/IS) in the courts for their further implementation. The project outcome consists in the report on a thorough diagnosis of the factual state in thirty pilot courts and indicates the key directions for improvement as well as six IT/IS good practices. The authors conclude with the recommendation for follow-up studies that could expand on the subject of good practices for common courts in Poland.

Keywords

Judiciary, information technology, good practices, new institutional economics, action research.

Introduction

Pursuant to the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy¹ and the objectives of the EU cohesion policy, a number of initiatives have been undertaken towards a more efficient use of work resources to foster the competitiveness of the EU economy. In this respect, the strategic goals aim at the development of human resources in the areas of employment, education, social integration, development of the adaptation potential of employees and enterprises as well as the creation of efficient and effective public administration at all levels and implementation of good governance.

An increasing number of court cases and demand for court services is directly linked to the development of the private sector in Poland. The ever growing demand cannot be matched by expanding on public administration only but also by leveraging on existing organizational structures and human resources supported with good practices in management and work organization.

¹The Lisbon Strategy adapted by the European Council in 2000 describes the strategic goals of the ten-year plan for Europe to become a dynamic and competitive economic region in the world-scale by leveraging on innovative solutions and research.

This paper describes the research project on identification and application of information and technology (IT) based good practices² to improve efficiency of Polish courts. The project was a part of a larger European Union (EU) financed project implemented at a national level in which best practices in management are applied in order to improve case management in Polish system of common courts.

This paper is organized as follows:

The first chapter presents the theoretical background drawing from the New Institutional Economics (NIE). It explains why efforts undertaken to improve the efficiency of the judiciary are beneficial for the country and shows how it helps to better organize the free-market economy. The chapter is concluded by the formulation of a research question. The second chapter briefly discusses the origins, main characteristics and guidelines of the methodological element of the study, i.e. action research (AR). The five distinctive steps of AR: diagnosis, action planning, intervention, evaluation and reflection are described. This 5-stage cycle is used later as a methodological framework of the study. The third chapter describes specifics of the project as well as the activities undertaken in each of two AR cycles. It also presents a brief description of the project output – the list of six good practices to be applied in the third AR cycle. Finally, the paper is summarized by a presentation of project results and their significance to theory and practice.

New Institutional Economics

There are various disciplines (in general) and theories (in particular) attempting to explain the differences between developed and underdeveloped economies. It seems, however, that one of most promising is NIE as it explains the ways in which economies in transition should organize a free-market economy (Makhia, 2004; Di Tommaso et al., 2007; Bowen and De Clerq, 2008).

NIE rose as an alternative to the mainstream economics, classical and neoclassical approaches which were rather unable to provide an answer for a fundamental question: Why, conceptualized by A. Smith “Invisible hand of the market”, is not functioning or is functioning with different degree of efficiency within different economic systems (i.e. countries – especially while comparing poor with rich)?

NIE originated from (sociological in its nature) institutional school of economics and highlighted the behavioral nature of economic activities and the role of new technologies and its influence on habits, ways of living and thinking (Rutherford, 2001). The current stage of NIE development does not comprise a unified theory (Williamson, 2000). There is, however, an agreement between scholars on some fundamental concepts of the discipline, i.e.: (1) the existence of transaction costs, asymmetry of information attributed to market transactions as well as the importance of well established property rights and regulatory role of institutions and organizations. The three last categories are particularly important for the research presented in this paper, and thus will be briefly described:

- Property rights; The role of established property rights in a free-market economy is unquestionable. The market players will continue to work and become richer only if the result of their efforts are assured and preserved. The tool that protects the ownership of individuals is an effective legal system. NIE discerns two kinds of property rights: economic property (ability to consume the commodity or an asset directly or indirectly through exchange rights) and legal property rights (means for providing economic rights and privileges established and enforced by the government) (Barzel, 1997).
- Institutions; The main obstacle in human activities when controlling and transforming its environment is uncertainty. Institutions help eliminate uncertainty or transform uncertainty into a more measurable and predictable category, i.e. risk (North, 2005). In the long run institutions lower the transaction costs, eliminate informational asymmetry and strengthen property rights. Institutions take a central place in NIE. D.C North (1990, p. 3) defines institutions on the one hand as “the rules of the game in a society” but on the other, as “the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction.” According to D.C.

² There is no commonly accepted definition of good practice within the IT/IS literature (Kautz et al. 2007). In this paper good practice is defined in its common-sense meaning, as the solution or methodology that proved to be acceptable in obtaining predefined objectives and thus is worthy to be disseminated.

North the historical change that societies undergo may be understood exclusively through institutional analysis.

- Organizations; The other important concept, which is very closely related but distinguished from institutions, is organizations. As the institutions are the rules of the game, the organizations are the players. D.C. North defines organizations as (1990) political, economic and social bodies putting together the individuals sharing common goals and achieving commonly determined objectives. Organizational design and modeling can be done through the analysis of governance structures, skills and the learning process leading to organizational success over the time.

Institutionalists studied the factors that undermined the process of economic change. In the last two centuries the radical changes in technology dramatically transformed the way in which people work and live. It is worth noting that technological changes are not an exclusive cause for the current development of the Western World. Technological solutions are rather easy to imitate. In order to develop, the economic system has to (1) put careful attention to the development of human capital that is able to adapt, modify and develop technology, (2) have physical conditions that allow to deploy and implement selected technology and (3) have efficient economic organization (North, 1974).

The judicial system is clearly the expression of the institutional environment of the country. However, its efficiency depends on its organizational ability (i.e. proper governance structures) to fulfill the required objectives. There are many examples of research studies presenting the ways in which the judiciary can be improved through the application of IT. They include studies focusing on specific solution, e.g. classifying judicial petitions on e-court (Bueno et al. 2003), introducing digital notification of court documents (Luzuriaga and Cechich, 2011), as well as introducing the IT based improvements to the judiciary, on one of its levels (Gorham, 2012) or in the national judicial system (Andrade and Joia, 2010). The other studies provide the insight into the institutional factors that facilitate successful introduction of e-government solutions in the economies in transition (Kitsing, 2008; Ifinedo, 2011).

The above ideas and factors as well as the interest that institutional economics has in technology, institutions, organizations and property rights within the economic system in general and economies in transition in particular, directly influence the main research question. Using the logic of NIE, the research context is based on three elements:

- The effective and efficient judicial system is an attribute of a developed economy and thus facilitates proper market mechanisms;
- The efficiency of judicial system may be improved on the court-level by optimizing the court-case management throughout an effective and efficient use of IT;
- Fulfilling the above preconditions will help economies in transition to progress more efficiently.

The desired set of court-level IT-based improvements is influenced by the requirements that originate from two areas: individual courts and the judiciary as a whole. The research question of the study may be therefore articulated as the following: Which IT-based improvements aimed at shortening the court-case life-cycle are desirable from the perspective of the judiciary as a whole and the needs of a particular court? The remaining part of the paper describes the research approach that, in the opinion of the authors, gives a satisfying answer to the formulated research question. It is based on identification of IT-based good practices in specific courts, their modification and improvement and proliferation in the other courts within the judiciary.

Action Research Methodological Framework

Action research (AR) is a type of applied research aimed at developing a solution to a real-life problem. It merges academia and practice and thus produces relevant research findings in the areas where no recognized theories exist. In this sense AR is suitable to analyze new phenomena in complex social environment and therefore very promising for information systems (IS) domain research types.

AR is a generic name that refers to a class of idiographic research approaches expressing the following common characteristics (Baskerville and Wood-Harper, 1996; Baskerville, 1999): (1) Research is aimed at getting a better understanding of an emerging social phenomenon, which is complex and multivariate in its nature; (2) Scientific discovery targets both: practical problem solving and getting scientific knowledge,

hence it is equally beneficial to the researcher and the organization; (3) The research process involves two elements: interpretive assumptions made about observation and interventionist character of the action performed by a researcher; (4) Research is performed collaboratively by a number of different actors, who in the end express their participatory observation; (5) The research process is cyclical and links theory and practice and (6) The acquired knowledge can be immediately applied.

Although AR is sometimes questioned as having the scientific rigor, it can be guaranteed through the use of the most advanced type of action research i.e. canonical action research (CAR). The structure and process for CAR was proposed in the field of organizational sciences by Susman and Evered (1978) and is being popularized and extended on the IS field by Davison et al. (2004, 2012). This approach is characterized as a rigorous (Davison et al. 2004, 2012; Vries, 2007), collaborative and iterative research process and consists of the following five steps:

1. **Diagnosis.** The researcher and the practitioner (who jointly participate also in the subsequent phases of the CAR cycle) identify or define relevant problems and their causes within the organization. They formulate and agree on the working hypotheses and the research phenomenon that is the subject of study in the subsequent steps of the CAR cycle.
2. **Action planning.** All necessary alternative actions that might lead to the problem solution are specified.
3. **Intervention.** The course of intended actions defines the details of the intervention, which result in making relevant implementations.
4. **Evaluation.** The assessment of the actions taken as defined in the previous step.
5. **Reflection.** Reporting on the results of the CAR cycle. Acquired learning should contribute to both the theory and the practice. Depending on the advancement of AR study, it may constitute the final results or the starting point to the next CAR cycle.

The research process is rigorous when all research steps are properly designed and executed according to the predefined scheme within the research cycle. Rigor of the research refers to both the methodological and theory building dimensions of the study. It is collaborative when there is a high degree of cooperation between academia and organization during the research, aimed at the elaboration of the shared outcomes which satisfy both parties. In order to fulfill the requirement of the process being iterative, the research cycle (all 5 steps) needs to be executed at least two times during the study.

The Case Management Project

Project Background

The project presented in this article is one of the initiatives towards the improvement of Polish judiciary through increasing the operational effectiveness of the Polish common courts, obtaining cost efficiencies and upgrading professional qualifications of employees.

The Polish judicial system is composed of the Supreme Court, common courts, administrative courts and military courts. Common courts are established at three levels: regional, district and appeal courts. Common courts handle law cases in the area of criminal, civil, labor, commercial and family laws. Court proceedings are based on two-level rulings process. In 2012 there were 321 regional courts, 45 district courts, and 11 appeal courts in Poland. The courts are managed by the Presidents of the Courts appointed by the Minister of Justice and by the Directors of the Appeal and District Courts as well as by the Finance Managers of Regional Courts who hold supervision over finance and administrative matters.

The financial resources for the project³ implementation were granted to the Ministry of Justice and its subordinate units from the European Social Fund within the framework of Human Capital Programme (2007-2013) in the area of good governance, among others, by enhancing the potential of the public

³ Project 'Education in the area of time management and cost management of judicial proceedings – case management,' agreement for subsidizing the project (POKL.05.03.00-00-012/11) concluded on 13 July 2012, end-date on 31 July 2014, total amount of grant amounting to PLN 3,726,600.

administration and judicial system to issue legal acts and regulations as well as strengthen their capabilities to provide high standard of services. The project has been coordinated by The National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution.

The activities defined as project requirements in the course of a public procurement included:

- Training in the area of modern human capital and finance in courts;
- Training in the field of court case workflow management and workload management at the department level;
- Training in the field of people management and deployment of modern technologies in courts;
- Elaborating on the report aiming at diagnosing the factual state in 30 pilot courts and indicating the key directions for improvement (a list of good practices). Subsequent implementation of good practices in management in each of 30 courts selected for the pilot phase. The pool of 30 pilot courts selected for the project represented all three levels of common courts. Thus the group of courts included 1 appeal court, 8 district courts and 21 regional courts.

This paper concentrates on the last activity. The responsibility for the conceptual work (research) was assigned to the experts from the Cracow University of Economics, Poland including specialists from three domains: organization and management, human resource (HR) management and information systems (IT/IS Expert Team).

Specifically, the subsequent sections of this article describe the work conducted by IT/IS Expert Team, the authors of this paper, who were responsible for conducting theory based research, identification of areas for improvement, final formulation of good practices related to the use of IT/IS solutions in the courts for their further implementation. The implementation phase of the recommended and approved good practices was vested in the experts representing the consulting companies participating in the project (Implementation Team).

First AR Cycle

Diagnosis

The courts which participated in the project had been requested to do a self-diagnosis in 2011, i.e. before the start of the subject project. The self-diagnosis identified shortcomings in functioning of specific organizational tools and solutions and showed the need for organizational improvements. In addition, some courts described existing solutions (good practices/strengths) that proved to be effective and efficient and were potentially viable to be disseminated in the other courts.

Organizational issues listed by the courts were mainly connected with:

- Human resource management (e.g. lack of motivation system for employees, gaps in job position description/evaluation/standardization, undefined criteria for differentiating the additional functional compensation packages, lack of personnel development scheme or a system for performance assessment);
- Work organization (e.g. lack of a system for employee workload assessment, insufficient or no training in the field of organization and management, poor knowledge management, lack of skills and deficiency in innovation management);
- Internal/external communication and information workflow (e.g. absence of effective internal communication, digital document workflow, including case files, internet or telephone, communication system with petitioners, management of IT services, including nonexistence of formal communication channels with IT personnel).

In order to improve the communication and information workflow, the courts expressed their readiness to use IT tools, both internally (i.e. intranet) and externally (i.e. using Internet when communicating with petitioners, other court instances, persecutor offices, police and department of correction).

Action planning

After analyzing the self-diagnosis documents provided by the courts the IT/IS Expert Team performed a series of on-site visits within the pool of courts. The courts that were selected for the visits in this step were those that were considered by IT/IS Expert Team as leading in the application of specific practices (i.e. using specific tools and techniques in the areas of organization and management, HR management and IS on higher than average level). The visits (lasting usually from 2 to 4 hours) aimed at discussing the situation described in the self-diagnosis and verifying with the factual state as well as identifying the good practices used in the courts. The onsite visits involved meetings and discussions with specialists representing various organizational units including court presidents, directors, managers and employees of HR, finance and accounting and IT departments. During the meetings experts provided the theoretical insight on the subject and highlighted the list of potential improvements. In consequence, the IT/IS Expert Team defined research directions, action plan and created a preliminary list of good practices.

Intervention

In the subsequent phase of the project, the IT/IS Expert Team conducted a number of full-day workshops in close collaboration with the specialists from the court IT department. During these full-day workshops the experts got acquainted with the IT solutions functioning in the respective court and shared the IT-related good practices implemented in the other courts. Face-to-face meetings were found to be very efficient and resulted in the exchange of information and brainstorming the ideas for refinement and expanding on existing good practices. After a number of full-day workshops in various courts, the IT/IS Expert Team worked out a preliminary list of IT/IS good practices that were structured on five maturity levels (Table 1). The concept of maturity levels was adapted from Paulk et al. (1993) and COBIT (ITGI, 2007). Each maturity level comprises a set of capabilities aimed to identify the degree of organizational excellence in a given context. They rank from level 1 (initial) to 5 (optimizing). The maturity levels used in this paper were adjusted according to the specifics of a given good practice. This approach enabled the courts to adapt good practices based on their current maturity level and needs. It can also help the courts to accommodate good practices in future as they move to upper levels in a streamlined manner.

Good practice	#	Maturity level
1. Resource reservation system	1	Local applications (e.g. spreadsheets) used by organizational units for booking the court resources (court halls, conference rooms, special rooms, cars, beamers, multimedia presentation tools)
	2	Networked application for resource reservation (court halls, conference rooms, special rooms, cars, beamers, multimedia presentation tools)
	3	Level 2 + calendars for court president, directors of the court departments and other court executives
	4	Level 3 + formalized method for resources reservation + metrics for resource utilization
	5	Level 4 + analysis of trends in resource utilization + users requirements analysis + optimization of resource reservation system.
IT/IS security audit	1	IT/IS (checklist based) audit on workstation level + analysis of results
	2	IT/IS (checklist based) audit on system level + analysis of results
	3	Level 1 + formalized method for assessment of IT/IS audit checklists allowing their update and modification
	4	Level 3+ establishing an IT/IS security forum which actively discusses IT security issues
	5	Level 4 + tracking and analyzing trends of potential security threats and vulnerabilities

Good practice	#	Maturity level
IT service management	1	Unification of hardware (workstations, notebooks, printers, scanners etc.) through setting the parameters for respective user groups and setting the minimal order quantities
	2	Level 1 + unification of hardware types in IT/IS service models (i.e. hardware for office, judges, court halls etc.) + using checklists for hardware and software installation
	3	Level 2 + automation of installation procedures and software configuration (i.e. Windows Deployment Services (WDS) and/or Group Policy Objects (GPO))
	4	Level 3 + using software tools for IT infrastructure description and monitoring (i.e. WikiMedia, nVision, ADOit)
	5	Level 4 + implementation of selected elements of IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) (e.g. Service Desk)
Digital writ of habeas corpus	1	Using templates filled with data obtained from court office management system
	2	Level 1 + manual sending data using XML via e-mail to the police
	3	Import of data from court office management system + manual sending via e-mail + periodic exchange of cryptographic keys
	4	Software implementing requirements from level 3 + encrypted channel of communication between court and police
	5	Level 4 + extension of the system to other institutions (e.g. department of correction)
Tools for internal communication	1	Intranet web portal
	2	Level 1 + intranet e-mail system
	3	Level 2 + intranet digital communicator and intranet forum
	4	Level 3 + formal model of communication (rules for information exchange, digital signatures, information archiving and classification procedures)
	5	Level 4 + communication tracking process (bottleneck identification) + trend analysis in internal communication methodology as to its potential application in the court
Case files workflow management	1	Case files workflow on the level of department offices (assigning bar-code signatures for files)
	2	Level 1 + case files management integrated with court archive
	3	Level 2 + support tools for forwarding case files to country central archive
	4	Level 3 + case files localization system
	5	Level 4 + utilizing radio frequency identifier (RFID) technology for labeling and localizing case files
Digital case files management system	1	Digitalization of multi-volume case files
	2	Real-time digitalization of case files
	3	Level 2 + obtaining external (e.g. from prosecutor's office) documents in digital form

Good practice	#	Maturity level
	4	Level 3 + formal model of accessing case files (for judges, other parties) + metrics of case files access utilization
	5	Level 4 + tracking trends in case files digitalization

Table 1 Preliminary List of IT/IS Good Practices

Evaluation

The preliminary concepts of IT/IS good practices defined in the previous step of the first AR cycle were consulted during subsequent full-day workshops in the courts. These visits took place in both, the courts that already used certain good practices and the courts that did not yet apply such solutions. The main objective of workshops held with the former group of courts was to discuss further development or refinement of the ideas used. Whereas the workshops held with the latter group focused on getting their views on potential application of good practices in their organizational units. The list of concepts was supplemented with new ideas proposed by the IT/IS Expert Team. In the result, the preliminary list of good practices was shortened to six (the practice ‘Case files workflow management’ was removed, but some of its elements were moved to the practice ‘Digital case files management system’.) Also the scope of the practice ‘IT/IS security audit’ was changed and renamed as: ‘Workstation/device security checklist-based control.’

It should be concluded that generally the courts’ IT departments shared positive (and sometimes even enthusiastic) opinions concerning the usefulness of the preliminary IT/IS good practices.

Reflection

Having completed the full-day workshop visits, the IT/IS Expert Team outlined the report in which preliminary IT/IS concepts were described. They were also captured in the executive summary that was later presented during a meeting with the court executives (presidents of the courts, directors). The report was distributed to the courts prior to the meeting during which various aspects of good practices and their impact on work organization in the courts were discussed.

The meeting was concluded with the shortlist of solutions for further discussion. The court executives requested a more detailed description of good practices which constituted an entry point for the next AR cycle.

Second AR Cycle

Diagnosis

The second AR Cycle began with distribution of questionnaires and the description of good practices and maturity levels (Table 1) to all courts participating in the project. The courts were asked to assess which practices were suitable for implementation in their organizations and to position their organizations against the appropriate maturity level. The analysis of the responses resulted in re-adjustment of good practices (according to the degree of actual maturity in using the practice, expressed needs and remarks) in order to better suit the courts’ organizational needs.

Action planning

Taking into account the analysis performed in the diagnosis step, IT/IS experts set the schedule for actions to be taken for elaborating the final version of good practices. It happened that some additional visits in the courts were necessary which was factored in the proposed schedule of actions.

Intervention

The experts developed the final version of IT/IS good practices including all the details related to their functioning. These descriptions constituted the base for their assessment and final selection performed by

the court presidents. The detailed description of good practices served also as documentation for the consultants responsible for elaborating the implementation plans. The additional workshops planned within the schedule of actions were performed accordingly.

The list of final versions of IT/IS good practices, together with its short description is presented in the table 2.

Good Practice	Description
Digital writ of habeas corpus	Introducing the tools for electronic data interchange (EDI) facilitating the orders of bringing the prisoners and/or witnesses to the courts by the police (replace paper communication with EDI communication channel embedded in IS of interested parties.) It uses XML-based EDI protocol and encrypted data channel. Digital writ of habeas corpus brings cost-savings for the courts (and police), and reduces the duration and complexity of the process.
Tools for internal communication	Improving the quality and speed of internal communication across all organizational levels and units through introducing of an intranet platform. It replaces traditional (paper) communication with an e-mail channel enabling attaching documents (i.e. letters, decrees, policy descriptions, procedures), sending direct messages (i.e. instant messaging system) and archiving. Deployment of the internal platform increases communication efficiency and cost savings.
Digital case files management system	Deploying digital document management system (DMS) to manage case files. DMS uses various methods, i.e. transforming case files to a digital form (scanning) thus enabling effective and efficient content analysis through optical character recognition (OCR), importing documents from internal and external sources (police, persecutor's office) and system design for case files storage and future access. The main advantages of digital case files management system are: obtaining fast and easy access to documents (including concurrent usage), minimizing risk of losing and or/damage/modifying the documents as well as lowering the cost of traditional case files maintenance.
Resource reservation system	Introducing IT-based tools supporting resource management (material and organizational) necessary for the judicial and administrative activities of the court. The system is based on centralized and unified intranet-based web-enabled solution. The benefits of the good practice are mainly evident in the improvement of the day-to-day resource management process and the potential optimization of resource utilization (including cost optimization) within the whole organization.
Workstation/device security checklist-based control	Improving security of the court's IS. The essence of good practice is based on performing periodical checklist-based control procedures of workstations and other devices (i.e. printers, switches) protection mechanisms. The main gains related include: enhancement of court IS security, identification of potential system strengths and vulnerabilities, increasing IS stability, providing system compliance with external regulations (including ISO standards), as well as improving the user's awareness of IS security issues.
IT service management	Introducing principles of effective and efficient IT management. Good practice is based on service-based model of IT delivery as described in IT Service Management (ITSM) body of knowledge. The central element of this concept is IT service defined as organizational need satisfied through the use of IT. Main benefits include: IT services adjusted to the court needs, planning and budget optimization, increased effectiveness and efficiency of staff performance resulting from alignment of IT services to

Good Practice	Description
	the specific user's needs, efficient change management, increased users satisfaction and improved court image among its internal and external stakeholders.

Table 2 Final List of IT/IS Good Practices

The descriptions of good practices were disseminated to all courts. It allowed the court executives to get familiar with all the details before their final selection. It was also sent to the consulting company responsible for implementation in order to initiate the implementation plans.

Evaluation

The court executives made the final selection of good practices based on the usefulness and applicability to their organizations. They also had an opportunity to raise comments related to good practices and their implementation during the meeting attended by presidents of the courts, directors, experts and the representatives of the company responsible for the implementation. After the meeting the final set of practices was selected by all courts. Table 3 presents the distribution of IT/IS good practices selected by the courts of respective level within the number of courts participating in the pilot project (the number of courts for each court category participating in the research is given in parentheses).⁴

	Regional courts (21)	District courts (8)	Court of appeal (1)
Digital writ of habeas corpus	6	4	0
Tools for internal communication	18	6	1
Digital case files management system	4	6	0
Resource reservation system	8	6	1
Workstation/device security checklist-based control	13	3	1
IT service management	16	6	1

Table 2 IT/IS Good Practices in the Courts of Particular Level

Reflection

After selection of good practices it was necessary to work out the implementation plans for each individual court. This task was initiated during the meeting between the representatives of the Implementation Team with the courts executives. The experts from the Implementation Team acted as the consultants. Various aspects of project management methodologies were discussed.

Currently (beginning of 2014) the good practices are being implemented in the courts participating in the project which forms the third cycle of AR. The IT/IS Expert Team is acting as the advisory body to help understand and resolve potential issues and fine-tune good practices to the needs of specific courts, if

⁴ The presented statistics includes exclusively IT/IS good practices. It was compiled on the decisions of 29 courts participating in the pilot project (The decision of one court is missing).

required. The completion date of this phase is scheduled for the second half of 2014 and will be followed by the assessment of effectiveness and efficiency of the implemented solutions and the post-implementation report.

Discussion of Findings

The tangible deliverable of the research consists in the list of good practices approved for implementation in the courts accepted as recommended standards for Polish judiciary. The authors conclude that the formulation of maturity levels and the series of interaction with the court representatives contributed to raising the awareness in the area of management, organization of work and communication supported by IT/IS solutions and influenced decision-makers.

As one of the lessons learned, the researchers found the courts to be a very specific research environment. Basically, courts are managed in the authoritarian way that leads to overall reluctance to change and inflexibility. Some courts, however, were managed in a more participative way and delegated decision power to their employees. These courts usually were the sources of good practices to be disseminated among the other courts. However, overall reluctance to change within the courts participating in the project decreased over time of the project eventually resulting in selecting 3-4 of IT/IS good practices per court for deployment.

It was also interesting to observe how the same organizational and legal procedures are being interpreted and approached in various ways by different courts. As a follow-up to the subject project, the authors recommend to expand on standardizing procedures across the courts as to the use of good practices.

Conclusion

The scope of the presented research area, in general, and IT/IS element in particular was a very good example of close cooperation between the academia and practice that triggered the exchange of ideas, and application of theories to organizational problem solving. The theories and approaches proposed by the IT/IS Expert Team comprised various concepts from broad domains, such as organizational information processing, EDI, workflow management, ITSM as well as specific solutions: OCR, XML based EDI protocols and application of security standards to mention the most important.

The project constitutes an interesting case study for the economy-in-transition domain. Its theoretical background, i.e. NIE indicates that establishing right institutional environment that safeguards property rights of its players facilitates proper development of free market economy. This should advise country-wide decision makers for future funds allocation.

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