

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DPT. OF PUBLIC HEALTH, FOOD CHAIN SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT



“BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE CONSIDERABLY ENHANCED OVERALL TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGHOUT OUR DEPARTMENT, ALLOWING US TO STAY WITHIN VERY NARROW BUDGET MARGINS AND TO SPEND THE TAXPAYER’S MONEY MORE WISELY.”

- GEORGES LEENEN, DIRECTOR OF MANAGEMENT, BUDGET & MANAGEMENT CONTROL – LOGISTICS, FOD VVVL

The creation of the FOD VVVL (Federal Government Department of Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment) in 2002 marked the culmination of ten years of successive far-reaching reforms of the Belgian civil services, reflecting the development of federal state structures. This Department is charged with drafting and applying policies that guarantee and improve the quality of life in general, of food and of the environment.

CHALLENGES FACED

- To get a clear view of over- or under-spending of budgets
- To gain further insight into budget allocations, expenditures and payment terms
- To improve accountability and reduce processing and cycle times
- To detect rapidly any deviations from Key Performance Indicators
- To improve budgetary transparency within the Federal Government Department and with other Departments and the Court of Auditors.

The reforms resulting from the development of Belgium's federal structure have had a considerable impact on the country's civil services. In 1995 two large federal ministries – Public Health and Social Affairs – were merged into a "super-ministry", only to be split up again into several Federal Government Departments in 2002.

"On the whole, even these fundamental changes did not raise too many organizational problems for our service, since both ministries used the same financial system", observes Georges Leenen, Director of Management, Budget & Management Control – Logistics at FOD VVVL.

Since 1989 extensive business re-engineering efforts had been undertaken to improve the quality of inputs and outputs and reduce cycle time, but the creation of the Federal Government Department in 2002, with the appointment of a new Board of Directors, offered the perfect opportunity to modernize the Budget & Management Control Service. Out of ten directors, eight were recruited from the private sector. The era of Business Intelligence could begin.

STRATEGY FOLLOWED

In consultation with Ardatis, its long-time management consultant and software integrator, the Federal Government Department decided to implement Cognos solutions for reporting, analysis and performance management. Cognos was selected for its user-friendly interface, the clarity of its reports, the high number of visualization possibilities and features, and its excellent drill-down capabilities.

"We were well aware that we could only succeed if the introduction of Business Intelligence was matched with a number of organizational measures throughout the Department. We already had the full support of the Board of Directors, but we had to secure commitment on all other levels", recalls Georges Leenen. The introduction of Business Intelligence at the Department was also supported by a Service Level Agreement signed by almost all the parties involved.

The role of the "budget owners" was clarified and budget and management control correspondents now meet monthly to identify areas where further quality and cycle time improvements can be made. Targets and bottlenecks are discussed during monthly presentations to the Board of Directors.

BENEFITS REALIZED

- Pro-active management control in a number of areas and improved accountability throughout the Department
- Clear and immediate information on over- or under-spending in human resources, operations and ICT
- Optimized payment processes for improved relationships with suppliers
- Better support of the budgeting process
- More detailed and accurate information for budget control operations.

At the end of a short implementation period of approximately six months, the system was fully operational and delivering its first – and quite impressive – results. A telling example is the progress achieved in the payment process. The legal limit for payment of suppliers' invoices is 50 days. The Department set the target of 32 days, but soon managed to cut average payment time down to only 19 days!

"In the longer term, this should correct the negative image and eliminate prejudices that still surround the public services. But there are other fields where our Federal Department's performance stands up to comparison even on an international scale", notes Georges Leenen. "Our Business Intelligence system allows us to stay within very narrow budget margins and thus to spend the taxpayer's money more wisely. Take our staff expenditures, for example: monthly follow-up allows us to fine-tune recruitment to budget allocations. Last year we spent 99.8% of our budget!"

TECHNICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Source Database: DB2
- Target Database: SQL Server

COGNOS SOLUTIONS IMPLEMENTED

- Scorecarding
- Multidimensional Analysis
- Managed Reporting

INDUSTRY

- Public services

For any further information, please visit www.fgov.be or contact Cognos at +32 (0)2 712 10 42 or at infobelux@cognos.com.



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