

André van der Meer – Background

Mr. André van der Meer has been employed by the House of Representatives of the Netherlands since 1997. In his present job he is responsible for the e-parliament programme. This programme works towards an integrated model of information management containing the ICT architecture, information architecture, organisation, communications and public relations. Its aim is to position the Dutch Parliament as a strong entity in the digital society.

Before he came to the Parliament he studied commercial economics, financial economics and business administration. He made his career in governmental organisation in the field of finance, operational management, ICT and reorganisations. He was head of the ICT Department of the House and was responsible for the reorganisation of the facility management department and the parliamentary reporting office.

Abstract – e-mail management for members, the Dutch experience

In the final declaration of the EPRI 2003 meeting in Berlin it is stated:

“Parliaments should support their members when it comes to answering the huge amounts of e-mails that they receive daily

- *by eliminating unwelcome messages through filters, additional e-mail addresses etc.*
- *by structuring and selecting the incoming messages*

The parliaments are invited to provide their members with additional means keeping in mind that sender of an e-mail expects an immediate and personal answer by his/her representative.

The conference should keep track of means and ways that would help cope with the increasing number of Spam mails, by information technologies as well as by legislation.”

This problem is well known in the Netherlands. In 2003 the Presidium of the House requested a solution for the members so they could divide their mail into two categories: public and confidential. That would help them to provide more specific answers. To help Members on this point, the Dutch Parliament has implemented the following solutions:

- an e-mail management system that reads and analyses the contents of e-mails from selected e-mail boxes and gives suggestions to answer to those mails. The suggestions come from a knowledge base maintained by a specific department or the political party of the MP in question. Every user group can decide on whether or not an individual mailbox should be attached to the email management system. Our experience till now is that it saves time;
- all MP's are given a secret email address for their personal electronic communication. Their public email account remains and will be attached to the email management system.
- MP's also get a folder in their mailbox for parliamentary documents only. This makes it possible for them to select quickly all relevant information on the parliamentary process
- Filtering of SPAM is organized on several levels, by means of a firewall (Exchange server) and the email management system. Spam is reduced with 90%.
- An active form of Frequently Asked Questions was taken into use to reduce the number of mails and telephone.

All these measures form an integrated solution which we are planning to refine in the coming months. The strength of this solution is that every part of the organisation can implement it as far as they want it themselves. The solution is realised by a project team with members from political groups and official departments.