The Internet has emerged as a key channel for both firms (electronic business) and governments (electronic government). Electronic business (e-business) can be defined as the management of relationships, electronic data interchange, collaboration, communication and the establishment of workflow processes with business partners, customers, employees, and other business agents, as long as these tasks or processes are performed by electronic means. Firms today frequently integrate Internet technology to redesign processes in ways that strengthen their competitive advantages. Consequently, e-business has a pervasive impact across the entire span of the organization’s structure (from the purchasing department to the field sales force) and across a range of its business processes (from internal administration to supply-chain coordination). E-business has the potential for generating revenues from e-commerce applications but its main contribution may come from its ability to reduce costs, including both fixed and variable costs.

The explosion of e-business in the private sector have brought upon public organizations increasing pressure and incentive to embrace the technology as a means to improve the way governments operate. Since the late-1990s, governments and businesses are shifting to a digital basis for doing business. Electronic government (e-government) refers to the use of information and communication technologies, and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government. The impact of e-government at the broadest level is simply “better government” by enabling better policy outcomes, higher quality services, and greater engagement with citizens and businesses. Government organizations at all levels are currently developing and implementing e-government initiatives.

This special issue comprises a selection of extended versions of the best papers presented at the IASK E-activity and Leading Technologies 2009, focusing on related issues concerning information technologies (ITs), software development projects, social networks in the Internet, ITs for payment systems and Internet-based learning.

The first study, entitled “An eAgriculture-Based Decision Support Framework for Information Dissemination”, by Armstrong, Diepeveen and Tantisantisom uses a similar approach to the Knowledge Discovery in Databases methodology to develop and IT based framework which can be used to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge for farmer’s decision making processes. The framework comprises data capture, analysis and data processing which precede the delivery of the integrated information for the farmer.

The second contribution, entitled “Activity Driven Budgeting of Software Projects”, by Baumeister and Ilg, investigates a new activity approach that is based on business specific cost data, which can be easily integrated into existing management accounting systems and applied for software development projects. Besides the
presentation of a conceptual design model, this paper delivers a framework for activity driven budgeting and cost management of software development projects in general combined with concrete implementation examples.

The third paper, entitled “Social Networks and Young People: A Case Study”, by Ferreira analyses some of the most popular social networks in Portugal. The main characteristics and differences between the “Web 1.0” and “Web 2.0” are explained and, then, the results of the empirical research are presented and discussed. The findings are particularly relevant for academics and industry professionals who might be interested in the application of new technologies for communication and socialization purposes.

The fourth study, entitled “Technological Dissemination in the Portuguese Payments System: An Empirical Analysis to the Region of Santarém”, by Pinto and Ferreira, investigates the degree of convergence, regarding the technological dissemination for banking purposes, between the Santarém’s Region and the national trends in Portugal. Throughout this paper, it is possible to verify that ITs were (and are) an important lever towards the modernization of the payment systems. The exploratory results show a high the degree of convergence between the Santarém’s Region and the national trends in Portugal.

Finally, the fifth article, entitled “RSS-Based Learning Using Audio”, by Álvarez-García, Paule-Ruiz, van Dort and Pérez-Pérez, explains how Really Simple Syndication (RSS) format can be used in web and audio learning. The paper shows that RSS enables new ways of communication to be established between students and teachers and allows the selection of the educational material by the users themselves. From a technological point of view, RSS offers a useful format to interpret and adapt results. Nonetheless, the format also presents a number of limitations such as accessibility and availability.

We are grateful for this opportunity to report and disseminate research presented at the IASK E-activity and Leading Technologies 2009 and we hope to see you all in the next edition of this International Conference.

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