

## PRESS RELEASE

### WeGov project Final Results & Highlights

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The [WeGov project](#) (Where eGovernment meets the eSociety) that aimed to improve the engagement between government policy-makers and citizens via popular social networking sites was officially launched in January 2010. After thirty-two fruitful months of vigorous activity, WeGov partners are pleased to announce they successfully reached the **end of the project** at the end of September 2012.

#### Final Results

WeGov has developed a cutting-edge software solution (**WeGov toolbox**); a *web application*, which includes tools and components that support policy-makers in the analysis of social networks. The WeGov toolbox **enables policy-makers** to use social networks to engage with citizens, get their actual opinions and highlight those opinions that can influence policy decisions. In this way it allows them to enrich the policy-making process.

The tools and components of the WeGov toolbox include the following:

- **Search** - searches and monitors discussions on social networking sites according to parameters such as: which networks to search, keywords defining the theme of the query, and geographical locations. The output of searches can be used in WeGov's analysis tools.
- **Topic Analysis** - reorganizes & summarises comments according to groups of words (concept groups) that represent areas of discussions within a wider debate, enabling the user to quickly see themes running through the comments.
- **Discussion Activity Analysis** - highlights important posts by predicting which posts and users will generate more attention.
- **User Behaviour Analysis** - classifies users according to their behaviour and interactions within the social networking sites.

The WeGov solution is intended to be **flexible & applicable** to many different use cases. It enables beneficiaries to make full use of the high level of participation and rich discussions that already take place in existing social networking sites.

The WeGov toolbox has been developed in close collaboration with a number of different entities such as the **European Parliament**, the **German Parliament**, the **Federal Parliament of Nordrhein-Westfalen** (Germany), local authorities and political parties from different EU countries, NGOs and businesses.

Strong user-engagement activities with the above entities during the **WeGov field trials** provided valuable use-cases and feedback for the WeGov toolbox. The key purpose of these activities was to **evaluate the WeGov toolbox** and its **added value**, as well as to **investigate** how it could be used to compliment decision-making processes regarding any given policy theme.

**Good progress** was achieved already during the first evaluation period of user-engagement, mostly with members of Parliaments, whose feedback resulted in the **major evolution** of the WeGov toolbox in the period from February till September 2012. In the final evaluation period, new stakeholder groups participated in the WeGov toolbox evaluation and a **large amount of feedback and interesting recommendations** were provided. The best proof of the **high potential** of WeGov is the fact that users expressed the desire to have further access to the tools after the end of the WeGov project, and were keen to be engaged in any further developments.

## Highlights

Among the project's most remarkable highlights is the [2<sup>nd</sup> WeGov workshop](#) "WeGov Toolbox - Politicians engage with Citizens" that took place within the **IFIP EGOV 2012**, on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012. The aim of the workshop was to demonstrate the final version of the WeGov toolbox to the scientific community of e-governance and e-government, showcase the implementation of the WeGov field trials (use-cases), present the implications of the WeGov solution for policy-makers, and explore potential use-cases and end-users.

The event concluded that the toolbox provides potential functionality in several ways, however since it is a research prototype further improvement is required to prepare the toolbox for commercial-quality release. Overall the 2nd WeGov Workshop was **successful**, providing a fruitful discussion and impressive ideas; but mostly bringing to light wonderful opportunities for social media assisting policy-makers engagement with their citizenry and stimulated stakeholders' interest in **future take-up**.

WeGov partners successfully raised remarkable awareness of the project and its added value, via an array of dissemination channels & tools. Another activity that can be indicated as a **major project highlight** would be the organization of the [Hansard Society/ WeGov event](#) "More heat than light? Can social media inform policy-making?" which took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2012, in Westminster, London (UK).

The event was embraced with great enthusiasm providing a fruitful discussion on the ways which social media could be utilized in the policy-making process. The event not only was deemed a great success, but also generated **great exposure** increasing the numbers of the members of the WeGov community of interest, and initiated much dialogue regarding the project in **well-known media** such as the [BBC News](#) (Article by Brian Wheeler) and [The Guardian](#) (Article by Nick Jones).

Overall, WeGov partners are **proud to acknowledge** that they have successfully raised awareness about the project and its added value; stimulated stakeholders' motivation and encouraged their participation in the WeGov field trials; built trust, and contributed to the enhancement of the WeGov software solution's competitive advantage.

Based on the above, the WeGov project **succeeded in communicating clearly** the strong **WeGov message** that through the cutting-edge WeGov software solution policy-makers could be freed from the inherent limitations of bespoke and dedicated platforms and instead could engage directly with citizens in their native online social environment to close the loop with their citizenry. This message was not only successfully communicated but also **commitment and acceptance** of it was won.

***About the project:** WeGov has been funded with support from the European Commission under the SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME THEME ICT 2009.7.3 ICT for Governance and Policy Modelling. The project aims to provide the tools and techniques for closing the loop between policy makers and citizens, taking advantage of the plethora of well-established social networking sites. These tools will enable policy makers to move away from limitations involved in the current practice of government hosted websites and instead to make use of the high levels of participation and rich discussions that already take place in existing social networking communities.*

For more information please visit: <http://www.wegov-project.eu/> Email: [info@wegov-project.eu](mailto:info@wegov-project.eu)



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