

Panel: The Y2K date rollover: Experiences and lessons learned from AIS region 2

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1. INTRODUCTION

At midnight on December 31st last year one of the most widely anticipated events in computing took placeXthe Millennium date rollover. Fortunately, the occasion was marked by virtually no disruption to computing services and the global meltdown that some authors had predicted did not arise.

The purpose of this panel is to explore the experiences of and the lessons learned from the Y2K date rollover. In order to this, the panel will draw on the experiences of a range of countries found in the AIS region 2 (Europe, Middle East and Africa) and will highlight the differing experiences of these countries.

The panellists will look at the three stages associated with the date rollover. First, they will explore the preparation that took place in their areas before December 31st. In particular, they will look at the role that governments played in ensuring that organisations were prepared for the date change and the advice that was given to citizens in advance of the date rollover.

Next the panellists will briefly review the arrangements for the New Year period, and in particular, any contingency plans that were made for major disruptions arising from the failure of computer systems.

Finally, each panellist will review the events that occurred after it became clear that the date rollover had been relatively uneventful and the lessons that had been learned from the whole process.

Clearly there are likely to be different national attitudes to each of these aspects of the Y2K problem. For example, there will be differences in the extent to which governments felt it was their obligation to ensure that the country was prepared for December 31st. There will also be differences in the extent to which they were able to ensure that organisations made adequate preparations for the end of the year.

Similarly, differences will exist between countries over the New Year period, with countries that have some form of conscription / national guard making very different preparations from those that can only rely on the police and military services in times of national emergency.

Finally, the aftermath of the nonBevent will also highlight national differences. In some countries, the lack of millennium bugs will be seen as evidence of successful planning for Y2K, in others it will be seen as evidence of the hysteria and cynical manipulation of public fears by the computing industry. The lessons learned will vary accordingly.

Gert Jan Hofstede will introduce the panel with a brief overview of its aims and objectives. He will then introduce each of the panellists who will briefly describe the experiences in their countries. Contributions from the audience will be invited to cover those countries and areas which were not covered by the formal presentations. Finally, Gert Jan will provide a summary of the various presentations and will draw on theories of culture to help explain the different responses to the problems of the date rollover highlighted by the panel.

2. MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

Country based presentations

Angeliki Poulymenakou, Athens University of Economics and Business, GreeceXSouthern Europe, especially Greece

Dewald Roode, University of Pretoria, South AfricaXAfrica, especially South Africa

Gamila Shoib, University of Cambridge, United KingdomXThe Middle East, especially Egypt

Edgar Whitley, London School of Economics and Political Science, United KingdomXNorther Europe, especially the UK and Ireland

Summary

Gert Jan Hofstede, Wageningen University, The Netherlands