

Making the Connection

Interoperability & Standards for pan-European eGovernment Services

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Outline

- ▶ The mission of the CEN eGovernment Focus Group
- ▶ What's special about eGovernment?
- ▶ A European perspective
- ▶ Interoperability
- ▶ Standards
- ▶ Policy considerations
- ▶ Conclusions



Focus Group mission

“Determine the role that standards should play in eGovernment”

“Identify what measures are required to achieve this goal”

“Contribute to the debate on how to ensure a permanent framework concerning eGovernment activities at a pan-European level”

AC/DC

- ▶ Question: When were Thomas Edison's original "direct current" (DC) services taken off the electricity supply grid in the US?
- ▶ Answer: Last week (13 Nov 2007)
 - ▶ conversion to AC started in... 1928
 - ▶ predicted to take.... 45 years
 - ▶ but still being used today...because it's useful!
- ▶ AC or DC?
 - ▶ They both have (dis)advantages
 - ▶ They are both standards
 - ▶ There is no "right" choice – can I have both please?
- ▶ Getting them to work together is the key...



Interoperability

...which is why we use transformers

- ▶ for different voltages, currents, supplies...

...and why we use adapters

- ▶ for different plugs
- ▶ for different appliances

▶ Different standards for different technical requirements

- ▶ as users, we shouldn't be bothered with these issues

▶ Interoperability for consistent delivery requirements

- ▶ as users, this is what is important for us

What's the point of interoperability?

- ▶ Reducing complexity
 - ▶ standards can be as simple or as complex as needed, but
 - ▶ requirements are clearly defined as points of interoperability
- ▶ identifying interoperability points:
 - ▶ basis of SOA – exposing the (predictable and stable) points at which clients can access your service
 - ▶ establish expectations of (service) behaviour
 - ▶ hide the “black box” of operational implementation

What's the point of standards?

- ▶ Governance
- ▶ Transparency
- ▶ Predictability and stability
- ▶ we're still not very good at standards collaboration in the IT field (heterogeneity of the discipline?)
- ▶ avoiding the slippery slope of standards hierarchies ("X is better than Y")
 - ▶ accept that if they are there, someone has identified a need
- ▶ Knowing that there are many of them helps improve chances of interoperability "on your terms"

eGovernment – what's so special?

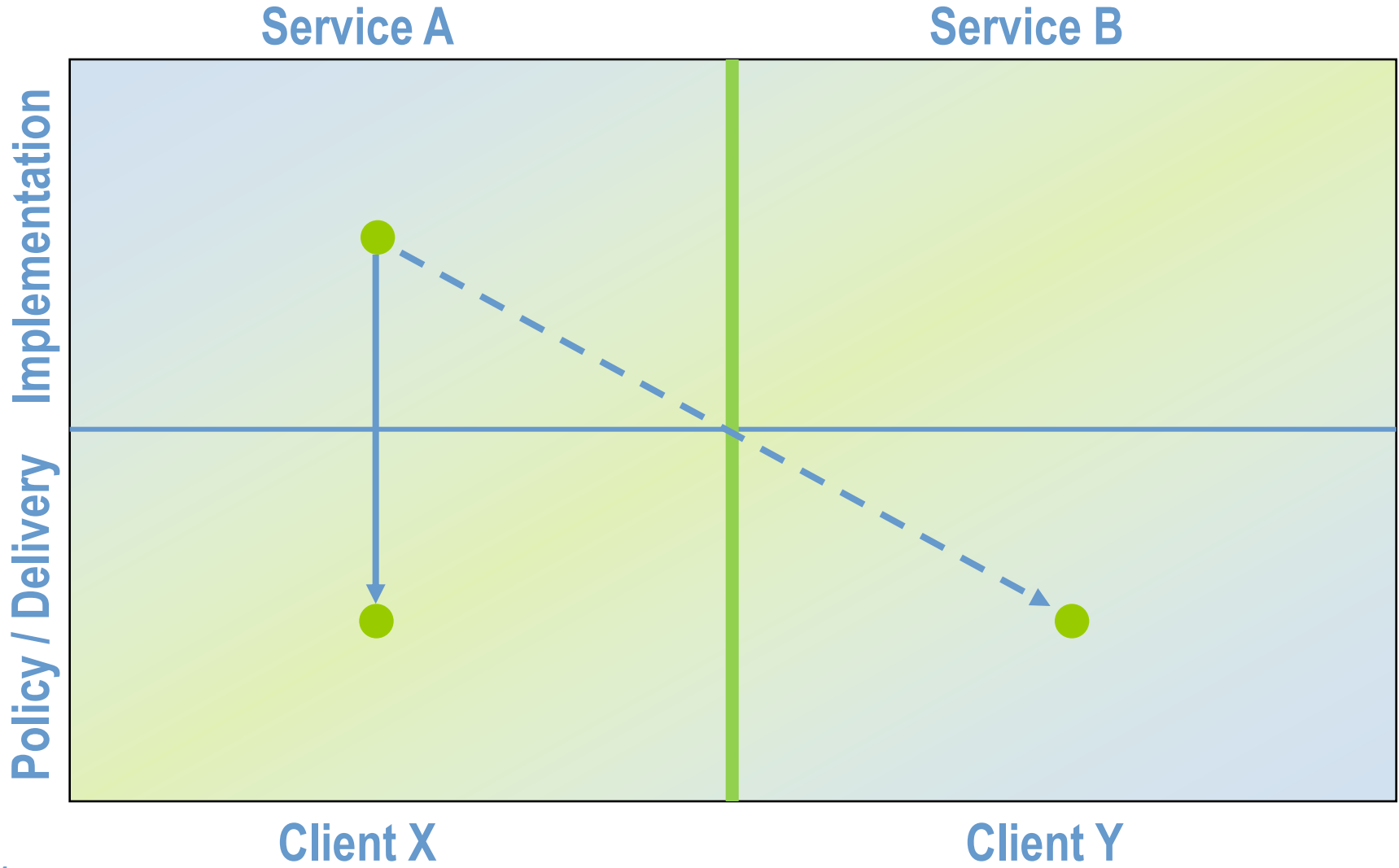
- ▶ As with any service, eGovernment needs to “make a connection” between a client and a solution
- ▶ “Classic” Business drivers
 - ▶ Effectiveness – improving quality of service to citizens
 - ▶ Efficiency – improving internal administration of services
- ▶ Important differences to business
 - ▶ Administrations can't choose their clients
 - ▶ Universal provision
 - ▶ Clients cannot (usually) choose their service provider
- ▶ Additional complication – cross agency/border services

European Challenges

- ▶ Increasing demand and need for cross agency and cross-border services, but...
 - ▶ EU has no mandate or legal basis for European level action in the field of public administration...
 - ▶ ...and most services are developed within specific government agencies.
- ▶ Most public authorities:
 - ▶ have no mandate to work across borders
 - ▶ focus on own needs
 - ▶ have budgets and resources determined on basis of *own* service delivery
 - ▶ want to maintain end-to-end control - accountability

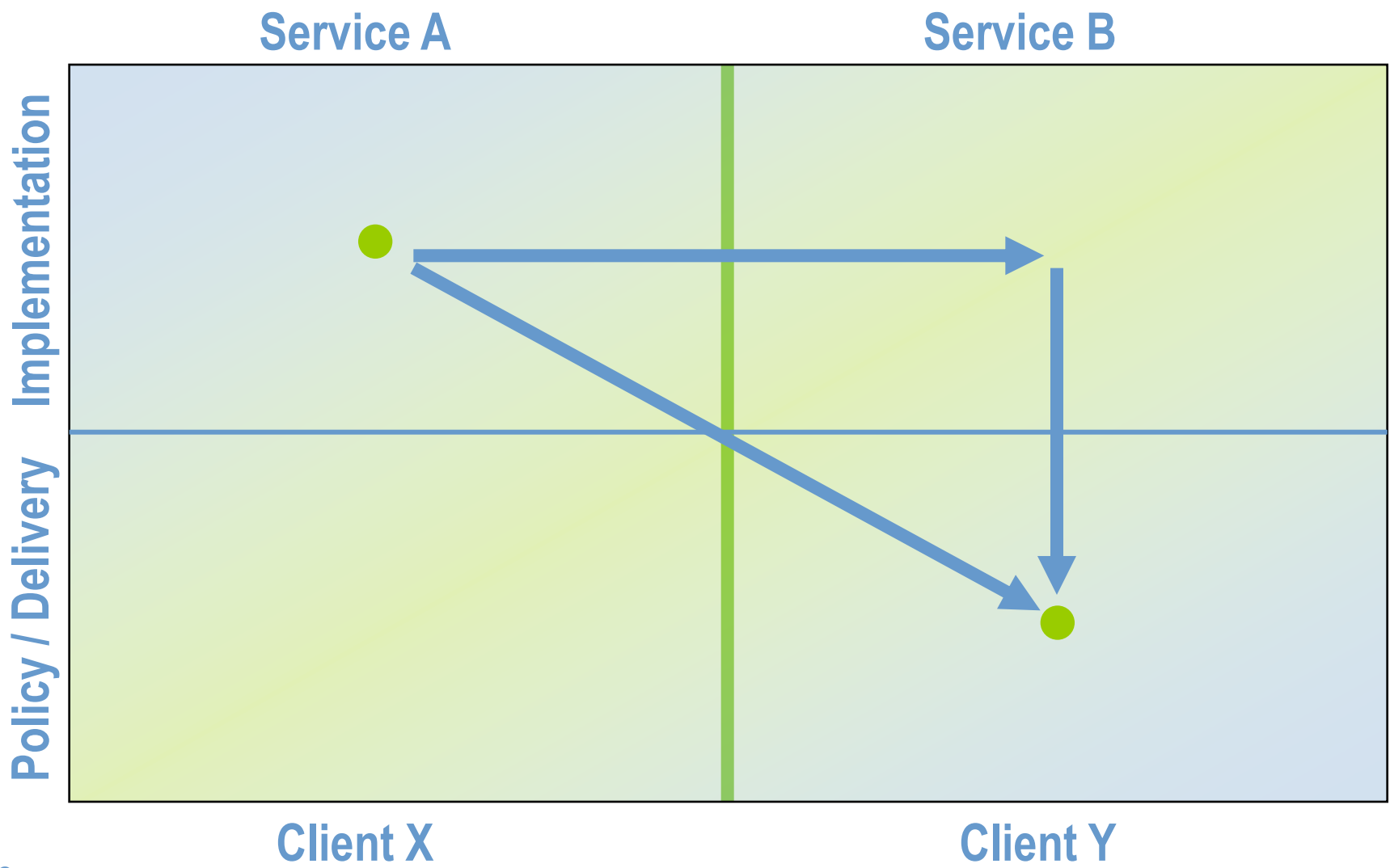


Interoperability Drivers



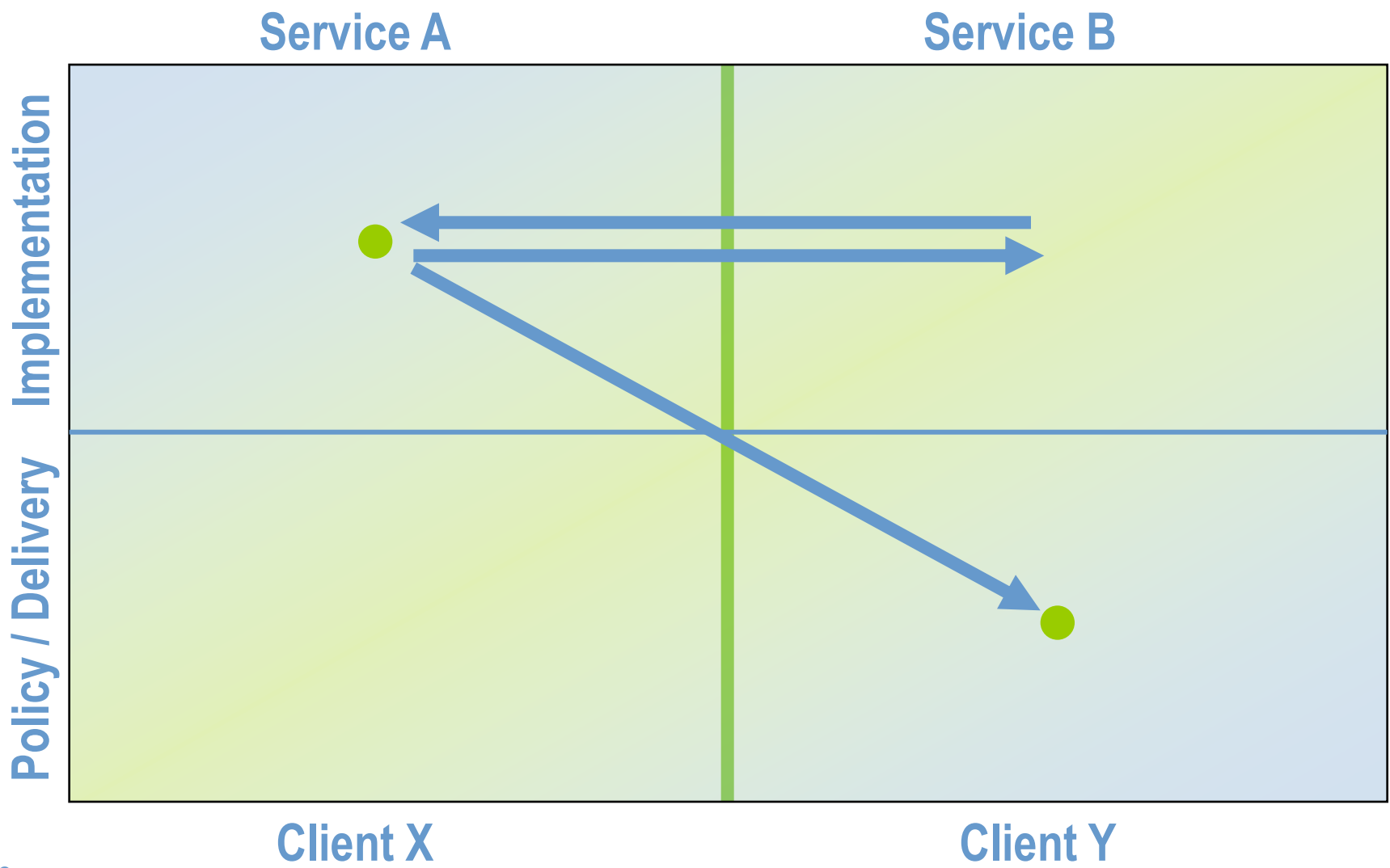


Different paths...



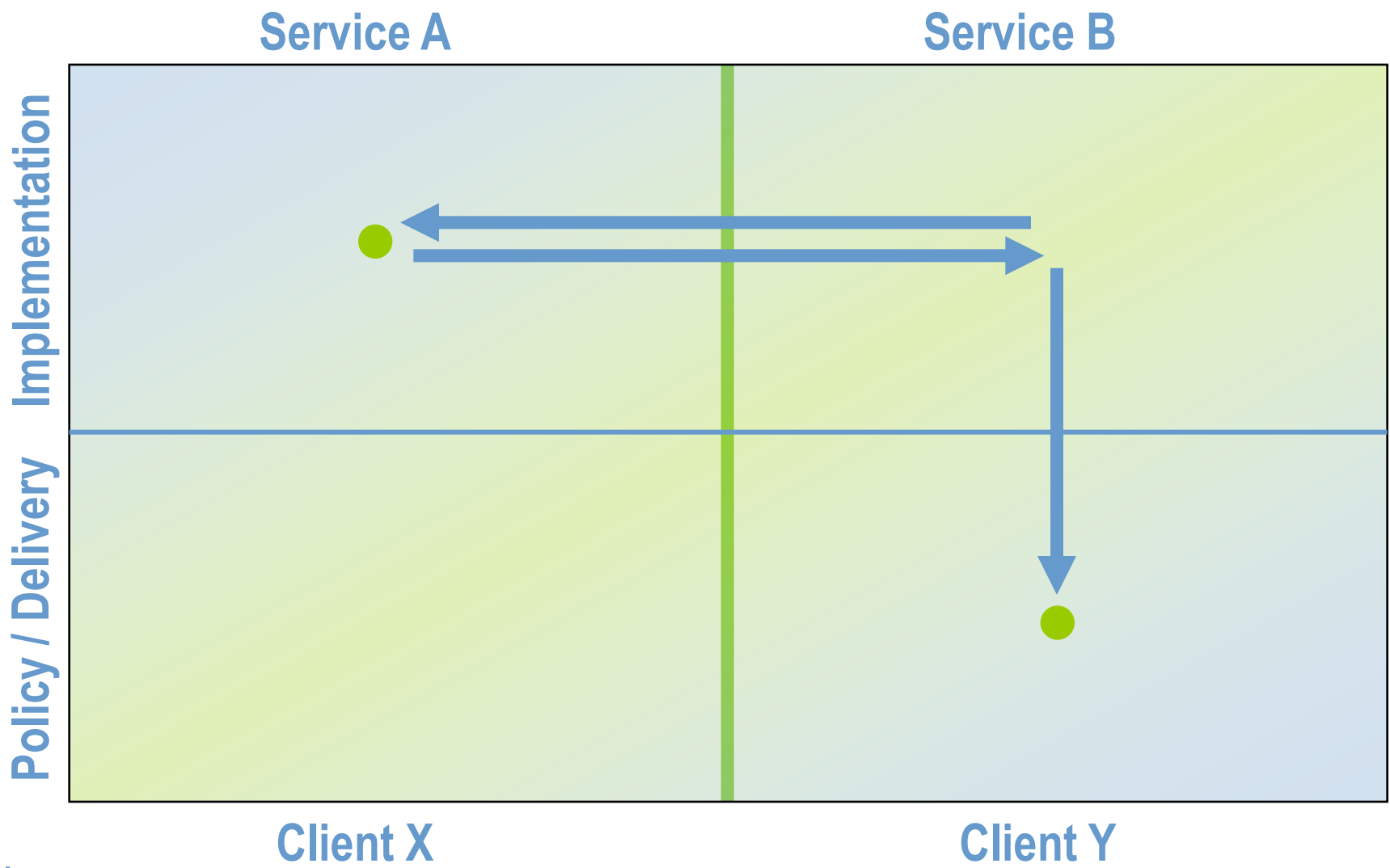


Different paths...



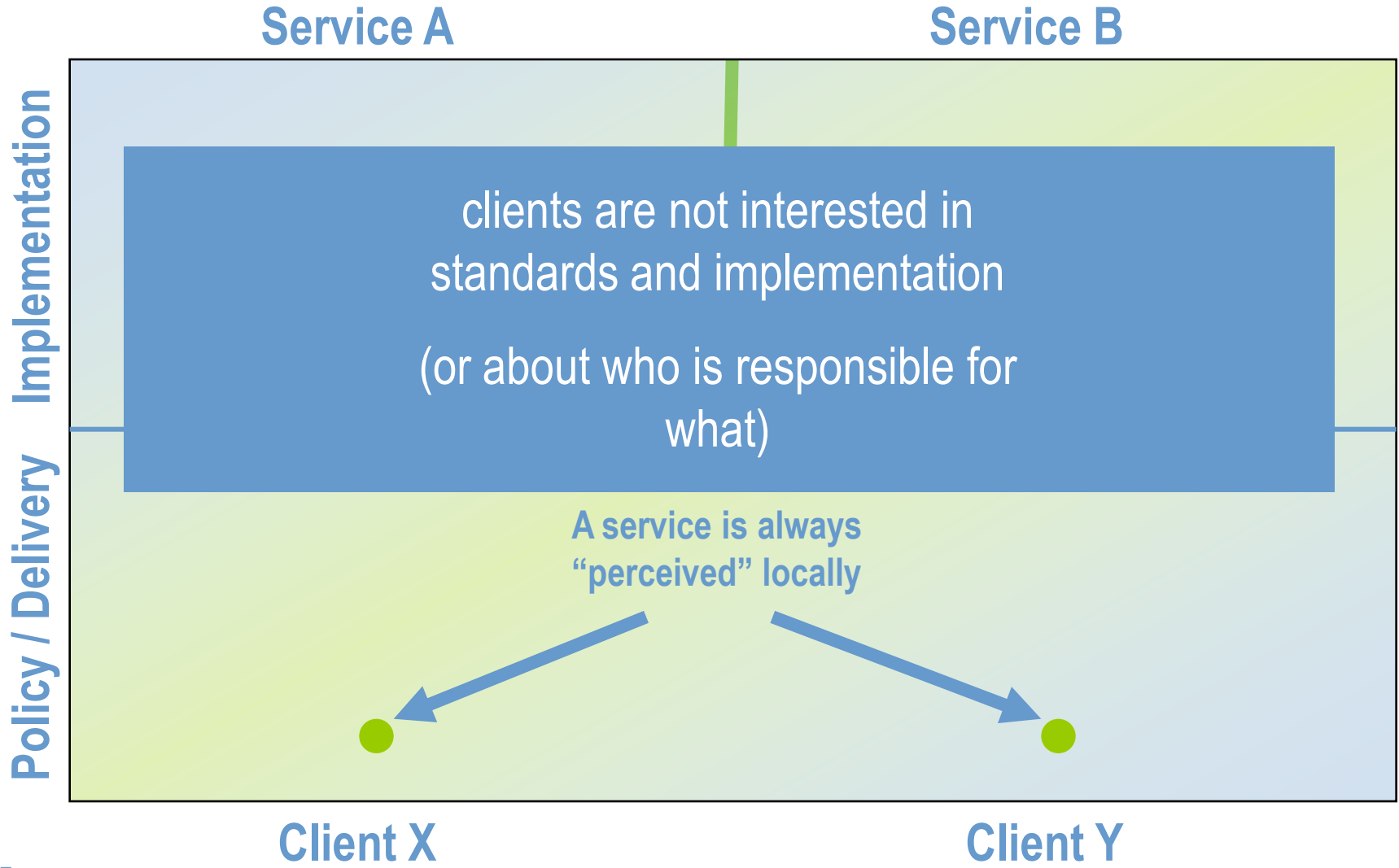


Different paths...





Delivery is the objective



Pan-European eGovernment Services

- ▶ Mission statement: “Public services where needed”
- ▶ “where needed” is a matter of shared ‘public policy’
 - ▶ need to establish common goals at different levels of government
- ▶ “how delivered” is a matter of agency efficiency and ‘internal policy’
 - ▶ need to establish performance benchmarks, in full respect of each agency’s autonomy and capabilities

Public Policy

- ▶ Can be highly fluid or volatile
 - ▶ May need to respond to rapidly changing requirements, political considerations or emergencies
 - ▶ Can involve any/all levels of policy makers
- ▶ effects are felt at the “delivery end” – often at the most local levels of government
 - ▶ client wants a result, a service – not interested in the “how”
- ▶ It's about interoperability

Internal (operational) policy

- ▶ Is determined often within (more or less autonomous) public authorities
- ▶ Is more concerned with operational infrastructure and delivery
- ▶ Quality of service and performance are important
- ▶ Is accountable to its own hierarchy and political masters
- ▶ It's about standards

European Interoperability Framework

- ▶ Identify key common services that have a cross-border or pan-European aspect
- ▶ Identify the main processes involved in delivering those services
- ▶ Identify the main 'interoperability points' which allow services to work together
- ▶ Agree a standard way of approaching interoperability
- ▶ Recognise that the main work is not technological but organisational, cultural, legal, political, social

European eGovernment standards

▶ Lack of persistence

▶ Much work is project-focussed. Once complete, there is little opportunity to use or re-use a particular "deliverable", as its visibility may die with the project's completion

▶ Lack of governance

▶ no single body has either *de facto* or *de jure* authority for providing persistence, continuity or connection between projects and initiatives


▶ Lack of maintenance

▶ there is no single or federated infrastructure in place to act as a repository for work that is available for use or re-use by other administrations.






Complex landscape

- ▶ Many actors involved
 - ▶ Standards bodies (different geographic scope)
 - ▶ Consortia and Alliances
 - ▶ Government agencies
 - ▶ Industry bodies
 - ▶ Many overlapping areas
 - ▶ eProcurement
 - ▶ eID
 - ▶ Security
 - ▶ ...with overlapping or contradictory standards
 - ▶ No agreement on what is a “standard”
 - ▶ (and probably never will be)
- 



Possible approaches

- ▶ Don't waste resources in making your own standards
 - ▶ don't try to out-perform industry at its own game
 - ▶ there is plenty to choose from already
 - ▶ Take a “Darwinian” approach:
 - ▶ Good initiatives & practices will get noticed
 - ▶ Bad ones will die off or be killed off
 - ▶ but:
 - ▶ Need to know who is doing what, particularly at EU-level
 - ▶ Need a mechanism to “resolve” possible overlapping and redundant initiatives
 - ▶ Need to gain acceptance for reference authorities
- 

Role of standards in eGovernment

- ▶ should be lesser
 - ▶ you'll always be accused by someone of getting it “wrong”
- ▶ should be stronger
 - ▶ when there is a clear, agreed, policy driver or imperative (eg Accessibility, Services Directive, Freedoms of movement)
- ▶ should be more pragmatic
 - ▶ if a “standard” has a sustainable governance model, then use, whoever it comes from
- ▶ Interoperability of standards
 - ▶ “mapping” relationships, dependencies (and, yes, there is a standard for that)
- ▶ Standards of interoperability
 - ▶ a common approach to identifying the interoperability points

Dangers

- ▶ Over-legislating
 - ▶ at which level? where do you stop? who has the authority
- ▶ There are no profit-based business drivers in the public sector
 - ▶ private sector is worried about the “bottom line”, and more concerned about standards, used (internally) to improve efficiency
 - ▶ its emphasis should be on interoperability, ensuring (external) effectiveness of services delivered
- ▶ Appropriateness of standards
 - ▶ can cause a “lock-in” of implementation paradigm

“Built to standard”



The first iron bridge: no “template” for its design, so it was built to the standards for wooden bridges – and was not able to exploit what iron had to offer

“Built to standard”



So...

- ▶ Make sure the standards you choose are appropriate to the job in hand and can deliver the result you need
- ▶ Be prepared to revisit your delivery objectives and adapt them to what becomes technologically feasible



Conclusions

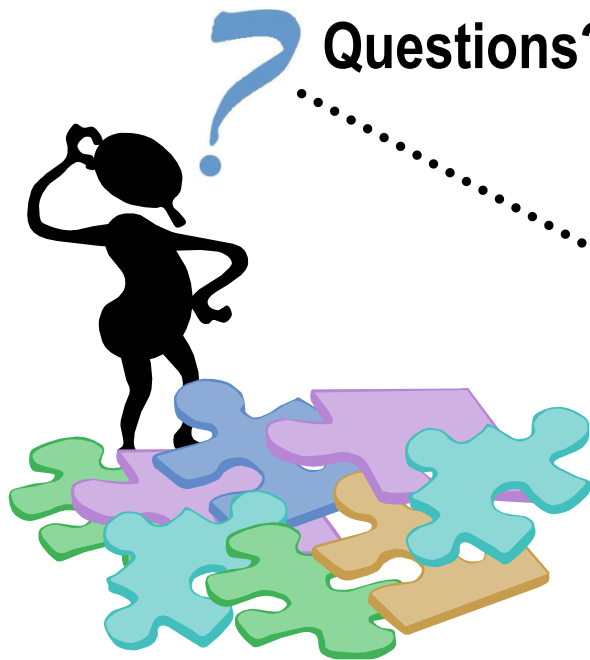
- ▶ Standards facilitate interoperability
 - ▶ but they are not the same thing
- ▶ Standards
 - ▶ focus is technical
 - ▶ how do you want to achieve it
- ▶ Interoperability
 - ▶ focus is on policy
 - ▶ what do you want to achieve
 - ▶ helps you “make the connection”

Making the Connection

D21 eGov Standards Workshop, Berlin, 22 November 2007

Comments?

Questions?



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