

## Introduction

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LEFIS organized a meeting in July 2007 in Jaca (Spain) to discuss the status and the perspectives of e-government especially applied to the legal aspects of society.

As it is known the potential benefits of eGovernment are numerous and they include greater efficiency, improved public services, enhanced engagement with citizens.

Yet progress has been relatively slow, particularly when compared with other sectors such as e-commerce.

From the presentations of some experiences focused in particular on digital divide, e-participation, form of government, role of citizens, planning methodology in proposing solutions for citizens, the book highlights some problems and solutions to help overcome barriers.

The experiences follow the objectives of the European Commission's i2010 eGovernment Action Plan: leaving no citizen behind; making efficiency and effectiveness a reality; implementing high-impact key services for citizens and businesses; putting key enablers in place; and strengthening participation and democratic decision-making.

Considerations on general issues such as e-inclusion and e-participation in a global perspective are mixed, in the book, with e-government development experience in several state (Italy, Greece, Lithuania and Greece).

The main findings of the experiences may be summarized according to organizational, technical assessment and managerial points of view.

From the organizational point of view: the rate of involvement and insight of the political and regulatory bodies are of paramount importance; many times the decision making about apparently

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technical aspects given to information officers and technologists is a short minded and ineffective measure; the strategy adopted seems to ensure that the ICT investments reflect governmental needs and are basis for solutions that stimulate demand. The authorities which do not yet developed such a strategy have been forced to do so in co-operation with the different stakeholders; the appointment of the project ownership to the appropriate level of authorities (according to the principle of subsidiarity make the inner energy grow; the need of e-voting and direct e-democracy seems of secondary importance compared with the desire of available services and the willingness of citizens' participation to the decision making process.

From the technical assessment point of view: the network and the Internet paradigms are more and more accepted and assimilated and virtual communities of users of existing services spread the perception of the technologies as an enabler for sustainable communities; in particular the one-stop approach and the availability of a bundle of transactional services behind a single query which was till few years ago just as a target at reach, is felt as on ordinary way to access services by the wide public; high speed connection and support to the convergence between the Internet, telephone and TV are asked by knowledge workers as well as by the ordinary users of generic service; the idea of life-long learning it is widely accepted and the issues of getting more insight on information technologies is considered crucial; while great concern is detected about privacy and data transparency, some basic technical issues, such as data integrity, information redundancy and system consistence, are given for granted by the users while the current practices are far from providing a satisfactory solution; data warehouse processes, data mining techniques and knowledge management procedures in the public administrations are unexpressed necessities that either companies or citizens are looking for.

From the management point of view: the e-government experiences provides a tool for experimenting new ideas, methods

and new regulatory arrangements (e.g. area plans, consortia of bodies at various institutional levels); new and more effective partnership emerged among the local authorities; the involvement of politicians, especially at the European level, has permitted a wider dissemination of best practice at local level, an increase of available resources and has encouraged the creation of the critical mass required for many projects; there is, in a few cases, a gap between design and implementation, also if many projects are still under development; episodes of de-motivation may affect some of the fast running and more entrepreneurial local authorities; sometimes the wide variety of goals, projects, plans, selection procedures and the novelty to define a politics for ICT made the things very complex.

In 2001, at Aix-en-Provence about 100 European researchers and practitioners, in the field of e-government, under the lead of R. Traunmuller and T. Lenk, designed and undersigned, a declaration on e-government whose main points appear to be valid and followed by the experiences described in the book:

1. A holistic view. This means that e-government must proceed on the basis of an integrated view: it must seek to achieve a permanent transformation enabling governance on a comprehensive scale.
2. Service provision as focus. ICT services for businesses, citizens, and communities must be designed so as to serve needs as they emerge from outside government itself.
3. Redefining governmental processes. This requires thoroughly rethinking the machinery of government, so as to bring out many more situations in which ICTs as an enabling tool can enhance the effectiveness, quality, and efficiency of public action, all the while making it more legitimate.
4. Knowledge-enhanced government. This requires shifting the focus from structures and processes to content, so as to get to the very heart of administrative work: the deeper the understanding of the connections between processes and knowledge, the better the resulting system design.

5. A sound engineering approach. This means that tools and methods for reengineering public-governance processes and institutions should take into account the role of human activity, knowledge, and decision-making capacities.
6. Reference models and administrative standards. Model practices and pilot projects should be used, because this will give an idea of the full potential.
7. Change management. Good government needs strong innovation, and the way to do achieve this is to look to the landmark projects as a guide, using the best practices and guidelines worked out on that basis rather than on new experimentation with peculiar approaches.

Abdul Paliwala in the paper 'Legal Regulation and uneven Global Digital Diffusion' goes deep and give insight to the meaning of digital divide as a uneven global diffusion either in developed and undeveloped countries, which can be explained within the overall context of networks and relationships which connect with information technology and such key contexts are provided by the processes of global technology diffusion. Digital divide is as well a danger that can be tackled by holistic considerations of the legal, regulatory and other processes which lead to inequalities in global diffusion of digital technologies. The conclusion is that there is need to address the fundamental structural issues of power and these can only be resolved by resort to concepts of human rights and social justice.

Cesare Maioli in the paper 'Qualification of territorial e-government policies through promotion of e-participation' stresses that Local government is providing services and encouraging people to be involved in shaping their ideas and the future of their communities; once a virtuous cycle is in motion, citizen engagement in the public sphere will happen by progressive stages. Four Italian success stories are presented dealing with education, health, access to service, and cooperation and group decision.

Rimantas Petrauskas with A. Kiskiėne and T. Bileviciėne presents 'E-Inclusion in Lithuania: state policy approach' where it is explained how e-inclusion related policy and research activities can take many different forms: from full-fledged policy programs or policy statements to grassroots initiatives, from basic research projects and technology development to market implementation studies. Several types of e-inclusion are related to public policy activities: inclusive online services, independent living, eServices for social inclusion. The main goal is to ensure, that people could use ICTs, be more flexible and adjust to changing circumstances. Full details are then given to several practical governmental initiatives to stimulate e-inclusion in Lithuania.

Ioannis Iglezakis in the paper 'The development of E-Governance and the issue of digital inclusion in Greece with particular regard to the constitutional right of e-participation' indicates the many chances and risks for the society connected with the development of e-government initiatives, in particular on the digital divide issue. Starting with the general legal framework on e-government and the Greek legislation pertaining to digital inclusion, and making considerations of general value, it is reminded how the imperative to promote digital inclusion is enshrined in the Greek constitution itself, which provides for a right to e-participation; however, this right is not directly actionable, and therefore, it does not provide the means to judicial recourse. Policies with regard to digital inclusion could be included in the definition of the 'universal service', and also in legislative programmes having this objective.

Andr s Saravia in the paper 'The Agency for the Promotion of e-Government, the Information and Knowledge Society in Uruguay' shows how Uruguay started e-government programs in the framework of South American experiences. The cooperation among already existent networks as well as the reuse of solutions are of paramount importance to speed up the processes of e-inclusion. The steps of the recent launch of e-government programs are detailed and explained.