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Electronic governance, premise for implementation of electronic democracy

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Abstract

Living in a rapidly changing society, where information travels with great speed and its upgrade is essential, we decided to approach certain aspects of e-democracy, as a dynamic way of citizen participation, using new Information and Communications Technologies.

The theme chosen for this research, **Electronic governance, premise for implementation of electronic democracy**, is a part of Electronic Administration field and identifies the meanings of implementing e-government and e-democracy, the necessity and effects of putting them into practice and the conditions to be fulfilled for the development of electronic services and fostering citizen participation in their use. E-governance as well as e-democracy have a clear contribution in making social progress, thanks to capitalize the most important irreversible resource, the time for achievement of the main administrative operations.

The overall objective of the research aims to establish the relationship between governance and electronic democracy. From this perspective, this paper will contain: analyzing the importance of both e-governance and e-democracy, risks and benefits for each one, clarifying the need and implications underlying the implementation of electronic systems and explain the conditions to be met by citizens in order to benefit from these services.

To achieve the objectives set, will be dominant the analyzing method of the social phenomena in their evolution. They will also combine harmoniously with practical examples in various member states of the European Union.

1. The conceptual framework on e-government and e-democracy

Once with the expanding use of computers and the Internet, citizens can benefit from public services easier. Information Society broke decisively in the public sector activities through e-government and e-democracy applications.

European Union published in 1998 the document Public sector information: a key resource for Europe (Green Paper on public sector information in the Information Society), in which data are available on the Information Society Conference on near of the administration with citizens (November 1998) with 3 levels structure in services development ³:

- a) Information services to collect classified information and requesting ordered (websites)
- b) Communications services for interaction between individuals or groups of people (e-mail, discussion forums)
- c) Services transactions to acquire goods or services online or for presentation of data (government forms).

The European Union has expressed its views on electronic administration, in documents such as ⁴ : Rationalization of electronic administration policies in the European Union (2001) and Report on the evolution of electronic public services in the European Union (2002). The first of the two reports describes the stages set in the previous report in 1998. Thus, it distinguishes between information, unilateral interaction (in one sense), bilateral interaction (two-way) and transactions. In the Second Report there are 4 different stages: web site, portal, e-stop shop and administration.

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³ Jose Miguel Fernandez, Maria Belen Morala Gomez, Alicia Rodriguez Perez, Raquel Flores Lopez, Yolanda Fernandez Santos, Cristina Gutierrez Lopez, *Implementacion de la informacion y gestion digital en los ayuntamientos leoneses: Analisis empirico de su utilidad y nivel de divulgacion*, Departamento de Direccion y Economia de la Empresa, Universidad de Leon, 2010, P. 191.

⁴ Idem, P. 192.

Over time have been written many projects focused on electronic services, they are a genuine instrument of public administration reform, promoted by the Romanian Government. The approach is still in its beginning and needs to reach every public officer to be effective.

OECD defines e-government ⁵ as "using of information and communication technologies, especially Internet, as tools for better governance." EGovernment is an important part of the new information society. Evidence shows that both the electronic government and electronic democracy have developed quite global. In Europe more and more citizens participate in online discussions, the Internet is the main source of public information, there is a growing number of government services offered online and development plans in area, such as the e-Europe initiative of the European Union ⁶.

In the literature ⁷ we find the concept of e-government, understood as information and communication technologies (ICT s) to improve and optimize delivery of public services and consultation and public participation in policy-making process, hence the 3 important dimensions: ⁸

- a) E-administration, local governments as service providers;
- b) E-democracy, local governments activate in promoting local democracy;
- c) E-government, locally policy makers.

The study of the authors Claver, Juana and Tari in 2008 attributed the inequality in political and organizational aspects of implementation and development of electronic administration at the local level in Spain. From the achieved analysis ⁹ of the contents of web pages halls with more than 5,000 inhabitants and a questionnaire conducted among officials responsible for technology, these authors have established a clear typology of electronic government strategies, as described in the table below:

Table 1 - e-government strategies:

e-government strategies	Procent de aplicare
1. informative	66,6% of the cases studied
2. non-availability transaction services	17% of the cases studied
3. availability of transactional services	16.4% of the cases studied

Source: Made by authors according to survey information

In another vision, "electronic governance is the process of reinventing of the public sector through digitization and new information management techniques, a process whose ultimate goal is to increase the political participation of citizens and the efficiency of administrative system." ¹⁰ Electronic government ¹¹ liasing public institutions citizens through electronic means to exercise the fundamental rights of citizens, such as: information about laws ¹² and opinions by citizens, pay taxes by the taxpayers, filing online complaints and

⁵ http://www.nispa.sk/_portal/conf_papers14_list.php?cid=14&fs_papersPage=6

⁶ http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/2005/index_en.htm

⁷ Gartner, 2000.

⁸ Jose Miguel Fernandez, Maria Belen Morala Gomez, Alicia Rodriguez Perez, Raquel Flores Lopez, Yolanda Fernandez Santos, Cristina Gutierrez Lopez, *Implementacion de la informacion y gestion digital en los ayuntamientos leoneses: Analisis empirico de su utilidad y nivel de divulgacion*, Departamento de Direccion y Economia de la Empresa, Universidad de Leon, 2010, P. 121.

⁹ Cerrillo i Martinez Agusti, Galan Galan Alfredo, *Informe sobre la administracion electronica local*, Informe /Fundacio Pi i Sunyer, d;estudis autonomics i locals, Barcelona, 2009, P. 351.

¹⁰ Herban Dorin-Adrian, *E-democratia: instrument al libertatii sau dependenta tehnologica si informational?* Revista Informatica Economica, nr. 1(25)/2003, www.revistaie.ase.ro/content/25/Herban.pdf

¹¹ *** *Utilizarea calculatorului si a serviciilor electronice, ghid pentru functionarii publici*, 2004, <http://www.riti-internews.ro/ro/Capitolul%204.pdf>

¹² http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck.home

petitions. Implementation of e-government comes from the state to the citizen, from top to bottom. The main components of e-governance are ¹³:

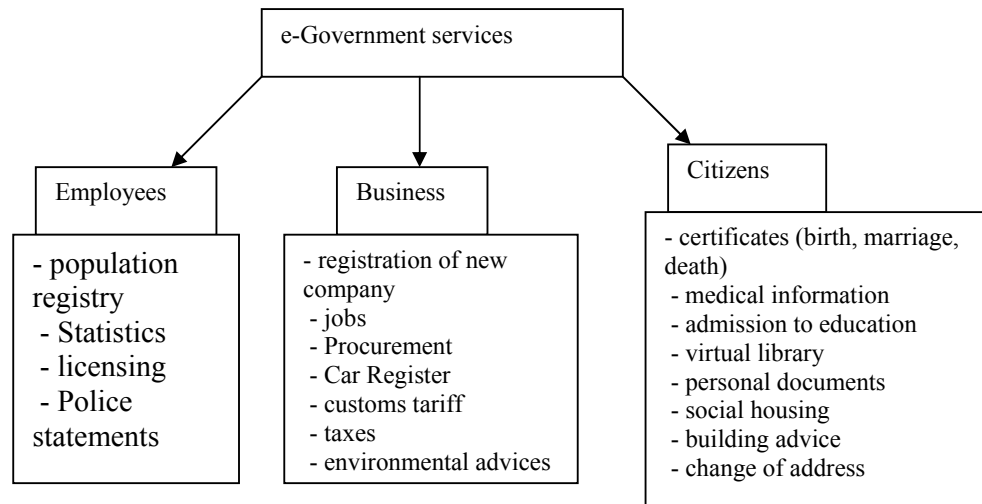
- 1) G2G (Government to Government) with G2E (Government to Employee)
- 2) G2C (Government to Citizens)
- 3) G2B (Government to Business). There are two main types of G2B applications: public procurement systems and private sector services, both offered by the state through the Internet.

The major e-government services ¹⁴ are divided into 3 categories:

- I. Information services - allow retrieval of information sorted and classified to request on the website or electronic info-kiosks;
- II. interactive communication services - enabling interaction with individuals or groups of individuals (eg e-mail, mailing lists);
- III. transactional services - allow completion / submission by citizens of the administrative forms, payment of taxes on Internet site and / or purchase of products and services online. Transactional services are considered the most representative in the future for e-government, so long as the completion and submission of forms by the population will continue to have a leading role in the relationship with the public administration.

Synthesizing information about the main components of e-government and the services offered by this, result the following figure:

Figure 1 - Main eGovernment services:



Source: Made by authors according to survey information

Italian Government ¹⁵, with regions, provinces and city administrations, launched the National e-government plans in 1997 and 2001 (Bassanini Laws 1997-2001, Phase I, 2001 - 2003, Phase II 2003-2006). The goal was the coordination and use of new tools allowing all citizens access to e-government services offered by both public administration and private companies.

A priority objective for the Spanish public administration is personalizing information services and administrative communication. To this goal, in some sectors of public administration are developing a series of projects that facilitate citizens' access to

¹³ Ghilic-Micu Bogdan, *Guvernarea electronica*, Revista Informatica Economica nr. 1 (21)/2002, Academia de Studii Economice Bucuresti, www.revistaie.ase.ro/content/21/ghilic.pdf

¹⁴ Georgescu Mircea, *Curs Birotica*, Iasi, 2007 .

¹⁵ Maioli Cesare, *e-Government and digital inclusion*, Legal Framework for the Information Society, Series 4, Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union, Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2008, p. 41.

personalized information. The best information and communication tools ¹⁶ are considered: one-stop shop, call platforms, service cards and automatic points of management consulting etc.

The role assumed by citizen can be the one of the simple user of public services or the role of the taxpayer ¹⁷. The last aspect involves the identification of the citizen with the institution. The term e-democracy ¹⁸ means how government uses information and communications technologies to give citizens easier access to information and increase the chances of participation in democratic institutions and processes.

Electronic democracy ¹⁹ comes from citizen to states, it means from above to up. Specifically, this is the use by citizens of electronic ways to communicate easily with government Officials and also with other citizens. Electronic democracy is a tool for Citizens to Combined by electronic means the debates of the government actions, grievances and improving proposals for the governance process. The Internet offers all these possibilities through the portals of electronic democracy ²⁰, the forums ²¹, mailing lists ²² and personal sites of opinions. These e-services for e-democracy, called e-democracy tools ²³ form the e-democracy, being complementary to the traditional ones.

The development of e-democracy seems at first, although some useful services ²⁴ were required like: e-participation (e-Participation) and e-voting (e-Vote).

E-participation means the frame of the policies in electronic environment ²⁵ and refer to each of the 3 key points ²⁶ around which ICT functions: policy, administration and civil society. In a broader sense, e-participation ²⁷ is a process in which citizens divide information and knowledge seeking participation in government functions through Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), especially the Internet, by which they will interact with political and administrative institutions. Thus, new technologies channels are developed to facilitate the effective participation in the democratic process and decision making.

Electronic services that make up the e-participation are: e-Information, e-Consultation and e-Decision making. Electronic voting has two main forms: remote (via Internet from any computer, via email or by text message or interactive digital TV) and the local one in voting booths through electronic voting equipment (Direct Recording Equipment and Voting machines). A polling booth with electronic voting equipment is also called e-Voting Kiosk. Public institutions increasingly emphasize the idea that e-democracy and e-participation need a new perception ²⁸ of citizens as owners of an incontestable right to citizenship rather than as a simple digital user of ICT and online services. This new perception, when it is put into practice, is helping the development of the democratic process and giving greater powers of decision to people.

¹⁶ Cerrillo i Martinez Agusti, Galan Galan Alfredo, *Informe sobre la administracion electronica local*, Informe /Fundacio Pi i Sunyer, d'estudis autonomics in locals, Barcelona, 2009, P. 241.

¹⁷ Arenilla Saez Manuel, *La reforma administrativa desde el ciudadano*, Coleccion Estudios, Ministerio de Administraciones Publicas, Instituto Nacional de Administracion Publica, Madrid, 2003, P. 253.

¹⁸ Fernando Galindo, Francisco Javier Garcia Marco, Pilar Lasala Calleja, *Electronic Government*, Legal Framework for the Information Society Series 8, Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, Agencia Espanola de Cooperacion Internacional para el Desarrollo, 2009, P. 148.

¹⁹ *** *Utilizarea calculatorului si a serviciilor electronice, ghid pentru functionarii publici*, 2004, <http://www.riti-internews.ro/ro/Capitolul%204.pdf>

²⁰ www.edemocratie.ro

²¹ www.forumpolitic.ro

²² www.agora.ro/tic, tic-lobby@agora.ro

²³ Dan Vasilache, *Guvernarea electronica. O introduce*, Editura Casa Cartii de Stiinta, Cluj Napoca, 2008, p. 271.

²⁴ Idem

²⁵ Castells, 1996.

²⁶ Gronlund, 2001.

²⁷ Maioli Cesare, *e-Government and digital inclusion*, Legal Framework for the Information Society, Series 4, Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union, Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2008, p. 41.

²⁸ Idem, P. 69.

Electronic transformation of the Parliament activity (e-Parliament) is concerning the making of laws. This process includes citizen's participation achieved by various means (e-petitions, for example) that aim to directly influence their elected representatives and legal decisions. The two issues can be treated, forming a whole in the e-justice (the drafting of laws) and e-democracy (citizen participation).

In Romania there are 3 major categories of applications²⁹ for electronic democracy:

1. Voter applications for the organizing of electoral campaigns on the Internet. Most candidates and parties have websites on the Internet. Other sites have been developed either by the Internet media groups (Kappa = election.ro, PCNET = alegeri.ro) or by media groups (elections in online newspapers) and NGOs (CITX Romania - www.electoral2000 . en);
2. Communication and feedback applications such as: email, mailing list, chat and forum, which are used by citizens to express opinions on specific discussion groups. In Romania, the most successful are on private servers or on the ones with free support from abroad;
3. Logistical and organizational applications, including use of sites for the expression of complaints, the organization of rallies and demonstrations and are used more frequently.

To spread eDemocracy have been made conferences and were created projects by professional organizations. EDemocratiei World Forum³⁰ in Paris is a good environment for the subject and an organizer for the annual conferences and in the last years have been organized similar conferences at Vadstena in Sweden³¹, London³² and in Vienna, Austria³³. The Council of Europe is organizing the Forum³⁴ for the Future of Democracy. Another organization ICELE³⁵ is also active in the British area (by offering a package of software tools for local e-Democracy) and also the e-Democracy Center³⁶ in Switzerland.

The utilization of government and electronic democracy applications depends on access to the Internet, education and changing attitudes. The efficiency of these applications has resulted in their acceptance by a growing sphere of people, generating positive effects for the entire society.

2. The need and implications of implementing e-governance and e-democracy

E-government programs were promoted and easily spread in Europe. Citizens, companies, state institutions are transmitting information and transactions over the Internet with the state, leading to "boost confidence in new technologies and the democratization of the society"³⁷. The objectives³⁸ of implementing new information technologies refer to a more innovative approach in their use, which consists in changing reactive activities (used to improve Administration operations) with proactive activities (which new products and services using Information technologies can offer to Administration).

The degree of development of e-government applications depends directly on the availability of computers and Internet accessibility. The more advanced stages³⁹ of e-government can be found in the U.S., Canada, UK and northern European countries, where almost all businesses, organizations and families have a computer connected to the Internet.

²⁹ www.edemocratie.ro

³⁰ <http://www.edemocracy-forum.com/>

³¹ <http://www.ifib.de/>

³² <http://www.headstar-events.com/edemocracy08/>

³³ [CeDEM - Conference on e-democracy, e-participation and e-voting](#), Krems, Austria.

³⁴ http://www.coe.int/T/E/Integrated_Projects/Democracy/

³⁵ ICELE (International Centre of Excellence for Local eDemocracy, www.icele.org) Steven Clift, <http://www.publicus.net/articles/edemresources.html>

³⁶ <http://edc.unige.ch/>

³⁷ Baltac Vasile, Programele eGovernment și construirea societății informaționale în România, 2001,

<http://www.edemocratie.ro/publicatii/Baltac%20-%20eGovernment%20ICPTA%2001.pdf>

³⁸ Ministerio para las Administraciones Publicas, Inspeccion General de Servicios de la Administracion Publica, *La modernizacion de los procedimientos de actuacion en la Administracion Publica*, Estudio Delphi, 1990, P. 132.

³⁹ Idem

Most of the activities of government institutions are held more easily through e-procurement solutions. Surveys show that the Internet is the means of making hundreds of thousands of orders daily and millions of offers, being almost indispensable.

Internet networks are generated in a double sense: both top down and bottom up. In the first case ⁴⁰, incorporating the Internet in political and administration processes requires a tool for creating new institutional capacities in order to improve public services through the transparency and citizen participation. Virtual spaces of participation promoted by institutions are introducing a new dimension in the relationship between citizens and public powers and are creating a democratic culture.

In the second sense ⁴¹, generation of bottom-up networks enable the creation of citizen networks, networks of mutual assistance between strangers, with different characteristics or in remote areas (community organizing networks, networks of reciprocity neighboring pressure networks ⁴², inter-exchange networks of information, training etc), oriented by resolution of issues facing individuals and teams to the work with the organization for mobilize pressure for or against specific social policies.

E-government has brought many changes and a new perspective on governance and government and also its proper functioning. Changes in organization, environment, employment, processes, culture are public managers specific challenges and define the specific request of the New Public Management ⁴³. From its original role of promoting the strategy of introducing the concept of electronic government, electronic service delivery management, processing services and government "behavior" managers have become leaders of e-government. In other words, they create the right balance between cyberspace and users of e-government responsibility, whether they are citizens, businesses or other forms of government (vertical and horizontal, national and international level) and government employees (civil servants). They manage changes using and developing the methodology of the change by management to ensure the adequate development in the new "states". They coordinate all activities, relationships and time for acceptance of new norms, principles and applications for Electronic Management ⁴⁴. They take an active part in restructuring and rebuilding of reform actions respecting government services in order to transform the traditional political organization, serving the open efficient and modern government, as shown in Figure 2.

⁴⁰ Pastor Seller Enrique, *Participacion ciudadana y gestion de las politicas sociales municipales*, Ediciones de la Universidad de Murcia, Espana, 2009, p. 161.

⁴¹ Idem, p. 162.

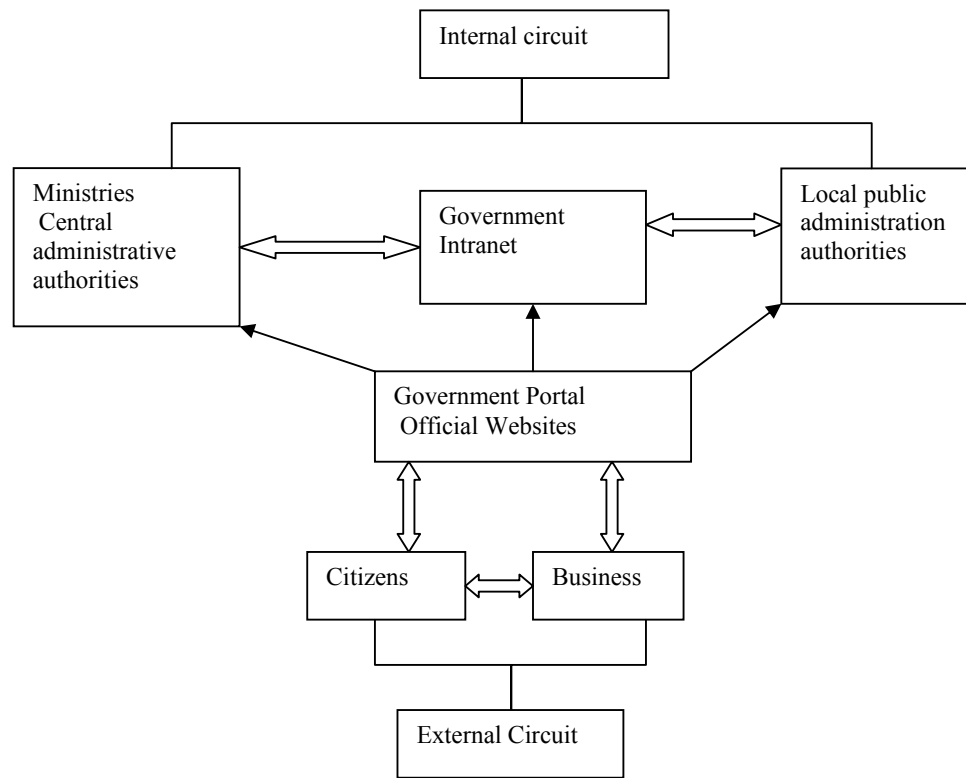
⁴² Grupurile de presiune utilizeaza TIC pentru a adresa critici, articula cooperarea si a realiza actiuni specifice impreuna cu un succes remarcabil (mobilizare contra razboiului din Irak, 2003).

⁴³ Drakulic Mirjana, Drakulić Ratimir, *Challenges of eGovernment Posed to Public Managers*, 2005,

http://www.nispa.sk/_portal/conf_paper_detail.php?cid=14&fs_papersPage=6&p=750&pid=296

⁴⁴ Idem .

Figure 2 - E-government and interaction between its subjects



Source: *** The concept of Electronic Governance, approved by Government Decision no. 733 of 28 June 2006, Official Gazette 106-111/799, 07.14.2006, http://en.anrceti.md/files/u1/conceptia_guvernarii_electronice.doc

In such a government, public managers must contribute to efficient management of electronic records to ensure teamwork, data and information exchange and interoperability between governmental and administrative organizations, policy-making based on evidence - adequacy of knowledge management for the use of data and information and interchange it between different actors, applying the legal framework and to provide authentic transactions and procedures and reliable government. Risk management is extremely important when it comes to limiting the of the control inputs and outputs. Implementation of the 7 basic principles⁴⁵ of nationality, privacy, identity, transparency, acceptance by users, hidden threats and problems of project, risk management must ensure that government acts as a learning organization, and public managers as process coordinators.

One of the main tools for developing electronic government in Spain is "Emergency plan to boost electronic administration" drafted by the Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Public Administration in 2003. This plan⁴⁶ proposes a focused group of 19 measures in 15 electronic services to broad consequences in quality of life and the development of enterprises. In particular, it suggests the evolution from a departmental administrative model, to a user-centered design, enabled by web access to services.

⁴⁵ Ibidem

⁴⁶ Jose Miguel Fernandez, Maria Belen Morala Gomez, Alicia Rodriguez Perez, Raquel Flores Lopez, Yolanda Fernandez Santos, Cristina Gutierrez Lopez, *Implementacion de la informacion y gestion digital en los ayuntamientos leoneses: Analisis empirico de su utilidad y nivel de divulgacion*, Departamento de Direccion y Economia de la Empresa, Universidad de Leon, 2010, P. 147. P.48.

A huge problem is ensuring the identity of all parties. Therefore, identity management guarantees data protection for users of electronic services. In addition to technological and organizational changes, knowledge, understanding, development and application of rules of Identity Management for e-governance are essential. The management policy also has become a discipline, whose concern is the design, analysis, implementation and effectively use and safely of technology dealing with digital information.

Knowledge of public managers should be composed of new disciplines of management, techniques and tools, added to the knowledge standard. E-governance facilitates proper functioning of the fund of knowledge⁴⁷ including: knowledge management, quality management and digital management.

In the same time, the New Public Management has affected e-government, its assumptions, rules, options and functions, from the fact that public administration should function properly and promptly, publicized proceedings, the protection of the rights, freedoms and interests of persons, attitude of "customer oriented" of public services and applying market principles to increase efficiency and productivity. New technologies and electronic services allow the implementation of e-government and major changes occur at both the domestic level of public institution and externally, affecting citizens.

In the traditional approach, citizens had a negative image of public services, mostly dissatisfied with their quality. In the poll⁴⁸, over 95% of citizens believe that government services should ensure a level of performance at least equal to the private sector.

Some disadvantages faced by citizens who enter in a government institution are: endless lines, waiting hours, confusing procedures and excessive bureaucracy. Increasing scope of electronic administration is fundamentally a complex of potential benefits and a major impact on citizens, businesses and other users. Gil Garcia y Helbig (2006) identifies 8 main benefits of electronic administration:⁴⁹

- 1) improves the quality of public services
- 2) bring greater efficiency and productivity of government processes
- 3) increase the effectiveness of public policies
- 4) ensure transparency in public liability
- 5) increase public participation
- 6) create a favorable regulatory framework for electronic government
- 7) create a favorable regulatory framework for information society
- 8) is reforming government structures.

This reduces the dissatisfaction in the binding relationship between citizen and Public Administration. In this sense, the citizen get the value of activities of New Public Management focused on modernization, efficiency and quality.⁵⁰

"Democratic governments should adopt a new way to approach their work - putting more emphasis on the relationship with citizens, both in service provision and development of draft legislation. It is necessary for governments to provide for public multiple opportunities of information, consultation and participation." (OECD)⁵¹.

⁴⁷ Drakulic Mirjana, Drakulić Ratimir, *Challenges of eGovernment Posed to Public Managers*, 2005,

http://www.nispa.sk/_portal/conf_paper_detail.php?cid=14&fs_papersPage=6&p=750&pid=296

⁴⁸ *** *Utilizarea calculatorului si a serviciilor electronice, ghid pentru functionarii publici*, 2004, <http://www.riti-internews.ro/ro/Capitolul%204.pdf>

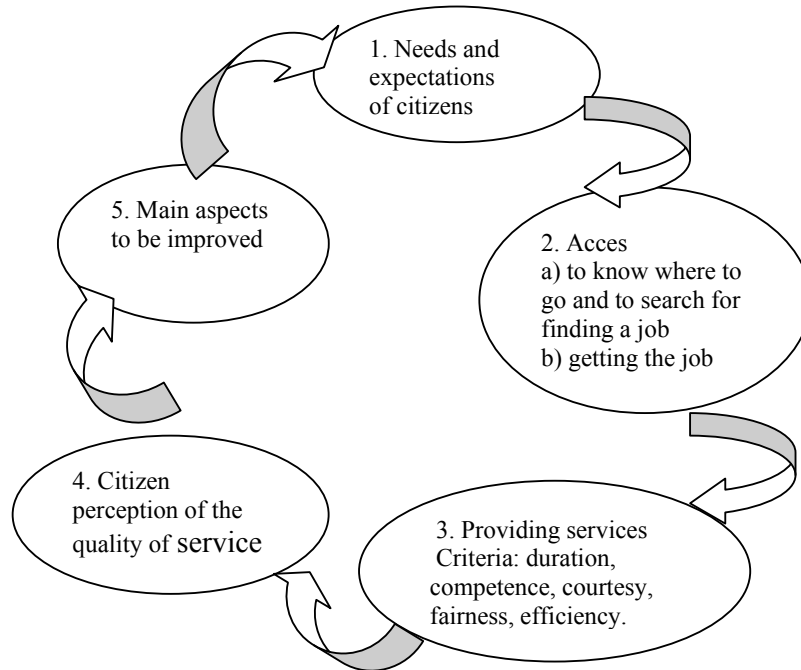
⁴⁹ Jose Miguel Fernandez, Maria Belen Morala Gomez, Alicia Rodriguez Perez, Raquel Flores Lopez, Yolanda Fernandez Santos, Cristina Gutierrez Lopez, *Implementacion de la informacion y gestion digital en los ayuntamientos leoneses: Analisis empirico de su utilidad y nivel de divulgacion*, Departamento de Direccion y Economia de la Empresa, Universidad de Leon, 2010, P. 38.

⁵⁰ Arenilla Saez Manuel, *La reforma administrativa desde el ciudadano*, Coleccion Estudios, Ministerio de Administraciones Publicas, Instituto Nacional de Administracion Publica, Madrid, 2003, P. 172.

⁵¹ OECD, "Citizens as Partners: Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making", PUMA Working Group, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001.

In order to turn this negative perception, governments should pay special attention to citizens' problems, which can be solved by upgrading services and improving their quality. For the same reason, many of the Romanian public institutions are implementing Quality Management Systems.

Figure 3 - Citizen-oriented services pattern



Source: *** *Utilizarea calculatorului si a serviciilor electronice, ghid pentru functionarii publici*, 2004, <http://www.riti-internews.ro/ro/Capitolul%204.pdf>

Citizen satisfaction⁵² leads to success or failure of the project. It was found that the projects generated from the needs of citizens had better results (higher number of transactions, better information, decrease of the number of complaints, employees' work efficiency and improve the image of the institution) to those generated from the political orders or the desire to implement new technologies. In order to obtain maximum results is necessary updating of the public activities based on the reactions of citizens.

Analysis undertaken by Ramilo Araujo (2005)⁵³ in Spain also focuses on the development of electronic government in the local by autonomous Basque Community for knowledge of the ICT utility in these municipalities (improving e-government, e-democracy and e-government) and find out if there are differences in ICT use after the model of mayors and of the province where they belong.

Presently, all public administrations have their own websites⁵⁴ from the ones which offers information to citizens, accessibility to public services, to those that serve as channels of communication with government officials for the citizens to express their demands and suggestions (or even participate in the management of some public affairs).

⁵² *** *Utilizarea calculatorului si a serviciilor electronice, ghid pentru functionarii publici*, 2004, <http://www.riti-internews.ro/ro/Capitolul%204.pdf>

⁵³ Jose Miguel Fernandez, Maria Belen Morala Gomez, Alicia Rodriguez Perez, Raquel Flores Lopez, Yolanda Fernandez Santos, Cristina Gutierrez Lopez, *Implementacion de la informacion y gestion digital en los ayuntamientos leoneses: Analisis empirico de su utilidad y nivel de divulgacion*, Departamento de Direccion y Economia de la Empresa, Universidad de Leon, 2010, P. 47.

⁵⁴ Cerrillo i Martinez Agusti, Galan Galan Alfredo, *Informe sobre la administracion electronica local*, Informe /Fundacio Pi i Sunyer, d'estudis autonomics i locals, Barcelona, 2009, p. 331 .

3. Conditions for development of electronic services and citizen access to e-services in modern society

To identify in the right way, the conditions for the development of electronic services, it is necessary that this approach to start from the principles⁵⁵ of successful e-government:

- 1) Vision / political will, which includes leadership skills and involvement and integration in overall policy of public management reform and information society activity;
- 2) The common systems for cooperation, coordination between agencies and financing costs of Information and Communications Technology;
- 3) Citizen -oriented, by facilitating access to services, choice of interaction, citizen involvement, confidentiality, accountability, monitoring and evaluation activities.

Online information by e-learning can accelerate the learning and training process in all areas of special programs to meet those needs.

E-health system has developed by sharing all information in the health sector in order to improve the use of resources and the care of patients.

Dissemination and sharing of information between central, regional and local administration can ease implementation of policies. In this way it was reached a new concept of e-democracy that wants to streamline communication from both the administration to citizens and in the opposite direction, having an effect of good collaboration. It should be noted that information about individuals must be confidential, for avoiding negative effects. Another important effect is to prevent corruption from simple referral of the facts by the citizens. All this leads to a wide open political process, thus supporting the idea of e-democracy.

E-government aims to be an effective way of activities by the policies, providing high quality services and better communication with citizens to achieve general policy objectives. In present, e-government policies with the e-democracy, are helping traditional practices to provide information, consultation and citizen participation in decision making.

A key of success in implementing their activities is the administration decision-making on stages. It is developed more easily by applying new technologies because they allow a uniformity of programs standards and a more detailed examination of the status of solved problems. Administration task is to take measures to guide and evaluate changing traditional government structures and methods with the electronic ones. Important tool in this process are the monitoring and evaluation results, which correctly used can more clearly estimate the ultimate goal.

Unifying projects of virtual administration⁵⁶ are a group of actions that by their special characteristics are incentives for the other actions or are the infrastructure needed to develop other projects. Tomas Martin Rodrigo, general subdirectory of AGE Coordination of Technology Resources, differentiates various types:

- a) Information systems and solutions for common or replicable use: it is about projects that addresses common management problems and do not add plus value to the business or public administration management, but which therefore can generate savings scale and free up resources that can be used in other areas. Among these can be cited for example: Nedaes (Decentralized Payroll Standard), SICRES⁵⁷(Information System for coding records of entry and exit) and Silice (Information System for electronic tendering and contracting);
- b) Sector management Project: are projects that by their repercussions stimulate the development of new electronic public services. Among them: Tax Agency's Automatic Services or Social Security Virtual Office.

⁵⁵ *** Organizatia pentru Cooperare si Dezvoltare Economica (OCDE), Bedros Naianu Petru, Avram Gheorghe, Stoica Ovidiu, Popa Alin, *Studii despre e-guvernare. Imperativele e-guvernării*, Editura Aisteda, Iasi, 2004.

⁵⁶ Cerrillo i Martinez Agusti, Galan Galan Alfredo, *Informe sobre la administracion electronica local*, Informe /Fundacio Pi i Sunyer, d'estudis autonomies i locals, Barcelona, 2009, P. 188.

⁵⁷ Idem, P. 189.

- c) Inter-administrations projects: are important in that it emphasizes the benefits of cooperation between different administrations for providing integrated services to citizens and respecting the competitive companies of different actors. It turns out that they are absolutely necessary for electronic administration to become reality. Among these may be mentioned: the single window for companies (VUE, Abati, 2001), work accidents electronic statement (DELTA), Information System of Public Employment Services (SISPE, Benito, 2000), embedded projects in the initiative IDA (Inter-exchange of data between administrations), common European network TESTA.
- d) Joint Infrastructure Projects: are horizontal projects, providing technological infrastructure to be shared on other projects. For example, public administration portal, an intranet project administration, CERES and the newsletter.

Once these conditions are secured, it can be further analyze the effect of a phenomenon called digital divide (digital gap), which is actually the difference between Internet users and those who do not have access to it. Reality shows that the phenomenon known as the digital gap or digital divide is still evident in the countries of southeastern Europe, including Romania. From existing data ⁵⁸, is resulting in increased of a new economy: the growing expansion of mobile telephony 207% the highest in Europe, the personal computer market by 22% per year, the number of Internet Service Providers of 100% in September 2001 compared to January 2000. Both the number of credit cards as the number of web sites had raised noticeably leading to the spread of electronic commerce. It is estimated ⁵⁹ that the developed states spend between 1 and 1.5 of the Gross Domestic Product on Information and Communications Technologies for administrative apparatus that uses public sector.

However, the negative statistics ⁶⁰ from 2001 indicated that only 4-5% of the population has Internet access, computer provision is only 37 people at a computer, face to the European average of 6.8 people, only 30-40% of the firms are equipped with PCs and even fewer are connected to the Internet. For a company in Romania an PC computer is equivalent with 970 hours of labor calculated based on salary costs, while the European Union only 64 hours ⁶¹.

As main factors ⁶² of reducing the digital divide, we can mention: the availability of information technology, Internet access, reducing classic illiteracy, which in Romania in 2001 was 3% and 80-84% the informatics one. Unfortunately, it was found that managers and policy makers have serious gaps in this area.

A survey ⁶³ conducted in 2001 ask of a number of people if they know what are certain concepts or phrases specific for the information society. The sample consists of young people between 25-40 years with the declared desire to improve post-graduate, so with training above the national average. However 22% do not know and and 13% just suspect what is a byte / octet, only 6% know what it is B2B or 128-bit encryption. With all the media coverage of electronic signature law only 22% said they know what it is, the rest just guess they know or do not know at all. The following chart details the answers to some of the significant questions concerning e-governance. The answers give a image much above the national average because from the sample just 8% are graduates of faculties of computers and 87% currently access the Internet.

⁵⁸ Baltac Vasile, Programele eGovernment și construirea societății informaționale în România, 2001

<http://www.edemocratie.ro/publicatii/Baltac%20-%20eGovernment%20ICPTA%2001.pdf>

⁵⁹ Eduard Aibar y Ferran Urgell, *Estado, democracia y red*, Administracion electronica y cambio organizativo, La Era de la Informacion en Catalunya, Generalitat de Catalunya, Editorial UOC, Ariel, Book Print Digital, Barcelona, 2007, P. 23.

⁶⁰ Idem

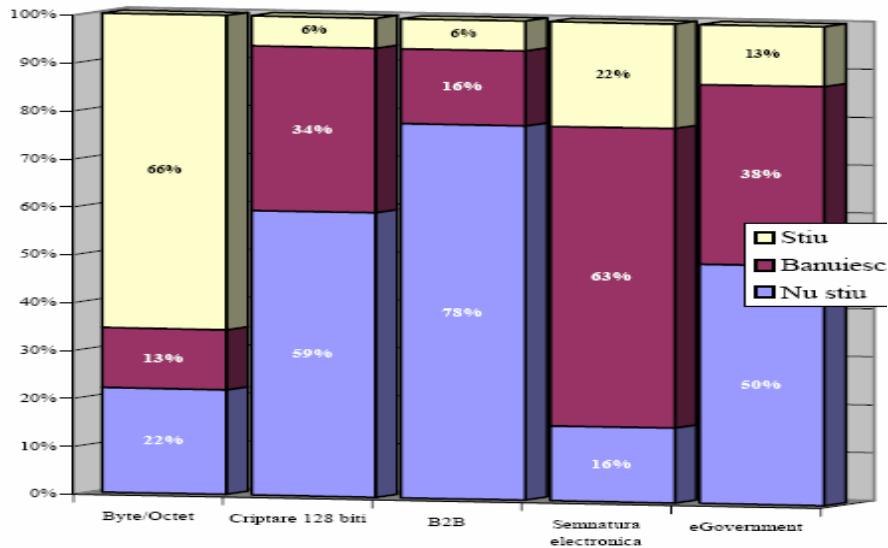
⁶¹ Baltac Vasile, *eBusiness as Opportunity to Bridge Digital Divide*, 2nd Conference on Digital Economy Development in Romania and South East Europe, Bucharest, October 4-5, 2001 organized by UN Economic Commision for Europe, <http://portal.softnet.ro/papers>

⁶² Baltac Vasile, Programele eGovernment și construirea societății informaționale în România, 2001

<http://www.edemocratie.ro/publicatii/Baltac%20-%20eGovernment%20ICPTA%2001.pdf>

⁶³ Idem

Figure 4 - Answers to questions about e-government



Source: Baltac Vasile, *Programele eGovernment și construirea societății informaționale în România*, 2001
<http://www.edemocratie.ro/publicatii/Baltac%20-%20eGovernment%20ICPTA%2001.pdf>

At the few computers and Internet accessibility and the lack of training in the use of information technology can add some problems⁶⁴ of managerial mentality that manifests itself by ignoring or even the rejection of new technologies. These mentalities are generated mostly by the lack of training in the use of new technologies. There are also difficulties in the implementation of national projects, mainly for lack of user acceptance of information technology even though the effort to simplify their interface is remarkable.

The hallmark of the Information Society is the accessibility of information and services (including for people with disabilities), considered a priority in the eEurope + action program by the governments of European countries. In order to expand citizen access to electronic services, the public must have websites⁶⁵ with updated information, arranged on segments of content for easy access. Such web sites must be made compatible with any browser. It is recommended to use clear phrases and at least one international language.

Some ideas⁶⁶ of e-government for a better administration are:

- 1) User-oriented electronic government
- 2) Efficient provision of services in several ways
- 3) Identifying collaborative business processes
- 4) E-government business perspective
- 5) Coordination of e-government.

To be effective, web development should take into account a number of basic principles that have been analyzed by different authors. Thus, for example, the United Kingdom⁶⁷ has drafted various documents about the development of public Web sites, for example the report UK government site Guide, since 2003.

⁶⁴ Ibidem

⁶⁵ *** *Utilizarea calculatorului si a serviciilor electronice, ghid pentru functionarii publici*, 2004, <http://www.riti-internews.ro/ro/Capitolul%204.pdf>

⁶⁶ Gobierno de Espana, Ministerio de Administraciones Publicas, Organizacion para la Cooperacion y el Desarrollo Economico (OCDE), Instituto Nacional de Administracion Publica, *E-gobierno para un mejor gobierno*, Collection Estudios y Documentos, Madrid, 2008, P. 192.

⁶⁷ Jose Miguel Fernandez, Maria Belen Morala Gomez, Alicia Rodriguez Perez, Raquel Flores Lopez, Yolanda Fernandez Santos, Cristina Gutierrez Lopez, *Implementacion de la informacion y gestion digital en los ayuntamientos leoneses: Analisis empirico de su utilidad y nivel de divulgacion*, Departamento de Direccion y Economia de la Empresa, Universidad de Leon, 2010, P. 194.

In Spanish literature, Lara Navarra and Martinez Usero (2003) propose a model for the 10 best practices⁶⁸ for developing Web sites, related to electronic government:

- 1) To be attractive, usable and accessible
- 2) Work in coordination with other organizations
- 3) Services for citizens
- 4) Efficiently contained
- 5) Promoting confidence
- 6) Attention to citizens
- 7) Multiple access channels proposal
- 8) Continuous evaluation
- 9) Promoting Web Site
- 10) Management of products and services.

In recent years a new concept has expanded, both in academic and in the participants context: e-Governance⁶⁹. The main argument in favor of the new feature is the aspect of governance that goes beyond the exclusive environment of government and administration, which includes the activities of other organizations that participate in a direct or indirect in public space management (Peters y Pierre, 2001; Mayntz, 2001). Even in the restrictive environment of public services, participation at their creation, delivery or management of external social actors in their Administration (private companies, NGOs, associations, etc.) is increasingly important, without forgetting that in many areas of public service participate in administrations of different levels simultaneously. In fact, many of the technological systems that are part of the concept of Electronic Administration are designed to make the link or to coordinate the activities of this context of heterogeneous entities.

Conclusions

Once with the expanding use of computers and the Internet, citizens can benefit from public services easier. Information Society broke decisively in the public sector activities through e-government and e-democracy applications.

Synthesizing the definitions offered in the literature, e-governance is the use of information and communication technologies to optimize delivery of public services and citizen participation in policy-making process and public consultation. This process is achieved through new information management techniques, resulting in increasing political participation of citizens. Implementation of e-government comes from the state to citizens, from top to bottom. The main components of e-government are: Government - Government, with a sub-category of government - government employees, Government - Citizen and Government-Business, with 2 applications: public procurement systems and private sector services both offered by the state through the Internet.

Most major e-government services are divided into three categories: information services, interactive communication services and transaction services.

Electronic democracy comes from citizen to state, that is inverted. The Internet offers various possibilities of communication through the portals of electronic democracy, the forums, mailing lists and personal opinions sites. The development of e-democracy seems at first, although some useful services were required, like: e-participation (e-information, e-consultation, e-decision) and e-voting (virtual, remote and local cabs stations). Parliament electronic business transformation, e-Parliament, may be influenced by e-petitions, together forming the concept of e-justice. There are 3 major categories of applications for electronic democracy: voter applications, communication applications and feedback and logistical and organizational applications. To spread e-democracy, have been held conferences and have been created special projects. Utilization of government applications and electronic democracy depends on the availability of computers, internet access, education and changing attitudes (from reactive to proactive ones).

Changes in organization, environment, employment, processes, culture are public managers specific challenges and define the specific request of the New Public Management (e-managing). From its original role of promoting the strategy of introducing the concept of

⁶⁸ Idem.

⁶⁹ Eduard Aibar y Ferran Urgell, *Estado, democracia y red*, Administracion electronica y cambio organizativo, La Era de la Informacion en Catalunya, Generalitat de Catalunya, Editorial UOC, Ariel, Book Print Digital, Barcelona, 2007, P. 30.

electronic government, electronic service delivery management, processing services and "behavior" government leaders have become managers of e-government.

A huge problem is ensuring the identity of all parties. Therefore, identity management guarantees data protection for users of electronic services. It is necessary for governments to provide multiple opportunities for public for information, consultation and participation. In general, the projects arising from the needs of citizens were superior to those resulting from political desiring to implement new technologies.

The development of electronic services comes from the success principles of e-governance, namely: political will, common systems of cooperation between government agencies and citizen -oriented. Also, online services have proven useful in other online areas such as education (e-learning) and health (e-health). A key to success in implementing their activities is the administration decision-making stages. Important tools in this process are the monitoring and evaluation results, which used correctly, can more clearly estimate the ultimate goal. Unifying projects of virtual administration are a group of actions that by their special characteristics are incentives for the other actions or are the infrastructure needed to develop other projects. These are divided into various categories: information systems and solutions for common or replicable use, sector project management, projects between administrations, common infrastructure projects.

The phenomenon called digital divide (digital gap), is actually the difference between Internet users and those who do not have access to it. As main factors reducing the digital divide, we can mention: the availability of information technology, Internet access, reducing classic illiteracy and the informatics one.

The hallmark of the Information Society is the accessibility of information and services (including people with disabilities), considered a priority in the eEurope + action program by the governments of European countries. In order to expand citizen access to electronic services, the public must have websites with updated information, arranged on the segments of content in various international languages, for easy access.

Some ideas of e-governance for better administration are: user-oriented electronic government, efficient provision of services in several ways, identifying collaborative business processes, e-government business perspective and e-government coordination.

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