Chapter XVI
An Exploratory Study of the E–Government Services in Greece

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INTRODUCTION

The impact of "e-business" on the public sector is the main source of the government's transformation towards *"e-government*," which refers to the public sector's efforts to use information and communication technologies (ICT) to deliver government services and information to the public. E-government allows citizens to interact more directly with the government, transforming multiple operational and bureaucratic procedures and employing a customer-centric approach to service delivery; it allows intra-governmental communication; it also offers numerous possibilities for using the Internet and other Web-based technologies to extend online government services (Gant, Gant & Johnson, 2002).

Governments evaluate the best practices of e-business applications worldwide and establish policies for the development of e-government applications. The aim of this strategy is to develop and provide faster and cheaper public services and contribute decisively to the new knowledge-based economy.

The visions, goals, and policies that encompass e-government vary considerably among practitioners and users, while comparative indicators may not always be precise (U.N., 2001). As e-government consists of various aspects, perspectives and objectives there is not only one valid way for assessing its progress. A number of different methodologies for collecting and analyzing data have been applied to different reviews, depending on their evaluation objectives.

The primary goal of the present study is to evaluate e-government services in Greece with a set of carefully chosen criteria, in a manner that can be used for evaluating e-government services world-wide.

BACKGROUND

It is with the advent of the Internet technologies e-government has truly become a global phenomenon (Jaeger, 2003; Jaeger & Thompson, 2003; Norris, 2003; Muir & Oppenheim, 2002; Wimmer,

Traunmuller & Lenk, 2001) and their services' importance has been highlighted according to a survey that was carried out by the department of Public Finances and Public Administration of United Nations (U.N.) in 2001 (UN, 2001). The research's outcomes in 190 states of U.N. indicates that 169 countries (88.9 percent) have launched Web pages for offering e-government services and the 16.8 percent of these were created recently and offer minimal and static content information. Countries that participated in the research have developed applications where the user has access in a number of public information and e-government services, in percentage of 34.2 percent, (65 countries); 17 countries (9 percent), have developed fully transactional e-services for their stakeholders.

On the other hand, the European Union (E.U.), investing in the prospect and the potential profits from developing e-gov services, lay out a Plan of Action called "**eEurope** 2005 – 2010" (eEurope 2002 (2001); Wimmer, 2002). In this plan E.U. places strategies for developing e-government services and supports its members-countries with budgets for that purpose.

Definitions of E-Government

There are differences in the philosophical underpinnings of **e-government**. For some, e-government is the "application of the tools and techniques of e-commerce to the work of government" (Howard, 2001). This perspective focuses on the practical efficiencies and cost reductions of e-government, such as those that can be provided by online procurement and online tax filing. For others, e-government has the potential to "improve democratic participation" and "overcome political alienation" (Noveck, 2003), which emphasizes e-government as an enabler to realize an inclusive and productive public sector along with more efficient administration, (White Paper on European Governance, 2001).

A more technical aspect considers e-government as the use of information technology to provide government's services, support their internal functions and engage citizens (Medjahed et al., 2003).

E-government refers to the delivery of government information and service online through the Internet or other digital means, and may also include opportunities for online political participation (Norris, 2003). Thus it concerns the complete range of automation of government information and services it encompasses the concepts of e-commerce, e-administration, e-service and e-information (Warkentin et al., 2002).

Types of E-Government

E-government activities can be examined in terms of the interactions between sectors of government, businesses, and citizens.

- **Government-to-government (G2G):** Government to Government initiatives facilitate increased efficiency and communication between parts of a government.
- **Government-to-business (G2B):** Government to Business initiatives, involving the sale of government services and goods along with procurement facilities have benefits for both businesses and governments.
- **Government-to-citizen (G2C):** Government to Citizen initiatives can facilitate involvement and interaction with the government, enhancing the quantity and quality of public participation in government (Kakabadse, Kakabadse & Kouzmin, 2003).

Developmental Stages of E-Government

The four stages of growth model for e-government (Gupta & Debashish, 2003; Layne & Lee, 2001) are described as:

1. **Cataloguing:** (online presence, catalogue presentation, and downloadable forms): In this stage, governments create a 'state Web site.' They do not have much Internet expertise and they prefer to minimize the risk by doing a small project.

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