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Chapter III

E-Government in Chile: Summarising the Policy Process

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Abstract

This chapter describes the incorporation of the concept of e-government in the Chilean government upon the context of the State's Reform and Modernisation Project. It starts by explaining the role of the Reform and Modernisation Project in the transformation of the Chilean government to later concentrate on how e-government has been developed as a strategic public policy. The document summarizes the basic initiatives, both at technological and institutional levels, that originated the e-government process. Finally, this chapter reviews some successful e-government experiences in Chile.

Introduction

The fundamental aim underpinning all the Chilean public-action improvement proposals in the last 15 years has been the placement of the state to the service of the citizens. Initially in an implicit manner and then explicitly, the democratic governments have changed the focus of attention to those who are the aim of any public policy, the people, reestablishing regulations, procedures, and instruments to their right proportion in order to achieve such a goal. One of the most significant mechanisms that the public sector has used in the challenge of giving citizens appropriate service is to strategically commit itself to the development of e-government.

This chapter is organised as follows. After this introduction, it provides a historical outline of the State's Reform and Modernisation Process. Then, the general characteristics, appropriateness, and structure of the e-government strategy in the process of modernisation of the state are analysed. Next the chapter reveals the examples of e-government best practices that Chilean public agencies have implemented. Finally, it establishes some of the main conclusions of the e-government strategy development in Chile and makes recommendations on possible implementations for future administrations.

History of a Progressive Modernising Process

The first post-military democratic government (1990-1994) led by Patricio Aylwin had the main institutional challenge of readjusting the administrative organisations for a democratic context, assuming responsibility for rebuilding, institutionalising, and strengthening a government that was minimised and had no hierarchical organisation at the end of the military administration. Due to the clearly transitional character of the first Coalition of Democratic Parties (Concertación) administration, government adaptation efforts toward the new political reality were focused on political, constitutional, and institutional aspects, thus beginning an incipient reform of the State's. Subsequently, President Eduardo Frei's government (1994-2000) set out to explicitly modernise public management, creating for this purpose the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Modernisation of the State. It went deeply into the extent and relevance of the modernisation processes in the main public agencies, and, for the first time, generated a strategic plan for the modernisation of public management.

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