

E-Government in Transition Economies

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INTRODUCTION

In December of 2002, the Lithuanian government approved the concept of e-government. The objective of the e-government concept is to develop effective means that will allow for adapting of public administration to modern needs. To achieve this purpose, the Lithuanian government identified e-government's implementation as one of political priorities. One step toward this purpose is the development of e-government, which ensures democracy, the promotion of e-business, the computerization of society, and the use of the Internet. Following the e-government concept's adoption, the Ministry of Interior affairs has been obliged to prepare a plan of measures necessary for implementation of the concept. The e-government concept describes the official approach towards the electronic government's phenomena in Lithuania.

BACKGROUND

"[E-g]overnment enables and requires rethinking [of] how government is organized from the perspective of the [c]itizen and the functions the government performs to serve the needs of [the c]itizen." This is the excerpt from the presentation of Lithuanian Prime Minister A. M. Brazauskas in World Information Technology Forum WITFOR'2003. The excerpt shows the necessity of e-government, which includes not only the implementation by IT means in public service, but also requires transforming the whole process of public administration in order to satisfy consumers' needs and ensures new quality in the relationship between public administration institutions and citizens or business subjects. Business firms, market conditions, and the culture and institutions of society need to undergo substantial change in a coordinated manner for ICT to diffuse throughout the whole economy in a way that supports the development of virtual community. It is the dynamic interdependence of these conditions that is the source of innovation and value creation in the new knowledge-driven economy. The agenda of research on the dynamics of adoption of new economy practices, innovation, and economic growth, as a result, needs to be expanded beyond the level of the firm. It needs

to be built around the dynamic interrelationships between technological transformations, firms' organisational and knowledge-creating capabilities, emerging market and industry structures, and public institutions (Castels, 2000). Effective working of e-government may be possible only if it has the most important components: public administration, legal regulations, modern and safe ICT means of implementation, customers' possibilities and skills in use of ICT means (Wimmer, 2001). Therefore, this is the approach we use while preparing and implementing e-government in Lithuania. Without all of these components, it may not give the expected benefit, and also, it may be damaging.

E-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT IN LITHUANIA

Legal Framework

Legislation of legal instruments doesn't make any essential problems for the implementation of public services in electronic means. The written document form and the electronic form are consolidated by technological neutrality and functional equivalence in Lithuania's Republic Civil Code, Public administration statute, and Archives statute. In the Civil Code of Lithuania's Republic, article 198 states that the document in electronic form is equal to the document in written form (for example, electronic data message, etc.), which includes these requirements:

- If it is transferred in telecommunication peripheral device
- If it is made by computer and saved in material medium in electronic form (if it's not for disposal)
- If the text protection is guaranteed (the function is done by electronic signature and other forms of data coding or blocking)
- It is possible to identify the signature

In any case, the electronic document cannot be less worth than the paper document because of:

- It is electronic
- It has electronic signature

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- It is transferred by telecommunication peripheral device
- It is made by computer and saved in material medium in electronic form

It is very important to state that the “written form” of a document in various public administration statutes cannot be evaluated as the one making troubles for usage and acceptance of the electronic form of a document. The assumption leads us to implementation of public electronic service (World Bank, 2003).

The attitude is certified by the change of Archives statute on March 30, 2004. The change consolidates common notion of a document without correlating it with the form of a document. It means that “a document” is the information stated by a legal or natural person in action despite its presentation, form, or medium.

Nevertheless, there are no essential difficulties in general statutes of Lithuania’s Republic, although in statutes, which controls specific actions and act under statutes are some obstructions for services in distance in electronic way.

The Public Procurement statute is concerned with EU directives, but some of its attitudes may serve as disadvantages for transferring public procurement into electronic space. These attitudes concern submission of requisitions and proposals. Although the statute allows giving proposals for government electronicall, but on the other hand, the proposal has to be certified by other than electronic means. The detailed regulation of opening envelopes of proposals for electronic public procurement makes noticeable disadvantages.

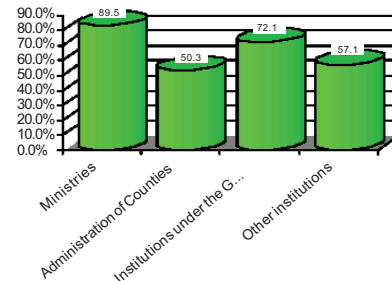
We may find in some statutes that the document in electronic form is not discriminated itself but the critics go to how the document is presented. There are some difficulties in transferring documents electronically, for example it is foreseen that the document may be transferred only by post, or some attitudes demand physical contact in transferring documents.

Another obstruction for electronic service is the requirement of special documents or property, such as a company’s seal procuration, a personal passport or ID card, a driver’s license, and so forth. It’s possible to avoid these difficulties if we implement secure transferring of data from the data bases of public registry information systems or competent state institutions.

Public Service

The public service survey was made in the end of 2003. Also state and self-government institutions on the Internet were evaluated on how they follow general requirements approved by the government of the Republic of Lithuania.

Figure 1. Conformity Internet Web sites of the public authorities



Public electronic service is usually available on the Internet. In the beginning of 2003, the government of Lithuania certified general requirements for state institution Web pages on purpose to standardize state institution Web pages, to secure their functioning, information actualities, trustiness, search possibilities, and so on. These requirements predict state institution Web pages on structure, information, administration, and appliance for disabled (SIC, 2004).

The survey exposed that general requirements are mostly fulfilled by Web pages of ministries—about 82%, counties administration Web pages—52%, institutions under the government of the Republic of Lithuania—64%, 7%, other institutions—63%. Information relevance and network application on WAP data transferring protocol have scanty accordance on the requirements.

Survey of juridical regulation and technological electronic service were done by an evaluation of European Community certified 20 public services (12 for citizens and 8 for business) rendering. Some of the services were parted, so then the general average was taken for evaluation. The level of public electronic service was evaluated sustained by Cap Gemini Ernst & Young’s offered method, when the level of maturity is evaluated in stage 0—0%, stage 1 (information via Internet)—25%, stage 2 (one way interaction)—50%, stage 3 (two way interaction)—75%, stage 4 (full electronic case handling)—100%. In the end of 2003, the general public service rate was 43.8%. The services for business subjects proceeded faster—public services for citizens—average of 35%, and for business—average of 52.2%. The highest level of service (100%) for citizens is given by library, while searching in catalogues and presenting full text electronic publications. In business area, the highest level of service is extended by social fee for employers and submission statistical reports. Twenty-eight percent of all Internet consumers or 5.8% of the entire Lithuanian population applied at least once via Internet to public administration institutions during the year 2003. The research presented that more than half (53%) of consumers visiting public administra-



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