

Chapter 16

E–Government in Russia: Strategies of Formation and Development

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores Russia's implementation of the national e-government strategy and information policies. Based on official, national strategic documents and a number of e-government cases that highlight different projects at the federal and regional levels, we outline the formidable barriers and idiosyncrasies of managing e-government development in Russia.

INTRODUCTION

The Russian Federation is the largest country, by territory, in the world (17,098.2 K km²). It has a population of 141.8 million people and 79.3 percent of inhabitants live in European parts of Russia. The Russian Federation became independent after the crash of the former Soviet Union (World Bank, 2008). Russia has a federated

structure which consists of 83 regions, including 21 Republics, 9 territories, 46 regions, 2 cities of federal significance (Moscow, Saint-Petersburg), 1 autonomous region and 4 autonomous districts. Each of these regions has equal rights. The country is also divided into 10 federal districts. The majority of the population lives in cities – 73,1 percent. Russian citizens are 79,83 percent of country's population (Russian Federal Statistics Service, 2008). The national language is Russian.

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E-Government in Russia

Russia is both a presidential and parliamentary republic. The president is elected every six years and has certain discretionary powers which means the exclusive right of a president to make quick decisions in crisis situations when time factor is crucial (before the end of 2008 presidential term was four years). President serves as a referee to all power branches facilitating collaboration and conflicts resolution. The President appoints the Prime Minister who is the head of the executive administration. Legislative power is represented by two chambers, the Federal Assembly consisting of the Federation Council and State Duma (Parliament). Governors head the regional executive branches and are appointed by the President, whereas the regional legislative authorities are elected.

Russia has the largest supply of mineral and energetic resources in the world. The Gross Domestic Production (GDP) in 2009 was 15,200 United States Dollars (USD) per capita (CIA World Facebook, 2009). The human capital development index in Russia is calculated based on the United Nations Development Program methodology is high (0,96 (1 is maximum)). Thus Russia can be considered a country with both high education and literacy levels based on total population (UN E-government Survey, 2008).

The E-government development process in the Russian Federation cannot be considered separately from the overall usage of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in society and in public administration in particular. The development of ICTs in society started in the 1960-70s in the Soviet Union, as with many other developed countries. Some examples are the National State Automation System (NSAS), United Network of Computation Centers (UNCC), United Automated Network of Communication (UANC), Republican Automated Management Systems (RAMS), Industrial Automated Management Systems (IAMS) (Glushkov, 1975).

The majority of these projects were inherited by the Russian Federation from the Soviet Union's

legacy. While they provide potential profits, they also create burdens on maintenance costs which are restraining the transition to new technologies.

After almost twenty years of informatization, which started after the Soviet Union crash, the first half of it can be characterized as chaotic. Most recent informatization examples demonstrate that ICT become strategic resource in different areas of government's activity. Overall, despite very difficult socioeconomic problems and rearrangement of the economy following crises in 1998 and 2007, the Russian Federation has continued to adapt the most innovative technologies. Recent development of new technologies by public administrations, businesses, and the general population continue to be a significant challenge for Russia in managing informatization. Russia's e-government readiness index score has decreased from 50th in 2005 to 92nd in 2008. A partial explanation may be the Web presence subindex score which decreased. due to the fact that agencies were not ready to use their web-sites as public services providing tools respectively not investing resources in further e-development. (UN E-Readiness Report, 2005) At the same time, the ICT-infrastructure development and human capital subindexes remained at much the same level as 2005 (UN E-government Survey, 2008).

ICT development across the whole country continues to take place against the backdrop of deep structural changes in governance, culture and policy development. All these are important factors when transitioning from one political system to another. Russian leaders considered the potential of ICTs for socioeconomic modernization and participation in key world events (Medvedev, 2009). The Russian Federation is not idiosyncratic in its specific ICT usage challenges, but its geographic scale and struggle to accumulate sufficient resources to find a solution to unique challenges.

The following sections of this chapter analyzes the Russian Federation's strategic achievements and less than successful initiatives on its way to de-

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