

Chapter 11

From E-Government to E-Governance in Europe

Rebecca Levy Orelli
University of Bologna, Italy

Emanuele Padovani
University of Bologna, Italy

Carlotta del Sordo
University of Bologna, Italy

ABSTRACT

The influence of e-government on the modernization and growth of public sector initiatives in Europe has been deeply claimed. Little is known, however, about how the so-called shift from e-government to e-governance takes place in European governments. This chapter presents a view of both challenges and advantages of implementing e-governance strategies, by examining how closely and critically intertwined e-government and e-governance are in European countries.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, there has been a significant evolution in public sector e-governments. With reference to Europe, there has been an overwhelming evolution of information systems and information technology over the last 20 years inspired by different strategies of implementation issued by the European Union over time. While the European Union has defined strategies and goals, which are valid for every member, each country has the freedom to adapt them to its

particular social, administrative, and economic context. Therefore, differences arise in terms of span of services provided via e-government, quality of introduction of new information technology tools in governments, and level of e-governance achieved, in terms of e-participation, e-democracy, overcoming of the digital divide, and e-inclusion (European Commission, 2007a).

While previous studies have focused on the description of the introduction of e-government in European countries under different perspectives (Dunleavy, et al., 2006; EIPA, 2003; Hood, 1983), there seems to be a missing link: to what extent the recent so-called “shift from e-government to

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e-governance systems” takes place in European governments? Research has delved into the factors that inhibit or promote the adoption of IT systems and e-government in general in the public sector. However, there is a lack of clarity in terms of the relationship between e-government and e-governance. E-government influences accountability and performance (Orelli, et al., 2010), which still remain the scope of any public management reform throughout the Western world (Bouckaert & Pollitt, 2005); thus there might be a strong connection between e-government and the ultimate goal of any e-governance initiative.

With the aim to investigate to what extent e-governance systems perform governance in the public sector, we judge as particular instructive to consider sixteen different national European cases. The cases were selected by different levels of e-government results achieved, i.e. high, medium and low ranking levels according to the European Commission indexes (European Commission, 2007b). The comparison among these countries will constitute the basis for the discussion about the influence of the shift from e-government and e-governance in European countries.

This chapter consists of four sections. The second section sets up the scene providing general information about e-government and e-governance in Europe and examines how closely and critically intertwined they are. The third section provides an overview of both European e-government and e-governance dimensions, and presents how typical they develop in the public administration, considering the experience of different EU countries. The main path and challenges of shifting to e-governance to support public governments are presented in the fourth section. Finally, in the conclusion we summarize the analysis highlighting the importance of shifting from e-government to e-governance in terms of advantages and challenges of such path.

E-GOVERNMENT AND E-GOVERNANCE IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

To shed light on the shift from e-government to e-governance in the European Union (EU), an overview of definitions, actors, and main strategies for e-government and e-governance is presented.

E-government is the first form of extensive usage of IT in the public sector, and since mid 1990s it has represented a major concern of public innovation for European governments involved in the implementation of New Public Management-style reforms (Orelli, et al., 2010; Pina, et al., 2010). In 2000, the European Commission launched the *i2010 initiative* (European Commission, 2007a) aimed at creating a single European information space, strengthening investment and innovation in ICT research, and to support inclusion, better public services and quality of life through the use of ICT.

According to *EU's E-Government Main Policy Strategies* (E-government factsheet European Union; Nov 2008 Ed. 1.0), at present, the EU's strategies in the e-government field focus efforts on five priorities, namely: Inclusive e-government, Efficiency and effectiveness, High-impact key services for citizens and businesses, Key enablers, and E-participation. Considering these five EU's priorities - that will be better explained in the next section - the need arises for new connections that e-government requires and are supposed to match the declared strategies.

As a response to the increasingly complex and plural nature of public policy implementation and service delivery, New Public Governance (NPG) regime has emerged as a new trend, contemplating “the plural and pluralist complexities of the state in the twenty-first century” (Osborne, 2009, p. 7). While NPG retains several of the New Public Management (NPM) pillars, it emphasizes the relationship with the external environment and the inter-organizational relationships. Some authors have pointed out this feature using the idea of

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