

# THE ROLE OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT) IN THE REFORM OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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*Trust in the norms of law.  
The law must not be the right of the stronger one.*

**ABSTRACT:** *In last few decades the Public Administration has changed. It is well known that the public sector is obliged to follow social needs by modernizing its procedures and services. The goal of the Public Administration is to serve society. But, the existed laws and regulations do not always cover the needs of e-citizens. Acceptance of e-Government is a great opportunity for public organizations improvement.*

*Information communication technologies (ICT) have a great potential to support sustainable development. Ample evidence from around the world for the positive impact of ICT on economic growth and development exists. What would be of most interest for sustainable development is how progress can be achieved with the fewest resources given.*

*Hence what should be measured as ICT indicators for sustainable development are the competitiveness of the ICT sector and the effectiveness of the regulatory environment in the current information era. In this paper I shall try to present my observation on the value of e-Government systems for the society and the government.*

**KEYWORDS:** *communication technologies (ICT); Serbia; public administration; sustainable development*

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** *K 00, K 23*

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## 1. ADVANTAGES OF ICT UTILIZATION

In Serbia the Digital Agenda Directorate established in March 2011, which operates under the Ministry of Culture, Information and Information Society, is engaged in activities that are aligned with the European Union economic development strategy, which core is the utilization of information and communication technologies. By following global trends, the Directorate is working on a comprehensive digitalization of the key segments of the Serbian society – education, state administration, economy, communication, culture.

However, the traditional hierarchical model of government is still the base of the public structure. What we have been working on is improving and facilitating access to different services that the state provides for citizens through the use of ICT, primarily through the e-Government portal.

Efficiency of e-Government is manifested in the simplification of administration for residential users and legal persons, increasing of transparency and liability, what results in the reduction of corruption in all segments of public administration.

E-government provides for citizens and economy more simple and faster carrying out of activities in front of the Public Administration bodies. Utilization of tools and systems based on ICT provides for the change in the process and manner of work and enables simplified access of users to the public services.

It is well known that the public sector is obliged to follow social needs by modernizing its procedures and services. In Greece there is very successful and popular e-government system TAXISnet (taxation information system)<sup>1</sup> which offers services directly to citizens through a web site.

Activities undertaken with the aim of Information society development in the area of e-administration, e-health care and e-administration of justice should be directed to the following priorities: electronic identity in public sector services, application of ICT in the administrative bodies and holders of public authorities, application of ICT in the health care system, application of ICT in the administration of justice.

## 2. LEGAL REGULATION

*The Strategy of public administration reform* adopted by the Government in 2004 is one of the strategic documents that first introduced in Serbia the principle of modernization through the e-government.

*The Strategy for the development of the information society in the Republic of Serbia* (“Official Gazette RS“, no. 87/06) adopted in 2006 included legal, institutional, economic and technical aspects of development in the area of ICT, as well as the important strategic aim of development of the broad regional access, insurance of networks security and development of programs of e-administration, e-inclusion, e-learning, e-health and e-business, in accordance with the Action plan e-Europe.

Core preferences and priorities are written in two of our strategic documents: the *Strategy for the development of the electronic communications in the Republic of Serbia*

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<sup>1</sup> Funded by the Greek Government and the European Union.

for the period from 2010 to 2020 ("Official gazette RS", no. 68/2010) and the *Strategy for the development of the information society in the Republic of Serbia to the year 2020* ("Official gazette RS", no. 51/2010) adopted in 2010.

Making policy and strategy of the information society construction is in the competence of the Ministry for telecommunications and information society. Competences in the area of application of ICT in Public Administration also have the Ministry for Public Administration and Local Autonomy competent for Public Administration system and Institute for Informatics and Internet of the Republic as special organization. According to the data of the Institute for Informatics and Internet of the Republic for year 2009, the level of sophistication of the e-government service in the Republic of Serbia was 46%, what demonstrates the growth of 8 percentage points in comparison with year 2007.

*Strategy for the development of e-Government in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2009. to 2013.* ("Official Gazette RS", no. 83/2009, 5/2010) is the act of the Government which in a comprehensive way defines basic aims, principles and priorities of the improvement in this area and establishes activities, which should be carried out in the next period. In the sense of Strategy, e-Government means legal, institutional, economic and technical aspects of the application of ICT by which more efficient and effective work of administrative bodies and holders of public authorities in the function of performing power, economic growth and reduction of administrative burden are achieved. The special importance has the implementation of *the Law on electronic signature* ("Official Gazette RS", no. 135/04). Solutions of *the Law on electronic document* ("Official Gazette RS", no. 51/09) will have great influence on the process of modernization, rationalization and introducing of e-Government. Especially having in mind the main legal solution according to which the document originally appeared in electronic form is considered to be the original, what represents one of the key conditions for the reform of the existing work procedures and introduction of electronic public services for citizens and economy. Utilization and exchange of electronic documents in certain areas as customs, accounting, banking and etc. becomes reality on which this Strategy is based on. The development of e-Government is also influenced by solutions of *the Law on the protection of personal data* ("Official Gazette RS", no. 98/07).

### 3. EDUCATION AND E-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT

Professional training and improving of one's knowledge (scientific and professional) is very important for development of Public Administration. Well organized work and principle of excluding the politics from the sphere of Public Administration is necessary too. While beginning with common values we are endeavoring to build up a future. By e-learning the processes of learning and education of wide stratum of population can be influenced in the great extent. In that way education and knowledge become available to everyone, what gives the full contribution to the knowledge based economy development.

National efforts in human capacity building are required. Serbia has to establish universal standards for transparent and verified employment requirements, but to appreciate its own national and statehood values more than such values of other states. Although employers in Serbia rarely use social networks to find out information on job applicants, mainly relying on testing and personal interviews, in some neighboring

countries, according to the newest research 80% of employees have profile on social networks.

Digital technology affects the lives of people all over the world in many ways. The Digital School project has historical importance for Serbia and is one of the biggest of its kind in the world. All elementary schools in Serbia (3000 of them) received IT equipment through this unique project.

Besides partial results in the e-Government development, the level of development of electronic public services is still low. By the Strategy for the development of the information society in the Republic of Serbia 20 electronic public services of priority were established, 12 for citizens and 8 for economy. Although the total level of development of these services is below all EU countries, none from the list of electronic public services of priority did not reach the level of full availability<sup>2</sup>.

Existing situation in this area is characterized by:

1. insufficiently developed common computer-communication network;
2. undeveloped official records in electronic form, as the essence of data necessary for e-Government development;
3. necessity of paper documents in almost every procedure;
4. insufficient standardization and coordination of information systems development in the bodies of authority;
5. lack of competent cadres.

Introducing of e-government provides for all users (citizens, economic subjects, organizations and etc.) to finish jobs in front of the bodies of authority more simple, faster and cheaper. By utilization of tools and systems based on ICT the better public services are offered to the authorities. Citizens have possibility to use all public services for which that is suitable through Internet and from their personal computer, other home or mobile device. Citizens also have possibility to use public services in classical way, but without need to visit more windows, with efficient service realization, as well as with full, clear and on Internet easy accessible information on the service.

Among the most important principles of e-Government development certainly are: the principle of availability of public data in electronic form (public information is available to everyone in electronic form and without compensation) and the principle of information security (security and reliability of electronic administration systems must be in accordance with established norms on information security and personal data protection).

Constant progress and greater availability of technology opens space for innovative solutions which with reduced investments bring to the significantly higher practical advancement than previously customary solutions. In the conditions of limited resources for investment in the e-Government development, innovative application of ICT represents the way toward faster development of technology application.

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<sup>2</sup> Full availability means that besides utilization of electronic access to the service, other formal procedure (personal or paper communication) is not necessary in order to accomplish public service, as well as that this service is available to everyone.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Serbia's future needs to be based on rendering high-quality services and producing high-quality products, primarily for the European market.

What worries us is unsatisfactory progress in the development of Internet and e-government in the Republic of Serbia in relation with EU countries. The aim is that Republic of Serbia till year 2020 by the indicators of information society development catches up to EU average.

We are actually quite good in the area of mobile telephony. This is a perfect example of how having stiff competition leads to higher quality and better availability of services rendered to citizens. But we lag behind quite a lot in almost all segments of utilization of information and communication technologies.

Positive role that ICT can have in all dimensions of sustainable development: in terms of efficient energy and resource use in relation to transport and climate change and for the achievement of common goals of sustainable development.

The link between the ICT and sustainable development is being addressed by extensive debates and research which recognize the existence of both significant opportunities and threats. In this polarized view, the ICT can be viewed as a tool contributing to 'a shift towards a sustainable development' or as "catalyst that can speed up current negative trends'.

Serbia, on the crossroads of numerous cultures, traditions and beliefs should be the source of stability in the region. Competitive markets only will foster restructuring of industries and innovation within Serbia and the future will teach us if our institutions are able to create the true competition culture.

It is important to strengthen the educational system in our country. There is the need for a new social mentality, for tools and business practices in the new modern information environment. As we know e-Government offers the great opportunity for public organizations improvement. We started to use its advantages.

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