

## A FEW NOVEL PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL REMARKS ON E-GOVERNANCE

Mădălina-Elena MIHĂILESCU\*

**ABSTRACT:** *The overwhelming „clumsiness,, related to the activities of the Romanian system of public administration have generated numerous practical issues that the modern age technology attempted to resolve by resorting to different information and communication systems with an efficiency that is infinitely higher than all the classical systems used for transmitting information useful to the citizens.*

*The studies and the statistics on E-government with all its pluses determined by interactive communication on the web up to the electronic transactions demonstrate that Romania still has a long road ahead before reaching the excellent results characterising the systems of administration of other European states (France, United Kingdom) even though existing research has already demonstrated that neighbouring states (i.e. Hungary) experience similar deficiencies.*

*This article aims to establish if e-governance is actually efficient in Romania, if it is functional and what efforts have been made recently to enable it to go beyond the theoretical framework.*

**KEY WORDS:** *e-governance; internet; administrative system; digital era.*

**JEL Code:** K 23

### 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Strategy on Strengthening Public Administration 2014-2020 by 2020 „public administration in Romania will go through a spiral of trust in relationship to the society, its beneficiaries will enjoy integrated, convenient and quality services offered after all options have been rigorously tested by the authorities and public institutions that are proactive and receptive to change”<sup>1</sup>.

The objectives of this Strategy are, amongst others, to improve the relationship with the citizen and other environments by offering public services that are visibly improved. The aim is to target these services on „economic efficiency”, to create a public

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\* PhD Associate professor, Faculty of Juridical, Social and Political Studies, Dunărea de Jos”, University of Galați, ROMANIA.

<sup>1</sup>*Strategia pentru consolidarea administrației publice 2014-2020/ The Strategy on Strengthening Public Administration*, [http://www.dpfb1.mdrap.ro/strategii\\_administratie\\_publica.html](http://www.dpfb1.mdrap.ro/strategii_administratie_publica.html) ,accessed on 3. 09. 2019, time 14, 30.

administration that is open to innovative solutions, namely an administration that simplifies and consolidates mechanisms.”

One of the key points in the reform of the current public administration is also to improve on-line services, to create some real facilities available to the citizen willing to interact as fast and as efficient as possible with the authorities, to inform them with regard to issues of major importance at the level of local communities<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, the struggle for reforming the public administration is a continuous one and the desired goal to create on-line efficient services is also mirrored by the opinions created approximately 10 years ago by legal specialists who stated that “E-democracy aims to offer one of the most innovative and technologically-oriented websites from Europe. Using ITC (Java mobile phones, SMS messages etc.) may help to construct the mechanisms of direct democracy in the local communities in order to bring administration closer to the citizens (direct input of the citizens in the process of devising public policies) by using new means of participation, thus extending the objective of political deliberation at a collective level.” (Nastase, Bondiguel, Caplan, Cañellas Llabrés, Carmo, Walkowiak, 2007).

„The Integrated Plan for the Simplification of Administrative Procedures Applicable to Citizens” revised in March 2017 noted the fact that was devised with the aim to simplify and rationalise administrative procedures, a fact that also calls for e-governance solutions<sup>3</sup>. In compliance with the Conclusions of the European Council of 20th June 2010, that adopted the European Union Strategy for a type of development that is intelligent, sustainable and favourable to inclusion, submitted to the EU Regulation no. 1303.2013 (of 17th December 2013)<sup>4</sup>,” it is necessary that both the Union and its Member States achieve a level of development that is intelligent, sustainable and favourable to inclusion, promoting at the same time the harmonious development of the Union and reducing the regional gaps”. In order to achieve these goals, in 2014 the Ministry of Information Society in Romania<sup>5</sup> promoted the objectives of the National Strategy on the Digital Agenda for Romania 2014-2020 that, in its turn, mirrored Europe Digital Agenda 2020 with its sole purpose of developing a single digital market.

Starting from the actual situation existing in 2018 in Romania regarding access to such electronic services that facilitate a better connection with the authorities of the system of administration, our study aims to present in a synthetic manner the opinions referring to the deficiencies of such services of the impediments that limit their implementation.

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, the Strategy intends to create an interaction with the administration that will be configured mainly in the form of electronic services, which will be available in intuitive packages and can be accessed anytime, anywhere, on multiple channels, from single sources. The electronic services will have a friendly interface, personalized and focused on the delivery of integrated public services. The beneficiary will not interact directly with the bureaucratic apparatus that contributes to their supply. See, in this sense, [http://www.dpfbldrap.ro/strategii\\_administratie\\_publica.htm](http://www.dpfbldrap.ro/strategii_administratie_publica.htm), accessed on 3. 09. 2019, time 14, 40.

<sup>3</sup> Valid on [www.mdrap.ro](http://www.mdrap.ro), accessed on 7. 12. 2018, time 12, 25.

<sup>4</sup> Regulation establishing common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Fund, as well as establishing general provisions on the European Development Fund Regional Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) no. 1083/2006 of the Council.

<sup>5</sup> Currently The Ministry for Communication and Information Society.

## 2. THE CHALLENGES BROUGHT BY E-GOVERNANCE IN ROMANIA AND OTHER STATES

E-governance can be understood „as a modern, more effective way of public management that uses information and communication tools and is based on a common access to the Internet. By using e-services, the administration of all levels (local, regional, national) is able to deal with citizens' problems in a faster, cheaper, and more comfortable manner”. ( Sztop-Rutkowska, 2019).

The significance of the internet is a consequence of its accessibility. Through the decades, countries have increasingly invested in their ICT infrastructure to enhance progress. How the development of ICT varies across countries becomes a critical indicator of the global digital divide. (Szopiński and Staniewski, 2017).

The emergence of new ICTs has brought about many new assumptions concerning radical social changes in various areas of operation of administrations, such as, among others: an increased participation of the citizens in governance; an increase in e-democracy; changes in organizations, like moving from hierarchical to horizontal structures; a transition to virtual organizations; and moving away from classic bureaucracy to New Public Management and digital governance (Şandor, 2012. apud. Szopiński and Staniewski, 2017).

The increased degree of freedom gives rise to yet stronger speculations but also to certain quite interesting experiments regarding the future of democracy. Confronted with the apathy of the voters but also with the nostalgia of direct democracy à la Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the idea of electronic democracy emerged. Digital democracy is seen “as a possible solution to increase the degree of citizen participation in politics, not only through electronic vote (to be introduced, at least experimentally in an increasing number of countries, but also through the emergence of electronic forums, electronic local councils (a concept introduced by Ross Perot in his electoral campaign in 1996), on-line lobby, on-line electoral campaigns (more and more frequent even in Romania) and electronic governance”. (Şandor, 2002).

Governments from all around the world are facing the challenge brought by the transformation and the necessity to reinvent of administrative systems in order to provide services, information and knowledge that are efficient and cost-efficient through technologies, information and communication. The development of information and communication technologies has been catalyzed and has led to the emergence of electronic governance that was in its turn defined in the specialty literature “as a means through which governments may use the most innovative information and communication technologies, mainly the application based on the Internet, in order to offer the citizens and companies a more convenient access to the information and governmental services, to the services in general and in order to offer more opportunities to participate in the decision-making procedures in the public institution and within the democratic processes carried out at a social level.”<sup>6</sup>(Fang, 2002).

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<sup>6</sup> These opinions were also presented in the lecture Decentralization and Good Governance organized at the Master on Governance and cross-border cooperation in public administration, Galați, Lower Danube University, 2018.

Electronic governance refers to the government making use of technology, mainly the applications based on the Internet in order to increase the access and provision of information and services offered by the government to citizens, business partners, employees, other agencies and governmental entities. It has the potential to contribute to building “better relationships between the government and the public, making interaction with the citizens easier and more efficient”<sup>7</sup>. (Layne, Lee, 2001).

Another opinion states that electronic governance refers to “the state offering, on public money, its beneficiaries some of its public services in an electronic form, that is by using information and communication technology, especially the Internet.” (Vasilache apud. Baltaru, 2012).

Electronic government (e-government) refers “to the processes and the structures necessary to provide electronic services to the public (citizens and companies), to collaborate with the business partners and to carry out electronic transactions within an organisation”. E-government represents “more than a bi-directional connection with the public”. It also includes an internal dimension: the different levels within the administration (central, regional, local) or branches (the executive, legislative and justice) need to interact electronically during the process of providing public services. (Șandor, 2002).

Using new technologies is an integral part of the modernisation of the local administration. The national strategy of electronic governance puts e-governance “at the core of the governments (and administrations – Ed.) attempts to modernize (ODPM, 2002, apud. King and Cotterill, 2007) and this is the reason why such a reform to the system is “an essential step in counter reform, a programme of promoting transparency and efficiency, of improving the interaction with the public administration and reducing corruption.” (The National Management Centre for Information Society, 2012 apud. Baltaru, 2012).

The European Parliament Report of 2nd May 2017 on *The EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020* pointed out the fact that “the full potential of a digital public administration may be achieved only if the citizens and the companies completely trust the services thus provided, that EU e-Justice portal is an essential instrument for the access to information and justice and it also represents an important step in modernizing UE public administration”. That it is necessary for national administrations “to finally move into the era of digital technology and that public administrations should be open, transparent, efficient and inclusive, offering digital public services that are borderless, personalized, easy to use, accessible and from end-to-end for all EU citizens and businesses by 2022, thus reducing the costs, obstacles and administrative burdens for citizens and businesses, especially SMEs, and thus leveraging all the benefits of the digital revolution; however, this approach is at the same time considered “to be compatible with the equitable” restructuring of public administration”<sup>8</sup>.

The text of the Communication issued by the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the

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<sup>7</sup> This information were presented in the lecture Decentralization and Good Governance presented by the author, semster II, academic year 2017-2018 Faculty of Legal, Social and Political Sciences, Lower Danube University of Galați.

<sup>8</sup> Point 1 and 2, Letter H of the European Parliament Report on the E-governance Action Plan 2016-2020, (2016/2773/ (INI)).

Committee of the Regions entitled "*A strategy for the digital single market for Europe*", reads that in the EU, "there has been an improvement in citizens' basic digital skills (in growth from 55% to 59% of the population), but more efforts are still needed". What is more, "the levels of digital skills must be increasingly developed among employees from all economic sectors and among people looking for a job in order to improve their professional insertion skills". There is a need to change the way in which the education and training systems adapt to the digital revolution. These changes can benefit from initiatives at European level, such as the "Grand Coalition Digital Jobs", "EU Programming Week" (EU Code Week) and "Opening of education"<sup>9</sup>.

In *Hungary*, a neighboring state, recent legislation has raised issues that are absolutely relevant to governance and the efficiency of this type of government. The "recently adopted National Info-communication Strategy 2014-2020 intends to give a comprehensive overview on the situation of the Hungarian information society and the ICT market, to define the ideal target situation and to identify professional trends and development targets in info communications for the same period as the 2014-2020 financial period" (European Commission, E -Government in Hungary, 2015). (European Commission, E -Government in Hungary, 2015).

The same aim had "an overall eGovernment law, the Act No. CCXXII. of 2015. on general rules of electronic administration and trust services that has been adopted by the Parliament. This new eGovernment law sets out the general rules of electronic administration, the relationship between the citizen and the public administration bodies providing e-administration services, their contacts, the renewal of interoperability rules, the legal provisions necessary to implement the eIDAS regulation (910/2014/EU), as well as the rules on authenticity of electronic and paper-based documents. It will gradually enter into force until 1 January 2017". A central ASP service providing pilot, the Municipality ASP 1.0 has been launched in 55 smaller municipalities of the Central Hungary Region.

The goal of the project is to allow the municipalities to use modern, integrated and cost-effective IT services. Based on the Application Service Provider's central hardware and software infrastructure the municipalities can use the following services within an integrated framework: financial management system, property cadastre, municipal tax system, document management system, industrial and commercial management system, municipality web portal and eadministration web portal. Another 34 municipalities were expected to start using the Municipality ASP's services from 1st January 2016, and the plans for further development of the Municipality ASP and its extension country-wide within the next years are already in the pipeline. With the use of these ASP services the operational costs can be lowered, while the productivity and the interoperability will improve within the local administrative level, as well as across the different levels of public administration. (European Commission, E -Government in Hungary, 2015).

Also, in this country, the Government adopted the 1631/2014. (XI.6.) "Government Resolution on the implementation of the Digital Nation Development Program". "The annual 'Infotér' conference is the largest gathering of the different stakeholders of the

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<sup>9</sup>*O strategie privind piața unică digitală pentru Europa, Comunicare a comisiei către parlamentul european, consiliu, comitetul economic și social european și comitetul regiunilor.*, pp. 18 , apud. [www.eur-lex.europa.eu](http://www.eur-lex.europa.eu). accessed on 5. 09. 2019 , time 16, 10.

information society. The programme of the conference includes lectures, plenary sessions and round-table discussions on current ICT and eGovernment issues. The detailed planning of the Operational Programmes and the available funds for eGovernment development for the period between 2014 and 2020 is under its way”.<sup>10</sup>(European Commission, E- Government in Hungary, 2015).

One of the most important step towards the expansion / extension of e-government in Hungary is the Law on Electronic Administrative Services (CCXXII / 2015, which came into force on 1 January 2018). It obliges each public-sector organisation “to make an electronic / online channel available for clients (at their request) during the whole lifecycle of the administrative / case-handling procedure – from obtaining information to submitting forms and interacting with the authorities, all the way to online payment and resolution”. In order to enable this fundamental transformation of service delivery, the government has developed a system of shared G2G services and infrastructure for the individual public-sector organizations (Hajnal, Kádár, Kovács, 2018).

“From 1 January 2018, business organizations/ companies are obliged for electronical correspondence and electronical administration with NTCA (National Tax and Customs Administrations of Hungary)”. For the companies,” the electronic storage surface used as a secure delivery service is the ‘Company Gate’, which can be used for electronic communication with NTCA; to send documents (for example, a declaration) and to download an official documentations”.

“There are also two ways for the taxpayers to report *permanent mandates*:

a. *EGYKE form*: The taxpayer (representative) has to file it, and has to attach a mandate in one of these models:

- mandate turned into an authenticated electronic document;
- an electronic document containing the mandate and at least the qualified electronic signature of the taxpayer or his / her legal representative;
- an electronic document authenticated with a document authentication service (AVDH) recaptured by at least the taxpayer or his / her legal representative.

b. *eBEV*: A statutory representative may also notify the permanent representative on the proxy reporting platform available on the eBEV portal, which becomes valid with the approval of the permanent representative. In this case, it is sufficient to attach the power of attorney in scanned form to the notification” . (Szenkovits, 2018).

Europe's Digital Progress Report (EDPR) “tracks the progress made by Member States in terms of their digitisation, combining quantitative evidence from the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) with qualitative information on country-specific policies. In 2017 *Bulgaria* ranks 27th in DESI. Compared with last year, Bulgaria progressed in the enhancement of its broadband infrastructure and in open data developments. However, its low performance in digital skills, digitisation of businesses and of public services are acting as a brake on the further development of Bulgaria's digital economy and society”<sup>11</sup>.

Confronted with major problems in this area, in November 2015, this country introduced a project regarding the development of broadband and high-speed broadband services to citizens and businesses in economically disadvantaged and outermost regions

<sup>10</sup> European Commission....., apud.joinup.ec.europa.eu, consulted in 5. 09. 2019, time 12.00.

<sup>11</sup> *Europe's Digital Progress Report (EDPR), 2017 Country Profile Bulgaria*, pp. 2.

in Bulgaria (project “Development of high-speed broadband in Bulgaria through the construction of critical, secure and reliable public ICT infrastructure” of Executive Agency “Electronic Communication Network and Information systems”) which was successfully completed in 29 municipalities and 24 towns in 14 regions of the country.

With its successful realisation will allow all State institutions from the targeted areas to be connected in the cloud of public administration, which is a pre-condition for the development of e-government. The technological focus of the project aims to provide full technical interoperability of the network with the existing infrastructure, including that of providers of broadband services. “In October 2015, the Bulgarian government unveiled government cloud service platform for all of the country’s municipalities. The platform, which was built for the capital city of Sofia, is now being implemented by the municipalities of Radomir, Gabrovo and Burgas. “All municipalities should have the opportunity to access the 50 government services on this cloud platform”, Deputy Minister for ICT, Valery Borisov, said at a meeting with municipalities.<sup>12</sup>

“As a whole, Bulgaria’s performance with respect to digital public services remains well below the EU average and the country slipped two positions – from 23rd in DESI 2016 to 25th in DESI 2017. One particular area showed strong progress though, Open Data, where Bulgaria comes in 7th place, i.e. rising two positions since last year. On 5 April 2016, Bulgaria adopted a Roadmap for implementation of the Strategy for the Development of e-Government for the period 2016-2020. It outlines the measures and activities for the implementation of the strategic goals, as well as the institutions responsible and the financial resources required. The Electronic Governance Act was amended in June 2016, introducing a key change: the establishment of a new State e-Government Agency (SEGA), the aim of which is to conduct e-governance policies. In terms of structure, SEGA integrates the “Electronic Governance” Directorate of the Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications and the Executive Agency “Electronic Communication Networks and Information Systems”. SEGA has only been operational since 1 December 2016 and recently (on 14 February 2017) launched its website –<https://www.e-gov.bg>.

A new Electronic Identification Act was adopted in May 2016 and came into force on 21 November 2016. In addition, amendments to the law on national identification documents were made. This is a key step towards the accelerated introduction of e-Government as it defines a unified scheme for electronic identification of citizens and businesses. It allows Bulgaria to start issuing electronic identification cards as of 1 January 2018<sup>13</sup>.

Another European country, Poland, was one of the first countries to open up access to publicly held data, with [widok.gov.pl](http://widok.gov.pl) being the third platform in the world to publicise statistics on the use of digital services. Already over one million people are using our Trusted Profile (eGO), an e-signature for people using online government services.<sup>14</sup>

“In 2015 Poland was still among countries of unsatisfactory level of e-administration comparing with other EU countries. A major problem faced by the state was the need to

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<sup>12</sup> *European Commission, E Government in Bulgaria*, 2016, pp 7-8, valabil la [joinup.ec.europa.eu](http://joinup.ec.europa.eu), consultat la 22. 01. 2019, ora 12, 35.

<sup>13</sup> *Europe’s Digital Progress Report (EDPR), 2017, Country Profile Bulgaria*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>14</sup> *Poland going digital, Then, now and tomorrow*, pp. 2-3, apud. [www.gov.pl](http://www.gov.pl), accesat la 2. 09. 2019, ora 11, 39.

promote and push advancement of public e-services. This requires a comprehensive approach as well as properly identified needs and preferences among citizens in general and local communities in particular. Expedited development of e-administration and broad use of services offered by the public administration via electronic channels should lead to between, more efficient and effective operation. This should lead not only to more efficient services but also new ICT applications enabling meeting growing expectations among citizens. The percentage of those people who use the Internet while dealing with official matters has been growing every year. In 2014, it increase by 18 percentage points if compared with 2013 and 23 percentage points if compared with 2012” . (Drab-Kurowska, Budziewicz-Guźlecka, 2015).

In this country on 16th November of 2015, the Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography (GUGiK) began implementation of 3 crucial and nationwide endeavors:

- CAPAP - Public Administration Centre of Spatial Analyses;
- K-GESUT - National database of the geodetic register of utilities network;
- Draft Governmental Program of ZSIN (Integrated Real Estate eGovernment in Poland June 2016 Information System) Development.<sup>15</sup>

Also, the Ministry of Digital Affairs (MDA) published its Strategic Action Priorities in computerization of public services. The draft strategy had been open for public consultation prior its final publication in the beginning of March. Coming with a set of 5 principles for digital state and 18 priorities, the strategy offers the vision and a range of concrete measures aiming to delivering a wide-reaching digital transformation of the state.

“Today, an important tool used by e-administration is the ePUAP platform. E-services platforms play a particular role in the process of adjusting IT systems to needs of the information society. They are the basis for solutions that enable interactive implementation of public and commercial tasks using electronic channels. ePUAP is a nationwide IT platform for public administration and institutions to provide electronic services. The platform provides them with relevant technological infrastructure. The ePUAP platform is best known to people of 25-34 and 45-54. Older and younger Internet users (18–24 and 55+) do not know the platform that well. In terms of the education level, an exceptional group are people of higher education, and more than a half of them are familiar with the ePUAP platform” . (Drab-Kurowska, Budziewicz-Guźlecka, 2015).

In the sense of developing an efficient and computerized administration in Poland, large projects are being developed right now:

1. *GovTech* : GovTech aims to improve the quality of existing online public services by using private sector expertise. By creating a platform which will integrate the data from across the public sector, GovTech will make it easier for different public sector organisations to exchange information. It will cut down on the need for businesses and citizens to provide the same information more than once and allow public sector organisations to work together more efficiently. GovTech will also explore innovative ways to improve backoffice processing, including by increasing the level of automation. This will mean that people working in the public sector will be able to concentrate on

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<sup>15</sup> European Commission, E- Government in Poland, 2016, pp. 7-8, valabil la [joinup.ec.europa.eu](http://joinup.ec.europa.eu), consultat la 22. 01. 2019, ora 13, 40.



what matters most - delivering a high quality public service, rather than doing routine admin tasks.

2. *Mdocuments*- Documents is a service that will allow citizens to access their documents (including those confirming their identity, such as ID) using their cell phone. With over 19 million people in Poland owning a smartphone, mDocuments will give citizens convenient and secure access to their official documents. For people who don't yet own a smartphone or prefer having the traditional hard copy of their documents this will still be possible. mDocuments is about giving citizens choice about what format they want their documents in. The official documents won't be stored on the cell phone, rather the citizen will be able to access an electronic version of them from his phone<sup>16</sup>.

In Romania, "the implementation of the government has been brought to the attention of the public only sporadically and especially at times when spectacular promises have been made or non-performing, incomplete or deficient products and services have been launched". (e-Romania portal can be an example in both cases). In a certain vision, a few years ago in our country there was no obvious strategic plan for the development of the e-government supported from the central level, so that the initiatives are developed more locally. (Urs, 2014).

From the point of view of the legislative efforts to develop some specific issues of e-government, we can observe a range of normative acts related to electronic signature<sup>17</sup>, electronic commerce<sup>18</sup>, electronic payment of local taxes<sup>19</sup>, a system of modern payment<sup>20</sup> or fighting corruption.<sup>21</sup>

The following electronic services of public use are available on the National Electronic System:

- www.e-guvernare.ro, public information system that ensures the access of the individuals and legal entities to the services and information held by the local and central government institutions, functioning according to Law no. 161/2003 ;
- www.e-licitatie.ro, electronic public procurement system operated in order to facilitate transparency and efficiency in the field of public procurement;
- www.autorizatiiauto.ro - electronic system regarding international transport authorizations<sup>22</sup>.

From the perspective of the average citizen, according to the latest data obtained from the National Institute of Statistics regarding the access to the Internet of the citizens from the urban and rural areas of Romania<sup>23</sup>, it turned out that the citizens are familiar with the

<sup>16</sup> *Poland going digital, Then, now and tomorrow*, pp. 15-16, apud. www.gov.pl, accesat la 2. 09. 2019, ora 11,50.

<sup>17</sup> Law no. 455/2001, on electronic signature, as amended and supplemented.

<sup>18</sup> Law no 365/2002, on electronic trade, as amended and supplemented.

<sup>19</sup> Ordinance 24/2002 on the electronic payment of taxes and duties as amended and supplemented.

<sup>20</sup> Law no 70/2015 for strengthening financial discipline concerning cash collection and payment operations and for amending and supplementing Government Emergency Ordinance No 193/2002 on introducing modern payment systems.

<sup>21</sup> Law no. 161/2003 regarding certain measures for ensuring transparency of public dignitaries, public positions and within the business environment, corruption prevention and its sanction, as amended and supplemented

<sup>22</sup> Nicolae Sfetcu, *Ghid web design pentru administrația publică*, [http://www.academia.edu/29448526/Ghid\\_web\\_design\\_pentru\\_administratia\\_public%C4%83](http://www.academia.edu/29448526/Ghid_web_design_pentru_administratia_public%C4%83), accessed on 31. 01. 2019. time 17, 09.

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com\\_presa/com\\_pdf/tic\\_r2018.pdf](http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/tic_r2018.pdf), accessed on 5. 09. 2019 , time 15,25.

technology, they access the Internet, their age does not prevent them from accessing the web pages or using online services.

According to these statistics, of the total of households in Romania, almost three quarters, namely 72.4%, have access at home to the Internet network, up 3.8 percent more than the previous year. Thus, in 2018, almost three quarters of the households in Romania (72.4%) have access at home to the Internet network, 62.9% of them being located in the urban environment. In territorial profile, the Internet connection was more widespread within the households in the Bucharest-Ilfov region (8 out of 9 households have access at home to the Internet), followed by the West and North-West regions. The lowest weights are registered by the North-East (65.1%) and South-East regions (65.2%).

The types of connection used to access the Internet at home are 82.1% fixed broadband connections (fixed broadband connections), followed by long distance mobile broadband connections (57.3%) and narrowband connections (12.5%). The percentage of people using the Internet decreases as they get older. Thus, the share of people using the internet in the age group 16-34 years was 94.7% while for the age group between 55 and 74 years it was only 53,8 %<sup>24</sup>.

*As evidence that the mentality of the Romanians has changed over time and that some of these services are proving to be (at least partly) functional, we have other data obtained from the website of the Romanian Association of Electronic Payments according to which the online payment by card of taxes and duties through the platform Ghiseul.ro registered record increases in the first three months of 2017 - over 144,000 transactions, increasing by 215% compared to the same period of 2016, the value of the transactions amounting to almost 47 million lei, increasing by 258%<sup>25</sup>.*

Another similar service is the creation of virtual private spaces. Spaces of this type can be found on the servers of the Ministry of Public Finance or ANAF and through them ANAF manages to establish the electronic communication of information and records with the natural persons, in connection with their own fiscal situation. "According to the Emergency Ordinance no. 40/2014 for the amendment and completion of some normative acts, as well as for the regulation of some fiscal measures in order to eliminate the administrative barriers, the fiscal body was given permission to transmit, including in electronic format, at the request of public authorities, the documents regarding the fiscal situation of a taxpayer. Thus, based on the Order of the Minister of Public Finance regarding the communication procedure between ANAF and the natural persons, by electronic means of remote transmission, the natural persons can opt for the communication by electronic means of remote transmission of the fiscal administrative documents issued in electronic form by the fiscal bodies from the National Agency for Fiscal Administration, by accessing the service "Virtual private space".<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>25</sup> The Government Decision no. 1235 of December 6, 2010 regarding the approval of the implementation of the national electronic system of online payment by card of taxes and duties approved the creation of the virtual payment counter, called "The national electronic system of online payment of taxes and duties using the bank card" (SNEP), as part of the National Electronic System (SEN). Thus, the partnership between the Agency for the Digital Agenda of Romania (AADR) and the Association of Electronic Parts in Romania (APERRO) is an example of a good collaboration between the public and the private environment, through which the first fully online system for tax payments was made available to taxpayers. and taxes with national coverage..

<sup>26</sup> For more details see [www.staticanaf.ro](http://www.staticanaf.ro), accessed on 6. 09. 2019, time 10, 25.

An additional step in the process of a functional e-government in Romania is also the facility to obtain certificates of urbanism online<sup>27</sup>, the City Hall from Cluj-Napoca being among the first to initiate a digitalization of its activity in this regard. The process itself is conditioned by the prior obtaining of an electronic signature, by the submission of the necessary documentation in the online version and by the payment of the related tax of this service (with the possibility that this can also be done online).

Starting with 2. 04. 2018, a new Electronic Public Procurement System developed within the project *Collaborative Information System for Public Procurement - SICAP*, whose advantages have been described by the Agency for the Romanian Digital Agenda in its Information regarding the launch of the new Electronic Public Procurement System. These include: intuitive and user-friendly interface since registration in the system; how to automatically activate payments for services offered to economic operators; integration with key institutions in the field of public procurement or multiple uploading of documents directly at the level of the award procedure.<sup>28</sup>

*As a latest novelty in the field of e-governance, we mention the publishing in the Official Gazette of Romania, part I, no. 726 of September 4, 2019, of the Decision no. 610/2019 regarding the approval of the Background Note on the necessity and the opportunity to carry out the expenses related to the investment project "Consolidated and interoperable integrated electronic system of NTRO destined to e-government services centred on life events" (NTRO V2.0)". The project referred to in the Background Note – Consolidated and interoperable integrated electronic system of NTRO destined to e-government services centered on life events (ONRC V2.0) –SMIS code 123634. ONRC V2.0 represents a version that is faster, safer and more technically operable. The implementation of the new version aims to reduce the bureaucratic elements, the time allocated to the registration process in the trade register and to support the professionals. Moreover, the procedures for setting up a company have been and are being successively modified, and NTRO is trying to keep up with the new regulations and manages to provide the professionals with adequate means to perform the administrative procedures associated with the registration process.*

The direct beneficiaries of the project are: "the business environment (G2B - Government to Business); citizens (G2C - Government to Citizen); public administration (G2G - Government to Government); NTRO employees who will use front and back office systems. The indirect beneficiaries of the project are the following: public administration (A2A - Administration to Administration); employees of companies"<sup>29</sup>.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

As one may easily notice, our study has endeavored to take a brief look at how computerization and technology can support both the citizen and national administrations, at the same time, in various European states.

E-government aims to be a solution for problems that have, in time, endangered the progress of the European administrations, with a predilection for the local ones, which

<sup>27</sup> The procedure may be seen on <https://edirect.e-guvernare.ro>, accessed on 6.09.2019., time 11, 30.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www1.e-licitatie.ro/Public/Static/ro/Comunicare.pdf>, accessed on 6.09.2019, time 11, 45.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.juridice.ro>, accessed on 7.09.2019, time 13, 45.

are facing even after the appearance of the digitalisation phenomenon, with numerous impediments.

Thus, the current Romanian e-governance cannot have the desired efficiency because:

- although most citizens have access to the Internet (theoretically speaking), many elderly people refuse or do not know how to access it;
- the same elderly people do not have an e-mail address, which will prevent them in the future, for example, from being able to have virtual private space or use the ghiseul.ro application, mentioned by us in this article;
- blocking access to certain sites containing typified statements, at certain times, due to heavy traffic or technical problems, would more than often lead to the impossibility of submitting such declarations (the single declaration, for example), within the deadline set by law;
- the information existing on various websites managed by the authorities or decentralized structures with electronic communications platforms (SNEP) is not always very well correlated and these non-correlations practically oblige the citizen to resume the difficult task at the offices of the administration, a fact that the creation of these platforms aimed to avoid in the first place.

As the studies of the European Commission cited above also reveal, not only the Romanian administration faces such problems, some of them being generally valid or often encountered, regardless of the level of development of the respective state: Internet access, blocking of useful sites at certain intervals, lack of communication or lack of availability of authorities to inform the citizen about the usefulness of such platforms or, the lack of availability to help them become familiar with them. Thus, we commend the good intention of some administrations to offer such advice or even effective support in the creation of SPV in Romania, for example, or even the decent and friendly conduct of some officials from the offices, who, without having this duty in the job description, had the availability to help elderly people in solving some issues related to the electronic payment of taxes or in the electronic filing of declarations.

Starting from the practical examples personally identified, we conclude that it would be useful for Romania to allow the operation for at least 2 years from now of small specialized IT departments at the headquarters of public institutions or authorities that require the ordinary citizen to use such platforms and the completion of standard declarations which are sometimes difficult to be downloaded or completed by anyone. In this way, much time would be lost in vain, and the administration would show more openness and especially speed, values pursued by all European states in e-government projects until 2020.

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