

# E-government: on-line services for citizens and business

Government



Traditionally, the interaction between a citizen or business and a government agency took place in a government office. With emerging information and communication technologies it is possible to locate service centers closer to the clients. Such centers may consist of an unattended kiosk in the government agency, a service kiosk located close to the client, or the use of a personal computer in the home or office.

Since mid-1990s governments around the world have been executing major initiatives in order to tap the vast potential of the Internet for distinct purpose of improving and perfecting the government process. Like the personal computer, the internet has become an indispensable tool in the day-to-day administration of government.

E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions.

E-Government is the birth of a new market and the advent of a new form of government - a form of a government that is powerful force in the Internet economy, bringing together citizens and businesses in a network of information, knowledge, and commerce. It also enables government to be

more transparent to citizens and businesses by providing access to more of the information generated by government.

### Applications of E-Government

Analogous to e-commerce, which allows businesses to transact with each other more efficiently (B2B) and brings customers closer to businesses (B2C), e-government aims to make the interaction between government and citizens (G2C), government and business enterprises (G2B), and inter-agency relationships (G2G) more friendly, convenient, transparent, and inexpensive.

### Government-to-Citizens

The Government-to-Citizens is by far the most widespread. The basic idea is to allow citizens to interact with the government from their homes. They can go online to retrieve information and conduct online transactions such as paying taxes, renewing drive's licenses, voting. Government disseminate information on the Web, conduct training, help in finding employment and others. Government agencies all over the world are planning more and more e-services.

### Government-to-Business and Business-to-Government

The heart of this relationship is the classic electronic procurement whereby a government agency orders materials online from vendors anywhere in the world. Businesses can also interact with Government by establishing accounts which will allow a business to register via the Internet and pay taxes online. Portals also serve as a source of information for companies.

## Government-to-Government

Government-to-Government services are designed to increase the efficient flow of information between government institutions (i. e. national and regional bodies, different local bodies, etc.). In addition, G2G may include information exchange between government bodies of different nations (e. g. international police/immigration information exchange). These services may utilize some of the components of G2C and G2B services but generally require more direct access to databases and applications.

## Government-to-Employees

By using an Intranet, information on various human resource issues, retirement, news releases and other employee-related applications can be made easy available in a timely manner. Apart from having access to this information, employees can also update their personal information online and fill out and send forms electronically. This is also a highly effective manner to provide e-learning and knowledge management.

## Stages of E-Government

While e-government utilizes all forms of information and communication technologies, it is the Internet and the world-wide-web which are primarily used to deliver information and services. Therefore, a government's web presence and the type of services provided are used to determine the different stages of e-government. The ultimate goal is for " citizen-centric" sites which allow " seamless" interaction, but governments can establish a presence of varying degrees. The different stages are as follows:

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## Global Leaders in E-Government

There are several key factors that define the core areas of an enabling e-government environment. Yet because the visions, goals and policies that encompass e-government vary considerably among practitioners and users, comparative indicators may not always be precise. We must consider also the fact that despite the pattern of continuous growth in internet usage it is too early to anticipate with confidence what percentage of a country's population will completely accept e-government and make it a regular part of their lives.

Several proven indicators, however, do exist that are representative of a country's capacity to launch, sustain, perfect and promote an effective e-government program - a country's e-gov environment - and can be used as dependable benchmark.

Telecommunication indicators like pc's, internet hosts, and telephone lines are indispensable, as without these requisite technologies, a country's capacity to sustain online service delivery is nonexistent. Analyzing website content, access pattern, online services and official information, give only a partial account of a countries overall e-gov environment.

The E-Government Index attempts to emphasize and balance the conditions that are most representative of a country's capacity to develop, sustain and provide unimpeded access to timely, useful and relevant information and services for every segment of its population.

Three distinctive measures consisting of primary indicators were developed:

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- \* Web presence measure captures country's online stage of development.
- \* Telecommunication infrastructure measure compares six primary indicators (PCs per 100 individuals, Internet hosts per 10, 000 individuals, percentage of the nation's population online, telephone lines per 100 individuals, mobile phones per 100 individuals, televisions per 100 individuals).
- \* Human capital measure attempts to capture a country's, and citizens' facility, opportunity and willingness to use online government.

As a result a chart of leading countries in E-Government can be produced:

## Conclusion

The contribution has drawn on results from various benchmarking studies allowing for international comparisons of the progress in e-government, with a focus on EU-Europe. It has been shown that implementation is a long and demanding process, that political targets seem to be over-ambitious and even in countries which are most progressed in e-government, real service improvements for citizens and businesses are still limited in reach. Despite the many initiatives and a number of outstanding advances it will take considerable time to come to terms with existing organizational, social and regulatory challenges. It will certainly take longer than expected by most political targets until electronic interaction in all contacts with public administrations will become a routine matter for the great majority of the population.