

Development of Mechanisms of Electronic Participation on the Local Self-Government Web-Sites

David Zautashvili¹, Nodar Chanturia²
Akaki Tsereteli State University, Kutaisi, Georgia
¹zautashvili@hotmail.com, ²lazi@rambler.ru

Abstract— There are considered in a given article the forms of interaction of Electronic Government with different civil society actors. There is given a review of one of the areas of Electronic Government concept – Electronic Participation as well as the existing feedback mechanisms within the framework of electronic participation. There is analyzed the level of the development of Electronic Participation and results of investigating the feedback completeness of the local-self-government web-sites in the Imereti region of Georgia.

Keywords— *e-government; e-participation; e-local self government; feedback*

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the governments all over the world began to intensively use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with a view to increasing the efficiency and improving the quality of their services. These initiatives and programs were called the Electronic Government (E-Government).

According to definition developed by Gartner Group Company the Electronic Government is described as "E-government is the continuous optimization of service delivery, constituency participation and governance by transforming internal and external relationships through technology, the Internet and new media" [1].

At present, there grows understanding of fact that the electronic government means not only application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in exercising the functions of state structures, but it is a matter of reorganization of activity of the State on the basis of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that leads us to the new degree of public administration as well as to the development of new forms of democracy.

An importance of the Electronic Government in the development of modern society conditions special attention to it from the States, international organizations, scientific and analytical centers.

The Electronic Government is an area in which research in recent years is very active. Special attention is paid to studies of one of the one of the areas of electronic government concept – electronic participation and the existing feedback mechanisms within the framework of

electronic participation, since an active involvement of interested parties in the process of developing and realization of state decisions is one of the critical goals of Electronic Government.

II. THE FORMS OF INTERACTION OF ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT WITH DIFFERENT CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

It is expected that the creation of Electronic Government will increase effectiveness of executive functions of the State (especially with respect to provision of state services), it will make government more transparent and accountable to citizens and business sector, change the relations between the State and citizens at the expense of substantial changes in the level of democracy.

Functionally, the activities of Electronic Government can be divided into three components: government to government (providing the services by state structure to other administrative agencies); government to citizens (provision of state services to the population); government to business (provision of state services to business sector). There are accepted now the following abbreviations of these components: G2G (government to government); G2C (government to citizens); G2B (government to business).

Recently, the new forms (such as Non-Governmental Organizations, science, technology) have been added by scientists to three classical forms of interaction.

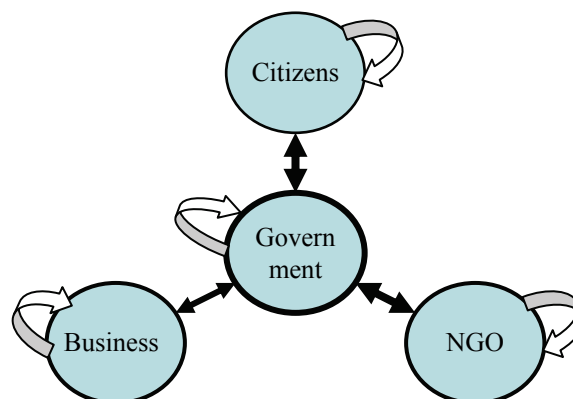


Figure 1. Basic Forms of Interaction of Electronic Government with Different Civil Society Actors

In our opinion the most optimal approach which represents four forms of interaction, such as G2G, G2C, G2B and G2N.

G2N is aimed at forging a link between the State and Non-Governmental Organizations in decision-making processes. This form of interaction is especially important in one of the areas of Electronic Government concept, such as Electronic Participation.

Thus and so, Electronic Government envisages a step-by-step transformation of the order of interaction and relationships between the State and society, the most important stage of which is organization of the access of citizens to information on bodies of power and their activities, as well as an active involvement of the interested parties an active involvement of interested parties in the process of developing and realization of state decisions.

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEEDBACK TOOLS ON THE LOCAL –SELF-GOVERNMENT WEB-SITES IN THE IMERETI REGION OF GEORGIA

Promotion of democracy and creation of the new forms dialogue government with citizens or the development of public participation in state decision-making process based on the application of ICT was called "eParticipation".

Electronic participation means the use of ICT for the involvement of various groups of citizens in public policy and developing the new forms of interaction with power bodies. Electronic participation means two-way communications between citizens (business sector, expert community, civil society as a whole) and representatives of governmental authorities of all levels of competences.

The significance of the realization of eParticipation schemes is characterized by two sides: the first is that during the designing of web-sites of bodies of power there necessarily have to be created the simple and available to users (citizens, associations, business-structures and establishments) eParticipation tools; the second side is stipulated by civil activity degree of individuals in terms of the use of these tools and by fact that how is organized feedback from them during the developing and making significant social an economic decisions.

Feedback is a process of obtaining of comments and views of different groups of citizens on particular actions, situations, outstanding issues by bodies of state power, and on the other hand, transmission of information to citizens from state structures.

The effective feedback mechanisms on the Electronic Government web-sites ensure the e-participation of citizens and organizations in making significant decisions by one or another establishment, as well as a readiness for adequate response to the requirements of citizens, businessmen and establishments. The well-organized feedback mechanisms considerably facilitate a process of obtaining significant information by citizens, enable the bodies of power to analyze views of different groups of citizens, as well as they ensure the real participation of citizens in decisions making

by bodies of power and civilian control over activities of government agencies.

The DEMO-net organization examines the following 11 mechanisms of feedback realization, which are currently used on the Electronic Government state web-sites in European Union member countries and USA:

1. Information provision
2. Community building
3. Consultation
4. Campaigning
5. Electioneering
6. Deliberation
7. Discourse
8. Mediation
9. Spatial planning
10. Polling
11. Voting [2].

The feedback mechanisms on the web-sites of European Union are more evenly developing and they are oriented not only to presentation of information, but to public involvement in dialogue, team decision-making and to feedback development. The dominant tools on the web-sites of European Union are as follows: Information provision – 44%; Deliberation -30%; consultations – 28%; discourse – 16% [3].

We have studied 12 municipal web-sites of local self-government in the Imereti region.

It was established that only the following 4 out of 11 feedback tools are used in local self-government of the Imereti region: Information provision, Deliberation, Polling, Spatial planning. There is shown in Figure 2 quantitative distribution of tools by the web-sites.

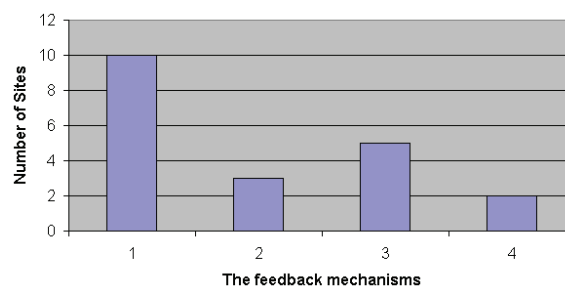


Figure 2. Quantitative Distribution of Feedback Tools

Unfortunately, such most efficient mechanisms of eParticipation as Community building, Campaigning, Electioneering, Discourse, Mediation, Voting are not practically used on the Electronic Government web-sites.

At present, it is possible to state that on the local self-government web-sites in the Imereti region prevails just the mechanism of presentation of information to citizens.

IV. CONCLUSION

In Georgia, there is started the first stage of the introduction of Information Society technologies into the sphere of functioning of power structures and construction of Electronic Government. Over the years, serious work was undertaken for creation of governmental information portals and placing them on the Internet, almost all governing institutions and considerable part of local authorities have designed their own Internet web-sites. This fact is testified by the report "United Nations E-Government Survey 2012 E-Government for the People", wherein Georgia is

considered to be on the 72nd place among 190 countries around the world. According to previous report Georgia was considered just on the 100th place [4].

However, so far there is no basis for the assertion that presentation of information on the Georgian Internet web-sites of local-self government can have a considerable influence on functioning of power structures and that with the aid of these technologies it is possible to ensure effective interaction of authority, population, business-sector and non-governmental organizations. There are presented on the existing municipal web-sites of Georgia small quantity of special tools and opportunities for the involvement of citizens in discussions and making decisions by local authority. This is explained by following reasons:

1. Low educational level of representatives of local authority, non-governmental organizations, mass media and population in the issues of Electronic government;
2. Poorly developed legislation in the field of Information and Communication Technology at the local level;
3. Mainly, the existing Electronic Governments at the local level only present information, i.e. in terms of interactivity of online services they are just at the informational level.
4. Low level of social readiness of population for the use of electronic services and for new methods of interaction with power.

5. On the majority of Electronic Government web-sites there are realized only a few number out of the total set of various tools of eParticipation and feedback mechanisms.

The success of the development of Electronic Government is conditioned by joint efforts of government authorities and interested parties such as: citizens, business-sector, public groups and civil organizations. There is needed a gradual transition from apprehending of citizens as the users of information to the model, which proposes an active participation of citizens and interested parties within the framework of Electronic Participation.

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