E-governance and its application in area the of programming public expenditures: the case for the Czech Republic and Slovakia

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1. Introduction

The main features of modern "European Administration” are defined by the important document “European governance: a White Paper” (European Commission, 2001), as openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. The contents of the “White Paper” represent current trends of changing from government to governance, or further to “public leadership” (Bouckaert, 2002), representing the next step in public administration systems reforms where all stake-holders benefit from mutual co-operation.

Modern governments must use a large range of tools and instruments to achieve the necessary quality level of governance, and shall utilize all suitable new technologies in the delivery of any type of governmental services. E-government/governance represents one such important emerging tool, with increasing importance during last ten years, when the use of the internet took on its worldwide character.

E-government/governance is ready to support better achievement than any of the main modern governance characteristics. In our paper we want to focus just one dimension of this relationship – the impact of e-government/governance on the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure.

Public expenditure programs spend between 30 and 60% of GDP in developed countries. Because public money/taxpayer's money is used, the principle should be that any expenditure program and any expenditure item is realized in an environment where openness, transparency and publicity principles dominate. Ex-ante, during the process, and ex-post information about the processes and outcomes shall be available to anybody interested.

In the first part of our paper we investigate the potential of e-government/governance concerning the improvement of processes of preparing, awarding, realizing and evaluating public expenditure programs. The main areas are ex-ante audit of intended public expenditures, selection and/or similar decision making processes, and processes of ex-post, performance based audits of finished expenditure activities.

The second part of the paper focuses on evaluating the current level of use of e-government/governance tools in two CEE countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, with the main focus on the Czech Republic.

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1 This paper is based on original research for the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic, project No 402/03/1221.
2. E-government/governance

Over the last few years, it has become evident that information – inevitably linked with Information Technology (IT) - has become of critical importance for the success of any organization, including the public sector system. New technologies (personal computers, the internet, mobile phones) are fundamentally changing our everyday lives. With the growing complexity of IT solutions and information systems which all functions of modern organizations vitally depend on, with growing investments in this field which are becoming a heavy burden even for very rich organizations, and with a tremendously rapid development of technology offering new solutions to business problems, these issues are entering the everyday agenda of top managers.

As an outcome of such processes on the level of the public sector, a popular new expression – e-government/governance – was coined. E-government simply means modern government that performs all its functions and provides all its services through intensive use of electronic means for information processing, computers, networks, the internet, etc. Electronic means are only not used for internal information processing and communication within governmental agencies but also for communication with other agencies, citizens and businesses (Vintar, 2002).

E-government/governance means that government is taking advantage of the new technology development to provide people with better government services. The basic aims of e-government/governance are to improve the ability of all people to participate in democracy and to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of all kinds of government services.

E-government/governance can be directly linked to the main dimensions of “good governance” (Leitner, 2003), especially:

- Coherency of policy making: it supports better quality co-ordination of policy making both on the horizontal and vertical levels;
- Participatory democracy: it supports more active participation of all players in policy making processes;
- Consistency, efficiency and effectiveness of policy implementation: it supports co-operation and networking in policy implementation phase, makes them faster, simpler and more cost-effective; and
- Transparency and openness of political processes: it provides general access to information at very low cost.

As indicated by some research, e-government/governance may play a crucial role also in connection with limiting corruptive behavior in the society and the government. Choi (2004) tested the following (as well as other) hypotheses:

1. The greater the degree of e-government, the lower the level of corruption in the country.
2. The more developed a country’s ITC infrastructure is, the lower the level of corruption will be.
3. The greater the transparency through e-government is, the lower the level of corruption in the country will be.
4. The higher the accountability through e-government is, the lower the level of corruption in the country will be.
5. The greater the empowerment through e-government is, the lower the level of corruption in the country will be.

The most important correlation has been found for the first hypothesis; data shows that the level of e-government has a greater impact on corruption than any other variable (variables like the level of economic development of the country, the size of government and the scope
of government regulation). Hypotheses 2-5 were also statistically significant. Such findings serve to confirm that e-government/governance is one of the key tools in building new modern governance systems.

According to the Green Paper (1998), we can distinguish governmental e-services by the three main functions they serve:

1. Information services to retrieve sorted and classified information on demand (e.g., WWW);
2. Communication services to interact with individuals (private or corporate) or groups of people (e.g., e-mail or discussion forums); and
3. Transaction services to acquire products or services online or to submit data (e.g., government forms, voting).

Taking into the account the main dimensions mentioned, we suppose that e-government/governance will be able to improve the quality of governance by for example:

1. Making it easier for people to have a say in government (e.g., to register a motor car or a new company from his/her home every day of the week is more flexible, accessible and faster);
2. Providing integrated services (because of the fact that different governmental organizations will communicate more effectively with each other). (E.g., after an accident, it may be necessary to contact several different governmental organizations – a hospital, the fire department and the police. Due to the modern ways of sharing information and integrating their services, only one call will be necessary),
3. Better information services relative to government law, regulations, and policies. (E.g., to fill in a tax form online will be more convenient due to implementation of cross over check points, quotations of possible inputs and validation of formal requirements).

However, it is necessary to stress that e-government/governance, similar to any other public governance tool, is not just one-dimensional; it does not just have a positive character. Certain important fears are connected with introducing it that modern government should cope with:

1. Citizens can be very quickly divided into 2 groups, one with the ability to use e-government, the second group without. There seems to be only two remedies for this threat – community access to the internet and improving the ability of citizens to use new IT technologies. Community access to the internet (in libraries, offices, etc.) for people who are not able access the internet from their homes, and focus on public information programs and educational programs in using the new technologies should be the priority for the e-government policy2;
2. There is a fear of the “Big brother is watching you” phenomena; this means that the government can know too much about the people and use the information in not appropriate way. To face this problem it will be necessary to review and strengthen all legislative measures designed to protect privacy (for some skeptical remarks see, e.g., Kumar A., 2002); and
3. Sometimes is it noticed that government will have to rise to the challenge of e-government methods being far too impersonal. The authors of this paper strike

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2 The National Computer Literacy Program launched in February 2003 is aimed at giving the public at large (i.e., people who may not have had any previous experience with computers) the possibility of learning the basics of computer literacy, including the use of the internet. This project met with extraordinary acclaim. In the first two months more than 10,000 candidates enrolled for courses and more than 210 regional training centers were set up (mostly in schools).
back because there will still remain many situations for which dealing with the human officer will be not expendable.

The current scale of use of e-government/governance

In this section, we utilize the results of a representative international study completed by Taylor Nelson Sofres Interactive in November 2003. The basic method of collecting information was the questionnaire which was used in 32 countries from around the world. The regional insight revealed an interesting finding: it is now evident that the top users of e-Government are Scandinavian countries (see Chart 1). A possible explanation for this is the significant increase of broadband in this region and it also seems that the internet has matured to the level where many people use it as their primary source of information; the growth of e-Government is self-evident then.

Regions of the Americas and of Western Europe have for a long time been above the average (except Great Britain and the possible reason here is that there is much to do to convince the citizens of the benefit of e-Government and online access – Brits still prefer other delivery channels such as the telephone or face to face communication). The Czech Republic is a leader in using e-Government among the transition countries. Internet penetration in companies has reached over 90% and we suppose it could be the reason for such high e-Government usage (there is no doubt that people use the internet in companies for personal use also). Poland with 6% penetration is far under the global average, but does not leave the line of other transition countries.

![Chart 1 Percentage of population who used e-government in 2002/2003](image)


The authors identified 5 basic groups of e-Government users within the last decade - Transactors, Providers, Consulters, Downloaders and Information Seekers. This approach allows one to create and measure development trends (Table 1) for individual groups as defined bellow:

- Non users – have not used the internet to get or provide information or transact with Government;
• Transactors – used the internet to pay for government products or services through the use of a credit card or bank account (e.g., rates, driving license, recycle bins, traffic fines);
• Providers – used the internet to provide personal/household information to the government;
• Downloaders - used the internet to print government forms that were then sent by post or fax (e.g., tax form to claim government rebates);
• Information seekers – have used the internet to get information from a government website; and
• Consulters – used the internet to express a point of view or to participate in community consultations with the government.

Table 1: Change in the users of e-government between the years 2002 and 2003 (in percentage points)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Increase (+), Decrease (-)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transactors</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulters</td>
<td>No significant change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downloaders</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Seekers</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non GO Users</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 describes changes in involvement of different kinds of e-government users. The number of users from all groups (except Consulters) is on the increase. This indicates two trends:
- On one hand, e-government is going to become an integral part of e-business without exception; and
- On the other hand, rates of increasing participation of citizens in democratic processes do not grow significantly, limiting this aspect of e-government/governance potential (see also Chart 2).

Chart 2: The users of e-government in 2003

Source: Government online, an international perspective 2003, global summary. TNS Study. November 2003
A bit different results arise from a similar study for North America (the US and Canada). There is stable penetration of Downloaders and a rapid decrease in Providers. We have no explanation for this development. We did not uncover any relationships between the perception of e-government online safety and the penetration of Providers (this group should be the most sensitive).

Table 2: E-government changes from 2001 to 2003 (North America)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>1507</td>
<td>1501</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactors</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulters</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Seekers</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non GO Users</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Some other general trends results from Table 3. The demographic pattern (55 percent penetration for users below 20 years of age) indicates an increasing trend for the future.

Table 3: E-government penetration and demographic pattern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic parameter</th>
<th>Penetration in % of adult population (2002)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet User</td>
<td>22 26 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Internet User</td>
<td>78 74 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>55 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 29</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 – 59</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 +</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3. The potential of E-government/governance in the area of public expenditure

As already indicated above, e-government/governance has an important link to the level of efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditures. Web based applications (the ones we focus on) can be used in all phases of processes of allocation and use of public expenditures. We may find at least the following areas where e-government/governance may play a significant role:
• Allocation of public funds (including ex-ante audit and programming of public expenditures);
• Realization processes of public expenditures (mainly public procurement); and
• Auditing and control of public expenditures (mainly interim audit of awarded programs, and ex-post, performance-based audits of realized programs).

Though this phase may still be underestimated, e-government/governance may already play a very important role in public policy making processes that are the main base of any public expenditure decision. In this phase, information and communication functions of e-government/governance are the key factors to allocating limited public resources effectively.

According to standard economic theory (Haveman and Margolis, 1970) and also according to the “good practice” policies of many international organizations (EU financial control rules), ex-ante audits of any public expenditure decision shall be a compulsory part of governmental activities, focusing on the 3E dimensions – economy, efficiency and effectiveness (in some cases dimensions like outcomes, impacts, internal rate of return and many others are included, too).

In the past, such processes were normally an internal issue of respective responsible organization. Today, the internet provides many possibilities to improve processes of ex-ante auditing by involving all (or at least most) of the stakeholders whose views should be taken into account.

The change from incremental subjective budgeting to program budgeting (Wright and Nemec, 2003) represents another important dimension and perspective for e-government/governance. Programs are not only prepared on the basis of communication with all stakeholders, but they should be publicly and transparently announced to all interested parties. A web based application can be tailored to fit the needs of any kind of public expenditure program and its budget, provided that there will be a central point (for example, a government portal) to reduce the cost of searching the WEB for any stakeholder.

The role of e-government in public procurement processes is already fully recognized in all developed, but also many developing, countries. Publishing new tenders on net is efficient as the number of internet users increases and the unit costs of publication decrease. Publishing tenders and all other procurement documentation via the internet increases transparency and improves the chance to obtain “best value” for public money. Today, the internet is used to support all phases of procurement processes; in some cases, it even represents the core base for realization of certain procurement processes (for example in Romania, e-procurement is the standard and the only tool to procure certain items in defined branches of government).

The role and impact of e-government in the ex-post phase of realizing public expenditure programs shall also not be underestimated. Publishing reports and findings via the internet (centrally or in a decentralized way) is not only a tool for transparency and openness, but it supports the level of accountability, and serves as a learning tool as well.

4. The level of use of E-government/governance in the Czech Republic

In this section, we only analyze the Czech Republic (taking into account space constraints), and it is the most highly developed country from this point of view.
The Czech government realizes the importance of e-Government. We can cite the government document (E-Government and Other Projects, online www.mfcr.cz): “The E-Government project in the Czech Republic is aimed at providing citizens and economic entities with the opportunity for swift and straightforward electronic communication with the state authorities, thereby increasing the transparency of public authority, while reducing the cost of public administration. Within the framework of developing an information society, the project will also involve legislative support of electronic public administration and e-commerce. The government has approved a White Paper on E-Commerce as the basic document for the promotion of electronic trade.”

In this section, furthermore, we would like to specifically mention “community portals” which will play a major role in public participation in government. The emphasis is on making the right information available at the right time. The common tools to enable communication between a citizen and the government are what are called “community portals.”

The most often visited community portal in the Czech Republic is the web page of Ministry of Finance (www.mfcr.cz) with 11000 hits per day. The second is the official webpage of the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic (www.mvcr.cz) with 4500 hits. The third is the website of the Czech Statistical Office and the Public Administration Portal of the Czech Republic. In following text we introduce two portals including their structure, impact and limits.

The Public Administration Portal

Let us start with the Public Administration Portal administered by the Ministry of Informatics. The vision of the Ministry of Informatics is as follows “…the ‘Public Administration Portal’ project, which was launched in August 2003, is aimed at creating a single portal that would offer remote access to information about the services of various public administration institutions to both citizens and legal entities. The information section of this portal will contain information about official procedures that apply to various situations in people's lives. The portal also offers free information about the Land Registry, as well as the full text versions of Czech and EC legal regulations.” (Vision of Public Administration Portal, online http://portal.gov.cz)

The transaction section of the portal enables users to sort out certain matters (in particular tax returns and matters lying within the competence of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs) directly via remote access and relying on electronic signatures.

It should be “the electronic gateway for the public to administration and government services in the Czech Republic.” (Quote comes from the “Welcome” page of the Public Administration portal (http://portal.gov.cz/wps/en/en.html). The aim of this portal is to provide help for citizens in finding information and communicating with public administrative authorities. The services currently offered by the Portal are based on 3 mutually interconnected databases:

- Legislation (enables searches for up-to-date versions of the laws of the Czech Republic, including EU directives and regulations);
- Contact list for public administrative authorities (is present, but not too accessible because of a bad navigation tool bar); and
- Do it online - transactional services.

Unfortunately, the pages seem to be a bit confusing. The scope of interest is too wide and the structure of the web page is too deep. Authors of the web did not follow the recommendation of the guru of web design usability (www.useit.com) “to be flat and clear”
(understood to mean building low level websites with clear links) and it is the main reason the portal is “only” third. Today it is not the gateway for e-government for ordinary user access directly to specialized parts of e-government (especially the Ministry of Finance). This is a pity because the Ministry of Finance portal is not able to offer such a wide range of services as to serve as a real “gateway.” The “gateway” should deliver links to the different areas of e-government and provide comprehensive guidelines to the e-government services. Authors of this paper suppose there is still much to do.

**Portal of Ministry of Finance**

As mentioned above, the most frequently visited website from “community portals” has for some time now been the website of the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic. It looks plain and more tabular than the Public Administration portal. When using a Front Page based application for measurement of download speed, we determined that this site is twice as fast as the other websites.

Online services on this site are wide-ranging, but we concentrate on the ones concerning public finance – taxes. The website of MF CR provides users with online assistance and delivery of tax returns. All kinds of taxes are ready for online processing such as personal income tax, corporate income tax, VAT, excise duties, inheritance and gift tax, and real estate transfer taxes. An authorized web based application is able to validate basic form criteria and does not allow the user to process an incomplete tax return (or other tax form). An appropriate reference guide follows every step of the process and the user is given some feedback each time. It is possible to send a request for help to the public authority (appropriate tax administrator). All tax rates and allowances are updated so it is not necessary for the taxpayer to study all amendments in the law.

There are some studies (Vitkova. 2002 and 2003, Sandorf, 2001) that calculate the administrative costs of taxation with respect to economies from online reporting. We follow the results of recent research in the Czech Republic (Vitkova, 2002) and calculate the extent of economies. The time saving aspect for the tax administrator is calculated to be about 70 % (transcription, validation and comparison of inputs with other public authorities such as the Czech social security administration) and for the taxpayer about 30 % (sample size of 154 taxpayers). The savings mentioned above are increased by new amendments of the Accounting Law - allowance to store all accounting and law records in an electronic form.

**Table 4: Storage costs of tax and accounting reports (in mil. Czech crowns)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole tax system</th>
<th>Personal income tax</th>
<th>Corporate income tax</th>
<th>VAT</th>
<th>Road tax</th>
<th>Transfer tax</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storage costs</td>
<td>28097</td>
<td>6612</td>
<td>6220</td>
<td>12148</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other costs</td>
<td>148376</td>
<td>5884</td>
<td>103531</td>
<td>34050</td>
<td>3608</td>
<td>1303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings for taxpayer (30% of storage costs)</td>
<td>8429,1</td>
<td>1983,6</td>
<td>1866</td>
<td>3644,4</td>
<td>586,5</td>
<td>348,6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vitkova, 2002

We assume a very low additional cost of buying hardware and software due to present saturation (PCs and appropriate software are already commonly used). The largest e-government economies are calculated for personal income tax, VAT and transfer and road
taxes. On the other hand, corporate income tax is not cost sensitive in e-government online processing.

There is a drawback of online processing: the problem of authorization of electronic documents. Electronic signatures might have been the best tool to overcome this obstacle but it failed. Only very few taxpayers have the certification to use their own electronic signature in the Czech Republic. The main reasons are assumed to be price (30 EURO per year), incompatible laws and the suspicious tendencies of taxpayers. That is why most online taxpayers prefer using online applications for tax returns and then print the form and send it through the mail). The full potential of e-government is not yet utilized. A substitute solution for the absence of electronic signatures is using special web based applications (e.g., www.podatelny.cz), but the number of application forms is still limited.

5. E-government/governance and public expenditures management in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

In part four, we indicated the most important areas where e-government/governance may help to improve processes of preparation, implementation and evaluation of public expenditure programs. It is necessary to stress that in both selected countries, representing a part of the most developed CEE region (Slovakia and the Czech Republic joined the EU in 2004), e-government/governance is not comprehensively developed as of yet (some barriers have been already indicated above). Because of this fact, there is no chance to expect that it is already being used in an incomprehensive, intentional and systematic way to cover all mentioned phases of public expenditures management.

However, some first interesting attempts already exist which show the way ahead. In this part we provide two examples from two different areas – the use of the internet in processes of drawing resources from EU funds in the Czech Republic and the main aspects of electronic support to public procurement processes in Slovakia.

E-government and EU funds: The Czech Republic

The Czech Republic introduced the pilot project titled “Tenders for Funds from Structural EU funds.” The web based application consists of two basic parts:

- Identification of applicant; and
- Description of the proposed project, including a simple evaluation of the project.3

Identification of Applicant (Identifikace žadatele), Chart 3, is intuitive. It should be supported with database of for the demographic and economic situation in relevant regions (derived from the address); some structural projects are eligible only to applicants from "relatively poor" regions. By correctly completing the Address field automatically eliminates inadmissible structural sources (funds, operation programs, etc.).

3 There is one issue connected to this. The question is, if all the evaluation criterions shall be publicly known (before and within the process of application) to all applicants or not. The common practice in CR is that the criteria are not public and the decision of the administrator about whether the bid was accepted or not does not need to be justified. The process transparency decreases and the opportunity for inefficiency increases.
The second part of this web-based application is the Specification of Project (Specifikace projektu) – Chart 4. One very important part of project submission is to choose the right (appropriate) source (structural fund). The rolling menu is helpful for Applicant at this stage. There are names of individual financial sources and a brief description.

The choice of particular financial source will affect the number of projects and the level of “Own source/Requested sources” (Vlastní/Požadované zdroje). It is common that there is a different ratio for co-financed projects from different structural funds. The web application automatically reports insufficient own sources and the applicant is forced to adjust the estimates (see next picture).
The “Own source/Requested sources” point is not the only criterion for evaluation of project. The other can be the present value of project costs. This value is calculated by web based application and is dependent on chosen interest rate.

The web based application provides useful information for the applicant through the indication of a numerical order of his application amount and other applications for the same financial source. The applicant receives prompt feedback whether his application is competitive or not.

This is only a pilot project; it is one of the possible ways how to make the application for funds from the Structural Funds of the EU more accessible to applicants. The number of evaluation points and characteristics of the project can be wider and may be mutually connected (to meet formal and subject criteria). The number of incomplete or unsatisfactory applications can be reduced to minimum and indirect administrative costs will, thus, be significantly reduced.

On the other hand, direct administrative costs (costs on the side of the administrator) will be reduced as well. The output of web based applications will be directly saved to database and actualization can be prompt. The preparation and evaluation time for the project will be reduced and the efficiency of the process will increase.

It is clear that without e-certification (signature), however, it will be necessary to have a physical copy of a contract, but information processing will still be much more efficient using online communication.

Prompt publication of the results of evaluated projects seems to increase the transparency of the process and can provide useful feedback for subsequent applicants. The conditions for this are more than convenient. The government supports the participation of the Czech Republic in the IDA program (Interchange of Data between Administrations) as of January 1, 2003. This program focuses on the use of information and communication.
technologies for the support of swift and effective electronic exchange of information between the public administrations of individual EU Member States and EU authorities. Czech participation in this program can be perceived as one of the prerequisites for the connection of the Czech Republic to the information infrastructure of the EU.

**Electronic media and public procurement in Slovakia**

Compared to some other countries (US, Romania), there is no e-public procurement system in Slovakia as of yet. There are many reasons for this such as the non-existence of functional mechanisms to implement laws on electronic signatures or the fact that there are EU delays in preparation of new public procurement directives which are also expected to include sections on e-procurement.

However, the necessity and potential of the use of the internet in public procurement processes is already recognized in Slovakia, as expressed, for example, by the two following important documents:

- Government decree 389/2000 from November, 2000, on publishing of tender intentions, tenders, tender documentation and tender results using telecommunication media; and
- Transparency International “good practice” guidelines, showing all phases when information about the procurement process should be displayed to participants and to general public.

The Decree is the first official governmental document concerning the use of the internet in public procurement. It does not include any obligations, but at least provides conditions concerning publishing of most important procurement documents via the internet, and leaves free space for extra activities as decided on by respective bidders.

Transparency International Slovakia is really active in the public procurement area, as this is an area which is very corruption sensitive. TIS published several documents/guidelines (see literature) in 2001-2003 providing good-practice advice for public procurement processes. Respective documents provide a list of internet supported information that should be published to increase the transparency and effectiveness of public procurement in Slovakia (Table 5) at every and all levels of the public procurement system.

**Table 5 Transparency International Slovakia guidelines on publishing public procurement information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public procurement phase</th>
<th>Information to be published</th>
<th>Executive body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before the concrete process starts</td>
<td>Internal anti-corruption system</td>
<td>All procurement organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal Code of Ethics in Public Procurement</td>
<td>All procurement organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procurement program</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex-ante audits for major items</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrity Pact</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guidelines, forms, manuals</td>
<td>Public Procurement Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>List of qualified procurement officers</td>
<td>Public Procurement Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory Actions</td>
<td>Responsible Entities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issuing the list of qualified bidders</td>
<td>Public Procurement Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation of tender document, publishing of notices, pre-qualification</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information about the intent to sign an Integrity Pact</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preliminary notice</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tender notice</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Results of qualification</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Call for offers</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tender documentation</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>All communication (clarifications) with bidders</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>List of non-selected/non-qualified candidates, including clarification</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Minutes from opening of tenders</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Results of tender</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Minutes from tender evaluation (secret parts excluded)</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contract (if not impossible)</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minutes about any change in contract</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-post audit (internal)</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-post audit (external)</td>
<td>Auditing bodies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publishing of good and bad practice examples</td>
<td>Public Procurement Office</td>
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<td>National yearly procurement report</td>
<td>Public Procurement Office</td>
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<td>Yearly procurement reports</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complaints</td>
<td>Procurement entities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decisions of Public Procurement Office on complaints</td>
<td>Public Procurement Office</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cases, court decisions</td>
<td>Public Procurement Office</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Not surprisingly, the list included in Table 5 represents, at this moment, only a quality of standard that is not much followed by procurement bodies. Recent TIS research proved that, for example, state administration district offices in most cases in 2003 did not provide the above-mentioned information via their web pages; these bodies did not even create some important documents such as procurement plans/programs at all. However, the existence of such a list at least indicates that major changes in favor of electronic support of public procurement processes might be expected in Slovakia relatively soon.

5. Conclusions

E-government/governance importance steadily increases in all developed countries, as do many factors supporting quick development of this inevitable tool/mechanism of good governance. CEE countries started taking their first steps in the area of e-
government/governance during last few years following the massive increase of internet use in the late nineties.

However, current achievements (as clearly shown from examples of two selected countries, Slovakia and the Czech Republic) are still limited, and this is true even concerning the general use of the internet to fulfill three basic e-government/governance functions - information services, communication services and transaction services.

Taking into account this fact, it comes as no surprise that the really great potential of e-government/governance in the areas of effectiveness and efficiency for public expenditures is minimally used in CEE conditions and only a few non-related cases of good practices could be found.

Literature