

E-government Implementation in Lithuania

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Summary. E-government can be implemented just in information society (IS), however e-government implementation is a tool of information society development. The paper briefly describes e-government development in Lithuania, introduce the first steps of development process, review the assumptions of the implementation, analyze positive and negative sides of building e-government. Digital society develops or disturbs democracy, transparency, accountability and efficiency of public administration; promote or block e-business, society computerization and using of Internet.

INTRODUCTION

The Governments of the democratic states serve citizens, protect their interests, provide them with important information and ensure transparency, accountability and efficiency of public administration. E-government implementation precipitates and improves these functions. For the achieving this purpose Lithuanian government identified e-government implementation as one of political priorities

One step toward this purpose is development of e-government, which ensures democracy, promotion of e-business, society computerization and using of Internet. The connection between Information society and e-government is bilateral: e-government can be implemented just in information society, however e-government implementation is a tool of information society development. But for the first some problems need to be solved: competence of citizens and public administrators in using information technologies (IT); computerization of society and public sector (access points); e-service sufficient provision and many others. The close circle is formed – a relatively small number of users do not promote e-commerce and slow business does not produce more users. The projects of e-government should move the sickle; increase the demand and supply of e-services.

The process of e-government building is a complicated in Lithuania. It requires planning, recourses, political will, and new quality of public sector, administration and society capabilities to use e-government. That's why different states reached different development of e-government.

Three main assumptions for e-government can be separated in Lithuania:

- Information society development;
- Legal base and institutional environmental;
- Preparation of public sector.

At present, *one common definition* of e-government as well as information society *does not exist*. Some definitions focus on the technology, others emphasize service or competence of public administration. Usually the definitions point out that e-government is provider of public services in distance way. The strategy of Information society development defines e-government as Information infrastructure institute, which ensure convenient access and furnishes society with IT.(1)

1. THE PROCESS OF INFORMATION SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT IN LITHUANIA

Initially the development of Lithuanian information society was fragmented. However now the Government of Lithuania has identified the development of information society as one of the underlying priorities in the development of the country as it affects all crucial to our country policy sectors: economic, social, security and other policies.

The Government of Lithuania took the first steps in this direction in 1991. But only in 2001 the Committee of Information Society under the Government of the Lithuania responsible for the development and funding of the activities in this area was established. The main goal of the Committee is planning, organizing, and coordinating the actions targeting the information society development in Lithuania.

In 2001 the Government adopted a *plan of Information Society development for 2001 – 2004* that included the following priorities.(1)

- Building competence of Lithuanian citizens in this area;
- Building the e-capacity of Lithuanian public administration;
- Providing incentives for e-businesses.

The strategy of information society development was prepared: “Lithuania is a state of global opportunities” (adopted in 2002) (3). The main points of this strategy are:

The consequences of global communication: changes in traditional way of life, works, and conditions of economical activities. The space of the world communication become without time and destination restriction. The influence of the digital communication changes traditional way of life, work and economical activity, situation (enlarge work, commodities and service market; they become more transparent for the world competition).

The reaction of Lithuanian society to the global development: needs and opportunities. It will be easier to develop if Lithuania will integrate into ES economical and social cohesion’s processes and will create new social model – information (knowledge) society.

The information society development is an endless process. It begins, with simple process, when you change information with your college and can develop till new forms of organization. It can stare and stimulate global changes in global social life.

The strategy of information society development (NIVP Strategy). It is a document certified by Lithuanian parliamentarians political parties in LR Parliament (Seimas). In this document determinates landmarks for ten years. According to this strategy Seimas created the draft for national development of the Republic of Lithuania. The purposes of NIVP are:

- to open global prospects for information society in Lithuania;
- to improve the way of living in Lithuania and erase competitive in global environmental for state and their citizens.

Implementation of the strategy will help for Lithuania to become an equal participant of global information society. Everyone in this state will have an opportunity to realize their wants, by using opportunities of the entire world.

In the “A long-term strategy for development of technology and information society in Lithuania, 2001-2015“ (the work grope was created by the Government of Lithuania) identified weakness of information society:

- Slaw exploration of IT in all the market spheres;
- IT products and services amount in total law part of GDP;
- Government slowly and without coordination move toward IT an telecommunication means governing;
- Disorderly government data and information system property
- Weakness in information sciences
- The lack of competence in using IT (citizens and officers);
- A little part of citizens of Lithuania using the networks of the computers;
- Gap between big towns and regions citizens’ opportunities.

The using of IT is rising but in comparison with other countries is conditionally little. A little number of citizens use IT, the lack of interest between citizens and business to become permanent consumers. It is quite a big problem in implementation e-gates projects. Otherwise Lithuanians appreciate the initiative to create e-government.

One of the biggest lack of IS development is high costs of Internet. The others handicaps are:

- Economical (cost of new technologies);
- Psychological (fear of innovations and changes);
- Revival (the lack of habits in using IT, political support of state);
- Situational (ignorance of problems, salutatory development of IT).(5)

These reasons help to develop Information society as well as E-government:

- the downturn of prices for using the Internet and hardware/software, their availability speedily changes life styles of many people;
- new services are offered, the existing services are delivered using new methods;
- actions of Lithuanian Government and cooperation with private sector;
- participation in EU programs: PHARE, eContent, eSafe.

2. LEGISLATION AND INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL

Democratic states have legislation, which can support or break e-government building process. E-government is a new phenomenon in Lithuania, which requires big attention to harmonization of legal base.

The World Bank in its report (2003) declared, that the legal framework should be fully aligned with international standards to ensure that digital transactions (such as e-signatures) are possible and fully protected (for example, through e-commerce regulation). Lithuania seems to have fulfilled only a few of the formal requirements, and more efforts are needed to ensure full implementation of legislation governing Internet and electronic transactions. (2)

E-government legislation correlates with information society process, because it is a part of IS. About the relations between IS and e-government was described in part "The process of information society development in Lithuania".

Clear guidelines for e-government implementation have been defined in the concept of e-government. The concept expressed Lithuanian Government opinion about e-government.

3. DATA PROTECTION AND INSTITUTIONS ENVIRONMENT

It is necessary to regulate and protect personal data and secure citizens liberty. That's why it is important to develop legislation of digital society. There are a lot of legislation, which closely related with information dissemination and protection.

Most important law is personal data protection (Asmens duomenų teisinės apsaugos įstatymas). This law defines reasons, when the data should be destroyed.

Other important law defines society provision of information (Visuomenės informavimo įstatymas). The law includes information selection, preparation, declaration and dissemination order.

The law of e-signature was passed in 2000, but e-signature doesn't under function. This fact put the brake on e-government and e-commerce process. E-signature is important for transaction, for payments, for declaration and for others e-perorations. This law was changed by Government decision (No. 568) in 2002. On more time it was changed on 2 of June in 2003.

One more important thing for e-service is state registers, which help to systemize, store, preserve information. The Register law defines establishment, operation, administration, reorganization, using, and elimination of government registers order. The legal bases of registers are wide and didn't harmonize. One of the most important actions is an available legislation acts related with registers development and preparation of new acts.

4. E-GOVERNMENT BUILDING IN LITHUANIA

Various European countries are doing different things to develop e-democracy and e-government, but there is no universal model for this process. Some of them usually encourage people to use the Internet through free access to net and tax allowances.

The Committee of Information Society under the Government of the Lithuania implement projects such as: e-government concept implementation; government "E-gates"; creation of e-post infrastructure; further integration into the global Internet network; digital literacy for central and local government officers, try to involve citizens into decision making.

4.1 The concept of e-government

The Government of Republic of Lithuania approved the conception on 31 of December in 2002. Ministry of Interior affairs has been obliged to prepare the plan of measures, necessary for implementation of the Concept.

The Concept was designed according to:

- The initiative of the “e-Europa 2002. Information society for everyone”, which was declared in 19 of June in 2000;
- The conception of National Information Society development, which approved on 28 of February in 2001;
- Grate Britain initiative of “E-Government. A strategic framework for public services in the Information Age”;
- Others conceptual instruments, documents, guidelines, recommendations that was successfully adopted in other countries.

E-government concept describes the official approach towards the electronic government phenomena in Lithuania. This document aims at improving (by using digital technologies) the delivery of public services to public and municipal authorities and institutions (hereinafter referred to as the institutions), to individuals of the Republic of Lithuania, and businesses. (5) The purpose to implement public services “on line” can help to save time and money. But at first government should create IT infrastructure and provide citizens with access points where they can get public services via Internet.

This document gives a brief outline of strategic guidelines of changes in the public administration sector once the business management model and IT have been applied and utilized. The document gives flexible opportunities for e-government development: it does not set as its goal to define the specific contents, processes or solutions of the E-Government project.

The concept of e-government declared that main purpose is to extend public services via IT. The document noted, that would rise necessity to change the legal environmental: to implement e-government law, to change some available acts and so on. EU guidelines will have a big affect on e government process too.

4.2 Institutions Evolved in E-government Development

All institutions of the Republic of Lithuania must participate in developing and implementing e-government projects. But the biggest responsibility was set under the Ministry of the Interior (responsible for e-government and e-services provision) and Information society development committee under Lithuanian Government (responsible for coordination of e-government projects and supervision), which is responsible for information society development. The most important of them are:

- Information society development committee under Seimas (established on 13 of September in 2001);
- Information society development committee under Lithuanian Government (established on 1 of July in 2001);
- Information Policy Department under Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (established on 28 of June in 2001);
- The Council of Knowledge Society under President of Republic of Lithuania (established on 15 of may in 2003).

Lithuanian government empowers competent institutions, responsible for administration of e-government projects, coordination and monitoring of e-government projects or supervision of public service delivery based on digital technologies.(5)

4.3 The Efforts to Built Digital Government

For public administration e-government will remain as a tool for the implementation of public administration reform. More transparent public administration, personal responsibility of civil servants, clear cut reporting system, transparent decision making mechanisms – all these are just a few examples of the benefits directly related with administration. Implementation of e-Government projects will allow public administration to introduce significant structural changes. Administration structure will change better quality services and higher production capacities will be demanded from public servants. The implementation of the projects will try avoiding increase in payment funds for the staff, but would rather be done through the redistribution.

The concept requires that all documents should be available within the system of information processing and submission to customers. The authors of the project „E-government Handbook For Developing Countries“ (6) defined three levels of communications between institutions and society:

Phase 1: publish – using IT to Expand access to government Information. Publish sites seek to disseminate information *about* government and information compiled *by* government to as wide an audience as possible. In doing so, publish sites serve as the leading edge of e-government.

Phase 2: interact – broadening Civic participation in Government. Interactive e-government involves two-way communications, starting with basic functions like email contact information for government officials or feedback forms that allow users to submit comments on legislative or policy proposals. In this phase government can involve citizens in the governance process.

Phase 3 - transact: making Government services available Online. Perhaps the biggest incentive for governments utilizing and providing ICT services is to streamline currently bureaucratic and labor-intensive procedures, which can save money and increase productivity in the long-run. Furthermore, by automating and revamping procedures and processes, especially in revenue-generating areas such as tax and fine collection, governments hope to stem corruption and graft, improving revenues while elevating trust in government at the same time.

E-government implementation in Lithuania divided into four phases:

The first level is simplex connection. Institutions provision with public information via the Internet.

“Government gates” was the first phase of e-government development in Lithuania. This project was implemented by the Information society development committee under Republic of Lithuanian. The site can be reached by the address: www.epaslaugos.lt, www.govonline.lt, www.evaldzia.lt.

The second level - partial transactions, when institutions provide to users partially automated forms and questionnaires, which may be filled and printed by users.

The Second phase of e-government is under process in Nederland, Canada, and Great Britain. Lithuania is left behind the second phase. LR Seimas and Ministry of Education and Science try to do this by the submission different projects.

The third level - partially interacting level. A user may present questions, and the institution upon a receipt of an electronic query provides answers. Non-electronic channels however, deliver the service.

The forth level is fully interactive level. E-government project is completed. The possibility for uses to submit questions by electronic infrastructure and get provision to use valid electronic service.

In general we can say, that first phrase provides with a little of advantage. The second saves time of people. The third and fourth phrases are very important, because it involves citizens in political decision-making.

Lithuanian Government with the intention to forward e-government development process adopted general requirements for the Internet pages of public institutions on 18 of April in 2003 (LR Vyriausybės nutarimas Dėl bendrųjų reikalavimų valstybės institucijų interneto svetainėms patvirtinimo (7)). This government decision proposed the ways of information delivery. The resolution declare, that the purpose of sites are: allow society to get all the public information via Internet about the functions of government institutions; uniform the Internet pages; secure their efficiency and information relevance, reliability, searching methods and regular update. (7) The document points out the chapters that are required for the web sites: structure and contacts, legal information, (legislation, projects of legislation), actions (plans of actions, planning documents), news, questions, cooperation. The sites of public institutions should be harmonizing 1st of July 2004.

The hope is that in the future sites of public institutions will assure the bilateral connection between Internet consumer and institutions; involve citizens in political decision-making.

Just transact sites can enhance productivity in both the public and private sector by making processes that require government assistance or approval simpler, faster, and cheaper. These are several steps (and in some cases, a quantum leap) above “publish” sites, governments need to be aware that implementation will neither be simple nor cheap. Consequently, transact sites may require significant changes in the country’s legal framework and government workforce. (6)

4.4 Computerization and Digital Literacy of Public Institutions

In June and July of 2002, the Information Society Development Committee of the Government of the Republic of the Lithuanian department and the Lithuanian department of Statistics ran a comprehensive study called “The Use of Information Technologies in State and Local Authorities and Institutions”. It was for the first time.

This study showed that Ministries tend to have the largest number of computers, followed by Parliament and its various departments of institutions.

Figure 1. Number of computers per 100 employees in institutions. Source: The use of Information Technologies in State and Local Authorities and institutions, July 2002.

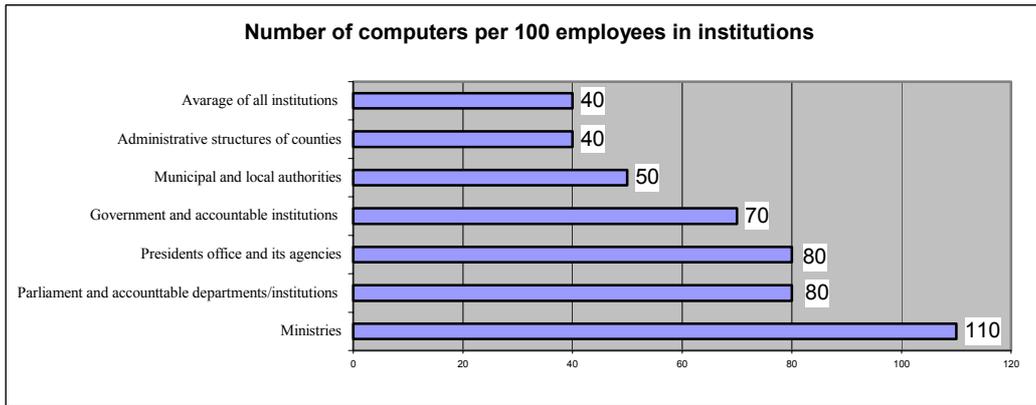
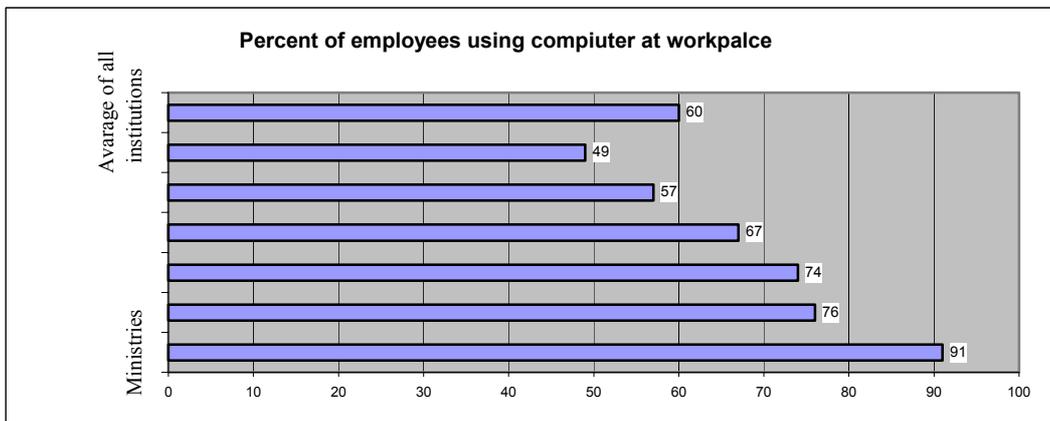


Figure 2. Percent of employees using computer at workplace. Source: The use of Information Technologies in State and Local Authorities and institutions, July 2002.



Almost all institutions (97,2 percent) were connected to Internet.

The digital literacy is important for public officers too. In 2002 just 60 percent of officials used computers and 40 percent used Internet. The statistics is not joyful, but the number of competent officers is rising. There is hope that all the public servants will pass European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) and will increase their competence in digital literacy.

4.5 First Attempt at Electronic Community

Lithuanian's first attempt at electronic community consultations was put into practice on the web site that was called "Lets discuss" ("Kviečiame svarstyti"). It was a product of Lithuanian government commitment to use the Internet as an interactive consultation tool. The aim was to encourage public comment on a draft document called "A long-term strategy for Lithuanian economic development, 2001-2015".

The largest number of comments was posted in relation to power engineering, communication and informatics and agriculture. The Web site attracted 18,918 visitors with total of 81,913 hits. Each visitor did more than 10 hits.

This project demonstrated citizens' readiness to deal with complex issues as long-term economic development. Second, the process moderating the Web site turned out to be very easy – in no instance did a posting have to be removed because of a violation of the Users Agreement. The weakness of this project was that not enough time was provided for preparation, consultation and results summarization. The public opinion expressed through such a short time was not sufficient. (14)

4.6 Lithuanian Government and Business Cooperation

Lithuanian Government made some actions to provide people with more facilities to access Internet. In the beginning of 2004 Ministry of Interior affairs together with Window to the future alliance (Leading Lithuanian businesses – mobile telecommunications company *Omnitel*, fixed telecommunications company *Lietuvos Telekomas*, the largest banks in the country *Hansa-LTB* and *Vilniaus bankas* as well as the largest Lithuanian IT companies *Alna* and *Sonex Co*) - have finished second Internet centers development stage. This collaboration will help better develop business and government collaboration and help citizens to access Internet for free. In 2003 100 new opened access points was established.

It is planned to allocate LT 5.6 million from country's budget for this project during three years. This project set jet 172 Internet centers into action. 20 thousands of Lithuanian citizens was trained.

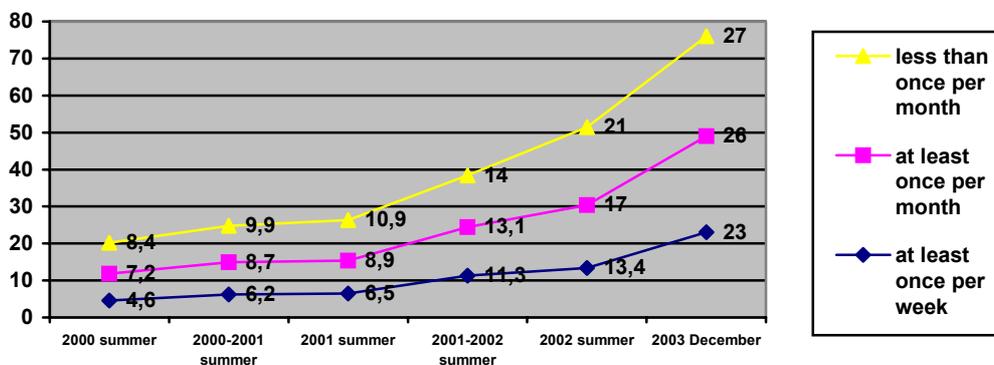
4.7 Efforts to reduce Digital Exclusion in Rural Territories

In 2004 Ministry of Interior affairs and Information society development community under LR started the implementation of project „Free accession points implementation in rural districts” funded by PHARE 2003 (Social – economics cohesion program). For the project assigned 3,15 millions €. During 18 month (during this time the project should be implemented) forecast 300 free access points in rural regions. 40 hours per week people can access Internet and can get services of the consultations. This project imposes to solve digital exclusion.

5. INTERNET USING IN LITHUANIA

The common efforts produced some promising results: at the beginning of 2002, 17,8 percent of Lithuanian citizens had used the Internet at least once in 6 months; 16,6 per cent had used it at least once a month, and 12,7 per cent were regular Internet users. In autumn of 2003, 22,6 percent (593,3 thousands of citizens) of Lithuanians had used at least once a month. In the beginning of 2004, 26,5 percent (695,7 thousand) at least once a month used Internet ("TNS Gallup").

3 Figure. The users of Internet (2000 – 2003). (9)



As we can see the rising number of Internet users in Lithuania. But it is just a little step toward information society. The World Bank (in 2003 report) declared, that Lithuania started to make progress on many of the elements required for a knowledge-based economy. For example, it has participated in EU research programs, prepared a white paper on science and technology, agreed to implement the e-Europe+ action plan, adopted various information society and e-government strategies, and signed a memorandum of understanding on information society development between the private sector and the Government. (2) The hope is that the attempts of Lithuania Government to create knowledge-based economy and information society will be successions and successful.

Conclusions

E-government has a big effect on society. It helps to develop information infrastructure on our social and private lives. For this changes is necessary an adequate political will and structures which coordinate these changes. Lithuanian Government tries to forward this process.

The concept of e-government outlines that e-government is a mean of government reforms and in the future it will help proceed development of public functions. One of the nearest purposes of Lithuanian Government is all public services to transport into the Internet at the before mentioned third level till 2005. It is possible to do with equivalent development and one integral management of all responsible institutions.

The technological disadvantage related with slow Internet, old software and its inconsistent, the lack of knowledge put the breaks. The sponsorship is a relevant question too. The public institutions declare, that it is not enough support implementation and development of e-services. Form my point of view the problem is lack of competence, knowledge's and ability to manage e-government implementation processes.

Effective information management and the creation of improved relations with consumers, partners and suppliers can help to move the circle on: government operate with private sector by creating business models, infrastructure and by providing services to end-users in public sector will help to develop e-government.

The implementation of e-government conception is just a little step toward good working e-government. Inevitable difficulties are emerged in the fields of changing models of decision-making, insufficient skills, information and communication infrastructure. There is need of permanent actions in this process, which will ensure: accessibility, trust, privacy, transparency, security, education, marketing and so on.

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