Chapter 78
Is Romania Ready for Nation-Wide Public e-Services?
Five Factors to Consider before Adopting an E-Government Public Policy

Virgil Stoica
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania

Andrei Ilas
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania

ABSTRACT

In 2009, the Romanian Government engaged itself to the ambitious goal of providing most of the traditional administration services through electronic means. The authors' larger aim is to assess the policy's chances of success by looking both at the history and the current level of e-development in Romania. While most of governments' actions are incremental, only marginally modifying existing programs or practices, the e-government policies around the world do not necessarily fall within this model. However, even the miraculous advancements depend on specific realities. Based on the relevant literature, the authors consider the way towards the success of a nation-wide e-government public policy as being paved by several major pre-requisites: educated citizenry, adequate technical infrastructures, offering of e-services that citizens need, commitment from top government officials, and membership in international organizations supporting e-government development. Results stress the importance of the EU membership and the disequilibrium between the level of Romanians' e-knowledge and that of governmental e-services. The chapter concludes that in the case of Romania, a successful e-government policy should primarily target the raise of citizens' Internet and computer related skills.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the recent remarkable improvements, e-government is still in its first evolutionary stages both in developed and in developing countries. Having a potential of great impact and promising to be a solution to many public sector problems, e-government has rapidly advanced on political agendas.

As many western governments two decades ago, Romania showed in the '90s its commitment to an informational society aiming to provide through electronic means more information and various services in order to increase the transparency and the administrative interaction with the public. However, little has been done to achieve these generous targets and now the government wants to quickly close the gap between Romania and the most advanced countries in this domain. In 2009, the Romanian new Government established ambitious goals to be reached in a three year period of time through a large-scale e-government public policy. Without previous consistent public policies on this area, a legitimate question arises: what would take for this policy to succeed?

It is of course not possible to fully answer to such a large question in one rather limited research. This is why we will concentrate on describing Romania's current (2010) e-government level by looking at its evolution and at some current data. Based on the relevant literature, five key factors that are influencing the implementation of an e-government policy are taken into account: educated citizenry; adequate technical infrastructures; offering of e-services that citizens need; commitment from top government officials; and membership in international organizations supporting e-government development. Our results stress out the importance of the European Union (EU) membership and the disequilibrium between the level of Romanians e-knowledge and that of governmental e-services.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

If it is to define politics either as a battle between ideologies or a struggle for life improvement then, in the case of public policies, the last approach seems the suitable one. From such a perspective, the politics dimension that mostly interest people is the practical one, the concrete action that finally reflects the impact of governance upon society and its capacity of making things better or worse. As Carl J. Friedrich (1963) noted long time ago, a public policy represents a government's intentional course of action in a specific environment containing obstacles and opportunities that the government aims to use or surpass in its effort to reach or achieve a specific set of objectives. Largely defined, a public policy consists in a multitude of governmental planned processes involving various actors, social context and values, a specific discourse, and different types of institutions, networks and organizations (Considine, 2005).

Although most of governments' actions can be considered incremental in the sense that they are only marginally modifying existing programs or practices, the e-government policies do not automatically fall within a model of incremental transformation. While sometimes the public policies on e-government are following an incremental pattern, they also seem to differentiate themselves as the new arrivals in an old territory do and impose radical changes. Hence, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that e-government is based on could require even a "re-ordering of the state's administrative structures and of government itself" (Lanzara, 2009) and, depending on specific socio-political realities, a country may be able of huge e-government progresses in a very short period of time (Misuraca *et al.*, 2010).

What makes some particular countries to be able of such astonishing e-government achievements? We will start answering this question by looking at two of the models proposed in the literature on the classic public administration:

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/romania-ready-nation-wide-public/67675

Related Content

An Empirical Study of Cloud-Based E-Governance Services Adoption in India
Brijesh Sivathanu (2018). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research (pp. 86-107).*
www.irma-international.org/article/an-empirical-study-of-cloud-based-e-governance-services-adoption-in-india/206174

Politics, Leadership, and Information Technology
Bruce Rocheleau (2006). *Public Management Information Systems (pp. 177-215).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/politics-leadership-information-technology/28223

Developing an E-Government Training Program: A Stakeholder Approach
Annie D. A. Abdullah, Calvin M. L. Chanand Syamimi Ariff Lim (2016). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research (pp. 37-54).*
www.irma-international.org/article/developing-an-e-government-training-program/167748

The Environment as Part of the E-Government Agenda: Framing Issues and Policies at the Nation-State Level
Gisela Gil-Egui, William F. Vásquez, Alissa M. Mebusand Sarah C. Sherrier (2011). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research (pp. 78-95).*
www.irma-international.org/article/environment-part-government-agenda/53486

Incident Preparedness and Response: Developing a Security Policy
Warren Wylupski, David R. Championand Zachary Grant (2008). *Electronic Government: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 994-1015).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/incident-preparedness-response/9764