Chapter 3
Fundamental Aspects for E–Government

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ABSTRACT

The upcoming initiatives using ICT in the government process should strengthen the benefit of e-government in most countries. Since e-government among other e-related terms is a widely (interpreted) term, it is sometimes challenging to understand the objective and goals of an initiative. Therefore, in this chapter, the authors introduce and explain most e-government related terms. Even more, they outline some interesting initiatives and implementations to explain the benefits of using ICT in the government domain. Concrete activities are aligned to the terms to explain their practical use in a better way. The authors conclude with several challenges that arise when thinking of the implementation of e-government services. Overall, this chapter should give a good overall view of e-government and the related issues.

INTRODUCTION

E-Government is a current challenge in many countries, where the existing possibilities of ICT should be used to raise the government goals mostly in regards of their players such as the citizens or enterprises on higher level. It is not unusual in the mind of stakeholders to implement E-Government tools through such initiatives in the area of E-Government to decrease the paper work of public authorities, next to the provision of added value such as providing services to citizens and enterprises 24/7. But in most discussions to E-Government - especially in western countries - there is also the idea in mind to increase the engagement of citizens in the political process. Most countries deal with the challenge of an increased lack of interest in politics, mostly in the younger generation.

For many people the E-Government term is most likely related to that what the term e-Participation implies. This perception is in a way retraceable, as far as citizens are interested in getting a higher influence in the policy making process. In regards of the focus on electronic participation it needs to be distinguished between normal participation possibilities, e.g. voting for politicians or maybe candidate as politician or demonstrating for a specific issue, and how ICT can contribute to involve citizens in the entire political process. ICT provides on the one hand a couple of new possibilities, such as debating with citizens from all parts of a country, also the information gathering is easier and it allows – depending on the provided services in the specific country – to contribute to political debates in parliaments and councils, what, for instance, the e-petition platform[1] provides to German citizens. On the other hand there are also some limitations, it makes less sense to make an electronic demonstration, because is harder to get heard by politicians. So the way ICT can be considered in E-Government provides some new innovative and sustainable options, but in fact it do not provide just benefits, it comes along with significant limitations.

In this chapter we want to outline the E-Government topic in a more clear fashion. The term E-Government and related terms like E-Participation, E-Administration and E-Governance are widely used in relation to current activities of countries and some organizations to show their future oriented strategies. The more terms are used that sound similar the more it get complex to understand the differences and the major goals. These terms suggest more or less the same aspects and it seems that they imply the same goals, but indeed this is often not true. Therefore in this chapter we will introduce and explain the meaning of these words, and how they are related to each other. In the second part of the chapter we will focus on interesting initiatives and implementations. This should on the one hand provide a more practical picture of what E-Participation etc. is, and on the

other hand how it allows to show established technology development that strengthens the benefit of ICT to achieve an improved (e-)government. We will conclude with the last section, where we will consider several challenges that arise when thinking of the implementation of E-Government services. Among other things we will take a closer look at ways to guarantee private data security and possible problems with the equality of citizens in an E-Government world.

E-GOVERNMENT AND E-PARTICIPATION

Before we outline interesting initiatives, we want to introduce the major terms and want to give an overview about E-Government. Our focus in E-Government lays on E-Participation, more precisely on how to gather citizens' opinions and ideas in the governmental decision making process.

Overview and Definitions

"Government has always been dependent upon technology" (Coleman, 2008). This statement admits certain modernity to governments, which often are perceived as technically rather backward. However, e.g. the possibility for governments to publish data via the Internet is given for already over 30 years (Sheridan & Tennison, 2010).

The public sector uses technical innovations concerning E-Government approaches and techniques only as a passive participant. But in contrast it acts as a major sponsor of science, where it rather takes a quite active role in the development of new technologies. Considering the development of the World Wide Web, we notice it was largely based on the results of government organizations: in 1993 agencies with scientific backgrounds, such as NASA, introduced the Mosaic browser and the Apache server. This was an important milestone in the history of the Internet. From this time on governmental usage of technological innova-

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