

IT GOVERNANCE IN ROMANIA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic, beyond the medical consequences on the population, directly influences the economy of the world's states. Social distancing as a basic measure imposed by the authorities has inevitably put pressure on information and communication technologies: Technologies thus become part of economic and social recovery measures in the pandemic period. In this context, IT Governance as a formal framework that provides a structure for government and organizations to ensure that IT investments support public and private business objectives becomes during this period the panacea for economic recovery. In this article we analyze the evolution of IT governance in Romania during the Covid-19 pandemic.

KEYWORDS: *COVID-19 pandemic, IT Governance*

1. INTRODUCTION

E-government, also known as digital governance, refers to the application of new communication technologies and IT applications by central and local administrative companies, with the main objective of improving the activity of the administrative apparatus and developing the quality of public services. E-government aims to "improve government decisions, improve citizens' trust in government, increase government transparency." As the government moves towards an information society or a cyber society, e-government has emerged as a digital link between government, institutions and citizens, based on ICT.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Today, the government network, sites are evolving for citizens, institutions and electronic services. E-government can generally be defined as the mixture of information and communication technologies and administrative practices in the belief of e-government services for citizens, institutions and other e-governments (Deakins and Dillon, 2002; Seifert and Relyea, 2004). Starting from the OECD definition of e-government, some researchers believe that e-governance can be defined as the use of ICT as a tool to achieve better governance and thus, while e-government is traditionally understood as centered. Around governance operations, e-governance can be understood as extending its scope by including citizen involvement and participation in governance.

The Software component is the basic tool for all institutions in the developed countries of the world. Damsgaard and Lytinen, 2001 state that "a technological society must respond to the problems posed by standardized interorganizational communication, present in computerized systems." According to

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Kanter, 1992 "software engineering is a component part of systems engineering and is oriented towards the development of software infrastructure, applications and databases, as well as on their control by various methods".

Effective public institutions need electronic management of documents, documents, files and document flows. Management is performed with the help of applications that allow the creation, capture, organization, archiving, manipulation and controlled circulation of documents in electronic format (Deakins and Dillon, 2002). Currently, information resources are not lacking in public administration, but there is always the possibility of interconnecting them. The organization of an integrated information system, at the level of the local public administration, must have certain elements: Hardware (computers connected in the network); Software (computer applications specific to public administration) and interconnected communication networks at each level, internet (Stoica, 2013).

Castelnovo (2013) refers to e-government policies that can be estimated according to their capacity to develop public administration to achieve public objectives so that citizens are satisfied with what they are offered. E-government is a complex transformation because it involves and includes activities such as providing important information to the public, facilitating citizens' access to public information, streamlining and improving the efficiency of information flow in public administration institutions, improving communication between public institutions, thus improving coordination within the public sector (Urs, 2013).

Services may provide information to customers or users, for example: the user makes reviews posted on information portals or sites, is a passive way of processing information. Other services require active involvement, such as blogging, social media, online shopping, or e-government applications (Friedrich et al., 2011).

IT governance deals with the reduction and / or mitigation of the main risks but also with the performance on the institutions that apply it. For IT governance to be properly applied and produce the expected effects, it is vital that all resources are properly distributed. According to IT Governance, 2003, the lifetime of IT governance is influenced by five directions of major importance, which take into account the interests of stakeholders and consist in planning, the direction given by the manager of the institution and the objectives proposed to achieve.

3. IT GOVERNANCE AND CLOUD COMPUTING

Cloud computing aims to reduce costs and improve efficiency in institutions and in correlation with the IT field enjoys a permanent evolution, which helps institutions to digitize and improve the systems used. For institutions to be able to use the cloud, a first step is to define and outline a well-developed strategy, and IT governance is vital to disseminate any issues related to data security and management. Institutions are looking for methods that offer competitive advantages with lower related costs. According to Friedrich et al., (2011) "there are a number of service providers that offer solutions to reduce costs, increase market speed, reduce overhead and global coverage."

Among the electronic public services of eGovernment, those in the field of public administration occupy the most important place, being the best developed and most widespread. Electronic services accessed through various electronic channels (internet, telephony, interactive digital television, etc.) are added to the traditional services of the public administration unit (UAP) and run in parallel with them (Vasilache, 2007, p.3).

E-government is a concept that took shape in public administrations in the late 1980s. The concept was initially defined in a simplistic way, in terms of elements that had the role of improving both the services provided to citizens and the steps taken by the public institution, namely: "increasing the quality of services provided to citizens", "efficient governance", "a new form of government", "a network for interconnectivity, decentralization and transparency " (Neamțu, 2013).

Information and communication technologies have been used in the public system for at least 45 years in developed countries. In this context, it is absolutely necessary to identify the elements that give a novelty to the concept of e-government in the 21st century.

The starting point in solving this dilemma seems to be related to the very evolution of information and communication technology. An analysis of the first ICT applications in the public system reveals the use of simple processes, designed to improve the capacity to process information, store data and make internal connections.

Currently, technology networks, such as the Internet, promote real-time communication, with its many benefits: connectivity, interactivity, personalized communication, stimulating collaboration between different categories of parties involved, reducing communication and transaction costs, etc. In fact, from the perspective of interaction, relationship and communication with different stakeholders, the 21st century is the key moment for the development and operationalization of e-government platforms (Neamțu, 2013, p.9).

According to the latest available data, provided by the United Nations, in 2012, regional scores on the level of development of e-government platforms worldwide revealed the dominance of Europe, with an e-government development index of 0.7188, followed by the United States of the Americas (0.5403) and Asia (0.4992).

E-Government services within the European Union can be provided by one state and other Member States. This is ensured by the strategy of the government of each state to implement its own eGovernment, a strategy that must take into account a cross-border dimension, this dimension being already formalized in a normative document called the European Interoperability Framework (EIF). (European Interoperability Framework for Pan-European eGovernment Services, 2004).

4. COMPUTERIZATION AT THE LEVEL OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT

The provision in electronic form of the basic services, existing, of the public administration, as well as the addition of new electronic services, represents the electronic administration, e-Administration. These electronic public services, e-Services, add to the traditional ones provided by a traditional computerized UAP and transform it into an eUAP, ie an electronic UAP. The computerization of a UAP (initially called, sometimes also electronic, or automation) forms the technological base, which, extended and adapted, allows the implementation of electronic public services. Simplifying, but keeping essential aspects, we will be able to say that, from the point of view of the beneficiaries, an EUPA is, in most cases, a 'UAP plus Internet', and from the point of view of government, an EUPA is a 'electronic and reorganized', more efficient (lower costs, better services), and with more qualified staff. In fact, most UAP public services are currently provided in the traditional form, with beneficiaries coming to the counter and exchanging paper documents, although there is a clear tendency for beneficiaries to switch more and more to electronic access channels. An EUPA will therefore provide in parallel both traditional services and the same services (or part of them, or new ones) in electronic form. (Vasilache, 2007).

5. THE EFFECTS OF COMPUTERIZATION ON THE POPULATION

The computerization of the public administration is a main condition of the economic and social development at the level of the whole society. The promotion and implementation of information technologies at the level of public institutions will align the economy with international standards.

The international economy is based on knowledge and electronic means, and their non-use will become a brake on the progress and development of a society. Promoting a modern model of administration, based on knowledge and technique, will have important results at the level of the whole society, will change mentalities and will shape a different type of organizational culture.

The main effects that computerization produces in society are:

- a. reduction of public expenditures. With a high-performance information system at their disposal, public institutions will no longer have to maintain a logistical base that is difficult to use, consuming a great deal of human, material and financial resources.
- b. Combating corruption and bureaucracy at the level of public institutions. One of the criticisms formulated both by the civil society in our country and by the observers of the different international bodies, is represented by the small corruption or so-called "counter corruption" (Dănăiață et al., 2011). In the context of an ineffective service of citizens during its relations with the public institution, we have reached the situation of double taxation, a legal one consisting of taxes and fees that every citizen must pay but also an illegal one, which takes the form of this corruption. However, computerization eliminates the citizen's interaction with the civil servant and thus disappears the premises for violating the professional ethics of the civil servant. Bureaucracy is a specific feature of public administration, both in the country and at European level. The computerization of public services comes as a solution to this difficulty.
- c. Increasing the degree of transparency of the use and administration of public funds. The computerization of public institutions will allow citizens and stakeholders access to information related to the use of public funds. Public procurement procedures will be absolutely transparent, allowing anyone to consult their conduct, under the conditions provided by law, with reference to confidentiality.
- d. Improving access to public services and information, in accordance with the legal provisions on personal data and liberal access to information of public interest. Computerization generates the construction of unique databases at entity level or even groups of entities located vertically different from "industry". Access to this information and data can thus be ensured in a centralized and unitary way. Information of public interest can be accessed from anywhere using internet-oriented technologies.
- e. Diminishing and streamlining the direct contact between the clerk at the counter and the citizen or economic agent. With a virtual, interactive framework available, direct contacts between them are increasingly rare.
- f. Providing quality public services and information by electronic means. Supported by high-performance information systems, the administrative act is a quality one.
- g. Strengthening the administrative capacity of public institutions to achieve their goals and ensure the provision, in a transparent manner, of public services and information
- h. Promoting collaboration between public institutions to provide public services by electronic means
- i. Redefining the relationship between citizens and public administration, respectively between the business environment and public administration, in order to facilitate their access to public services and information through information technology.

6. MEASURES TAKEN BY EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The European Commission has published a common European roadmap with measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. At the meeting of the members of the European Council on 26 March 2020, they pledged to take all necessary measures to protect EU citizens and to overcome the health crisis caused by the proliferation of COVID-19 virus. The figure below shows the broad measures by member countries as well as the number of cases of infection with the new Coronavirus reported by each country until April 13, 2020 at 4 p.m.

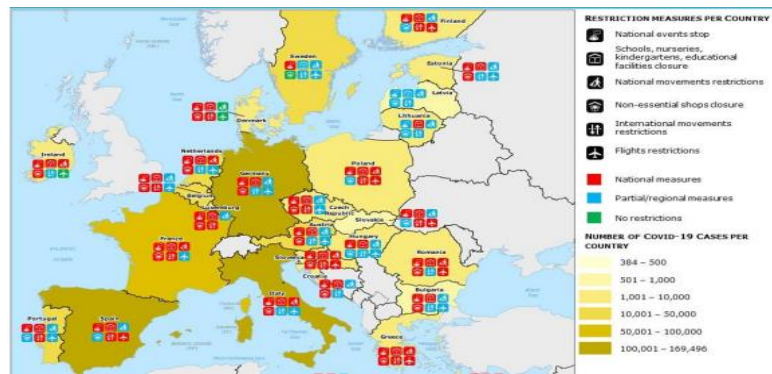


Figure 1. Measures imposed by each country and the number of cases of Covid-19 infection

The Special Telecommunications Service as a central specialized body, which organizes, leads, conducts, controls and coordinates the activities in the field of special telecommunications for the Romanian public authorities has published on its website a series of particularities considered in providing communications and technology services. information during the pandemic.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The study of information systems is located at the intersection of several fields, including - computer science, management, accounting, organizational culture, public administration, etc. -, representing a real challenge for those trying to enter their study. The literature considers that all these are an important component in any program of economic studies and public administration.

There are 3 important reasons on which the application of information technology in public administration and economics is based. These are found in 3 fundamental roles that information systems have in ensuring the success of an institution / organization, these being the following:

- support for activities and operational processes of the institution;
- decision support for these employees;
- support for strategies related to competitive advantage.

The provision in electronic form of the basic, existing services of the public administration, but also the addition of new electronic services, constitutes the electronic administration of e-administration type.

These electronic public services or e-services are added to the traditional ones provided by a traditional, computerized public administration unit, transforming it into an e-UAP, ie an electronic public administration unit.

The concept of e-services refers both to the provision of services through electronic access channels - especially through the Internet, and to a reorganization of traditional public administration units, meant to make them an adaptation to the new access channels and to bring , in general, high operating efficiency.

The information desk, e-office, is a concept that is the gateway for electronic access of beneficiaries to the electronic public services of the e-government information system. Of course, the concept of e-counter can also be applied to other e-services. For the beneficiary who accesses e-services via the Internet, the e-counter is seen in the form of a site created by the service provider, a site from which information can be obtained or through which it can interact in two directions, receiving and sending information, for performing complex services such as paying taxes or participating in computerized public procurement.

An e-government e-service provider can have a secure site, which is a single point of access, thus facilitating the task of beneficiaries to search for the services they need.

One of the important e-services of public administration units is that of electronic public procurement, called e-procurement, through which public agencies can purchase, usually by auction, the goods and

services they need. Through such a public procurement, a city hall, for example, can purchase the consumables or computers they need to modernize their information base in the unit.

e-Government is a phenomenon in continuous expansion, with a sustained pace of development and a strong influence on public sector activities, which is explained or by which it is necessary to increase the expenditures allocated in the public budget.

e-Government promises to solve public administration problems. And yet, many e-government projects fail, either they are total failures, in the sense that the system is not implemented or abandoned after implementation, or they are partial failures, when the main objectives of the projects are not achieved. We can therefore talk about a clear divergence between the enthusiasm that manifests itself in the promotion of IT solutions in the public sector of the specialized literature and the banal reality. In many cases, important financial, human or even political resources have been wasted, without being able to offer the promised improvements to the beneficiaries.

The information society integrates the objectives of sustainable development, focused on social justice and equal opportunities, ecological protection, freedom, cultural diversity and innovative development, restructuring of industry and the economic environment. The computerization of the public administration facilitates the access of the citizens and the institutions to the local public services, also ensuring the transparency in the fulfillment of the specific attributions.

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