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Development of electronic governance as an element of reforming state governance according to the Adjarian example

At modern stage development of informational society in Georgia has a big influence on functioning of state governance system. Therefore, information-communication technologies acquire big importance that should ensure effectiveness of state apparatus, interaction with citizens and different institutions. Meanwhile it is important to eliminate extra bureaucratic procedures and corruption in public service. Creation of electronic governance and its effective functioning play the most important role in this context. Its main advantage will be increased public trust towards the government.

Georgian government declares creation and development of informational society as an important precondition and basis for democratic, free and fair state as well as for development of social and economic spheres and human resources.

Electronic governance first of all includes automatic services in order to provide citizens with licenses and other formal acts. Electronic governance is a form of state governance which aims to give service to citizens and organizations by use of information communication systems and optimize interrelations between different institutions. It also aims to increase social participation in state governance. At modern stage electronic governance is regarded as instrument for governance and effective way of managing crises, political and socio-economic challenges.

Technological changes have an impact not only on economic but also on social elements of society which in turn has created new challenges for states' political systems and their regimes. As a result of unprecedented growth of information technologies and communications digital democracy and electronic governance have emerged in western states. Electronic governance is based on information and communication technologies in state governance. It

includes local self-governance as well as central governance. Its main instruments are digital technologies and global communication systems which give an opportunity to create websites of public organizations, provide information about their activities, budget, vacancies, news, etc. This in turn unprecedentedly increases public participation in state governance. In order to raise trust towards the government and strengthen democracy society (citizens, public groups, civil organizations and business) should be able to take part in the decision-making process.

According to Georgian president's decree of March 2006 a centre for effective governance system and administrative reform was created which published conceptual documents like state conceptual project for digital Georgia as well as a concept of electronic governance. Since 2007 important decisions were made concerning electronic governance. A state commission for supporting development of electronic governance was created. Since then many important projects concerning electronic governance have been implemented like my.gov.ge, hr.gov.ge, eauction.ge, rs.ge. According to the UN's report in 2012 Georgia was on 72th place according to development of electronic governance and in 2014 it took 56th place.

In last decade in Georgia many important changes have been made concerning electronic governance in both private and public sector at central and regional levels. In this case for us it is important to analyze the regional level.

Development of regional electronic governance in Autonomous Republic of Adjara is very interesting. In 2014 a government portal of Autonomous Republic of Adjara was created. The region is a pioneer in the country in this regard.

In general the following directions of electronic involvement are defined in Georgia: feedback to electronic services, involvement in elaboration of electronic services, open data, transparency, open governance and lastly decision-making as well as policy development.

Feedback mechanisms may include the following: comment/complain, service menu, online chats, short messages, forums, blogs, online research or consultations, online questionnaires, social media. Portal www.adjara.gov.ge doesn't have even one of the above mentioned feedback mechanisms. According to our research concerning electronic involvement the web-pages of public institutions are mainly oriented on one-side communication which aims to exchange information and doesn't have such discussion platforms as blog forums. Most websites don't have evaluation forms of online services by which problems could be identified and solved together with citizens. The website www.adjara.gov.ge doesn't have an instrument

in order to make comment concerning different state decisions, projects and events. The website doesn't have electronic petitions as well.

Establishment of electronic governance in the region is facing serious problems. Organizational, technical, social and methodological problems have been identified after the research. These problems currently create serious barriers and hinder development of effective e-governance. Lack of human resources, difference in program targets of the centre and the region, lack of citizens' awareness about the project of electronic governance and so on should also be mentioned.

In spite of positive changes the overall situation concerning development of modern information-communication technologies in Adjara is not satisfactory. The information systems in the region can be described as transforming in a democratic way which needs serious reforms. Current situation shows that unsystematic, uncoordinated actions were made which overall represents more chaotic rather than coordinated systematic process. Therefore, a strategic document "Adjarian Electronic Government" should be created which will ensure systematic development of electronic governance in the region.

"Adjarian Electronic Government" should increase quality and effectiveness of public service for citizens and provide them with information concerning activities of public institutions. It should also ensure effective interactions among public institutions. Electronic government is a system which has its internal and external contours.

The internal contour of electronic government represents a closed system which is used only by internal state apparatus. It includes program complex with saved data. All this ensures effective interactions between institutions. Internal contours include unified electronic system of document exchange between institutions and government's informative analytical system.

Implementation of the strategy of "Adjarian Electronic Government" should be based on not only conceptual and instrumental but also legal basics. A legal normative basis should be created which will include formation of electronic government's instrumental basis as well as creation of united regional system of electronic document management. Meanwhile types of documents which would be used in inter institutional relations should be defined under a legal norm. Creation of regional united system of e-filing will regulate regional public institutions, relations between local self-government and public organizations as well as will ensure coordinated work of all regional public institutions.

The informative-analytical system of state governance should ensure effective decision-making process which should be based on analysis and monitoring of socio-economic development of Adjara.

The external contour of electronic government represents a system which on the one hand contains information concerning regional government, state institutions, legal-normative basis and different issues and on the other hand gives an opportunity to get electronic public service. The external contour is an open system and is accessible for all customers. It contains open internet resources. This contour should include several systems: unified portal of Adjarian government, portal of municipalities, portals of Batumi City Hall and Sakrebulo, portal of Adjarian supreme council and portal of state service. The government portal includes websites of government apparatus, ministries and sub institutions which should provide citizens and business with all necessary information about government activities. The state portal should give citizens not only information but also instructions about state services.

A unified regional-municipal portal should be created on the basis of Adjarian municipal websites. Every municipal website should include general information concerning a municipality, its structures, statistical data, important normative documents, plans and projects. Current websites have only general information about municipalities and their structure. Unified regional portal "Adjarian electronic government" should be created on the basis of unified municipality portal and existing Adjarian unified government portal. This system should include such electronic service which will give citizens and organizations an opportunity to address directly relevant institution concerning certain issues. The institution itself will be able to operatively respond.

The project "Adjarian electronic government" should optimize state services for citizens by use of information-communication technologies as well as it should increase effectiveness of decision-making process in public service. All this will reduce extra bureaucratic procedures and will give executive government a possibility to control substructures which receive citizens' applications and complaints. At the same time certain services will be provided electronically and there will not be queues in public institutions.

At the same time some citizens don't have internet or skills to use electronic resources. Such problems can be solved by electronic terminals and raising of relevant skills.

There are several factors by elimination of which electronic governance will be improved at regional and national levels. Among these factors first one is absence of common strategy. Uneven development of regions makes interactions between regions and the centre difficult. On the whole there is not much attempt to create state's unified electronic architecture.

On the other hand an effective strategy of public service should be developed which will provide citizens with new, comfortable electronic services that in turn should ensure electronic involvement and open governance. Therefore, relevant infrastructure should be developed and electronic security should be strengthened. It should be researched how often people use services of www.adjara.gov.ge. Government should develop citizen-oriented services, eliminate digital inequality and help raise computer skills which will increase effectiveness of services. Priority should be given to (G2C) effective service between government and citizens as well as to online services on portal www.adjara.gov.ge. It is also important to increase availability of internet resources across the region in public service halls, social centers and libraries by self-service machines and such commercial tools as payment machines.

So, in spite of existing shortcomings Adjarian unified government portal can be regarded as a model of regional government in Georgia and as an element of reforming state governance in Georgia. A state program for establishment and development of regional electronic governance should be created which will be part of the process of developing electronic governance in the country.