

Law aspects of developing e-Government in the Republic of Macedonia

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Abstract

The paper focuses on crucial characteristics of latest public administration reform in Republic of Macedonia, and developing the concept of E-Government. This process is not easy at all. It takes years and maybe decades to create respectable concept of E-Government. In the paper, different research methods are used, but mainly methodology of case study, statistical, empirical and comparative methods also are used. Main conclusions from the paper are that in Republic of Macedonia there are very consistent law frame and conditions for developing concept of E-Government, but there are also obstacles relating to the political and regional problems in the western Balkan region. Also these efforts are recognizable in global level, but there is a lot yet to do in the future because whole world is made as a global village because of the use of modern e-technologies and everything is reachable from end point of the west to the end of the east in the global world map.

Key words: E-Administration, E-Government, Public Administration Reform, Republic of Macedonia.

1. Introduction

Republic of Macedonia has very old roots in the history, regarding Antique Macedonia and the Kingdom of Alexander The Great, than Crossroad in Roman Empire where Christianity was spread by St. Paul the Apostle. Macedonia is born country of Justinian, the Byzantine Emperor. Macedonia is a country where St.Kiril and Metodij were born, and they were first Slavic educators, teachers and founders of modern Slavic alphabet together with its students, St.Kliment and St. Naum, which create Cyrillic alphabet. Tsar Samoil found its kingdom exactly in Ohrid. Macedonia as province was five centuries under the Turkish Ottoman Empire. In the beginning of 19th century Macedonia was divided into neighboring countries in Balkan wars, and also The First World War. In The Second World War, Macedonia fought for the Antifascist Alliance and take win. Together with other neighboring nations in 1945 was formed Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, and Macedonia was equal part of it, together with Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Yugoslavia was with socialist political and economic system. After falling of Berlin Wall in 90's of the previous century, in 1991 Macedonia takes its independence again and continues as democratic, independent, sovereign state. All these periods influenced the system of power and the system of administration in Macedonia. Now Macedonia wants to be a part of modern European Integrations and in order to follow this direction and achieve this goal, it should make reforms in all parts of the state system, including reforming public administration. Reform and modernization of public administration is a continuous process in countries with developed democracy and a market economy. Given that fact means the authorities continuously implement reforms within the society, including the reform of the public administration. Macedonia wants to be one of the most progressive countries and leadership

societies in 21th century, because societies aspiring to increased transparency, reduced corruption, improved performance and efficiency, reduced costs and increased revenues. The common denominator of these societies is organized effort in harnessing the benefits of information - communication technologies in terms of social governance. The main pillar in this direction is adopted "Strategy for Public Administration Reform-PAR 2010-2015", adopted at the end of 2010. (R.Rechkoski,2012). This means that PAR Strategy for changes in this domain will be neither very broad in extent nor radical, due to the fact that such a radical Strategy is not needed in the Republic of Macedonia. However, on the other side, the reform will not be merely a cosmetic and superficial intervention. An optimal PAR Strategy for the present level of development represents a selection of specific precisely determined actions and changes, which will be implemented taking into account the existing level of development of the country and also the actual needs. The PAR process will therefore rather imply improvement and further regulation instead of a radical reconstruction of the existing Public Administration system. To meet the expectations of the citizens and legal entities in terms of modernization of Public Administration, Macedonia needs to undergo a process of further reform and modernization. The vital role of this PAR Strategy is to determine the direction and pace to this process. Not only from a point of view of internal, domestic needs to reshape and improve the system of Public Administration in order to be more economic, effective and efficient functioning, but also in relation to the international obligations. There is a set of principles and standards in the field of administrative law, which were conceptualized through the system of "benchmarking", the "best practices" and the so-called "European Administrative Space". A modernized Public Administration is a precondition for the proper functioning of the state and its further development is institutional stability, high administrative and professional capacity at all system levels, economic and social prosperity and inclusion for all citizens. Therefore, the modern state functions do not comprise only legal and public regulatory activities, but also different important service and social developmental functions which have to enable further prosperity and because of that Macedonia should aim to be a modern, democratic and market oriented state. Macedonia de jure has very democratic, consisted, and comprehensive and with fully included European Union standards legislation, but more must be done in proper implementation of the adopted legislation. Next steps must be focused especially to the legislative implementation which will result in raising of the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of the Public Administration, increasing the transparency and openness, raising the quality of its services and outputs, and in improving the customers satisfaction, i.e. satisfaction of citizens and private law entities which are treated as "consumers of the public services".

2. Strategic objectives of par strategy

After implementation of this PAR Strategy and its main projects it is expected Public Administration to be more effective, efficient, and accountable, with citizen oriented services that operate in a transparent and open way, while meeting all values and standards of the "Good Governance" within the "European Administrative Space". Public Administration will become an effective facilitator for continuous and sustainable social and economic development. In order to achieve this vision, the objective of the PAR Strategy is to improve and further regulate the remaining legislative and administrative framework, to implement the EU-concepts and standards and to improve the general and sector specific administrative capacity. Specific objectives of the Strategy are focused on **improving**:

- *The quality of administrative services for citizens and businesses*, with emphasis on improving and rationalizing administrative procedures by their simplification and inter-connection with the contemporary Information Technology solutions, including all aspects of the "E- government" and "E-administration" concepts;
- The public service quality by *strengthening Human Resources Management (HRM) and Human Resources Development (HRD)* function across the whole administration;
- *Strategic planning* and policy coordination function;

- *Raising efficiency and effectiveness* of the public finance system by improving the budgetary process, internal and external financial controls, further development of the program-oriented budgeting, and making more transparent public procurement system;
- *Openness and transparency* of Public Administration through improved access to public information.

Some dilemmas were appeared during the decision which organizational parts of the integral public sector should be "reformed" in Macedonia. The reform should impact on:

1. The whole Public Sector,
2. The system of Public Administration, and
3. The system of the State Administration which outside the core organizational structure of the State Administration is consisted of comprising different public and 'mixed-status' institutions e.g. Public Funds, Public Agencies, Institutes, and similar organizational forms.

To overcome all possible differences and dilemmas, for the needs of this PAR Strategy, the functional approach for determination of the scope of this PAR Strategy was chosen. This means that the attention will be focused on the most relevant cross-cutting functions of the administration:

- Policy making function; Inter-institutional and intra-institutional collaboration and coordination function; HRM and HRD function; Public finances including public procurement function; Anti-corruption measures; Business processes optimization and simplification; Improvement and simplification of administrative procedures and administrative services; Enabling access to public information, and E-government and E-Administration function of the contemporary administration. It must be stated that it is evident that these reforms, adjustments and transformations needed to be conducted since all of the countries of South-East and Central Europe, and also from the region of the Western Balkans have with no exceptions, declared their clear intentions to actively participate in the Euro-Atlantic integration processes and to join the European Union in a relatively short period of time. It is very important to accent the linkage between the PAR efforts and the economy and the social sector. In Macedonia, the total number of the population is 2.065.769, and the present total labor force counts 957790 persons, of which 687465 or 69.03% are employed and 270325 or 28.2 % are unemployed persons. Average salary in Macedonia is 21.217 denars, i.e. 345 euros. Macedonian GDP in 2014 is 4.3%, which is good in this hard periods, other economic indicators are lower than in some comparable EU Member Countries, this means that the extent of civil service in Macedonia should be at least partly lower than in the comparable countries from this region. It is therefore intended to reach this rationalization with sustainable decrease of the number of employees in this sector by 1 % each year, first of all by non-replacement of the civil servants who leave administration and with proper reorganization within the Public Administration. The appropriate active HRM measures will be taken in order to prevent future uncontrolled new employment within the civil service.

The number of total employed in public administration in Macedonia is almost 120.000, and that is so much for the not so developed country such as Macedonia. That is unacceptable this number of employed in public sector, because of inconsistency of budgetary burden and it should impact on whole economic development of the country and also of total debt of the country (R.Rechkoski, 2012).

3. Legislation and other public policies

With one overview of the existing legislation which represents the frame in which PAR is being implemented, it can be concluded that the legislation relating to Public Administration determines to a great extent the direction and the development for the future PAR process. Legislation in Macedonia is very comprehensive and fully harmonized with modern standards and demands, but implementation is the problem. Core legislation adopted in Macedonia and important for PAR is:

- The new Constitution from 1991; Law on Organization and Operation of the State Administration Bodies and the Law on the Government of the Republic of Macedonia in 2000; Law for civil servants, 2000, and the Code of Ethics for State Servants from 2001; Law on public servants, 2010; Law on Institutions, 2005; Law on the General Administrative Procedure, 2005; Law on Administrative Disputes, 2006; Law on Inspection Surveillance, 2010
- Law on Budgets from 2005; Law on Territorial Division of the Republic of Macedonia and Defining Areas of Local Self-Government Units from 2004; Law on Inter-municipal Cooperation, 2009; Law on Public Enterprises, 1996; Law on the Ombudsman 2003; Law on State Audit, 2010; Law on Referendum and other types of direct Citizens' Initiatives in 2005; Law on Associations and Foundations, 2010;
- Law on Public Procurement, 2010; Law on Personal Data Protection, 2005; Law on Labor Relations, 2005; Law on Access to Public Information, 2006; Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interests, 2007; Law on Prevention and Protection against the Discrimination, 2010.

A number of legal acts, by-laws, secondary legislation determining the relevant administrative framework for the operation of the Public Administration, were enacted as well, about internal organization and systematization within the civil service, numerous regulations from public finance field, e-Governance.

The future legislation activities should be mostly concentrated on improvement of some elements of the current legal i.e. regulatory framework, as well as towards the further harmonization of the existing legislation with widely recognized standards and principles of the most important international institutions, such as the EU, Council of Europe, UN, OECD, OSCE, but mainly process of implementation should be improved. Also preparation of some additional legislation and regulatory framework for Public Funds, Public Agencies should be done. It has to be emphasized that the existing legislation in the field of the Public Administration, which is currently applied - e.g. the Law on Civil Servants, Law on General Administrative Procedure, Law on Administrative Dispute etc., are mainly harmonized with appropriate European standards. About the situation in vertical sectors of the Public Administration system, it can be pointed out that operation of the Public Administration, for example in the field of tax and customs administration, transport, statistics, etc. should develop general administrative capacity. Also an additional effort will be needed in order to create the conditions for developing appropriate sectorial capacity in key policy sectors, and this will have to include concrete proposals to improve the coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the Public Administration and its institutions, and to reduce fragmentation within and between government levels. Having in mind all stated above, in the PAR Strategy is incorporated:

- *A holistic approach;*
- *Principles of "Good Governance", such as the Rule of Law-legality, Transparency-Openness, Efficiency and Effectiveness, Legal certainty, Political neutrality and impartiality, High level of professional competency, Accountability, Client orientation ethics, and Coherency, Equal treatment, Predictability are incorporated in all the planned administrative activities;*
- *Creation of a professional and impartial civil service;*
- *Involvement of different stakeholders and beneficiaries at all stages of strategy preparation;*
- *Clear targets and time framework measures are in this PAR Strategy.*

For being able to assure faster approximation of the Public Administration to the established good practices and standards recognized all over the EU, the following most important aspects of this PAR Strategy are envisaged:

- *The general modernization of the Public Administration;*

- Further development of professional, impartial and *merit-based* HRM system in civil servants system is envisaged;
- *3 main financial systems* will be strictly implemented and further developed- internal financial control and audit, external performance audit, revision system, and system for efficient management of domestic and the EU funds;
- *Comprehensive program* and action plans for anticorruption;
- Bigger administrative *transparency* and *effectively implemented* legislation;
- In the direction for *citizen-orientation*, concrete regulatory and managerial measures must be taken to improve quality of services and user satisfaction;
- Comprehensive program of *removal of administrative burden* was and process of implementation is continued;
- *Better regulation* measures will be taken in order to improve coherency, impact assessment and public participation in regulatory action.

Also some benchmarks for the Macedonian Public Administration were set in the process of preparation for accession of euro-integration such as: political dialogue; reports for the implementation of anti-corruption legislation; recruitment and career advancement of civil servants to be developed on merit-based system and fully implemented in accordance to the Law on Civil Servants; enhancement of the general business environment by further improving the rule of law, strengthening the independence of the regulatory and supervisory agencies, speeding up the legal procedure and continuing the registration of property rights. Important points that have to be taken into account are:

- PAR is not a single project or exercise, but a *long-lasting "never-ending" process* of gradual transformation and adjustment;
- The *legislative harmonization* and enactment of new legislative and regulative instruments - is not enough, and there should be substantive transformations of the legal, managerial, organizational and procedural instruments and mechanisms, and also to its implementation;
- Changes within the business and administrative processes which leads to the quality changes and *introduction of "E-Administration" and E-Government*";
- There is a clear need to introduce and enforce different concrete mechanisms for developing a really *transparent and accountable* Public Administration;
- Participation of all interested parties within the PAR process will be ensured, and this is an indispensable precondition for preparation of quality legislation and for a final success of the PAR process - *inclusion of different NGO's and other civil society organizations, business organizations, and others*;
- Numerous *organizational changes*;
- *Training* is a very important tool for individual and institutional capacity building process.

4. Characteristics, quality of administrative services and removal of administrative burden

It should be invested in developing skills of the involved staff, both at the level of individual specialists, and at the top management level. Organizational rearrangement within different administrative authorities is needed. Units or officials dealing with key horizontal functions - such as normative acts preparation, human resources, financial management, information technology, or institutional communication – should play a more central role within such institutions. Public Administration, among other, delivers administrative services such as licenses, documents, various decisions, data, to users - citizens and businesses. Improvements of the quality of services, and satisfaction of users, as well as streamlining and simplification the procedures - all this is put in the highlight of modernization processes in the EU. Some solutions have already proven to be very successful - above all, one-stop shops for starting up a business operation. This system in Macedonia is among the best in the world ranked no. 6 according to the World Bank Doing Business Review. On the basis of such experience, efforts to build a user and service-oriented Public Administration will be continued. More systematic efforts with aim to improve the following have to be made:

- Access to administrative services through territorial organization and through E-Government;
- Timeliness of services through streamlining and accelerating administrative procedures;
- Through the simplicity of applications, payment and service-delivery and
- Through professionalism and kindness of civil servants dealing with customers.

At the end of 2006, a thorough process of reviewing the existing legislation from the perspective of simplification of the procedures and improving the business environment was conducted. This project, called the “Regulatory Guillotine”, resulted in interventions on approximately 600 regulations. This process will go on with even more intensity and will be extended to simplification of procedures for citizens, as well. The Central Register of the Republic of Macedonia is the competent authority for registration of legal entities in the Republic of Macedonia. The registration procedure is simple, through one- stop-shop system by submitting one request during a single visit to the Register. Also, the Central Register and the Employment Agency of Macedonia and the social funds-pension and disability insurance Fund and Health Insurance Fund, are linked, and during the registration of the company, the first employment can be registered at the same time, as well as registration for employment insurance benefits. The area of registration of business is regulated with Law for trade companies from 2004 and The Law on the One-Stop Shop System and Trade Register and Register of Other Legal Entities from 2005. In last several years the period for registration of legal persons is shortened to 4 hours and a general clause on business was introduced. Since the beginning of 2008, the measure for electronic submission of the annual balance sheets entered into force, which significantly facilitated the process for submission and processing of the annual balance sheets for all legal entities. The costs for registration of companies were reduced in many occasions and at the moment they are relatively low. According to the report of "Doing Business" of the World Bank, Macedonia is ranked as 6th in the world in the category of business start-ups.

5. Civil and public service system, human resource management and public finance system

An effective and efficient civil and public administration system has an important influence also to the economic development of the country. The following key activities are envisioned by the end of 2015:

- The development of a competence management model;
- The development of a data-base of competencies of civil servants in order to enhance internal mobility;
- The development of internal labor market within the state and public service;

- The introduction of a HRM planning model;
- Law on Salaries including bylaws for civil servants and public servants will be prepared and enacted.
- Continuance of the process of the reform of the salary system for the public sector – depended on the analyses conducted and Law on Salaries in the Public Sector, preparation of secondary legislation and collective agreements, application of the new system in case of existence of appropriate financial, fiscal conditions.

Significant progress has been achieved in the development of the financial system. PAR Strategy makes conditions for the most important subjects to create an efficient public finance system in the country, budget preparation process, public procurement, tenders, internal financial control, and external financial audit. There are some problems regarding the implementation of the existing legislation and procedures:

- Despite a decreasing trend, there are a high percentage of annulled tenders, approximately 20 %;
- Some subjective elements in evaluation of submitted offers can be noticed. In certain cases, the "most effective and lowest in price" criterion for selection is applied;
- Cases of insufficient application of the electronic auctions can be noticed
- There were quite long deadlines for tender evaluation process.
- Even though the bank guarantee is not mandatory pursuant to the Law, but optional, it sometimes creates barriers for some potential participants in the public tender procedures and this will be reconsidered and appropriate solution will be found;
- There are long deadlines for acting upon complaints in the State Appeals Commission, which must be substantively shortened
- Creation of more effective mechanisms for controlling the public tendering procedures, as well as the implementation of the contracted procurement is envisaged as a priority;
- Although the number of contracts without public announcement and through direct negotiation is significantly reduced, there is still space for improvements;
- Strengthening the capacity of relevant Institutions.

6. E-Government and e-administration in Macedonia

Building E-Government is a complex process that includes analyzing processes, developing solutions and procurement of equipment, changing the old and new laws. But this is only based. The transformation of administrative processes and procedures, the manner in which government institutions communicate with citizens, businesses and each other, is a reform which should give life to the technical solutions, developing E-Government in the true meaning of nasal technology as a facilitator, not a replacement. Macedonia has a mission to involve its economy with the world map of networked economies, to establish conditions for a leap forward in the development of the economy by accelerated introduction and massive efficient use of electronic communications and information technologies. Optimization of processes and improvement of the quality of services is strongly connected with the start of the process of the introduction of IT in public administration. Nevertheless, quality services need IT solutions and must be available on-line for those who have the possibility and are willing to use the services of the E-Government, E-Administration. The Government is fully aware that E-Government is not simply a set of Informatics and Computer Technologies projects. E-Government is strongly connected with streamlining of administrative procedures.

6.1. Principles of E-Government

E-Government Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia is based on the following principles among which are the principles confirmed in the Declaration of the Ministers of EU member and candidate countries in Brussels, in 2001.

1. E-Government which is fully focused on the needs of citizens - Services of e-Government should be constantly available, to be easily accessible and fully adapted to the needs of citizens. When considering on any electronic service, it should always think about the real needs of citizens, should always take into account their way of thinking, needs, etc. Taking into account that the relation state - citizen shall be real counterpart of the relation company - customer. Reformed services should make life easier and more comfortable for the citizens: they do not have to be physically present in order to use the services.

2. Confidentiality and security - Citizens must have faith in the e-government, as much as they have in the traditional government. Citizens must have confirmation that the electronic version of the official document that they received is not changed and that was really sent by the relevant institution.

3. Transparency - New technological advances will be accepted only if those who are affected by them, from public administration to the citizens and businesses, if they are fully involved in the activities performed in a transparent manner.

4. Fast, cheap and effective - E-Government, through the use of new information and communication technologies and appropriate organizational structures will enable providing e-services and information very fast. More efficient functioning of the public administration will contribute e-services and information to be cheaper and better for the citizens, rather than through conventional channels of communication counter, telephone.

5. Accessibility and Inclusion - Public administration services must be accessible to everyone without any discrimination. The digital gap, separation between those which use new technologies with no problem and those who have difficulties, should not exist. The proposed solutions should be without any barriers and be available to all.

6. Usefulness and simplicity - Offered E-services must be structured in an easy, clear and simple way. To obtain approval and acceptance by users, forms and portals must have a consistent design. Navigation and menus should be logical, with known structure, that users can easily find what they seek.

7. Cooperation - The implementation of e-services work best when there is cooperation between all levels of e-government, including organizational and technical elements. There should be cooperation between state institutions in all segments based on the introduction of new technological solutions.

8. Standardization - State administration will function as a coordinated mechanism on central and local level. This will allow users to communicate with the authorities to use their services with the same quality, speed through the same media, regardless of who provides the specified service.

9. Interoperability - Different types of systems should be able to communicate with each other, regardless of their platform. E-Government solutions will be designed according to generally accepted standards.

10. Participation in decision-making - E-Democracy, E-Government takes into account the needs and wishes of citizens, businesses, NGOs and other institutions and includes all parts in its operations. Government will develop tools for effective public debate and participation in democratic decision-making.

6.2. Measures and instruments for developing E-Government

It can be stated that the Ministry of Information Society and Administration of Macedonia is the basic authorized institution for developing information society and is in charge to

coordinate appropriate measures for its implementation. It is developed The National Strategy for e-Government 2010-2012, which defines the main strategic goals and action plan to allow increased usage of Information and Communication Technologies, for a more efficient Public Administration. Strategy for E-Government is sets out the strategic objectives of the Government in the years to come, in terms of taking advantage of the benefits of information - communication technologies for integrated, efficient and modern operation of public administration. The strategy contains all the necessary elements, vision, goals and benefits, defining principles for the development in coordination with EU recommendations. It identifies the main stakeholders of development, the priorities and measures to speed up the development. The strategic measures are classified in 3 directions: projects, e-services and initiatives. Developments of 13 **projects** are predicted:

- System management of documents in the state administration;
- The system for issuing digital certificates of public administration;
- Interconnection and use of registers and databases between state authorities and institutions – Interoperability;
- E-documents;
- E-ID cards;
- Web portal for E-Democracy;
- Managing relations with citizens;
- Information Security;
- IT standards in public institutions;
- E-payment of administrative fees;
- Complete e-treasury system;
- E-Cadaster;
- Single Window for import and export and One stop shop

There are much more **E-Services**, i.e. 17:

- Personal income tax - E-taxes for individuals;
- Get the police – E-alarm police;
- Submitting data in the Statistical Office - Web - collecting statistical Data;
- Use of Social Security - Exercising the right to child support;
- Registration tax irregularities and corruption;
- Use of Social Security - Exercise of rights for social benefits;
- Unemployment Certificates;
- Vehicle registration;
- Building permit;
- Application for Higher Education;
- Certificates - Issuance of Certificate of Citizenship;
- Publication of change residence;
- Permissions related to environment;
- Establishment of a new system for processing customs declarations;
- E-system for registration/deregistration of employment for the budget and public institutions;
- Web portal for geographic information system of the Center for Crisis Management;

- Health care services.

There are 4 **Initiatives** for E-administration:

- Development of web - sites of municipalities;
- Development of ICT staff in the state administration;
- Training for E-Government and
- Promotion of e-services.

From legal aspect, several laws and legislative documents cover the organization of e-Government and e-Administration in Macedonia. The Law on Electronic Commerce from 2007 enables electronic documents to be treated as official contracts and defines their legibility as paper documents. The legislation about electronic signatures and electronic documents specifies the process of using electronic messages, like time stamp, system identifier etc. In reality, this law was followed by 4 bylaws in 2001 and it started to be used during 2007 by issuing the 5th bylaw which regulates the institutions that can be certificate authorities. The Law on Electronic Management from 2009 was initiated after beginning with a relevant project on establishing the document and workflow management infrastructure for government institutions. This law regulates the work of the ministries and other government authorities in the exchange of data and documents in electronic format, in relation to the implementation of administrative services by electronic means. These acts regulate unique environment and communication, certification of information systems, format and content of administrative services by e-means such as electronic documents, standards and regulations for e-communication; technical requirements; security of information systems; format and content of administration of data bases. During the last 10 years, the E-Government development showed an enormous growth in Macedonia, where the process of initial digitalization and computerization in E-Infrastructure stage was realized although this process was finished in late 90's in the EU. The process of setting up the communication infrastructure and enabling all inclusive broadband access is on-going along with realization of e-services. Several benchmarks show that Macedonia scores levels of E-Government sophistication comparable with those of Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania, but at the same time there is a delay factor of 5-8 years with the average values in the EU, meaning that in 2010 Macedonia is on the level that the average EU countries had in 2003-2005. Nowadays, the EU aims at implementing the e-Impact phase, while Macedonia will need 2-5 years to finish the E-Services phase. As it is shown on Table 1 use of Internet in Macedonia is growing, from 56.7% in 2011 to 68.1% in 2014, and that is further step forward in the necessity of developing E-services.

Table 1. Internet users in Macedonia

Internet users In Macedonia (aged 15-74)

2014	68.1	%
2013	65.4	%
2012	57.5	%
2011	56.7	%

Source: State Statistical Office of Macedonia
http://www.stat.gov.mk/IndikatorIT_en.aspx?id=27

Penetration in households in Macedonia is also growing as it is shown in Table 2. In 2011 percentage was 55%, and in 2014 it is 68.3%, which is very good, and in next years it will grow yet.

Table 2. Households with Internet access in Macedonia

Households with Internet access in Macedonia

2014	68.3	%
2013	65.1	%
2012	58.3	%
2011	55.0	%

Source: State Statistical Office of Macedonia
http://www.stat.gov.mk/IndikatorITS_en.aspx?id=27

In business sector usage of internet is bigger, as it is shown in Table 3 below, from 88.6% in 2011 to very high 93% in 2014. That means that almost all business subjects have and use internet, which is the best recommendation that E-government and E-administration should be more developed and used in the future.

Table 3. Enterprises with 10 or more persons employed with access to the Internet

Enterprises with 10 or more persons employed with access to the Internet

2014	93	%
2013	92	%
2012	88	%
2011	88.6	%

Source: State Statistical Office of Macedonia
http://www.stat.gov.mk/IndikatorITS_en.aspx?id=27

During the past years, intensively is worked to improve the business environment and the conditions for pursuing businesses, but further improvement is still necessary. According to the relevant rankings of business environments "Doing Business 2014" of the World Bank, Forbes, Macedonia is ranked highly due to the conducted reforms in the following areas: business start-ups, obtaining building permits, employing, registration of property, obtaining loans, protection of the investors and tax payment. However, it should be mentioned that these rankings do not appraise certain segments which are important for the business, such as the development of the infrastructure, market size, etc.

The **main problems and barriers** in the current E-Government, and E-Administration level of development are:

- *Late process of the computerization;*

- Certain *inconsistency* among the existing pieces of legislation-that support the establishment and realization of e-services, for example legislation on the electronic documents and management define usage of e-documents, but legislation on higher education, value added taxes, archive etc., determine usage of stamps, handwritten signatures, paper based indexes and "classical" documents;
- There is still a *low level of awareness* and usage of e-services and its benefits;
- Some registers and e-services *are not planned* within the Action Plan attached to the National Strategy for e-Government up to 2012 - for example, the register of citizens, the register of waste, the register for environmental pollution, then the realization of high speed infrastructure supporting interoperable services and documents with the EU recommendations, like driving licenses, passports, personal identity cards, etc.;
- There is *no monitoring* mechanism for the quality of the realized E-Services, as well as no user centric and pro-active portals;
- *Low budget* for E-Government services realization can be noticed;
- There is still a *low level of educated civil service managers* and project coordinators;
- There is still a *low level of specification* of administrative processes and procedures, and low level of their connection with the information infrastructures.

The **main** actions for development of e-Government and e-Administration can be summarized as:

- The *EU recommendation* for interoperable frameworks will be followed including e-procurement, exchange of business documents, exchange of information about environment protection, and other government information for citizen, business, properties etc. available for public usage);
- There is an immediate need for *increased* offer of *e-Government* services to boost its usage and increase efficiency, economy and overall growth;
- There is a need to *increase conditions for a pro-active user* centric services with intensive usage of e-documents;
- There is a need for development of the *high speed inclusive broadband internet* infrastructure to allow both businesses and citizens to use the benefits of E-Services.

These actions will be determined as priorities and will allow not just web existence and availability, but also a complete interoperable environment with practical benefits for the users that will intensify its usage.

The Government intends to build the further development of e-Government in such way that all horizontal solutions will be developed by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, particularly:

- *Further development of* e-Government portal, strengthening of the information component and development to the service and integration level;
- Development of *e-identification and authentication* for the purposes of e-Government;
- *E-payment* of services provided through the E-Government portal.

The following key activities are envisioned:

- *Adoption of legislation* and additional administrative framework to allow benefits of e-Government;
- *Specification of administrative procedures* and quality of service implementation, followed by business re-engineering of processes to allow the implementation of appropriate e-solutions;

- Further *development of horizontal solutions* which will be provided by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration for all Public Administration authorities, such as joint web-portal for "e-Administration", e-applications, e-identification, e-payment, e-delivery;
- *E-document management system* solution applicable for all the Public Administration authorities;
- Within the frames of the budget possibilities, *one-stop information center*-portal and call center for citizens and businesses will be fully operational;
- Introduction of *on-line services* for businesses;
- Introduction of *5 high impact integrated on-line services* for citizens-application, payment, data integration, delivery of administrative decision/document have been thoroughly streamlined;
- *Increased budget* and realization of projects for E-Government services with special accent on interoperability;
- *Raising awareness* about E-Government services and training about qualified project managers and training of civil servants about E-Government usage will be conducted on a regular basis;
- *Interoperability* framework for the Public Administration authorities fully developed and implemented.

Future instruments for capacity building and key activities which are envisioned for development E-Government in the future are:

- Starting the *introduction of an IT-supported system for the timely operation* of the administration in administrative decision making procedures;
- In the budget possibilities, introduction of an *IT-supported "barometer of quality"* - a system of constant measurement of user-satisfaction with administrative service;
- Development of *special training programs* focused on customer relations;
- Analysis of the present regulation of *working hours for customers and improvements*;
- Implementation of the rule that *administrative authorities will acquire data from official register themselves* and that in no case citizens will be requested to provide data which are held in official registers;
- *Simplification of payments* of administrative services: payments will be possible using all modern means of payment-cash, credit and debit cards, e-payment;
- The continuation for *removal of administrative burden*.

7. Conclusions

From all stated above it can be concluded that:

1. Surely it can be concluded that the PAR in Macedonia goes in very good direction and that the basic foundations and pillars are set on a strong ground.
2. Measures and instruments are well designed and all stakeholders have to support the realization of this important process significant for the whole social system.
3. Every person, legal entity, any institution and everything as a system, must contribute to the implementation of the PAR, in order to better tomorrow for all, because this process is not only important for the state and its Euro-Atlantic integration, but above all, it is very important for each subject separately. This process will improve the standard of living and quality of life. Therefore it

will have to follow closely from the whole professional, political as well as the whole public, as this process takes place and what effects produced.

4. As a researcher in this area, my opinion remain on attitude that PAR is inevitable and long-term process, which must be done, even sometimes causing dissatisfaction, obstacles and problems, but in the long term it is for the good of all. Everybody can help, and to consider the further implementation of the PAR, together with the following challenges, prospects, problems, concerns, and successes that will be achieved in order to study and analyze in the subsequent researches that will be created.

5. It is important for all to know that the Republic of Macedonia is going forward, regardless of all the pressures and problems that exist. Macedonia certainly steps forward, and it should be a motto, which will lead through all obstacles, pressures and temptations that will successfully overcome all together in the future.

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