

## Social Aspects of E-Governance

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### **Abstract**

*The main purpose of this paper is to determine the social impact of services developed so far in the e-government in the Republic of Kosovo, with reference to the opinion of some citizens. The survey was conducted on a small sample case in order to analyze how citizens are familiar with electronic administration, services, and above all the socio-economic benefits that it brings, but also to present the deficiencies and the steps that should be taken to overcome some gaps created in access and use of internet - electronic services.*

*Results show that most people are aware of the services that electronic administration is offering, but also a part of them do not use these services. What should be done to improve the situation in this regard.*

*After analyzing the results, are given some recommendations for improvement of the situation.*

**Keywords:** e- governance, administration, results, social impact, analysis.

### **Entry**

The use of information and communication (ICT) has transformed the lives of people, especially in the last decade. Accelerating transactions, goods and services, has implemented changes in everyday social and professional life of people, increasing the amount of information available, in the private sectors, as well as in the public sector. Today, Information and Communication Technology segment is considered very important segment for the development of the economy and the ability to access that majority of services are considered as a key factor to personal and social progress. Instead of capital, information is becoming more and more the basic unit of social and individual growth.

A special role in the social development in this regard belongs to e-government that includes the use of information technology in public administration in order to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability. The purpose of the citizens who provide these e-services is that they could be afforded access to information of public importance in a much easier way and with the maximum possible savings in time and financial resources. According to several studies of the EU from 2005 to date, the e-government services actually provide concrete benefits for citizens, especially in terms of savings time thus increasing flexibility for other activities. What emerges as the primary issue is the ability of citizens to

use all the benefits of e- governance and the issue of equal access and usability of information and services offered. In recent times, this problem is called the digital separation ( gap ) that results in the gap between those who have and who do not have access to the Internet and other information systems.

About 95 % of Internet users now live in developed countries or in the process of developing. Typical users of e-government are also citizens of those countries. Is it possible to overcome the digital division and development of a society where socio - economic deterministic variables will always be smaller? Is it possible to prevent the emergence of e- elites and e-subclasses? Is it possible that the gap in terms of Internet use and access to e- services is reduced, or with the passing of time will deepen even more?.

This paper examines the concept of e-government and the concept of the digital division and that aims to reduce the digital division and the construction of a more social information society. Particular reference is given to the recommendations for reducing the digital gap in the strategy of development of information society in Kosovo.

### **Digital Distribution - inequalities in access to the internet and use of the internet**

Digital division is a concept that shows a gap that has emerged between those who are taking advantage of new technologies and those who for many different reasons, do not receive those services. The problem mainly has to do with the issue of access to ICT-s and the possibilities of its use, if somehow the access is provided. Thus, this paper aims to examine the difference between the two aspects of the digital division. The first digital partition is referred to a different level of access to the Internet, which is mainly in function of socio - economic development and technological infrastructure and the other digital division is due to the different possibilities of using the internet which is associated mainly with educational status and personal motivation. In this study, the digital division will primarily involve separation caused by different levels of Internet access.

According to P. Norris (2001:4), there are three types of digital division: global, social and democratic. While global division deals with various options to access and use the Internet between developed countries and developing countries, the social division shows the gap between those who have access and those who do not do within a country. Finally, democratic division refers to the difference between those who use digital resources to mobilize the community and that they participate in public life.

International Telecommunication Union, an organization within the UN has developed digital indices, an approach that is based on an information technology and communication on a global scale. The index includes eight variables from five areas: infrastructure readiness, access, educational level, quality of ICT services and Internet usage.

Similar positions can be distinguished in terms of social division. Increasing the importance of the internet in social life, community groups can systematically be excluded because of the inability to access or use of ICT. Numerous studies have shown that socio - economic variables, such as gender, age , race , urban / rural , have a major influence on Internet usage . For example, a study conducted in North Carolina in the United States showed that important variables in rural areas, belonging to different minorities and gender, African-American origin, have less access to the Internet and use less Internet. (Wilson, 2003.174). The problem of social division is related to overall economic inequality within each society. Initiatives of well treatment "services for all" should come mainly from specific countries and organizations as may be the EU (which in terms of social inclusion that treats IT as one of the main goals in creating society comprehensive information). Although many studies have shown that the gap is decreasing in recent years, cannot claim with certainty that social sharing has satisfactory positive trends. In this sense, education, skill development, motivation, etc, are crucial factors for the reduction of social separation, which have driven by the interaction of technological progress, market mechanisms and public policy.

Rose emphasizes the existence of four phases of use of the Internet to provide information and services to citizens by the government : (1) a minimum level which provides basic information that websites are often out of date, (2) an enhanced level of which provides answers to important questions, where the site is updated regularly, (3) the level of interaction where citizens are active users and where there is the possibility of "discharge papers" and (4) the level of transactions that includes the ability to express thoughts and taking decisions, information operations, sending forms, etc.,

### **Republic of Kosovo in the path of computerization of society - Activities to reduce the digital gap**

The development of information society is set up as one of the strategic objectives of the Government of Kosovo for the period 2009-2015 +. Government considers it necessary to take coordinated activities, inclusive and dynamic action for faster progress in the information society , in order to comply with the recommendations of the European Union, citizens and businesses have the highest quality and wider usage of information for active participation in global trends . In this sense, the main objectives of the e-Kosovo are to "allow citizens to receive information in time and be active participants in society through a network information system , comprehensive exchange of information which will be fast and efficient for all citizens "

Therefore, e- governance has a direct or indirect impact, in the four areas of governance and public administration (Brown , 2005) : economic and social programs implemented by the state , its relations with citizens and the rule of law ( mainly the development of e - democracy ) , internal administrative affairs, the political process and the relationship with the environment .

Analysis of development of information society in Kosovo and especially trading its social aspect is realized from a study with a random sample of 64 people aged between 18 and 70 years. The aim of the study was to determine the gap that exists in the use of services offered by the information society on the rural / urban report, age group, then rural, hilly and mountainous location , etc. .

The main findings of the study regarding the development of information society in Kosovo and the state of development in comparison with the EU countries show that:

1. Kosovo citizens are not left far behind in the use of the Internet compared with EU countries;
2. Financial and banking companies operating in Kosovo excel in the use of ICT;
3. e-Government services are still in the early stages of development and acceptance from citizens as well as from the private sector;
4. e-Learning has a relatively high quotas and ICT equipment in educational institutions are relatively satisfactory.

### **Examples of social inequality**

In our study are addressed several aspects of social inequality which will be presented in the sequel. Differences in access in the information systems or specifically in digital services are more prevalent in relationships town / village / hilly mountain village. The results show that in remote areas a significant number of communities don't use these services for the absence of technological equipment, or lack of access to the Internet. In this report is not included the quality of services and equipment. An important factor in this analysis is the inability to perform the services to several social classes. If we refer, for example, the level of illiteracy in Kosovo which is approaching 8 % , this difference is even more drastic in rural-urban ratio , because the largest percentage of illiterates live in rural areas . The analogy that computer illiteracy is equally dangerous with graphic illiteracy deepens further the digital gap which increases even more the social discrimination. Report of the respondents (town / village) was 50:50

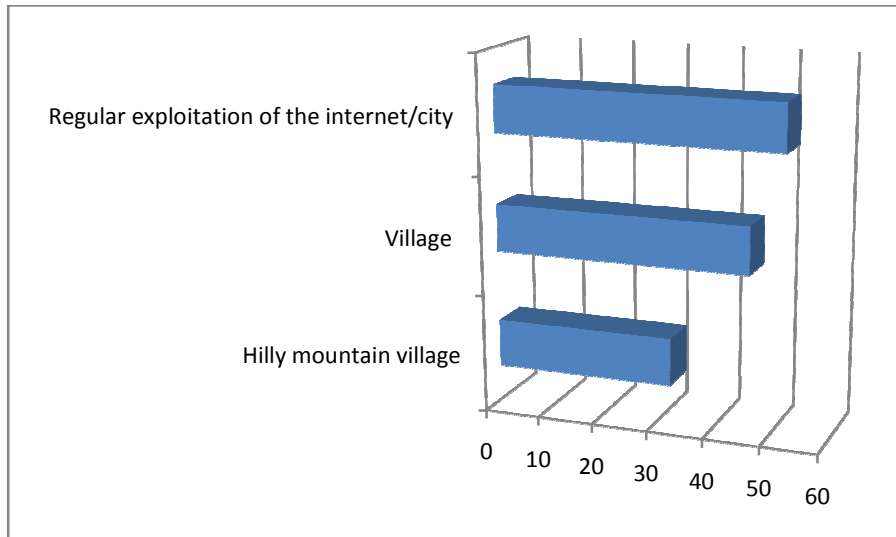


Fig.1. Exploitation and Internet access in family economies

The presented results do not match the statements of Strategy for e- Governance 2009-2015+ approved by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo, in which it says " we will create an environment where services provided by e-government, business and citizen of the Republic of Kosovo to be able to use them from the most remote places of our country. "

In the chapter on social benefits and Strategy it is said: "With the implementation of e-government strategy, Kosovo society will have major benefits. Benefits will be economic and social including modernization of administration, education, health, justice, security, business development, trade development, agricultural development, increasing the budget, growth of democracy, the development of culture, scientific research, different statistics, etc.

Some of the most important benefits will be:

- Creates an electronic counter where services are taken from all parties including people with disabilities;
- Reducing administrative burdens and costs;
- Will increase transparency and efficiency in public administration;
- Create an effective interrelation student-teacher- parent in Education;
- Increases security and reliability to the justice;
- Fights and decreases organized crime;
- digitizes the data and automates the processing of the information;
- Reduces the time needed for decision making;
- Reduces the level of corruption;
- Creates space for increasing the investment;
- Citizens and businesses realize their obligations through the Internet;
- Realization of income electronically is monitored better;
- Facilitates the communication with the public, especially in the rural areas;
- The information that is published and online training affects the building of knowledge and improve technology in all areas of life;
- For businesses will be spending cuts;
- Present national achievements in the world;
- Prepare the country for European integration, etc."

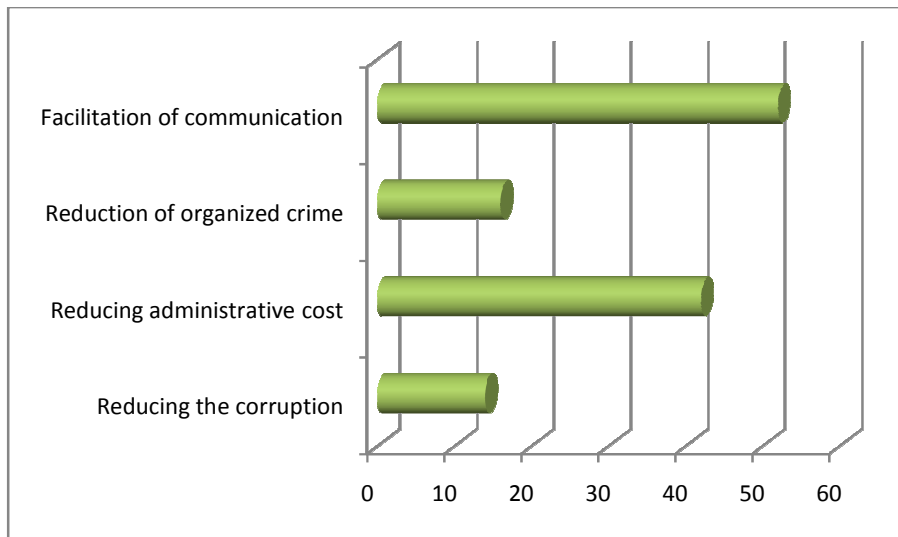


Fig.2. Impacts of electronic services in some socio-economic components

As the chart above clearly shows, exactly on key elements which have socio-economic interferences, civic perception is that information system or e-services have not reached the expectations.

### Conclusions

The problem of digital division is listed as one of the main obstacles for the development of an inclusive information society, in a global level as well as in the European Community. Numerous documents have been approved, programs and specific actions that aim reducing inequalities in access to the Internet, and the possibilities of its use. The European Union is particularly active in this regard in relation to the goals of the Lisbon strategy that sets expectations for transforming the EU into "an economy based in knowledge".

Inequalities in access to the Internet and the possibilities of its use will probably always exist, although the reduction of the digital division can act toward reducing global economic imbalances and strengthen the technological base. This task can be achieved by joint efforts of international institutions, governments, non-governmental sector, private sector and scientific research institutions. To realize the potential of e-government are presented significant obstacles that exist on the demand and the ability of individuals to use e-government services. Actions to increase the level of education of the population and the increasing number of information services and e-government provides, are some of the factors that will increase usability. A special role should be given to the problem of encouraging citizen participation and involvement in the political process, which is associated with the overall level of democratization and the elimination of disparities.

These results should be a signal to policy makers in further defining of the priorities and activities in order to enable the reduction of the digital division, and that social inequality for the use of information services, in following years begin to melt.

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