

## **E-Government Initiatives: Multinational Perspective**

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While private companies have continued to take advantage of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to improve their businesses, services offered by government organizations have remained deficient over the years. Bureaucracy and the low rate of change in the public domain have caused much criticism of government services and the resulting outcomes in terms of government and citizen relationships. This has often led to a low public participation and trust in government services. Public organizations have realized the limitations of their Information Technology (IT) infrastructures and are seeking ways to improve their efficiency, to provide better services to their citizens.

During the last decade, the concept of electronic government has emerged as a credible solution to improve such services as it allows people to access public services from within their own homes or offices. Electronic government applications support the delivery of online services, reduce government bureaucracy and provide the opportunity to increase citizens' access to government.

The role of government in delivering better services is perceptible with many public organizations transforming their strategies and deploying electronic government applications. Electronic government applications are considered to be a special case of ICT enabled business process change and it is therefore worth investigating. There are many substantial benefits of electronic government initiatives such as strengthening trust between governments and citizens and improving efficiency by reducing the time spent upon manual tasks. Additional benefits of basic public services include their interactive nature, accessibility for all, and utilization of the potential of broadband networks and of multi-platform access. This is done to utilize the availability of new technologies and enhance the delivery of services and information to their citizens.

Various countries face different issues and challenges as they design and implement efficient and effective e-government systems. In the case of US, for example, democratic values need to be incorporated into the design and implementation of e-government systems because it involves more than merely improving the instrumental processes of government (Brewer,

Neubauer and Geiselhart 2006). Thus, the authors argue that public administrators should take an active role in designing and implementing e-government systems to instill democratic values and ensure that democratic processes and outcomes are realized. The result will be communications infrastructure that can help government agencies respond effectively to chaotic events while still retaining their essential democratic nature.

The northern neighbor of US, Canada, is facing a different issue regarding the e-government. The problem is in the emergence of e-government as primarily a set of national and provincial strategies for public sector reforms and rising importance of municipal government and local governance systems. Roy (2006) believes that solution will depend on how provincial and federal governments respond to the erosion of public trust by adapting their own structures, as well as the effectiveness of emerging top-down mechanisms being deployed to strengthen the infrastructure of cities and communities.

In the European Union, the challenges arise from attempting to develop a policy in an area in which the Treaties do not grant it any powers. When the e-Europe program was launched within the Lisbon Strategy, the EU's Institutions were aware that they lacked the regulatory framework and that the bulk of the execution of any decisions that might be adopted was going to depend on the actions of the member states. However, the program was very successful in accomplishing its objectives, although further effort is needed in creating the "single face of government," which optimizes the use of multiple channels for service delivery and more focused on customer (citizen) needs and results (their satisfaction); also, less technology and more organizational change is necessary (Weerakkody, Janssen, and Hjort-Madsen 2007).

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