



Global Business Dialogue on Electronic Commerce

## **e-Government Recommendations**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In business activities today, what is produced and offered is more important than how we produce them.

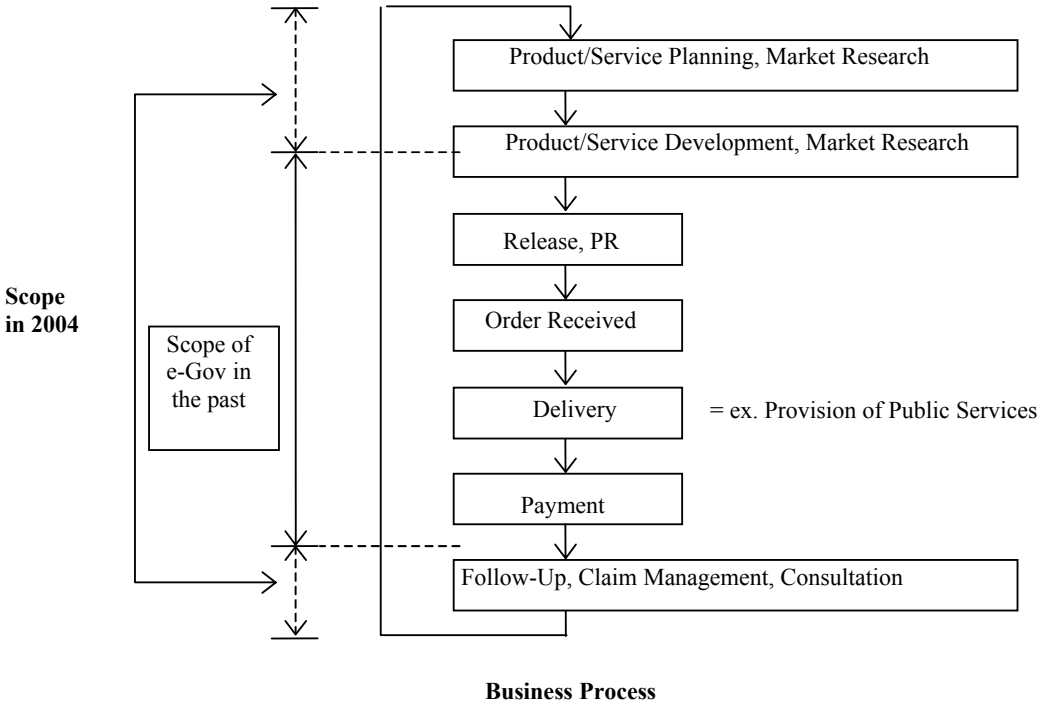
In point of fact, if the words “speaker”, “contributor”, and “voter” are replaced by “consumer”, “purchaser”, and “statements” and/or the words “contributions” and “opinions” are substituted with “inquiries” and “orders” of products and services, it is readily seen that the very same environment is necessary for e-commerce. Citizens and businesses making requests or opinions to Government are no different than consumers who make similar requests to shops or companies.

It is important to gather opinions from customers efficiently and effectively, responding to their needs, to ensure that their wishes are reflected in products and services. This is true for Government and administrative agencies as well.

Therefore, “e-Participation” is, in a certain sense, the same as marketing activities and CRM (Customer Relationship Management) in the private sector.

From 2001-2003, the GBDe’s e-Government Working Group made recommendations on issues such as the provision of public services using IT technology, as well as other issues including the sale of goods, and payments between Government/administrative agencies and businesses/citizens. These topics fall within the broad scope of “e-Government”.

In 2004, the working group has continued to focus on this objective, and has also examined processes around the core of this value proposition.



## **1. Requirements for an e-Participation environment**

For the opinions of businesses and citizens to be reflected promptly and accurately, the following environment is necessary:

1. Secure networks where confidentiality of the speaker and the statements are protected (as discussed in the GBDe Securing Electronic Transactions (SET) Working Group);
2. Ubiquitous networks where people can voice and send their opinions from anywhere, anytime (discussed in the GBDe Ubiquitous Society (USF) Working Group);
3. Simple procedures for contributions;
4. Transparency when making clear who the contact person is for requests/opinions and which section is responsible for processing it at a given time;
5. Prompt reply, regardless of the content of the response; and
6. When some fee or cost is required, the ability to easily access (send requests/opinions) and receive a response.

## **2. e-Participation: Examples of the application of technology**

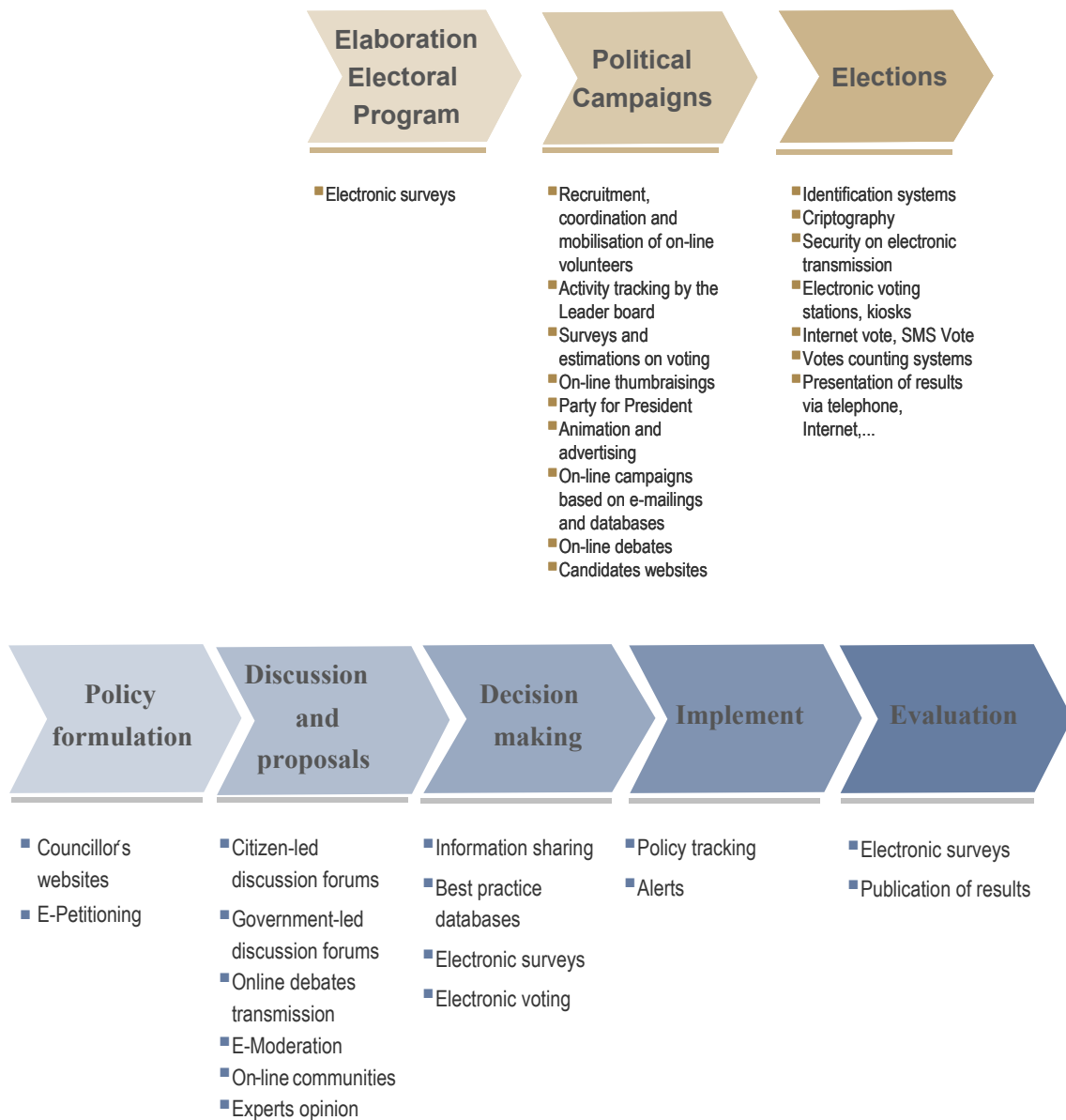
The participation of citizens in effective policymaking is essential, in the same way that the opinion of the users in the design or in the evaluation of a product is the basis for the continued development of improved versions.

Technology can provide the means to support this process. Examples of the application of technology that are currently being used are:

- Electronic voting stations
- Internet vote, vote online, SMS vote
- E-Counting systems
- Electoral campaigns via Internet or via satellite
- Automation of data management
- Presentation of results via telephone, MTT, PC, Internet
- Mobile services
- E-voting in General Assembly Meetings of companies
- Documents accesible to the public via Internet

- Identification systems, security and cryptography
- Customer relationship management tools
- Knowledge management tools
- Marketing campaigns via the web

### EXAMPLES OF APPLICATION TO e-DEMOCRACY (Public Sector)



### **3. e-Participation: Main advantages of the use of ICT**

Some of the advantages that the use of ICT can bring are:

- Consultations can be more interactive and the results can be obtained almost immediately.
- New technologies can improve levels of participation (in particular in local consultation exercises).
- New technologies may be used to attract some segments (e.g., young people) whose voices are not usually heard during traditional consultations.
- It brings transparency to the process since the results of e-Consultations upon which decisions have been adopted may be published on the web.
- Lowering the cost of the consultation process. Additionally, the use of ICT allows citizens or businesses easier access to the issues under discussion.
- The use of ICT in consultations may help to increase the number of users of the existing initiatives based on certification. This would allow a decrease of the cost per user, which in turn, would allow a generalisation of the use of certificates.

### **4. Frameworks of e-Participation**

The following frameworks are necessary for governments to consider e-Participation:

- From a public sector perspective, the creation of an e-Participation environment can be a powerful tool for the future development of democracy. It is also an essential part in the development of e-commerce and in the interaction of opinions between the private sector and Government.
- It would be desirable to create a common and shared environment in which the public and the private sectors could operate. This would increase the number of overall users and reduce cost per transaction.

- Using this environment for e-commerce will make businesses and citizens aware of its application for e-Participation, and its significance will be greater.
- The GBDe recommends that Government should promote the creation of this environment. Although there are challenges, we believe that they are able to be solved.

## 5. Recommendations for Governments

It could be said that the public sector is walking along the same path that the private sector completed some time ago. Government can benefit from the experiences of the private sector.

Implementation of e-Participation, as well as many other e-Government applications, is a slow process that requires a transition period.

In order to facilitate this transition the GBDe recommends:

- a. Create a culture of consultation and dialogue which will improve the communication currently lacking between citizen and Government.** e-Participation should not be viewed as a substitute for existing methods of involvement but should add value to them. The development of e-Participation tools should be viewed as an evolving process linked to the confidence and assessment of citizens, representatives and governments.
- b. Start with local Government.** Local Government plays a key role in this process and is the best candidate to drive it, since it is the main contact in a citizen's every day life. This is the level of Government that more directly represents the interests of the general public.
- c. Establish criteria to determine which decisions could be taken in a participatory form.** Not all politics and decisions can be taken in a participatory way. Some decisions require very specific knowledge and expertise.
- d. Provide a citizen space for consultations and a public forum for discussion.** This space must include a register of central government consultations. Citizens can be notified in different ways, including e-mail and SMS.

- e. **Produce e-Participation guidelines.** Experiences in e-consultations show that, in general, Government does not have clear guidance on how to make the best use of electronic media for this purpose. To overcome this, the GBDe recommends the development of a toolkit and mandatory guidelines for departments in charge of coordinating these kinds of initiatives.
- f. **Bring the citizenship closer to the new technologies.** In order to make the most effective use of these new technologies it is important that citizens receive adequate training, support and guidance.
- g. **Drive pilot programs, share and analyze experiences and develop policies on the basis of best practices.**
- h. **Pay attention to change management among public servants.** It is important to prevent the perception that decisions are now taken by people who haven't the same level of skills and experience.
- i. **Security and confidentiality.** Viability and trust are key issues in e-Participation.

## 6. How the private sector can help

The following are barriers to the realization of e-Democracy:

1. Regulation of the legal system;
2. Lack of appropriate planning;
3. Self-regulation and a concern regarding the possibility that private information could be leaked; and
4. The use of the wrong technology for the job.

The GBDe believes that the private sector can cooperate to eliminate the barriers listed in points 2 and 4 in the following ways:

- Encourage closer cooperation between Government and the private sector in the definition of e-Participation models.
- Match the private sector's know-how and experience with Government's needs.

- Develop platforms and tools to improve trust and confidence. In particular, it is necessary to work on the interoperability of the existing infrastructures.
- Maximize the use of common standards.
- Examine how technologies used in other fields can be applied to e-Participation.