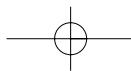
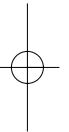
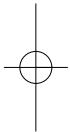
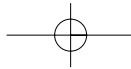


**Improving Performance and Innovation
in Public Administration: analyses
and researches among
European e-Government experiences**





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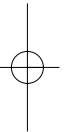
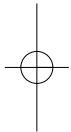
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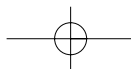
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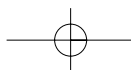
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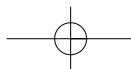
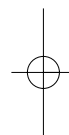
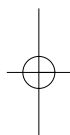
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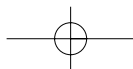
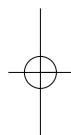
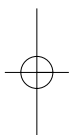
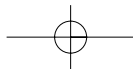
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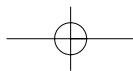
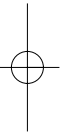
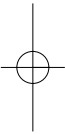
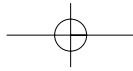
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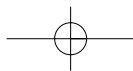
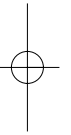
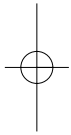
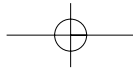
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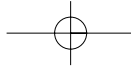
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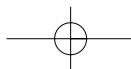
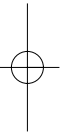
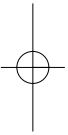
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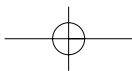
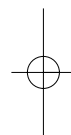
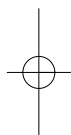
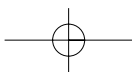






Foreword





The development of new information and communication technologies has led, in recent years, to a radical transformation of society. Communications, access to information on production processes, the various branches of the public administration: there is no aspect or dimension of life that has not been revolutionised by the new technologies. In particular, public administrations throughout the world, far from acting as mere terminal points of the process of renewal underway, are playing an active role.

An important step in this direction has been e-Government. As is common knowledge, e-Government means *“the use of information and communication technology in the public administration, combined with organisational change, plus the acquisition of new skills, all for the purpose of improving public services and the democratic process, in addition to sustaining public policies”* (European Union). From what has been stated, there is no mistaking the far-reaching scope of the concept of e-Government, which includes the formulation and implementation of a whole series of policies necessary for the effective introduction of ICT. More specifically, the concept covers both the so-called **“electronic or digital administration”** and **“e-Democracy”**. The first term refers to all those initiatives meant to simplify the activities and the mode of organisation of the public administration, so as to provide citizens and users with better services; as for the second term, it regards initiatives that allow citizens to take an active part in public life (electronic voting, forums, public enquiries etc.). In other words, the term *e-Government* designates the sum total of policies and actions designed to favour the introduction of I.C.T. within the Public Administration, for the purpose of improving the services provided to citizens, with respect to their effectiveness, economic and operating efficiency and level of performance. The supply of more efficient services to citizens and businesses, together with the innovation and simplification of administrative procedures, are the main areas of development sparked by the change that came in the wake of the computerisation of the public administration. It is no accident that the noteworthy structural reforms implemented in recent years have had as their objective the promotion of a new administrative culture, meaning one no longer based on rigid procedures and dysfunctional formal practice, but rather geared towards results and performance. In keeping with this approach, the supply of effective, flexible, quality services to citizens and businesses through a drastic reduction in bureaucratic elephantiasis has become the primary mission.

Among the initiatives of international scope promoted to this end by the European Commission in recent years, the most important has been the so-called **e-Government Action Plan 2010**. This document contains the official declaration in which all the member nations agree to promote, within their respective nations, the alignment and harmonisation of the different national policies on e-Government and the new technologies, completing the task by the end of 2010.

The main objectives include:

- e-Government services that are easily accessible, user-friendly and transparent;
- an interoperable, on-line system capable of guaranteeing recognition of electronic identities, so that the citizens and businesses of any member country can access public services and branches of the public administration throughout Europe;
- the preparation of many more instruments designed to stimulate the participation of citizens and encourage their involvement in decision-making processes;
- an increase in the level of e-public procurement to 100%.

As is widely known, the *e-Government Action Plan* for 2010 reiterates the points of the previous Action Plan for 2005-7, confirming them unreservedly and further proposing the ambitious goal of making 100% of public procurement procedures available electronically, while arriving at actual use of e-Procurement for at least 50% of all such operations. Public procurement is a key sector of the European economy, seeing that it accounts for 16% of gross domestic product. It follows that the modernisation and opening-up of cross-European markets for procurement constitute key factors when it comes to European competitiveness and to the creation of new business opportunities. The implementation of new I.C.T. advances can contribute to the achievement of noteworthy reductions in costs, to the removal of market barriers and to the establishment of greater efficiency. At the same time, there can be no overlooking the risk that an unbalanced development of such technologies could result in a fragmentation of the unified market. In addition to the unquestioned benefits, the proliferation of new advances in I.C.T. could also lead to the rise of new barriers and obstacles to the freedom of movement of individuals, merchandise and services in the E.U., in the event that their implementation were not coordinated and rendered interoperable. The different national initiatives must be harmonised, in order to guarantee that, throughout Europe, each citizen is full European citizen. In other words, each individual must be able to access the same services, no matter where in Europe he or she happens to be. And this can only be achieved through the creation of an efficient system of data-sharing among the various European public administrations: no small task, given the scarce cooperation shown by the various parties involved. An apt example is the attitude of public employees, who, throughout Europe, bemoan the lack of information and data-sharing, but then, as shown by a number of surveys, prove to be the first ones not to believe in the benefits of e-Government for users. This resistance from public employees remains the primary obstacle. They should be involved in the projects of implementation, their proposals should be taken into consideration, and incentives should be offered. So while there can be no doubt that the enactment and use of these technologies by the different public administrations constitutes a key resource that reaches citizens in the form of improved services and more efficient public offices, it is also true that the benefits which digital technology can generate depend, and in a very direct manner, on the operating skills of their users. When discussing the topic of innovation and change in public administrations, it is not sufficient to consider automating the existing procedures, as was done in the initial period of e-Government. In fact, the necessary innovation is a system-wide effort that simultaneously and suitably involves various participants and factors: the personnel inside the public administration, citizens, internal organisations, the infrastructural instruments, the laws etc..

For any change to be effective, simply putting the technology in operation is not enough. Instead, learning procedures must be activated, providing the various subjects involved in the process with an adequate set of skills and technological capabilities. Naturally, this is true both for the high-ranking officials of the public administration, who bear responsibility for understanding and governing this major opportunity, and for all public employees, not to mention citizens, who are increasingly looking for public services and information on the Web. Each of these groups must at least possess the so-called basic *e-skills*, in addition to the different sets of know-how specific to their roles.

It is no accident, therefore, that the reforms currently underway within the European Union, in addition to being geared towards transferring the traditional services of the public administration to Internet, with all the attendant benefits, are also aimed at eliminating any gaps in knowledge. Investing in innovative services, know-how and

social relations, so as to put into practice programs for improving and learning the new technologies, will reduce the difference between those who are able to use them and those who lack that ability.

Another question of particular importance is the change in the very outlook of the activities of the public administration, which are no longer focussed on the needs of the public administration itself, but on those of citizens. The term *user-centricity* refers to this change in perspective. Under this new scenario, civil society moves beyond its role as the passive subject of administrative acts, becoming a social protagonist capable of direct participation in public life. Thanks to the new technologies, citizens have greater opportunities for accessing information. They can take part in the decision-making process, offering suggestions and criticising the work done by the public administration. When they are given a chance to express their views, their sense of responsibility towards the body public grows, forcing the public administration to listen to them and setting in motion a process of synergy based on the effectiveness and efficiency of administrative actions.

These opportunities are even more interesting when applied to local public administrations, as is shown in the memorandum of the European Council on the convention "**Electronic Democracy and Deliberate Consultation on Urban Projects**": citizens feel a greater urge to make themselves heard on issues that have a direct effect on their day-to-day lives.

A further consideration is the fact that citizens are increasingly being viewed as partners of the authorities within an even larger territory: Europe.

This volume is an annual reference, an opportunity for analysis, reflection and study on the international level by all those interested in remaining constantly updated on technological progress and on perspectives that could potentially permit a noteworthy transformation and an opening of new horizons for development, within the context of the Information Society.

Its contents constitute a collection and analysis of highly competent contributions supplied by the **European public administrations** in the sector, with the end goal of formulating an updated and thorough overview of the most noteworthy e-Gov experiences currently underway in Europe.

Compared to previous editions, this one sets itself apart by the special attention paid to the topic of "Improving Performance in Public Administrations". The volume is organised in three parts: the first regards the revision of administrative processes and the management of flows of documents; the second the topic of innovation in the services provided to citizens and businesses, and the last deals with the prospects and opportunities offered by an integrated platform of e-Government.

The questions dealt with were carefully selected, in an attempt to cover the main issues currently at the centre of the European debate on e-Government.

