E-government Survey 2020
Chapter 5: E-participation

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Definition(s) and scope of chapter

• Most definitions of e-participation revolve around the basic concept of using information and communication technologies (ICTs) to engage citizen in decision-making and public service delivery (Macintosh, 2004; Saebø, Rose and Flak, 2008; Medaglia, 2012)
  • UN e-gov Survey definition: “the process of engaging citizens through ICTs in policy, decision-making, and service design and delivery so as to make it participatory, inclusive and deliberative” (UN, 2014)

• e-participation: a social activity, mediated by ICT, involving interaction between citizens, public administration and politicians

• the Survey convers only initiatives where the government plays a role
### Spectrum of e-participation according to political dimension and level of participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction of political discourse</th>
<th>Policy-making</th>
<th>Public service delivery</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political parties’ website, social media</td>
<td>Provision of information on laws, regulations, strategies, budgets, administrative processes, etc.</td>
<td>Information on public services, Open Government Data</td>
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<td>Voting advice applications</td>
<td>Ideation forums</td>
<td>Customer feedback</td>
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<td>Parties platforms</td>
<td>Parliamentary inquiries</td>
<td>Consultations on services</td>
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<td>Candidates’ website, social media</td>
<td>Consultations on draft policies (incl. feedback from govt.)</td>
<td>Participatory planning (e.g. urban)</td>
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<td>E-voting and m-voting</td>
<td>E-voting and m-voting (e.g. for part. budgeting, referendum)</td>
<td>Co-production (e.g. crowdsourced disaster maps)</td>
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<td>Agenda setting (e.g. e-parties, collaborative electoral platforms)</td>
<td>Citizens’ initiatives</td>
<td>Co-creation (e.g. innovation competitions, hackatons)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>E-petitions</td>
<td>Participatory budgeting</td>
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**Focus of the e-government Survey**

- Provision of information
- Consultation
- Collaboration
- Empowerment

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**Less engagement**

- More political

**More engagement**

- Less political
E-participation: What does the e-government Survey measure?

• The Survey assesses e-participation on the basis of features of national e-government portals and websites relating to provision of information, consultation, and decision-making
  • Selection of variables from the main assessment questionnaire
  • E.g: Availability of online information (on policies and budgets) in the areas of education, health, social protection, employment, environment and justice;
  • E.g. Evidence of e-consultation in these sectors
  • E.g. Evidence of Governments’ publication of outcomes of policy consultations online

• 0/1 scores are aggregated into an index of e-participation (EPI) (normalized from 0 to 1)

• The survey does not measure take-up of e-participation opportunities, quality of e-participation, impacts on policy and services, etc.

• EPI measures the existence of tools and channels for e-participation: “supply-side” only
Geographic distribution of the 63 countries with very high EPI, by region
Number of countries providing archived information on their national portal, by sector

- Justice*
- Environment
- Social protection
- Employment
- Education
- Health

2020 vs 2018
Number of countries having undertaken online consultations in the past 12 months, by sector

![Bar chart showing the number of countries in 2020, 2016, and 2014 for various sectors: Justice, Environment, Social protection, Employment, Education, Health.](image-url)
Proportion of countries having conducted an e-consultation in the past 12 months by region

- Oceania
- Europe
- Asia
- Americas
- Africa

The graph shows the proportion of countries in each region that have conducted an e-consultation in the past 12 months.
Recent trends

- Rapid development of the “supply” side. Big inflexion from 2012 to 2018.
  - Many governments now offer a range of opportunities for e-participation that goes beyond the provision of information
  - Multiplication/ proliferation of consultation mechanisms (for policy, rulemaking, feedback on public services, complaint systems)
  - Rise of ideation forums
    - Full spectrum, from unstructured to e-petition systems linked with formal mechanisms
  - Rapid development of crowdsourcing, hackatons, innovation competitions, etc., to create new e-services
- “Package” approach: several functions on the same platform
  - National level: [ideation forums + consultations + opinion surveys]; [feedback on public administration + complaints + corruption reports]
  - Local level: ideation forum + e-petitions + e-voting + participatory budgeting+ user surveys
  - Multi-channel, offline and online (computer+ mobile)
- But also coexistence of multiple participation platforms (national/sectoral, local, for different types of participation)
Examples of higher-level participation mechanisms highlighted by Member States in MSQs

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Policy-making</th>
<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Collaboration/ empowerment</th>
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<td>Ideation platforms: Luxembourg “Vosidees”; Switzerland engage.ch; Azerbaijan Idea Bank</td>
<td>Citizens’ initiatives &amp; E-petitions: Finland Citizens’ Initiative, Estonia Citizen Initiative Portal rahvaalgatus.ee; Russian Public Initiative, UK e-petitions website, Costa Rica Parliament’s website; Korea e-petition to the President; Participatory Budgets (national level): Korea Budget Participation; Portugal Participatory Budget</td>
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<td>Consultation Websites: Singapore REACH, Malta’s consultation Site, Mexico “participa”, New Zealand “Engaging with government” site; France “Participation citoyenne”, Armenia e-draft website; Argentina “Consulta Publica”; Brazil participa.br; Colombia Urna de cristal; Uruguay participación ciudadana</td>
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<td>Public service delivery</td>
<td>Public Feedback / complaints: Armenia complaint system; Oman “Shurkum”, Bahrain Tawasul App, China “Hudong”/Interactive Website, Korea “e-people” website, Philippines Complaint Management System e.reklamo; Singapore One Service; Albania Platform of Co Government; Dominican Republic 311.gob.do; Mauritius Citizen Support Portal, Tanzania Wananchi portal; Cote d’Ivoire Participation Citoyenne</td>
<td>Co-creation: Colombia “Software Público”</td>
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Some challenges (1)

• In many cases, “demand” remains low
  • Low take-up of e-participation opportunities
  • Low quality of participation

• Technology factors
  • Access to Internet, mobile
  • Advanced IT skills/ participation skills
  • Social media not well adapted to advanced forms of e-participation

• Social and institutional factors
  • Focus on the technical side at the expense of organizational, social aspects
  • Stakeholders’ needs, incentives to participate often not well factored in
  • Institutionalization of e-participation processes in their organizational context critical, but not well understood
  • Lack of linkages with formal decision-making processes, creating unmanageable expectations
  • Knowledge of impacts and effectiveness is limited; infrequent evaluations by governments
Availability of online services versus use of online consultation and e-voting in Europe, 2014-2019.
Linkages between e-participation processes and formal decision-making processes: e-petitions

- **CITIZENS**
  - E-petition submission
  - Rules for submission of e-petitions
  - Feedback to citizen on outcome of petition

- **Ad hoc unit in Parliament / government**
  - Triage in Parliament / Government
  - Rules for consideration by the legislature / government

- **Parliament / Government**
  - E-petition discussed by Parliament
  - Rules of procedure for discussion of petitions, including communication and engagement
  - E-petition rejected

- **Outcome of discussion**
  - Communication around outcome of petition

- **CITIZENS**
Some challenges (2)

• Social and institutional factors (cont’d)
  • “Competition” from citizen-to-citizen platforms
    • Reinforces the legitimacy issue: how to connect governments with the “real” concerns and needs of citizens?
  • Lack of trust in government, Internet or social media
  • Legal and regulatory framework
  • Culture and values in public administration

• A more cautious view of the potential of e-participation by governments?
  • Technology, by itself, does not increase participation and civic engagement
  • Recent focus on security, polarization of opinions, “capture” of e-participation tools by populist movements
    • E.g. Europe 2020 call for proposals versus EU involvement in the 2000s
Thank you