

# **E-Government as an Efficient Tool towards Good Governance**

## **(Trends and Comparative Analysis throughout Worldwide Regions and within West Balkan Countries)**

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### ***Abstract***

*In the new period of worldwide technological improvements, the public sector has been widely implementing the modern information and communication technologies in everyday work.. The broader use of ICT tools is leading to transformational shifts in public policy, processes and functions. E-government is engaged not only in providing citizen services but in improveing public sector efficiency, transparency and accountability in government functions and decreasing the costs of public administration.*

*In fact, the ultimate goal of the E-Government is to be able to offer the public services to citizens in an efficient and cost effective manner, which is also the good governance maxim.*

*Therefore, e-government can be seen as an efficient tool for good governance in many countries in the world, which are working on public administration reform, trying to make government more proactive, efficient, transparent and especially more service oriented. To accomplish this transformation, governments are introducing innovations in their organisational structure, practices, and procedures, including the way they utilise human, financial and information and technological resources to improve service delivery to citizens.*

*This paper presents the trends and makes comparative analysis of E-government development as an efficient tool to improve governance within the countries, especially emphasizing the E-government developments in West Balkans countries, comparing their achievements with the same in other worldwide regions and developed EU countries. Analysing the data from official UN and Word Bank's Reports in the period 2005-2012 the objective of the paper is to*

*indentify correlation between Good governance and E-governance development*

**Key Words:** *e-governance, e-government, good governance,*

## **Introduction**

Good governance is a concept that has recently come into regular use in political science, and public administration.. Within the public management discipline, good governance has been regarded as new paradigm in Public Administration, which emphasises the new tipe of approach of public officers in providing high quality services to citizens.

According to the World Bank, there are 6 major issues that need to be considered when discussing and assessing the level of Good governance development<sup>1</sup>:

- **Voice and Accountability** - captures perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media;
- **Political Stability and absence of violence** -measures perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including politically-motivated violence and terrorism;
- **Government Effectiveness**- captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies;
- **Regulatory Quality**- captures perceptions of the ability of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private sector development;
- **Rule of Law** -captures perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence;
- **Control of Corruption**- captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests .

Good governance has major implications for equity, poverty and quality of life. Therefore, Good governance should be participatory, transparent and

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<sup>1</sup> [http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/pdf\\_country.asp](http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/pdf_country.asp)

accountable in characteristic. This provides a framework which enables decision making based on broad consensus in society, respecting the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable groups while allocating public funds and resources.

The trend of reforming the public sector is based mostly on implementing basic “good governance values”, while providing public services in proper time and in the most convenient and efficient manner.

Thus, the citizens’ demand is focused towards government’s top performance and efficiency, proper accountability and high level of delivery of services, which might be accomplished by extensive use of information and communication tools.

### **Recognising E- Government as “Good Governance” Tool**

By definition “E-Government' essentially refers to ‘The utilization of Information Technology (IT), Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and other web-based telecommunication technologies to improve and/or enhance on the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in the public sector.’ (Jeong, 2007).

While E-Government has traditionally been understood as being centered on the operations of government, e-Governance is understood to extend the scope by including citizen engagement and participation in governance. As such, e-Governance can be used as a tool to achieve better governance. Therefore, some governments have seized the opportunities offered by the new and emerging information and communication technologies to transform government based on democracy, inclusiveness and performance excellency. Others, have yet to begin to appreciate the impact of the new information and communication technologies. They have continued to depend on the traditional ways of creating wealth and providing services.

Yet, the Governments and the other governance structures share the responsibility for the evolution of the new digital society and the knowledge economy through focusing on people-centred development. Availability of online public services (‘supply-side’) has been the primary focus of policymaking, but over the past years, citizen usage of e-government services (‘demand-side’) has also become a priority issue. An increasing number of governments, mostly in developed countries, were making greater efforts to increase usage of services. They started by recognizing that the benefits of e-government services are very much determined by the number and type of users of these services, and the frequency of their use.

Furthermore, E-governance can contribute towards better implementation of the main principles of "good governance". To achieve such a transformation of the inherited modes of governing, e-government needs to provide several major contributions:

**Table 1: Governance versus E-Government <sup>2</sup>**

Good Governance Principles	E -Government impact
• Coherence in policy drawing	• Allows for easier policy coordination among ministerial departments, public agencies and layers of government
• Participative democracy in policy making	• Enables the active involvement of all stakeholders in policy making
• Consistency, effectiveness and efficiency in policy implementation:	• Facilitates cooperative and networked policy implementation in an easier, quicker and cheaper manner
• Transparency and openness of the whole policy process	• Makes information widely accessible at a very low cost

Therefore, e-Government is not only about modernising public administration through ICT but it is a key enabler in the building of citizen-oriented, cooperative, and modern governance.

### Controversies of E- Government

The development of the new information and communication technologies has all the attributes to create added value to the processes that give identity and relationships that characterise good governance. The rapid development, deployment and proliferation of the new and emerging information and communication technologies create new opportunities for growth and development in countries around the world. Governments worldwide are seeking to harness the potential offered by these new technologies to create new dimensions of economic and social progress. However, in the current recessionary climate, some countries have been better able to continue to invest in ICT infrastructure and service improvement. Others are evaluating the marginal utility of such investment, especially taking into account low user uptake of existing services, and reassessing service portfolios where demand for online services is low. Many countries with low levels of infrastructure and human capital remain at lower levels of e-government development with serious issues of digital divide. In fact there are still controversies related to extensive use of e-governance in all public areas, referring to the possibility of even greater exclusion of some categories of population and greater division between developed and underdeveloped countries.

Thus it is necessary to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of E-government deployment.

<sup>2</sup> European Institute of Public Administration-“ e-Government in Europe: The State of Affairs”- EIPA, Netherlands, 2003; pg 14

**a) Advantages**

E-government can be a catalyst in boosting productivity, thereby speeding up the benefits of newer technologies to the people. In the last few years many countries have employed ICT in areas such as entrepreneurship, innovation, research and development, promoting distance learning, e-health, e-agriculture, e-trade and other fields.

Therefore, the appropriate use of ICT plays a crucial role in advancing the goals of the public sector and its contribution towards enabling an environment for social and economic growth.

Further the E-government can enhance the speed and efficiency of operations, by streamlining processes, lowering costs, improving research capacities and record keeping.

However the real benefit of E-government is not in the use of the new technology *per se*, but in its application to process of transformation.

E-government allows the improvement of government transparency. Government transparency is important because it allows the public to be informed about what the government is working on, as well as the policies they are trying to implement. Simple tasks may be easier to perform through electronic government access.

E-government is an easy way for the public to be more involved in political campaigns. It could increase voter awareness, which could lead to an increase in citizen participation in elections. It is convenient and cost-effective for businesses, and the public benefits by getting easy access to the most current information available without having to spend time, energy and money to get that information.

E-government helps simplify processes and makes access to government information more easily accessible for public sector agencies and citizens. The anticipated benefits of e-government include efficiency, improved services, better accessibility of public services, and more transparency and accountability.

Improved accounting and record keeping can be noted through computerization, and information and forms can be easily accessed, equaling quicker processing time. On the administrative side, access to help find or retrieve files and linked information can now be stored in databases versus hardcopies stored in various locations. Individuals with disabilities or conditions no longer have to be mobile to be active in government and can be in the comfort of their own homes.

One goal of e-government will be greater citizen participation. Through the internet, people from all over the country can interact with politicians or public servants and make their voices heard. These technologies can create a more transparent government, allowing voters to immediately see how and why their representation in the capital is voting the way he or she is. This helps voters better decide who to vote for in the future and may help the public servants become more productive.

Recent pressures from environmentalist groups, the media, and the public, some governments and organizations to reduce the use of paper is another advantage of ICT. Proponents of e-government argue that online government services would lessen the need for hard copy forms.

#### **b) Disadvantages**

The main disadvantages concerning e-government is the lack of equality in public access to the internet, reliability of information on the web, and hidden agendas of government groups that could influence and bias public opinions. Increased contact between government and its citizens goes both ways. Once e-government begins to develop and become more sophisticated, citizens will be forced to interact electronically with the government on a larger scale. This could potentially lead to a lack of privacy for civilians as their government obtains more and more information on them. The E-government is saving money, but in the same time requires a large amount of money and time and effort to be spent for its effective deployment. Namely, immediate challenges relate to the need for requisite efforts by governments to narrow the digital gap through<sup>3</sup>:

- putting in place the necessary national information infrastructure;
- developing and nurturing the necessary human resource to operate the national information infrastructure; and
- providing adequate financial resources to implement both the infrastructural and human resource requirements.

In fact, worldwide IT spending is estimated to total \$3.6 trillion in 2011, which is 5.1% increase from the year 2010 (\$3.4 trillion). The estimation is that IT spending is likely been even higher for the next few years.<sup>4</sup>

Opponents of e-government argue that online governmental transparency is dubious because it is maintained by the governments themselves. Information can be added or removed from the public eye. To this day, very few organizations monitor and provide accountability for these modifications. Even the governments themselves do not always keep track of the information they insert and delete.

### **The Trends of Global E- Government Development**

As the collective global effort is focused towards a greater acceptance of the institutional linkages among the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development, there is a need to analyze the importance of e-government in achieving higher standards of living for future generations all over the world. Issues of public service delivery arising from the current financial and economic

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<sup>3</sup> United States of America –E-Government Act 2002

<sup>4</sup> European Institute of Public Administration-“ e-Government in Europe: The State of Affairs”- EIPA , Netherlands ,2003 ; pg 16

crisis also contribute to the variety of the e-government progress, accepting it by certain countries with different level of economic development.

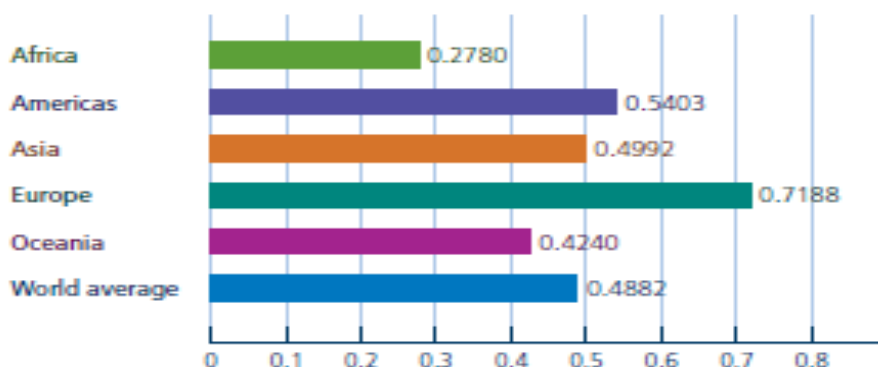
Namely, many of the developed countries have invested substantial resources and effort into experimenting with these e-government tools, finding innovative ways to use them for more effective delivery of public services. On the other hand, the lower developed countries are faced with pressure to do more with fewer funds, which creates a larger gap between the countries regarding the level of E-government application for the purpose of better governance.

According to the UN Survey 2012<sup>5</sup>, currently there are large differences among the worldwide regions, in terms of e-government readiness, so that Europe, has evident advantage over other regions, and followed by America, while Asia is around or slightly below the world average and Africa, which is lagging far behind it.

UN indicators (index for e-government development) in year 2012 note significant increase of more than 10 per cent in the world average of e-government development, compared to two years previous. The e-region of Europe (0.7188) shows the highest e-government development followed by the Americas (0.5403).

Despite considerable strides towards bridging the digital divide, infrastructure and human capital limitations in several parts of the world impinge upon the ability of governments to spread – and the citizens to partake of – the benefits of information technology in the delivery of services. With a history of high levels of functional education and widespread telephone infrastructure, Europe and the Americas as a whole remain far ahead of the rest of the world regions. Asia, which is home to around three-fifths of the world citizens, has nevertheless only around 70 per cent of the level of e-government in Europe while the level of services in Africa barely squares off at 40 per cent of those in Europe.

**Figure 1. E-government development index within worldwide regions (2012)**



<sup>5</sup> UN E-Government Survey 2012-, 2012, pg 8

(Source: UN E-governance Survey 2012)

Within any region, countries at the lower percentage of e-development do not fare well either. This is especially true of the lower income countries in both Asia and Africa. The 10 least e-ready countries in Asia have barely 37 per cent of the level of e-government in Europe while in Africa the figure is little more than 20 per cent.

Building upon the transformative nature of ICT and maintaining their focus on e-government development, all of the top 20 countries in 2012 were high income developed economies. Out of 20 countries, 14 are from Northern America and Europe; 3 from East Asia (Republic of Korea, Singapore and Japan); two from Oceania (Australia and New Zealand); and 1 from Western Asia (Israel).

**Table 2: Top 20 World Leaders in E-Government development**

Rank	Country	E-Government Development Index	Rank	Country	E-Government Development Index
1.	R. Korea	0.9283	11	Canada	0.8430
2.	Netherlands	0.9125	12	Australia	0.8390
3.	United Kingdom	0.8960	13	New Zealand	0.8381
4.	Denmark	0.8889	14	Liechtenstein	0.8264
5.	USA	0.8687	15	Switzerland	0.8134
6.	France	0.8635	16	Israel	0.8100
7.	Sweden	0.8599	17	Germany	0.8079
8.	Norway	0.8593	18	Japan	0.8019
9.	Finland	0.8505	19	Luxemburg	0.8014



<b>10.</b>	<b>Singapore</b>	<b>0.8474</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Estonia</b>	<b>0.7987</b>

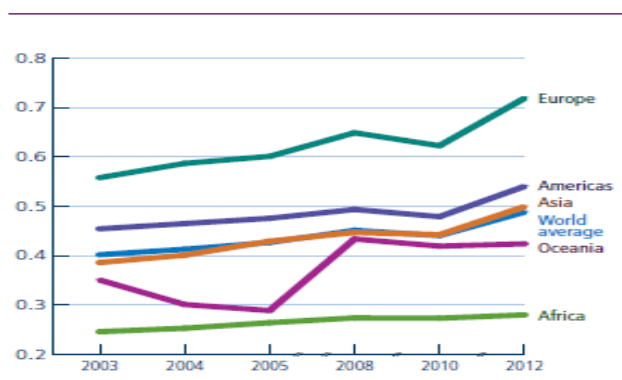
(Source: UN E-governance Survey 2012)

Surprisingly the first position for several years on is reserved for the Republic of Korea with e-government development index of (0.9283) , and is followed by three European countries, Netherlands (0.9125) Great Britain (0.8960) and Denmark (0.8889), as well as the United States of America, (0.8687), France (0.8635) and Sweden (0.8599) which follow close behind the global leaders.

What is encouraging is the worldwide trend during the last decade. Since 2003 all regions of the world have steadily improved their e-government development .(Figure 2)

Yet, European countries visibly taking off in the last two years and are similarly followed by Americas.

**Figure 2: Trend of E-government development over the worldwide regions (2003-2012)**



**Source: UN E-Government Survey 2012**

While some countries have advanced considerably over others, Asia as a whole progressed at a leaner rate until 2010 – almost in line with the advances in the world average – and then took off. With an almost flat curve for the period 2003-2012, e-government offerings in Africa advanced minimally, with the region as a whole still remaining least e-ready.

## E-government Development in Europe

The European region has the highest level of e-government development, which is around 50 per cent higher than that of the world as a whole. Western and Northern Europe offer the most online services but considerable gains were made by Southern and Eastern Europe as well in 2012.

With a common e-government framework, EU countries are encouraged to deploy advanced technologies, institute better governance and provide expanded services with concomitant pursuit of greater transparency, efficiency and inclusion.

Notwithstanding, differences remain between regions and within them. Key European countries spend more than double the EU average amount per capita on ICT, others, around half of it. The Netherlands (0.9125) made substantial gains, advancing to the top position in Europe and 2nd in world rankings, followed by the United Kingdom (0.8960) in 3rd place and Denmark (0.8889), which also advanced and occupies the 4th position this year.<sup>6</sup> Within the aforementioned common e-government framework, all of the top countries of Europe offered more or less the same level of user centric services to their citizens resulting in marginal assessment difference among them.

For example, Germany (0.8079), the 10th leading country in Europe as a whole, achieved about 89 per cent of the e-government development level of the regional leader, the Netherlands. Advancing 32 positions in the world rankings, the Russian Federation (0.7345) became the leader in Eastern Europe followed by Hungary (0.7201) and the Czech Republic (0.6491).<sup>7</sup>

As in other parts of Europe, all countries of the sub-region improved their e-government development in 2012, advancing the sub-regional average by 16 per cent even though they could not maintain their rankings, except for Belarus and the Russian Federation. Being the largest country in the world and consisting of eight federal districts influences the development of e-government in the Russian Federation. This government recently announced investments of around 80 billion rubles for the informatization of federal government bodies and other initiatives related to the development of government.

## **Trends of E- Government Development in West Balkans**

West Balkan countries have acknowledged the importance of e-government development towards creating effective government, improving quality of public service delivery, transparency and accountability; all in all in performing good and responsive governance in public sector. They became fully aware that e-government is not simply a set of ICT projects, but strongly connected with streamlining of administrative procedures, creating appropriate legislation, strategic platforms and education, for both public administration as well as public services providers, and business, communities and citizens as public services users.

Generally, the region's average e-government readiness through the years 2005-2012 is continuously above the world average index. (Table 3)

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations E-Government Survey 2012, World e-government rankings, pg 23.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, pg. 25

**Table 3: Trends of E-government development in West Balkans countries <sup>8</sup>**

	<b>2012 Inde x</b>	<b>2010 Inde x</b>	<b>2008 Inde x</b>	<b>2005 Inde x</b>	<b>2012 Ranki ng</b>	<b>2010 Ranki ng</b>	<b>2008 Ranki ng</b>	<b>2005 Ranki ng</b>
Slovenia	0,74 9	0,62 4	0,66 8	0,67 6	25	29	26	26
Croatia	0,73 2	0,58 5	0,56 5	0,54 8	30	35	47	47
Albania	0,51 6	0,45 1	0,45 7	0,37 3	86	85	86	102
Serbia	0,63 1	0,45 8	0,48 2	0,19 6	51	81	77	156
Montenegr o	0,62 1	0,51 0	0,42 8	0,19 6	57	60	100	156
BiH	0,53 2	0,46 9	0,45 0	0,40 1	79	74	94	84
Macedonia	0,55 8	0,52 6	0,48 6	0,46 3	70	52	73	69
<b>REGION</b>	<b>0,65 7</b>	<b>0,55 6</b>	<b>0,56 4</b>	<b>0,46 5</b>				
<b>WORLD</b>	<b>0,48 8</b>	<b>0,44 0</b>	<b>0,45 1</b>	<b>0,42 6</b>				

Analysis by country shows different readiness, as well as a different curve of progress through the years. Namely in 2005 in several countries the e-government index is far below the world's (Serbia, Montenegro and Albania), Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia are slightly below and above the world's average index, while the e-government index in Slovenia and Croatia has already achieved relatively high level of e-governance readiness even in 2005 (or the highest in the Region) and is much above the world's and region's average index.

Regarding the ranking, there is wide range of variations within the countries. Namely, Slovenia is keeping 26<sup>th</sup> position in the world ranking list, and although it has slightly improved through the years it keeps almost the same (25<sup>th</sup>) position in the year 2012. Serbia and Montenegro have progressed the most during the period of 2005-2012. Both of these countries, tripled their e-governance development index, (from 0,1960 in 2005 to over 0, 6218) and improved their ranking from 158 place in 2005 to 51<sup>st</sup> (Serbia) and 57<sup>th</sup> (Montenegro) in 2012 on the world's e-government ranking list.

The most stable progress in terms of e-government index is noted by the Republic of Macedonia. In 2005 Macedonia was above the world average one and almost equal to the West Balkans e-government development index. The same trend is continuing with the same curve shape along the years. However the position in the ranking list pretty varies in time, so that from 69 position in 2005, over 73<sup>th</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Created by author, using the data from UN surveys (2005-2012)

place in 2008, Macedonia has improved its position at the world ranking list achieving 52<sup>nd</sup> position in 2010 and then turn down at the 70<sup>th</sup> position in 2012 ,i.e having almost the same place that has had in 2005. The positive shift at 52<sup>nd</sup> position is mostly due to the legislative and infrastructural reforms made in 2010 in Macedonia. These reforms have had given Macedonia the advantage compared with other countries, which in the same time suffered from the consequences from the financial and economic crises. On the other hand, the worsened position in 2012 is due to others countries' e-government developments in the region (Serbia and Montenegro), as well as to the fact that legislative and infrastructural developments were not immediately followed with other e-governments advances.

The main problems which the Macedonian government has faced related to e-government level of development can be put in the following categories<sup>9</sup>:

- late process of the computerization – this includes the establishment of internet infrastructure and basic ICT education of population;
- certain inconsistency among the existing pieces of legislation – that support the establishment and realization of electronic services (for example, legislation on the electronic documents and management define usage of electronic documents, but legislation on higher education, value added taxes, archive etc., determine usage of stamps, handwritten signatures, paper based indexes and “classical” documents);
- a low level of awareness and usage of electronic services and its benefits;
- no monitoring mechanism for the quality of the realized e-Services, as well as no usercentric and pro-active portals;
- a low budget for e-government services realization ;
- a low level of educated civil service managers and project coordinators;
- a low level of specification of administrative processes and procedures, and low level of their connection with the information infrastructures.

### **Correlation between E- Government Development and Good Governance Progress**

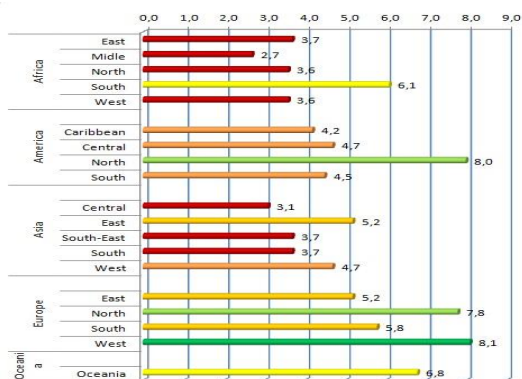
Being the tool of good governance, e-government development is very much correlated with governance progress. The World Bank reports aggregate and individual governance indicators for 215 economies over the period 1996–2011, for six dimensions of governance: voice and accountability, political stability, governance effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption. According to the World Bank Worldwide Governance Reports, the average governance indicators follow almost the same level of developments as the e-government development indexes do. Namely the highest average ranking of 8,1 is eminent for West Europe, and its followed by North America (USA and Canada),

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<sup>9</sup> Public Administration Reform Strategy in Republic of Macedonia (2010-2015); 53 pg

then Oceania (Australia and New Zealand) with 6,8 and Asia and Africa being the regions with the poorest governance in the world.

**Figure 3: Level of worldwide Governance development index**



**Source: World Bank Worldwide Governance Report 2011**

The correlation is also evident if the top ten and the worst 10 countries in good governance will be compared with the above mentioned top 20 countries in e-government development. Namely, all of the 10 highest ranked countries related to Good governance progress are present in the 20 top countries in e-government development. It draws us to the conclusion that Good governance and E-government are closely correlated, i.e. E-government is a tool towards good government's development.

**Figure 4 Top 10 countries in Good governance (2006-2010)**

Top 10 - Good Governance				
Rank		SSI 2006	SSI 2008	SSI 2010
1	Denmark	8.7	8.7	8.6
2	Finland	9.0	8.7	8.5
3	Sweden	8.6	8.6	8.5
4	Switzerland	8.6	8.7	8.5
5	New Zealand	8.8	8.5	8.4
6	Luxembourg	8.8	8.6	8.4
7	Netherlands	8.4	8.3	8.3
8	Norway	8.5	8.5	8.3
9	Australia	8.3	8.2	8.3
10	Canada	8.3	8.3	8.3

**Source: Word Bank Governance indicators 2012**

### Good Governance and E- Government Corelation in West Balkans Countries

The strong correlation between governance development and the level of e-government readiness is also evident in the case of West Balkans countries. According to the World Bank global governance indicators, there have been analyzed six governance aspects: Government efficiency (G.E.); Corruption Control (C.C.); Regulatory Quality (R.Q.); Political Stability (P.S.); Rule of Law (R.L.) and Voice and Accountability (V&A). (Table 4)<sup>10</sup>

**Table 4: Good governance aspects and E-government comparison**

2010(2011) Country/Territory	Good Governance indicators in 6 categories						Governance Total score		E-Government	
	G. E.	C. C.	R. Q.	P.S	RL	V&A	Index	Rank	Index	Rank
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ALBANIA	0,20	0,61	0,28	0,27	0,49	0,08	-1,21	6	0,4519	7
BiH	0,76	0,32	0,04	0,90	0,34	0,21	-2,57	7	0,4698	6
CROATIA	0,55	0,02	0,56	0,54	0,18	0,42	+2,27	2	0,5858	2
MACEDONIA	0,11	0,04	0,33	0,45	0,25	0,01	-0,51	4	0,5261	3
MONTENEGRO	0,10	0,21	0,06	0,52	0,03	0,25	+0,63	3	0,5101	4
SERBIA	0,15	0,20	0,01	0,33	0,33	0,29	-0,71	5	0,4585	5
SLOVENIA	0,99	0,93	0,63	0,84	1,07	1,03	+5,49	1	0,6243	1

Governance indicators are estimated in the range of +2.5 to -2.5 for each of the good governance aspects, meaning that -2.5 stands for the weakest and +2,5 for the strongest governance performance. By adding up the scores of all of these six items, one can get the integrated indicators in a scale of +15 to -15. Analyzing the correlation of governance and e-government indicators in the case of West

<sup>10</sup> Created by author using data from UN E-Government Surveys 2005-2012 and World Bank's Good Governance Report

Balkans countries. In the Table 4, are presented the estimated indicators for each of governance aspects (the columns from 2 to 7), while the integrated indicators per country and their ranking within West Balkans are presented in the column 8 and 9 respectively. If we compare the governance aggregate indexes and therefore the respective ranking, with those ones related to e-government development (presented in columns 10 and 11), the correlation is more than evident. Three countries have the same ranking in both governance performance and e-government development [Slovenia (1), Croatia (2) and Serbia(5)], while in two cases two pairs of countries swap their ranking positions: Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina (swapping the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> position), and Macedonia and Montenegro (swapping the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> position respectively).

### **Further Trends in E- Government Developments**

There is a growing recognition that e-governance can support development by improving inter-organizational linkages and consolidating government systems. This emerging e-government paradigm, allied to the twin objectives of efficacy in government functioning and achieving improvements in service delivery, is bringing about new perceptions of the inter-linkages between e-government and the sustainability of systems.<sup>11</sup>

Government structures need to be transformed into horizontal integrated systems, which facilitate customer orientation and increase levels of transparency and accountability in a move towards public service delivery solutions that are sustainable.

At the same time, social equity and inclusion are possible only if institutional barriers to citizen inclusion are removed and opportunities for their participation through ICTs are equitably distributed.

Therefore, the future role of e-government would be seen as a facilitator of information and services, rather than as a controller, whereby information and services are focused in addressing the real needs and concerns of the citizenry.

E-government has an important role to play, now and in the future. As the world moves towards 2015, (the date set for reaching the Millennium Development Goals) national governments need to understand that economic, social and environmental pathways and must adapt, develop or reform their strategic frameworks, towards outcomes that promote sustainable development. The role of the government once again needs to be redefined to reform the governance systems through which services are delivered in a way that maximizes development and minimizes natural resource degradation. Therefore governments and all stakeholders need to recognize the key role that e-government and e-governance can play in support of the establishment of effective institutional linkages, necessary for sustainable development. Evidence shows that it is possible to successfully utilize

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<sup>11</sup> R. W'O Okot-Uma" E-Governance : *Re-inventing Good Governance* ", pg. 33

ICT based on governance frameworks that underpin the effectiveness of public sector institutions.

Being in the core of building a strategic sustainable development framework, one of the key functions of the e-government is to provide an integrated framework of policies, laws and regulations and develop institutions and processes that allow the private sector to provide – and the people to partake of the benefits of newer technologies. The underlying principle of e-government, supported by an effective e-governance institutional framework, is to improve the internal workings of the public sector by reducing financial costs and transaction times so as to better integrate work flows and processes and enable effective resource utilization across the various public sector agencies aiming for sustainable solutions. It seeks to establish ‘better processes and systems’ aimed at more efficiency, effectiveness, inclusion and sustainability. As a driver of efficiency and coordination, e-governance encompasses institutions, mechanisms and processes for planning, organizing, coordination and implementation of successful socio-economic development programmes.

In this context, national governments need to<sup>12</sup>:

- Recognize the opportunity for synergy among institutions that e-government offers;
- Re-engineer the enabling environment for e-governance to enable institutional inter-linkages within the government; and
- Promote coordination and connectivity between ecosystems and development outcomes.

From putting in place policies and programmes to the design of laws and regulation for ICT access and citizen participation, e-government and e-governance will expand their reach in affecting the living conditions of peoples in all countries of the world in general, and in ameliorating the adverse impact of the digital divide in particular. Lessons of experience in a few of the vanguard countries indicate that by deploying innovative ICT solutions e-governance can optimize solutions for further governance development.

Europe as a region has been in the vanguard of information technology and setting the pace for others to follow. Building on the existing strength of high levels of human capital and infrastructure, the transformative role of ICT has been recognized and adopted to further streamline e-government services.

Moving beyond improving public sector efficiency, Europe is now looking to adapt innovative technologies to human development and economic sustainability in the future

The EU’s growth strategy for the coming decade involves an innovative use of technology to challenges of economic growth, employment, education, social inclusion and climate/energy.

Expanding the reach, EU countries are looking towards ICT as the key enabling technology to underpin future development in the region.

The EU member States have earmarked a total of € 9.1 billion for funding ICT over the duration of the Seventh Framework Programme.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibidem 35 pg



One of the three flagship initiatives to achieve smart growth in Europe 2020 is the digital agenda for Europe, a blueprint for creating a single digital market based on fast or ultra-fast internet and interoperable applications. The strategy for the near future aims at development of common platforms and reference architectures, interoperability and data exchange standards in order to build a competitive advantage in technology solutions, which will yield high value added.

## Conclusions

The opportunities and challenges posed by the new and emerging information technologies has stimulated efforts by national governments to work toward the development of national information policies and strategies. Despite the trend toward privatisation and a decreasing size of the public sector, governments continue to be the single most significant force to influence the future in this area. Governments set and promulgate policies and are collectively the major spender on information and communications technologies. In fact e-government entered a world in which the societies were already actively looking for new and innovative forms of public governance. E-government can contribute significantly towards the process of public administration reform in terms of creating accountable and cost effective government, through facilitation of communication and improvement of the coordination of authorities at different government layers.

The analysis made across the countries show correlation with e-government development and good governance as well as tight connection with the level of the economic development of the relevant countries. The evidence based proofs show that low-income countries, in particular, suffers with lack of transparency, social inclusion and providing high efficiency public service in time and quality as aspects of good governance. Further more they are faced with traditional barriers to ICT investment such as lack of technical skills, high costs of technology, and ineffective government regulation.

Therefore, the efforts of countries at low levels of governance development are still affected by a lack of integration of administrative simplification with e-government development plans, lack of infrastructure and human resource capacity, and a gap between e-services supply and demand. As part of this shift towards e-government, there has been an increasing recognition that efforts towards a holistic approach to governance for sustainable development require strategic national planning to ensure efficacy, transparency, responsiveness, participation and inclusion in the delivery of public services. The overall challenge, therefore, is to deliver improvements in the standards of living in such a manner that development today does not compromise development tomorrow.

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