

The Programme of e-Administration in Hungary

1. The abbreviated form of the conception of electronic administration is *e-administration*. The letter "e" however means more than purely *electronic*, though the meaning of this extended content is quiet obscure. Instead of electronic, one could say *digital*, but that refers only to the change of technology. In the information age one could talk about *information* administration, although this attributive by itself can be interpreted in the area of public administration with difficulty.
2. Even if understanding of what e-administration (or in a wider sense, e-government) really means is vexed, the fact, that in the last few years all level of government and local government in Europe has switched or is switching over to e-administration, must command our attention in Middle-Europe or in Hungary, as it is. This action might mean some rather significant reform of the state and public administration, since the bigger part of the continent considers it as the most important development of the information era and in the newest version of the e-Europe strategy it is ranked as the first step of the way. Let's consider it secondary for the moment that the Hungarian society or at least, in a narrow sense, the public opinion which pays attention to changes, was not adequately informed about the new European strategies, like the e-Europe program that was announced by the European Commission in the end of 1999.
3. Presuming that Hungary becomes a member state of the European Union in a few years, it's obvious that the successful start or even a partial accomplishment of the reform of administration by that time would be of great importance. This has been partly and increasingly realised by the Hungarian political elite - independent of parties and governments as well - ,but no agreement has been reached so far concerning whether the introduction of e-administration in the next three-four years should be (one of the many) a high priority political and budgetary task.
4. In the recent parliamentary and municipal electoral campaign, this challenge was not even mentioned, although it should have been. The stake of the municipal elections was not simply which party's candidate wins the election, rather if the elected candidates, mayors, representatives are prepared for the electronic government and administration tasks, and whether they are aware of these tasks at all.
5. In the information age, the opportunities and direction of movements of every settlement and region are formed by the circumstances determined by the information society. The main task at this point is that as many settlements and regions as possible, have their intelligent strategy and operative program not only drawn up, but also that they implement this program. In the present government course the need for the modernisation of state operation is the biggest we have seen so far: the government and every municipal has to switch over to e-administration. In parallel with the e-administration, the local institutions and instruments of e-administration might be established by the end of this course of four years. If we really want municipal regions from 2006, then in parallel with the planning, in at least one region a model project should be started in 2004. By doing so, the systematic experimental work out of the model of information age, thus at least the digital municipal region could be started. Meanwhile, it is essential that the whole civil service prepares for the modernisation of the public administration partly in the framework of distance teaching programmes. There is nothing we can do, but keep our fingers crossed that as many mayors and representatives as possible would handle the above mentioned as their high priority tasks.
6. The literature of Hungarian administration is fully aware that the establishing of service state and administration is can not be avoided. At the same time it is still not obvious even to experts, that e.g. the administration of the service state that can really reach many, *can not be*

anything else than the e-administration.

7. The information society creates - as it can be more and more observed - the new type of state, the digital state that modelled on network economy and network society will be a *network state*. This state is not equipped with one or many centres, it is not a centralised or decentralised state. In the network state the regional, county level and local administration becomes all the more equal with the earlier top-power, the government. The main task of the latter is to establish the possibility for the citizen, who was treated up to this point as dependant, to become *partaking citizen*. Thus the digital self-government and digital citizen, the e-administration and e-citizen postulates each other, and together they incarnate the *e-democracy*.

8. I would like to repeat the sentence above, so as it won't disappear among the other thesis: Digital self-government and digital citizen, e-administration and e-citizen postulates each other, and together they incarnate the *e-democracy*. One can compose it more theoretically: the e-administration is the institutional basis in the information age of the localisation that is getting globally more and more important. You can characterise it by using a better-known approach: in the 20th century state and society *drifted far* from each other, and the members of the state could frequently feel, as if the state had not been for their sake. Furthermore, in the time of dictatorships it was obvious that the state was against them. The purpose of the institutes of the modern democracy can not be anything else, but to line the state and the administration up for the *society*. The majority of citizens will not fancy the state unless, exceptionally the local government and local administration become the friends of citizens. The systemic and, for the time being, the only solution for achieving this goal can be the e-government and e-administration.

9. We should not think that everything has been settled and everything is obvious. I would like to point out three main sources of conflict: a) Because of the different administrative traditions and political strategies of the EU member states, many different interpretation of e-democracy can be explored. Therefore, there is no way for avoiding the work out, discussion and adaptation of the Hungarian model of e-administration. b) Many would like to simplify the e-administration. According to them it simply means that the offices have computers and can do office-work via Internet. If that kind of conception gets accepted as state program, then the e-administration's failure is absolutely certain. c) Often the reform or the development of the e-administration is fruitless, gets stuck or needs recommencement. It happens in Europe and outside of Europe as well, and mostly on the ground of disorganization or over-hasty organization. We must count with at least that many or even more conflicts when introducing our own e-administration. e.g.: The two professional circles (information specialist and administration experts) don't always understand each other, there will not be sufficient government intention for the implementation, there will not be sufficient preparation, or the municipals will not want to have e-administration, might be afraid of this development, or part of the intellectuals doesn't stand by the supporting will of the majority of civil society.

10. Let's have a look at what e-administration means. There are four sides of the new kind of co-operation of the municipal-administration and public-administration, with new content: (1) The local society, (2) the national and regional state, (3) the local government and administration and (4) the local mines of information are communicating and operating through the electronic gate (portals, e-markets). Or, in other words: the opening of the gate of the civil society, the e-gate of municipal-administration, the e-gate of the government and the e-gate of administration knowledge into each other. The new content means e.g. widening and institutionalise the circle of partaker citizens, make the service simpler, faster and more professional than it is today. The new type of administration is the intensive co-operation of the local society and municipal, the municipal and the state (what is more, European) government, local society and local state equipped with all necessary knowledge, and finally

the non-stop modernisation of the internal operation of municipal bodies and mayor's offices.

11. The condition of the service state and e-state is that the citizen can reach and make use of the services anywhere. However, the services of the traditional state are very difficult and expensive to obtain today. The service state must therefore be the digital state initiating e-administration, where a) the services are expanding, b) can be reached electronically directly and c) businesses can be settled faster and more efficiently. Many suggest and do so with reason, that the main condition of introducing e-administration is the establishment of the Hungarian (really fast and wideband) information-communication infrastructure, the more expansive spreading of mobile and wired Net-surfing, the dynamic spreading of communal (not simply tele-house) and institutional access points or the start and continuous development of national and local administration content providers. Nobody should believe that the Internet network comes before the spreading of e-administration. The financing of the building up of the infrastructure postulates the use of e-administration and e-education. Parallel processes, enforcement and developments can bring only the expected success.

12. Even in the smallest settlements, the e-administration will be the place of open social game and undertaking. The citizens and their interest groups will co-operate electronically with the representatives elected by them, and with the local administration, and they will together implement the decisions resulting from this co-operation. If the digital self-governing, the local e-administration - against and beside the regulation - remains the result of personal our group deals, temporary or permanent agreements, rightful or unlawful beliefs, for a long time, then local strategies, local decrees, local decision, local supports will be necessarily formed by limited local interests and conceptions. This defencelessness however can be partly lessened by the electronic method of public administration, the Internet created local publicity and transparency. Better solution may be realised by a yet forthcoming (or second) reform of the e-administration that will be the adoption of artificial intelligence into the state and public administration. Then this artificial intelligence will take over partly the decision preparation, decision making and implementation from the local representatives and local apparatus.

13. The topical state and government tasks can be ranked as follows: drawing up the national e-administration strategy till the beginning of the year 2003, setting up the government (e-administration) centre, and the division of tasks among the affected departments, starting the prominent financing of e-government and e-administration, the support of present and future pilot-projects at every level of the e-administration. Meanwhile carrying on the intelligent region (or e-region, e-micro region , intelligent settlement) developments, that at the same time (can) establish the ideal social and economic conditions of e-administration. Most of the Hungarian regions has a regional information society strategy on regional or county level. The best sample regions are the Central Hungarian, the Central Transdanubian and the West Transdanubian regions. Recently more e-administration programme have been launched in different Hungarian regions.

14. The prospects are quiet clear. After the extension of the right of voting in the 20th century, the task of our time is the extension of voters' participation in the decision making and voters' action, provided that parallel with this process the division of voter's knowledge takes place in every social group. The national top task in the nil decade of the new century therefore the internal, in the second part of the decade the external modernisation of the state.

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