E-GOV:
TARGET SHOOTING OR GAME HUNTING?

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Abstract

The European direction of e-government developments is determined mainly by budgetary considerations. Cyber-optimistic predictions, such as "let's do it and people will use it" are unfulfilled and the use of services remains lower than expected.

Tracking the demands of users of government services (businesses and citizens) is a real challenge for the developers of e-government services. New demands arise constantly as a result of realized solutions, best practices in the business world and other countries; technological development and use of improved devices.

After considering whether the electronic public services available for Hungarian citizens adequately meet the expectations of the digital age we can state that the best way to turn young, mobile equipment users into e-citizens is by applications made for new platforms.

Keywords: *eGoverment, online public services, digital age*
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Introduction

The main directions of e-government developments in the European Union and – as a result – in Hungary, are determined in consideration with the budgetary planning periods of the EU. Realisation and financial control of the development programs made and approved in this manner are important targets, which neglect – for the most part – technological developments and the re-structuring of user demands generated partly by these developments.

In the early period of developing e-government services the era of bureaucratic-technical hypotheses was accompanied by a line of thought which took user demands and needs into consideration (Eggers, 2005). This was named (e-)government 2.0 following the example of web 2.0, which provided new, user-friendly services.

The convergence of the two viewpoints may be tracked in works discussing service providing public administration and New Public Management (NPM) and the re-considered version of the latter describing Post-NPM (Hajnal-Rosta, 2015). Integration of this thought into the development of e-government services is marked by the fact that the EU system evaluating the level of development of electronic public services, which was earlier based on the Common List of Basic Public Services (CLBPS) provided for citizens, changed into evaluating the suitability of services for Life Events (Table 1.).

Table 1.: Change of list of services in evaluating e-government achievement

Basic Public Services (2005-)	Life Events (2012-)
Enrolment in higher education (CIT 10)	Studying (enrolling in higher education and/or applying for a study grant)
Job search services (CIT 2)	Starting a new job
	Losing and finding a job: • Becoming unemployed • Looking for a job
Social security benefits (CIT 3)	Starting a procedure for a disability allowance
	Retiring
Certificates (CIT 9)	Declaring the birth of a child and/or applying for a birth grant
	Marriage or change of marital status
	Death of a close relative and/or starting an inheritance procedure
Personal documents (passport/driver's license) (CIT 4)	Needing a passport to travel to another country
Car registration (CIT 5)	Owning and driving a car: • Applying for a driver's license (or renewing an existing one) • Registering a car (taxes, parking permits)
Application for building permission (CIT 6)	Buying, building or renovating a house
Announcement of moving (CIT 11)	Moving and changing address within a country
	Moving or preparing to move to another country (e.g. to study, work, retire...)
Health-related services (CIT 12)	Making a doctor's appointment in a hospital
Declaration to police (CIT 7)	Reporting a crime (smaller offences, e.g. theft, burglary etc.)
Income taxes (CIT 1)	Declaring income taxes
Public libraries (CIT 8)	Making use of the public library

Source: own construction based on Capgemini 2007 and 2013

Devices used by costumers of e-government services are constantly changing as a result of development, availability and spread of information and communications technology (ICT). Spread of the internet and faster connection resulted in the increasing expectation of real-time online connections and since 2005 personalisation and real interaction.

Progress of mobile technology resulted in the demand (Fig. 1) that government websites be fast to download and easy to read on mobile devices and also that special programs, applications be available for using the services (Capgemini, 2015).
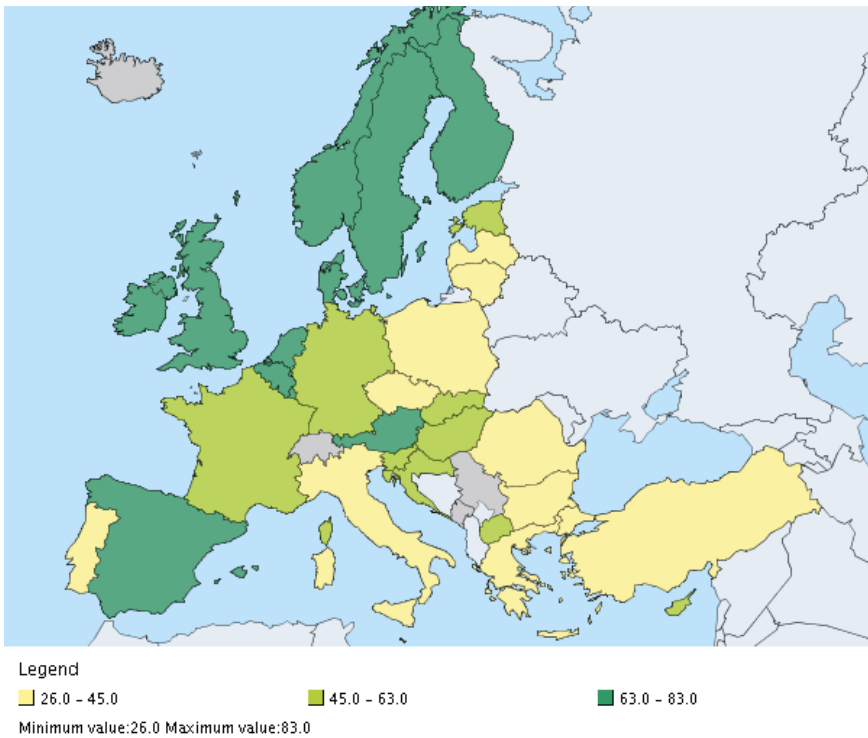

Fig. 1.: Individuals using mobile devices to access the internet on the move
(% of individuals aged 16 to 74. - 2015)
Source: Eurostat

Material and methods

Hungarian public administration offers online services for some of the life events described above. I reviewed the existence of elements indicating suitability for the requirements of the digital age as they were available in the period of December 2015 – January 2016. The reviewed elements were as follows:

- mobile friendly website;

- mobile application;

- online forms;

- personalisation;

- online payment of fees.

Results and discussion

The starting point for central public administration services is the Kormányzati Portál (magyarorszag.hu), which is a collective site, electronic one-stop-shop, central identification system and single sign-on (SSO) authentication surface. This last function provides the identification of clients who have the so-called "ügyfélkapu" (client gateway) access. Through client gateway electronic documents can be submitted in an authenticated manner and on- or offline forms can be sent to the organizations that enabled electronic administration. Client gateway access can be established by attending in person an organization appointed to register clients (government offices, tax authority, post offices, consular representations).

Birth of a child

The birth of a child must be reported in person to the Registrar allocated to the place of birth. In special cases (for certificates issued after 1 June 2014 regarding the applicant and free of charge) a copy of the birth certificate may be requested through the nyilvantarto.hu website (as a good example the VitalCheck site operating in the United States should be noted).

On the website of the Hungarian Treasury (www.allamkincstar.gov.hu) information on all forms of family support required by law is available for Private Persons/Family support. In order to apply for support various application forms are available that can be downloaded and submitted via post and applicants with client gateway access can submit benefit applications and track the progress of their cases on the eugyfel.allamkincstar.gov.hu website. Regarding this service personalisation and targeting could be expected, i.e. registered applicants should find their data already uploaded onto the forms and would only need to record changes (e.g. increased benefits due to the birth of a new child).

Enrolling in higher education

Application process to higher education institutions: www.felvi.hu website provides information on higher education institutions and the courses taught at these. Applications and obligatory attachments may be submitted through online forms and it is necessary to confirm the application via client gateway or the post. Fees can be paid by bank transfer or debit/credit cards online. From 2015 applications can only be submitted electronically and one type of communication (postal or electronic mail, internet, phone, text message) may be chosen regarding the results of the applications process and the relevant scores.

Looking for a job

In the Country Factsheet published in 2015 (EC, 2015) this event is indicated with the summary term of "Losing and Finding a Job". 22 services were reviewed for evaluating job seeking and training programmes for finding a job.

Job seeking: all information necessary for job-seekers can be found on the website of the National Employment Service (NES) (munka.hu) such as: benefits, training programmes, assistance. In the job data base job-seekers can search among job opportunities notified to the employment offices (Virtual Labour Market Portal, VLMP). Other useful additional services are also available, e.g. the National Job Orientation Portal (self-assessment questionnaires, information on various professions and occupations, labour

market information and career advice to support career planning, among other things) or the CareerHelp (predictable trends on the labour market, professions in demand and occupations where there is over-supply).

Characteristically, registered job-seekers maintain contact with the relevant job office in person, with the only exception of e-mails, which can only be used after preliminary registration. Employers of temporary workers (simplified employment) can use a mobile application through which they can report their temporary workers after registering with client gateway.

Declaring income taxes

The efficiency and relationship with citizens of the National Tax and Customs Administration of Hungary (the "NTCA") are decisive factors in the operation of public administration. This is a regularly repeated and fiscally significant contact. In Hungary the NTCA receives the majority of forms submitted online. For a specified group of tax payers it is obligatory to submit tax returns electronically.

For providing information the website of the NTCA is outstanding. As the time of submitting tax returns for year 2015 is approaching, the NTCA prepared a sub-site which can be opened separately and even through a mobile device. The sub-site contains the most important information, deadlines and services (unfortunately only in Hungarian – Fig. 2.)

Fig. 2.: Income taxes declaration homepage from NTCA
Source: nav.gov.hu/szja/szja

Electronic support for submitting tax returns started with calculating tables published officially and then continued with a downloadable program. Today the framework program called "General Form Completion" may be used to download and fill in blank forms (offline). After logging in, the form can be submitted to the NTCA via client gateway. Personalisation of the forms, e.g. automatic filling in of the data and income already known to the NTCA does not exist. However, in given circumstances the tax payer can select the option of letting the NTCA determine his taxes or entrust the employer with preparing his tax return. Taxes and contributions are paid by bank transfer to specified target accounts. It is not possible to pay with bank cards online.

In a mobile-friendly world though submitting tax returns should not only mean the possibility of filling in an electronic form which lacks comfort and is not user-friendly. Instead, the program should be available to download onto computers as well as online and mobile applications (phone and tablet). In the USA the users can choose from a wide range of mobile applications,

which support the preparation of tax returns (Wagoner, 2015 and Battersby, 2011). This is in addition to the understandably popular TurboTax, which is the same age as the program used by the NTCA.

Reporting a crime

Reporting minor crimes online is possible via the police.hu website where forms can be downloaded and then filled in with the help of the general form completion program (similarly to dealing with the Tax Authority).

The RUTIN smartphone application is connected with the activities of the police and helps travellers with notifications about accidents and other traffic information.

Based on international examples local and civil organization initiated the development of applications (e.g. Városvédő, HelpyNet, Segélyhívás, Balatonhelp) which in emergencies will send an alarm to previously pre-programmed phone numbers. The further development of these applications and ensuring connections with the authorities is a task for the future.

Needing a passport

Personal identification documents (ID cards, driver's licenses and passports) require attendance before the relevant authorities in person. This is expected to change since on 1 January 2016 a new, electronic identification card was introduced which, in practice, contains all the data that appears in passports.

The central government portal contains the most important steps and the list of necessary documents required for dealing with these issues in person. There is also a possibility to book an appointment online for attending the document office. Customers can also ask for an electronic message to warn them before their personal documents expire and may request new documents online to replace lost ones. On the website of the Central Office for Administrative and Electronic Public Services (nyilvantarto.hu) the progress of cases can be followed with an online case helper. In the course of modernizing services "OkmányApp" was created, through which lost documents can be replaced, changes to the ownership of vehicles can be notified and a certificate of good standing can be applied for.

Conclusions

The basis for the development of electronic services for governments in the digital age is the "reintegration of services, the demand-based holistic approach, and the extensive digitalisation of administrative operations" (Z. Karvalics, 2008:8). Since 2012 the integration of e-government services is the basis of the EU evaluation of developments. In order to achieve appropriate results the existing, point-like services will need to be re-structured to build on and connect with each other in accordance with the life events of citizens and businesses. Assessment and consideration of user demands is necessary for creating services. It shall be taken into account that these demands are varied and multi-levelled ranging from people who reject or unable to use electronic devices to the digital natives of Generation Z.

Based on the use of digital devices by the latter group, characterised by increasing numbers and activity, I reviewed the comfort provided by e-government services available for citizens. Looking at the results summarized in Table 2. below it can be stated that there are numerous possibilities for further development.

Table 2.: Digital age maturity of Hungarian eGov

Life event	Mobile-friendly websites	Mobile application	Online forms	Persona-lisation	Online payment
Applying for a birth grant			✓		
Enrolling in higher education			✓		✓
Looking for a job		✓			
Declaring income taxes	✓				
Reporting a crime					
Needing a passport		✓			

Source: own construction

It is my opinion that developments will bring returns, concentrated and user-friendly services will inspire even users who are not keen on using e-government services.

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