

## GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

# E-Government Efficiency and Return-of-Investment

*Leonidas G. Anthopoulos, School of Business and Economics, Technological Education  
Institute, Thessaly, Greece*

E-Government evolution has been based on ambitious political slogans, corresponding strategies and extensive funding on complex programmes in order to achieve in contextual objectives: simplified access to public services; openness; accountability; transparency; citizen engagement. In U.S.A. only, Federal Government has invested an annual amount of \$70 billion on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) during the last decade. However, the outcomes from these investments are questioned. For instance, U.S. citizens still appear to prefer traditional transactions (i.e., office visits) when they have to deal with individual or non-automated public services. Additionally, the objective of the 20 common public services that has been identified in Europe since 1999 under the e-Europe strategies, has not been yet achieved by all the member States. On the other hand, citizens' expectations have not been met yet and e-Government adoption is low at an average international level. Various investigations (i.e., by the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI)) show a steady but slow improvement regarding meeting citizen

expectations, which cannot be easily counter-balanced by the invested capitals.

Enterprises evaluate the efficiency of an investment with various methods, such as Net Present Value, Return of Investment etc. Although Governments do not invest with similar perspectives to the private sector, scholars argue about the earned value from e-Government investments, while it is important to evaluate Government efficiency and e-Government outcomes' achievement compared to the invested capitals.

This special issue focuses on e-Government progress measurement and aimed to validate whether government's efficiency has been increased; and to confirm whether a return-of-investment (ROI) method or other similar methods are appropriate to be applied on e-Government spending evaluation. More specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

- How much Governments are being or have been invested on e-Government in different countries or regions?

- How differently international organizations (i.e., United Nations, OECD, World Bank, European Commission etc.) measure e-Government efficiency? To this end, it must be considered that government efficiency concerns public sector performance or productivity rates and it is mainly associated with public spending effects to socio-economic indicators
- How can e-Government success be measured with regard to public spending?
- What measures/indexes are appropriate to measure Government efficiency's change with regard to e-Government?
- Has e-Government spending resulted in a better Government?

Similar sorts of questions have been asked by the contributors to this special issue who investigated e-Government project management. The first article "Twenty Years after the Hype: Is e-Government doomed? Findings from Slovenia?" by Alois Paulin addresses various myths with regard to e-Government and uses data from Slovenia to validate them and to give answer to this special issue's questions. De Vries and Ester follow with their contribution "Inter-organizational transactions' cost management with public key registers: findings from the Netherlands", which use data from the Dutch Kadaster to depict how inter-organizational

transactions bring extra costs and accounting complexities to public agencies, while corresponding financial autonomy and accountability are reduced. Weber et al. follow up and address the modern topic of participatory budgeting in their article "Participatory Budgeting: Findings from Germany" and they use data from 58 German cities and municipalities to illustrate whether consultative participation is enhanced with this corresponding process. The final article "E-Government Portal Updates' Evaluation: a Comparative Analysis" by Anthopoulos and Syrakoulis, questions one-stop e-Government portal updates' success in meeting citizens' expectations and user satisfaction increase. They use data from e-service execution over seven one-stop e-Government portals and show that not all renovations achieve in their missions.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their assistance in providing an extraordinary high quality of peer review for this special issue of IJPADA: Vassiliki Kazantzi, Theodosia Leventi and Nikos Mplanas from the Technological Education Institute of Thessaly; Christos Mpellos, Stathis Zikos and Nikos Tsimprikidis from the Hellenic Open University.

*Leonidas G. Anthopoulos*  
*Guest Editor*  
*IJPADA*