

# **Development of an Information Society in the Dominican Republic - Challenges & Limitations by Liranzo, José**

## **Abstract**

Dominican Republic embarked in the enterprise of creating a knowledge and information society. Although with little resources and coordination problems the country's achievements in the last 10 years is outstanding. This paper presents the challenges and limitations of the effort and the research and statistical data that supports this thesis.

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## **Introduction**

The many initiatives introduced by DR government to improve government processes by using ICT's and that was later integrated into an agenda to implement a knowledge and information society, broadening its scope, where hindered by the number of institutions given similar responsibilities that later on created conflicts and double efforts translating later into poor reviews by international organizations indexes and indicators and multiple different policies. Despite this, DR managed to advance in the implementation of a Knowledge and Information society because of the commitment of individual institutions who, faithful to the general consensus of using ICTs to improve processes, ended up implementing truly revolutionary solutions and services such as the Contact Center and the e-government Website.

## **1. Approach**

The research team compiled its body of data from reviewing laws and decrees that regulate the ICT sector of Dominican Republic. Additional information of initiatives and ongoing projects were obtained from websites of Institutions mentioned or created by

said laws and decrees. Other important reports were reviewed AND METADATA COMPILED TO support the conclusions of this paper.

All other data were obtained from government websites and their transparency pages. Data from the Dominican Institute of Telecommunications (INDOTEL) about computer and mobile phone use was also included in this paper.

## 2. Framework

Several Laws, Decrees, Regulations and Norms were issued to support the implementation of different stages of ICT related policies. The process started in 1998 with law 153-98 which created INDOTEL, an institute in charge of regulating the communications sector. Government reform was initiated with the Decree 484-96, which creates the CONARE with the fundamental purpose of the development of measures to be recommended to various branches of government, policy monitoring and NRPs and modernization aimed at improving public institutions, deepen democracy and ensure model development based on equity, justice and well-being of the Dominican people.

### 2.1 Laws

Law	Creation Date	Description
41-08	January 2008	Created the Ministry of Public Administration (MAP) and established its roles to evaluate and propose reforms of the organizational and functional structures of public administration. Review and approve the procedure manuals and organizational charts of the public administration institutions.
153-98	May 1998	Telecommunications Law.
126-02	April 2002	Electronic Commerce, Documents and Digital Signature.
200-04	July 2004	Free Access to Public Information.
5-07	August 2007	Public Finance Administration System.
53-07	April 2007	Technology Crimes Act.
1-12	January 2012	National Development Strategy.

### 2.2 Decrees

Decree	Creation Date	Description
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335-03	April 2003	Regulations for Electronic Commerce, Documents and Digital Signature Laws. (Law No. 126-02).
1090-04	September 2004	Creation of the Presidential Office for Information and Communications Technologies (OPTIC).
130-05	February 2005	Regulation of the Implementation of the General Law on Free Access to Public Information.
101-05	February 2005	Creates the National Commission of Ethics and Anti-Corruption.
178-05	March 2005	Provides that the Audiovisual Institute of Computer Studies is named Center of Information Technologies and Communication (CETIC).
212-05	April 2005	Created the National Commission for Information Society and Knowledge (CNSIC).
310-05	May 2005	Operating Regulations of the Commission of Ethics and Anti-Corruption.
244-06	May 2006	Crates the Committee for the Establishment of a Unified Comprehensive Care System Business Formation, with a mandate to streamline, integrate and computerize procedures followed by institutions.
229-07	April 2007	Application Instructions on Electronic Government which contains the general guidelines for the development of e-government strategy in the Dominican Republic.
228-07	April 2007	Sets the Government Contact Center *GOB (*462), which is the official government voice channel and first point of contact for citizens.
192-07	April 2007	Creates Regulatory Improvement Program coordinated by the National Competitiveness Council (CNC).
191-07	April 2007	Expands the scope of the Committee on the implementation of a unified Comprehensive Care System for Enterprise Creation.
615-07	October 2007	Instructs OPTIC to coordinate the procedure for the preparation of inventories regarding applications incorporated into computers and their licensing information.
709-07	December 2007	Instructs Dominican Republic's government's institutions to comply with the rules and technological standards published by OPTIC
175-08	March 2008	Instruct the public institutions to use GOB.DO and GOV.DO in

		their domains.
694-09	September 2009	Sets the 311 Citizen Service System as the primary means for receiving and channeling complaints, denouncements and claims.

### 3. Institutions and their roles

The sheer number of institutions involved in the coordination or leadership roles of implementing electronic government can be identified as a weakness. We believe this was created because of a misunderstanding of the overlapping responsibilities between the terms Knowledge and Information Society, electronic government and open government initiatives. All of them share in some way the responsibility to disseminate and implement the use of ICT's to develop a country society both economically and technologically.

If we accept as a logical roadmap to implementation the Knowledge and Information Society (SIC) the three main phases of STATE REFORM (to improve processes using ICT's, ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT) to improve government services for citizens and OPEN GOVERNMENT (to improve access to information, government transparency and accountability), then the mayor players are:

#### 3.1 CONARE

CONARE was a commission for Civil Service Reform, initially created and later absorbed by the Ministry of Public Administration (MAP) under the law 41-08. Its fundamental purpose was the development of measures to be recommended to various branches of the government, policy monitoring and NRPs and modernization aimed at improving public institutions, deepen democracy and ensure model development based on equity, justice and well-being of the Dominican people. (Decree 484-96, Article 1).

The Ministry of Public Administration - MAP's role is to evaluate and propose reforms of the organizational and functional structures of public administration. Review and approve the procedure manuals and organizational charts of the public administration institutions. (Law No. 41-08).

- Advice, strategic planning, develop, manage, implement and evaluate Information Technology and Communication (ICT) projects for various government's institutions. Encourage and support creation of cooperation networks between public sector, private and civil society to facilitate and optimize management of government agencies and government contracting.
- Assist centralized, autonomous and decentralized government institutions, in identifying opportunities for implementation of ICTs, for the improvement and

efficiency of civil service and the design of projects, taking into account that the initiative must correspond to each institution, seeking to promote the adoption and use of ICTs in public institutions, for a better relationship with citizens.

- Develop, coordinate and promote the National E-Government Strategy.
- Monitor, measure and disseminate the development of the E-Government Agenda.
- Government Ethics and Integrity Dept. - DIGEIG is the governing body on ethics, transparency,
- Open government, anti-corruption, conflict of interest and free access to information on government administrative level.

Decree No. 486-12 Art. 1

### **3.2 DIGEIG**

DIGEIG acts as coordinating and responsive institution to the tasks undertaken by the Dominican government on ethics and transparency in national and international scenarios, on Open Government, Participative Anti-Corruption Initiative, access to information, conflicts of interests, among others.

Decree No. 486-12 Art. 6.13

### **3.3 CNSIC**

CNSIC is the National Commission for Information and Communication Society of the Dominican Republic (Decree 212-04). It comprises the following players:

INDOTEL/UTEA, OPTIC, ONE, DPD, PRODETEL, INTEC, UASD, Dominican Telephone Companies, Consejo Consultivo Para La Sociedad Civil, NAP Del Caribe, MMUJER, MSP, MESCYT, FEDOMU, MEPyD, Alianza ONG, Liga Municipal and Cámara TIC. Its main role is to create, promote and coordinate the Dominican Republic's strategy for the implementation of an Information and Communication Society.

### **3.4 INDOTEL**

INDOTEL is the state agency that regulates and supervises the development of a telecommunications market. Its mission is to "regulate and promote telecommunications services for the benefit of society, in a context of open, fair and effective competition." Its main functions include:

- Promoting the development of telecommunications, implementing the principle of universal service defined by the General Telecommunications Law 153-98.
- Ensuring the existence of sustainable fair and effective competition, in providing public telecommunications services.

- Defending and enforcing the rights of customers, users and providers of telecommunications services, issuing the relevant regulations, enforcing the obligations of the parties and, where appropriate, punishing those who do not comply, in accordance with the provisions contained in the Law and its regulations.
- Ensuring efficient use of radio spectrum in the public domain in the Dominican Republic.

### **3.5 OPTIC**

OPTIC is the Presidential Office of Information Technologies and Communication of the Dominican Republic. It is a unit of the Presidential Office and its functions are planning, directing and executing the necessary measures to implement e-government for the country through the dissemination and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Main functions performed by the Institution are:

- Advice, strategic planning, develop, manage, implement and evaluate Information Technology and Communication (ICT) projects for various government's institutions. Encourage and support creation of cooperation networks between public sector, private and civil society to facilitate and optimize management of government agencies and government contracting.
- Assist centralized, autonomous and decentralized government institutions, in identifying opportunities for implementation of ICTs, for the improvement and efficiency of civil service and the design of projects, taking into account that the initiative must correspond to each institution, seeking to promote the adoption and use of ICTs in public institutions, for a better relationship with citizens.
- Develop, coordinate and promote the National E-Government Strategy.
- Monitor, measure and disseminate the development of E-Government Agenda.

### **3.6 ONE**

ONE is the National Statistics Office for the Dominican Republic. Its functions are to collect, review, develop and publish national statistics in relation to economic, agricultural, commercial, industrial, financial, and social conditions of the population. Among its responsibilities are also conducting national censuses and coordinating statistical services of the Dominican Republic.

## **4. Policies**

### **4.1 Visions and Strategies**

The vision for the use of ICTs in the Dominican Republic, is the following: To achieve the FINAL GOAL of a Knowledge and Information Society (SIC) by implementing these

vital phases: State Reform (using process re-engineering and ICTs), Electronic Government (by offering Citizen Services, ICT development), Open Government (with OAI, Transparency, Open Data).

## **4.2 Strategic Framework**

The strategic framework used to implement initiatives for electronic government were included in various documents: The National Development Strategy (END), Digital Agenda7 and e-Dominicana7. Basically it promotes the use of ICTs for all government processes and the creation of electronic available citizen's services. All aimed at reducing processing time and bureaucracy.

## **4.3 E-government Plan**

The country plan is to encourage and facilitate the transformation of the processes of public and private sectors using ICT's as an inclusive tool of production and democracy, allowing the transformation of the production structure and economic model of the Dominican Republic, towards a model based on knowledge and digital economy.

For the implementation and development of e-Government, OPTIC, coordinated with government institutions to establish the following areas of action:

- Democratic participation of citizens
- Citizen engagement through affordable services
- Good government (technology for government processes & management)
- Transparent services.

## **5. Initiatives/Projects and Achievements**

Of the 4 defined e-government levels of implementations (Emerging, Enhanced, and Transactional and connected) Dominican Republic have completely achieved the 2nd level: Regularly updated contents and information. Some transactional level achievement have been reported as some online government services have been implemented.

### **5.1 Projects/Services**

Using the overall framework defined by UN (a tool that guides the development of strategies that countries undertake in the field of e-Government, based on different stages that benchmark the advance of implementation of online services that Governments offers to citizens. Emerging: Basic information online, Advanced: More sources, e-tools, e-information services, Transactional: two way Interactive applications,

financial and non-financial transactions, Connected: Full interoperability, integrated Government, G2G, G2C, C2G.

Dominican Republic, is in the intermediate stages, between transactional and advanced phases, due to the increase of electronic services that have been in operation in the different public entities through which citizens and businesses interact with government. Services that have made significant impacts/Contributions are:

G2C Government to Citizen (front office) output to civil society in the form of e-services

- Integrated government Services for citizens (PuntoGob, CCG, GOB.do)
- C2G Citizen to Government (front office) input from civil society (empowerment)
- 311 hotline
- Hotline for reporting abuse against children and teenagers
- Hotline for reporting human traffic

G2B Government to Business (front office) output to business in market in the form of e-services

- Electronic Public Procurement
- Digital Signatures
- Integrated Services Windows
- Create Business Online
- Electronic tax reporting

B2G Business to Government (front office) input from business in market (empowerment)

- 311 hotline

G2G Government to Government (back office) internal business processing

- Service Integration (e-Government visiting center, Web, Call center/hotline)
- Normative (Web Portals, Interoperability, etc.)
- Central processing (back-up, redundancies, continuity)

G2E Government to Employee

- PAD (Digital Alphabetization Program)
- ICT Training
- E-learning

## **6. Challenges and Limitations**

The need to design and implement of a sustainable model for ICT and electronic government projects, plus the changes being implemented today in the public administration processes, include the following:

- There is a lack of a proper ICT sustainable model. International cooperation can be of great help in assisting and promoting such model to government. The goal is to design and implement a sustainable model for ICT and electronic government projects for the Dominican Republic.
- Consolidation of internal administrative procedures and establishment of common basis.
- Expansion of integrated civil services.

Challenges to be overcome and/or recommendations to be taken are:

#### Lack of Strong Government Leadership

##### 1) ICT agenda not a priority of the government

- Lack of a long term strategic and sustainable plan
- Nationwide change management program design for processes and not for ICTs
- Aligned e-Government projects with Performance Evaluation

##### 2) Customer Oriented e-Government Services

- Continuous Administrative Reform: Removal of overlapping functions and processes of informatization, streamlining of inconvenient civil services (bureaucracy) and reduction of corruption.
- E-Government initiatives with the most potential to impact everyday lives of citizens such as resident registration, vehicle, customs clearance, employment, statistics management, etc. were given first priority, which became the foundation for e-Government.

##### 3) Sustained Investment in e-Government Budget

- Yearly investment in e-Government implementation (1% of the national budget).
- Created and utilized the Information and Telecommunication Promotion Fund to build early e-Government
- Appropriated 10% of the informatization budget for e-Government support projects by OPTIC or similar institution, in order to effectively implement multi-ministry horizontal projects

## **7. Conclusion**

The Internet is a social phenomenon therefore social conditions of access are important. Among them, the most important is the ability to use technology by regular citizens of a country, what is called digital literacy and digital fluency, which are cutting edges of the second digital divide. Social media sites have also been playing an important role in advancing the digital fluency of regular citizens. Dominican Republic has increased the use of such networks to outstanding levels in the last two years.

Although there have been a lack of government interest in ICTs and e-government topics. There has been a steady improvement in the implementation of such innovations in government institutions and the private sector. Access has increased. The speeds of Internet connections have improved and the number of households with computers and Internet access, social media accounts and web presence has also increased (Encarnación, 2013). All indicators of a healthy improvement of ICT used by general population.

Most government institutions have implemented an ICT infrastructure to enable better citizen services and information.

Nonetheless the need of the establishment of one organization as the promoter and coordinator of e-government implementation might be the needed push that promotes the Dominican Republic to the new stage of ICT use, government modernization and lastly overall competitiveness of its economy.

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## **About the author**

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