E-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: CHALLENGES FOR ACCOUNTABLE (E-)GOVERNMENT? ¹

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INTRODUCTION

It is still valid what Romzek stated in 2000 - contemporary administrative reform is complex and multifaceted. Accountability is a major issue in public administration (Mitchell, 1993), it is a cornerstone of public governance and management (Aucoin and Heitzman, 2000). Accountability has many, often conflicting, functions - Aucoin and Heintzman (2000) point to three purposes of accountability: (1) to control of the abuse and misuse of public authority, (2) to provide assurance in respect of the use of public resources and adherence to public law and values (because it is not assumed that citizens can govern directly in respect to most matters), (3) to encourage and promote learning (and communication, not simply measurement) in pursuit of continuous improvement in governance and public management. Last but not least, demands for accountability may be implicit or explicit (Kearns, 1994, in Jos and Tompkins, 2004).

E-Government represents one relatively fashionable field of the current research. Its literature is vast. E-government is not a model in itself, neither does it line up exclusively with any one of the models like NPM, governance, etc., and there are many versions of e-government (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). In general, e-government refers to the application of ICTs inside and surrounding public administration, ICTs are often seen as enablers (sometimes even causes) of desired or desirable changes (Homburg and Snellen, 2007). The terms like e-government and e-governance usually refer to initiatives of governments that build on possibilities of new ICTs to serve as an instrument for practical achieving of improvements in governments, their bureaucracies and decision- and policy-making and evaluation processes in many ways (e.g. by simplification and shifts of administrative burden from citizens to public administration, speeding up of processes, reduction of costs, enhancement of inclusion in public decision-making, control empowerment, making necessary administrative interactions and burdens more comfortable etc.). Terminology always refers to general notion of public administration as a service to citizens. The goal is to ensure that the practice of this principle will be based on / supported by new technologies. E-government still represents an alternative instrument which offers new means / methods of work for those who can and/or want to use them (although it is apparent that more duties are prescribed for public administration and businesses rather than for citizens) (Špaček, 2012).

In order to innovations, we may distinguish following trends (for example) in e-government policies, legislation and projects of EU member states (Špaček, 2012):

- establishment of new / revision of existing national portals that sometimes innovate their service delivery mechanisms (e.g. by using mobile IDs, by enhanced possibilities of personalization) or focus on a specific field of communication between government and businesses / citizens (including projects from the areas like e-procurement, e-invoicing, e-health, e-justice, e-environment and others)
- piloting e-participation and e-democracy projects (including the community building projects),
- promotion of more internationally recognized instruments for electronic identification (eIDs),
- searching for instruments enhancing effectiveness and efficiency inside public administration (e.g. promotion of open standards and software solution, more complex managerial information systems as well as new institutional arrangements for e-government coordination and evaluation etc.).

These trends bring fragmentation and heterogeneity of e-government theory and practices which are harder to coordinate / integrate and raise questions about accountability of government as well as of management and development of e-government itself.

We build our paper on available public information, advocating the principal requirement that accountable government and public administration shall be open and transparent (i.e. available for outside scrutiny in the form of publicly available information that enable questioning the legitimacy of their activities and their accountability for results - see also Pina, Torres and Royo, 2010). Following the opinion that, regardless the existing level of globalization, patterns of adoption of technology and organizational change are still context-dependent to a certain degree (e.g. Wong and Welch, 2004; Pina, Torres and Royo, 2010), in this paper, we outline and discuss what have happened in the post-communist development of e-government in the Czech Republic, in order to address our three core research questions for the Czech conditions:
Have changes improved service delivery mechanisms?
Have changes facilitated trust of all actors into the cyber space?
Have changes helped closing the gap between government and citizens?
The synthesis will define main reserves and challenges of future development.
We deal particularly with national policies and projects

1. UNDERSTANDING (?) ACCOUNTABILITY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

This paper does not intend to conceptualise accountability in public administration. Still, the authors believe that it would be beneficial to begin the paper with a summary of what is going on in the public administration accountability literature.

Accountability is one of the oldest but most elusive issues in the field of public management and difficulty of ensuring accountability is illustrated by and compound by the vague, incomplete, and multiple understandings of it (Hill and Lynn, 2009). The accountability literature has centred on two questions according to Wang (2000) - how to enhance accountability (accountability tools) and what should be accountable (accountability contents). The latter also refers to the question: what is “accountability” in public administration. In fact, public administration literature has been focusing on more questions, as can be summarized by the following Scheme 1.

In the literature, we may find various understanding of accountability as a criterion for evaluation of government and public administration. For example SIGMA Paper No. 27, which summarizes general criteria of European administrative space and recommendations for (mainly former) candidates to EU membership, emphasizes what we can call administrative law perspective on accountability – “Generally, accountability means that one person or authority has to explain and justify its actions to another ... Accountability also requires that no authority should be exempt from scrutiny or review by others... Accountability is essential to ensure values such as efficiency, effectiveness, reliability, and predictability of public administration... A particular characteristic of accountability in the domain of administrative law is that it is ensured through a complex array of quite formal procedures. Supervision is needed to make public administration accountable, to ensure that administrative bodies use their powers properly according to law and follow established procedures.” (OECD, 1999, pp. 12 - 13). Similarly, building on the Romzek and Dubnick 1987’s typology of accountability demands, Jos and Tompkins (2004) speak about traditional forms of compliance-based accountability which result from defined rules and procedures and led to employing various means to ensure compliance with their expectations.

Another perspective was emphasized particularly in the public management literature – “accountability for results”, mainly as a (theoretical as well as practical) consequence of new public management (NPM) ideas and requirements of the provider/purchaser split which try to address the question “Why Accountability?”, “How can governments improve their ability to deliver what they promise?” and move accountability from inputs, processes and ex ante controls to outputs (performance), outcomes (results) and ex post result oriented-accountability (Kettl, 2000; Wang, 2002;
Mattei, 2007). “In recent times... the expectations are shifting towards performance. It is not enough that governments are democratically elected and act fairly to be considered legitimate; they should also perform” (Willems and Van Dooren, 2011, p. 513) or be efficient. Under this new global approach based on neoliberal reforms, public management has undergone significant changes in terms of its objectives, norms, structures, roles, and service delivery (Haque, 2000). On the one hand, most of these reforms have intended to change the culture and context within which public managers conduct their duties to increase government’s efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. On the other hand, many reforms have been proposed and undertaken with the presumption that, once the reforms are in place, accountability will somehow take care of itself (Romzek, 2000).

**Scheme 1 – Key questions about accountability in public administration (perspectives in current literature)**

![Scheme 1 - Key questions about accountability in public administration](image)

In the “accountability for result perspective”, which have evolved also thanks to the rapid spread of ICTs (Jos and Tompkins, 2004), accountability requires clear assignment of responsibility for action as well as clear statement of goals (Hood, 1991) and related standards which refer to the criteria for which public officials are held accountable (Haque, 2000; Jos and Tompkins, 2004). Although particularly the "managerial accountability" is usually pointed out considering this perspective, in general, accountability of political bodies (government), executive leadership (public managers) and/or (outsourced) service providers is sometimes differentiated. According to Aucoin and Heintzman (2000), the greatest challenge is to assure citizens and their elected representatives that those responsible for managing the managers, namely, public service leaders at the centre of government, do ensure that accountability for individual management performance counts, because “[a] pure administrative state governed by bureaucrats, without the checking of elected politicians and the civil society, may lead to a less accountable and open government” (Wong and Welch, 2004, p. 289).

Referring to accountability in public administration, its specifics are usually discussed together with the specifics of public management. For example Hughes says (2003, p. 67) “Conflicts may occur between the concepts of public management and public accountability. If the public servant is to be
managerially accountable, this could be seen as detracting from the accountability of a responsible politician. How can a citizen call a public servant to account? Accountability may become a real problem, although the old system was unrealistic and a very poor guarantor of accountability in any case. In addition, the managerial changes promise greater transparency, so that the achievements of particular programmes can be seen. This may actually improve accountability in that the public has a better idea of what governments are doing, while the greater external focus means its interests are more highly considered.” “While company management is theoretically accountable to shareholders, the public employee is accountable to the political leadership, parliaments, the public, and to various parts of the judicial system.” (Hughes, 2003, p. 75). This may produce multiple (and often overlapping) systems of accountability for public authority administrators and authorities must respond simultaneously to many values, policy preferences and expectations (Mitchell, 1993). These multiple sources of authority, which often leads to employment of multiple accountability strategies, present challenges to public officials because occasionally it is unclear which of the focal points (or sources of expectations) constitute the most legitimate source of authority for a given situation (Romzek, 2000).

As it is indicated also in the mentioned approach of Hughes, literature has also argued that the traditional model of public accountability in which an official is technically accountable, through the hierarchical structure of the bureaucracy and its mechanisms of command and control systems and through professional accountability, to elected politicians and to the citizenry, is illusory or ineffective in securing either performance or accountability for performance (yet, it may still govern the behavior of some officials as well as politicians). Also democratic accountability - as a process by which a government has to present itself at regular intervals for election, and can be ousted by the electorate (Mattei, 2007) - is an insufficient instrument. Complexity of accountability in public administration can only be understood by adopting a multi-perspective framework of analysis (e.g. McGarvey, 2001, Jos and Tompkins, 2004, Willems and Van Dooren, 2011, Aucoin and Heitzman, 2000). Because opinions about goals and priorities may vary, demands to government and public administration may vary as well, and, consequently, many administrative agencies may be required multiple and sometimes contradictory goals (Wang, 2002; Bocci, 2005; Gaster and Squires, 2003; Andersen and Lawrie, 2002). In this respect, Romzek (2000) describes four types of accountability relationships. She differentiates them according to the degree of autonomy and sources of expectations and/or control, and speaks about hierarchical accountability (e.g. immediate supervisors and periodic performance reviews based on close supervision of individuals who have low work autonomy and face internal controls within supervisor-subordinate relationships), legal accountability (based on relationships between two relatively autonomous actors in which technical correctness is evaluated analogically to the above mentioned accountability in the administrative law perspective), professional accountability (where the source of performance standards is an individual’s own internalized standards and judgments; individuals face questions about whether their performance is consistent with norms derived from professional socialization etc.), and political accountability (i.e. a requirement to be responsive to concerns of key stakeholders, such as elected officials, clientele groups, and the general public). For example, Haque (2000) speaks about external-formal mechanisms of accountability (including legislative instruments, executive means, and judicial or quasi-judicial processes), external-informal mechanisms (such as public hearings, interest groups, opinion polls, and media scrutiny), internal-formal means (including official rules, codes of conducts, official hierarchies, and performance reviews), and internal-informal (such as organizational culture, professional ethics, and peer pressure). The wide range of potential accountability relationships presents important and complicated questions regarding which one(s) to use, especially since the reforms seek to increase accountability (Romzek, 2000).

Willems and Van Dooren differentiate 2 mutually interlinked notions of accountability - accountability and managing of expectations and emphasize (2011, p. 508): “Viewing it as a strategy for managing expectations, accountability is more than the actual fact of being held accountable”, (p. 512) “accountability is about answerability. Yet, when reconstructing how accountability works in practice, it evolves almost automatically into managing different expectations”. They recommend to build on Bovens’ description of accountability as ‘a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the
actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgment, and the actor may face consequences. According to him accountability has three indispensable components: (1) the actor should be obliged to inform the forum about his conduct, (2) there should be an opportunity for the forum to debate with the actor about his conduct as well as an opportunity for the actor to explain and justify his conduct in the course of the debate and (3) both parties should know that the forum is able not only to pass judgement but also to present the actor with certain consequences. Analogies to the definition of accountability – as proposed by Willems and Van Dooren – can be found among requisites of fiscal accountability and responsiveness as defined by Justice, Melitski and Smith (2006). Similar approaches require availability and accessibility of relevant (accurate, sufficient, clear, up-to-date...) information, on which the following debate and consequent (formal or informal) judgement can be built. Similar preconditions may be also found in the literature on quality management - e.g. in the concept of negotiated quality as described by Gaster and Squires (2003) as a process in which different groups of stakeholders express their needs, and contribute their ideas and their expertise – “defining and implementing quality is a matter of negotiation” (p. 50). They are also cornerstones of present approaches to e-participation (see below).

Although most reforms have intended to change the accountability culture of public administration, they have also brought complications and challenges to accountability (besides the above outlined complexity of accountability). As Haque (2000) points out, temporary contract-based appointments of public servants make them more vulnerable to political executives who exercise control over their job contracts and careers. According to some, struggle for accountability through performance raise questions about “hoop jumping” / “cliff edge effects” like “do managers manage the measurement of performance instead of performance?” which may be supported by the purchaser / provider split (Jos and Tompkins, 2004; Hood, 2006). Researchers have also consistently documented a gap between citizens’ levels of perceived quality of governmental services and objective measures of program performance and much research has focused on the role of perceived quality, rather than objective quality, as a driver of service satisfaction (Roch and Poister, 2006). Complications have been brought by processes of contracting (collaborative arrangements), decentralization and devolution. These processes have blurred the lines of responsibility, led to discussions about principal-agent problems and made it harder to determine who is accountable for which results (Kettle, 2000). Recently, for example, Willems and Van Dooren (2001) discussed negatives of accountability in public-private partnerships addressing the question “How can we avoid accountability getting lost in diffusion of public and private responsibilities?”. They point out that accountability is challenged because the accountor becomes diffused and it is not always clear who exactly can be called by the account-holder to account for what. In this respect, sometimes vertical, horizontal and diagonal accountability is separated (see Hakvoort and Klaassen, 2008)\(^2\). Reforms also require contextualization as Chan and Rosenbloom (2010) demonstrated with regard to four challenges to accountability in contemporary public administration\(^3\).

Bouckaert (2008) emphasizes the need to redefine responsibilities between actors (legislative versus executive; public sector versus market; politics versus administration; ministers versus ministries versus autonomous bodies; central level versus decentralised levels of government) triggers the need to redefine mechanisms of accountability. In this respect, also validity of NPM and potential and limitations of “post-NPM” models (like neo-weberian state, networks and governance) is discussed in

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2 Beuilding on the approach of Schillemans and Bovens (2004), Hakvoort and Klaassen define them as follows: „Accounting is a process in the course of which an actor explains, justifies and defends his behaviour to a significant third party. If this third party is in a hierarchical position in relation to the actor who does the accounting (a principal-agent relationship) there is a vertical accounting relationship. This formal hierarchical accounting relationship is lacking in a horizontal accounting relationship; the actor accounts to parties that are (potential) stakeholders or to their representatives, for example citizens, the media or chain partners. In addition to these two, a hybrid form may be distinguished: diagonal accountability. In that situation, accountability to an organization assigned by a hierarchical superior to supervise and check the actions of the actor is concerned. “

3 They discuss the following challenges: 1) outsourcing, devolution, and legal controls of accountability; 2) result orientation and and political accountability for non-mission-based administrative objectives, 3) the promotion of public values, 4) outsourcing and bureaucratic accountability.
current public administration literature (see e.g. Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011; Lynn, 2008; Randma-Liiv, 2008; Drechsler, 2009; Nemec and de Vries, 2012). Still, as indicated in the literature outlined above, accountability will always include retrospective as well as prospective aspects, either formal, or informal. Accountability is among several concepts that have long been central to public administrative theory and practice and yet continue to elude satisfactory definition (Chan and Rosenbloom, 2010).

2. E-GOVERNMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

2.1 E-government and accountable government

The above introduced summary of accountability literature clearly indicates that there are two dimensions of accountability we can in relation to e-government. In the first, e-government is perceived as a tool which may enhance accountability. Here, the central question is “to what extent and how does e-government promote public accountability?” (this was discussed e.g. by Wong and Welch, 2004, who followed the approach of The Cyberspace Policy Research Group in which government websites openness is a function of transparency and interactivity). For instance the role of publicly available information is discussed in the literature – e.g., Wang (2002) agrees with the opinion of Pateman that with more information about available administrative resources, stakeholders may be more realistic and acceptable about administrative capacities, performance standards, and decision limitations. Also e-participation as an instrument for enhancing inclusion in public decision-making, opening the decision-making processes and active obtaining of input from citizens has been under vast debate in the last decade, because in many OECD countries a gap exist between the polity and the community (de Vries, 2000). According to Wang (2002), the interaction helps administrations better identify, asses, and thus satisfy public needs.

Some are not so optimistic about the role of e-government in enhancement of public administration accountability and various aspects of e-government are reassessed. For example, Wong and Welch (2004) conclude that it is simply a myth that e-government will automatically and dramatically change the accountability nature of public organizations. According to them, whether e-government will unambiguously lead to a more transparent, interactive, open and hence, accountable government, or whether it will only reinforce existing tendencies (e.g. to control access to information for the purpose of monitoring citizen behavior to tighten political control of the regime), remains a central question. They say that “the spread of e-government provides a case of convergence in practice rather than in results”. Pina, Torres and Royo (2010), in their research focusing on financial accountability concluded that the spread of e-government provides a case of convergence in the tools applied (in their case the Internet financial reporting) rather than in the amount and quality of the information provided. On the other hand, Roch and Poister (2006) emphasize aspects of the quality management and outline that literature on service quality (particular its part grounded on the disconfirmation paradigm and instruments like SERVQUAL of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry) has pointed out, that service satisfaction may be significantly influenced by expectations (initial reference point) and perceived quality and that these two antecedents of satisfaction are critical to understanding users’ reported levels of satisfaction with services – „we know, however, relatively little about the relationship between disconfirmation of expectations and satisfaction with public-sector services, including the e-services / e-government services“. Also the potential of e-participation has not been utilized sufficiently according to others (see below).

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4 Here, transparency refers to the extent to which an organization reveals work and decision processes and procedures. Website transparency is equivalent to a layman’s basic map of the organization as depicted in the information on the site and reveals the depth of access it allows, the depths of knowledge about processes it is willing to reveal, and the level of attention to citizen response it provides. Interactivity refers to the quality of communication between agency and citizen; it is a measure of the level of convenience or degree of immediate feedback provided.
In the second dimension, e-government can be perceived as what should be accountable - an object which shall be managed in the accountable way. Also in this dimension, conservation or reinforcement of existing tendencies may be discussed and we may raise question like “To what extent may e-government be managed in the accountable way if e-government itself is not used by a government to enhance accountability of public administration?” Particularly this dimension is touched (in exploratory rather than in empirical way) in our paper.

2.2 E-Government – potential and limitations

We will not discuss here in depth various approaches to “e-government” terminology. It is still apparent what Grand and Chau stated in 2005: definitions of e-government abound in the literature. We may add that the term is more stable particularly in its frequency (i.e. we do not see terms like “digital government” or “on-line government” today as often as we did in the past, usage of the term e-government/e-governance is rather globalized), rather than in its content (i.e. definitions may still vary in their specifics across approaches). Current terminology may also emphasize a technology that is / is to be used – for example it is the case of m-government (see e.g. Snellen and Thaens, 2008) or e-government 2.0 (see e.g. Criado, 2009, or Accenture, 2009). E-participation represents, as a relatively young field of research (Macintosh and Whyte, 2006), a single category in some e-government concepts. In compliance with the e-government movement, e-participation attempts to improve government by achieving better governance through enhanced participation. The term refers mainly to G2C and G2B interactions emphasizing the role of ICT to enlarge the space for discussion and inclusion of opinions of stakeholders into policy outputs (Špaček, 2008).

Regardless the terminology, e-government has become one of the most important elements for the public sector reform, as it promises transparency, accountability, and interface with citizens, access to information, and good governance, including prevention of corruption. However, e-government policy has unique characteristics different from other public policies. It is, first, overall policy, covering different economic sectors. It deals with the policy making process and the organization and management of government in general (Kudo, 2008). The OECD has repeated many times that, on the one hand, e-government may bring better government by enabling better policy outcomes, higher quality services, greater engagement with citizens and by improving other key outputs. On the other hand, criticism of e-government practices often argues that new technologies are insufficiently managed as well as used in reorganizing the public administration or that they do not involve the general public in decision-making regarding public affairs. As OECD rephrased repeatedly, e-government is more about government than about “e”, many e-government initiatives have been developed from a supply-side “build and they will come focus”, they have only been overlaid on an existing organizational structures and processes rather than they have reorganised them, and there is still the need to be able / to measure potential and real demand, policy outcomes and quality improvements that can result and particularly are resulting from e-government initiatives (compare e.g. OECD 2003 and 2009).

E-government represents a specific area of public policies where interdisciplinary approach in theory and practice is inevitable particularly because of the complexity of e-government that can be discussed with regard to the complexity of its aims, preconditions (including the reduction of the digital divide and other barriers, as summarized for example by outputs from the project “Breaking Barriers to eGovernment”5), practices and effects. Since the e-government represents an alternative to traditional administrative and governance processes, the e-government complexity itself derives from specifics of public administration and public services themselves (e.g. the executive nature of public administration and requirements of the rule of law principle; the role and practice of the political leadership; multi-layered character of present governance systems which are more hierarchical in their sub-systems of state administration, but harder to coordinate from the state level in the decentralized sub-system of more autonomous self-governments; contradictions of aims of public management reforms; multiple and sometimes mutually contradicting roles of citizens; multiple stakeholders;...

monopolistic feature of providers of many public services – see e.g. Špaček, 2010). Due to the technology used, it may also bring other aspects to the complexity. According to literature on quality management, in public administration, perceived effects of some public services may be influenced by behavior and capacities of their users (civil servants as well as citizens). In this respect, (e-)readiness and the level of “user-centricity” of e-government services is discussed, because e-government consists of e-services which has not only the character of information services, but particularly of self-services (see e.g. Rowley, 2006).

To sum up, in practice one seeks to find an answer to the question arises – “how to manage e-government and ensure an optimal degree of centralization for practical, often rather decentralized projects, in order to guarantee a balanced degree of economic sustainability, democracy, controllability, efficiency and effectiveness of e-government implementation?” (as well as the practice of other criteria that are associated with e-government and can be in contradiction). In this respect, necessities to incorporate and improve e-government management also through better evaluation have been clearly emphasized in literature as well as in policies produced on national and inter-/supranational (i.e. European) level. Current literature clearly show that the skeptical opinion of Bakos and Jager from (1995, in Willcocks and Lester, 2006) about ICT productivity paradox that “computers are not boosting productivity, but the fault lies not with the technology but with its management and how computer use is overseen”, which led to elaboration of the ICT productivity paradox (Willcocks and Lester, 2006), is still relevant. Regardless existing national organizational structures for e-government management, the criticism appearing still in the last OECD studies (see e.g. OECD, 2008 and 2009) outlines and current European e-government policy and action plan (European Commission, 2010a and 2010b) indicates problems of e-government management and evaluation in many developed countries and suggests that it is not always true that the countries having a higher GDP per capita have a better quality of e-government management. The problem associated with more meaningful e-government management and evaluation is that responsible governmental institutions often do not have any real knowledge of the evaluation framework at the stage of implementing the project, not to mention ex ante situation. Even though irreplaceable function of evaluation is generally recognized in each management process, more systematic theoretical and practical approaches to e-government evaluation began to appear more frequently as late as in the last decade and they are still evolving, taking into account the knowledge from service evaluation literature. They try to incorporate requirements of a more rational (evidence-based) management and a more rigorous consideration of investments (also under the influence of NPM), and, often rhetorically, rather than in practice, they shall overcome the perceived lack of transparency in e-government evaluation prior to the decision about implementation of concrete projects, during their implementation and ex post.

Up to now various aspects of internal as well as external quality, which should not be omitted in e-government evaluation, have been discussed together with their weights across evaluation criteria and with methods through which the given aspects (at least to a certain degree) can be measured and subsequently managed and evaluated. These requirements have already found expression in requirements of various quality management models and tools, some of which have been already “adapted” to e-government management and its specific aspects (like security etc., this was for example the case of ISO norms, uniquely of other instruments like Common Assessment Framework etc.). Although the current theory of e-government evaluation or theoretical bases of constructed and designed frameworks as well as measurement and evaluation models emphasize that e-government evaluation should take into consideration the elements of internal and external quality (as defined generally for example by ISO 9126 standard), application of existing tools in practice, however, can be focused only or significantly on selected aspects (either on external or internal) and other aspects can be tackled only formally and superficially in evaluation practices. Consequently, produced evaluation cannot facilitate argumentation of real effects and support their comparison with which were anticipated (Špaček, 2012).

For example available methodologies of e-government economic analyses, which are also spread in the name of good practice (e.g. OECD, 2006; Office of Government Commerce, 2003; HM Treasury, 2011) by OECD, try to support more evidence-based evaluation and comparison of costs and benefits. They have been published with the aim to set up or strengthen (and frequently unify) the practice of
“business cases” of e-government projects and so to improve chiefly the *ex ante* practice of evaluating the planned projects. They obviously attempt to cope with the characteristic, described by Irani et al. (2005, pp. 64 - 69) as “managerial myopia”⁶, still higher concreteness of impacts (according to the OECD evaluation or critical self-evaluation of some countries – e.g. e-Government Unit, 2006) can be seen in the area of costs rather than benefits, both in the case of impacts evaluated for the government/public administration side (which are frequently more concrete), and for citizens (for the demand side).

In spite of the comments of low quality of e-government efficiency, latest OECD and for example also Australian (AGIMO’s) methodological and summary documents do not put so much stress on ex ante cost-benefit evaluation. Rather they emphasize particularly the role of instruments of *ex post* effectiveness evaluation and point out approaches of user satisfaction evaluation. The literature indicates that current concepts of e-government services quality still heavily builds on research based on E-S-QUAL / E-SERVQUAL and E-RecS-QUAL of Parasuraman et al. (Špaček, 2012). Even if they feature varying e-government service quality aspects, they presume that e-services quality management is based on a certain intersection in understanding quality of service users and their providers. They can supplement methodologies of economic analyses, mainly to deal with the criticism that they hardly address the demand side (e-services users). On the other hand, quality concepts of web and e-services may not consider development and maintenance costs of platforms used for delivery of e-services. If their authors operate with the term efficiency, they have in mind a different thing than economists – primarily the simplicity of web use, its suitable structure, minimum of information entered by the user, which influences ease and speed of acquiring e-service, rather than economically conceived efficiency (allocational and technical) on the public administration side. Economic analyses also stress the necessity to evaluate cost shifts between supply and demand (in comparison with the previous, traditional way of providing public services; including the customer and provider switching costs).

Both more systematic e-government economic analyses and more complex attitudes toward e-services quality evaluation require certain statistically gathered data on various e-government aspects. In the European context, current frameworks of OECD or Eurostat suggest that high-quality economic analyses and quality management of e-government projects cannot rely more on the e-government statistics produced by national institutions. What is more, international methodologies may significantly shape national statistical framework that can consider only internationally stipulated requirements and (contradictory to their recommendations) do not take into account other aspects (this can be seen also in the practice of the Czech Statistical Office – see e.g. Špaček and Maťaš, 2010). The principal drawback of statistical data collection about e-government in practice – if any - is that the official e-government measurement is made as a specific part of statistical measurement of the “information society” as a whole and as such it often represents only marginal and often superficial process rather than systematic and independent area of deeper (inter-)national measurement and evaluation. The current international / national statistical measurement of e-government tends to focus mainly on quantifiable aspects of e-services and outputs (such as the number of existing services or the number of visits), rather than on outcomes. Their indicators contain mostly general prerequisites for using ICT, namely those related to the side of potential clients/customers of public administration outside the administration system – citizens and businesses.

In practical approaches to e-government evaluation a great potential is attributed to benchmarking. Up to the present international benchmarking has not paid much attention to back-office (re-)organization which is captured indirectly by using e-service sophistication / maturity models. Primarily the supply side rather than the demand side aspects has been benchmarked, although the called “citizen-centricity” is often emphasized. They follow mainly the output aspects rather than outcomes (output quality / performance improvement etc.). Accenture studies are an exception to this rule (particularly those published since 2004). It still holds true what Kunstelj and Vintar reported in 2004 – current

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⁶ According to them, managers tend to be short-sighted when appraising the investment in ICT, primarily because they do not have a sufficiently robust evaluation framework. Besides, they tend to find merely marginal solutions to hidden or indirect costs, which can be as much as four times higher than direct cost components. In their opinion this myopia can lead to a failure of the project in the long term and characterizes most decisions concerning investment in concrete projects as rather intuitive.
attitudes to e-government benchmarking do not sufficiently address e-government’s complexity and must be improved to mediate the information needed by policy-makers for their decision-making. A frequent application of these methods is probably linked to the satisfaction that such evaluation will confirm a growing trend of existing e-services, even if the results do not provide more detailed information about the quality of service delivered and the demand for them. Benchmarking can also be reflected in the way of thinking of political representatives. As a result some countries can develop e-government systems, which are adapted to the method of influential international benchmarking studies rather than to the needs of users in their own country and benchmarking need not discover these contingent inefficiencies (Bannister, 2007).

Referring to e-government and its instruments for improving democracy of governance (i.e. e-participation), for example Clift (2004) concludes, besides all, that: democratic necessity does not guarantee the use of ICTs based on their demonstrated or potential value, and the use of ICTs in democracy does not guarantee their success or a positive impact, faults in adaptation to local conditions, culture, law, and implementation with follow through are real challenges. Earlier, Blumler and Coleman (2001) identified and discussed the following 5 shortcomings of e-participation: 1) risk of political control (without the critical intervention of the media); 2) vague objectives which may lead to excessive expectations of the public and, consequently, to public disappointment; 3) bogus democracy, where participants are claimed to be empowered, but their political influence is not real; 4) lack of informed inputs; and 5) the risk of fragmentary marginalisation – the experimentation thus far has been fragmented, small-scale and of disparate value. Examples of successful practice are still limited to relatively small numbers within a few countries. Similar conclusions can be found in recently published Study on the Social Impacts of ICT (Van Dijk et al., 2010). The study points out, that in the web 2.0 perspective users are expected to be able to create alternatives to institutional politics, the traditional mass media and knowledge institutions together with other users. On the other hand, as the study emphasizes, serious user-generated content that could play a role in politics, the business world and societal participation is delivered by a minority of people with high education – „those who were already frontrunners in participation, the higher educated and those motivated to participate, benefit a lot more from these opportunities. This means that existing (relative) inequalities will remain, if not increase“ (p. 23). Similarly also Justice, Melitski and Smith (2006) point out that because of the digital divide representativeness of participation is not ensured.

According to the cited study of Van Dijk et al. (p. 574), „[w]hile many scholars have suggested that the Information Society will make politicians more responsive to the needs and preferences of citizens, in all countries except for the USA more than half of all Internet users ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘somewhat disagree’ with the statement that the Internet ‘will make public officials care more about what people like you think’“. They also state that only in few cases data obtained from citizens were reflected in the approved policy in a larger extent. According to them (pp. 68 – 69), “[s]o far, e-Participation has not resulted in cheaper and faster policy making. The new applications require a lot of investment. A multi-channel approach remains necessary to reach all citizens and to stimulate not only the quality but also the quality of input. When policy making with e-Participation happens faster than before, this does not have to be progress according to all views of democracy. The fast and direct democratic applications of e-voting, e-referenda and e-petitions run the risk of populism according to most views of democracy. They prefer some time for consideration in a representative system.”

3. E-GOVERNMENT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

3.1 E-Government in the CEE region

E-government has been a sexy topic of reform agenda not only in Western democracies, but also in the region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). E-government was not always an explicit part of their initial reform phases like transformation and consolidation (as described for example by Hesse, 1998), during which particularly the initial democratization and establishment of basis of public administration structure (including the deconcentration and decentralization and creation of self-governments) together with initial economic transformation (during which also telecommunication
After accession, the EU pressure for changes almost disappeared, and reforming public administration became a more “voluntary” and nationally motivated process. The reaction to such new conditions was relatively different between new EU member states. Some of them (e.g. Latvia and Lithuania) continued to try to realise more complex reform plans, others (e.g. Slovakia, Czechia) significantly slowed down and only a marginal changes occurred Today, country reports and also many other sources indicate that one of the most progressing CEE reform areas is e-governance (Nemec, 2008).

We will not discuss here, to what extent the e-government has been implemented as a result of globalization and to what extent internal pressures have played the role in the process of e-government adoption and development in the CEE region. Aspects of both the pressures can be seen in the region. Some projects were implemented in order to imitate foreign experiences and have brought practices which have even overrun Western countries (e.g. practice of Estonian e-voting may serve as an example here). Together with other public policies, e-government development in the CEE region has been facing various (mutually interlinked) deficiencies and challenges discussed which have been discussed with regard to their reforms. Building on the literature, these deficiencies and challenges of public administration reforms in the CEE region can be summarized by the Table 1.

Table 1 – Deficiencies and challenges of public administration reforms in the CEE region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deficiencies, challenges</th>
<th>Specification</th>
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</table>
| Legalistic approach to reform and imitation | • reform perceived particularly as a change in legislation  
• insufficient inclusion of stakeholders  
• mechanical transfers of experience from public administration in other countries into a national culture, regardless of national specifics  
• reforming of cornerstones which had not been stabilized, pressures to reform the not-yet-existing management practices (trial and error method) |
| Strategic management and stakeholders involvement in policy-making and policy-evaluation | • insufficient policy-making and policy-evaluation capacities (thanks to the political instability which brought instability of managers and tactics „wait and see” of civil servants)  
• top-down approach without sufficient horizontal and vertical communication  
• a great number of developments have taken place not in the framework of strategic plans and concepts, but rather sporadically at the initiative of particular organisations or influential individuals |
| Decentralization | • decentralization itself does not produce improvements  
• only “de iure”, but not “de facto” decentralization |
| Civil service professionalization | • civil service professionalization was outshined by economic and political reforms  
• high degree of politicisation of the civil service, particularly at a management level  
• low salaries do not motivate young people to apply for jobs in...
Although changes in CEE have been fast and radical (Randma-Liiv, 2007), public administration reforms were often perceived particularly as a change in legislation or a reform transfer, brought by the pressures of euphoria after the fall of regime or - among others - by the EU accession. New legislation had not often been implemented for a long time due to national contexts (see e.g. Coombes, 2007) and insufficient capacities of politicians and civil servants (e.g. this was also the case of Czech Supreme Administrative court which was anticipated by the Constitution of 1993, but had not been established till the end of 2002, or the law on freedom of information, which was anticipated by the Charter of basic rights and freedoms of 1993, but could not be further implemented before the act on free access to information was approved in 1999 etc.). At the beginning (but to certain degree today in some countries), civil service professionalization was outshined by economic and political reforms which often have not addressed the main issues of financial management (e.g. in the Czech Republic, the Act on State service was approved in 2002, but its enforcement has been postponed almost every two years). These characteristics determined also the practice of accountability mechanisms in the area of public policy as well as public administration, as it can be seen for example in figures of corruption perceptions index of Transparency International (see below). In 2007, criticizing the approach of the World Bank, IMF, UNDP, EU-TACITS and other development agencies, Coombes pointed out that standards of professionalism have really declined so much since the communist period, then spelling out normal standards of right conduct for public officials is not likely to make much difference, however strictly the new codes might be enforced.

Current trends of e-government in CEE countries are more or less in line with those that can be seen in Western European countries. They may be summarized (or better to say “indicated”) by the following Table 2 which outlines variety of national e-government projects in the CEE countries. The table refers to the period 2005 - 2011 and is based on e-government factsheets of new EU member states that have been published on the portal epractice.eu (and as such it may not be complete). In the Table 2 we also included basic information on e-readiness aspects (using the Eurostat data which are also included in the factsheets), which also indicate the level of take-up, and level of online sophistication of 20 basic e-services as benchmarked by Capgemini et al. (2010). For the purposes of the Capgemini benchmarking, online sophistication has been defined as the extent to which government services allow for interaction and/or transaction between the administration and citizens or businesses. Basic Delivery of e-services (mainly the supply-side aspects - see above) are assessed against a 5-stage maturity model which are maintained from previous measurements: (1) information (20 %), (2) one-way interaction (40 %), (3) two-way interaction (60 %), (4) transaction (80 %), and (5) targetisation/automation (100 %) (see Annex C of the Capgemini report for more information). According to the last available benchmarking study (Capgemini et al., 2010, p. 13): “The gap between the availability of services and their take up, shows that the public sector is facing important challenges to rethink how public services can become more citizen-centric... The achievement of the
critical mass requires a certain level of eGovernment acceptance not only on customer side but also within public administrations. Unfortunately, hardly any comparative figures exist for usage of eGovernment within government (degree of computerization of administrations, ICT-enablement of the back office, elimination of paper-based processes and such like)... Without the critical mass of eGovernment users, the real value derived from eGovernment will continue to elude administrations; service delivery will never be as cost-effective as sought; administrations will fail to use technology to free up the front line of service delivery; citizens will continue disengaging from democratic processes; entrepreneurs will not receive the business support they seek, and so forth. "Most eGovernment services still focus on delivering large scale administrative services designed to make existing government functions work more efficiently and effectively, such as tax and procurement systems, automation of registrations, permits and licenses, etc. These services are often existing services put online which are still basically silo-centric, top-down, with little service innovation, expensive, and with just as many failures as successes. In other words, their main focus remains first and foremost to serve the needs of government" (p. 74). Despite awareness of the e-government take up gap, only 9 countries have reported in the survey to have some experience with measuring take up in this year’s benchmark according to the study. From the CEE region, this was only the case of Latvia.

Table 2 - Trends of e-government in new EU member states (national projects, period 2005 – 2011)

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>BG</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modifications of existing national portal for citizens/businesses</td>
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<td>• new e-services</td>
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<td>• personalization instruments (My Data, My account etc.)</td>
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<td>• speech synthesizer of the portal content</td>
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<tr>
<td>• multilingual national portal(s) (usually, very restricted content in comparison to native languages version)</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creation of new portals and new e-services for citizens and businesses</td>
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<td>• national e-government portal</td>
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<tr>
<td>• secured e-mail boxes for communication with public administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Point of Single Contact / Integrated Service Points (for entrepreneurs as anticipated by the EU services directive)</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>• information system for the management of draft laws</td>
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<td>• e-health services</td>
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<td>• e-police services (traffic point, crime reporting)</td>
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<td>• anti-corruption portal</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>• central online catalogue of public information</td>
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<tr>
<td>• portal for simplification of administrative procedures / reduction of adm. burden</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>• self-service employment portal</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>• e-payment gateway</td>
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<td>• e-registration of companies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• eGovernment Knowledge Portal</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>• eCensus</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>• eSignature portal (also for storing of signed e-documents)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>• portal assisting children and young people in assessing e-gov services</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>E-participation / E-Democracy</td>
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<td>• possibility to comment national draft</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
law

- possibility to comment e-government development x x
- tool enabling residents’ participation in government policy-making x
- e-voting x (m-ID)

eIDs and new passports

- eIDs planned x x x x x x x
- eIDs implemented x x x x x x x x (only m-ID)
- new passports with biometric data x x x x x x x x

New duties, e-services and controlling institutions inside PA

- central public procurement infrastructure (duties to use it differ in the states) x x x x x x x x
- new institutions for e-gov monitoring (outside the organizational framework of ministries, data protection ombudsman or general audit offices are not included) x x
- CERT x x x x x
- national portal that helps local governments design and modify their websites x x x x x x x x
- generator of e-forms x x x x x
- portal of best managerial practices x x x x x
- one-stop job portal for civil servants x x x x x x x x
- open source policies and duties x x x x x x
- central register of contracts x

New legislation

- special “eGovernment Act” x x
- E-signature legislation x
- National Interoperability Framework x x x x x x x
- Act on the freedom of information by electronic means (or amendments of former FOI law) x x x x x x x x x

E-readiness aspects

- % of households with Internet access (2010) 33 68 60 61 64* 67* 42 67 68 61
- % of enterprises with Internet access (2010) 85 96 90 96 92* 94* 79 98 97 95
- % of individuals using the Internet at least once a week (2010) 42 71 61 58 66* 58* 34 73 65 58
- % of individuals using the Internet for interacting with public authorities – obtaining information/downloadings forms/returning filled forms (2010) 13/ 47/ 26/ 18/ 41/ 18/ 6/ 33/ 40/ 15/ 7/
- % of enterprises using the Internet for interacting with public authorities – obtaining information/downloadings forms/returning filled forms (2009) 56/ 77/ 65/ 88/ 68/ 53/ 40/ 86/ 85/ 63/ 76
- Level of on-line sophistication of basic 20 e-services in 2010 (Capgemini et al., 2010) 77 97 80 84 94 87 73 81 97 85


- 3.8/ 6.6/ 5.1 4.9/ 4.5/ 5.0/ 3.8/ 4.5/ 6.6/ 4.9
- 3.6/ 6.5/ 4.7/ 5.0/ 4.3/ 5.3/ 3.7/ 4.3/ 6.4/ 4.6/
- 3.3 6.4 5.1 4.8 4.2 5.5 3.6 4.0 5.9 4.4

Global Corruption Barometer (2010 – perceived “decreased”//”the same”// “increased” level of corruption, in %)

- 28/ n/a 4/ 8/ 9/ 26/ 2/ 5/ 14/
- 42/ n/a 20/ 29/ 36/ 45/ 11/ 22/ 42/
- 30 76 63 55 29 87 73 44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>BG</th>
<th>EST</th>
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</table>

Note: *2011, **2010

Source: Authors, based on epractice.eu e-government factsheets of the countries (most of which were in the version of October or December 2011), Capgmenini et al. (2010), Transparency International (2009, 2010a, 2010b and 2011).

The Table 2 also shows, that except for Poland and partially also for Lithuania, the figures of corruption perceptions index (CPI) of Transparency International were decreasing in the period 2009 - 2011, i.e. the perceived level of public-sector corruption was growing. According to the Global
Corruption Barometer of TI from 2010, the level of corruption increased or was the same in most of the countries from the CEE region. Regardless the weaknesses of the CPI (as a perception-based indicator it cannot directly show “objective” incidence of corruption – see e.g. Beblavý, 2009), one may discuss to what extent has the perceived level of corruption changed (increased) after the accession to the EU and to what extent is the European regional policy funding mechanism capable to cope with corruption of new (as well as old) member countries (or even if it raises the corruption levels of countries in the CEE region). According to 2008 Bribe Payers Index of the Transparency International, which is limited in focus (from the CEE region, only Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were included in the last survey), the surveyed executives of companies from the CEE mostly stated, that actions of governments in the fight against corruption is very ineffective (34 %) or ineffective (33 %) (BPI figures for the countries were not presented in the report).

Among the e-government trends in the CEE region, we may found particularly the following new instruments which shall enhance accountability of governments and their public administration:

- In Bulgaria, a new ‘anti-corruption portal’ was launched in December 2007, which aims at providing citizens with a convenient and anonymous means of reporting incidences of corruption. In April 2009, a new e-service “Anonymous Denunciation of Corruption to the Policy” was launched which enables reporting to the Ministry of Interior. This service is accessible through the national portal e-Uprava which also offers, for example, Anonymous online complaints service.
- In September 2006, the Slovenian Ministry of Public Affairs establishes a central online catalogue of public information which is accessible from the e-government portal e-Uprava and offers rapid and free access to the records of different state authorities on citizens, businesses and bodies involved in providing public information, in accordance with the Act on Access to Public Information.
- In Estonia, new information system for the management of draft laws allowing Estonian citizens to comment legislative proposals was launched in April 2011. (Eelnõude Infosüsteem - EIS) provides access to all draft laws and other documents that have been submitted by government bodies for consultation and approval or sent to the Government. In addition, the system gives access to the EU draft laws, as well as other documents related to the EU decision-making process. The EIS allows users to follow proceedings of drafts, read all documents as well as comment upon them.
- Hungarian eGovernment Knowledge Portal (etudasportal.gov.hu), which was developed in June 2010, aims to provide and make available the information and knowledge bases relating to e-government that already exist in the central and local authorities.
- Bulgarian eGovernment Act, which entered into force in June 2008, was based on Austria’s experience.
- Public procurement portals. In Bulgaria, Public Procurement Register (PPR) allows users to see the full list of announcements and perform a search according to various criteria.
- New monitoring institutions. Following a reorganisation of June 2011, the public authority in charge of Estonia's information systems' security, is now called the Estonian Information System's Authority (EISA). It shall help with and monitor the security of the information systems of private and public sector organisations and includes also the CERT. In Hungary, the Public Administration and Central Electronic Public Services Office holds the responsibility for all tasks relating to the provision of e-government services, and the management of electronic records and documents since January 2007. In Romania, National Centre for Management of Information Society, a public institution and a legal entity, is responsible for coordination of all operating systems that are providing e-government services.
- Since January 2011, a new Central Register of Contracts is in operation in Slovakia. The Central Register of Contracts is a public list of contracts by the Government Office, ministries, central government authorities, public bodies and subordinate organisations (subsidised, budgetary organisations, etc.). According to Act No. 546/2010. Contracts shall enter into force on the day following publication in the register.
3.2 E-government development in the Czech Republic

E-government ideas have been reflected in various projects of the central government as well as local government which have been planned and implemented in Czech public sector. They have also been incorporated into new legislation. For the purposes of later discussion, the text below, firstly, summarizes e-government policy and legislation, further on it outlines the Czech institutional system of e-government coordination and evaluation, and indicates main challenges of 4 most visible key national e-government projects (Czech POINTs, data boxes, basic registers and eID).

3.2.1 E-government policy

Aims of e-government development in the Czech Republic may be summarized by the Table 3. The table informs also about deadlines which were anticipated by various policies and as such informs about topics which had not or have not been accomplished. It is based on national e-government policies which have been elaborated particularly by national general coordination bodies (like former State Information System Office – “ÚSIS”, Office for Public Information Systems – “ÚVIS”, Ministry of Informatics or current Ministry of Interior, sometimes in cooperation with Government Council for State Information Policy) as a part of the broader information policy strategy (similarly to the EU approach). Only the first formalized strategy (State information policy of 1999) and the last strategy (Smart Administration strategy of 2007) were specified and supplemented by following (sometimes revised and updated) action plans (again these action plans were broader, this time contrary to the EU approach where special action plan on e-government development follows the broader information society strategy). Sometimes the general strategy did not integrate and enumerate aims of e-government projects of strong central authorities like the ministry of finance or ministry of social affairs which may raise difficulties of integrated e-government evaluation.

Table 3 – Aims of national e-government policies in the Czech Republic

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<td>G2C / G2B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to public information</td>
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<tr>
<td>• availability of information on public finance utilization</td>
<td>x (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• description of life events on national PA portal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• e-collection of law</td>
<td>x (1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Companies register, Trades register and public information on businesses and trades</td>
<td>x (1999)</td>
<td>x (2001)</td>
<td>x (2005)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• access to electronic notice boards of courts</td>
<td>x (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• environmental portal</td>
<td></td>
<td>x (2005)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More sophisticated e-services (for transactions with PA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• to make electronic communication with PA possible</td>
<td>x (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• e-forms</td>
<td>x (1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-services for citizens (e.g. e-tax declarations, application for IDs and passports, announcement of change of addresses, applications for social allowances)</td>
<td>x (2005)</td>
<td>x (2012)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>electronic registry offices of authorities</td>
<td>x (2002)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>data boxes for communication with PA</td>
<td>x (-)</td>
<td>x (2009)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-justice</td>
<td>x (-)</td>
<td>x (2012)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Authentication and access to personal data</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>access to personal data</td>
<td>x (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>E-commerce and public procurement</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-commerce legislation</td>
<td>x (1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>G2G</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Information systems and supplementary solutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitating instruments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analysis of educational needs in public administration</td>
<td>x (2001)</td>
<td>x (2005)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>conception of ISPA development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>legislation and infrastructure for long-time archiving of el. documents</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“INTERSECTIONAL” (incl. legislation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authentication and e-signature legislation</td>
<td>x (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>regulation on interoperability (standards of information systems of PA and related atests)</td>
<td>x (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>regulation on ICT expenditures</td>
<td>x (1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal data protection and establishment of control authority</td>
<td>x (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>equalization of paper and electronic form of documents</td>
<td>x (2000)</td>
<td>x (-)</td>
<td>x (2012)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>national telecommunication policy</td>
<td>x (1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrated information system of transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td>x (2002)</td>
<td>x (2005)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information system of structural funds (for projects funding from the EU programmes)</td>
<td>x (2001)</td>
<td>x (2003)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>national strategy of information security</td>
<td></td>
<td>x (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appointment of the CERT team</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>(2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implement continual monitoring of public services quality</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(incl. of measuring clients satisfaction)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“eGON centres” of regions and municipalities with extended responsibilities which would include technological centres and educational centres</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors, based on national policies.

Note: 1) Aims of 1999 include aims anticipated by 2 documents - State information policy (SIP) and Conception of ISPA development. 2) Aims of 2000 were stipulated in the Action plan of SIP realization till the end of 2002. 3) Aims of Action plan of SIP realization till the end of 2003. 4) Aims of the policy e-Czechia 2006. 5) Aims of the policy Strategy of Smart Administration realization in the period 2007 – 2015. 6) Aims of Strategy for development of services for information society and aims of Strategy of e-government implementation in a Territory.

Temporary government of 2009 and current government (as appointed in 2010) have not approved any e-government policy, neither the broader information policy, nor the more specific e-government development framework. The goal of State policy in the area of electronic communications - Digital Czechia - is different. Therefore aims specified in the Smart Administration strategy (2007) and supplementary documents (Strategy for development of services for information society and Strategy of e-government implementation in a territory, both approved in 2008) are still relevant. Their importance grows also thanks to their funding from the EU structural funds. Representatives of both the last governments as well as their civil servants have repeated that, due to the financial development, they will try to revise the e-government priorities. Government of 2009 proclaimed that it would continue particularly with implementation of data boxes, basic registers and Czech POINTs (see below). Programme of the 2010 government anticipates that "Strategy of electronization of selected administrative activities) will be submitted and that basic registers will be completed, register of offences will be launched, issuing of eIDs will start, and projects of data boxes, Czech POINTs, ICTs in legislative process and public procurement will be further developed. In the current coalition agreement, e-government is mentioned rather marginally and its text emphasizes particularly the project of basic registers, which have been on agenda since the 1990s regardless the structure of political leadership (as shown in the Table 3), and implementation of eIDs.

### 3.2.2 E-government legislation

Some of the aims of e-government policies have been supported by following legislation. For the purposes of public e-services and their management, particularly the following existing legislation is of crucial importance:

a) **Act no. 106/1999 on free access to information** incorporates also the European directive on re-use of public sector information. It represents the ius generalis in the field of public information. It defines also the supply side of public information that shall be made available in “the way that enables the distant access” on the basis of activities of public authorities, or on the basis of applications for them made by citizens. The act presupposes a certain level of e-readiness of “legally bound subjects”. This act required also secondary legislation that would specify some of the prescribed informational duties (e.g. today’s special regulation of the former Ministry of Informatics no. 442/2006 which prescribes compulsory structure of public information, including the publication of life event instructions) (see e.g. Špaček, 2007). Relevant duties are shattered in various acts and other related law (e.g. in act on information systems of public administration that is presupposing accessibility of information systems to disabled people since 1. 1. 2008 and related special regulation no. 64/2008 on accessibility of web pages; act on free access to environmental information (Act no. 123/1998).\n
b) **Act on information systems of public administration** (no. 365/2000) currently prescribes not only the new accessibility requirements, but also general duties of “long-term management” of information systems. Within these duties the act require administrative authorities to elaborate and approve an “information conception” (in the period 2007 – 2008) that would address long-term aims of quality and security management, and also general principles of buying, developing and running of their information system (as specified in special regulation no. 529/2006). The information conception shall
serve elaborating the second pillar of the ICT “long-term management” – documentation of the information system. Both of these parts shall be approved by certification. Such certification is not required in case of municipalities which exercise only the basic amount of state administration. The certification shall ensure also the interconnection with other information systems. This act also prescribes special duties of the Ministry of Interior to administrate the Portal of Public Administration. Amendments to the act also facilitated the establishment of the Czech POINT network.

c) Act on e-signature was passed already in 2000 (act no. 227/2000).

d) Relevant duties are prescribed in the Administrative Procedure Act (Act no. 500/2004). This act presupposes also electronic form of official notice board. Electronic notice board of an authority may be established also indirectly by making a public-law contract with other authorities in case of low capacities of an administrative authority to ensure publishing of content of notice board electronically. No specification of this incapability is prescribed however. The act on administrative procedure stipulates similar duties regarding the electronic registries which are special workplaces of public authorities that should serve receiving and delivering of data messages as defined in the act on electronic signature.

e) In July 2009 the Act on Electronic Transactions and Authorised Conversion of Documents (the so called “e-government act” in the Czech Republic, act 300/2008) came into force. This act specifies data boxes as electronic communication instruments that shall simplify communication between public authorities and businesses and citizens. From July 1, 2009, all public authorities are obliged to communicate electronically with each other, and with certain private sector entities and individuals, for which the data box have been established (on the compulsory or voluntary basis). Data boxes are designed for sending and receiving official documents in an electronic form.

### 3.2.3 Institutional system of e-government coordination and evaluation

The current Czech e-government policy and legislation presupposes the institutional system of e-government management as simplified by the following Figure 1.

**Figure 1 – Czech institutional system of e-government management**

![National level](#)

**Government**

- Ministry of Interior

**The Prime Minister**

- Ministry of Interior

**Territorial level**

- Association of Regions

- 14 Regions

- 8 Regions of Cohesion

- Union of Towns and Municipalities

- More than 620 Municipalities

- About 770 Voluntary Associations of Municipalities

- "Deconcentrates" of the Ministries (e.g. labour offices, financial authorities, etc.)

- Other Ministries and Central Authorities

Source: Authors.

The figure emphasizes the central role of the political level (the Government, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior). The Ministry of Interior as a representative of central bureaucratic level represents “a key bearer” of the Czech strategy reform and its management. It shall cooperate with
other external stakeholders from the group of central authorities (of which particularly the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Social Affairs were the pioneers of Czech central e-government projects) and territorial self-governments and their associations. Since autumn 2006 responsibilities to coordinate and evaluate central public administration reform were transferred from the Office of the Government to the Ministry of Interior. The transfer of responsibilities was supposed to unify the public administration coordination tasks of the Ministry which has also gained the majority of responsibilities of the former Ministry of Informatics after its formal abolishment in June 2007. Since that time, the ministry has also been responsible for the evaluation of e-government in the Czech Republic. This duty is incorporated in the general duty of the ministry to search for, process, save and create new information that forms a knowledge base for quality development and improvement of information systems of public administration.

Since Autumn 2009, various reorganizations of the Ministry of Interior had been realized which have been followed by personnel changes on top positions. The former ‘Deputy of the minister for public administration, informatics, legislation and archiving’ and his ca 900 employees were split up into responsibilities and personnel of two deputies - Deputy of the minister for public administration, legislation and archiving, and Deputy of the minister for informatics. This split up was also motivated by the tendency of the former sub-system to concentrate mostly on e-government rather than on other issues in public administration, including legislative proposals and archiving. First section should have created assignments and the executives of the deputy for informatics should have offered ways how to implement them (as pointed out by the new Deputy for public administration, legislation and archiving in the interview in November, 2009 – see Chum, 2009). Currently there is only one deputy responsible for e-government, within his office the organization have not been stabilized and former section for informatics and e-government was split into two sections. Some have pointed out that the European Commission have frequently criticized changes in top bureaucratic positions of Czech ministries and hope that the European funding will not be restricted (see e.g. eGov.cz, 5. 3. 2012). Also the political leadership of the ministry was not stable and have been stabilized to a certain degree after the appointment of new minister in April 2011 (see e.g. eGov.cz, 15. 1. 2012).

Government Council for Information Society shall have helped the Government and the Ministry of Interior since Spring 2007 (it was appointed lately in May 2007. It shall advise government in the area of conceptual development of information society in order to accomplish higher level of interconnection and coordination of ministerial and national projects. Its responsibilities were enhanced in May 2010 which was reflected in its title. It is presided by the prime minister and consists of ministers and other members representing state administration and self-governments.

On the central level Gremium for regulatory reform and efficient public administration was established as an inter-sectoral coordinating body of Smart administration strategy which substitutes the Government Council which has not been established yet, although it was presumed by the Smart administration strategy. The Gremium consists of central authorities, the Union of towns and municipalities of the Czech Republic, the Association of Regions of the Czech Republic and the Economic Chamber, and is presided by the Minister of Interior. It shall comment the proposals of legislation, approve project proposals, comments proposals of mid- and long-term conceptions, analyses and programmes. The Smart Administration strategy presupposed that the Group for Smart Administration Coordination would be appointed which should coordinate elaboration and evaluation of projects, elaborate the projects schedule and inform the government about the reform progress semi-yearly and annually. Semi-yearly reports shall be submitted to the Gremium. Annual reports shall be submitted to governments. No such reports have been made available to public so far. Only minutes from the Gremium’s meetings are available on its website. The Group for Smart Administration Coordination has published only the list of project proposed for the funding from the European structural funds within the Smart administration strategy on its web pages so far, the list does not comment the prioritization of individual projects nor their cost-benefit characteristics.

Czech Statistical Office (CSO) has remained the only central authority which has been continually publishing information on inter-sectoral e-government practices. Although its methodology was
supposed to incorporate economic and social outcomes of ICT use, it is still mostly following the Eurostat’s e-readiness framework.

The Czech legislation which was passed in the last decade, particularly the act on information systems of public administration, aims at reduction of mutual incompatibilities of municipal information systems that is important also with regard to another specific feature of Czech public administration – municipalities (as well as regions) may be responsible also for state administration tasks (we speak about joined / mixed model of territorial public administration – see e.g. Špaček and Špalek, 2007). Taking into account characteristics of the joined model of territorial public administration, practice of Czech e-government projects always reflect characteristics of state administration and self-government. Distinctive features of state administration as a subsystem of Czech public administration are particularly the centralization, hierarchy and top-down implementation of projects which intend to modernize it. In the territorial state administration, the development of e-government is influenced / conditioned by national projects which are realized by individual branches of state administration (mostly separately by individual ministries) or in more resorts together with coordination of the Ministry of Interior. The national projects usually bring adaptation of information systems of municipalities and regions whose functionalities also cover the area of self-government.

Specific areas of e-government projects which may occur in Czech territorial self-government represents those which are realized in territorially subdivided statutory cities and in the Capital of Prague. Statutory cities represents a group of cities whose specific is their possibility to subdivide their public administration into central level and into a lower level represented by municipal parts / districts which, afterwards, have their own political and administrative bodies.

3.3 Selected key national e-government projects and challenges for (e-)government accountability

3.3.1 Czech POINT project

In the Czech practice of e-government, the Czech POINT project still represents one the most visible central government initiative. The project was launched on the basis of central e-government strategy. Czech POINT projects represents an e-organization initiative which, in a form of network of one stop shops (called „Czech POINTs“), offers alternative channel of service delivery through larger integration of governmental services. Still, services are delivered particularly by the front-line levels of public administration (municipalities) and other participating institutions (particularly by offices of Czech Post) however.

The innovation is apparently of an incremental rather than of a radical type. It has improved particularly processes in existing institutional system which may make service delivery faster. The ICT application has been more used to automate existing procedures, but brought also certain redesign of existing procedures which will (or shall - according to existing plans) be further developed. The object of innovation has been focusing particularly on administrative processes in order to improve the service to citizens and businesses. Changes were initiated particularly internally, by the Ministry of Interior in cooperation with other central authorities. The innovation brought by the Czech POINT project is citizen- as well as administration-oriented and impacted central as well as municipal (and partly also regional) administrative level. Ministry of Interior as a coordinator of the project has often highlighted the leading motto of the project: “to make the data, not the citizen, run around”. Due to the former principle to follow the administrative territory of public authorities when servicing citizens in the case of state administration responsibilities, citizens had to visit more public authorities and often had to travel among them in the past. Thanks to the project citizens can now visit one of more than 6 800 Czech POINTs in order to receive certain services (see below) on one place regardless of their permanent residence.
Ministry of Interior expected that Czech POINT system would provide access to all data stored in public registers and would be accessible for citizens via the internet. The aim of the project is to create guaranteed service that can be used particularly by citizens and businesses in order to communicate with the state via single contact place where it will be possible to

- obtain and authenticate data from public and non-public information systems,
- authenticate documents,
- converse paper documents into authorized electronic form and vice versa,
- obtain information about the progress of administrative proceedings and to initiate administrative proceedings.

Czech POINTs were tested from April to December 2007. For the purposes of pilot testing municipalities were selected already in 2006. In December 2006 in his article Ryšavý (2006) warned of an opinion of the president of the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic that Czech POINTs activities may be undervalued in the system of state administration funding. The president also claimed that the ministry attempted to diffuse Czech POINTs in all municipalities with the registry office, but it was not clear if it had sufficient information about their readiness. The article also pointed out an opinion of the political opposition that still in that time not so much was known about the technical solution of the project and it was not clear if Czech POINT services would be provided via the Czech Portal of Public Administration. During the spring 2007, Commission for informatics of the Union of Towns and Municipalities criticized that former plans presupposed 250 million CZK a year in order to equip 1 200 public authorities. The Commission also criticized that the financial plan of the ministry did not take into account costs on employees and highlighted that knowledge of employees (especially of small municipalities) as well as the awareness of citizens represent the crucial determinant of future Czech POINTs' practice. It was also against the first legislative proposals that wanted to amend the act on public administration information systems, enumerated the list of Czech POINT providers and spoke about duties of certain municipalities to provide Czech POINT services. The Commission required voluntariness which became a leading principle of Czech POINTs establishment. The Commission raised a question why also financial authorities (223 financial authorities exist today as deconcentrates of the Ministry of Finance ), or construction authorities (which form a special field of state administration of more then 600 municipal offices, 13 regional offices and the City office of Prague) and possibly also regional courts were not supposed among Czech POINTs providers.  

7 Financial authorities and construction authorities are those that mostly require citizens to submit extracts from the Cadastre for purposes of their administrative procedures. Regional courts form the network of registration courts, they fill the Companies Register.

The first Czech POINT was launched on 28 March 2007 at the office of city district Prague 13. Finally 37 municipalities participated in the pilot phase. From April 18 to May 4, 2007, the main part of the pilot testing was realized. In June a survey was carried out and from July to September 2007 also employees of the Czech Post and the Economic Chamber were trained, 74 branches of Czech Post (mainly in towns with former district authorities) and 10 branches of the Economic Chamber participated on the pilot testing. The full practice of the Czech POINT project was launched in January 2008.

We may differentiate the following categories of services provided by Czech POINTs (Czech POINT terminals / one-stop shops) which are specified also in the Table 4:

- issuing of authenticated extracts from public, partly public and non-public information systems (customers may obtain the extracts if they are required particularly by banks or other, mainly not public, institutions)
- intermediation of citizens’ submission of certain documents in administrative procedures
- conversion of paper documents in into authorized electronic form and vice versa and authentication of converted documents
- internal communication of authenticated extracts from information systems and registering new / changed information in public administration (former “internal Czech POINT” and current “CzechPOINT@office” – see Špaček, 2012b).

**Table 4 – Functionalities offered by the Czech POINT project**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functionalities of Czech POINTs</th>
<th>Available since</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Extracts from the Cadastre of Real Estate</td>
<td>the pilot in 2007.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Extracts from the Companies Register</td>
<td>the pilot in 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Extracts from the (public part of the) Trades Register</td>
<td>the pilot in 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Receipts of submission made by citizens according to the Trades Licensing Act</td>
<td>January 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Application for extract from the Crime Register</td>
<td>January 2008 (since February they can be issued also by the power of attorneys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Czech POINT E-SHOP – extracts by mail (still only in case of the above enumerated functionalities a), b) and c))</td>
<td>March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) “Internal Czech POINT”, currently in the advanced form called “CzechPOINT@office”</td>
<td>July 2008 in the case of internal use of extracts from the Crime Register; July 2010 in the case of CzechPOINT@office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Extracts from the records of points for driving offences</td>
<td>January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Authorized outputs from the List of Qualified Suppliers</td>
<td>January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) Submissions into the Register of Car Wrecks</td>
<td>January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k) Extracts from the Registry of Insolvent Subjects</td>
<td>16 April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l) Functionalities related to duties prescribed by the Czech act on e-government - applications concerning data boxes (their creation, making them inaccessible / accessible, recision of log-in data, rights of other persons etc.) and duties related to authorized conversion of documents</td>
<td>July 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Špaček (2012b)

Although a number of Czech POINT services has been growing and ministerial plans were ambitious, Czech POINTs currently represent a network of physical terminals that provide Czech POINT reception services mostly during their office hours. They mostly do not deliver services to users on 24/7 basis via the internet, but they transfer most of the requirements on its providers. Some of Czech POINT services can be ordered by citizens from their homes (thanks to the service Czech POINT E-SHOP – extracts by post), majority of them requires citizens’ effort to visit a provider during office hours, but Czech POINTs clearly attempt to transfer administrative burden back to public administration itself. The project is still developing, but certain stagnation of its functionalities can be seen in the last two years. This was and still is motivated particularly by the effort of central government, which co-funds the practice of the Czech POINT project, to save money and find possibilities to reduce the deficit of public finance.

If we speak about results of the Czech POINT project, we must also point out what was planned, but has not been achieved. The ministerial plans anticipated the following functionalities which have not been launched yet:

- extracts from „Info Court“ Information Systems that would inform citizens about progress of their court procedures (planned since April 2009);
- extract confirming that citizens do not owe payments to health insurance (planned since May 2009) and to social insurance (planned since June 2009);
- In February 2009, the minister of interior and general director of the Czech TV signed a memorandum of cooperation in the field of t-government which would bring Czech POINT services on the screen of citizens’ TV in the future (first pilot projects were anticipated at the end of 2009);
Czech e-government strategies (see e.g. Špaček, 2010 and 2011) also speak about “CzechPOINT@home“, i.e. Czech POINT that will allow citizens to use various functionalities from their home on self-service principle. According to plans this future form of Czech POINTs shall utilize experiences of another awarded and/or in media promoted Czech projects like Virtuos, eSMO, eObec etc. (see e.g. Špaček, 2011). It was presupposed that the project would bring larger integration of information systems and services delivered by municipalities thanks to the portal system CzechPOINT@home for public authorities. This portal system shall comprise services enabled by central portal solutions (e.g. a municipality can use electronic forms available in a central file depository, centrally / regionally designed electronic booking system for appointments with civil servants, electronic registry and electronic official notice board).

In March 2011, the government supported the proposal to include private law subjects into Czech POINT network, particularly banks. It is still not clear to what extent these private law subjects are willing to participate in the Czech POINT network.

The up to now development of Czech POINTs also clearly show smoother horizontal (between central authorities) as well as vertical administrative cooperation (between the centre and regional and municipal governments) in top-down as well as bottom-up directions. The project has also brought enhanced cooperation between central government and other stakeholders (namely Czech Post Office, the Economic Chamber, the Chamber of Notaries) who may also provide Czech POINT services and thus joined-up services involving more organizations. In the case of results, one must be aware of the still insufficient evaluation of the project (which is apparent among published information) however. Published information about the practice of Czech POINTs is still scarce and if exists it is not of analytical nature and their characteristic feature is their supply centricity (i.e. available information refers mainly to opinions of Czech POINT providers rather than users). Available information mostly refers to opinions of Czech POINT providers rather than to opinions of their users (citizens and businesses), and particularly consider only opinions of municipalities. The central coordinator of the project, the Ministry of Interior, has not been systematically evaluated the demand for Czech POINT services. No study that would focus on citizens’ perceptions of usefulness and benefits is available in the officially published information. When speaking about the benefits of the project, the Ministry of Interior usually only emphasize the statistics which it collects and which is available on the Czech POINT website (http://www.czechpoint.cz). The statistics shows only growing number and structure of Czech POINT providers and number and structure of services used by customers.

In 2008, Kunc, Svoboda and Simonik raised a question to what extent the offered model of communication between public administration and citizens corresponds with citizens’ needs. They also commented future prospects of the Czech POINT project. They warned of low awareness about the project among public (only 23 % citizens older than 15 years heard about the project in 2007) and recommended enhanced nation-wide promotion of the project in the future. In 2009, Šimoník, Pojer and Svoboda pointed out that more than half of Czech population is aware of existence of Czech POINTs, but only 28 % know where they can visit the closest terminal and 88 % have not used Czech POINT services. In 2010, The Czech Statistical Office in its survey results informed, that almost 1/3 of individuals older than 16 years did not know the project and that 57 % of individuals were aware of the project, but had not used it. In 2012, the survey results show that still 30 % of population does not know the project and that 51 % of individuals were aware of the project, but had not used it. Only 10 % of individuals have used the Czech POINT services at least once.

Survey method of the Czech Statistical Office does not research the incentives to use the service, neither aspects of users satisfaction. Its survey is (similarly to the methodology of Eurostat) not linked to the list of 20 services which have been benchmarked for the European Commission by the Capgemini.

### 3.3.2 Data boxes

The practice of data boxes project was facilitated by the Act on Electronic Transactions and Authorised Conversion of Documents (act 300/2008). Since July 2009, all public authorities have been required by this act to electronically communicate with each other using the data boxes and use data
boxes in communication with those persons (individual or legal entities) for which a data box have been established (only for corporate bodies which have been established by legislation or are registered in the Commercial Register the act stipulates the duty to have their data box established and the use of data boxes communication is compulsory particularly in the direction public administration → individuals / legal entities). Representatives from the Ministry of Interior, central authority which administers information system of data boxes as well as the catalogue of institutions and individuals for which the data box have been established (free of charge), usually distinguish data boxes from ordinary e-mails emphasizing that in the case of communication via data boxes the security of communication is guaranteed (as well as funded) by the State. Data boxes shall serve as a secure repository of official electronic communications with the public authorities (see also Smejkal, 2011).

It was assumed that the communication through data boxes will replace the traditional means. This more strict approach (speaking about duties to use the instrument) is not frequent in the European context. Several national public administration portals have started to offer secured electronic mailbox to registered users through which they can (on voluntary basis) communicate with public administration and which may also serve as repository of documents similarly to Czech data boxes. For example Belgian portal my.belgium.be offers personalized accounts which may be used by individuals who use the eID. Similar instrument is anticipated also in France (according to the information in the epractice.eu factsheet. Only new Danish e-government strategy presumes that all Danish citizens will have digital mailbox by 2012 which will replace traditional paper communication with public administration. Currently the Danish portal Borger.dk offer personalized service My site (Min side) which – according to the description of its functionalities – offer secured e-mail and digital mailbox.

Originally, data boxes could not be used for communication between individuals and businesses and/or other corporate bodies. Since January 2010 Czech Post has launched the service “Postal data message” which allows for individuals and corporate bodies to use data boxes for their mutual communication (originally it was possible only for sending invoices and payment requests, since July 2010 the purpose is not restricted). The reception of the data message is free of charge, sending is charged by the Czech Post.

On the basis of government statement no. 563/2010, changes in funding of data boxes projects were anticipated. The statement anticipated the following: “the use of the data boxes will be covered by end-users from their own budgets”. The proposal of the Ministry of Interior excluded private law entities and individuals from this duty and only public authorities as end-users were anticipated to fund the project, because their communication represented almost 95 % of total data messages sent through data boxes. The following complaints led to the political decision (from November 2010) that consecrated formerly existing practice – the State finances the Czech Post delivery of data messages from the State budget except for communication between private law entities and individuals (see above).

In September 2009, the practice of data boxes was described as follows: “After two months of data boxes practice, only about 270 thousands of them had been established which is not even the half of the anticipated total of 600 thousands established data boxes. Looking at the numbers of activations, for 29 % of anticipated individuals the data box had been established by the Ministry of Interior. In the case of public authorities, only 3 % of them had their data box activated (Budina, 2009). Full practice of the information system of data boxes was postponed to the beginning of November finally. Since that time all formerly inactive data boxes have been activated automatically. Published information speaks about 369 thousands of data boxes activated by the end of 2009, of which 45 % have not been used (portal Datové schránky, 6. 6. 2010). By March 2012, almost 400 thousands of data boxes have been activated through which almost 27,7 million of data messages have been sent (portal Datové schránky, 1. 3. 2012). In case of private law institutions – corporate bodies for which the data box have been established – data boxes is often used passively, for receiving of messages, with an exception in the case of VAT declarations which must be sent through the data boxes (Menoušek, 2011).
During the discussions on further development of data boxes, it was also presumed that data boxes will be used as an *anticorruption instrument*. According to the proposal of the National economic council of the government, all information on public tenders and related documentation shall have been registered and made available to the public. Current information shows scepticism and *political disinclination* regarding this initiative. It is also still not clear to what extant data boxes will be accessible through private e-banking solutions as proposed by the government and in the amended legislation from August 2011.

Current information only speaks about these total numbers. Neither the Ministry of Interior as administrator, nor the Czech Post as a operator of the IS of data boxes, have not published report that would *systematically tackle operation of data boxes*, including the satisfaction of their users from the side of public administration as well as the public. The total numbers are published by the Czech Post, not by the Ministry, without deeper comments. Even the Czech media were criticizing *decreasing publicity* of the project after one year of its operation, which for example Peterka (2010a) links to the *instability* of political leadership of the Ministry of Interior and its section for e-government.

Among *problems of data boxes* particularly the following have been emphasized (Peterka, 2010b, Smejkal, 2010 and 2011, Svobodová, 2011, Ministry of Interior, 2010; Budiš and Hřebíková, 2010; and Lechner, 2011):

- **insufficient awareness of potential users** (e.g. more than quarter of entrepreneurs know they may use the data box for electronic submission of tax declaration), including public authorities;
- **unwillingness and incompetence of public authorities** to use information system of data boxes to send a data message to person who evidently has the data box established and activated, or to accept data message which was sent without using the e-signature (the use of e-signature in the communication private law entity → public authorities is not required by the legislation), or requests of paper form of messages / documents by public authorities followed by direct order not to send message through the data box;
- **restricted functionality of data storage** of Czech POST. Data messages can be stored for 90 days period, than, if not re-converted and revalidated by using the time stamp, they are deleted and only an “envelope” remains which informs of sending and receiving (not of the content of the message);
- **mistakes in catalogue of data box “contacts”** which were also caused by errors in data registered in national registries (like Register of Companies; among the positive effects of data boxes, also cleanup of data by registration courts was emphasized);
- **unclearness of legal specification of data boxes use in private law communication of public authorities**. The use of data boxes in private law communication has been allowed by changes of the e-government act since July 2010, but it is not used often, because, in legal terms, the message is delivered in the moment, when its reception is (actively) confirmed by the addressee through the data boxes, although the information system of data boxes allows to prove, when the data message was delivered as well as read (which is used as evidence in public law communication relationships). According to Smejkal (2010 and 2011) this is directly in conflict the idea of data boxes and electronic communication and as such a step backward in the e-government development.
- **the necessity for users to install special software** (602 XML Filler) in order to be able to access their data boxes through the web interface which also prefers particularly the Microsoft operational system
- **non-systematic and unclear link of data boxes to former key national e-government projects.** Representatives of the Ministry of Interior pointed out that the ministry administrates various systems which have similar functionalities – more specifically, the spoke about the information system of data boxes and transactional part of the national public administration portal (i.e. www.portal.gov.cz, which has been officially launched in October, 2004). The Ministry proposed, that these systems would be replaced by Data boxes portal (Stiegler, 2011). This portal was established formally by amendments of the e-government act in June 2011. Since this solution was not systematic, taking into account existing functionalities of transactional part of the national portal (and the portal itself did not inform users about the anticipated changes), some central
authorities have launched alternative solutions of e-submission instruments (this was for example the case of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, see e.g. Peterka, 2011). In October, the introductory web page of the Data boxes portal informed that it would become a portal from which users can access intelligent e-forms as well as their data boxes and that the Ministry of Interior was negotiating with individual authorities in order to make them provide users with such e-forms. Very recently (late in March 2012), the design of the national public administration portal has changed, its former transactional part is missing and through the portal one can access his data box account.

3.3.3 Basic registers

Smart Administration strategy, similarly to all the previous e-government policies (see Table 3 above), anticipated that in 2010 basic registers would be launched and functional which would replace still existing many heterogeneous and often duplicate records of various authorities. The strategy enumerated Register of Inhabitants, Register of Legal Entities, Register of Territorial Identification, Addresses and Real Estates, and, newly – in comparison with previous policies, also Register of Rights and Duties. The latter shall store information on rights and duties of the public as well as of public authorities which would be consolidated also through the catalogue of public administration services and responsibilities. Among one of its elements also electronic collection of law was anticipated (Baloun, 2008).

According to plans, which were originally speaking also about united state information system (see above), it was often proclaimed that registers shall serve as mutually interlinked information systems through which civil servants can access fundamental data they need for their work without further asking citizens for them, if once registered. Basic registers represents of the important areas in relation to which civil servants often criticized the lack of legislative support. The Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament approved the act much later than it was anticipated in the policies, in February 2009. President signed the act in March and the act itself was published as act 111/2009.

The ‘Act on Basic Registers’ provides for the interconnection of four basic registers and will be implemented through the information system of basic registers. It provides for the interconnection of four basic registers that will be implemented through the information system of basic registers. The Act created the Office for the Administration of Basic Registers under the Ministry of the Interior, which is tasked with operating the system of basic registers. The Act represents an important first step towards the establishment of effective online national registers which will reduce the administrative burden of businesses and citizens. The Act was supposed to take effect on 1 July 2010. Since its publishing in the collection of Law, the act has been amended for three times. One of its amendments from 2010 postponed its enforcement and since that time it has been anticipated that the Act should be achieved by the beginning of July 2012, including operation of the basic registers. A technical solution for the registers was expected to enter its pre-operational phase on 1 July 2011.

During the annual national e-government conference, „ISSS“ (which is particularly a platform for business solutions advertisement rather than conference of public administration scholars, practitioners from public administration or academic event), in April 2011 representatives of the Ministry of Interior spoke of 4 phases of basic registers implementation (Felix a Slaninová, 2011). By the end of March 2012 the validity and completeness of data in registers and their completion was anticipated and a month later other information systems shall have been linked to basic registers. The plan was specified in more depth by the government regulation 161 from May 2011 which stipulated duties of administrators of departmental information systems, the Office for the Administration of Basic Registers and the The Office for Personal Data Protection (the latter is responsible for the „ORG identifier“ which shall replace the birth numbers of citizens in basic registers).

Still in May 2011 for example Smejkal criticized huge delay of basic registers establishment which was caused by problems of related public tenders. Particularly the tenders for Register of Inhabitants and Register of Rights and Duties were the most problematic. In March 2010 the Ministry of Interior
closed the tender with the Accenture (Central Europe B. V.) as a winner, however, two other organizations (ICZ and Asseco) appealed against the results (criticizing the process as well as price proposed by the winner which was perceived as unrealistic and extraordinary low in comparison to other bids) and the Office for the Protection of Competition abolished the decision of the Ministry on appraisal of bids and returned the tender to the phase of winner selection (by its decisions S132/2010/VZ-17758/2010/540/VKu and S134/2010/VZ-17736/2010/530/EDo). According to the decisions of the Office, the Ministry violated the law on public procurement, particularly because it allowed for essential changes in the bid after its submission (which should have narrowed discrepancies between the bid and proposed contract). Also giving scores to individual bids was not sufficiently justified to bidders. The contracts were finally signed with the Asseco (on establishment of the Register of Rights and Duties) and ICZ (on establishment of the Register of Inhabitants), in both the cases as lately as in July 2011 (the total price was 260 millions of CZK higher than the prize of the contract of Accenture as pointed out by eGov.cz, 24. 7. 2011). In the meantime, media had been speculating that the winner of the public tender had been known on the market even before the tender was officially announced.

Information which has been published by institutions responsible for basic registers implementation (particularly the Ministry of Interior and the Office for the Administration of Basic Registers) had tackled the project implementation only in the superficial and partial way. Although the study Impacts of basic registers launching on territorial self-governments was published and the Ministry of Interior presented pilot version of basic registers during the ISSS 2012 conference in April 2012, it is still not always clear in what phase the project currently is (individual basic registers are) and some commentators are skeptical about the roadmap of effects as presented during the conference by the Ministry (see e.g. Peterka, 2012 who criticizes marketing and PR of the project and even perceives the presentation during the conference as propaganda, one of the commentators of the article speaks of “theatre” performance, another commentator would welcome reasonable and truthful information from the Ministry etc.).

Information which were published on the web pages of responsible authorities in January 2012 only generally indicated that the project was still in the phase of data validation particularly in the case of the Register of Inhabitants and the Register of Rights and Duties and processes of interlinking the departmental information systems to basic registers for the purposes of pilot testing. The study on impacts points out that it was elaborated in the very strict short deadline in the situation of extensive preparation for implementation of act on basic registers. It also summarizes results of a brief questionnaire survey and interviews in which respondents from regional and municipal authorities participated. The study indicates in very general terms (and without any further specification of used questionnaire and the structure of questions used in the interviews) that some of the authorities had not started to adapt their processes to requirements of basic registers implementation. Most of the respondents (30 %) would welcome particularly the methodological help from the central authorities. Still in April 2012, representatives of the Czech Statistical Office, which is responsible for launching the Register of Inhabitants, criticized that public authorities (that run the resort information systems) have not sent necessary quality data and the Office must urge them to send their revised version. This makes it almost impossible for the Office to launch the register in time (eGov.cz, 19. 4. 2012).

In the case of ex ante evaluation of the project, no specified information on cost-benefit impacts have been published, the “Regulatory Impact Analysis” which is included in the report on reasons of proposed act on basic registers is very general and speaks about the impacts in broad qualitative terms and mentions the total amount of 2 milliard CZK anticipated by the Ministry of Interior (which will be mostly covered from the European funds). Czech RIA methodology is incorporated into Legislative rules of the Government (since 2007) and requires that consultations with public shall become one form of inclusion of public within the process of evaluation of legislation proposals. Submitters of regulation shall prove that they consulted the public before they submit a final proposal according to

8 The document General principles of regulatory impact assessment (RIA) was approved by the government in August 2007 as a complementary part of government rules on legislative procedures, but was already required by the central level reform projects from 2004.
the rules. No such evidence is incorporated into the RIA of basic registers bill.

New interdepartmental working group was established in November 2011 as a part of the Government Council for Competitiveness and Information Society. In December 2011, personal change on the position of the Director of the Office for the Administration of Basic Registers was realized which further support discussions about instability of e-government management in the Czech Republic.

3.3.4 eIDs

The project of eIDs represents another example of unclear and insufficiently deliberated and communicated approach to central e-government project implementation in the Czech Republic. Its practice has been also influenced by the implementation of the Register of Inhabitants. The Table 3 indicates that eIDS have been explicitly on agenda of e-government development since the first strategy was published.

During the ISSS 2009 conference, Němec (not the co-author of the paper) as a representative of the Ministry of Interior, informed that the issuing of eIDs would start in July 2010. Still in July 2011 the Ministry of Interior suggested that the issuing will be postponed to 2014 due to the insufficient funding (Hospodářské noviny, 9. 7. 2011). In October 2011, the proposal of ministerial ordinance that contained also the issuing of e-IDs was sent into interdepartmental process for gathering remarks. The proposed ordinance spoke about the issuing of eIDs from the beginning of 2012. Finally, new eIDs have started to be issued since that time which was broadly criticized by municipalities which have been impacted by their issuing. Till that time the IDs had been issued also by municipalities with registry offices and citizens were allowed to apply for IDs also in smaller municipalities. Since the beginning of 2012 this is not possible any more and new eIDs are issued only by municipalities with enlarged responsibilities. Representatives of municipal authorities have commented this for example as follows (Veřejná správa, no. 22, 2011, pp. 10 - 11): “Taking into account that legislative amendments that would postpone the issuing of electronic personal IDs (e-OP) is not possible due to the restrictions of the legislative process, since January 2012 e-OP will be issuing by municipalities with enhanced responsibilities. The Ministry of Interior assigned only limited funding for their issuing... and this agenda has to be exercised with technical equipment which is currently used in agenda of electronic passports... This suggested way is absolutely unrealistic, because guaranteeing of functionality of these agendas is not only a matter of technical equipment... The workplace which handles the travel documents has only two photo rooms which shall satisfy the needs of 46 000 inhabitants, including those from 77 municipalities from the administrative district of our municipality. Currently the capacity of photo rooms is fully used and the number of applications for passports is even growing... The number of applications will also grow, because the applications will not be possible to submit in municipalities with the registry office.... The fact, that the issuing had not been postponed in order for the authorities to be adequately prepared for issuing of new e-OP, may even lead to collapse of our municipal authority”.

Although the new eIDs incorporates the functionality of identification as well as shall allow their holders to access e-government services (citizens may have – for a fee – the functionality activated), their use for the letter purpose is not clear (there is no clear plan of the Ministry as well as current e-services which would be prepared for such use).

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Have changes improved service delivery mechanisms?

The former part of the paper indicates that much have been heard in the Czech Republic about intended improvements of service delivery mechanisms. Real changes may be discussed with regards to at least the two following aspects of e-government
ICT as the instrument allowing for additional channel for governments provision of public information which enables access to information on 24/7 basis

ICT as the instrument for provision of more sophisticated (partly / fully transactional) electronic services.

The first aspect was facilitated particularly by the freedom of information legislation which requires certain types of public authorities to provide actively or on the basis of application certain types of information (see e.g. Špaček, 2003). The development of websites and their informational aspects have been enormous in the last decade in the Czech Republic, taking into account particularly the large number of municipalities and also the project e-PUSA which has been trying to help those small municipalities that did not have the capacity to meet duties of the freedom of information legislation to actively publish certain information.

Czech Statistical Office (CSO) has remained the only central authority which has published information on inter-sectoral e-government practices and several aspects of e-service provision by public administration, but which still cannot serve the national e-government coordinator – the Ministry of Interior – as a supplier of more in-depth research data. Several aspects of ICT use in public administration have been surveyed by CSO more systematically especially since 2004. The CSO’s evaluation of ICT use within Czech administrative system has three pillars which are the combination of annual reporting from public authorities (based on questionnaires) and web-based survey carried out by the CSO which partly gather different data and partly verify the data received during the annual questionnaire surveys.

Deficiencies of CSO’s methodology of measurement in public administration – particularly with regard to small municipalities - are still apparent. The results are not always up-to-date and the methodology is still not sufficiently covering municipalities with less than 500 inhabitants and it is not clear to what extent all public authorities that are required to publish certain types of information on their web pages meet these requirements in practice. The questionnaire sent to (almost 6 700 – see Annex 1) public authorities has two parts – the first encompasses the access to the internet, used security measurements, web-pages and services which were provided for citizens, and is addressed to all public authorities. The second part which focuses on human resources and EDI is not addressed to (almost 5 000 of) municipalities with less than 1000 inhabitants. The web-based survey is still focusing only on 205 municipalities with extended competence, although the informational duties are prescribed mostly for all municipalities, (25) central authorities and (14) regional offices (i.e. executive bodies of Czech regions, the number includes the office of the Capital of Prague). The scope of measurement of ICT use in public administration is much narrower in comparison to the ICT use by businesses although the methodology for surveying businesses may be inspiring for modification of measurement in public administration. Referring to the informational aspects of websites of public authorities, the latest research results based on the questionnaire method can be summarized by the following table (ČSÚ, 2011):

| Table 5 – CSO’s survey and information aspects on public administration websites in the Czech Republic |
| 1. PUBLIC AUTHORITIES WITH THEIR OWN WEBSITE (Q) |
| – Organizational units of the State* | 2005 | 2008 | 2010 |
| – Regions (13) | 100 % | 100 % | 100 % |
| Municipalities (municipal offices as their executive bodies in Total) | | | |
| - with 20 000 and more inhabitants | 73 % | 91 % | 97 % |
| - with 5 000 – 19 999 inhabitants | 99 % | 100 % | 100 % |
| - with 2000 – 4 999 inhabitants | 99 % | 100 % | 100 % |
| - with 1000 – 1 999 inhabitants | 94 % | 99 % | 99 % |
| - with 500 – 999 inhabitants | 85 % | 97 % | 99 % |
| - with less than 500 inhabitants | 60 % | 85 % | 95 % |
| 2. INFORMATION ON LIFE EVENTS ON WEB PAGES (Q) |
| – Organizational units of the State* | | | |
| | 2007 | 2010 |
| | 90 % | 95 % |
The Table 5 shows that in 2010 the vast majority of public authorities have their own website that offered also information on life events, even in the case of smaller municipalities. Within the information, forms were available for download particularly on web pages of regions and municipalities with more than 2 000 inhabitants (it is necessary to point out that the legislation does not require public authorities to make forms available on their websites). According to the web-survey which focused on web pages of 205 municipalities with enlarged responsibilities, all of them offered the searching tool on their web pages and 70 % of them informed on grants in 2011 (ČSÚ, 2012).

Although its methodology was supposed to incorporate economic and social outcomes of ICT use, it is still mostly following the Eurostat’s e-readiness framework. The methodology of the CSO is not always consistent since it does not incorporate sufficiently the surveying of Czech POINT characteristics as perceived by citizens and businesses, only general information on Czech POINT use (who has already used) by citizens is surveyed. The practice of data boxes has not been incorporated in
the methodology of CSO although the project has been in place for almost three years and it is anticipated that they will become the major channel for e-communication in/with public administration. The methodology of Czech Statistical Office does not even tackle the extent to what users have known and were satisfied with national public administration portal available (www.portal.gov.cz) through which various transaction electronic public services (e-service for electronic submission of various records for social authorities and submission of tax declarations to financial administration have been available and developing since 2004) have been delivered for several years, neither it focuses on user satisfaction with information and e-services available on websites of public authorities and as such it cannot supplement for example the benchmarking of e-services of Capgemini for the European Commission (and vice versa). Aspects of more sophisticated (partly/fully transactional) e-services delivery covered by the CSO’s are summarized in the following Table 6.

Table 6 – CSO’s survey and aspects of more sophisticated e-services delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POINT</th>
<th>ASPECT</th>
<th>ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS OF THE STATE</th>
<th>REGIONS (13)</th>
<th>MUNICIPALITIES (MUNICIPAL OFFICES AS THEIR EXECUTIVE BODIES IN TOTAL)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>ELECTRONIC REGISTRY AVAILABLE ON WEBSITES OF PA (Q)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Organizational units of the State</td>
<td>56 %</td>
<td>81 %</td>
<td>86 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Regions (13)</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipalities (municipal offices as their executive bodies in Total)</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>31 %</td>
<td>50 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 20 000 and more inhabitants</td>
<td>89 %</td>
<td>99 %</td>
<td>99 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 5 000 – 19 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>70 %</td>
<td>93 %</td>
<td>95 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 2000 – 4 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>38 %</td>
<td>68 %</td>
<td>84 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 1000 – 1 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>24 %</td>
<td>45 %</td>
<td>66 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 500 – 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>32 %</td>
<td>54 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with less than 500 inhabitants</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>18 %</td>
<td>37 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>POSSIBILITY TO FILL-IN THE FORM ONLINE (Q)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Organizational units of the State</td>
<td>28 %</td>
<td>39 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Regions (13)</td>
<td>54 %</td>
<td>85 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipalities (municipal offices as their executive bodies in Total)</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 20 000 and more inhabitants</td>
<td>18 %</td>
<td>28 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 5 000 – 19 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 2000 – 4 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>12 %</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 1000 – 1 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 500 – 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with less than 500 inhabitants</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>12 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>FULL-ONLINE SUBMISSION POSSIBLE ON PA WEBSITES (Q)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Organizational units of the State</td>
<td>40 %</td>
<td>43 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Regions (13)</td>
<td>31 %</td>
<td>77 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipalities (municipal offices as their executive bodies in Total)</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>12 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 20 000 and more inhabitants</td>
<td>18 %</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 5 000 – 19 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 2000 – 4 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td>18 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 1000 – 1 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with 500 – 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>12 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with less than 500 inhabitants</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td>11 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ONLINE DISCUSSION AVAILABLE ON WEBSITES OF PA (W)
| CENTRAL AUTHORITIES (25) | 4 % |
| REGIONAL OFFICES (14) | 29 % |
| MUNICIPALITIES WITH EXTENDED RESPONSIBILITIES (205) | 25 % |

ONLINE POLLING AVAILABLE ON WEBSITES OF PA (W)
| CENTRAL AUTHORITIES (25) | 16 % |
| REGIONAL OFFICES (14) | 36 % |
| MUNICIPALITIES WITH EXTENDED RESPONSIBILITIES (205) | 34 % |

Q – aspects researched by questionnaire survey; W – aspects researched in web-based survey carried out by the CSO.
Points 1, 2, 3 refer to % of PA with own websites.
The Table 5 and 6 shows that the PA websites offer particularly information rather than more sophisticated e-services or services for e-discussion and e-polling. Except for regions (but not all of them), full online submission is not possible through PA websites in the Czech Republic according to the survey of CSO and submission of e-documents may be handled particularly through electronic registries (CSO’s methodology does not distinguish two forms of e-registries which are available on websites of PA – the predominant form is an simple e-mail address of e-registry, another form is more sophisticated e-form application which also enables to electronically sign the document and sometimes also enables to track the submission made).

In its web-based survey, the CSO has been also focusing on the sophistication of basic on-line services on web pages of 205 municipalities with enlarged responsibilities. The group of basic services includes personal documents (IS, passport), registry documents (birth certificate, marriage certificate) and registration of inhabitants, trades licenses, construction permission and provision of social allowances. The sophistication level has been analyzed for limited number of public services and the results still do not show its higher levels. In its 2011 web survey, the CSO worked with the following 5 levels sophistication:
- the service is not available
- information – on-line information on the service is available
- one-way interaction – forms are available for download
- two-way interaction – it is possible to fill-in the forms online
- transaction – all of the steps of the service delivery can be accomplished online, including the electronic submission.

The results do not show its higher levels.

Table 7 – Sophistication of basic on-line services available on web pages of 205 municipalities with enlarged responsibilities in 2011 (as measured by the CSO, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic services</th>
<th>Sophistication level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal documents</td>
<td>1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>registry documents</td>
<td>1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trades licenses</td>
<td>1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>construction permission</td>
<td>0,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provision of social allowances</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors, based on CSO (2012).

As it was already introduced above, Czech POINT project represents the key national projects creating alternative channel of service delivery through larger integration of governmental services – more than 6 800 contact points which are available particularly in branches of Czech POST and within the premises of municipal offices. The up to now development of Czech POINTs show smoother horizontal (between central authorities) as well as vertical administrative cooperation (between the centre and regional and municipal governments) in top-down as well as bottom-up directions. The project has also brought enhanced cooperation between central government and other stakeholders. The Ministry of Interior as a guarantor of the project has not published any comprehensive report on Czech POINTs project yet, although the full practice was launched in January 2008. Published information about the practice of Czech POINT project is scarce and if exists it is not of analytical nature. Responsible central authorities only inform about number and structure of Czech POINT contact points and their outputs (issued extracts etc.). No aspects of user satisfaction (perceptions of citizens) have been surveyed by CSO or the Ministry of Interior (or for them) according to the available information. Perception of participating public authorities and other institutions (front-line providers of Czech POINT services) has been surveyed only partly. Published information shows high degree of supply-centricity which is also visible in results of supplementary survey realized by the magazine eGovernment (as published in April 2008; only employees of 174 municipalities participated).
Albeit Czech POINT customers were not surveyed directly according to published information, but only through opinions of Czech POINT providers, results of the Magazine Egovernment.cz survey (2008) revealed some issues of the project development which indicate possible inadequacy of demand-centricity of the current form of Czech POINTs (issues with disunity of fees required for services, unclearity of methodological guides, restricting technological solution, deficiencies in existing services and in professionalism of their delivery) (see Špaček, 2009a). In April 2009, the Magazine informed that similar survey would be realized since the end of March 2009 that would use modified questions. No other information about the methodology and results can be currently found.

Also data boxes project intended to improve communication within public administration and between public administration and the public. Available information on their evaluation are even scarcer. The Magazine carried out brief survey on data boxes within the period from November to December 2009 during which more than 6000 civil servants who took part in data boxes training were surveyed, 640 of them actually participated, mostly they represented civil servants of municipalities (Egovernment.cz, 2009). 46 % of them (who were mostly representing civil servants of larger municipalities and regions) perceived data boxes as meaningful, 39 % of respondents (mostly from small municipalities) considered the project to be “needless complication”. The survey revealed that some of the regions did not implement the data file system as perceived by act on archiving. Among the most frequent issues – as perceived by respondents – particularly the difficulty to find the addressee was mentioned, although all addressees were supposed to be included in the address book.

4.2 Have changes facilitated trust of all actors into the cyber space?

It is not clear if changes which have been implemented facilitated trust of all actors in the development and functioning of e-government in the Czech Republic. For the purposes of the discussion, we may distinguish (besides all) the trust of institutions participating in the delivery of e-government services and the trust of the public as a group of current as well as potential users.

Above we introduced the key challenges of implementation and management of key national e-government projects. Taking into account that official evaluation is limited in methodology, openness and transparency, we may only state the hypothesis that higher degree of trust on the side of participating institutions (front-line providers of Czech POINT services) as well as citizens can be seen particularly in the case of the Czech POINT project. Still, the public is not fully aware of its functionalities (30 % of individuals does not know the project at all according to the CSO, 2012) and introduced information indicates that the current potential project has not been fully realized, not speaking about the planned potential. Also the project of the Ministry of Interior to include the private corporations (like banks) in the network of Czech POINT has not brought the effects yet. There is no information that any bank has been decided to be involved so far. The Ministry published conditions of necessary authorization of private subjects only very recently (18. 4. 2012).

The trust may be even undermined by aspects of e-government management and implementation as it has been criticized by the media. Above, we introduced the critique of the basic registers project which particularly tackled the process of public tenders, their implementation and related marketing and PR. We have also outlined critique of Association of towns in the initial part of the Czech POINT project (related to the unclear vision of the Ministry of Interior about the structure of service providers and the funding of the project) as well as challenges for data boxes development where still unwillingness to use them in practice by public authorities can be seen. Also the discussion about the intended changes in funding of data boxes have been pointed out which indicates deficiencies in communication and partnership in the Czech public administration system and which raises questions about sustainability of top-down e-government management and implementation in the country.

Benchmarking of the Capgmeni at al. (elaborated for the European Commission), as well as other institutions (like UN, Accenture etc.) usually does not sufficiently address the preferred (by legislation as well as society) structure of communication channels in relationships inside public administration and in external relationships with citizens etc. This is for example the case of evolving practice of
Czech data boxes. Some have already criticized, that the national e-government coordinator – the Ministry of Interior – has no clear vision on future potential of formerly established communication channels like the national portal of public administration (although its new form has been launched very recently) as well as on future prospects of the currently launched projects (like the eID). The national public administration portal was also out of service during March 2012, because the European Business Enterprise, the maintaining company, did not receive the payment from the Ministry of Interior for 8 months of portal operating (eGov.cz, 11. 3. 2012). The Ministry was also denoted as a pirate by the company, since it forwarded (according to the company unlawfully) some of the portal functionalities to the portal of data boxes.

In 2009, Šimoník, Pojer and Svoboda (who was the senior executive of the Ministry of Interior) pointed out that citizens express their will to communicate with public administration electronically, but they emphasize that it does not mean they will really communicate electronically in practice. According to them, only 18 % of citizens had practical experience with electronic communication with public authorities in the end of 2008. Total numbers on general use of ICTs and e-government services, as presented particularly by the Czech Statistical Office in the Czech Republic, indicate that in spite of the fact that the citizens are aware of potential of ICTs and use new technologies for private purposes, the take-up of e-government services by citizens (in contrast to businesses) is generally low similarly to the majority of countries from the CEE region (see Table 2 above), but is growing. According to the more current survey of the CSO (2012), in 2011, 40 % of individuals older than 16 years have used the internet in their relationship with public administration (in comparison to 5 % in 2005), only 14 % of individuals have communicated with public administration using the e-mail (in comparison to 1 % in 2005), 25 % have been used the internet to search for information on web pages of authorities (in comparison to 3 % in 2005), 17 % to download the form (2 % downloaded in 2005), and 30 % to fill-in the form (in comparison to 1 % in 2005).

General numbers have not been further linked to specific e-services available (even to the key national e-government projects) in order to have at least more specific picture on e-government supply in the country. The aspects discussed for example in the technology acceptance models literature are not covered by the national statistics. We will see what will change with implementation of new Eurostat model questionnaires which – in the case of the survey focused on households and individuals – includes also questions related to civic and political participation and some of the basic e-government services. Still there current form indicates that the motives of e-government use will be addressed particularly in questionnaires for businesses (Špaček, 2012).

Also quite unexpectedly, the Ministry of Interior has discontinued the agreement on communication infrastructure of public administration for one year in 2011, and some authorities have started to announce public tenders on necessary services. The basic registers have not been the only object of investigation of the Office for the Protection of Competition. Also the health registries which shall be integrated in the eHealth central solution, have been criticized, because the Coordination center for resort health information system (which is directed by the Ministry of Healthcare) extend the deadline for bid submission just few hours before the closing date (eGov, 17. 4. 2012).

Since the beginning of 2012, payments of social allowances have been transferred from municipalities with enlarged responsibilities to labour authorities. This change has not been communicated sufficiently and the Internet is full of critique from municipalities that pointed out the speed of the reform, insufficient preparation and unclear changes in personnel. The change was followed by new ICT solution which did not work properly and in January some people, who are entitled to the social benefits, have not received them. Still in April 2012, the system is not functioning properly, it is unstable and lack some important functions according to employees of labour offices (who also called for resigning of the minister of social affairs). More businesses have to work on the solution, the Ministry did not open the public tender for it, and some media have criticized the extortionate price of the revision as well insufficient information of the Ministry on who is doing the revisions (which is also currently investigated by the Office for the Protection of Competition) (eGov.cz, 12. 4. 2012). Server eGov.cz also pointed out that in 2011 in more than 70 % of public tenders (which is more than 5 milliard CZK) on e-government development only one bidder participated. The winning
organisations usually have than the copyright and exclusive right to maintain and develop the system and only 10 organisations have won more than 80% of all the tenders (eGov.cz, 27. 3. 2012). Media have also criticized data boxes project due to unfavourable agreement on prices of data messages between the Ministry of Interior and the Czech POST (eGovernment.cz, 10. 4. 2012). They have also pointed out, that the Czech POST (which is the state business enterprise according to the law) itself is silently becoming the leading institution for ICT services provision for state administration (which is also for example the case of the tax information system of the Ministry of Finance in which IBM is the supplier etc.) (see e.g. eGov.cz, 1. 4. 2012).

4.3 Have changes helped closing the gap between government and citizens?

The gap between government and citizens must be linked with trust briefly discussed above. It may also be discussed in relation to availability and use of e-participation instruments. The national statistics covers only e-discussion and the Table 6 above shows that across all the categories surveyed by the CSO (i.e. central authorities, regional offices and municipalities with extended responsibilities) this instrument is not frequently used and was used particularly (but only in 29% of cases) on the web pages of Czech Regions.

Based on the international e-participation literature, one of the authors surveyed reflections of international e-participation concepts in the Czech territorial self-government. Web-content analysis of e-participation practices of 13 Czech regions (Prague was excluded) was carried out in August 2007 (Špaček, 2008a), progress of regions was surveyed in June 2008 and presented during the EGPA 2008 conference (Špaček, 2008b) and the survey framework was modified for purposes of research that included 23 Czech statutory cities in the analysis (Špaček, 2008c). It was the first analysis of its kind that focuses on e-participation practices in Czech public administration. Albeit the approach of the analyses was supply-centred (it took into account only available e-participation services available on web pages, not opinions of their users) and limited to tools of e-information and e-consultation as defined in the United Nations’ E-participation framework, results clearly indicate the predominant supply of e-information instruments among surveyed group of territorial self-governments which represent larger municipalities and regions that may facilitate e-participation of smaller municipalities. The surveys discovered limited cases of more participatory and transparent e-consultations instruments. Such instruments were utilized in less than half number of surveyed regions. Limited number of regions organised electronic surveys through their introductory web-pages, only four regions enabled more transparent instruments of e-discussions where visitors may propose a topic as well as react to issues organised by others. The survey revealed that only one region published video files that would enable to scrutinize former public meetings of the Council and that also this region was using the webcasting tool that would enable transparent real-time broadcasting of the Council’s meeting. Two regions offered downloadable audio files of former meetings of its Council. In the case of statutory cities, e-surveys represented the most frequently used instrument for consulting the public, but only 5 websites of statutory cities provided archives of past surveys summarizing their results for their users. A discussion forum was only found on 2 out of 23 websites, but only one statutory city made information on its purpose and instructions for use available to users. This can raise the importance of analysis of practices of citizen-2-citizen instruments.

In the Czech Republic, there is no national e-discussion platform similar, for example, to the former version of the Citizen Space in the UK. The current version of the national e-government portal (portal.gov.cz; as launched at the end of March 2012) does not offer e-discussion functionalities, although its former version enabled citizens to give their voice on prepared legislation or link them to limited discussions on web pages of central authorities. No ministry (out of the current 14 ministries, see e.g. www.ministerstva.cz) uses similar instrument, only 2 of them use some transparent e-discussion instruments (users can see and/or submit the topic of discussion as well submissions of participants) on their websites (as briefly surveyed 26. 4. 2012, introductory web pages together with information sections like “Citizen”, “Public”, “Public consultations”, “Ministry”, “Communication with the authority”, “E-communication and mail”, “Other information”, “Services for public”, “Map
of the web” were surveyed). Only 2 ministries offered accessed to downloadable forms which could be used to submit comments:

- Ministry of Transport offer the possibility to leave comments on prepared legislation (here: http://www.lepsipravo.cz/)
- Ministry of Industry and Trade in the section “Public consultation” (http://www.mpo.cz/cz/e-komunikace-a-posta/verejne-konzultace/)

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports offered a link to Methodical portal on inspiration and experiences of teachers (rvp.cz).

Department for regulatory reform and quality in public administration of the Ministry of Interior carried out public opinion polling in which it addressed what experiences individuals and businesses have with instruments allowing them to participate in preparation of governmental documents (as a part of evaluation of the practice of Methodology on inclusion of public in preparation of government’s document which can be used to meet the requirement to consult the public during the elaboration of RIA). The questionnaire was published on the web pages of the Ministry from March to June 2008, only 78 respondents participated in relation to which we cannot agree with the opinions of the ministerial report that present the results as being conclusive. As the fundamental issue, particularly small awareness of participation possibilities was pointed out by the respondents.

The voter turnout, which is summarized for the national assemblies in the Annex 2, would be better discussed in relation to the broader political culture development, rather than to e-participation or e-government development.

CONCLUSIONS

Czech central government, as well as central executive authorities, has not been passive if we speak about the rhetoric of public administration reform and e-government potential. Taking into account the requirements described in the accountability literature and introduced practices of e-government development, the concept of public administration accountability has not been translated into more visible practices of the Czech government as well as central level of public administration. Particularly aspects of administrative law perspective on accountability can be observed which have been pointed out also in relation to violation of public tender legislation in the case of some of the key national e-government projects.

Although accountability is essential to ensure managerial as well as political values of public administration, the introduced national e-government projects are not managed in the open and transparent way and published information indicates that the primary focus of the existing top-down e-government management is supply-centred, rather than about systematically gathering and evaluation the feedback from the public and e-government users. Accurate, sufficient, clear, up-to-date information, as required for example by the Willems and Van Dooren notion of accountability as answerability and managing of expectations, are not available, although they represent the fundamental precondition for informed debate. The practice of open and transparent accountability for results that would be based on transparent involvement of citizens and other stakeholders in public policy-/decision-making processes seems to be underdeveloped, although there is a national structure for e-government and Czech law clearly define responsibilities of management and coordination of e-government on the national level. Also the Smart administration strategy of 2007 called for of implementation continual monitoring of public services quality without more visible practical effects on the national level of e-government management. Even the European framework for e-government statistics is not favouring demand so much and the rationality requires adequate managerial as well as evaluation practices of individual states, their bureaucracies, civil society and other stakeholders. We may repeat that this inevitably questions adaptability of central institutions responsible for coordination and their coordinated and integrated evaluation.

Still two fundamental challenges remain in our opinion in analyzed practices: 1) improvement of management and evaluation of e-government; and 2) deliberate integration of existing evaluation
approaches. Such challenges form critical issues of rational, synergic and outcome-centred e-government development. The published evaluation of the Ministry of Interior which is responsible for e-government coordination and evaluation is still very limited in its scope. The officially published information does not cope with the currently most visible projects and if they tackle them than only in the supply-centered way. Outputs of evaluation which have been published by Czech central level do not cope sufficiently with internal as well as external quality aspects. The integration of CSO’s results may be beneficial, but its methodology must be improved to absorb the requirements emphasized in the international literature since it does not cope with demand and focuses more on the technical e-readiness aspects. The trust of the public may be undermined, because no official objective studies on the level of organizational change, cost-efficiency / effectiveness have been published by the central level, neither the satisfaction of users and attitudes of citizens have been systematically surveyed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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Annex 1 – Structure of respondents – 2010’s questionnaire survey of the CSO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of a public authority</th>
<th>Basic Sample</th>
<th>Surveyed Sample</th>
<th>Number of returned questionnaires</th>
<th>Rate of Return (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational units of the State</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– ministries</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– courts</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– State prosecution offices</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Labour offices</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>98.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Geodesy and cadastral offices</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Hygiene stations, veterinary administration</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Others</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>97.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regions (Prague is excluded)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Municipalities or municipal districts of the Capital of Prague</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– with 20 000 and more inhabitants</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– with 5 000 – 19 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>99.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– with 2000 – 4 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>98.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– with 1000 – 1 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>98.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– with 500 – 999 inhabitants</td>
<td>1 349</td>
<td>1 349</td>
<td>1 333</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– with less than 500 inhabitants</td>
<td>3 525</td>
<td>3 525</td>
<td>3 400</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6 697</strong></td>
<td><strong>6 697</strong></td>
<td><strong>6 530</strong></td>
<td><strong>97.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annex 2 – Voter turnout in the Czech Republic – national assemblies

Note: See the web of the CSO for more information
(http://www.czso.cz/csul/redakce.nsf/i/casove_rady_zakladnych_ukazatel_u_volbni_statisiky)