E-GOVERNMENT, INNOVATION AT THE SERVICE OF CITIZENSHIP

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Citizens are not yet comfortable with the online procedures of public administrations. People have few qualms about shopping on sites like Amazon, it is easy for a wide range of people, but eGovernment, with its exceptions, continues to lag behind in terms of usability and experience. It is time for online public services to be at the forefront of innovation and excellence, commensurate with their relevance.

The pandemic has contributed to accelerating digitisation in all areas, including public procurement. The INE reports in last year's "Survey on Equipment and Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Households" that e-government increased its penetration by 11% between 2021 and 2022. Most use, however, is limited to simple tasks such as printing out forms, and less than a quarter of the population has applied for an official certificate or for assistance online. The reasons seem obvious: more than 60% of internet users report having encountered problems using e-administration in the last year, and nearly 7% have given up on a necessary procedure they needed to carry out.

The issue is not a minor one: in an environment where more and more services are going digital, a large part of citizens do not exercise their rights and obligations online, even when they need to.

If a citizen lacks directions or assistance when they go to an e-commerce site, they may decide to abandon the transaction, causing the company to lose a business opportunity. However, if they perceive that the procedures on a public platform are inaccessible, confusing or unusable, they may not turn to an alternative website. What the administration loses, in this case, is trust and legitimacy on the part of citizens.

The **user experience** is a concept that has been worked on more than ever in the design of interactive products and services: is it designed with users, their perceptions, contexts and needs in mind? One does not have to look far into the platforms of the different administrations to find services that have clearly not been designed with citizens in mind, putting themselves in their place. They are rather structured to scrupulously attend to regulatory requirements and internal administrative logics, leaving the user in a secondary role, when it would be a matter of **promoting her autonomy in the exercise of citizenship**.

By prioritising user-centred design, the idea should also not be to think of a single average user, but to give accessibility to all kinds of people, diverse in digital literacy, functionality, etc. This is the first key policy recommended by the European Commission's "eGovernment Benchmark 2022" report.

Along the same lines, another recommended policy is to streamline the delivery of services so that users can access all the procedures related to a vital milestone through a single window, breaking down departmental silos. Rather than encouraging the different administrations to encroach on each other's competencies, it is about accompanying the user, opening up ways to collaborate, or sharing data to facilitate the work.

Perhaps administrations should not limit themselves to the user arriving at their virtual window. If the benchmark e-commerce companies are capable of personalising their recommendations for each person, perhaps the administrations should also be proactive in providing information on aid and subsidies every time one of these milestones occurs in the life of the citizen: maternity, schooling, job applications, entrepreneurship, retirement, etc.

This is one of the articles included in the [spring publication by NAIDER](#).

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