

The new age of e-Government: Public administration without borders

Public Administration stubbornly refuses the transformation to a modern e-Government despite the pressure from the citizens and the constant demand by the Europeans and the IMF. Stavros-Ioannis Benos, a true pioneer of e-Government in Greece, explains in his article this urgent need for radical reform

The biggest challenge our country faces in this difficult time is the creation of a robust and functional public administration, which achieves its goals, brings results and is friendly to the country's citizens and entrepreneurship.

No major public policy can deliver results without the radical reform of the State. The first step towards simplifying the structure of the State was made with the CALLICRATES project. This step needs to be completed in order to include both human resources and the full use of the possibilities offered by e-Government. All changes in public administration must converge towards a major goal: Greek public administration must at last be able to record its inflows and outflows, set goals and measure its results. Therefore, our great mission is to create a public administration **without borders** between the different institutions and at different levels of governance.

In order to achieve this and enable the political leadership to manage the State effectively, it is a prerequisite to control the **three main flows** that are functionally composing the State itself:

The flow of human resources

We should aim for a mobility of civil servants which is as wide and simple as possible. For example, an engineer who's originally appointed in a mu-

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nicipality could at any given time be transferred outside the capital, from one ministry to another, or at any geographic location in the country if the

public administration requires him/her to do so. Therefore, all civil servants, from the first moment they are appointed, are employees of the State and not of a specific State institution.

Flow of procedures

The flow of procedures, i.e. the flow of administrative decisions, must be dictated by the doctrine "documents, not citizens, circulate within the State." E-Government is now providing us with the possibility to ensure the unhindered flow of administrative decisions and break internal borders between the different organic units of the State, as demonstrated by the operation of KEPs (Citizens' Service Centers).

To better understand the operation of KEPs, we must clearly realise that the State, the entire State apparatus (ministries, regional authorities, municipalities, State-owned companies etc.), is actually a large industry that provides administrative products (services) for

its citizens. These services are about 1,200 in number (from birth certificates to retirement) and were organised in a digital form that allows citizens to access a single e-document for any given case. That e-document contains two things: the citizen's application and the supporting documents required for the handling of their case. It also bears the signature of all co-responsible ministers, therefore it is indisputable for the public administration employees, since it serves as a kind of "Administrative Certification".

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This way, thus, the State organises its production chain and places its products in the same way in all KEPs across the country. KEPs now operate as **branches of the State**, where citizens, with just a single visit to the nearest KEP, can handle any kind of administrative cases.

KEPs are radically changing the relationship between State and citizen, which is shifting from a sad and traumatic communication into a friendly contact between citizen and State. It should be stressed that the State exists for its citizens and that its existence is only justified in the eyes of citizens.

KEPs are also the sparkle that will light up the flame of the country's administrative reform. We need, at last, a citizen-minded State, with objectives and measurable results, with inputs and outflows.

We need a State with a new code of values, a change of attitude to respect the citizens, preserve their dignity, promote the culture of everyday life.

In other words, KEPs represent **democracy of everyday life**, since they

Stavros-Ioannis Benos: A pioneer of e-Government

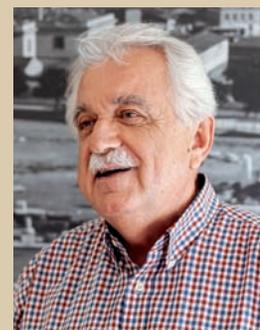
President of "DIAZOMA" association Stavros-Ioannis Benos was born in Kalamata on December 30, 1947, and he is a licensed topographical engineer.

He has served Greece's public life as:

- Mayor of Kalamata (1979-1990)
- Member of Parliament (const. Messenia, 1990-2004, const. Athens B, 2004-2007) and
- Deputy Culture Minister in Andreas Papandreou's last government
- Culture Minister, Minister for the Aegean region, Deputy Minister of Public Order in Kostas Simitis' governments.

Major achievements during his public service are:

- The reconstruction of the city of Kalamata after the devastating earthquakes of September 1986; this project was awarded both by the European Council of Spatial Planners (for the original and human-centred urban restoration of Kalamata) and by EuropaNostra (for the preservation and enhancement of the city's monuments)
- The establishment and operation of the Citizen Service Centers (KEPs)
- The establishment and operation of "DIAZOMA" Association.



guarantee that all citizens and the business community have the same degree of accessibility to the State.

Flow of money

Controlling the flow of money is the leading reform in the difficult times the country is going through, because of the generalised tax evasion problem. Controlling the flow of money means that all financial transactions must be automatically communicated to the State's central computer system (TAXIS).

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No government, even one under the most capable Prime Minister and cabinet, can proceed to any major reform, if it is unable to rule the State. And in order to rule the State, a government must effectively control the three flows mentioned above.

At the same time, systems for the evaluation and the measurement of results should be introduced throughout the country's administration bodies (municipalities, regional governments, hospitals, universities, etc.). It is unbelievable, for example, that our hospitals are not aware of the patient's excessive waiting for surgery, or the pharmaceutical cost per patient, or the performance capabilities of surgical beds etc., which reflect the image and level of operation of a health unit. Based on the evaluation of the administration bodies, civil servants can also be evaluated and this evaluation system can and should be linked to their productivity bonus. In addition, the electronic communication between public services and citizens should be gradually extended to all public authorities. All civil servants are certified with a digital signature and have access to a fast internet connection and an e-mail address from the SYZEFXIS programme.

The aforementioned changes will completely change the image of the public administration and will create a fertile ground for all the other reforms that this country needs.