

Georgian e-Governance in Local Self-Governments: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technologies and their integration into governance processes has become an irreversible process in modern societies. The effectiveness of the local self-government system significantly depends on its adaptation to modern technologies, which allows municipalities to improve communication with citizens, increase the availability of services and reduce bureaucratic barriers through optimization. This, in turn, led to the concept of e-government.

“Communication between the state and society using modern digital technologies” is e-government¹. However, e-government also includes internal communication between the state and business, as well as between state institutions themselves, which is carried out using digital technologies².

The purpose of the study is to analyze the practice of digital transformation of local self-government in Georgia, assess the main stages of its development, achievements and existing challenges. The Georgian government has taken a number of steps in recent years towards digital governance elements, including within the framework of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative, although technological disparities and digital skills shortages among municipalities remain serious challenges.

The effectiveness of technological solutions depends on their users, i.e. the local population, who must be ready to receive and use electronic services. According to research, part of the population in Georgia still trusts traditional, paper-based processes and uses online services less.

Keywords: local self-government, e-governance, digital skills, Challenges and analysis.

Introduction

It is logical to say that the 21st century is the era of digital technologies³. Computerization and “Internetization” have completely engulfed the modern world and have established themselves in all aspects of human existence⁴. It can be said that the world is now dependent on digital technology. All aspects of social life, including the process of state governance, have been influenced by the Internet⁵.

The importance of this world wide web in state governance is becoming increasingly important in modern, developed countries⁶. Trying to use the maximum potential of digital technologies, the government helps to establish and develop concepts of “good governance”, such as efficiency, accountability, transparency, etc.⁷. Hundreds of Internet services are available to the population. The

¹ Koh, C. E., Ryan, S., & Prybutok, V. R. Creating value through managing knowledge in an e-government to constituency (G2C) environment. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 45(4), 2005. 32-41.

² Alshehri, M., Drew, S., E-government fundamentals. *Proceedings of the IADIS International Conference ICT, Society and Human Beings 2010*. <https://www.ict-conf.org/previous-editions/>. [L.s.07.03.2025].

³ Bisen, S., S., The Impact of the Internet in Twenty-First Century Addictions: An Overview in Psuchologival, Social and Cultural aspects of Internet addiction. IGI Global, 19. 2018.

⁴ Wellman, B., The Internet in everyday life. John Wiley & Sons. 2002.

⁵ Dutton, W. H., Peltu, M., The emerging Internet governance mosaic: connecting the pieces. 2005.

⁶ Polat, R. K. The Internet and political participation: Exploring the explanatory links. *European journal of communication* 20(4), 2005. 435-459.

⁷ Saxena, K. B. C. Towards excellence in e-governance. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 18(6), 2005. 498-513.

greatest achievement of modern democracy may be the provision of electronic reports to citizens on state activities or the holding of universal and fair elections via the Internet⁸.

Paperless office practices are widely used in the Estonian public sector through the use of electronic document and records management systems (EDRMS). Despite many challenges and obstacles, Estonia has overcome them over time and increased its efficiency. More than 90% of public document exchange in the country is digital⁹. The public sector in Georgia aspires to follow the Estonian model of successful transformation.

The modern world has also seen a paradigm shift in governance systems due to globalization, development, and new challenges. Due to these factors, public administration has become one of the most important topics of today.

The evolution of government systems today can be understood in the context of the redistribution of power (society for a better society). The days of omnipotent power in any corner of the world are long gone, and the number of key players in each society has changed significantly.

This process accelerated in the second half of the twentieth century. The horizontal distribution of power in the system of governance (the distribution of power between different branches of government, such as parliament, the executive and the judiciary) was institutionalized, and the vertical distribution of power began (in some places) to subnational sub-levels (between regions, cities and communities) within the state. Of course, when it comes to the horizontal distribution of power and responsibilities, one must take into account the need for distributed resources, capabilities and readiness to overcome existing or potential difficulties. As a result, a new style of public governance and management emerged.

There are three general trends in the ongoing transformation process in the field of public governance:

1. Changing the role of public authorities in the governance process;
2. Territorial and sectoral transformation of central government functions;
3. Increased influence of international regimes and international competition.

This trend is also noticeable in local and regional development¹⁰.

The modern system of governance depends largely on the democratic mechanisms and participatory implementation of decentralized, local government. A large body of literature emphasizes the importance of good governance, the whole-of-government approach, and the promotion of other innovative approaches.

In general, the relationship between central and local government is undergoing significant changes due to many different factors: globalization, the influence of European structures, urbanization, and others.

The idea of decentralization required the strengthening of local self-government principles and their inclusion on the agenda. European states responded to this demand by developing the European Charter of Local Self-Government (European Charter of Local Self-Government, 1985). Along with the increase in the number of signatories to the Charter, the legislators of these countries also underwent significant changes.

Research methodology

As part of the research process, an inductive case study was used to investigate a specific phenomenon¹¹. Yin defines a case study as “an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth

⁸ Vassil, K., Solvak, M., Vinkel, P., & Alvarez, R. M. The diffusion of internet voting. Usage patterns of internet voting in Estonia between 2005 and 2015. *Government Information Quarterly*, 33(3), 2016. 453-459.

⁹ Pappel, Ingrid; Tsap, Valentyna; Draheim, Dirk. The e-LocGov model for introducing e-governance into local governments: an Estonian case study. *IEEE Transactions on Emerging Topics in Computing*, 9 (2), 2021. 597-611. DOI: 10.1109/TETC.2019.2910199.

¹⁰ Pike A., Rodriguez-Pose A., Tomaney, J., *Local and Regional Development*. London: Routledge. 2006.

¹¹ Willis, J. W. *Foundations of Qualitative Research - Interpretive and Critical Approaches*, In J. W. Willis. California: Sage Publications, Inc. 2007.

and in its real-world context”¹². Four important reasons justify the choice of this method. In the first step, it clarifies complex presumed causal relationships in real-world interventions. Second, it describes the real-world context in which the response occurred. Third, it can provide an overview of specific evaluation topics. Finally, a case study helps clarify situations where observations do not have clear, isolated results.

The research methodology is based on theoretical works of both Georgian and foreign sciences, as well as reports of international organizations are actively used. To study the topic in more detail, the author conducted interviews with competent persons and representatives of municipalities as a result of qualitative research. To determine whether local governments are ready to implement e-government in the governance process, both in terms of knowledge and financial resources, to promote greater participation of the population. That is why an interview will be conducted with local authorities in order to determine their current capabilities and vision in terms of e-government and e-services.

Based on the research objectives, a specific questionnaire will be developed. An in-depth study will be conducted, where the author took the local governments of the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region of Georgia as a specific case. In-depth interviews with respondents will contribute to the study of critical trends and shortcomings in state policy. In-depth interviews will help the author easily receive feedback from respondents, especially considering that the target audience was less accessible to the author at this stage (due to distance).

Based on the analysis of the results of the expert interviews, a structured quantitative research questionnaire will be developed, in which up to 205 people will participate. The data obtained as a result of the quantitative research will help the author in providing the second and third answers to the research questions. The quantitative results will be processed in SPSS.

The following methods were mainly used during the research: A quantitative (online survey) questionnaire was created within the framework of the research, based on the research objectives. Methods of analysis, synthesis, qualitative, statistical and comparison will also be used. (The interview was conducted online).

1. Overview of Georgia's e-Government within the framework of the Open Government Partnership (OGP)

This section analyzes the action plans and strategies developed and implemented within the framework of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), which are based on e-government policies.

Every two years, the United Nations publishes updated results of the e-government survey, which is considered the most comprehensive and influential in this field. The survey analyzes the trends in the development of e-government in all member countries of the organization.

The right electronic portals and electronic services are important components of e-government development. Georgia joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP) international project in 2011 to increase transparency and accountability in the governance process of member countries, and the necessary tools for this are modern technologies and electronic services. Most of the state digital services introduced over the past decade are defined in these documents.

Within the framework of the OGP project, Georgia aimed to address the following challenges:

- I. Improving public services;
- II. Increasing trust in the public sector;
- III. Better management of public resources;
- IV. Creating a safe environment.

¹² Yin, R. k., Case Study Research and Applications Design and Methods. In Yin, R. k. Case Study Research and Applications Design and Methods. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc. 2018.

Georgia has developed and successfully implemented four action plans in cooperation with civil society since joining the partnership¹³. Within the framework of the action plans, dozens of electronic services have been implemented more or less successfully, which have played an important role in the development of e-governance in the country. Georgia is ready to implement measures in all four challenges simultaneously within the framework of the OGP partnership since 2012.

The first challenge, “Future Public Service”, consisted of several aspects; the responsibilities of the challenge, which are components of e-government, are listed below:

The challenge of “Implementing e-government in local self-government” in the development of the process included two directions: 1- Integration of pilot municipalities into the e-government system and 2- Opening of community centers in municipalities. According to the report on the implementation of the action plan, the first direction of this commitment was partially fulfilled. An important step forward in this direction was the introduction of an electronic document circulation testing system in 5 municipalities, which significantly simplifies the process of providing services to citizens. The government opened community centers equipped with modern technologies in an additional 12 municipalities, where qualified personnel help citizens use new technologies and use the desired services. The second requirement was mostly met.

The Public Service Development Agency, the National Archives of Georgia, the National Public Registry Agency, the Social Service Agency, and the Agricultural Logistics and Services Company LLC provide services to the users of the Community Center. MagtiCom and Liberty Bank are two private companies in the center. Currently, there are 88 Community Centers located throughout Georgia¹⁴.

The launch of the Citizens’ Portal - My.gov.ge was a turning point in the evolution of Georgian e-government¹⁵. The portal was launched in 2012, and in 2013 it was expanded to include 50 state services and up to 80 utility bills. The Citizens’ Digital Portal is the first step in the process of implementing e-government, as without it it is impossible to systematize and integrate existing state e-services. This commitment was fully fulfilled according to the OGP Action Plan 2012-13 report.

Challenge II - Increasing public engagement through the implementation of electronic services, such as:

- Activation of portals, such as Data.gov.ge and Ichange.ge; Proactive disclosure of public information;
- Transparency of political party finances;
- Citizen participation in the legislative branch;

The first commitment of this challenge was the creation and launch of state electronic portals - Data.gov.ge and Ichange.ge. According to the action plan, Data.gov.ge should be the state open data portal, and Ichange.ge - the state portal for electronic petitions.

This commitment was identified as one of the priorities of the subsequent action plan. The state open data portal - data.gov.ge - was created and launched in the subsequent period (2014-15), although with certain shortcomings. The electronic petitions portal Ichange.gov.ge was not created in the context of the 2012-13 action plan and could not be prepared and launched according to the 2014-15 action plan, however, the site was launched in 2018.

Citizen participation in the legislative power is the third commitment of the second challenge of the 2012-13 action plan, which corresponds to digital technologies. According to the document, on the website of the Legislative Herald (www.matsne.gov.ge) any Georgian will be able to comment on legislative acts or any article of the draft law, criticize, evaluate and/or submit his own initiative. According to the plan, a special commission would respond to citizens' comments or initiatives.

¹³ OGP Georgia. (2012-2019). Georgia developed and successfully implemented 4 Action Plans in cooperation with civil society. <https://ogpgeorgia.gov.ge/en/action-plan>. [L. s. 07.03.2025].

¹⁴ Community Centers. 2021.

¹⁵ My.gov.ge. 2012. Georgia. <https://www.my.gov.ge/en-us/services/10>. [L. s. 07.03.2025].

Although the website - matsne.gov.ge - was technically functional, this obligation was only partially fulfilled, as it was not possible to create a special group to respond to citizens' actions.

Challenge III - Better management of public resources - included two responsibilities: the implementation of an electronic procurement system and electronic declarations. In turn, the obligation for the electronic procurement system, according to the Action Plan, included the creation and operation of the following electronic portals:

- www.procurement.gov.ge - improvement of the electronic system of public procurement;
- www.eauction.ge - electronic system of public auctions.

Georgia successfully implemented the public procurement and auction system, according to the 2012-13 report of the OGP Action Plan. Although the obligation was largely fulfilled, the mechanism for balancing price and quality in procurement, which was written as one of the points of the plan, could not be developed.

According to this point, public procurement tenders were to be conducted using a unified electronic system. To achieve this goal, an innovative electronic model was developed within the framework of the Action Plan and implemented in the electronic public procurement system (tenders.procurement.gov.ge). According to the report, this commitment has been fully fulfilled, as 12 tenders were announced electronically through the public e-procurement system in 2015.

Challenge IV - Creating a Safe Environment - Combining three commitments:

- Electronic Criminal Proceedings and Electronic Statistics - According to the commitment, the criminal justice process should be fully transferred to an electronic system, which will also include courts.
- Crime Map - According to the commitment, the relevant authorities should create a map showing all registered crimes in the region.
- Safe Zone - Commitment to create a website - www.igov.ge, which will allow any person to electronically inform the relevant agencies about the problems existing in their territory.

For various reasons, these commitments, which were identified in response to the fourth challenge of the OGP 2012-13 Action Plan, could not be fulfilled during the reporting period. The fourth challenge of the 2014-15 Action Plan, Creating a Safe Environment, included two commitments: the development of alternative 112 channels and interactive crime statistics and criminogenic maps.

Commitment - In the context of "creating alternative channels for communication with 112", the so-called GPS tracker served as an additional means of connecting to the emergency services. Appropriate software was also introduced to activate continuous reception of the satellite signal. Additional services were launched for hearing-impaired citizens, in particular, since 2015, the possibility of connecting to "112" via text message and video call. According to the results of the 2014-15 OGP report, this commitment was fully fulfilled.

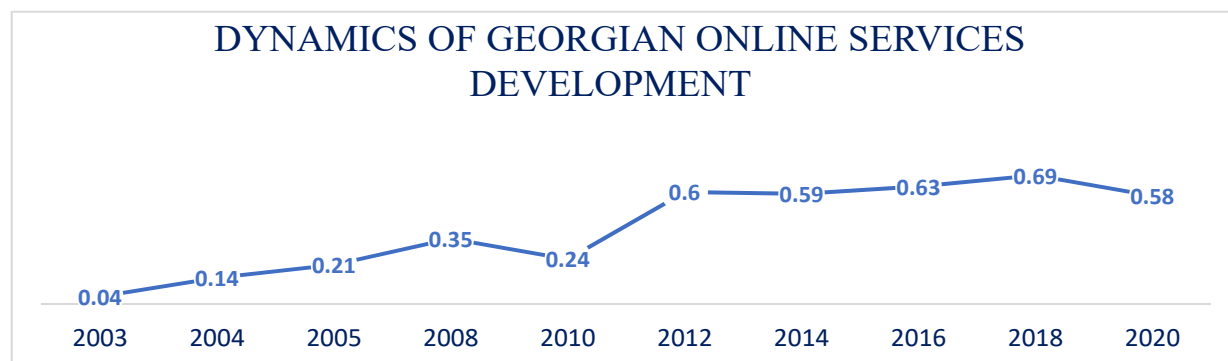
2. Assessing and measuring the progress of Georgia's e-Government Development Index based on the relevant UN indicator

To describe the current state of e-government in Georgia, the author used both international and local studies. In this regard, it is worth noting that the UN study on e-government, which includes all member states and analyzes e-government trends, allows us to unambiguously determine the general e-government rating and level in the country. However, it should be noted that it is impossible to describe the actual situation based on UN data alone. This type of analysis is not comprehensive and is focused only on reflecting specific data and identifying the reasons for hindering or facilitating e-government. Despite the shortcomings of this subsection, the author considers it appropriate to use a general picture, rating and data on the dynamics of the quality of e-government by year.

Over the almost 20 years of the UN e-government study, all indices received by Georgia were analyzed. The data obtained were visualized and presented in the form of diagrams. Figure N1 below shows the

dynamics of the Georgian e-services index according to the results of 2003-2020. (These indicators were generated by the author based on the UN survey for 2003-2020).

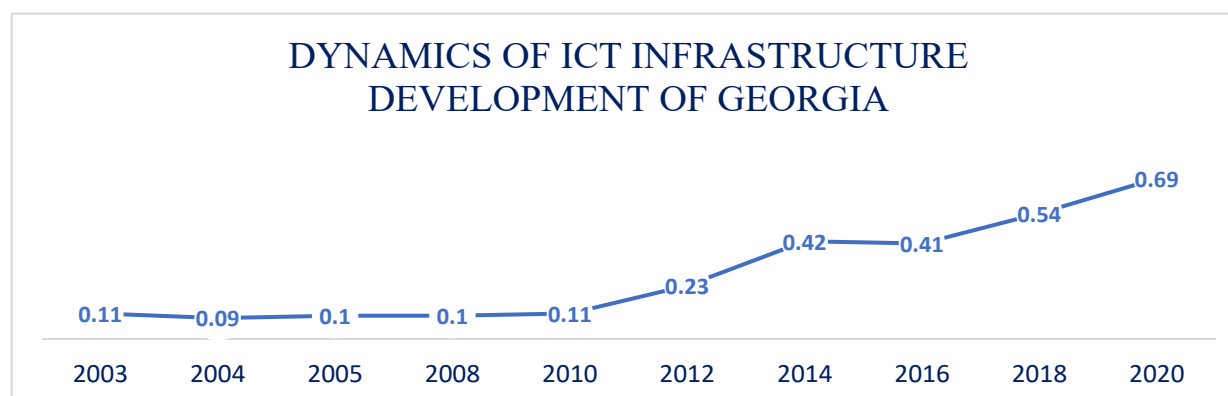
Figure 1. Dynamics of Georgian Online Services Development



As the diagram shows, from 2003 to 2020, Georgia's e-services index developed almost symmetrically, except for the 2008-2010 survey data obtained as a result of the Russian occupation. According to 2012 data, Georgia experienced unprecedented progress in the development of e-services. During this period, Georgia joined the OGP and an action plan for the introduction of e-services was implemented, which was reflected in the country's e-services development index.

The second indicator that determines the e-governance index is the degree of development of the state's communication infrastructure. Figure N2 below shows the dynamics of the development of ICT infrastructure in Georgia from 2003 to 2020.

Figure 2. Dynamics of ICT Infrastructure Development of Georgia

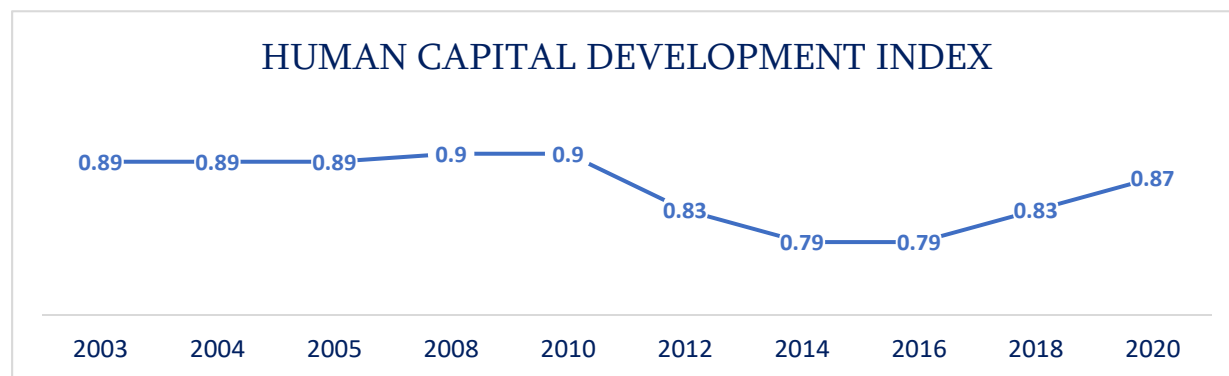


According to these data, the development of ICT infrastructure in Georgia actually began only in 2012. As noted above, this is the period when Georgia began implementing the OGP Action Plan, which may be one of the main factors contributing to the improvement of the ICT situation in the country in 2010-2012. According to a recent UN study, the ICT infrastructure index in Georgia is estimated at 0.69 points. (It is worth noting that in the process of collecting this data, the UN itself is guided by secondary sources).

The third main indicator by which the UN determines the e-Government Development Index in the world is human capital. This is an indicator of how many potential users of electronic services there are in the state.

According to the UN study, Georgia has a much higher score on this e-Government indicator compared to the previous two indicators. According to Figure N3 below, from 2003 to the present, human capital was the only indicator by which Georgia was ready for e-Government.

Figure 3. Human Capital Development Index



As with the ICT infrastructure data, the UN relies on data from secondary sources. Changes in the survey methodology led to the decline observed between 2010 and 2014. More specifically, the third and fourth sub-indicators were added to the first two sub-indicators used to measure human capital in a country, which led to a noticeable change in the indicators shown in the diagram.

3. Practical part of the research conducted in municipalities and analysis of interviews

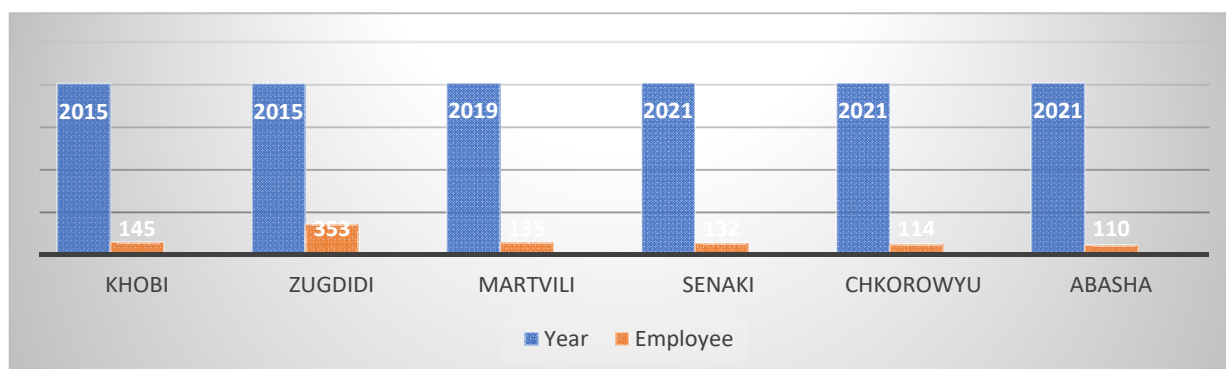
In this subsection, the author offers an analysis of the results obtained by combining both the existing reality and the results obtained from the interviews. During the interviews, it was revealed that municipalities began to implement electronic services at different times (these indicators were compiled by the author based on the results of the qualitative research).

The empirical data presented in this chapter were collected as a result of interviews with representatives of local self-government in Georgia. Based on the objectives of the research, a specific questionnaire was developed, as well as an in-depth study, for which the Samegrelo Zemo-Svaneti region of Georgia was taken as a specific case. A total of 7 interviews were conducted in 6 municipalities, including:

Table. Interviews in the following 6 municipalities

Municipality	Position	Name, Surname	Interview length
Zugdidi Municipality	Chairman of the Legal Committee of the City Council	Sandro Sordia	48 minutes
	Chief Specialist of the Public Relations, Media, and Non-Governmental Organizations	Giorgi Chikovani	
Martvili Municipality	Head of the Human Resources Management and Case Management Department of the Administrative Service of the City Hall	Tamar Tsivtsivadze	26 minutes
Abasha Municipality	Head of the Administrative Service of the City Hall	Dimitri Tsanava	21 minutes
Senaki Municipality	Head of the Administrative Service of the City Hall	Nana Zarandia	33 minutes
Chkhorotsku Municipality	Head of the Public Relations and Citizen Services Department of the City Hall	Inga Papaskiri	19 minutes
Khobi Municipality	Head of the Administrative Service of the City Hall	Zviad Bukia	18 minutes

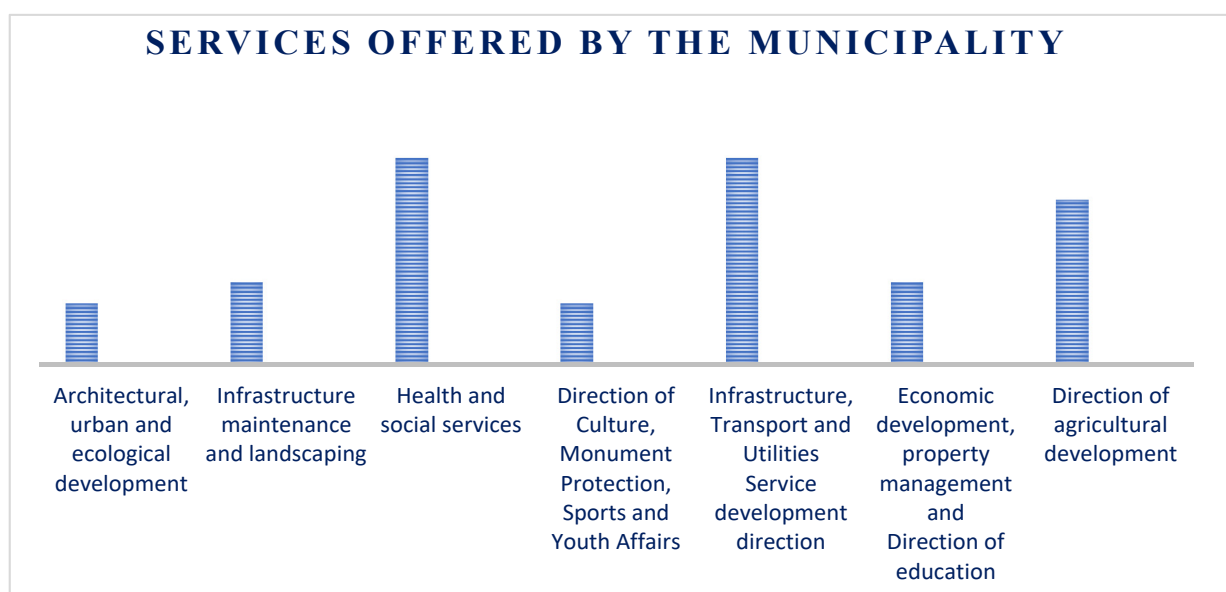
Figure 4. Introducing e-services and employees by years



As can be seen from Figure N4, almost all employees of all municipalities use electronic services, and a maximum of 5 people in each municipality are directly focused on providing electronic services. After the introduction of electronic services, no municipality has employed a developer who is directly involved in their creation, nor has any training been provided to them. Skill development is also quite problematic in the region, and personnel rarely participate in such activities.

The interviews revealed that all municipalities offer the population all services provided within the framework of self-government. According to the Local Self-Government Code, the types of municipal powers are: 1) the municipality's own powers; 2) the municipality's delegated powers. Figure N5 shows all services offered by local governments.

Figure 5. services offered by the municipalities



The most demanded services can be divided into two directions. The first is the most demanded for citizens with individual needs: social and health care services. The second direction of mass, daily needs for the population of the municipality can be cleaning, municipal transport and amenity services.

Respondents note that: services are mainly focused on vulnerable groups, including the elderly, although the Local Self-Government Code does not define their responsibilities as social assistance and health care. Nevertheless, the municipality is committed to voluntary authorities and mainly focuses on citizens, which respondents associate with the existing difficult economic background.

Services are designed taking into account the needs of both the elderly and people with disabilities. Respondent Nana Zarandia, Head of the Administrative Service of Senaki Municipality - names "persons with disabilities, because they need special services and infrastructure, which we provide today in Senaki Municipality and is adapted to such people and equipped with ramps. The City Hall has organized such infrastructure so that they can come and submit an application, request or complaint.

We also have a special nutrition center. Care program: In this regard, Senaki Municipality is the first to fully finance the municipality since 2022, which is financed by the entire municipality. Disadvantaged - provides food to specific beneficiaries for free."

The interview revealed that citizens are involved in the activities of the municipality. However, the percentage is relatively low, despite the fact that representatives of the relevant structures of the municipality are actively trying to increase their participation. If we look at the trend, it is increasing, but the involvement is still low. It is clear from the interview that the activities of the municipality mainly include the same contingent that is interested in and familiar with the structure of the municipality, understands the essence of the municipality well and knows how to use municipal resources in a good way. The main contingent is non-governmental organizations and civil activists. As can be seen from the interview, the level of citizen involvement in the events planned by the municipality is not satisfactory. However, a certain group of people is interested in municipal issues and is involved in various ways. Examples: attending local council meetings, attending commission meetings, participating in the Mayor's Advisory Council, and attending hearings of reports. Zugdidi Municipality also uses informal mechanisms such as the Civic Budget, also known as participatory budgeting and green budgeting. There are also cooperatives that include a co-financing component. These partnerships represent various necessary projects, and the municipality provides them with a fairly high 95% co-financing.

The forms of citizen participation in the implementation of local self-government are:

- General Assembly of the settlement;
- Participation in the meetings of the Municipal Council and the Local Council Commission of the Municipality;
- Citizens' Advisory Council
- Petition;
- Hearing reports on the work done by the Mayor and the Municipal Council member.

Municipalities offer the following types of electronic services to the population.

- Petitions, however, are not fully electronic, as the signature function is not added and citizens must scan and send them in this way.
- Public information can be requested online.
- Communication can be done by e-mail.

According to respondents, the Tbilisi City Hall Municipal Service Agency program is available on the municipality's websites, the distribution of which began in 2016 and is currently available in all municipalities. The program includes:

- Social service delivery module.
- Infrastructure module.
- Issuance of construction permits.
- Commissioning of buildings.

There is also a built-in program "Idea to the Mayor", when a citizen can propose an idea to the mayor and it is discussed at the city hall and a corresponding decision can be made. There is also an asset management module, which is not yet functional but will be activated, property management building registration, etc.

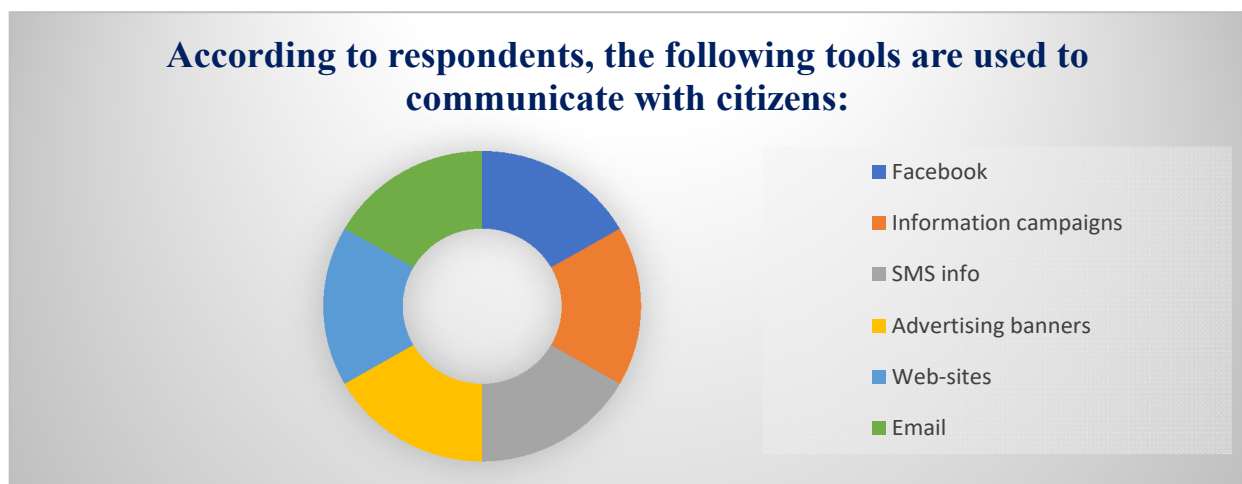
According to Giorgi Chikovani, since the beginning of the pandemic, municipalities have been holding city council meetings via Zoom, and a link was published on the social network Facebook, where any citizen could attend the meeting, ask questions and participate in the form of comments. After the regulations were lifted, Facebook Live has also been enabled. Zugdidi Municipality still does not have cameras and the necessary equipment, so one representative calls on the phone and can also participate

and write comments. Currently, Khobi Municipality has the best infrastructure for updating and equipping the provision of electronic services. According to Zviad Bukia, "Today's villages have a chancellery. Citizens do not need to go to the city to file a complaint or proposal, but can do it on the spot and receive an immediate response." According to Tamar Tsivtsivadze, "Internet access is planned to be expanded in Martvili Municipality, because it is not available in villages. Computer equipment is updated every year." The remaining municipalities, first of all, need to be updated, and if they find the money, they will definitely update it.

As for the level of electronic service provision, representatives of all municipalities believe that many are satisfactory and can be improved. However, representatives of Zugdidi believe that the services offered are weak and require improvement in both equipment and service.

The interview revealed that citizens rarely use electronic services, and no satisfaction survey has been conducted in any municipality. However, respondents believe that the population is positive about electronic services. Among the tools for involving citizens in self-government, the most effective is the registration of their documents in the municipality. According to respondents, most people go to the site to receive the desired service, but they also use email and social media to communicate. Figure N6 shows the tools that the local municipality uses to communicate with the population.

Figure 6. Tools used to communicate with the population



It is also worth noting the readiness of all municipal representatives to introduce electronic services, where they believe that the new generation, Internetization and modern technologies will allow them to be more actively involved in self-government activities. In their opinion, the more electronic services are introduced, the more the population will be involved. This is necessary for the municipality and the population, and for the development of self-government activities in general.

Another interesting conclusion was that all municipalities had the same response, because they do not have the opportunity to create electronic services or programs. Nevertheless, they can prepare proposals requesting additional services if necessary. After that, a study will be conducted and these services will be issued by the Municipal Services Development Agency, although there are no precedents.

In addition to financial resources, there is also a lack of knowledge and competence to create a new service. Every municipality has this problem, and the author singles out Zugdidi Municipality, where Giorgi Chikovani talks about the challenges and issues. "In 2018, the Igov.Zugdidi application was created, which contained tourist attractions, dates of city council meetings, dates of commission meetings, short biographies of officials, and information on various planned activities. We tried to announce a tender, but it was announced incorrectly, and now, unfortunately, it is not working."

4. Quantitative research analyses of research results

The figure below shows the extent to which the Internet is accessible to the study population and how often they use the Internet. The quantitative data of the study showed that 89.3% of respondents living

in municipalities have Internet access 24/7, 6.3% have limited access, and the remaining 4.4% have access to community centers. According to the respondents, 63% use the Internet daily, 23% use the Internet quite often, 20% use the Internet with “average” intensity, 15% - rarely, and 5% do not use the Internet at all (these indicators were compiled by the author based on the results of the quantitative study). Figure N7 shows the frequency of Internet use by population.

Figure 7. Frequency of Internet use

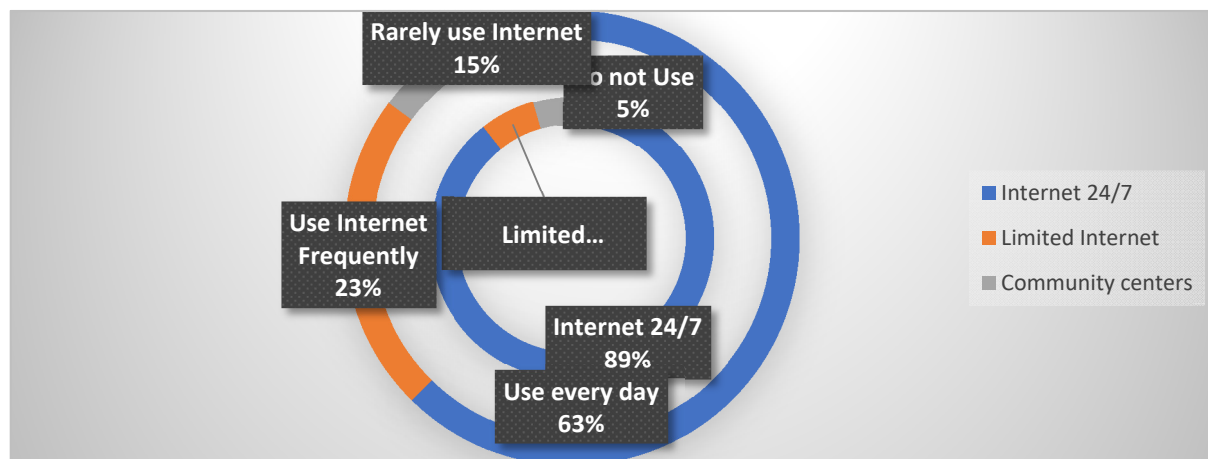
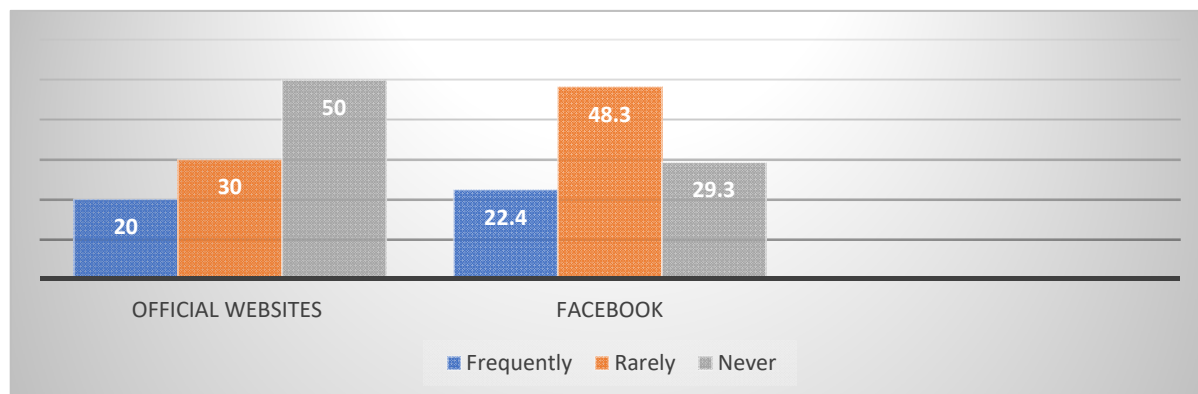


Figure N8 answers the question of how often the population uses the local municipality website, only 20% of respondents said often, 30% rarely and 50% never. When asked how often they contact the municipality via social media, 48.3% said they rarely communicate, 29.3% have never had such interaction with local municipalities, and 22.4% have frequent contact with local municipalities.

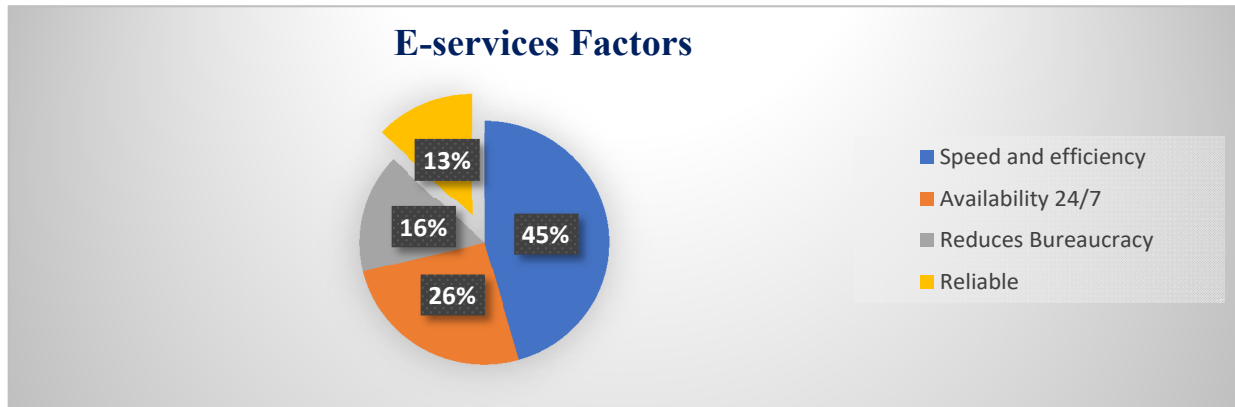
Figure 8. Frequency of using local municipality website and Facebook pages



Regarding the knowledge about the electronic services offered by the municipality, the respondents stated: 32.5% think they know, while 47.8% think they have limited information. For comparison, 19.7% have no information at all. The survey showed that 32.2% of respondents used the electronic services offered by the municipalities in the last month, 14.6% six months ago, 11.7% a year ago, and 41.5% did not use them.

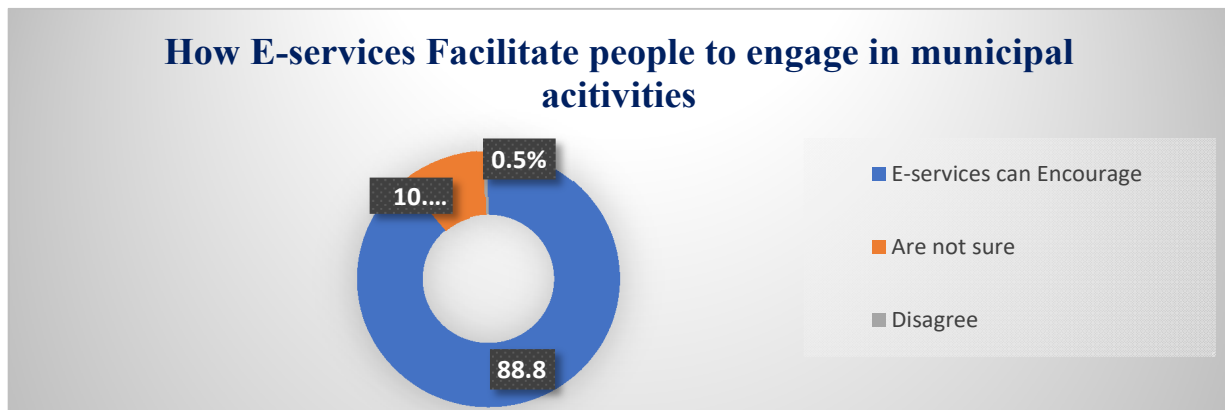
The survey showed that when asked how much time they save by using electronic services, 88.2% of respondents believe that it saves time, 10.8% are not sure about the validity of this opinion, and 5% do not think that it saves time at all. Figure N9 shows the factors that influence the use of electronic services:

Figure 9. e-service factors



The study showed that when asked whether they were satisfied with the electronic services offered by the municipality, 29.8% of respondents said they were satisfied. 30.7% did not have a specific opinion on this, and 39.5% were dissatisfied. However, when asked how they think electronic services can motivate people to engage in local government activities, respondents answered as follows in Figure N10.

Figure 10. How e-services facilitate people to engages in municipal activities



5. Limitations of interviews and questionnaires

The research was conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the research questions, and limitations are inherent in both studies.

In the case of qualitative research, several factors influence the limitations of the study. Representatives from six municipalities participated in the interviews, out of a total of nine municipalities. Unfortunately, it was not possible to conduct interviews with other municipalities for various reasons (one of which was the lack of internet access in Tsalenjikha Municipality). The most difficult thing in this regard was to conduct online interviews in an online format.

The limitation is the quantitative method, and the study surveyed 205 residents. The first problem can be named the remote conduct of online surveys, as most of the study participants may have been employed. 205 people participated in the survey, the results of which were obtained due to the sampling design and the lack of scope to detect trends. Due to the distance, it was not easy to contact and interview all stakeholders to explore their views.

Conclusion

The main course of the research presented in this paper aims to identify interrelated factors and significantly determine the successful implementation of local self-government as a concept. In this regard, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- In terms of creating guarantees for the functioning of local self-government, special attention is paid to the correct understanding of the essence of local self-government. It is worth noting its democratic purpose and value, which means that through this institution the share of citizens in the public political management system significantly increases.
- The second purpose of local self-government lies in the balancing function of public authority, which generally implies the effective implementation of the public authority system, which is achieved through the use of decentralization of powers and constitutional mechanisms. Decentralization of powers and the correct distribution of functions are the basis of effective management.

The study showed that despite the current development in the practice of public institutions in terms of the introduction of e-government and e-services, the Georgian government sector still faces many challenges.

In the modern world, any state is trying to improve the management process using modern technologies. However, it should be noted that despite the integration of electronic services into the management process, most of the implemented digital services do not meet expectations. This is due to several factors, including the lack of scientific research on this issue. In many countries, e-government is being implemented without prior research. The government does not have information about what types of digital services the public is looking for or whether there is a demand for electronic services at all.

Information can be obtained via the Internet, but the standards of electronic communication with the public need to be improved. In order to facilitate citizens' participation in obtaining information and discussing various issues, it is necessary to develop websites and timely updates that include access to various services on the web resources of government and public institutions.

It is worth noting that the implementation of e-government in Georgia is inconsistent. A study conducted at the local self-government level showed that e-government and e-services were introduced at different times.

The study identified several gaps that need to be addressed in the following areas:

- The country's ICT infrastructure (including internet penetration and the provision of necessary equipment)
- Retraining civil servants and hiring competent staff
- Conducting a public satisfaction survey

Services such as the point of contact should be digitalized in order to digitize the country and increase citizen engagement. Communication platforms should be created where payments and other services can be integrated.

The study showed that the most demanded services in the social, healthcare, transport and agricultural sectors should be digitized. Sensors should be developed to facilitate real-time tracking of transport. Grant applications or other types of applications should be available electronically.

As a result, such a policy will improve services and improve information exchange. This will increase the transparency of governments and increase trust in the population, save costs, improve the quality of citizens' business life and activities, increase citizens' interest and use of services, and increase their involvement in municipal activities.

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