E-GOVERNMENT IN BELARUS: OVERCOMING INFORMATIZATION INERTIA

The end of the "Electronic Belarus" State Informatization Programme for 2003-2005 and up to 2010 was an important step towards creation of components of electronic government (e-govt): the telecommunication infrastructure was advancing; the major information systems and resources were created; and the normative documents were drafted. However, Belarus has moved from the position of "follower" in 2008 to the position of "catcher-up" in 2010. The main problem is in the formation of an adequate conceptual and legal framework needed to organize the electronic interaction of citizens with the government.

The international practice has elaborated a general idea of the e-govt as a transformation programme of state governance (with the use of ICTs – information and communication technologies) that assumes the following: accessibility and individualized nature of services; accountability and transparency of the work of governmental agencies; informed and efficient participation of citizens in the political process; empowerment of representative institutions; and a free information exchange. A number of generally accepted principles of strategic planning of projects in this area have been formed as follows:

- Improved forms of providing government services to the population and businesses;
- Increased participation of citizens in the processes of state governance;
- Support and empowerment of self-servicing of citizens;
- Growth of citizens' technical awareness and qualification; and
- Reduced impact of a citizen's geographical location.

Belarus is successfully running the process of implementing the technologies of information society into the functioning of state institutions. However, the technocratic approach and focus on the needs of the state, which define the specific "informatization policy", are in serious conflict with the concepts of maximizing the transformation effect of e-govt projects. The problem is aggravated by the fact that the sub-programme of e-govt preserves in many aspects, despite the renewed rhetoric associated with the introduction of the concept of "information society", the so-called "state-centric" approach.

The Belarusian specificity of strategic planning for e-govt is notable for its technocratic approach, orientation towards the needs of the state, and lack of an integrated concept, which is in stark contradiction with the concepts of maximizing the transformation effect of information and communication technologies. Overcoming the informatization inertia is the key for moving the country into the cluster of followers, and then – the leaders in implementing the e-govt project.

The basis for overcoming the informatization inertia and, therefore, for development and implementation of efficient projects should be ensure through a holistic concept of e-govt with an accent on provision of services to citizens, formation of the regulatory framework and an open resource for expanding the network of experts, and organization of public control as an efficient monitoring tool based on the international methodologies that take into account the qualitative characteristics of the e-govt.