GEORGE A. PAPANDREOU

Electronic government for

Citizens need simple and friendly services
in sectors which directly affect their
everyday lives, such as insurance,
taxation, as well as their general contact
with public administration

Five years ago, again in an article for SEPEnews Magazine, I referred to an Information Society where services and technologies would be accessible to all citizens equally. At the time I stressed, inter alia, the need for public administration to focus on the promotion of accountability and transparency. A modern public administration which must constantly improve services for citizens and enterprises.

Since that time, I have been stressing the need for a leap in quality in the relation between the citizen and the state. In order to face the risks inherent in the lack of trust in the institutions. We envisaged the constant active participation of citizens in the procedures and decisions that concern them. We emphasized the need to create infrastructures which would accelerate and simplify public functions, while favoring innovation in both the private and the public sector.

Today, Greece is at the crossroads of a multifaceted crisis. It is a crisis which affects the economy, politics, institutions and values. Its consequences are experienced by all Greek people, practically in any part of their everyday life. Every citizen feels profoundly the corruption, the lack of transparency, the bureaucracy, the impediments, the waste and the exclusion. In sharp contrast to a government unable or unwilling to face these phenomena, we submit specific proposals which guarantee transparency, accountability and the open participation of all citizens in the democratic process through public consultation procedures.

Citizens need simple and friendly services in sectors which directly affect

their everyday lives, such as insurance, taxation, as well as their general contact with public administration. Services recorded in an electronic transactions "booklet", so that every citizen may have absolute control over the services provided by the public sector. Electronic government means transparency, simplification for the citizen, speed where today there is delay. It means opportunities for electronic consultation, quality telecommuting for young people, the elder, the disabled, for isolated areas of our country.

We propose that electronic government is developed as a plan which will be implemented gradually, but quickly and efficiently and with immediate effects. A plan based on the principle that all public administration procedures are open by default. Procurements, registers, legislative proposals are analyzed, simplified and reorganized so that they become more and more "automatically transparent". In other words, it should be possible to monitor their progress easily, automatically and to be able to reuse all information.

The major issue concerning public administration is that gradually, almost

without noticing, it becomes obsolete and outdated by the lightning speed by which the Internet changes the citizens' expectations. To avoid this outcome, the following proposals will start being implemented right after the next national elections, with a binding schedule.

A single and decentralized internet platform, for the digital organization and free disposal of all public data, where all public authorities providing services to the citizens will be integrated.

Publication of all state expenses on the internet, describing the scope, the contract, as well as the total price, the amount, the date and the Tax Identification Number of the beneficiary and the contracting authority.

Transparent property declaration, with a new system for electronic entry and publication of property declarations and cross-checking of all the information submitted by the officials participating in the decision making process for the appropriation of public resources and public funds.

An electronic procurement, allowing automated, transparent, effective

the citizen

We propose that electronic government is developed as a plan which will be gradually implemented, but quickly and efficiently. A plan based on the principle that all public administration procedures are open by definition. In other words, it should be possible to monitor their progress easily, automatically and to be able to reuse all information

public and resource saving procurement processes, by exploiting the available market solutions to overcome time-consuming procedures.

Transparency in recruitment. By abolishing immediately the interview before the Civil Service Staffing Council (ASEP) and planning a comprehensive recruitment plan for the public sector exclusively through the ASEP. By expanding the recruitment information system whereby all project and employment contracts concluded by the public authorities in general, either through the ASEP or not, will be announced.

A national Observatory of Prices with online information on prices for all kinds of products in each area. The citizens

GEORGE A. PAPANDREOU

Electronic government for the citizen

The shift and the application of electronic government will be supervised by the prime minister's office and by a commissioned minister who will coordinate the organic connection of all policy areas, all Ministries, with the aim to implement the best electronic government practices in a binding schedule

should have the possibility to participate and intervene to comment and update the information, while the competent authorities will answer all questions within five days.

To support the above-mentioned policies through electronic government applications horizontal interventions are required. We cite four main interventions which concern all the basic sectors of government policy.

First, new infrastructures for quality education, green development and more efficient administration. Our country today needs a large development project for an electronic communications infrastructure which will provide optic fiber connections to households, businesses and all the buildings housing public authorities in all the cities of the country. A project for the development of a new generation network which will be open to all telematics services providers. These infrastructures are a crucial parameter for the development of an open school, electronic libraries and electronic books, energy saving and the development of new electronic services. This intervention will help the country to steer a new development course through the creative use of new telecommunications infrastructures by the private and public sector.

Second, the public content should be returned to society. The public content consists of the information, the data, the administrative deeds and the ministerial decisions, as well as all the studies, research and the cultural content financed through national resources. Gradually, all of these resources will be

> The challenge is big and therefore our proposals are radical. At the same time, they are an appeal to the private sector of the Greek market of the Information and Communications Technologies to become more active so as to exploit productively the large projects in favor of the citizens and the Greek economy

available free of charge on a decentralized online platform for digital organization and data provision to citizens and will cover all public sector activities. At the same time, as a second intervention we propose an executive agreement with publishers, producers and authors for the free disposal of publicly financed cultural content. Through organizations such as the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT), the Cadastral, research and education bodies, bodies of the Ministry of Culture and libraries, our aim is to ensure immediately the free online disposal of all public content.

Third, electronic services based on open standards and open software are the main pillars for change in education and public administration. Our objective here is twofold: on the one hand, to use open software products in education and on the other hand to adopt an open software design and production at all education levels. The preferable use of open software in Public Administration will contribute to the reduction of operating cost, the independence from proprietary solutions, security improvement and more employment opportunities.

Fourth, the shift from hardware and software procurement to services based solutions. It is an intervention which will contribute to the development of the services sector and will lead to the transfer of funds from the hardware and software acquisition expenses to the domestic services market, contributing also to an improvement in the trade balance. It will contribute to the productive exploitation of large and critical information and communications projects undertaken by the state but so far not offering any benefits to the public administration and to citizens. At the same time, it is a green policy, because it contributes to the decrease of the required hardware, as well as the daily energy consumption.

The shift and the application of electronic government will be supervised by the prime minister's office and by a commissioned minister who will coordinate the interconnection of all policy areas, all Ministries, with the aim to implement the best electronic government practices in a binding schedule.

Our successful recovery from the current major economic crisis will depend not only on the interventions to several sectors, but also on our ability to adopt and integrate to Greek people's everyday lives the appropriate technologies in the most efficient and socially fair way.

This is a big challenge and therefore our proposals are radical. At the same time, they are an appeal to the Information and Communication Technologies sector of the Greek market to actively participate in large ICT projects in favor of the citizens and the Greek economy. The efficient contribution of all the information technology companies and the employees of the sector are crucial in order for our interventions to be successful.

In conclusion, the implementation of our proposals has only one objective: to make the lives of the citizens more humane by providing them with new opportunities, possibilities, forces, as well as by setting them free of bureaucracy, clientele list politics and everyday corruption. It will be a contribution to the quality of our democracy, the dynamism of our economy, the creativity of our civilization, the simplicity of our everyday life.

Mr. George A. Papandreou is the Leader of the Opposition and President of PASOK. **S**