INFLUENCE OF ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION ON SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE OF COUNTRY

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Summary. The world community’s shift from an industrial society to an information one has significantly affected all types of citizens’ political activity. More and more such forms are carried out by information and communication technologies and get constitutional and legislative foundations due to their importance for developing e-democracy and ensuring the political rights and freedoms of citizens. It is an important part of constitutional mechanisms for implementation of political rights as a part of e-democracy. The aforementioned issues are relevant not only from a theoretical point of view, but also in the praxeological aspect. To come to a common understanding of how information and communication technologies can positively support democratic processes such as improving government through engaging citizens in decision-making, this essay concerns the topic of influence of electronic participation on sustainable governance of country.

Keywords: political rights, e-democracy, e-participation, e-government, sustainable governance.

Introduction. The development of modern technology has become the lever that influences the democratic processes. The political activity of citizens has spread recent years, in particular, it is expressed in the large mobilization of citizens who were not previously interested in politics or activities of the government or the state on the whole. Traditional democratic institutions remain unchanged in their content, however they alter their form via Information and communication technologies (ICT). ICT have changed the forms of traditional tools to promote the fulfillment of political rights of citizens. Such mechanisms with ICT provide citizens with opportunities to address the government. Consequently, the government may adapt new instruments for political transparency, participation and accountability. Such practices can be called e-participation (short for electronic participation), as part of e-democracy (short for electronic democracy). Furthermore, they may support the development of the sustainable governance for some reasons, which will be considered in this paper.

Sustainable governance. Codebook Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI) 2020 mentions the meaning of the sustainable governance. Sustainable governance
is defined as the political management of public affairs that adopts a long-term view of social development, takes into account the interests of future generations, and facilitates capacities for social change. The perspective of long-term system stability and political performance, the quality of democracy and political participation are crucial aspects of society success. The stability and performance of political system depend in large part upon the assent and confidence of citizens. Democratic participation and oversight are also essential to genuine learning and adaptation processes, and to the ability to change. In this sense, guaranteeing opportunities for democratic participation and oversight, as well as the presence of due process and respect for civil rights, are fundamental prerequisites for the legitimacy of a political system. The quality of democracy in each country is measured against a definitional norm that considers issues relating to participation rights, electoral competition, access to information and the rule of law [1]. Due to these features of the sustainable governance, it is important to mention that a range of tools, which support the participation rights, may become more effective with the use of ICT. This enables the government to expand democracy into a field of the e-democracy.

Concept of e-participation. E-democracy is all that governments do to promote greater citizen participation in governance through digital or electronic means. The Internet and e-democracy develop a way to positively rethink democratic processes and revitalize relations between citizens and their elected representatives [2]. In addition, the shift of the world community from an industrial society to an information one has significantly affected all types of citizens’ political activity. Eventually, these new forms are carried out by ICT and have constitutional and legislative foundations in terms of their importance for developing e-democracy and ensuring the political rights and freedoms of citizens.

Special international scientific and practical conferences were devoted to various types of global network activity of citizens: at the Carnegie Mellon University (2003), at Stanford University (2005), at the University of California at Berkeley (2008), at the University of Leeds (2010) and others. These events focused on the fact that the activity of citizens on the Internet is crucial for the functioning of an open and democratic society and achieving a public consensus.

The concept of e-participation is interdisciplinary and manifests itself in a variety of activities such as:
1) online consultations, which include the public opinion with different ideas and suggestions for the authorities to make compromise decisions;
2) «Government to Citizens» (G2C), as organization of feedback from public authorities and their officials with citizens in order to ensure public and responsible governance;
3) online survey, as a survey on public issues;
4) online support, as an expression of collective support for the proposed policy or administrative decisions through electronic networks;
5) online research communities, as the formation of research teams from among Internet users to jointly develop problems of public governance;
6) interactive e-learning, as educational activities for public governance through electronic educational portals or through distance learning courses;
7) Internet forums or web forums as a form of public dialogue, which concerns discussion of current issues with the aim to exchange of views;
8) online chats, as a network tool for quick exchange of text messages between Internet users in real time;

9) online group decision making, as development and approval of decisions of political and legal nature by developing a common opinion (consensus) or a majority of votes among the participants.

Different European countries employ these tools for their governance. For instance, 42 of UN members among European states supply portals with social tools for communication, 39 states - portals with electronic tools for consultation and discussion, 40 states have used discussion and consultation tools for development and there are no countries that do not use any online tools [3].

In particular, Internet discussion can have positive consequences for democracy and especially sustainable governance since social media have significantly increased civil participation and the democratic decision-making process. The online space allows for more equal and decentralized communication between a government and citizens. This interaction combines numerous factors (spheres of activity, age, and place of residence), where all participants have equal opportunities to express their thoughts, ask questions and share information.

Positive results of e-participation. The positive results of e-participation and increasing political participation of citizens as one of the elements of e-democracy are the following:

- receiving public response (via tools such as chat rooms, IRC, audio and video conferencing);
- discussions, dialogues, extended conversations (through such tools as email discussion lists, discussion forums);
- the ability to identify new ideas for solving problems;
- strengthening the institutions of representative democracy by providing conditions for party competition and competition of candidates, activation and involvement of civil society, ensuring transparency and increasing accountability in the decision-making process;
- gradual reduction of acute inequality of political opportunities of citizens.

We should note that understanding in the aspect of political and legal participation of citizens is supposed to be considered from three aspects:

- standards of communication quality and the legal regulation of the e-participation;
- influence and importance of digital platforms;
- establishment of a clear distinction between formal and informal forms of political activity of citizens, implemented through ICT.

Conclusion. In conclusion, an essential feature of a democratic society is the direct and indirect participation of ordinary citizens in addressing issues of national and local importance. This political activity of citizens with the use of ICT also impacts the sustainable governance in the country. Political activity of citizens can be, on the one hand, an activity to implement the right to participate in government and support the sustainable governance, and on the other - a quality that is regarded as an inherent part for citizens’ participation in political life. It is important to note, that the development of ICT opens up new opportunities for the development of sustainable governance. For instance, it concerns the ability to identify new ideas for
solving problems and strengthening the institutions of representative democracy. Participation in the management of public affairs may be implemented without huge budget for arranging meetings or spending a lot of time for negotiation but with great possibilities to support governance in the country.

References: