

## Chapter 4

### **E-Government for Simplification**

**M**ost OECD countries view e-government as a lever for change, a key tool to support and enhance the implementation of policies in other areas. E-Government has proven its advantages in simplifying the public administration: it allows administrations to share information and data internally and with users more easily; it enables administrations to broaden the channels of service delivery to include e-government services; it provides administrations with tools to ensure integrated and “seamless” services. E-Government delivers a set of tools enabling the public sector to reconsider and simplify the regulatory context around public sector business processes, and to use this set of tools to create simpler business processes within public sector organisations or across organisational boundaries and levels of government.

Prerequisites for an efficient and effective e-government development and implementation are to ensure that e-government has a whole-of-public-sector perspective, and does not limit its scope to certain areas of the public sector. OECD country experiences<sup>1</sup> confirm the importance of keeping a whole-of-public-sector view on costs and benefits and seeing e-government as an investment into the entire public sector rather than a cost to a single public sector organisation where benefits might be limited or non-existent.

E-Government in Portugal is perceived as a necessary tool to support and enhance administrative simplification initiatives – and most of the initiatives in the Simplex programmes depend heavily on effective and efficient front-and back-offices to allow the development and implementation of coherent e-government services across the entire public sector.

This chapter analyses how e-government supports public sector simplification initiatives and whether or not existing or emerging common e-government collaboration frameworks are in place and in use across the public sector, regarding in particular: i) integrated back-office functionalities, such as the use of common business processes and enterprise architecture; ii) approaches to ensure interoperability and interconnectivity; and iii) the creation of an ICT security framework, including an infrastructure supporting the usage of electronic ID cards and signatures.

## How does e-government support simplification?

Simplifying the public sector is a transformation process whereby countries strive to change a set of features of the public sector to comply with

a set of political goals and wishes for the development of the public sector. Experiences in several OECD countries show that transformation of the public sector depends on the use of e-government. Sharing resources is one of the prerequisites for transformation, and e-government enables governments to better achieve their simplification goals.<sup>2</sup>

The Simplex programmes mainly focus on improving front-office-oriented public sector business processes with direct impact on users (citizens and businesses) and how these simplification activities can make users' interaction with public authorities less burdensome (see Chapter 2). E-Government is a key engine for successful implementation of the Simplex programmes, as simplification of front-office business processes depends on obtaining an integrated and coherent e-government back-office.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, better regulation requires a number of monitoring tools (targeted indices measuring the quality of regulation) and tools for information and process management (see Box 3.1). These tools build directly or indirectly on coherent e-government services, which in turn depend on: an integrated back-office with commonly agreed business processes; standards for information and data storage, management and exchange; and a user-focused approach to service delivery in general. It is therefore important to ensure that e-government development and implementation is a fully integrated part of the overall regulatory-oriented simplification design and implementation to properly harvest the benefits of synergies between the two areas.

More specifically, e-government supports and enhances simplification by eliminating:

- **The necessity for rules and regulation through automation of business process value chains:** Automation of business process value chains eliminates the necessity for intermediary processes and procedures. The use of automation of partial or complete business process value chains reduces or removes tasks or series of tasks which otherwise should have been regulated.
- **Redundant procedures and regulations through resource sharing:** Sharing resources (sharing of information and data, business processes, and staff) by using electronic networks reduces the need for regulation. Redundancy occurs if processes and procedures are set in place to regulate the use of these resources.
- **Unnecessary regulation of semi-automatic or manual processes and procedures by linking services and data together through electronic networks:** A growing number of OECD countries link services across the public sector in order to establish end-to-end solutions for specific user groups. An

example is the social security sector, where complex laws and regulations govern the use of social support funds towards marginalised citizens.

### An integrated back-office for simplification

OECD countries are increasingly developing common public sector organisational and technical platforms on which to implement e-government solutions – a key to ensuring horizontal and vertical integration, and a way of optimising efficiency and effectiveness of e-government service delivery across the public sector.

In Portugal, the Knowledge Society Agency (UMIC) has developed an *Interoperability Platform* for the public sector which, since May 2007, has been managed by the Agency for Administrative Modernisation (AMA). The platform defines an architectural standard with rules and procedures that enable interconnectivity and interoperability between e-government services. The platform is supported by a *Common Services Framework* (see Box 4.1).

#### Box 4.1. The Common Services Framework in Portugal

The Common Services Framework includes:

- an authentication system guaranteeing security and compatibility among several agents;
- identity federation ensuring that no system or public body knows all the different identities of citizens and businesses; i.e. private individuals and public authorities will both be guaranteed privacy, confidentiality and security of their data;
- electronic services and workflow management;
- transaction, message and e-payment engines.

The system consists of embedded individual identities based on random numbers. Unique identification numbers are not allowed according to the Portuguese constitution. The purpose of the platform is to improve workflows rather than share information and data. Each public authority decides on access criteria, for example cross-checks between tax and social security.

Source: Questionnaire on administrative simplification and e-government in Portugal, OECD 2007. Answer to Question 3.1.6.5.

When fully implemented, the platform will provide the public sector with a sharing tool allowing interconnectivity between independent systems and making multi-channel electronic services available.<sup>3</sup> The platform is built on a systems integration approach using open standards and therefore

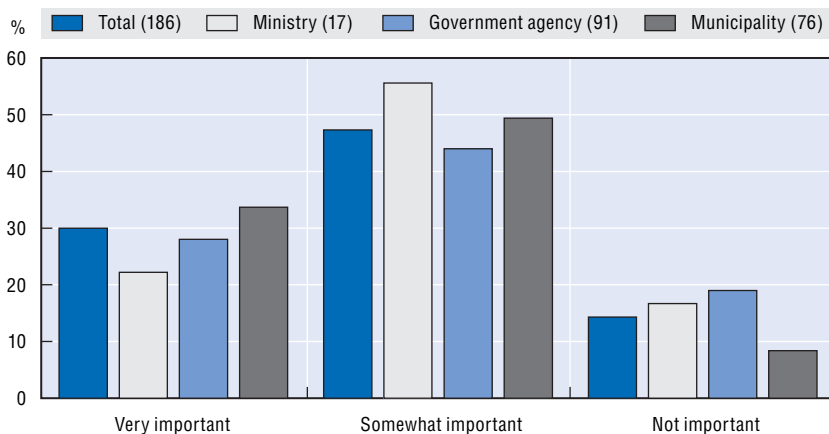
independent of proprietary technological solutions. A central design principle is the single sign-on, which means that citizens or businesses will only need to authenticate themselves once. Furthermore, the system is designed for multiple channels of communication such as Websites, mobile phones, Citizen's Shops (see Box 2.5) and contact points in public organisations. So far, the platform has been used to support the Citizen's Card project, and there are plans to use it to support several services through the Citizen's Portal and Business' Portal (see Box 2.2).

The Interoperable Platform and the Common Services Framework together could constitute the content of an enterprise architecture – they provide both the technical foundation for communication among government agencies and also open possibilities for rearranging and changing organisational structures and workflows.

Use of the Interoperability Platform and the Common Services Framework is mandatory for Portuguese central government organisations, but not for autonomous regions and municipalities. The Interoperability Platform is established in accordance with the *European Interoperability Framework for Pan-European e-Government Service*.<sup>4</sup>

The lack of a stated common public sector enterprise architecture is not considered to be a major impediment to the implementation of administrative simplification and e-government initiatives according to Portuguese officials; 48% of the respondents to the OECD Survey on Administrative Simplification and E-Government in Portugal consider it to be somewhat important while only 29% say it is very important (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. **Challenges to implementation: enterprise architecture**



Note: N = 186 (21 answered either "don't know" or "not applicable" or are missing value). Regions are included in the total, but are not shown as a category.

Source: OECD Survey on Administrative Simplification and E-Government in Portugal, 2007.

Building the Interoperability Platform and applying it to some cross-cutting services (e.g. the electronic authentication system behind the electronic Citizens Card, On-the-spot-firm – creating a business within an hour, simplified business information, etc.)<sup>5</sup> was an important first milestone, but increasing its usage across the public sector remains a significant challenge.

Portugal follows a two-step strategy concerning the use of or compliance with the platform in regions and municipalities: the first step is to test and consolidate at the central level, and the second step is to make it available for the regional and local levels.

The lack of tools to ensure the common usage of the Interoperability Platform and the Common Services Framework could constitute a weakness in reaping the full benefits of an integrated and interoperable back-office supporting simplification activities throughout the public sector. However, under the umbrella of the *Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional* (Portuguese National Strategic Reference Framework – NSRF), a common understanding has been created, and common projects are rising.<sup>6</sup>

### Key points

- Portugal has developed a common organisational and technical platform for back-office integration for simplification ensuring interconnectivity and interoperability of e-government services, and therefore supporting and enhancing administrative simplification. Following guidelines from the European Union, an enterprise architecture consisting of an *Interoperability Platform* and a *Common Services Framework* has been developed but is not yet broadly implemented in the public sector.
- Portugal follows a two-step strategy concerning the use of or compliance with the platform in regions and municipalities: the first step is to test and consolidate at the central level, and the second step is to make it available for the regional and local levels.

## Data standardisation

Data standardisation is important for reaping the full benefits of simplification (see Box 3.1). Sharing information and data resources across organisational boundaries and levels of government ensures citizens and businesses that information and data collection processes are not repeated by different public authorities. The principle of “collect once, use many times” is a cornerstone for simplification efforts in most OECD countries, including Portugal.

Key foci are: achieving maximum reuse of the information and data already collected and stored in public databases, and development of intelligent e-government services with which citizens and businesses can contribute to their own case-handling through simplified processes.

It is important to build and maintain the trust of those who provide information and data. Many governments have come from an era where privacy was not a significant issue because layers between the owners and the users of personal information and data were relatively few. In the development of e-government services, trust and privacy can be seen as a compliance issue to be addressed as an add-on. Trust concerns, and the perception that the state is gaining more control over the lives of individual citizens may be contributing to the fall off in democratic participation.

In Portugal, the Constitution provides a definition of privacy protection in which information and data handling must take place. The public sector must share information and data in a secure and trusted way that protects personal information and data in general, and sensitive information and data in particular, as prescribed in the Portuguese Constitution, in European Union directives and under Portuguese law (see Chapter 3).

At a minimum, an agreement across the public sector on common definitions of data standards for developing e-government services is central to securing compatibility and interoperability of logical data structures and technical solutions (like software programs and hardware platforms). Portugal has only just taken the first steps towards organising a common approach to data standards to ensure the standardisation of data-related objects in the public sector:

- **Legal standardisation of data definitions.**

Legal standardisation of data definitions will ensure common terminology and designations across laws regulating registers and databases. OECD interviews did not reveal a systematic effort to ensure legal standardisation of data definitions. The Simplex Test, while not directly aimed at data standardisation, does evaluate draft legislation for “e-government practices” and “legislative consolidation”.<sup>7</sup> Also, the Portuguese Data Protection Authority contributes to this standardisation, due to its powers of previous consultation when data protection rules are to be approved, and to its role in authorising and defining rules for data procedures.

- **Standardisation of data structures and interface descriptions – organisational considerations.**

Technical standardisation of data structures and interface descriptions at the organisational level is essential to establishing a proper model for data exchange in Portugal. An example involving the tax authorities, registers, the Statistic National Institute, and the Portuguese National Bank has been

established through the so-called *IES – Simplified Company Information*. It provides one single access point where businesses deliver standardised data to be shared among the authorities involved.<sup>8</sup> Companies can file accounts and submit annual accounting, statistical, fiscal and financial information to the public authorities by using a single online form available at *www.ies.gov.pt*. OECD interviews did not reveal any common systematic approach to the organisation of the standardisation of data structures and interface descriptions.

- **Standardisation of data structures and interface descriptions – technical considerations.**

The technical considerations for data structure standardisation and interface descriptions are essential in linking e-government services and databases. The interoperability platform provides technical standardisation for the deployment of services using standardised data. The first version of the canonical data model is a result of the work developed for the Citizen Card life-cycle system.

#### Key point

- Portugal has begun working towards a common systematic public sector approach to data standardisation ensuring the legal, organisational, and technical standardisation of data. The first version of the canonical data model was a result of the implementation of the Citizen Card-life cycle.

## ICT security framework

Securing public sector information systems and electronic networks against logical and physical attacks is imperative to the protection of information and data, and hence to e-government services for citizens and businesses. ICT security has increasingly become necessary to maintain confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information and data, ICT systems, and electronic communication networks. Establishing secure and trusted means for citizens and businesses to access e-government services is important to the successful implementation of the Simplex programmes – which also aim to increase trust in public sector service delivery.

Portugal has begun to develop an ICT security framework supporting increased use of ICT in the public sector and in Portuguese society. The security framework consists of:

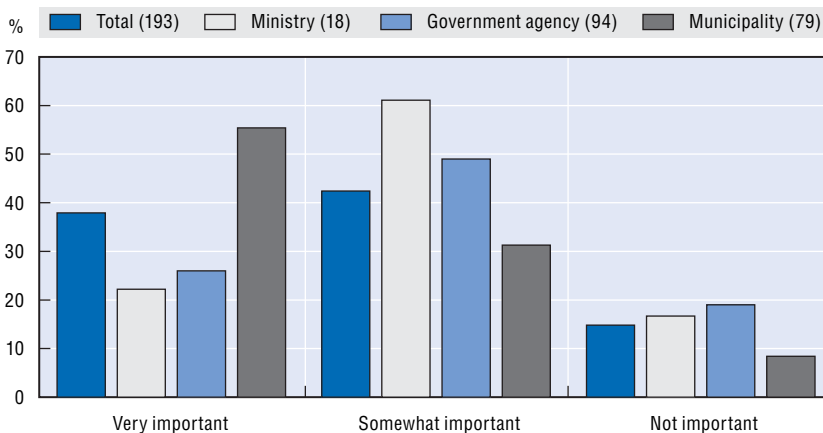
- A *CERT function*<sup>9</sup> operated by the Portuguese Foundation for National Scientific Computing (CERT.PT).



- A national *Citizen's Card* (an electronic ID card) issued to Portuguese citizens as of March 2007. It replaces four sector identification cards: the civil identification card, the taxpayer card, the National Health Service users' card, and the social security card. The voter's card will also be replaced by the Citizen's Card.
- An *ICT security infrastructure* supporting the use of the electronic ID card and digital signatures. The ICT security infrastructure was created in 2006 and is operated by the Electronic Certification System of the State (SCEE).

In the OECD Survey on Administrative Simplification and E-Government, 38% of the respondents considered the lack of a secure electronic authentication system as a very important challenge. Another 42% identified it as a somewhat important challenge to the implementation of simplification projects (see Figure 4.2). The OECD interviews confirmed the importance of a secure electronic authentication system, but seemed to indicate that the implementation and dissemination of the Citizen's Card from March 2007 and its supporting ICT security infrastructure have been an important step. The use of the electronic authentication system still seems to be limited, but creating the system has already led to improvements.

Figure 4.2. **Challenges to implementation: secure ICT**



Note: N = 193 (14 answered either "don't know" or "not applicable" or are missing value). Regions are included in the total, but are not shown as a category.

Source: OECD Survey on Administrative Simplification and E-Government in Portugal, 2007.

Like the Interoperability Platform and the Common Services Framework, the use of the electronic authentication system is not mandatory throughout the public sector. Nevertheless, even though the use of the Citizens' Card is still in its early stages, it is already an important milestone for different public authorities to develop and implement e-government services integrating

authentication components using the Citizen's Card as a secure token. The OECD interviews did not reveal how the use of this security component would be disseminated to different organisations within the public sector. But information has been given that many central and local government institutions, private institutions and universities are already using the card as an internal authentication tool. The recent approval of the Public Procurement Code will also work as an important driver for its use as a secure identification and authentication token in the framework of mandatory electronic pre-contractual public procurement procedures, and for contract signatures. Industrial and tourist licensing procedures and urban building procedures are being transformed into electronic simplified processes requiring authentication and electronic signature using the Citizens' Card. The card will also be necessary for several services already available – like the online company incorporation, online registrations and other procedures such as social security and driving license procedures, as they will all imply electronic authentication and/or signature.

### Key points

- Portugal has created different components of an ICT security framework including a CERT function organisation, an electronic Citizen's Card, and an ICT security support infrastructure. These framework components form a basic security foundation for the development of e-government services. It is however still unclear whether the individual components will be integrated into a common, coherent public sector security framework ensuring a trusted e-government environment for simplification.
- Like the Interoperability Platform and the Common Services Framework, use of the electronic authentication system is not mandatory throughout the public sector. Nevertheless, a growing number of central and local government institutions, private institutions and universities are already testing the Citizen's Card as an internal authentication tool. However, concrete incentives or tools to impose or ensure the use of developed ICT security components seem to be lacking.

### Notes

1. OECD *e-Government Studies – Finland*, OECD, 2004. OECD *e-Government Studies – Norway*, OECD, 2005. OECD *e-Government Studies – Mexico*, OECD, 2005. OECD *e-Government Studies – Denmark*, OECD, 2006. OECD *e-Government Studies – Turkey*, OECD, 2007. OECD *e-Government Studies – Hungary*, OECD, 2007. OECD *e-Government Studies – The Netherlands*, OECD, 2007.

2. OECD (2007), *E-Government as a Tool for Transformation*, [GOV/PGC(2007)6], 28 March 2007, OECD, Paris, France.
3. Presidency of the Council of Ministers: *Common Services Framework*, 2007.
4. The *European Interoperability Framework for Pan-European e-Government Service, Version 1.0* (see the link: <http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/servlets/Doc?id=19529> – accessed 2 January 2008) was adopted and approved in 2004. The European Commission is revising the Framework and will publish Version 2.0 early 2008.
5. *Answers to the OECD Questionnaire on Administrative Simplification and E-Government*, 2007. Question 3.3.1.3.
6. See Chapter 5 on collaboration and co-ordination.
7. *Answers to the OECD Questionnaire on Administrative Simplification and E-Government in Portugal*, 2007, Question 1.3.1.3.
8. *Answers to the OECD Questionnaire on Administrative Simplification and E-Government in Portugal*, 2007, Question 3.1.6.5.
9. A CERT function (Computer Emergency Response Team – CERT) – also known as a Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRTs) – is an organisation that provides incident response services to victims of attacks (e.g. virus and other attacks on computer systems), publishes alerts concerning vulnerabilities and threats, and advises users on how to respond to threats or how best to recover from cyber attacks. Over time, the CERTs extended their services from being a reaction force to providing more complete security services, including preventive services (e.g. alerting) or security management services.



# Table of Contents

<b>Assessment and Proposals for Action</b> .....	11
<b>Évaluation et mesures proposées</b> .....	27
<b>Chapter 1. Country Profile and Context</b> .....	45
The public sector .....	49
Institutional set-up for administrative simplification and e-government .....	50
Drivers for simplification .....	53
Notes .....	55
<b>Chapter 2. Policies and Strategies</b> .....	57
Vision and mission .....	58
Policies and strategies at central government level .....	59
Links to other public sector reform programmes .....	69
Policies and strategies at the regional and local government level ..	71
Notes .....	74
<b>Chapter 3. Legal and Regulatory Context</b> .....	75
Quality of regulation .....	77
Tools for better regulation .....	80
Legal and regulatory framework for e-government .....	91
Notes .....	95
<b>Chapter 4. E-Government for Simplification</b> .....	97
How does e-government support simplification? .....	98
An integrated back office for simplification .....	100
Data standardisation .....	102
ICT security framework .....	104
Notes .....	106
<b>Chapter 5. Implementation Tools</b> .....	109
Budgetary tools .....	111
Human resource management .....	118
Collaboration and co-ordination tools .....	123
Administrative culture .....	128

Public consultation: Engaging stakeholders . . . . .	130
Notes . . . . .	132
<b>Chapter 6. Performance Tools</b> . . . . .	135
Monitoring and evaluation . . . . .	136
Outcomes and impacts . . . . .	150
Communication and dialogue . . . . .	158
Notes . . . . .	159
<b>Annex A. Economic and Social Background</b> . . . . .	163
<b>Annex B. Public Governance Structure in Portugal</b> . . . . .	178
<b>Annex C. History of E-Government in Portugal</b> . . . . .	184
<b>Annex D. Methodology</b> . . . . .	186
<b>Annex E. Survey on the Simplex Programmes, October-December 2007</b> . . . . .	191
<b>Annex F. Main Initiatives in Simplex 2006-2008</b> . . . . .	206
<b>Boxes</b>	
1.1. Goals in the Simplex programmes . . . . .	48
2.1. Examples of Simplex initiatives under Key area 1: Eliminating certificates . . . . .	60
2.2. Examples of Simplex initiatives under Key area 2: Eliminating paper/dematerialisation . . . . .	61
2.3. Examples of Simplex initiatives under Key area 3: Simplification/de-bureaucratisation . . . . .	62
2.4. Examples of Simplex initiatives under Key area 4: Deregulation . . . . .	63
2.5. Examples of Simplex initiatives under Key area 5: Easier access to public services . . . . .	63
2.6. Examples of Simplex initiatives under Key area 6: Harmonising and consolidating sets of rules . . . . .	64
2.7. The Simplex Test . . . . .	67
2.8. Évora Digital Region . . . . .	72
3.1. Administrative simplification in the Netherlands . . . . .	86
3.2. Tools for administrative simplification and reduction of administrative burdens . . . . .	89
3.3. Key barriers to legal and regulatory frameworks in OECD countries . . . . .	91
4.1. The Common Services Framework in Portugal . . . . .	100
5.1. The Portuguese state budget process . . . . .	112
5.2. Portugal's National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF 2007-2013) . . . . .	115
5.3. ICT skills in Australia . . . . .	119

5.4. Collaboration and co-ordination across levels of government . . . . .	126
6.1. OECD's indicators on Product Market Regulation (PMR): methodology . . . . .	138
6.2. The World Bank's indicators on Ease of Doing Business: methodology . . . . .	139
6.3. World Economic Forum's Index on Global Competitiveness: methodology . . . . .	140
6.4. Evaluation and monitoring in OECD countries . . . . .	149
6.5. Electronic tax returns in Portugal . . . . .	153
6.6. Strategies for digital inclusion in selected OECD countries . . . . .	156
A.1. Portugal . . . . .	163
F.1. Thirty initiatives highlighted in Simplex 2006 . . . . .	207
F.2. Twenty initiatives highlighted in Simplex 2007 . . . . .	208
F.3. Fourteen initiatives highlighted in Simplex 2008 . . . . .	209

## Tables

1.1. Distribution of civil servants in Portugal (2005) . . . . .	50
3.1. Rank of Portugal on Doing Business indicators . . . . .	79
3.2. Main European Union directives regarding e-government . . . . .	92
5.1. Results of public consultation on Simplex 2007 . . . . .	131
6.1. Internet usage and access in Portugal and the EU27 . . . . .	155
A.1. Demand, output and prices . . . . .	165
A.2. General government accounts . . . . .	166
A.3. Real GDP, percentage change from previous year . . . . .	166
A.4. Labour market . . . . .	167
A.5. Use of Internet by individuals (by education level) . . . . .	170
A.6. Use of Internet by individuals (by education level and age) . . . . .	170
A.7. Use of Internet by businesses for interacting with public authorities . . . . .	172
A.8. Broadband access, growth . . . . .	173
A.9. Level of computer skills, individuals aged 16 to 74 . . . . .	173
A.10. Portugal as a top reformer . . . . .	175
A.11. i2010 . . . . .	176
D.1. Responses to the OECD survey . . . . .	188
E.1. Responses: Type of government . . . . .	191
E.2. Question 2.1: The overall purpose of the programme . . . . .	191
E.3. Question 2.2: The main lines of action in the SIMPLEX programme . . . . .	192
E.4. Question 2.3: Initiatives in SIMPLEX 2006 . . . . .	192
E.5. Question 2.4: Initiatives in SIMPLEX 2007 . . . . .	192
E.6. Question 3.1: My own institution has suggested initiatives for SIMPLEX . . . . .	193
E.7. Question 3.2: My own institution is responsible for initiatives included in SIMPLEX . . . . .	193

E.8. Question 3.3: My own institution is involved in implementation of SIMPLEX initiatives .....	193
E.9. Question 3.4: My own institution is affected by SIMPLEX initiatives. .	194
E.10. Question 4.1: To modernise public administration .....	194
E.11. Question 4.2: To improve efficiency and lower costs of the public administration .....	194
E.12. Question 4.3: To reduce the number of civil servants. ....	195
E.13. Question 4.4: To enhance the trust of government. ....	195
E.14. Question 4.5: To improve service delivery from central and local government to citizens .....	195
E.15. Question 4.6: To improve service delivery from central and local government to businesses .....	196
E.16. Question 4.7: To improve the business environment .....	196
E.17. Question 4.8: To improve Portugal's competitiveness .....	196
E.18. Question 4.9: To improve co-ordination between levels of government (state, regions, and municipalities) .....	197
E.19. Question 5.1: Legislation is complex and difficult to understand .....	197
E.20. Question 5.2: Legislation preventing collaboration with other actors. ....	197
E.21. Question 5.3: Lack of funding .....	198
E.22. Question 5.4: Lack of long-term funding for multi-year projects ..	198
E.23. Question 5.5: Lack of mechanisms for shared/joint funding across organisations. ....	198
E.24. Question 5.6: Lack of common instruments for cost/benefit analysis .....	198
E.25. Question 5.7: Lack of common public sector enterprise architecture .....	199
E.26. Question 5.8: Lack of secure electronic identification and authentication. ....	199
E.27. Question 5.9: Lack of ICT skills .....	199
E.28. Question 5.10: Resistance to organisational change .....	200
E.29. Question 5.11: Lack of coherent policies and strategies .....	200
E.30. Question 6.1: Project selection .....	200
E.31. Question 6.2: Cost-benefit analysis .....	200
E.32. Question 6.3: Project planning .....	201
E.33. Question 6.4: Monitoring .....	201
E.34. Question 6.5: Evaluation .....	201
E.35. Question 7.1: Evaluations are done .....	201
E.36. Question 8.1: Lack of incentives to work together. ....	202
E.37. Question 8.2: Habit of non-collaboration .....	202
E.38. Question 8.3: Lack of confidence in other actors .....	202

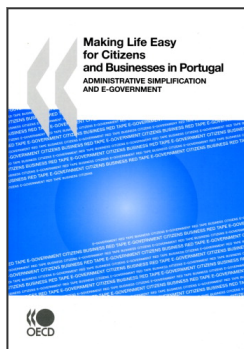


E.39. Question 8.4: Different maturity levels . . . . .	203
E.40. Question 8.5: Internal resistance to change . . . . .	203
E.41. Question 8.6: Lack of clear guidelines . . . . .	203
E.42. Question 8.7: Incompatible technical standards . . . . .	204
E.43. Question 8.8: Lack of financing mechanisms for shared service. . .	204
E.44. Question 8.9: Legal barriers . . . . .	204
E.45. Question 9.1: Citizens or citizens' organisations . . . . .	205
E.46. Question 9.2: Businesses or businesses' organisations. . . . .	205
E.47. Question 9.3: Other governmental institutions (including local government) . . . . .	205

## Figures

1.1. Organisation of the co-ordination of administrative simplification and e-government . . . . .	50
3.1. Indicator of burdens on start-ups . . . . .	78
3.2. Indicator of regulatory opacity. . . . .	78
3.3. World Economic Forum survey: most important problems in Portugal. . . . .	80
3.4. Knowledge of the purpose of Simplex . . . . .	83
3.5. Knowledge of main lines of action . . . . .	83
3.6. Institutions having suggested initiatives for Simplex . . . . .	84
3.7. Institutions responsible for Simplex initiatives . . . . .	84
3.8. Institutions responsible for Simplex initiatives . . . . .	85
3.9. Institutions affected by Simplex initiatives . . . . .	85
3.10. Challenges to implementation: complex legislation . . . . .	94
4.1. Challenges to implementation: enterprise architecture . . . . .	101
4.2. Challenges to implementation: secure ICT . . . . .	105
5.1. Challenges to implementation: funding. . . . .	113
5.2. Challenges to implementation: long-term funding . . . . .	114
5.3. Challenges to implementation: shared funding . . . . .	116
5.4. Challenges to implementation: cost-benefit analysis . . . . .	117
5.5. Guidelines for cost-benefit analysis . . . . .	117
5.6. Challenges to implementation: ICT skills and competencies . . . . .	120
5.7. Existence of guidelines and toolkits within organisations . . . . .	121
5.8. Importance of challenges in preventing co-operation. . . . .	123
5.9. Challenges to implementation: organisational change . . . . .	129
5.10. Challenges to implementation: coherent strategy . . . . .	130
5.11. Involvement of external stakeholders . . . . .	132
6.1. Structure of the Standard Cost Model (SCM) method. . . . .	141
6.2. Existence of guidelines for monitoring. . . . .	146
6.3. Existence of guidelines for evaluation . . . . .	147
6.4. Frequency of evaluation . . . . .	147
6.5. Percentage of e-services fully available online . . . . .	152

6.6. Use of e-government by individuals . . . . .	152
6.7. Use of e-government by businesses . . . . .	153
A.1. Map of Portugal . . . . .	164
A.2. Gross domestic product . . . . .	165
A.3. Households with access to home computers . . . . .	168
A.4. Households with access to the Internet . . . . .	169
A.5. Internet penetration for businesses with 10 or more employees (by size) . . . . .	171
A.6. OECD broadband subscribers per 100 inhabitants, by technology (Dec. 2007) . . . . .	172
B.1. The Portuguese government's legislative procedure . . . . .	181



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