Introduction

Information and communication technologies, widely known as ICTs, have radically changed our societies. No economy can be competitive today without efficient supply and use of ICTs. Nor can policy makers hope to foster social and economic development unless they fully embrace it.

Several terms are used to designate the growing use of ICTs. One such term, the "Internet economy", covers the full range of economic, social, and cultural activities supported by the Internet and related technologies. It was in recognition of the need to further the development of the Internet economy that ministers and representatives of OECD countries, meeting in the Korean capital, Seoul, adopted the Seoul Declaration for the Future of the Internet Economy on 18 June 2008. The declaration, which forms the basis for action by OECD countries to strengthen the Internet economy, states its intent as follows:

> We **share** a vision that the Internet economy … will strengthen our capacity to improve the quality of life for all our citizens … by providing new opportunities for employment, productivity, education, health and public services as well as addressing environmental and demographic concerns.

"Information society" is another term that has been coined to describe how ICTs have come to shape society. It commonly refers to societies where ICTs play a central role, affecting every walk of life, and where creating, distributing, and manipulating information have become significant activities. Governments of information societies face the daunting challenge of harnessing ICT to the effective, efficient delivery of public policies and services. Spain is one such country.

In 2008, after a decade of rapid growth, the country entered recession, like other European economies (OECD, 2010c). The result in Spain has been a massive rise in unemployment to a level that has now passed 20%. Severe fiscal imbalances and budget challenges, an increasing gross debt and low growth are among key issues. Instability and rising interest rates in the euro area reinforce the need to ensure trust in Spanish economic policies and government administration (OECD, 2011a). Spain has already undertaken far-reaching measures, reducing expenditure, public sector wages and staffing, and public infrastructure investment (OECD, 2011b; 2011a). Policy responses are urgently required both to consolidate public finances and restore economic growth.

Information society policies and ICT are considered important to Spanish economic recovery and growth (OECD, 2010c). Indeed, Spanish policy makers and stakeholders also believe that information society polices and ICT may be an instrument of societal change and the advent of a competitive, equitable, sustainable knowledge-based economy. However, crucial to any successful ICT-related initiative are regional and local implementation and cross-regional co-ordination. Spain has a decentralised multi-level administrative structure with regional governments that boast a broad span of competencies and account for roughly one-third of all public expenditure

(OECD, 2011b). Some 8 000 municipalities and other entities form the local level of government.

Information society strategies: Plan Avanza and Plan Avanza 2

Plan Avanza

Plan Avanza, the previous information society strategy, was Spain's umbrella strategy for the advancement of an information society. Launched in 2005 to cover the period 2006-2010, it addressed action in four areas: digital citizenship, digital economy, digital public services, and digital context. It provided a major, concerted policy response to the role to be played by ICT in the Spanish economy and society. Some of its milestones were public sector modernisation, increased broadband availability, ICT diffusion, and the emergence of the ICT sector as a driver of growth.

In 2010 the OECD reviewed the previous information society strategy (OECD, 2010b) and identified three areas of action: leadership and commitment as key drivers; progress in ICT diffusion and access; and a move towards greater value creation from ICTs. It framed its proposals for future policy within these three themes (OECD, 2010c), recommending that the previous plan should:

- strengthen the contribution of ICTs to economic recovery and long-term objectives for green growth and innovation;
- support a demand-driven, user-centred strategic approach to public service delivery;
- maximise the impact of initiatives while making optimal use of resources invested.

These policy recommendations have contributed to Spain's continuous adjustment of its efforts to put in place an information society strategy and to its finalisation of Plan Avanza 2.

The OECD described the previous information society strategy as the most ambitious and comprehensive policy that the government of Spain had undertaken towards the advancement of an information society (OECD, 2010b). The OECD also asserts in its initial review that the plan has an important role to play in the current economic context. In the short term, it could make an especially important contribution to Spain's economic recovery and, in the long term, play a crucial part in promoting sustainable economic growth.

Plan Avanza 2

On 16 July 2010, the Spanish Council of Ministers approved the second stage of Plan Avanza,: the 2011-2015 Strategy for Plan Avanza 2. It is designed to ensure continuity with the original plan's course of action. It includes projects in progress and updates initial objectives so that they respond to the new challenges of the information society.

One of the Plan's prime objectives is to leverage information and communication technologies to change Spain's economic model. The thinking is that wider use of ICTs can help increase competitiveness and productivity and favour equal opportunities across the country, so boosting the economy and consolidating a sustainable model of economic growth.

The previous information society strategy, aimed at catching up with European Union (EU) averages, especially in respect of coverage and connectivity. The second stage seeks

to make Spain a leader in the development and use of advanced ICT products and services.

The Plan's structure and strategy implementation plan for 2011-2015 have been approved. The State Secretariat for Telecommunications and the Information Society (SETSI) under the aegis of the Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade co-ordinates the implementation of information society strategy centrally. It seeks co-operation with the private sector and other social, political, and institutional stakeholders in order to ensure efficient, effective implementation. Implementation is organised around a collaborative framework that brings together all levels of Spanish government (central, regional, and local), industry, and other representatives of society. Spain's Telecommunications and Information Society Advisory Board (CATSI), for example, provides input on prioritising the use of the Plan's resources.[1] Because this information society strategy involves Spanish society as a whole, the government regards its development as a priority, particularly as it aligns with a number of initiatives currently being undertaken in the EU.

On 19 May 2010, the European Commission adopted a Communication on the Digital Agenda for Europe, one of the seven flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The Agenda, which follows on from i2010, sets out the key enabling role ICTs will have to play if Europe is to succeed in its ambitions for 2020. Its objective is to maximise the contribution that the information society and ICT development can make to economic recovery and job creation in the European Union by 2015. The Plan's ambition translates into four strategic axes: Infrastructure, Trust and Security, Paperless Administration, and ICT sector development.[2]

Spain has identified 34 key challenges in the field of ICTs which it has to face. The Plan's strategy document defines how to address these challenges by aiming to achieve ten objectives outlined in Box 0.1.

Box 0.1. **The Plan's ten concrete objectives**

1. Promoting innovative ICT processes in the public administration.
2. Spreading ICTs in healthcare and for welfare.
3. Modernising the education and training model through the use of ICTs.
4. Spreading telecommunication networks and increasing their capacity.
5. Spreading trustworthy ICTs among citizens and enterprises.
6. Increasing the advanced use of ICT solutions among citizens.
7. Spreading the use of ICT business solutions in enterprises.
8. Developing technological skills in the ICT sector.
9. Strengthening the digital content sector and intellectual property rights in the current technological context and within the Spanish and European legal framework.
10. Developing green ICTs.

Source: Spanish Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade (2010), *Estrategia 2011-2015, Plan Avanza 2*, Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade, Madrid.

The government has identified over 100 measures that can be taken to achieve the 10 objectives, as well as performance indicators for measuring results. It has also drawn up a set of reforms scrapping rules and regulations that hinder the expansion and use of ICTs and guaranteeing the rights of citizens in an information society.

The 2011-2015 Strategy for Plan Avanza 2 is to maintain the collaborative model with the regions (*Comunidades Autónomas* and *Ciudades Autónomas*), local government, and public and private institutions and enterprises, used in the previous information society strategy.

Scope and focus of this study

The present strategic study of the Plan examines two important issues, selected to underline the need for successful supply and demand-side policies in building a far-reaching, inclusive, and efficient information society. They are:

- Improving communication infrastructure, consideration of which involves assessing some of the main measures taken to extend communication networks, particularly broadband networks.
- Paperless administration, considered as a contribution to achieving efficiency gains and savings within the Spanish public sector and an ubiquitous, enhanced provision of public services. It is addressed through the prism of the paperless administration of justice and taxation.

Improving communication infrastructure

The fourth of the Plan´s 10 objectives (Box 0.1) relates to improving the capacity and coverage of telecommunication networks: ultra high-speed fixed and mobile networks should be deployed to support the development of the information society.

The ultimate goal of most OECD infrastructure policy makers, including Spain's, is the development of broadband networks and services to attain the greatest practical coverage and use. Ultra high-speed fixed broadband networks require heavy investment, especially those that are fibre-based. A high policy priority is therefore to create a legal framework that provides incentives and certainty for investment in fibre broadband networks.

Chapter 1 addresses the improvement of communication infrastructure. It assesses the policies that Spain has implemented to date and makes a set of recommendations designed to assist it in pursuing its policies. This assessment will be informed by a strategic analysis of the public policy approach to upgrading infrastructure in Spain, illustrated where necessary by selected best practices that OECD countries have undertaken.

Chapter 1 will also consider the constraints with which Spain has to contend. They include some of the goals it has assigned to its policies, such as:

- the creation of a legal and economic framework that provides incentives for investment in next generation access (NGA) networks;
- public funding for the deployment of NGA networks in rural, remote, and less privileged areas;
- the increased availability of spectrum resources for wireless broadband services;

- the removal of obsolete in-building wiring infrastructure which obstructs the rollout of NGA networks.

Paperless administration

The Spanish government considers ICTs an innovative catalyst for achieving a more efficient, sustainable, citizen-focused public sector, where ICTs support productivity growth and reductions in expenditures. One important challenge addressed by the Plan is to foster e-government as part of a bid to achieve a paperless public administration by 2015. A paperless administration entails computerising and automating administrative procedures; digitalising data, records, and services; ensuring greater uptake of digital public services by citizens and businesses; reducing existing ICT costs; and the building of a comprehensive digital infrastructure able to support all such measures.

In addition, government departments have their own goals. Specific modernisation goals have been set for the judicial system as part of the current Strategy Plan for Modernisation of the Spanish Justice System 2009-2012. The Tax Administration has established objectives to meet the strategic challenges of the Spanish Tax Agency and its users, e.g. to combat social security fraud and increase efficiency.

Chapter 2 addresses e-government and paperless administration through four themes:

1. the application of the strategy and co-ordination framework applied, looking for example at institutional structures and budgets;
2. service delivery channels and the supply of digital services with special emphasis on the maturity of services and their delivery;
3. the demand for online services and user uptake, focusing on the actual use of the services provided;
4. consolidation and realisation of the benefits of e-government,

Benchmarks with OECD and EU member countries are used throughout the analysis to support the arguments.

Structure of the report

The report is structured according to the two analytical perspectives outlined above. The OECD Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry has prepared the chapter on communication infrastructure (Chapter 1) and the Directorate for Public Governance and Territorial Development the one on e-government (Chapter 2).

Chapter 1 comprises four sections. They look at the background, consider the Spanish market context, then analyse and assess the communication infrastructure measures taken. A comprehensive conclusion sets out key findings and recommends proposals for action.

Chapter 2 is devoted to e-government and focuses particularly on the areas of e-justice and e-taxation. It comprises five sections, beginning with an overview of Spain's e-government strategy and co-ordination framework. It then outlines and puts into context the approaches to digitising the tax and the justice systems. The following section considers relevant good practices from OECD member countries that may support the Spanish government in tackling the key challenges it has identified. The chapter concludes with key findings and proposals for action.

Notes

1. CATSI, the *Consejo Asesor de Telecomunicaciones y Sociedad de la Información*, is established by law, *e.g.* the Royal Decree 1029/2002. See OECD (2010) for a detailed description.
2. The initial Plan Avanza 2 mentions 5 strategic axis. However the two axes, "Technological Training and Content and Services", have been merged with "Paperless Administration".

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