"eParticipation –
Electronic Participation
of Citizens and the Business Community in
eGovernment"

Study on Behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior,
Division IT 1

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1 Management summary

With its eGovernment 2.0 programme, the German federal government is determined to assume on a pioneering role in this area. At the same time, the government also addresses one important goal of the eGovernment action plan within the scope of the EU’s i2010 initiative: "Better decision-making processes and greater participation of citizens in all phases of the democratic decision-making process" (EU Commission 2006, p. 12).

The federal government's programme states in the section on measures "designed to increase the use of the Internet in the interest of the European goals":

"In order to increase the use of the Internet in the interest of the European goals of involvement and participation of all citizens – eParticipation and e-inclusion – suitable forms of electronic involvement, such as forums, will also be expanded as required. ... The goal must be to create an information society for everybody and, to these ends, to promote a digital society geared towards involvement where opportunities are offered to everybody whilst the risk of discrimination is reduced to a minimum. Furthermore, the electronic availability of data and information from public agencies will be increased in order to promote the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act (IFG) also under aspects of economic efficiency” (p. 167, cap. 7.4.1)

In order to concretize these goals, this study presents the current status and prospects of electronic participation in Germany and recommends actions, projects and measures for the German government's eGovernment 2.0 programme. The study is not limited exclusively to the level of the federal government, but also addresses the municipal level, where many approaches exist which can be used to provide impetus for the federal government.

This study defines eParticipation as the participation of individuals and legal entities (including groups thereof) in political and administrative decision-making processes by means of information and communication technology (ICT).

The study addresses participation offerings with an administrative and political background as well as activities originating from citizens, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the business community. The following six forms of participation are distinguished in this context:

1. **Information:** Offers which are related to the provision of, access to and development of information of public agencies and which are conditions for the success of other forms of participation.

2. **Transparency through third parties:** Informal offers with reports concerning measures taken by the legislator or by the executive, thereby enabling public control.

3. **Consultation:** Forms of participation by which expertise as well as votes from citizens, interest groups and stakeholders from the business community and civil society are sought for on various topics.

4. **Applications / complaints / petitions:** Offers which enable the submission of proposals or criticism to agencies and public authorities with decision-making powers, usually via intermediary institutions created specifically for this purpose.

5. **Cooperation:** Offers which are designed to enable consensus-based cooperation between administration agencies, policymakers, citizens as well as stakeholders from the business community and civil society and which lead to collective preferences and hence (also) to results which diverge from initial positions.

6. **Activism / campaigns/ lobbying:** Forms of participation where individuals or organized groups take measures which are designed to generate attention and support for topics and positions as well as particular interests and which hence contribute towards the formation of political opinion and will.
The development of eParticipation in Germany

Following first experiments on citizen participation via electronic media (at that time termed "tele-democracy" via TV and telephone) in the 1970s, the advent of the Internet in the 1990s gave new impetus to the concept of eParticipation. Its concrete implementation in Germany initially took place within the scope of research projects on a municipal level. Ten years later, the number of offerings has increased significantly and although the concept is no longer entirely new, it still involves projects which run largely parallel to established planning and decision-making processes and which account for just a few percentage points compared to the total number of planning tasks and decisions.

Research work on eParticipation also advanced from the more technology-focused approach, which sceptically or euphoriously extrapolated the Internet's characteristics and derived conclusions concerning political effects, towards a view which focuses more on the role of the Internet in the context of social and cultural change. However, descriptions of isolated cases are currently predominant whilst comparative empirical classifications and evaluations remain the exception. This is why well-founded empirical, representative and generalizing statements concerning the effects or success factors of eParticipation are still not possible.

The international status of eParticipation

The pioneers of eParticipation among western industrialized nations are the United States, as well as Canada and New Zealand and, in Europe, the UK, Denmark and Estonia. However, the offerings for different forms of participation vary in terms of quantity and quality.

1. In as far as the "information" participation mode concern, the level of offerings is high throughout. Especially those offers which provide information in a user-orientated manner promise added value for participation, such as portals with search functions and indexes as well as possibilities to track the processing status of inquiries.

2. Offers by non-governmental organizations designed to increase transparency address processes on both legislature and executive level. They round off government offers or highlight the need for transparent processes which government institutions fail to satisfy. ICT also provides tools for empowering non-government players, for example, by compiling public information concerning the work of MPs.

3. Most offers are at present found in the consultation field. In many countries, online consultation offerings on a national level are firmly institutionalized and readily accessible. However, the quality varies significantly between simple polls and complex consultations; technological innovations concern new forms of access, such as mobile phones and new processing and handling options, such as automatic summaries of text offerings.

4. In the case of applications / complaints / petitions, the offers vary strongly depending on national laws. Besides government-run points of contact, certain interesting offers were also developed by non-governmental organizations and implemented on the basis of Web 2.0 and GIS technology.

5. The number of cooperation offerings is very small. This is a very demanding form of participation and is hence quite seldom used. The use of ICT for this purpose is still limited to a largely experimental level.

6. Activism, campaigns, lobbying represent the technically most advanced offerings for eParticipation. The campaigns by international interest organizations, in particular, benefit from the possibilities which the Internet has to offer.
The view of the recipients of eParticipation on federal level

A comprehensive data capturing effort has been made in order to determine the state of use of eParticipation offers in Germany with the maximum possible precision and in order to consider how citizens, businesses and non-governmental organizations view these offers. These polls suggest the following: **Germans are generally very interested in politics.** A good three quarters of voters aged 18 and over have a very strong (8.2%), strong (26.8%) or certain (41.6%) interest in politics. The question concerning ways of obtaining information about or participating in political issues on the Internet made it very clear: **Information on the federal government’s websites is of paramount importance.** More than 20% of all voters aged 18 and over stated to obtain "information from the federal government's websites". This use is followed by the group of those citizens who visit homepages of politicians and who order or directly download information material from the Internet. The representative poll also showed: **The Internet is used as a source of information primarily with a view to the federal government's policy.** Federal-land and European policy are significantly less important. The reasons for using the most frequently used eParticipation offerings differ significantly between municipalities and the federal government: Whereas one's personal involvement (67.7%) and the expected effect of one's own participation (64.5%) are most important on municipal level, personal interest in the subject is the key motivation on federal level. However, the poll also showed that those who use political offerings on federal level do not expect their involvement to show any effect; on the contrary, only 6.2% of those polled believed that they could achieve most here.

However, the preferred information access on federal level constitutes a potential which can be activated by creating effective participation possibilities and the appropriate level of transparency.

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks of electronic participation in Germany

**Germany's strengths with regard to eParticipation** can be summarized as follows:

- The standard of ICT use in the information segment is very high. The German "Portal U", for instance, is considered to be an international model for environmental information.
- **Consultations** are currently at the heart of eParticipation in Germany. This is reflected by the number and diversity of offerings; a high international standard has been achieved especially at regional and municipal level.
- In the applications / complaints / petitions segment, Germany provides an offering with the public online petitions of the German parliament which stands out on an international level thanks to its practical concept for use.
- Besides consultations, the activism / campaigns / lobbying segment provides the most offerings which are also technically the most advanced offerings. Experiments on federal level, such as the binational Future-of-Food online consultation or the online debate on the modernization of information law, met with international attention at an early stage. Several Laender and municipalities perform regular online consultations as part of urban and regional planning and with regard to participatory budgets. Tried-and-tested technologies and a wealth of experience are available in this field.

**Germany's weaknesses** can be summarized as follows:

- In the information segment, international examples show that Germany does not make full use of the Internet's possibilities when it comes to simplifying access to information within the scope of the Freedom of Information Act.
Although certain creative strategies exist with a view to creating transparency by third parties, these approaches cannot have a sustainable effect due to a lack of resources so that could fail to achieve the required critical size.

Electronic consultations are carried out only sporadically on federal level. International top performers, in contrast, offer regular national online consultations, including central consultation directories which trigger interest and support citizens in accessing the offerings.

In the applications / complaints / petitions segment, it must be noted that the many points of contact that exist in Germany (including, for example, the more than twenty commissioners of the federal government) do not yet make comprehensive use of the Internet in order to receive applications and suggestions and that, in contrast to other countries, there is no central portal via which these many points can be addressed.

The cooperation segment is represented among the eParticipation offerings to a very small extent only in view of the demanding requirements for initiators and addressees of such offerings. These can be found on municipal level and in the field of conflict settlement through mediation.

Although several lighthouse projects exist in Germany, one must nevertheless conclude that more wide-spread offerings need to be developed and, above all, that the institutional integration of eParticipation offerings need to be improved significantly. A more constant use of ICT is seldom achieved. Furthermore, there is a lack of transparency and responsivity because providers often fail to communicate the purpose of participation, what happens with the result and whether a response from policymakers and administrations can be expected. Although weblogs and podcasts are often used as "participative web" formats, this is carried out without making use of the interactive and multilateral potential offered by these technologies.

Germany's opportunities can be summarized as follows:

The basis for eParticipation on an access and use level is sound: Almost two thirds of Germans use the Internet at least sometimes, whilst a good 50% of Germans have broadband access. Almost all young people use the Internet. The technical equipment and facilities at public agencies can also be considered to be good. A good basis also exists at the demand end for eParticipation. There are strong indications of a keen interest in participation offerings on the Internet:

- Three quarters of voters have at least a certain interest in politics.
- A quarter of the population has already found out about or participated in political topics on the Internet. 13% – i.e. a good 10 million people – can imagine taking part in an Internet discussion on topics related to federal politics.
- Civil-society projects, such as Abgeordnetenwatch.de and Direktzu.de, enable an exchange between citizens and politicians and are very popular.
- The most recent eParticipation offerings, such as the participatory budget of the city of Köln (Cologne) which was accessed from around 100,000 different computers (unique visitors), demonstrate the "mass suitability" and the mobilization potential of eParticipation.

Further opportunities result from a very well developed practice of conventional participation offerings on Federal-Government, regional or municipal level which provide the legal and organizational foundation for eParticipation. What's more, the surveys which were conducted for this study suggest that 20% of those polled visit websites of federal authorities in their search for information. This opportunity can be put to good use if the strength of advanced
technical tools is carefully used so that visitors will experience positive results, visit the websites again and continue their active participation in the future.

**Germany's risks** can be summarized as follows:

*Risks* exist if eParticipation fails to achieve or loses its positive and desired effects, i.e. to strengthen the citizens' trust in politicians and political institutions, if

- the results fail to influence plans and decisions,
- the use of contributions is not apparent from the very beginning for all those taking part and for observers,
- eParticipation is used as a marketing instrument rather than a way of enabling learning processes,
- the effects are not afterwards documented in an understandable manner and
- the participation offerings are not continued in follow-up processes.

This means that it is not the citizens who could primarily control these risks, but that these risks are largely due to barriers within administrative organizations. Participation processes often conflict with the administration's own interests and communication culture. They call for the introduction of new workflows and their implementation requires a significant degree of coordination between different ministries. Limited funds in the public sector are another factor because the introduction of eParticipation requires not only once-off investment but also ongoing support by personnel.

**It is hence not possible in the short term and, above all, with isolated technical measures to solve the key problem of long distance and a low level of trust which many citizens have especially with regard to federal politicians; instead, this will require more long-term, gradual programme which should encompass as many administrative areas as possible where transparency and credibility are the guiding principles and where both sceptical citizens and inexperienced administrative staff can experience positive results.**

However, the results of the stock-taking efforts and the analysis of strengths and weaknesses also suggest that advanced technical tools are a necessary, but by no means sufficient prerequisite for successful participation processes. However, they can be used as a catalyst for organizational process and workflow innovation within the basic structures of a representative democracy. The international research projects or the projects and applications so far implemented in Germany failed to find any indications that eParticipation models lead to the questioning of these basic structures of a representative democracy.
**Recommended actions:**

The recommendations contained in this study are orientated towards the time frame of the eGovernment 2.0 programme. They address the opportunities identified and refer to reference projects and thereby demonstrate their feasibility. Crucial for the positive effects that can be achieved through the suggestions are **quality requirements which turned out to be the central success factors in practical applications:**

- **simplified access** through segment-spanning one-stop offerings,
- **transparency** by publishing all the contributions wherever possible,
- **promoting responsivity through tracking and tracing**: Those who participate are interested in hearing what happens to their contributions and what their effects are,
- **involvement of further groups through additional, concise forms of participation**, such as polling and rating.

Concrete project proposals for the six different forms of participation introduced earlier are orientated towards these principles. They are summarized below in the order of their implementation times.

A total of eleven measures are proposed which can be given different priorities depending on their implementation time and their effect on improving eParticipation in Germany (refer to Fig. 1-1).

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**Fig. 1-1: Recommended actions and projects: priorities and implementation times**
(1) Immediate measures

Immediate measures can be implemented without major technical preparations or coordination with other ministries. In as far as this study recommends more intensive consultations and greater transparency for planning, this should start in conjunction with the implementation of the participation goal in the eGovernment programme using this study as an input. This should take place in the form of moderated consultation over a limited period of time which is implemented with an interactive poll on the results and recommendations of this study.

**Online consultation on "eParticipation in the eGovernment 2.0 programme"** on the basis of this study should hence be given the highest priority. This will enable the Federal Ministry of the Interior to persistently address the eParticipation issue from the very beginning: An extended group of players will be involved at an early stage, thereby underlining the importance of the eParticipation issue. Low priority is attached to a **minister podcast with feedback** on this subject.

(2) Measures which can be implemented in the short term

Projects which require coordination with other ministries with a view to their funding from the eGovernment programme, but which can be initially implemented by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, are classified as projects which can be implemented in the short term.

a) A first sub-project in the larger **freedom of information** measures segment can be implemented in the short term. Whilst this larger segment concerns the improvement of access to public information within the scope of the Freedom of Information Act, an example from Belgium titled "Mijn Dossier" should be mentioned which enables, with the introduction of the electronic ID card, not just **online access** to a citizen's own data record in the central civil register, but also to the **log file and hence transparency concerning access by third parties to a citizen's data**. Parallel work on establishing a central Federal Civil registry and the electronic ID card offers the opportunity to create transparency concerning the use of this data and to counter fears of "Big Brother".

b) Furthermore, it seems that a pilot application from the larger **consultations area** ("your opinion matters") can also be implemented in the short term. The medium-term goal is to set up a client-enabled consultation platform which is to be offered to all federal authorities for different participation formats. In the short term, **two concrete consultations** should be implemented on the basis of existing platforms:

- Similar to the earlier approach with the Freedom of Information Act, the Federal Ministry of the Interior should perform consultation concerning a draft **Federal Data Protection Audit Act**.
- Parallel to this, consultation concerning the **amendment of the Barrier-free Information Technology Ordinance (BITV)** should be offered to the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. An amendment is urgently needed because the ordinance in its present form does not yet address new developments of the Internet (Web 2.0). In May 2008, the "Aktion Mensch" campaign will present at a conference the results of a large study on the requirements of handicapped people for Web 2.0 applications. This could mark the beginning of online consultation concerning the consequences for the **Barrier-free Information Technology Ordinance**. The high participation rate of those concerned, which can be expected with this target group, as well as independent moderation by the Alliance for Barrier-free Information Technology [Aktionsbündnis für barrierefreie Informationstechnik (AbI)] are positive success factors for online participation and could also trigger the interest of other parties.
c) High priority should hence be attached to the establishment of an **eParticipation competence network** by a non-governmental institution (applied science) which, in analogy to comparable institutions, for example, in the UK, bundles data, facts and know-how, edits and processes reports for national and international institutions, prepares guidelines, provides consultancy and training services for federal authorities and other institutions by other members of the network, develops quality standards, and acts as a project organizer for competitions and targeted promotion programmes.

d) Such a **promotion programme should support civil-society initiatives** designed to create transparency and to discuss relevant issues. Civil-society initiatives and organizations provide an important contribution towards political opinion-forming. If these initiatives are supported by public funds in order to also use the Internet in a suitable manner, this strengthens not just public debate, but also the credibility of public institutions with a view to the seriousness of their interest in democratic debate. National promotion programmes in the UK and the Netherlands are role models for such a programme.

(3) Projects which can be implemented in the medium term
Projects whose implementation requires the cooperation of a larger number of institutions and which are to be preceded by feasibility studies can be implemented in the medium term.

a) These include the above-mentioned **client-enabled consultation platform** on which federal authorities and other institutions can perform consultations in a demand and target-group-focused manner in the form of surveys, panels, forums, hearings, etc. The final requirements, different provider models and acceptance as well as the experience with the two proposed pilot applications should be clarified in a feasibility study.

b) The above-mentioned "**freedom of information rooms**" are another high-priority project which can be implemented in the medium term. In analogy to the electronic reading rooms, which are required by law in the US, organizations which are subject to the Freedom of Information Act would make certain documents available for retrieval from identically designed areas of their websites and these links would then be provided under a central portal. In a second step, a keyword-based search function is then to be created, covering all the documents made available in this way. A parallel effort is to be directed towards clarifying how and by whom the applications pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act are to be monitored, i.e. in the form developed to a certain degree by NGOs in Germany and the UK, or in the form in which it is already offered by the German Research Foundation with a view to progress information concerning subsidy applications.

c) The establishment of a **central portal for applications, complaints and petitions** should also be treated as a very high-priority issue. The federal government has set up more than 20 commissioners as points of contact for different interests and population groups which can so far, at best, be contacted electronically per e-mail. The positive experience which the German parliament has made with ePetitions that can be inspected and co-signed by other citizens shows that such an additional service would also make sense for petitions and complaints sent to as many federal authorities as possible. From a cost perspective and in order not to confuse senders with regard to responsibilities, a common portal should be set up to which the individual public authorities can subsequently connect one after another. Examples of this approach exist in the UK and Estonia.

d) A **signpost for public participations** is also considered helpful in strengthening eParticipation, even though a somewhat lower priority should be attached to this strategy in terms of its effects.
Several countries operate **central platforms or directories** offering subject-focused and/or geographic information on **the participation possibilities currently on offer**. Portals of this type seem to be becoming a standard for eParticipation. At present, such transparency does not exist, neither with regard to all the offerings from federal authorities nor in terms of offerings on federal-land and municipal level. Although such a system can reduce barriers, a complete and at all times up-to-date directory would involve very high costs and effort. It is hence proposed that a feasibility study be initially conducted in order to examine foreign experience and, for Germany, the demand and willingness to support such a system.

e) The **description and rating of online administration services by users** in the form of simple ratings and descriptions in wikis ("Mein Amt" [My public agency]) constitute an eParticipation approach which is directly related to eGovernment. Such an offering is in line with the trend of the Web 2.0 development and the announcement of increased user participation in the 2007 implementation plan for eGovernment 2.0. In this case too, however, the concrete design, the selection of suitable subjects and the cost-to-benefit ratio for administrations and citizens seem to require further clarification, so that the first step should be to commission a feasibility study.

Chapter 7 of this study contains a detailed description of these project proposals with a view to the respective starting position, goals, methods and players, time horizon and added value, potential barriers, costs and evaluation criteria.

In the online consultation proposed as an immediate measure, these descriptions should stand in the foreground and should also be commented and evaluated there.
2 Introduction

Electronic participation (eParticipation) still plays a minor role in the context of eGovernment in many European countries. However, the inclusion of eParticipation in internationally comparative evaluations (for example, Holzer & Kim 2006) clearly shows the increasing relevance of this issue: Limited commitment in this area leads to downgrading in international eGovernment rankings. The ongoing eGovernment debate also relates to all elements of government and administration, from public will formation via decision-making, service creation to service provision.

With its eGovernment 2.0 programme, the German federal government is determined to respond to this trend and assume a pioneering role in this area. At the same time, the government also addresses one important goal of the eGovernment action plan within the scope of the EU’s i2010 initiative: "Better decision-making processes and greater participation of citizens in all phases of the democratic decision-making process" (EU Commission 2006, p. 12).

In order to concretize this goal, this study, which was commissioned by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, presents the status and opportunities of eParticipation in Germany and develops recommendations for action, concrete project proposals and measures for implementing the German government's eGovernment 2.0 programme on the basis of scientific analyses. The following questions are especially addressed in this context:

- Which participation formats and channels and which forms of participation are already in place?
- Which development level has Germany reached with its eParticipation offerings and their use compared to other countries?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of eParticipation in Germany?
- Which examples of good practice in Germany and abroad can be adopted and generalized?
- Which measures and projects could ideally promote eParticipation in Germany?
- How can the sustainability of such offerings be ensured and how can they be evaluated on a regular basis?

eParticipation is defined here as the participation of individuals and legal entities and groups thereof in the decision-making process in the branches of government using information and communication technology (ICT) equipment. In the context of the federal government's eGovernment activities, we interpret this along two lines, i.e.

- as an offer to participate, in a form upgraded by the use of ICT, in plans and decisions by the federal ministries and their downstream public agencies and by the German parliament,
- as an extension of applicable rules and requirements for other levels of government within the federal government's (framework) legislative powers.

In international debate, a distinction is made between the term "eParticipation" and the term "eDemocracy" in that the latter also covers elections as the most binding form of citizen participation (DEMO-net 2007c). Therefore, this study does not deal with eVoting.

At the same time, this study and the recommended actions and project proposals contained herein are not restricted to eParticipation on federal level. Instead, they also and specifically address municipal level because a host of approaches already exist in this area which can sometimes be used to generate impulses for the federal government, and, on the other hand,
because the federal government could also make eParticipation platforms available which could be used across boundaries between administrative levels.

This definition of eParticipation and political participation and/or citizen involvement does not cover social "citizen commitment", for example, in self-help and charitable institutions which primarily refers to what is often mutual concrete assistance and which can hence be interpreted as some kind of output by the political and administrative system and which focuses on interest representation – i.e. the input – to a lesser extent.\(^1\) However, this distinction becomes blurred when political self-help groups fight in the political arena in order to have their interests perceived and supported.

Furthermore, the term "citizen involvement" suggests that it is the many individual citizens who participate of their own accord. This view which is close to the republican democracy model\(^2\) is, however, more of an exception. It is typically so-called "intermediaries" rather than individual citizens who act. Besides the political parties explicitly emphasized in the Basic Law, these primarily include lobby groups from the business community or worker representatives as well as other so-called non-governmental organizations (NGOs) whose importance in the political arena has increased significantly over the past twenty years.

In order to develop well-founded recommendations for action, two analytical approaches were combined from a methodological perspective:

- One approach was to take stock of eParticipation applications in Germany and abroad (chapter 4) based on literature studies, up-to-date rankings and competitions, Internet research and to evaluate ongoing or completed projects on eParticipation, and to then systematically compile the examples found there in a grid of participation forms and formats specifically developed for this study (chapter 3.1).

- In a parallel effort, different methods were adopted in order to poll three target groups concerning their experience with, understanding and concepts of political participation in general and eParticipation in particular (chapter 5). This was carried out in a representative telephone poll of 1,031 citizens aged 18 and over which was conducted by the Wahlen Telefonfeld GmbH research group. Since it was assumed that the share of citizens having experience with eParticipation would still be relatively small, a parallel online poll of potential users of online participation offers was conducted. These online questionnaires contained references to websites and newsletters of the federal government as well as newsletters of the partners ifib and Zebralog e.V. who conducted the poll; furthermore, the Abgeordnetenwatch.de NGO mentioned the poll in its newsletter. With 320 valid answers, the share of these "users of eParticipation" is approximately as high as the group of eParticipation users in the random sample of the representative poll of the German population. Furthermore, guideline-based telephone interviews were conducted with 20 citizens who had been selected according to certain criteria. The third target group consisted of the business community and organizations of civil society for which 20 individuals in charge of lobbying work at umbrella and specialist organizations of the business community and various NGOs were selected in telephone calls and subsequently given a detailed online questionnaire.

The results of both poll programmes were compiled in a SWOT analysis and subsequently considered when developing recommendations for action. To this end, an attempt was made to assess relevance and effectiveness for the different stakeholders. However, an action-

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\(^1\) Refer to the comprehensive work by the “Future of Civil Commitment” study commission of the 14th German Bundestag, Deutscher Bundestag 2002.

\(^2\) Refer to Habermas's three political models (1997).
orientated study on eParticipation should not stop at a representative poll. The first practical proposal hence foresees the online discussion of this study and of the recommended actions using technical tools which are also proposed for other participation processes.

At this point, we would also like to thank the staff of the IT 1 division of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, which commissioned this study, for their helpful feedback during the research phase and for their support during the online poll of potential users of eParticipation offerings. Furthermore, a word of thanks also goes to the "Abgeordnetenwatch" NGO which disseminated our poll in its own newsletter and thereby helped us to reach a wide range of users.

At the same time, we would also like to thank the many users of eParticipation offerings who completed our online questionnaire and who were additionally willing to answer our questions on the telephone. We would also like to thank the representatives of specialist business and umbrella organizations as well as the NGO representatives who completed the online questionnaire specifically designed for this group. Our thanks also go to Professor Gerhard Vowe (Düsseldorf university), Dr. Martin Emmer and Mr Martin Seifert (both from Technische Universität Ilmenau) for their collaborative support who provided us with extracts from their still unpublished poll results on the behaviour of eParticipation users from summer 2007.
3 Classification of participation formats and channels

3.1 Classification of formats and channels

The term "political participation"\(^3\) as used in participation research refers to activities and acts "which citizens perform voluntarily in order to influence decisions on the different levels of the political system" (Kaase 1992, p. 339). The range of such activities encompasses membership and active work in associations and political parties, the individual's perception of offerings from administrations and political organizations, such as information and discussion events, the submission of suggestions and concerns in planning processes, as well as demonstrations and more recent activities, such as mediation and round tables. Participation in elections and even unlawful acts of violence against individuals and property, for example, during (non-) permitted demonstrations are also forms of political participation. All these forms can be combined in groups of activities and/or offerings which feature common characteristics – such as goals, rules, etc. – and which are already established and reproducible. Fig. 3.1-1 shows the entire range of possible activities.

![Fig. 3.1-1: Forms of political participation](image)

The study focuses on the forms shown in the frame in Fig. 3.1-1. This means that participation in elections and all direct democratic instruments existing under the general term "referendum" (refer to Luthardt 1992) will not be addressed in more detail. A categorization

\(^3\) The interpreter: the Germany study used the terms “politische Beteiligung” and “politische Partizipation” synonymously. They are both translated with “political participation”.

system is used for stocktaking which is based on the OECD classification for participation offerings initiated by administrations and political bodies (OECD 2001b) and which also considers activities which primarily originate from citizens, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the business community and which are addressed to administrations and policymakers. In the following, participation offers will be broken down into six "forms" which are not generally specific to the Internet, but which also occur as "offline" forms. They can be further characterized by differentiating between formalized or formal offers, i.e. offers which are stipulated by law as mandatory, and non-formalized or informal offers, i.e. offers which exist in addition to what is prescribed by law (refer to Kaase 1992).

The six forms of participation on which this study focuses can be characterized in more detail as follows:

- **Information**: Offers which primarily aim to provide and supply information and which have hence an important role to play in the success of participation. This includes statutory access rights and publication obligations concerning information pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (IFG) and the Environmental Information Law (UIG), as well as informal offerings, such as information websites of governmental institutions, and any activities which are pursued in order to inform the public of certain subjects, plans or decisions.

- **Transparency through third parties**: Informal offerings providing information about actions of institutions of the legislature or the executive level, thereby enabling public control (Abgeordnetenwatch⁴, for instance, enables the monitoring of the voting behaviour of MPs on all relevant issues). This also includes offerings which round off or enhance existing government offerings, for example, in the form of additional information, a more user-friendly presentation format or interaction possibilities. Examples include the attempt to establish a central website for collecting applications already submitted on the basis of the Freedom of Information Act and subsequently made available to the applicants⁵ or the DemokratieOnline⁶ portal which presents information related to the German Bundestag's petition offering in a user-friendly manner (sorting of petitions according to subjects, progress level, degree of popularity, etc.). This category also includes civic education offerings, such as the Wahl-O-Mat election simulation tool offered by the Federal Agency for Civic Education⁷ in the run-up to elections.

- **Consultation**: All forms of participation which primarily aim to make use of the expertise of citizens, interest groups and other stakeholders from the business community and civil society and to obtain and subsequently consider votes and opinions concerning existing plans and forthcoming decisions. These include, for example, hearings and discussions within the scope of the citizens' formal involvement in planning processes (for example, in land-use planning and town and country planning) as well as informal, occasional and/or continuous surveys on selected subjects or the involvement of members of the scientific community and experts on the basis of expert reports or surveys.

- **Complaints / applications / petitions**: Offerings that enable the forwarding of suggestions or complaints to the deciding institutions and public authorities (these can be all government bodies, such as public authorities on municipal, federal-land or federal

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⁴ [www.abgeordnetenwatch.de](http://www.abgeordnetenwatch.de)
⁵ [www.befreite-dokumente.de](http://www.befreite-dokumente.de)
⁶ [www.demokratieonline.de](http://www.demokratieonline.de)
⁷ [http://www.bpb.de/methodik/XQJYR3_0,WahlOMat_.html](http://www.bpb.de/methodik/XQJYR3_0,WahlOMat_.html)
level, ministries on federal or federal-land level, parliaments - from district councils to the European Parliament - social insurance institutions, other corporations or corporations under public law).

The right of petition, for example, is laid down in Article 17 of the Basic Law. The provisions differ from federal Land to federal Land.\(^8\) The ePetitions of the German Bundestag are an example of Internet-based implementation. Furthermore, this also includes appeals in the form of protests in administrative procedures right through to actions in court or the notice thereof. The commissioners appointed by the German Bundestag, the cabinet or federal authorities for different aspects and interests of different parts of society deserve special mention.

- **Cooperation:** Offerings which go beyond the capture of expertise, preferences and opinions and which aim to achieve closer and often more long-term cooperation between administrations and/or politics and citizens as well as the groups from the business community and civil society to be involved, also with the aim of establishing mutual agreement, and which can lead to results that deviate from the original positions. These more far-reaching offerings have so far been more in the domain of informal participation and are supported by discourse-orientated methodologies, such as round tables, planning cells or mediation as "offline participation" modes. Cooperative relations between decision-makers and stakeholder groups can be characterized by the fact that administrations and politics are involved in the process and undertake to render accounts with regard to the status of the proposals developed which is, for example, the case with some participatory budgets.

- **Activism / campaigns/ lobbying:** Forms of participation where individuals or organized groups take or organize measures which are designed to generate attention and support for topics and positions as well as particular interests and which hence contribute towards the formation of political opinion and will.

  A characteristic feature of activism are individual campaigns arousing public attention; these can range from (online) disclosures via mass mailings (letters, postcards, e-mails) right through to acts of civil disobedience (such as blockades of transport routes or electronic blockades of websites, so-called virtual sit-ins). Campaigns aim to mobilize large parts of the population (for example, by collecting signatures for a Freedom of Information Act on federal level\(^9\) or the collection of signatures per SMS by the "minimum pay initiative" [Initiative Mindestlohn]\(^10\)) with the amplifying effect of mass media often playing a role in such campaigns. In contrast to this, lobbying can also address individual institutions or individuals as a very targeted way of pursuing particular interests (for example, per e-mails to individuals MPs).

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8 For an overview, refer to the provisions related to petition law as contained in the federal-land constitutions and laws as well as the rural district regulations and local government regulations. Brangsch (2007).

9 [www.pro-information.de](http://www.pro-information.de)

10 [www.mindestlohn.de](http://www.mindestlohn.de)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation format / tool</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital TV in the closer sense (without feedback channel)</td>
<td>Unidirectional communication from one transmitter to many receivers in the sense of traditional mass media. The digital transmission paths enables the integration of additional information services, such as electronic programme guides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiosk systems / info terminals</td>
<td>Computer-based, stationary multimedia terminals which are typically used as information systems with or without Internet access. The desired functions can be accessed via the keyboard or a touch-screen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website (including FAQs / glossaries)</td>
<td>Websites are primarily used for unidirectional information dissemination. However, they can also integrate other channels and then become more complete online portals or platforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>Periodical electronic publications (circulars) which can be received at the user's e-mail address.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSS feed</td>
<td>RSS feeds provide information concerning newly published contents on websites, in weblogs or forums. A so-called RSS reader (also called feedreader or aggregator) which can also be directly integrated into a browser or a mail program can be used to display this information. It is then no longer necessary to visit websites and to check them for updates. Audio or video contents of a podcast are also automatically downloaded to the computer by RSS syndication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weblog</td>
<td>A frequently updated website presenting contributions in chronological order, with the most recent contributions appearing on top. Weblogs enable users to quickly and easily publish text, pictures, audio and video files on the basis of a Content Management System (CMS). These contributions can then be commented by visitors of a weblog. Furthermore, blogs are strongly interconnected by so-called trackballs (direct references to contents of other blogs) and blogrolls (collections of links to other weblogs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Audio or video) podcast</td>
<td>Audio or video contributions which are published on websites and which can be directly viewed or downloaded from there and/or which can be automatically received using special, RSS-based software. Audio podcasts, in particular, are designed for playback using mobile devices. This is also reflected by the term &quot;podcast&quot; which is made up of the &quot;iPod&quot; (a mobile audio player) and &quot;broadcast&quot; components.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online games and simulations</td>
<td>Games and simulations enable a playful approach by users towards the contents of a particular subject. They can be of a descriptive or illustrative nature and of a more educational character, or they can simulate a real (decision) situation and highlight the possible effects of actions. Most of these applications enable human-to-computer interaction, but so-called multi-user games are also available which can involve several users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive maps / geodata-based communications</td>
<td>Applications for the presentation of geographical data on the Internet. The presentation of the data can usually be varied by the viewer. The applications can be designed in such a manner that information (such as text or pictures concerning a particular place) can be added.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS / MMS</td>
<td>The abbreviations SMS for Short Message Service and MMS for Multimedia Messaging Service represent both the service as well as the pure text and multimedia short messages themselves. The short messages can be sent by a mobile device or from the Internet to a mobile device.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail / mailing lists</td>
<td>E-mail (&quot;electronic mail&quot;) enables the asynchronous exchange of both text messages and files. Although e-mails are mostly used in communications between individuals, they can also be sent to several recipients or used to exchange messages within closed user groups (so-called mailing lists).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation format / tool</td>
<td>Description</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webcast (with feedback function)</td>
<td>Broadcasting (streaming) of video contents from one sender to several receivers via the Internet. The recordings are broadcast live, but can also be archived and viewed at any time. Some webcasts also offer feedback functions during live streaming. It is, for example, possible to ask individual questions or send comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone / call centre</td>
<td>The telephone enables simultaneous communication between two individuals (or several individuals in the case of a telephone conference). The answering of calls and/or the active establishment of contact per telephone are bundled in call centres which are staffed by several employees. In contrast to contacts established with individual call partners via the telephone, a call centre ensures that the call is in fact answered. This usually eliminates the need for time-consuming connecting on the telephone and asking callers for the right partner to talk to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat</td>
<td>Chats are simultaneous (synchronous) text-based discussions. Depending on the purpose of a chat, two or more users can communicate with each other freely or via a moderator in the case of subject-centred chats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instant messaging</td>
<td>Instant messenger enables the realtime communication of text, voice or video signals. Communications are usually restricted to users of the same system because there are, with a few exceptions, different software solutions which use different protocols. In the case of instant messaging, other users must first be confirmed as contacts and entered into a so-called buddy list which shows where a contact is online and additionally ready to communicate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social tagging (folksonomy) / social bookmarking</td>
<td>Internet contents are collaboratively tagged by users by means of metadata in the form of so-called tags. The tags are assigned without fixed rules and structures, so that every user can assign those tags which he or she personally associates with the contents. Folksonomies are characterized by the fact that the terminology used corresponds to the users' everyday language and that further tags can be added at any time. It is hence not necessary for the users to be search experts who are familiar with existing classifications, their orders and terminologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking / rating tool</td>
<td>Ranking and rating tools enable the quantitative or qualitative rating of contents, for example, in a discussion forum. Such rankings or ratings can be carried out either automatically (for example, longest contribution, most-viewed contribution or contribution with most replies) or by the users of the systems (for example, awarding points which reflect consent to a contribution).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online input form</td>
<td>Information can be captured and transmitted in a standardized form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick poll</td>
<td>Short polls which enable the retrieval of simple opinion statements. A certain question is usually asked and a few reply options are offered. (Intermediate) results of the poll are usually immediately output.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online questionnaire / survey</td>
<td>Longer surveys designed to retrieve more differentiated opinion statements which can be completed and transmitted online. The data is captured electronically and can hence be evaluated more quickly and with less effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video conference</td>
<td>Video conferences support the simultaneous communication of two or more geographically separated communication partners in the form of (moving) pictures and sound, i.e. all the partners taking part in the conference can hear and see each other. Some conference systems also enable the exchange and joint editing of documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum</td>
<td>Forums enable (in most cases subject-centred) discussions in larger groups irrespective of time and place. Active participation in the discussion in a forum is usually subject to prior registration. Following this, registered users can publish their own contributions to the discussion (postings) or comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation format / tool</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Participation format / tool</strong></td>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>on postings from other users. Forums can be without a moderator, so that postings are published directly and discussions moderate themselves without external intervention, or a moderator supports the discussion, checks whether the postings are appropriate for the subject, prepares summaries on a regular basis, etc.</td>
<td>Wiki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic collections of websites can be prepared in a joint effort by a large group of users at different times and at different geographic locations. Every user can directly edit the texts online, with integrated version management functions (history entries, discussions) ensuring the traceability of every single change.</td>
<td>Wiki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo / video community</td>
<td>Online platforms on which users can publish their own photos or videos which can be commented on and rated by other users. Furthermore, the contents published can be provided with tags. The community members can present themselves with their own profiles and organize themselves in (thematic, for instance) groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networking site / online community</td>
<td>Online platforms which are primarily used for one's own presentation and to establish and maintain contacts and relations. The profiles can be provided with tabs and supplemented by additional contents, such as photos or videos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groupware / CSCW</td>
<td>Complex applications designed to support group work via time and space boundaries. Groupware systems offer a host of functionalities for cooperation (shared information space, group editors or wikis for the joint creation and archiving of documents, communication with group members (conference and messaging systems, such as video conference tools, e-mail, chats, instant messaging) and coordination of workflows (workflow management, calendar sharing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual worlds</td>
<td>Virtual 3D environments in which users move and interact with other users via a digital person (avatar). The contents and objects of a virtual world, such as &quot;Second Life&quot;, can usually be created by the registered users themselves. Communications with other users take the form of short messages, chats or forums, including the possibility to send e-mails to non-users. Furthermore, the participants can organize themselves in user groups, for example, in order to work on joint virtual projects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several ICT-based participation formats and/or tools are available when it comes to designing participation processes within the different participation forms. The term "tool" refers to the technical functionality and implementation, whilst "format" refers to the abstract information and communication pattern.

In the case of the tools in Table 3.1-1, no explicit distinction is made between tools which can be used in mobile applications and stationary tools which can be used at home or at the place of work. Mobile "only" means that a particular application and/or format can be used by different mobile devices (such as laptops, PDAs, mobile phones) at different places. From a technical perspective, such services and applications can be based on a host of network and/or transmission technologies, such as WLAN, Bluetooth, WAP, GSM, GPRS, UMTS, etc. which feature a more or less limited range. The question is now less about whether there are special mobile formats and more about the paths which are to be chosen in order to access the formats in Table 3.1-1.

Mobile applications of the formats in Table 3.1-1 are not only conceivable, concrete offerings are already available for practically each of these formats, albeit not in the context of eParticipation, with most of these offerings being based on mobile online applications. Social networking tools, such as Xing\(^\text{11}\), or video communities, such as Youtube\(^\text{12}\), can also be used by mobile devices, e-mail push services, such as Cortado\(^\text{13}\), redirect incoming e-mails directly to the mobile phone, web portals, such as news4mobile.de\(^\text{14}\), offer visualization and tagging functions in the form of tagging and ranking services in addition to the charts of mobile websites.

One important difference between Internet-based and mobile online applications is that the latter need to be adapted to the specific characteristics of mobile access. The key issue in this context is the adaptation of the contents to the presentation and navigation functionalities which are still limited, as well as the data rates of mobile terminal devices.

It is hence not necessary to include mobile formats in the classification in addition to the formats already listed. The stock-taking of participation projects hence also considers those offerings which can be accessed and used by mobile devices.

These forms and participation formats were used as a basis for developing a matrix for this study (refer to Table 3.1-2 on the next two pages) which can be used in order to set up a systematization of eParticipation in different fields, i.e.:

- as a classification framework for stock-taking (chapter 4),
- in order to present the state of development in Germany on an international scale (chapter 4.5),
- in order to present good examples of participation formats (according to selected lines, chapter 4.5) and
- to develop project proposals for different forms of participation (according to selected columns, chapter 7).

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\(^{11}\) [http://m.xing.com/](http://m.xing.com/)
\(^{12}\) [http://m.youtube.com/](http://m.youtube.com/)
\(^{13}\) [http://www.cortado.de/](http://www.cortado.de/)
\(^{14}\) [http://www.news4mobile.de/](http://www.news4mobile.de/)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation formats / tools</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Transparency through third parties</th>
<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Applications / complaints / petitions</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Activism / campaigns/ lobbying:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital TV in the closer sense</td>
<td>Receiving information, time-dependent</td>
<td>Receiving information, time-dependent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Publishing own contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiosk systems / info terminals</td>
<td>Retrieving thematically edited information, place-dependent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Website (including FAQs / glossaries)</td>
<td>Searching for and retrieving information, downloading documents</td>
<td>Searching for and retrieving information, downloading documents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Publishing own contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>Subscribing to and periodically receiving information</td>
<td>Subscribing to and periodically receiving information</td>
<td>Subscribing to information on forthcoming consultations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Publishing own contents</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSS feed</td>
<td>Subscribing to references to newly published contents</td>
<td>Subscribing to references to newly published contents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weblog</td>
<td>Retrieving person-centred or theme-centred information</td>
<td>Retrieving person-centred or theme-centred information, publishing own contents</td>
<td>Writing comments / feedback on entries</td>
<td></td>
<td>Publishing own contents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Audio or video) podcast</td>
<td>Subscribing to audio and video contents</td>
<td>Subscribing to audio and video contents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Publishing own contents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online games and simulations</td>
<td>Acquiring knowledge and information and generating preferences in a playful manner</td>
<td>Forming opinions and preferences</td>
<td>Forming opinions and preferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geodata-based communications /</td>
<td>Retrieving geographic information</td>
<td>Retrieving geographic information</td>
<td>Entering geographic data</td>
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<td>Participation formats / tools</td>
<td>Information</td>
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<td>Applications / complaints / petitions</td>
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<td>Activism / campaigns/ lobbying</td>
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<td>interactive maps</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMS / MMS</td>
<td>Receiving short messages / picture and video files</td>
<td>Sending short messages / picture and video files</td>
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<td>Sending short messages / picture and video files</td>
<td>Sending short messages / picture and video files</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail / mailing lists</td>
<td>Receiving information (text, files, etc.)</td>
<td>Receiving information (text, files, etc.)</td>
<td>Sending information, notification of reply to one’s own posting</td>
<td>Sending petitions</td>
<td>Communicating with an individual or group</td>
<td>Sending and receiving information, communicating with an individual or group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone / call centre</td>
<td>Receiving information, time-dependent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Communicating information, time-dependent</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webcast (with feedback function)</td>
<td>Receiving live video transmissions of events, debates, etc. (and asking questions), time-dependent; retrieving archived transmissions</td>
<td>(Entering comments on contents received)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chat</td>
<td>Asking targeted questions (for example, during online consultation hours), time-dependent</td>
<td>Asking targeted questions (for example, during online consultation hours), time-dependent</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instant messaging</td>
<td>Asking targeted questions (for example, during online consultation hours), time-dependent</td>
<td>Asking targeted questions (for example, during online consultation hours), time-dependent</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social tagging (folksonomy), social bookmarking</td>
<td>Qualitative tagging of given information for other users</td>
<td>Gathering, structuring and sharing information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gathering, structuring and sharing information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation formats / tools</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Transparency through third parties</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ranking tool</td>
<td>Rating given information for other users</td>
<td>Rating given information</td>
<td>Rating given information</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input form</td>
<td>Entering and forwarding information</td>
<td></td>
<td>Entering and forwarding petitions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quick poll</td>
<td>Submitting opinions and ratings on individual issues</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online questionnaire / survey</td>
<td>Submitting differentiated opinions, information and ratings</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video conference</td>
<td>Submitting comments, time-dependent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussing in a theme-centred manner, time-dependent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum</td>
<td>Developing own proposals and comments, commenting on contents</td>
<td>Writing own postings, commenting on postings</td>
<td>Writing own postings, commenting on postings</td>
<td>Writing own postings, commenting on postings</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiki</td>
<td>Jointly creating contents</td>
<td>Jointly creating contents</td>
<td>Jointly creating contents</td>
<td>Jointly developing contents</td>
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<td>Photo / video community</td>
<td>Sharing picture and video files on relevant issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing picture and video data</td>
<td>Sharing picture and video files</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social networking site / online community</td>
<td>Making contact with other users, exchanging</td>
<td></td>
<td>Making contact, maintaining relations, exchanging</td>
<td>Making contact, maintaining relations, exchanging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Groupware / CSCW</td>
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<td>Jointly developing contents over a longer period of time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virtual worlds</td>
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<td>Interacting with others in the virtual</td>
<td>Interacting with others in the virtual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation formats / tools</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Transparency through third parties</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Applications / complaints / petitions</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Activism / campaigns/ lobbying:</td>
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This matrix shows from the users' perspective how they can sensibly use the tools in conjunction with the individual forms of participation. The matrix is configured in such a manner that the degree of activity by the different forms of participation increases from the left to the right, whereas in the case of the tools, the user receives from the top to the bottom more and more group-related communication possibilities and more influence on the make-up and rating of the contents. This difference compared to the unilateral receipt of information and simple, bilateral communications is represented by terms like Web 2.0 (Trump et al. 2007), the German term "Mitmach-Netz" [join-in web] (Gscheidle & Fisch 2007) or "participative web" (OECD 2007b), as well as the term social software (Richter & Koch 2007). Web 2.0 is hence defined via a new quality of Internet use compared to former possibilities which primarily refer to the two dimensions of "group-related communication" and "shaping of contents". These include video communities, photo communities, social networking sites, weblogs, podcasts and wikis (refer to Trump et al. 2007). Besides the options enumerated above, the OECD (2007b) also mentions the possibility of jointly collecting and rating contents, i.e. by way of social tagging and bookmarking, as well as interaction possibilities in virtual environments (virtual worlds). Whilst the idea of eliminating the divide between the authors' and recipients' roles and of active participation by users was already in the foreground of debate in the first forums and newsgroups in the early 1990s, this only seemed to materialize to a significant extent 15 years later. More and more Internet users are actively participating in the so-called Web 2.0. This not only concerns complete websites, but also the integration of the corresponding formats into existing websites. This is hence also triggering the corresponding expectations with regard to the web offerings by public institutions.

3.2 Assignment of demand groups in the population and business community

For the purposes of this study, demand groups are regarded as target groups and/or addressees of participation offerings. In general, participation offerings can

1. be directed to the general public without focusing on particular demand groups,
2. aim at a representative selection of participants in order to obtain a result which is as representative as possible,
3. address those concerned by the object of participation.

A distinction between demand groups in the population and in the business community as well as between individuals and collective players, such as interest groups and associations, makes sense for an identification of eParticipation projects. It is, however, not possible to assign certain participation forms and formats to individual groups because all six forms of participation and all participation formats are generally possible for both sub-groups. A more detailed characterization of the contents of these general demand groups is hence limited to specific cases. If the participation offering addresses those concerned by the subject matter of participation, such a characterization will in each case depend on the target and subject of a participation process and is usually carried out in the form of a stakeholder analysis in the respective process. In the case of an urban development process, for example, a distinction is

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15 The matrix shows that the participation formats referred to as Web 2.0 do not by themselves contribute towards more political participation, but that they require forms of participation with higher degrees of activity in order to develop their participative potential.
made between residents, shop-owners, motorists, etc., whilst public hearings on environmental protection issues will address other groups than those addressed by public hearings on IT security (refer to Kubicek et al. 2007).

A comparison of research results concerning political participation in general and the use of Internet offerings shows a strong match between the sociodemographic characteristics of politically active citizens on the one hand and so-called onliners on the other. Interest in political participation should not be underestimated despite frequently voiced concerns about poor polling and a lack of political interest. In a representative poll in 2003 (FGWT 2004), a good 68% of German adults were in favour of direct citizen participation in important political decisions by society. Only 29% believed that elected politicians should bear the main responsibility. Demand for direct influence is strongest on municipal level. However, at federal level too, 59% of Germans wished to be directly involved in important decisions.

The actual participation behaviour reflects this wish. During this poll, 77% of Germans stated that they had already supported a collection of signatures, with 35% stating that they had already taken part in an approved demonstration. 21% had worked in an action group and 63% can imagine using this form of participation in future. Significant participation levels of 13% and 11%, respectively, were recorded with regard to work in a political party and participation in non-approved demonstrations (ibidem).

The state of research is still quite low with regard to the different forms of eParticipation. A representative study conducted in 2005 by Technische Universität Ilmenau suggests that this is also applicable to the level of online participation. Only 7% of German-speaking citizens living in Germany and aged 16 and over had taken part in an online collection of signatures during the past year. 6% had contacted a politician via the Internet and just 1% had expressed their political opinion by using banners or mail signatures with a political content.

Political participation, especially informal participation, is not evenly distributed among citizens. According to the so-called standard model, participation is particularly pronounced among citizens with higher incomes, a high level of education and relevant skills (Verba et al. 1995). Situative factors, i.e. the possibility to participate and the possibilities offered, are also important (Gabriel & Mößner 2002).

With regard to eParticipation, several studies found that participation is also very unevenly distributed and that existing disparities are even increased by differences in access possibilities and skills. Furthermore, it was found that the social groups participating on the Internet differ from offline participants (Gibson et al. 2005; DiGenarro & Dutton 2006). There is hence reason to hope that the use of the Internet will address broader and, above all, new population groups for political participation compared to those who can be reached via traditional channels. These new groups are, in particular, young people and, according to another study, also people living under socially less favourable conditions (Gibson et al. 2005; Emmer et al. 2006).

In this context, the above-mentioned disparities in Internet use should not be forgotten because they hinder political influence especially for poorer and less educated people. These people face a dual barrier, i.e. with regard to political participation and Internet use. According to a comprehensive survey conducted in six languages by the media commission of the German ARD/ZDF radio and TV stations, the differences found for people with a migration background are not so pronounced that a distinct parallel media-use society could be identified with regard to the Internet (ARD/ZDF Medienkommission 2007; Simon 2007). According to the study, migrants living in Germany use the Internet slightly less than their fellow citizens, however, with the need to differentiate further between different migrant groups. Furthermore, other surveys failed to find any differences between males and females in terms of both offline and online participation (DiGenarro & Dutton 2006). However, differences are found between the genders when it comes to certain forms of participation: In
the fields of political campaign support, contact with politicians and membership in political organizations, males are the stronger group with participation rates which are 7 to 9 percentage points higher. The election and demonstration offerings, on the other hand, are used to the same extent by men and women (Verba et al. 1995, S. 255).

Authors dealing with citizen participation in practice also refer to the social imbalance in terms of participation behaviour and participation opportunities. Reinert (2003, S. 37), for example, refers to the dominant position of highly educated, middle-class members in higher professional positions, public service employees, males aged between 30 and 60, as well as representatives of political parties, associations, societies and churches. Underrepresented, in contrast, are lower-income classes and older employees, migrants, youths, women as well as groups under extreme time pressure, such as single parents with infants and young children, shift workers and people with frequently varying working hours. In the case of organized players too, it was found that smaller citizen groups are disadvantaged in comparison to more influential and better organized associations.

An analysis of the preconditions which demand groups must fulfil for electronic participation offerings to be used appears to be possible and to make sense when analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of eParticipation offerings and, in particular, of their presently still rather seldom or selective use. These preconditions include technical access as well as the necessary skills and habits along with the concrete benefits which are expected and experienced. Because these parameters can differ even within the demand groups, certain participation formats are only suitable for parts of the respective demand groups and are hence not constant. Web 2.0 seems to initiate a change.

Such a general stock-taking of Internet access and use patterns is carried out in a study titled "E-Inclusion – Digitale Integration durch E-Government" [e-inclusion – digital integration through eGovernment] to be conducted parallel. However, the stock-taking of projects considers to the maximum possible extent the addressees of these offerings, and when projects are recommended, attention is paid to ensuring that the formats and subjects proposed are suitable and interesting for the respective addressees.
4 Stock-taking of activities, developments and results in the public administration

4.1 Compilation and evaluation of available statistics and studies on eParticipation

Statistics on Internet use are helpful when it comes to assessing the potential of eParticipation and evaluating the actual activities on the part of users. The growing number of Internet uses in the population and the extent of Internet use were central issues of the "e-inclusion" study (Becker et al. 2007) which was prepared parallel to this study also on behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The relevant results of the "e-inclusion" study are hence summarized here and supplemented by data concerning the use of eGovernment, eParticipation and Web 2.0 offerings.

4.1.1 Internet use in Germany

According to Eurostat data from 2006, 67% of German households have Internet access (for the figures below, refer to: Becker et al. 2007). Around half (34%) of these households have a broadband connection. More than 69% of citizens actually use the Internet. The figures are somewhat higher in the business sector where 95% of companies have access to the Internet, with 73% of these having a broadband access. Whilst in the case of companies it is primarily the size which determines Internet use patterns (large businesses use the Internet more frequently than small ones), Internet use among citizens is distributed according to different criteria: 16

- Demographics: Older people use the Internet less frequently than the average citizen, i.e. 58.2% of those aged 50 – 59; 35.5% of those aged 60 – 69, and 13.2% of those aged 70 and over.
- Gender: Although the percentage of women who use the Internet is smaller than that of men (53.8% vs. 67.1%), growth rates are higher among women.
- Education: Less educated people use the Internet less frequently: with a certificate of secondary education but without an apprenticeship: 30.5%.
- Income: Household income also influences Internet use. Only 37.6% of households with an income of less than €1,000 uses the Internet. People without a paid job (pensioners, trainees, pupils, university students) use the Internet less frequently (43.7%) whilst the share of pupils and students who use the Internet is significantly above average.
- Population numbers: In cities with a population of less than 5,000, only 54.9% use the Internet, compared to 63.8% in cities with a population of 500,000 and above.
- Federal land: In the new federal laender and in the Saarland, use is more than 5 percentage points below the federal average.

16 The following figures are based on the "(N)Onliner-Atlas" of Initiative D21 from 2007. The reference values are based on an Internet use rate of 60.2% among German-speaking citizens aged 14 and over (refer to Becker et al. 2007, pp. 32 seq.).
• Migrants: Migrants (refer to ARD/ZDF-Medienkommission 2007) use the Internet slightly less frequently than non-migrants (22% daily Internet use vs. 28%), with a further differentiation required according to migrant groups (migrants with a Polish background: 29% daily use).

4.1.2 Use of eGovernment and eParticipation

Use of eGovernment

Data is available from the Federal Statistical Office and Eurostat concerning the use of eGovernment offerings. This data can provide a first indication of the interest and willingness to interact with government institutions. Furthermore, the question concerning the provision of information from public institution websites also covers an activity relevant for eParticipation.\(^{17}\)

In 2006, around 32% of citizens in Germany made general use of eGovernment offerings. The share of men was higher than that of women (36% vs. 29%). 27.8% of citizens visited websites of public institutions as a source of information. Statistics also represent corresponding activities on the part of businesses where eGovernment use is much more common (49%), including the provision of information (36%).

In total, the extent of use must be considered to be small in view of an activity as important as the provision of information. This is also reflected by the use of eGovernment offerings which, in a European comparison, is only slightly above average (for citizens) or strongly below average (for companies) (EU-25 average for 2006 for citizens: 26%, EU-25 average for companies: 64%). In 2006, Germany ranked 8\(^{th}\) among European countries with a view to the use of eGovernment offerings by citizens and 23\(^{rd}\) with a view to the use of eGovernment offerings by companies.

However, an analysis of 20 online services shows that the eGovernment offering in Germany increased significantly last year (CapGemini 2007). According to this analysis, the online availability of services improved from 47% to 75% of the offers analysed, so that Germany advanced from 17\(^{th}\) to 8\(^{th}\) place in Europe. It is likely that Internet use has also advanced accordingly. Although figures for companies are not yet available for 2007, the data on the use of eGovernment by individuals recently published by Eurostat clearly proves this success: the share of users increased by 11 percentage points to 43%.

Use of eParticipation

The use of eParticipation offerings in Germany has so far been addressed by just one study conducted by Technische Universität Ilmenau (Vowe & Wolling undated; Emmer et al. 2006). The project team was so kind to give us the as yet unpublished results of the latest survey wave concluded in August 2007. This enables an up-to-date overview of the use of eParticipation offerings in Germany.

\(^{17}\) The source of the following data is Eurostat. Refer to the tables at: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat) Wissenschaft und Technologie → Die Informationsgesellschaft [→ Science and technology → The information society]. Unless states to the contrary, the data reflect the situation in 2006.
The clearly most frequent form of use of eParticipation offerings is the reading of news and political information on the Internet. 22.3% of the population aged 16 and over make use of this possibility several times a month. The second most frequent form of use is also of a passive/receptive nature: 16.3% of citizens have already visited a politician's website.

Fig. 4.1-1: Use of different eParticipation formats (source: Vowe undated; August 2007 survey wave; the figures represent percentages of the population aged 16 and over [n=1,304], multiple answers were possible)

The share of people who use the Internet in an actively participating manner is significantly smaller. 10.3% of citizens have their own web offering, but only 7.9% of these offerings is of a political nature. 1.8% of those polled stated to have their own weblog. 11.8% of citizens offer online activities and more than 20% of these online activities are related to politics.

Further active forms of participation include online letters to editors which were written by 9.6% of citizens during the last year, as well as signature collections on the Internet in which 7.4% of citizens took part. Direct contact with politicians via the Internet is even more rare, with 5.5% of those polled stating to make use of this option. 5.3% of those polled at least occasionally discussed politics on the Internet and to this effect made use of formats like chats, newsgroups or forums.

A comparison of these figures and of the data on participation via traditional channels from the FGWT survey (2004) shows that active online participation is approximately as common as cooperation in a political party or participation in non-approved demonstrations. The collection of donations via the Internet by political organization appears to be insignificant. Last year, only 0.5% of those polled made use of this possibility.

A look at the distribution of socio-demographic parameters among users of political information on the Internet shows that the age groups up to 45 years of age are over-represented whilst older people are under-represented. With a view to education, citizens with a certificate of secondary education are clearly under-represented whilst people without a school-leaving exam are slightly and pupils and citizens with A-level qualifications are
definitely over-represented, at least when compared with the universe of the German
population.

The results suggest that participation via the Internet must today be considered to be a
relevant form of political participation which significantly expands the range of possible
forms of participation. However, it is also striking that eParticipation is to some extent an
exclusive option and that people are apparently excluded by socio-demographic factors, such
as education and age.

It should be noted here that the results of Technische Universität Ilmenau match those of the
representative poll that was specifically conducted for this study (see below) in those aspects
where a comparison is possible. This means that the data available for evaluating the use of
eParticipation in Germany is highly valid.

Use of Web 2.0 offerings

Web 2.0 is often associated with participation and the term "join-in web" is often publicly
perceived. In contrast to the mere consumption of contents, user participation in the
production of contents ("user generated content") is a core element of Web 2.0 offerings.
Examples include weblogs where readers can become writers with a mouse click, video
communities where in theory anybody can operate their own TV channel, or virtual
communities which enable social contacts to be maintained solely via the web.

Experts forecast strong growth for the "social web" (Deutschland Online 2006). The majority
of experts expect that interaction between users and between users and institutions will
characterize the Internet more than before. In this respect, Germany is still considered to be a
developing country. Although a Booz Allen Hamilton survey from December 2006 suggests
that around 14.8% of Germans use Web 2.0 offerings (quoted from TNS Infratest 2007), they
are, on an international scale, significantly less active than onliners in the US, the UK or
Australia.

Weblogs, in particular, are seldom used (Universal McCann 2007) whilst Wikipedia as an
online encyclopaedia is very popular (TNS Infratest 2007). Contrary to widespread opinion,
the Result market research institute found that the regular users of Web 2.0 offerings are not
to be characterized as self-exposers (Trump et al. 2007). Instead, active users are interested
more in communication whilst passive users focus on entertainment and the search for
information.

The ARD/ZDF Onlinestudie 2007 (Gscheidle & Trump et al. 2007; Fisch 2007) is one of the
few surveys to measure Web 2.0 use in a quantitative and methodologically controlled
manner and which are thereby most likely to ensure representative results. This study
systematically examined the actual degree of interest among online users in active use of Web
2.0. This study is hence also able to provide indications concerning interest in eParticipation.

31% of German onliners (aged 14 and over) expressed a general interest in actively writing
blogs on the Internet.\(^{18}\) Young people (49%) are particularly interested, but also those aged 50
and over showed a high level of interest (15% being "very interested"). On the other hand, a
look at actual use broken down according to applications shows a mainstream offering which
covers Wikipedia (used by 47% of onliners at least seldom) and video portals like "Youtube"
(34%). Weblogs, professional and private online networks and photo galleries meet with a
low level of interest with use rates of between 10% and 15% of Internet users.

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\(^{18}\) Given Internet use by 62.7% of the total population, this corresponds to around 19% of the total population.
Note, however, that this represents the lowest level of use, i.e. at least seldom use. A second step of the poll addressed active use in the sense of posting one's own contributions. The figures are significantly lower in this respect: Of the 47% of onliners who already use Wikipedia, only 6% have already written an article. In the case of video portals too, the relation between mere consumers and producers and/or "producipients" (users who both receive and produce) is very disproportionate at 93 to 7. The share of active users of photo galleries and weblogs is significantly higher at 41% and 25%, respectively.

These small numbers are an apparent contradiction to the attention which these formats receive in the media. However, one should remember that the absolute figures represent more than one million weblog authors and almost two and a half million people who post their photographs in Internet galleries. Furthermore, many offerings probably use the technologies of the "join-in web" without actually inviting users to take part or offering the related functions at the user interface. One should also consider that an evaluation of active users according to socio-demographic factors is not possible on the basis of the results published.

A recent representative survey by Stern magazine (Markenprofile 12, October 2007)\(^\text{19}\) for which only a summarising evaluation is currently only available confirms this assessment. According to this survey, a total of 2.5 million Internet users in Germany regularly take part in Wikipedia, weblogs, forums or communities. Around 880,000 users write at least occasionally in their own weblogs, so that one's own homepage (7% of onliners) represents the most frequent regular form of use. If one additionally includes occasional use and rare use (which makes sense with a view to the occasional structures of eParticipation), the largest use figures are obtained for active participation in discussion forums: Around every fourth Internet user does so at least seldom, corresponding to almost 9 million people.\(^\text{20}\)

\(\text{\textsuperscript{19}}\) www.markenprofile.de

\(\text{\textsuperscript{20}}\) Both for the ARD/ZDF study and for the brand profiles, absolute figures can be calculated only roughly from the published percentages.
4.2 eParticipation offerings in Germany

The extent and quality of eParticipation offerings are considered to be central factors for motivating citizens to participate in politics. According to Gabriel and Mößner (2002, p. 219) this holds even more true for eParticipation. Against this background, the following section provides an overview of national eParticipation projects on the different administrative levels, i.e. federal government, federal laender and municipal administrations, and characterizes these projects according to the criteria of the classification developed earlier in this document.

4.2.1 Development of eParticipation in Germany 1997 – 2007

Following first experiments on citizen participation via electronic media (at that time via TV and telephone; refer to Krauch 1972) in the 1970s, the advent of the Internet in the 1990s gave new impetus to the concept of eParticipation. Its concrete implementation in Germany initially took place within the scope of research projects on the level of municipal administrations. In 1997, the EU-sponsored "Geomed" project combined web-based forums and geographic information systems (GIS) with results of the mediation methodology in a tool for eParticipation in regional planning (Ziegenhagen & Seelbach 1998). This tool enabled the addressing of information demands, documentation purposes and formal participation by citizens via the Internet.

Whilst first Geomed trials were still limited to a laboratory scale, i.e. to a fictitious scenario (however, with real planners), the city of Bonn used the new channel as early as 1998 to give citizens the opportunity to participate at an early stage in a development plan for a new construction area (Märker 2007). Over a period of four weeks, citizens were able to inspect the planning documents and participate in a discussion forum on the Internet. However, interest was still moderate: Only three contributions were made via the Internet.

Early experiments on the possibilities of eParticipation were also launched on the level of federal administration. In 2001, the "Future of Food" pilot project was carried out which is still regarded as a remarkable effort today. Within the scope of an international dialogue project between Germany and The Netherlands, informal online consultation on the future of agriculture was offered at the initiative of the countries' ministers of agriculture (refer to Deutscher Naturschutzzring 2001).

The aim was to better understand the wishes, concerns, opinions and values in the German and Dutch societies with a view to food quality and safety. Besides an online opinion poll, a discussion forum was used which was moderated and in which contributions were translated into the other country's language. The project also included offline workshops and events. Participation was considerable with 450 discussion contributions over a period of six weeks. The results of the consultation were published as a book and recommended to the governments for further use.

Thanks to the careful and meticulous organization of the project, the involvement of senior politicians, the interface with offline events and the transparency of the project and its international nature, this early eParticipation is still an exemplary application (see below: examples of good practice).

Close to ten years after the first experiments on municipal level, eParticipation has definitely departed from the experimental stage, at least in urban and regional planning: In June 2007, more than 280 citizens of the city of Hamburg staged an informal, three-week participation project using Internet-based map material and social design tools (including wikis) in order to
develop their own ideas for using the Domplatz square and contributed these to the planning process – with the involvement of the Senator for Urban Development and the Senator for Culture.

In the Frankfurt/Rhine-Main region (which in 2007 received the Internet award of Informationskreis für Raumplanung e.V. [Information Group for Spatial Planning], in brief: IfR for its use of the Internet in regional/spatial planning), citizens were given the opportunity from May to July 2007 not only to inspect all the planning documents for the regional land use plan on the Internet and to submit formal applications and requests online, but also to send questions concerning the planning tool to an "online citizens' office" and to read answers already given.

Since October 2007, citizens in Berlin (where the eParticipation offering repeatedly (in 2004, 2006) ranked number one in the eParticipation Initiative's ranking) have been able to exchange their ideas on the future use of Tempelhof Airport and to send these ideas to the Senate Department's planning via an Internet idea exchange. The Internet is today an established additional channel for citizen information and participation in spatial regional and municipal planning. This is reflected not least by the inclusion of eParticipation provisions in construction law in 2004 (section 4a of the Federal Building Code [§ 4a BauGB]).

Although there are good individual examples and experiments, wider diffusion is still lacking – this applies to the spreading of eParticipation applications on municipal level (which holds true for the federal laender and the federal government) and to the percentage of electronically submitted contributions in contrast to offline channels: A survey conducted in 2005 by the German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu) among planning boards of German cities with a population of more than 50,000 as well as random surveys of smaller municipalities suggest that, although far more than half of these municipalities use the Internet for (early) citizen involvement and publish their plans on the Internet, the number of responses received has hardly increased through the use of this new channel. Only one third of the replies received from municipal administrations stated at least a minor shift in responses from conventional to e-mail format. 12% stated that the use of the Internet for citizen participation led to savings, whilst 73% denied this. With regard to participation by public authorities, 29% stated that public authorities used the electronic channel at least "in part", whilst this is "predominantly" the case for 5%. (Refer to Strauss 2006)

Scientific research on eParticipation also advanced considerably between 1997 and 2007. Starting from normatively focused and either very euphorius or very sceptical evaluations, an increasingly empirically orientated research approach developed. In this context, the perspective shifted from a primarily technology-centred view, where the technical characteristics of the Internet were used as a basis for deriving political effects, more towards a view marked by stronger orientation towards cultural change and seeking to identify the role of the Internet within the complex of social and cultural change.

A study on "Web publicness and digital democracy" ["Netzöffentlichkeit und digitaler Demokratie"] by the Office of Technology Assessment at the German Parliament (TAB) (Grunwald et al. 2006) provides a differentiated assessment of the state of development. The authors find that, although web-based communication has become "an integral part of political processes with the new possibilities of citizen information and participation and communication between political players and the general public on the Internet" (p. 19), the authors nevertheless maintain that the mass media channels continue to be the most important ones, with the Internet only constituting a supplementary channel.

However, the study also expects that the demands of politically interested and well-informed citizens will grow with regard to access to political information, transparency of political processes and participation in decision-making processes via the Internet. The digital divide may lead to the isolation of user groups with low qualifications. Together with several other
studies (Wölk et al. 2007; Stiftung Mitarbeit/Initiative eParticipation 2007), this assessment confirms the perceivable trend towards the expansion of eParticipation in Germany. In the following, a differentiated analysis of this general trend will be provided according to the forms of participation identified earlier in this document on the levels of federal policy and administration as well as on regional and municipal levels.

At a conference of the European Science Foundation organized in November 2007 by the authors of the study, the experts present concluded that studies in this field are still confined to individual cases and that comparative analyses are being designed only gradually with regard to quality and evaluation standards.

4.2.2 Current status of eParticipation in Germany

Support and expansion of political participation via information and communication technologies are repeatedly mentioned as goals in comments (refer to document 15/5109 of the German Bundestag) and government programmes ("Informationsgesellschaft Deutschland 2006" action programme from 2003; "E-Government 2.0" government programme of 2006) as well as in international conventions and EU requirements to which the government of the Federal Republic of Germany has committed itself (for example, the Arhus Convention of UN-ECE, Environmental Information Directive of the EU). In a recommendation for resolution in 2002, the German Bundestag encouraged the government to gather experience with the participation potential of the new media (Bundestag document 14/8098). Furthermore, a project group of the Federal Ministry of the Interior developed concrete guidance for the use of online forums in the federal administration and recommended its stronger use "as a firm element of political decision-making for the participation of citizens" (Karger & Ahrens 2003, S. 23).

Overview of the offering on federal level

The actual state of the eParticipation offering on federal level was examined most recently in a comprehensive report by the Institute for Futures Studies and Technology Assessment (IZT) for the German Bundestag in 2005 (Wölk et al. 2007). At the end of 2004, the interactive online dialogue offerings of the German Bundestag and the federal government were surveyed and analysed to this effect. It was found that both the German Bundestag and the federal government use the Internet as a means of entering into dialogue with citizens. The offering was limited to four formats which permit real interaction, i.e. polls, chats, forums and so-called online conferences 21 (the latter with the German Bundestag only). Furthermore, the quantity of the offering was limited to 24 dialogue offerings, with chats and polls being the dominant forms with ten and eight offers, respectively. On a quality level, the study identified a high level of fact-focused and reason-orientated communications which clearly met with the requirements for political discourse, i.e. argument-based discussion of political standpoints. Concerns that the dialogue offerings would be inefficient or could be misused hence appeared to be unfounded.

On the contrary, interactive dialogue offerings proved to be particularly valuable for the political system, on the one hand, in order to learn about the citizens' perspectives and to...

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21 This is a special form of the online forum designed to apply the conference format to the Internet. Online conferences are limited to a few hours and are moderated. They sometimes include discussions with panels of selected experts.
Stock-taking of activities, developments and results in the public administration

develop a broader perspective and, on the other hand, in order to portray the political process in a more modern outfit. However, the authors of the study complain that the dialogues are not explicitly included in the political process and that the stakeholders are mostly unaware of what happens with the results. Most of the dialogues offered are hence only PR instruments rather than participation offerings. This is also reflected by the fact that the offerings identified were of an episodical nature and not available on a regular basis.

In its assessment of the federal government's eDemocracy strategy, the TAB study thus also notes that the "divide between what is promised and what is achieved" appeared "to be particularly large" because the "declared goals for promoting the political online discussion in civil society and for dialogue between politicians and citizens have up to now been achieved to a limited extent only" (Grunwald et al. 2006, pp. 109 seq.). The study thereby confirms the view of Fühles-Ubach (2005a) according to which digital democracy in Germany is not yet very advanced on national level.

Although an overview of the federal government's current web offering (bundesregierung.de and websites of the ministries as per October 2007) shows that there are new developments, it also confirms the general fact that transparency of the procedures and the degree of institutionalization of the eParticipation offerings still have potential for improvement. It should be noted, however, that a systematic survey among more than 300 upper federal authorities would go beyond the scope of this study. With a view to practicability and time restrictions, this study is hence limited to the websites of the ministries and there to a survey of the first two linking levels – an approach which is also likely to correspond to the typical use pattern of a visitor to the websites.

Overview of the offering on federal-land and municipal levels

The analysis of eParticipation on federal-land and municipal levels results, on the one hand, from the strong participation interest of citizens which is directed towards these levels. According to a representative study (FGTW 2004), 79% of citizens have an interest in participating on municipal level and 64% on federal-land level whilst this figure is down to 59% on federal level. On the other hand, recommendations by transnational institutions, such as the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, or the requirements for citizen participation resulting from the UN ECE Aarhus Convention, aim at municipal level as the sphere where most can be done to counteract disillusionment with politics and to support more democratic commitment.

The development of eParticipation on this level is hence relevant for the federal government in three respects.

1. The provision of the appropriate participation offerings means that obligations under international conventions can be fulfilled.
2. Lessons for analogous offerings on federal level can be learned from this experience.
3. The implementation of federal framework laws can be supported by suitable measures.

By integrating participation rights in various laws, especially in planning law, formal participation is hence possible on federal-land and municipal levels even beyond the scope of elections.

- Petitions for referendums and citizens' initiatives can be carried out on federal-land and municipal levels throughout. The rules of procedure differ strongly from case to case, with ICT mostly serving information purposes only (overview of ongoing procedures, download of forms).
- With regard to approval or planning approval procedures on the level of federal laender, regions and municipalities, several laws (Federal Immission Control Act [BImSchG],
Federal Water Act [WHG], (Environmental Impact Assessment Act [UVPG], Law on Administrative Proceedings [VwVfG], Act on the Introduction of Strategic Evaluation of the Environment [SUPG], Public Participation Act [ÖffBetG]) contain provisions for citizen participation, for example, in conjunction with the preparation of landscape plans. The Federal Agency for Nature Conservation has launched a model experiment titled "Interactive Königschlüter Landscape Plan" in order to sponsor a project that aims to identify suitable forms for implementing schemes for the participation of citizens and public authorities in procedures pursuant to the Federal Nature Conservation Act via the Internet.

- Section 4a (4) of the Federal Building Code explicitly mentions ICT as a supplementary channel of citizen involvement in the development of land use plans and development plans. For some years now, several municipal administrations have been relatively reluctant to implement this on the levels of information and consultation, primarily referring to technical reasons as barriers preventing this (refer to Strauss 2006). Different interpretations and a need for legal clarification still exist with regard to the legally binding nature of suggestions sent by e-mail, for instance.

Besides these statutory participation options, informal participation is also possible in many cases.

- A small, but growing number of municipal administrations involve citizens in the annual budget planning procedures in the form of so-called "participatory budgets" (Bertelsmann Stiftung & Innenministerium NRW [Federal Ministry of the Interior of North-Rhine Westphalia] 2004). Some of these projects use the Internet as a participation channel (see below).

- Citizens are involved in a more or less systematic manner in individual plans or projects, such as the development of general principles or local urban development. In as far as the time horizon is concerned, these offerings range from individual events (development of general principles) and permanent involvement (citizens' forums, neighbourhood offices). Although ICT is used mainly on a case-related and experimental basis, some municipal administrations are developing strategies for eParticipation (Hamburg, Frankfurt/Main, Cologne). The federal land of North-Rhine Westphalia has integrated online participation into its eGovernment 2009 action plan, however, apparently as a once-off project only.

- Special target groups, especially children and youths and increasingly migrants too (refer to Neuhaus & Wilforth 2007a), are being addressed by separate participation programmes because their views are not considered in the normal political process. Especially for the target group of youths, the Internet is the medium of choice thanks to its user structure and its use frequency is correspondingly high (for example, "Projekt P" of the Federal Agency for Civic Education; the "Biotalk" debate in Hamburg, refer to Hohberg et al. 2007).

On the one hand, the actual eParticipation offering on the level of federal laender and municipal administrations can be regularly measured within the scope of the invitation to

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22 Refer to the project documentation at: http://www.koenigslutter.de/landschaftsplan.php
23 http://buergerbeteiligung.hamburg.de
24 Refer to report B 643 of the Magistrate of the city of Frankfurt dated 31 August 2007.
25 Refer to http://www.egov-zentrum.fraunhofer.de
27 http://www.projekt-p.de
compete for the IfR award. According to Schröter (2007), simple communication formats, such as the communication of e-mail addresses or contact forms and the use of websites for publishing plans, drawings and documents have now become firmly established. In contrast to this, more far-reaching use of the technical options in the form of discussion offerings, more detailed background information (reports, aerial photographs) or visualization offerings and links to external sources are still rare.

The study titled "Elektronische Bürgerbeteiligung in deutschen Großstädten 2005" [Electronic citizen involvement in German cities in 2005] of the eParticipation initiative (2005) also notes: "The positive opportunities of eParticipation in terms of more citizen orientation and citizen satisfaction are far from being implemented." Progress was, of course, recorded compared to 2004. The eParticipation offering by Berlin as the winning city, for example, featured a city forum, participation offerings for land use planning, an informal urban planning procedure as well as a participatory budget with online moderation.

But development as a whole takes place on a low level, with citizen participation offerings on the Internet being the exception. Certain offerings, for example, within the framework of land use planning or preparatory land use planning, were hardly used. Other points of criticism concerned insufficient visibility of the offerings on the websites of municipalities as well as low transparency and user-friendliness (navigation problems) of the offerings.

A scientific study of eParticipation on a municipal level confirms these results to a large extent (Kuhn 2006, p. 145). Expansion of citizen participation through the Internet cannot be seen. According to Kuhn (Kuhn 2006, p. 87), the reason for this is the still low level of development of eParticipation offerings. These should encourage participation on the Internet, underline the relevance of participation, and offer interactive communication formats, such as chats and forums.

A corresponding analysis for municipalities in Baden-Württemberg (survey date: end of 2004) showed that 34% of municipal administrations publish such requests and that close to one quarter show the relevance, whilst only 11% of municipal administrations offer communication formats, such as chats or forums. Questions and queries put forward by citizens are not integrated into the political process to a satisfactory degree.

The study also surveyed attitudes among mayors, council members and administrative employees towards eParticipation (once again limited to Baden-Württemberg) and thereby reveals two relevant influence factors of the offering, i.e. politics and administrations. The results suggest a high degree of Internet affinity among decision-makers throughout (more pronounced at administrations than on political level) and a high degree of acceptance of citizen involvement both via the Internet and via traditional channels.

Those polled are particularly open to forms of representative participation (elections, citizen conventions, work in political parties). A particular preference of the presentation of administrative information on the Internet cannot be identified. However, different views can be attributed to municipal council members and administrative employees: The former associate eParticipation primarily with forms of direct citizen involvement, the latter with representative forms.

Another interesting aspect is the comparison of the offering and the views of council members and administrative employees. This comparison suggests that the views of council members do not have a measurable influence on the eParticipation offering of municipal administrations, whilst the views of representatives of the top levels of administrations concerning eParticipation have a significant influence. The study thus confirms the assumptions in literature concerning the great importance of the administration for the quantity and quality of municipal eParticipation offerings (Kuhn 2006, p. 212 seq.).

The existence of an explicit eGovernment and eParticipation strategy is emphasized as another factor. The size of a municipality, on the other hand, has no role to play in the design
of the offering. The results of this study are hence valuable not only to describe the state of eParticipation offerings, but also to analyse the influence factors and the development of recommendations for action.

**Overview of offerings by civil society**

The increasing withdrawal of government from planning procedures and the change in the citizen's role from an object to a partner of planning processes have moved civil society to the focus of attention. Civil society must fulfil increased requirements in terms of commitment and involvement within the scope of modern governance. As the last aspect of the overview of national eParticipation offerings, non-governmental forms of (organized and non-organized) participation should hence be examined. Within the systematization matrix, they can, in particular, provide clues concerning "transparency through third parties" and "activism, campaigns, lobbying" forms and will be explained in the related sections of the following chapters (refer also to Table 4.2-3).

### 4.2.3 Selected examples according to forms of participation

**Information offerings**

The standard of the Internet offerings by the federal ministries is generally very high with regard to the "information" factor. The offering ranges from detailed explanations of the respective spheres of responsibility and the current focal points of government work to interactive applications (such as the "child benefits" family funding module offered by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth) and "eMagazines" with a sometimes very sophisticated, multi-media based layout (offered, for example, by the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs on the "old-age pension" subject). Even the latest Web 2.0 technologies are used for these offerings.

Access to information alone is an important precondition for political participation because only well-informed citizens can make constructive contributions towards the decision-making process. In order to underline this, the German parliament has enacted the Environmental Information Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

In section 7 (1), the Environmental Information Act provides, amongst other things, that environmental information in the possession of the federal authorities is to be increasingly stored in electronic databases or other formats which can be accessed by electronic means of communication. Section 10 (3) provides that environmental information must be additionally disseminated in a form that can be understood by the general public and in readily accessible formats. Electronic means of communication are to be used to this effect in as far as such means are available. The integrated "PortalU" Internet portal developed by the federal government and the federal laender and the related environmental data catalogue, UDK, are demanding offerings that provide interested citizens with central access to several hundreds of thousands of websites and database entries of public institutions and organizations; they also provide a search function that enables keyword browsing of websites, database entries and Germany-wide background maps.²⁸

²⁸ Refer to [http://www.portalu.de](http://www.portalu.de) and [http://www.kst.portalu.de/udk/index.html](http://www.kst.portalu.de/udk/index.html).
In conjunction with the rights to access public information resulting from the Federal Freedom of Information Act, the language of the law refers to the integration of ICT at two points:

- On the one hand, no form requirements exist for questions and notices which can also be submitted electronically (for example, per e-mail) or by telephone. Furthermore, simple information can be provided directly by telephone or per e-mail (section 7 (1) and (3)).

- On the other hand, suitable lists are to be created in order to give access to existing information collections and purposes (section 11 (1)) and in order to publish organization and file organization plans (section 11 (2)). The law here obliges the public authorities to pursue an active information policy and to make such plans, along with other suitable information, generally accessible in an electronic format (section 11 (3)). In the application notes concerning the Freedom of Information Act published by the Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information, such further information primarily relates to facts where citizens can be assumed to have an interest in such information (for example, in the case of documents already applied for) and which are suitable for electronic publication.

The Freedom of Information Act of the federal land of Bremen from May 2006 explicitly foresees the establishment of a "central electronic information register" in order to facilitate access to information (section 11 (5)). It thereby even goes beyond the practice of the US government which has established so-called "electronic reading rooms" at the individual government agencies (see below: International status). The project by the federal land of Bremen has not yet been implemented; work is currently underway on a uniform thesaurus for tagging documents which is to facilitate the inter-agency search for documents.

An examination of the websites of selected ministries and public authorities has shown that it is often easily possible to understand and access the responsibilities and secondary institutions of the individual ministries. The obligation to publish organization charts and file organization plans is also normally fulfilled, whilst the easiest way to find these plans is using the search functions integrated in the websites. The possibility to submit applications for official information is also occasionally mentioned (for example, from the Federal Ministry of the Interior by stating an e-mail address).

Other suitable information within the meaning of section 11 (3) of the Freedom of Information Act was only found on the website of the Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information. This information concerns publications of court decisions related to the Freedom of Information Act. A central information platform of the type implemented during the course of the implementation of the Environmental Information Act (see above) is still lacking.

The federal administration also offers its competence in the field of electronic information dissemination to other countries, for example, within the scope of development aid. Two examples of projects pursued in Africa by the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food are particularly interesting with a view to citizen participation even if they are not directly related to political decisions.

RUNetwork29 is a platform for the exchange of knowledge between farmers and scientists (motto: "African farmers ask questions, experts reply"). Farmers can use vouchers in order to obtain advice on topical issues which is then documented on the website in a manner visible to all users (principle of demand-orientated knowledge collection). The vouchers also mean

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29 [http://www.runetwork.de](http://www.runetwork.de)
quality assurance because the value represented by them is not paid out to the consultant until the farmer who asked the question states that he is satisfied with the answer.

RESIMAO (Réseau des Systèmes d’Information des Marchés en Afrique de l’Ouest)\(^3\) is a system where market information from all over West Africa is gathered, geodata-indexed and made available for analysis and up-to-date information via an Internet platform. Although this system "only" gathers and provides information, this information is highly relevant to the individual stakeholders. Most importantly, however, the information is provided by the stakeholders themselves and merely compiled by the portal. The experience and competence gathered in these projects are also to form a basis for the eParticipation offerings to be made available in Germany.

Civic education offerings constitute another group of information offerings relevant for eParticipation. The Federal Agency for Civic Education, in particular, uses the Internet for this purpose, for example, with the "Fluter.de" online magazine which offers a young target group information, forums and blogs as a means of participation. The "Wahl-O-Mat" election information platform provides a universal, interactive offering for all kinds of target groups which presents information on the election programmes of political parties. Scientific research supporting the project has shown that this offering not only informs citizens, but also encourages them to participate (Marschall 2005).

The Federal Agency for Nature Conservation promotes civic education within the scope of a youth campaign under the "Naturdetektive" ["Nature detectives"] name which accompanies the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. Participants can post their nature observations in a wiki and make these available to the general public via the website. This application is of an educational and playful character and is supported by a competition. "Mein-Umweltblog.de ["My environment"] is a comprehensive online community offering by the Federal Ministry for the Environment in cooperation with the "Zeitbild" agency tailored to the target group of youths. The "No Angels" pop group welcomes visitors to the website where they can create their own profiles, download videos and information related to environmental protection, as well as post their own videos, photographs and blogs. The Federal Ministry of the Exterior pursues an identical concept with the "Mein-Europablog.de" ["My Europe blog"] community which was launched on the occasion of Germany's European Council Presidency and which also covers blogs related to Europe (also in cooperation with the "Zeitbild" agency). Competition elements also form part of the offerings (Europablog) or are planned for these (Umweltblog).

In as far as municipal level is concerned, a specification report titled "Internetgestützte Beteiligungsmaßnahmen in formellen Planungsprozessen" ["Internet-based participation measures in formal planning processes"] by the Media@Komm-Transfer initiative sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWi) also identifies a very high standard of information presentation in participation offerings (BMWi 2006).

The following formats are used for information purposes in this context:

- geographic search engines (stating addresses for searches for planning projects; for example, in the case of the city of Paderborn)
- geographic map material with embedded links leading to background information (for example, official listing of areas available or suitable for development, for example, in the case of the city of Düsseldorf)
- multi-media visualization offerings (for example, visual walk, for example in the case of the municipality of Ilsfeld)

\(^3\) [http://www.resimao.org](http://www.resimao.org)
• GIS-based maps with the possibility to precisely assign comments to a particular place (for example, the landscape framework plan of the district of Diepholz).

The efficiency of electronic processing of many comments is also considered to be one key advantage of the Internet, with the "InfoDoc" system, for example, constituting a tried-and-tested solution for this purpose.

Offerings designed to increase transparency

One characteristic feature of eParticipation offerings by non-governmental organizations is the fact that they point to shortcomings in the government’s offerings and thereby help to close these gaps with dedicated solutions. With regard to the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act, this is illustrated by a project by Chaos Computer Club e.V. (CCC) and the Verein zur Förderung des öffentlichen bewegten und unbewegten Datenverkehrs (FoeBuD) [Association for the Promotion of Mobile and Immobile Public Data Traffic], i.e. the “Befreite Dokumente” ["Liberated documents"] portal.31 This portal considers itself to be a file collecting unit for the Freedom of Information Acts of the federal government and the federal-laender administrations. Citizens can use this platform in order to publish information and files which they have received in reply to a query pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. The platform also offers a search function for the documents already published. Its makeup resembling a makeshift solution aside, the platform fulfils the functions of an "electronic reading room" like those offered by public institutions in the US.

In a similar manner, the privately run "DemokratieOnline.de"32 website points to shortcomings in public eParticipation offerings, in this case, related to the German parliament’s public online petitions (see below). The private website supplements these offerings by providing an interface with improved overviews and search functions. Furthermore, it also offers additional discussion forums which enable the by-passing of potential moderator intervention.

Another feature of many offerings is that they request public players to justify their acts and thereby ensure transparency. The Abgeordnetenwatch.de33 portal, for example, monitors and documents the voting behaviour of MPs on all relevant issues on both federal and federal-laender level. At the same time, users can ask politicians questions via the portal. The posting of questions and the transparent presentation of the state of answers to these questions (so-called tracking/tracing) put pressure on MPs to address the questions asked by citizens on the one hand and help to set up a continuously growing knowledge base about MPs. The strong interest in the offering is underpinned by the high use rate of 125,000 visitors during the first year of existence of the offering in Hamburg and by its expansion to cover federal and even European level. It also shows that a pure information offering, which does not enable dialogue for large parts of the population, is not sufficient.

Consultations

Both opinion-forming and decision-making require not just the provision of information but also more far-reaching communication offerings which are not only unilateral but also enable

31 http://www.befreite-dokumente.de
32 http://www.demokratieonline.de
33 www.abgeordnetenwatch.de
multilateral communications between governments and citizens on the one hand and between citizens on the other.

Dialogue offerings of this kind are very rare on federal level. The first striking point is that the federal administration's web offering lacks a central overview of up-to-date participation offerings like the one announced by the federal government in March 2005 (Bundestag document 15/5109, pp. 5 seq.). Furthermore, it is also very difficult to find reference to participation possibilities on the individual websites of the public agencies examined within the scope of this study. The most commonly found format is a simple e-mail form under the "Contact" heading where interested citizens can write down their wishes and suggestions. Communications in this way are neither visible for other citizens who may have similar concerns nor do citizens see in most cases who reads an inquiry and what happens to it during the further course of processing.

Examples of more far-reaching formats:

- The offerings of the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs with a weblog of State Secretary Kajo Wasserhövel which not only provides an insight into day-to-day work but which is also open for reader comments. Another, albeit very limited, participation offering is "eWalk", a (real-world) information centre on the issue of "pension at 67" where users can post a photograph and a short statement on the question of "What makes your country worth living in" which are then published on the ministry's website. Both offerings use Web 2. formats (weblog and photosharing).

- The online forum of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour where registered users can discuss subjects like the "Me Incorporated" form of self-employed work, mobile radio and starting up in business for craftspeople. The forum is actively moderated in order to ensure a straight-forward form of discussion. However, there is no transparency with regard to the purposes for which the forum is operated and to the question as to how the postings are read by anybody other than the moderators and interested forum users. From a technical perspective, the forum uses conventional state-of-the-art forum software with an appropriate user interface.

- The online forums of the Co-ordinating and Advisory Agency of the federal government for Information Technology in the Federal Administration (KBSt) which are explicitly designed to make the KBSt's work transparent and to involve the specialist public in decision-making processes. From a thematic perspective, the format is both a user forum where experience and problems with the different software offerings can be exchanged and a discussion forum where latest developments can be commented and suggestions put up for discussion. In technical terms, the forums can be compared to those of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour.

- The "noise survey" by the Federal Environmental Agency\(^{34}\) where citizens can complete an online questionnaire in order to inform the administration of their personal views concerning noise exposure. However, this survey is at present still only available on a secondary page with no further explanations provided as to who entries are handled.

- An online poll by the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs asking users for their opinion concerning the ministry's own website. In contrast to polls on the websites of other ministries, citizens are explicitly asked to comment on their additional demand for way of active involvement (referring to the forum and blog formats).

- Various chat offerings which are sometimes documented on the websites of the ministries (for example, the Federal Minister of Labour on the "50plus" initiative), and sometimes

\(^{34}\) http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/laermumfrage/index.htm
offered via third parties (for example, the Federal Minister of the Interior and the Federal Minister of the Environment in the "tagesschau-Chat" at politik-digital.de). However, the participation offerings in chats are very limited due to the necessary selectivity.

Whilst government communications hence use the possibilities of the Internet for information purposes, the offering of Internet-based consultation possibilities is still limited to individual projects – a result already reported in the study from 2004. Although it may well be that some eParticipation offerings were overlooked in this general overview, it nevertheless shows that it is sometimes quite difficult to find the existing offerings.

Numerous dialogue offerings mentioned on the website of the ministries demonstrate that government institutions and offices are definitely open to dialogue with citizens. Examples can be found at the Federal Ministry of the Exterior ("Forum globale Fragen" ["Forum Global Issues"]), the Federal Ministry of the Interior BMI ("Forum gegen Rassismus" ["Forum against Racism"]), the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs ("Dialog mit der Bauwirtschaft" ["Dialogue with the Building Industry"])) and the Federal Ministry for the Environment ("Nationaler Dialogprozess Nachhaltigkeit in Konsum und Produktion" ["Dialogue on the National Roundtable on Creating Solutions for Sustainable Consumption and Production"]), to mention but a few. Although in each of these cases, the Internet is used to refer to corresponding (real-world) events and/or their documentation, it does not constitute a participation channel in its own right.

Two consultation offerings by government units additionally offer the possibility to send comments per e-mail. The Federal Ministry of the Environment has a public consultation offering on the draft of the national implementation report for the Aarhus Convention,35 as well as the "Dialog Nachhaltigkeit" ["Dialogue on Sustainability"] launched in November 2007 by the federal government for the development of a national sustainability strategy.36 However, both consultation offerings make only very limited use of the possibilities of the Internet which have been established for eConsultation processes on other political levels and abroad (see below).37

In the case of the "IT summit", the "Dialog zur IKT-Politik auf hochrangiger Ebene" ["Dialogue on ICT Policy on a High Level"] which was held in 2006 for the first time, classical communication channels were initially exclusively used in order to involve representatives of government, business and science. An eParticipation option was not foreseen.

For the successor event in December 2007, the Hasso Plattner Institute as a private stakeholder invited citizens to discuss the subjects of the summit and to this effect set up the "IT-Gipfelblog" weblog.38 High-ranking politicians and experts were asked to submit comments on which every visitor to the weblog can, for their part, post their comments. This discussion is moderated by the Hasso Plattner Institute.

These examples suggest that there is a willingness to open up the political process to enable participation by citizens (as well as the business community and organizations of civil society) and may indicate a change in the relations between government and the subjects of government action. Whilst ICT is often considered to be the engine of such change, these effects are not perceived when it comes to using the Internet for consultation purposes – in

36 http://www.dialog-nachhaltigkeit.de
37 In the UK, the government-independent "Sustainable Development Commission" uses the Internet for regular polls of the opinions of a stakeholder panel (refer to http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/sd_panel.html).
38 http://it-gipfelblog.hpi-web.de
contrast to the declared interest of the government in using the Internet for involving citizens and business.

Online consultations of the German parliament and of the federal administration alike are not carried out on an institutionalized, regular basis. However, parliament occasionally used moderated discussion forums in order to give citizens the possibility to voice their opinion. During the survey in October 2007, however, the archives of only three completed discussions were available. Although the "Haushalt 2006" ["Budget 2006"] and "Auslandseinsätzen der Bundeswehr" [Foreign Missions of the Federal Armed Forces"] forums were interesting for large parts of the population, the Office of Technology Assessment at the German Parliament saw potential for improvement with regard to user-friendliness (Grunwald et al. 2006, p. 160). The TAB study at that time judged the German parliament's discussion forums to be "neglected" (Grunwald et al. 2006, p. 161), a situation which still seems to prevail.

The online forums of the German parliament and the government's discussion offering have both lack integration into the political process on a concept level. Participants are unable to understand the purpose of the debate, to identify the addressee of the postings and to see in which form the results are further processed in the political process.

One project by the German parliament from the year 2001 can serve as a contrast to this picture. At that time, the "New Media" sub-committee launched an online discussion on the subject of modernising information law which also met with a significant amount of international interest. The idea was to discuss the related legislation with the stakeholders on the Internet at an early stage (refer to Grunwald et al. 2006, p. 156).

Besides a general discussion forum, special virtual panel discussions were also offered to this effect where MPs and experts could make their statements. Furthermore, the moderator panel was also exemplary for the performance of online forums, with moderators continuously providing information, responding to criticism from the forum in a very committed manner, and enabling a lively debate by refraining from checking contributions in advance. However, the project remained largely without any effect because the related legislation initiative did not occur and because the project has been suspended since 2002.

Another single initiative from 2004/2005 for online consultations of the German parliament aimed to improve the German parliament's Internet offering. In a three-stage process and supported by a web-based software, users initially collected proposals for new offerings which were then submitted for prioritising before the entire process was subsequently evaluated.

Several hundred individuals took part in the consultation which can be considered to be a success in view of the self-referencing subject (Fühles-Ubach 2005b, p. 23). The consultation was also a success for the participants because the implementation of the proposals by the Bundestag's administration was documented in 14 points (out of a total of 26).39

With this form of eParticipation, it should be noted that unidirectional communication from the citizen to the parliament prevails and that there is no interaction between the parties involved. However, the multi-stage procedure generated an interaction effect whereby the feedback on the participants’ aggregate opinion led to a change in the individual assessments of many of the participants (similar to the Delphi method, refer to Häder & Häder 1994).

At this point, one can already summarize – anticipating the comparison with other political levels and other countries – that the consultation offering using ICT on a federal level is so far quite meagre. The offering of Government authorities is more comprehensive, both in

39 http://www.bundestag.de/interakt/konsultationen/anderungen.html
quantitative and technical terms, whilst in the case of the German parliament, there seems to be a stronger willingness to actually involve citizens in the decision-making process (see also below concerning the changes in the fields of petition law). Both institutions lack a systematic, continuous and transparently communicated eParticipation offering.

A host of offerings on federal-land, regional and municipal level shows that the possibilities which the Internet has to offer for citizen and stakeholder consultation were understood and that the use of this channel is quite common.

Concrete examples on federal-land level include participation projects concerning the construction of motorways in Lower Saxony (spatial planning procedures concerning the new construction of the A 39 motorway, spring 2006; planning of the A 22 coastal motorway) with the possibility to post comments on individual aspects of the planned routing (refer to Köhler & Schulze-Wolf 2007; the project is based on the entera MapServer system, see below). An identical eParticipation scheme was also used to accompany the spatial planning programme in Lower Saxony (November 2006 to February 2007). Schleswig-Holstein is preparing a comparable procedure for setting up the new federal-state development plan (source: enntera.de).

On a regional level, a regional land use plan is being developed in the greater Frankfurt/Rhine-Main area – something absolutely new in the German planning landscape (refer to Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour – BMWi 2006). This project is also innovative in the use of eParticipation. A modern form of citizen involvement is to be achieved via the Internet on the one hand, with planners also expecting increased efficiency and lower costs on the other.

To this effect, the project combines informal formats, such as moderated online forums, where the general planning view is discussed with formal formats, such as GIS-data-based online forms for comments on individual planning aspects in addition to e-mail communications. Whilst the latter is considered to be insecure and spam-prone, SSL encryption of the online forms means that secure transmission of personal data and additional documents is possible.

A direct link here existed between entries made in the online form and further processing by a special software system. Tagging of the comments was also carried out during processing (however, not in the usual collaborative manner of Web 2.0).

Another special element of the project is the way access to participation is designed. On the one hand, the offering was broadly publicized both online (banner advertising on a regional portal) and offline (advertising in local trains). What's more, access was designed as a two-stage system: the entry threshold was deliberately low for informal participation (anonymous participation in forums) whilst formal participation was subject to registration and identification with the user's name (this also enhanced the security of communications).

Communication in this planning process was rounded off by an online citizens' office which was offered parallel to the first stage of formal citizen involvement. This online office received questions from citizens in the same manner as during local information events and these questions were subsequently publicly answered by staff at the specialist departments.

By integrating multilaterally orientated, informal communication offerings, the overall project is a noteworthy innovation especially for German conditions. The project received the ifR award in 2007.

Finally, online consultations both of a formal and informal nature are occasionally used on municipal level.40 Offerings designed to integrate disadvantaged groups, such as migrants,
deserve special mention in this context. Four of these offerings were implemented within the scope of the MISS model project (refer to Neuhaus & Wilforth 2005, 2007b) where two formal and two informal consultation procedures were adapted to the "migrants" target group in four cities of North-Rhine Westphalia.

In addition to an Internet offering, the participants of each project were approached in an active and offline manner via schools, clubs, commissioners and other multipliers as well as the local press. Local events, such as citizens' festivities, were another route to establishing contact. One formal participation concept additionally used brochures advertising the Internet offering which were distributed to all households in the city. In an informal project, interviewers visited citizens and talked to them. All communications were multilingual corresponding to the respective target groups.

Online questionnaires and online forms were offered on the Internet as participation formats. The advantages of the Internet were, in particular, the elimination of information deficits which hinder participation as well as an additional access route to planning procedures.

A satisfactory response was recorded in only two projects. Those responsible for the projects considered the geographical nearness of the planning procedures to the target group and well-established communication networks to be responsible for this result. The Internet as a complementary channel is found to be successful when it comes to approaching migrants. However, it does not replace additional contacts on location and should hence be integrated into a mix of media (Westholm 2005).

Discussing guiding principles is another field of application for informal eConsultation. Examples are, for example, the online discussion in the city of Hamburg concerning the "Growing City" ("Wachsende Stadt") issue in 2002 which saw a particularly keen interest among citizens (almost 4000 postings within 4 weeks). Furthermore, the city of Karlsruhe conducted a multi-stage online poll from 2005 to 2006 on the development of the 2015 master plan of the city.

The city of Bad Honnef is another example: Since 2005, its citizens have been able to contribute their proposals for the city's guiding principles via an online portal. What is unusual about this project is that the guiding-principle discussion is managed by a private company and a civil initiative with no direct links to political level. On the other hand, the project uses weblogs as a cost-effective and modern format for the online discussion even though its suitability is questionable when it comes to complex debates.

Whilst the Karlsruhe poll was a unilateral project, the citizens of Hamburg and Bad Honnef were given the possibility of discussing multilaterally. The underlying issue, however, was not the respective guiding principles themselves, but questions related to their design. Furthermore, both discussions emphasized the playful character (similar to brainstorming) as their characteristic element.

Applications, complaints, petitions

The "petitions" area currently records the strongest activity as far as the German parliament is concerned. Even before the corresponding legislation was passed, the German parliament examined incoming e-mails with regard to their relevance for requests within the meaning of

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41 http://www.tetraeder.com/miss
42 For details of this case, please refer to the detailed literature (for example, et al. 2004; Lührs 2006).
43 http://www.karlsruhe.de/rathaus/masterplan_2015
44 http://www.leitbild-bad-honnef.de/index.html
petition law and passed these mails on to the petitions committee (Grunwald et al. 2006: 139), whilst its "Öffentliche Petition" ["Public Petition"] (2005-2007) model trial went even one step further towards proactive communication with citizens (Toncar 2007).

This projects supplements the usual (and today also Internet-based) petition procedure which means that petitions are now also posted as "public petitions" on the Internet in contrast to former petitions which were filed by individual citizens or groups. The public character can help to find co-signers on the one hand and other citizens can comment and discuss proposed petitions in any online forum set up for a petition on the other. For eParticipation, this means that citizens can at least indirectly take part in the legislation process (around 50% of the petitions sent to the German parliament are "requests for legislation") and/or try to influence the effects of laws (Grunwald et al. 2006, p. 139; Riehm 2007).

Many interested citizens avail themselves of this possibility. At the beginning of October 2007, a total of 32 petitions had been published for co-signing and 165 public petitions due for signing in 2007 were in the process of parliamentary examination. The co-signers can number tens of thousands with this procedure. According to TAB, more than 450,000 citizens had taken part in public petitions until the end of 2006, with more than 18,000 postings received by petition discussion forums (Riehm 2007).

A comparison with figures related to the use of petition law before the introduction of public petitions shows that the federal parliament receives between 15,000 and 20,000 new petitions every year. In 2004, 1,134 of these petitions were group petitions, i.e. collections of signatures with the same subject matter which since 2005 have also included public petitions (Bundestag document 16/2500). This means that the use of the Internet in order to support petition options did not necessarily lead to an expansion of this option, but it apparently increased the visibility of citizens' interests in public perception.

In technical terms, the offering is currently handled using software of the Scottish Parliament which is developed and handled by Napier University in Edinburgh. What is striking in this context is that, although the active support of a petition is supported by an ePostcard offered and that a direct reference is made from the discussion forums of the German parliament to the public petitions, the system also features serious shortcomings in terms of user-friendliness (refer to the TAB project tender).

Cooperation offerings

The "MISS" consultation project mentioned earlier in this document shows that it is not always possible to draw a clear distinction between formal and informal participation in municipal planning projects. Urban planning has replaced pure participation rights with so-called "activating participation" as an attempt to develop an ongoing and close dialogue with citizens (Berding et al. 2007). Examples of related procedures are roundtables, citizens' panels, citizens' forums or advocacy planning. Information and consultation as forms of participation are hence increasingly supplemented by cooperation, i.e. close working together between citizens, civil society, business and administrations as well as the political sector.

This is an area where the strengths of the Internet (support of asynchronous and multilateral communications) come fully into bearing. Accordingly, there is a host of eParticipation offerings for informal participation on municipal level. The vast majority of these cases are episodic offerings which are launched for a particular issue or planning problem. Up to now, there is no long-term strategy on any political level for involving citizens and the business

45 http://www.tab.fzk.de/de/projekt/skizze/epetition.htm
community via the Internet which goes beyond the offering of general forums which are ultimately of no consequence.

The only exception can be found on municipal level with the so-called participatory budgets in as far as they fulfil the requirement for permanent institutionalization (Bertelsmann Stiftung & Innenministerium NRW [Federal Ministry of the Interior of North-Rhine Westphalia] 2004, p. 13). Furthermore, the city of Frankfurt am Main is currently working on a strategy for institutionalizing eParticipation and other municipal administrations have started bundling eParticipation offerings on appropriate pages of their websites (participation portals, see, for example buergerbeteiligung.hamburg.de) and/or developing special participation portals, such as the one currently being developed for the city of Cologne which will be available and adaptable for all specialist departments throughout the entire administration complex (see above).

The Bremen "Stadionbad" public swimming pool is one example of a cooperation process supported via the Internet (refer to Kubicek et al. 2007 with regard to the following). This project focused on citizens' participation in the plans for the rehabilitation of Bremen's most popular open-air swimming-pool. The core of the procedure was a group of representatives of relevant groups ("mentor group") who developed a concept for the swimming pool's future in a cooperative manner and in consultation with the broader public and in this context used the Internet not just to disseminate information, but also for other purposes, such as an online debate on open points of the decision.

The participation process for the pool's future was characterized by media interaction (papers, Internet, face to face), different modes of participation (mentor group, on-site visits, future party, advocacy planning, etc.) and by the involvement of youths and older citizens. The very far-reaching transfer of decision-making powers to the representatives' group as the organizer of the procedure gives the process a high political relevance. For example, the department of sports as the public authority in charge agreed in advance to accept the results of the consensus-orientated procedure on condition that these results would be based on broad-based agreement.

Around 1,000 citizens took part in the entire process, including around 300 pupils and 100 kindergarten children. Although the organizers rated participation in the online forum as relatively low with around 100 participants per week, the quality of postings was high – 50 mainly constructive and at times very well-founded postings were received even though the "youths" target group was not reached via the Internet.

Participatory budgets as another form of cooperation procedures have triggered a certain interest among municipal administrations in recent years. With this concept, citizens are involved in the preparation of budgets - however, in an informal and often playful manner. This instrument is designed to involve citizens in a partnership-orientated planning process and at the same time to make them aware of the complex nature and burden of responsibility of budget planning as the most important field of political action.

Central features of a participatory budget are the multilateral discussion among the stakeholders, the permanent establishment of the corresponding procedures and the administration's accountability with regard to the use of proposals. The participatory budget of the Berlin-Lichtenberg district is presently the most important project of this type. The project was launched in the autumn of 2005 in order to enable citizens to submit their budget

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46 Refer to report B 643 of the Magistrate of the city of Frankfurt dated 31 August 2007.
47 An overview can be found on the Internet at: http://www.buergerhaushalt.org
plan proposals online every year. In a multi-stage process, the Internet is at first used to collect and evaluate proposals (online forums) which are edited and published by an editorial team. In the second stage, votes are then cast with regard to the proposals (prioritising) on the Internet (online questionnaire) and via other channels. The results obtained in this way are forwarded to the city administration. Its handling of the proposals – just like the entire procedure – is also documented on the website.

Offline and online channels are closely integrated throughout the entire process. Citizens are involved in decentralized citizen conventions and a central closing event. Furthermore, the proposals can be commented via the Internet or by post.

An evaluation of the 2005 participatory budget showed that participation was restricted to individual, isolated events rather than being a continuous exercise (Klages & Daramus 2006). This implies correspondingly higher requirements for the supply of information in the run-up to the events. The media mix met with a generally positive response because it levelled out the distortions in participation in individual formats. In this context, the evaluators particularly underline the potential of the Internet to compensate for the influence of a citizen's age on participation. Although the possibility of participation via the Internet met with a very positive response, only a relatively small number of citizens actually made use of this channel.

In October/November 2007, the city of Cologne also introduced an online-based participatory budget involving not just a central eParticipation platform but also the city's call centre as a participation channel. Citizens were able to call a dedicated hotline and ask staff to post their budget proposals on the Internet.

Finally, the so-called city wikis are another informal participation path with a cooperation character. City wikis are thematic websites related to a municipality which can be created and modified by the citizens using the wiki technology or similar formats (Gerick 2007; Schmidt 2007).

The municipality of Sternenfels, for example, which was distinguished as the best online community in the "InternetDorf 2007" ["Internet Village 2007"] competition invites visitors to its website to actively comment or amend the existing articles. Furthermore, photographs can be uploaded via the "Flickr" photo community and articles can be provided with keywords in order to support other visitors in their search for information. Another Web 2.0 format of the websites is the integration of Google Maps in order to visualize geographic information. Applications of this type, which offer citizens considerable freedom to participate in the design of the information offering, are still relatively rare. In view of legal issues that have yet to be resolved (in particular, with regard to responsibility for the contents of a website), it appears to be unlikely that this offering will expand in the short term. However, the Wikipedia example also shows that even in the case of very large groups of participants it is still possible to give users control of the website and that the benefits outweigh the risks which definitely exist. However, it is not yet clear to what extent the additional possibilities and responsibility on the part of citizens can also trigger a stronger commitment to the political interests of the community.

Wikis are also used on the level of the federal administration in order to support cooperation processes. The Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information uses these wikis in order to set up orientation guidance for data protection in cooperation with staff of the data protection commissioners of the federal laender. In this context, there are also

48 http://www.huervergaushaltar-lichtenber.de. The project is managed by the Berlin-based Zebralog association using the "discoursemachine" from binary objects (see below).
49 http://www.sternenfels.org
considerations as to whether further author groups might also be admitted which would shift the offering towards the field of eParticipation.

Activism, campaigns, lobbying

The eParticipation activities of civil-society organizations focus not just on the above-mentioned offerings to increase transparency, but first and foremost also on the field of activism, campaigns and lobbying (refer to Brauckmann 2007). In this area too, they address frequently perceived shortcomings of government offerings and offer additional possibilities and incentives for participation. Their activities are hence often starting points for optimising offerings initiated by the government.

On municipal level, this is illustrated by an offering from a Hamburg-based initiative for the "Rettet den Volksentscheid" ["Save the Referendum"] referendum in 2007. The administration had foreseen an application for postal voting. The members of the initiative considered this to be an obstacle to participation, all the more so since signature collections in the street had already been prohibited by law. They believed that the success of the referendum was at risk.

The initiative therefore developed an interface via which interested citizens could easily order the postal voting ballots via the Internet using an online form. The software of the initiative "translated" the application to the administration. In this way, the initiative managed to significantly lower the threshold for taking part in the voting and at the same time to be always up to date with regard to interest in the referendum.

The "Direkt zur Kanzlerin" ["Directly to the Chancellor"] initiative makes similar use of the Internet.\(^{50}\) Taking up the concept of the Federal Chancellor's videocasts ("Die Kanzlerin direkt" ["The Chancellor Directly"]), which did not foresee any possibility for contact for citizens, a group of university students created a website where every interested citizen could post a question or suggestion to the Chancellor and rate the questions and suggestions received from other citizens. Through clever negotiations and public pressure, the group managed to induce the Federal Chancellery to agree in October 2006 to answer every week the three questions with the highest rating. Although it is now also possible to submit video and audio postings, the project is technically relatively simple, but it nevertheless meets with strong interest thanks to its direct approach and its multi-stage selection process. It may also have contributed to the decision that, starting in 2008, the Federal Chancellor's videocast is to be provided with its own feedback channel.\(^{51}\)

Another feature of the offerings by civil-society organizations is the campaign-type dynamism which they can trigger. Accordingly, many political campaigns are launched either in part or in full via the Internet. One example is the "Minimum Wage Initiative" ("Initiative Mindestlohn") where not just the Internet, but also mobile services (format: SMS) are used as a means of participation (Wernecke 2007).

Mobile participation gains even greater momentum when used for real-time monitoring according to the model of the Web 2.0 "Twitter" service,\(^{52}\) a web-based distribution channel for short messages which can be transmitted in very different forms (including, but not limited to, WWW and SMS).

\(^{50}\) [http://www.direktzurkanzlerin.de](http://www.direktzurkanzlerin.de)


\(^{52}\) [http://twitter.com/](http://twitter.com/)
The participants in the protests against the G8 summit in Heiligendamm in 2007 used this format in order to enable immediate reporting from the place of interest. The short messages from participants were published via a web portal and could be used by other participants (for coordination) and also by interested citizens (for information and, not least, also for entertainment).

Looking at the totality of organizations, civil-society organizations use the possibilities of the Internet to a minor extent only as Grunwald et al. (2006, p. 186) point out: "In technical terms, most websites of NGOs are relatively simple and many-to-many communication offerings are more of an exception." Easy-to-use formats, such as mailing lists, have an important role to play in this context, especially as regards the exchange of information, coordination of activists and mobilization (Bennett 2003). In contrast to this, NGOs rely more on web-based formats for discussion and publicising purposes (Cammaerts & van Audenhove 2005).

Technically more complex eParticipation offerings require more resources and are hence offered chiefly by established organizations.53 Some associations and interest groups attach high priority to the Internet in their opinion-forming work.

The German "Aktion Mensch" ["People Campaign"], for example, became generally known as a moderator of society-spanning discussion processes concerning subjects like, for instance, biotechnology or social policy in general.54 In each case, a broad-based advertising campaign triggered citizens' interest and directed them to a website with an online forum. Besides the pure forum, other electronic channels were used which made participation interesting and eventful (chat events, creative design offerings, ePostcards, etc.). The results of the comprehensive debates were subsequently fed back to the (offline) public through repeated advertising campaigns and by directly addressing politicians and representatives (see below: examples of good practice).

Lobby organizations, such as Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft (INSM) ["New Social Market Economy Initiative"], also use the Internet as a participative format. Besides a weblog (which does not permit comments, but which can be accessed for links from other blogs – so-called "trackbacks") – and an online forum for discussing the political programme ("Vision D"), the organization operates a portal where university students can rate how the university uses their fees. The ratings are collected in order to rank the universities and, according to the organization, to achieve public control of the appropriation of fees.

INSM's activities are hence interesting especially because they highlight another feature of non-governmental participation via the Internet: Each action can trigger a response and a counter-statement can be quickly posted in reply to every political statement. INSM offers an "INSM watchblog" which is designed to enable the monitoring and open discussion of the activities of the lobby organization (and which, in contrast to the official blog, offers the possibility of posting comments) and which thus corresponds to the "transparency through third parties" form of participation.

The Lobbycontrol association pursues a more broad-based approach towards its equally lobby-critical work. Besides a weblog for continuous reporting on lobby activities, this association repeatedly launches campaigns on special issues which particularly use the Internet.

53 A more continuous campaign work is also achieved through new forms of organisation, such as online citizen networks. Examples of these include the German "Campact" network and the Yezno.com online community (refer to Metzges 2007).

54 http://1000fragen.de; http://diegesellschafter.de
For example, information on the current "Keine Lobbyisten in Ministerien" ["No Lobbyists in Ministries"] campaign is made available via a wiki, albeit without the possibility of reader participation. Readers can, however, submit information concerning lobby activities by letter, fax or e-mail which is then posted after examination. The offering also includes a newsletter and the campaign can be disseminated by online banners and downloading of texts in so-to-speak "viral" mode\(^{55}\), whilst donations can be contributed directly via an encrypted online form.

The media constitute another non-governmental source of eParticipation offerings. However, the relationship between the widely used online forums (for example, of the "Spiegel Online" magazine) or comment posting offerings and the political decision-making process is hardly perceivable because these forums are limited to discussions between the readers. In contrast to this, the ARD and NTV TV stations offer participation possibilities.

"Ihre Frage nach Berlin" ["Your Question to Berlin"] hosted by the ARD TV station\(^{56}\) offers citizens the opportunity to post videos with a question to a particular politician on the basis of the example set by the CNN / Youtube debates during the US election campaign (see below). Selected questions are then answered by the politician concerned in the ARD morning magazine programme and a video of the answer is additionally published on the Website.

In contrast to this, the Busch@ntv\(^{57}\) programme is a kind of chat format via television. Viewers of the interview programme can submit their questions via an online form or as an SMS, but the guests are not exclusively politicians but also representatives from all fields of society.

The political parties certainly also constitute a relevant group of sources of eParticipation offerings. They act to some degree between government and society. Parties have long since been using the Internet, for example, in order to involve their members in party work and to support cooperation between election campaign teams (Marschall 2001).

This participation includes party intranets with related discussion forums, virtual local groups to support grassroots work without limitations in terms of space and time, as well as virtual party conventions. In election campaigns, online platforms not only serve as a means to provide multi-media information material, but also enable online communities and weblog platforms in order to coordinate supporters according to the US model (refer to Albrecht et al. 2005).

Newer eParticipation offerings using Web 2.0 formats include, for example, a wiki of the Green party designed to coordinate parts of its election programme for the 2005 general elections where not just party members but also the general public was able to make its contribution to the wording of a proposed resolution (Jellen 2005).

In 2007, the Social Democratic Party, SPD, used a content management system in order to gather and rate ideas for a new party platform. In this case, too, participation was not limited to members. The proposals were to be considered by the platform commission which submitted a draft at the party convention in October 2007.

In conjunction with its 2007 basic platform, the Christian Democratic Party, CDU, offered the possibility to submit contributions via an online form. Furthermore, it used online videos and

\(^{55}\) "A viral is an advertising spot which is specifically produced for the Internet. Its name is derived from the form of advertising within which it is designed and used, i.e. viral marketing". Refer to http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viral

\(^{56}\) http://frage.tagesschau.de/

\(^{57}\) http://www.n-tv.de/busch
mashups with Google map material in order to report on the Secretary General’s tour which accompanied the dialogue. It is also possible to donate money via an encrypted online form. Both the Free Democratic Party, FDP,\textsuperscript{58} and, since the end of October 2007, the SPD\textsuperscript{59} have been offering an online community even outside election campaigns. In this way, they enable not just members, but also interested citizens, to participate in the opinion forming performed by the political parties. Since the winter of 2007, the public limited company "Trupoli.com"\textsuperscript{60} and hence a private provider has been offering an online community for those interested in politics.

\textsuperscript{58} https://my.fdp.de
\textsuperscript{59} http://meinespd.net
\textsuperscript{60} http://www.trupoli.com
### 4.2.4 Summary tables

Table 4.2-1: Features of eParticipation offerings on federal level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiators</th>
<th>Federal government, federal authorities, German parliament</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forms</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information: very high level in certain fields of politics, little department-spanning integration (exception: &quot;PortalU&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation: low level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petitions: in the development stage (German parliament only)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree of formality</strong></td>
<td>Formal participation: in the case of ePetitions only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other offers: still below informal participation because no declared reference to the political process is perceivable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>Permanent / long-lasting: forums and/or surveys (of an often unclear duration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very short / event-type: chats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium duration (a few weeks): hardly any offers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutionalization</strong></td>
<td>Mostly in conjunction with PR work, institutional basis for ePetitions only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target groups</strong></td>
<td>Typically all interested parties, with subjects sometimes specifically addressing the business community (forums of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour), comprehensive offerings for youths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong></td>
<td>Information: many formats, hardly any tagging and ranking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consultation: forums, weblogs, forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Petitions: forms, forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td>Government: no specific methodology perceivable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parliament: graded surveys for online consultation; special procedure for ePetition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2.2: Features of eParticipation offering on a federal, regional and municipal level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiators</th>
<th>Planning departments at administrations, often with the involvement of research institutions or civil-society organizations; from case to case even the legislature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Forms                                                                     | Information: very high level  
Consultation: although formal procedures are wide-spread, they use the potential that exists to a limited extent only (primarily unilaterally); informal procedures on a high level  
Cooperation: only isolated offerings (small municipalities, city districts)  
Petitions: federal-land parliaments of North-Rhine Westphalia, Bavaria, Thuringia, Hesse: Internet support limited to the internal processing of petitions |
| Degree of formality                                                       | Formal participation in planning procedures (citizen participation at an early stage, public disclosure) on all levels  
Informal participation on all levels of guiding-principle processes and in urban planning  
No direct connection of cooperation forms to the political process |
| Duration                                                                  | Permanent / long-lasting: forums on municipal websites; citizen wikis  
Very short / event-type: chats  
Medium duration (a few weeks): almost all offerings for planning-related participation, including participatory budgets (regularly repeated) |
| Institutionalization                                                      | Firm institutional integration in the case of formal procedures; portals or strategies going beyond this are only under development. Informal procedures with a low level of institutionalization (exception: certain participatory budgets). |
| Target groups                                                             | Frequently a broader target group than in the case of offline procedures; eParticipation in order to supplement and expand the target group; in individual projects even special target groups, such as youths and migrants (activating participation) |
| Technology                                                                | Information: all formats (including multi-media, three-dimensional and GIS-based information)  
Consultation: formal: forms, forums, even weblogs as informal approaches, sometimes communities  
Cooperation: wiki; community; social networking site  
Petitions: forms only, no forums |
| Methodology                                                               | Various methodologies exist for both formal and informal procedures; these methodologies are adapted from project to project (multi-stage procedures, media mix, etc., refer to chapter 4.4.2) |
Table 4.2-3: Features of eParticipation offerings of non-governmental organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiators</th>
<th>Civil-society organizations, sometimes lobby organizations, activities, all the political parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Forms      | **Information**: most important element, level depending on the initiators' resources (generally lower than in the case of government offerings)  
**Consultation**: offered by NGOs and political parties for political opinion forming  
**Petitions**: as campaigns (mass petitions) or by third parties via social pressure  
**Cooperation**: citizen networks for campaigns and political communities  
**Transparency**: high level, high degree of innovation  
**Activism**: many offerings with strongly varying levels (depending on the initiators’ Internet experience) |
| Degree of formality | Informal procedures throughout, illegal forms (virtual sit-ins) in rare, exceptional cases |
| Duration | Permanent / long-lasting: cooperation forms, transparency through third parties, sometimes campaigns  
Very short / event-type: chats, forms of protest, virtual party conventions  
Medium duration (a few weeks): offerings for opinion forming, campaigns |
| Institutionalization | Sometimes highly organized forms (for example, associations, companies), but in most cases with a low level of institutionalization and episodic |
| Target groups | In most cases all citizens, as well as special target groups in the case of campaigns and/or opinion-forming offerings |
| Technology | **General**: more innovative than government offerings  
**Information**: all formats other than complex ones (GIS)  
**Consultation**: forums, weblogs, forms  
**Petitions**: e-mail circular, including video messages  
**Cooperation**: mailing list; wiki; community; social networking site; groupware  
**Transparency**: communities, forums, groupware  
**Activism**: mainly unidirectional formats, as well as SMS, wiki, multi-media |
| Methodology | Highly developed, innovative and large portfolio of methodologies, especially in the case of consultations and transparency offerings |
4.3 International eParticipation offerings

Most activities related to eParticipation focus on developed democratic countries.\(^{61}\) In certain, non-democratic countries, political use of the Internet can generally only emerge against the will of the government.

The strong networking and/or the exchange between providers is reflected by the similarity of the offerings. Many of the above-mentioned offerings in Germany can also be found in comparable forms in other countries and this is in part due to the use of identical technologies and in part due to the fact that Internet offerings are often copied ("copycat"). Although such offerings will be mentioned in the following, they will not be addressed in more detail.

There is no up-to-date scientific overview of the international eParticipation offering. Nor is it possible to provide a comprehensive analysis in this study. We will hence mainly refer to offerings which were already the subject matter of individual studies, as well as to particularly innovative offerings which go beyond the level of the German offering. Like on the national level, the focus will be on government offerings, however, without excluding non-governmental offerings.

Two studies which try to give a comprehensive overview as of the time of their creation are helpful in illustrating the development of international eParticipation. In the first study, Coleman and Götze (2001) state that there are only very few eParticipation offerings worldwide and that most of these are of an experimental nature. The authors identify two major weaknesses, i.e. the fact that citizens are largely unaware of the related offerings and insufficient integration into the political decision-making process.

Interestingly, very similar statements are also found even in the most recent study on international eParticipation (Ahmed 2007, p. 155) where the level of eParticipation is still described as being at an "infancy stage" with only a few countries making experimental offerings. It was, in particular, not possible to establish the efficiency of eParticipation on the political process (UN 2007, p. 5).

However, these observations must be differentiated in several respects. To this effect, this study first explores the international state of eParticipation in as far as it can be derived from comparative studies by the United Nations. This will then be followed by a description of the strategies of the eParticipation offerings (if any) of other countries before some examples of the different forms of participation will be explained in more detail where other countries go clearly beyond the offering in Germany. A discourse will address online offerings in the presidential election campaigns in France and the US.

In its study from 2005 on "E-Government Readiness", i.e. the state of development of national eGovernment activities, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Secretariat also examined the state of eParticipation. A dedicated index was set up to record the quality and usefulness of the eParticipation offerings of government websites in 191 countries (UN 2005, p. 19). Another parameter which was measured was the extent to which governments use this approach in order to promote the participation of citizens in political decisions. The study itself states that the expectations on eParticipation were low in the study and that measuring was carried out only indirectly via the ratings of the corresponding websites (UN 2005, p. 96). The results should hence be interpreted with care.

\(^{61}\) This is probably also due to the fact that the strongly internationally orientated research on eParticipation clearly focuses on developed and democratic countries.
Whilst Germany ranked 11th in the eGovernment benchmark, it only managed to become 15th in the field of eParticipation (refer to Fig. 1.1). This rating has not changed since 2004. Although Germany managed to keep up with international developments in the field of eParticipation, the distance from the UK as the leading nation increased. With an index value of 0.56, Germany recorded slightly more than half the score of the UK as the leader (compared to 0.59 in 2004).

The next ranks were occupied by nations which were also leaders in eGovernment, i.e. Singapore, the US, Canada and South Korea. In a European benchmark, Germany is ranked 6th, behind the UK, Denmark, the Netherlands, Estonia and Sweden and on par with Finland.

The rating of eParticipation was broken down for some countries according to the sub-aspects of eInformation, eConsultation and eDecisions, however, not for Germany. The evaluation shows that all countries with an average eParticipation level cover the eInformation aspect particularly well (between 60% and 90% of the maximum possible score). However, the top ten additionally offer a vast range of eConsultation offerings (between 40% and 75% of the maximum possible score) and of eDecision offerings (30% to 67%). This suggests that a top position can only be achieved with a balanced eParticipation offering.

Fig. 4.3-1: Benchmark of the state of development of eParticipation and eGovernment for the top 25 of the world-wide eParticipation ranking of the United Nations 2005. Own presentation (selected European countries), data: UN 2005

The rating of eParticipation was broken down for some countries according to the sub-aspects of eInformation, eConsultation and eDecisions, however, not for Germany. The evaluation shows that all countries with an average eParticipation level cover the eInformation aspect particularly well (between 60% and 90% of the maximum possible score). However, the top ten additionally offer a vast range of eConsultation offerings (between 40% and 75% of the maximum possible score) and of eDecision offerings (30% to 67%). This suggests that a top position can only be achieved with a balanced eParticipation offering.

62 Besides information concerning the relevance of the respective aspect, eInformation includes the provision of calendars for participation offerings as well as support for communications between citizens (C2C) through forums, newsgroups, etc. eConsultation includes web-based consultations, C2G discussion offerings, a wide range of subjects which are open to participation, a central overview of participation offerings, as well as the invitation to citizens to take part in polls and discussions. eDecisions include online petitions as well as the willingness by governments to consider suggestions from citizens in decision-making processes and a feedback in response to submissions from citizens.
The UN report summarizes the state of eParticipation as follows: "In summary, the potential of e-participation remains yet to be fully exploited." (UN 2005, p. 103). Some examples of good practice which were summarized and amended for the purposes of this study to reflect the latest state (see below) provide an overview of this potential.

A report from the European Commission on the implementation of the "i2010" eGovernment action plan (European Commission 2007) gives an up-to-date overview of the state of eParticipation in Europe. This report addresses the progress achieved since 2005 in the field of eParticipation which includes eDeliberations, ePetitions, eConsultations and eLegislation.

The report states that eParticipation activities in the member states increased significantly between 2005 and 2007 – however, starting from a low level (European Commission 2007, p. 69). Municipal level stands in the foreground in this context, with many national governments supporting the corresponding activities. eParticipation is chiefly used in spatial and urban planning, environmental planning as well as budget planning.

Although the report by the European Commission does not permit a systematic comparison of the eParticipation offerings of the EU member states because it addresses selected case examples only, it does, however, identify a need for development in the following areas:

- eGovernment policies should define the term "eParticipation" more clearly and describe its sphere of application.
- Legal and financial framework conditions for eParticipation should be created.
- eParticipation offerings are at present still isolated and disperse. Only Cyprus, Malta, Norway and Slovenia, for example, currently offer their own eDemocracy portals. A European focus and networking in individual fields of application is hence recommended.
- The aims and target groups of eParticipation should be identified more clearly. Measures must be taken in this context to ensure that the problems and interests of minorities are taken into consideration.
- The embedding of eParticipation offerings in the political process requires more knowledge on the part of organizers with regard to the design and implementation of dialogue procedures.

4.3.1 eParticipation offerings in other countries

There are many different eParticipation offerings available on an international level and in other countries. Apart from the few quantitative studies, there is no comprehensive overview of the forms and formats used for eParticipation. The following compilation of examples does not claim to cover the full range of the offering.

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63 Following the completion of this report, the UN published a new "E-Government Survey" for the year 2008 (UN 2008) which could no longer be fully considered in this report. One striking result of the new report is that Germany clearly lags behind, not just in terms of the rating of eGovernment readiness (rank 22) but, above all, in the rating of eParticipation: The study ranks Germany 76th. The breakdown of the result for this year shows that there is a particular backlog in the areas of eConsultation and eDecisions, whereas eInformation achieves an index value of 40%. However, the dramatic drop in rating does not appear to be understandable, neither through this breakdown nor from the documentation of the study (also compared with European studies, such as CapGemini 2007), so that an evaluation of the results had to be omitted, also with a view to the fact that the results are still very new.
It does, however, provide a systematic overview because offerings were examined for each of the forms of participation identified earlier in this document. In analogy to national level, the cases were selected according to the following criteria:

- The focus is on offerings by government institutions. Non-governmental offerings were only considered if they went beyond the government's offerings.
- Offerings which are explicitly related to the political decision-making process were primarily included. Pure PR offerings were not considered.
- Preference was given to offerings which a) offer a high degree of transparency, b) address large target groups, c) are firmly institutionalized and d) are well-documented.
- Finally, offerings were selected which used particularly innovative technologies or methods.

The validity of the results achieved is reflected by the fact that examples are particularly frequent from countries which, according to the above-mentioned quantitative study, are among the pioneers of eParticipation, above all, the UK and the US. It should, however, be noted that it was easier for offerings in English to be included in this good-practice list than offerings in other languages.

**Information offerings**

The United Nations study shows that all the nations which are leading in the field of eGovernment offerings achieved a very high level in terms of the dissemination of information about political decisions (UN 2005). In many countries, especially in the western world, information obligations exist under different types of freedom of information acts.

The US, for example, have amended the Freedom of Information Act in 1996 by adding a provision under which information must be made available in electronic reading rooms, i.e. in specifically marked areas of the federal agencies' web offerings on document servers on the Internet. One of the reasons given for this provision was cost savings: All the documents issued are published electronically so that the costs for another form of provision are saved. Although a central directory of the reading rooms of the different public agencies is kept by the Ministry of Justice\(^64\), a more general search for information is possible to a limited extent only via the general search function on the "Fedworld.gov"\(^65\) portal.

The UN ECE Aarhus Convention also sets forth more far-reaching requirements for environmental information. In the latter respect, Germany with its "Portal U" has already taken on an exemplary role in Europe (Krammer & Legat 2007) and is considered to be an example of good practice (European Commission 2007, pp. 71 seq.). However, according to a report from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) from 2005, the state of implementation is still badly in need of improvement for the participation offerings which are also foreseen in the Convention, in particular, with regard to the use of ICT.\(^66\)

This study will therefore not address any further pure information provision offerings. However, two examples show ways of how the provision of information can be connected to the promotion of participation.

(1) The above-mentioned portals for the legislation process provide information on proposed and passed laws on the Internet. One example of this is the eLaw system in Austria

\(^64\) [http://www.usdoj.gov/oip/04_2.html](http://www.usdoj.gov/oip/04_2.html)

\(^65\) [http://www.fedworld.gov](http://www.fedworld.gov)

(Engeljehringer 2006)\textsuperscript{67} which is used to handle laws from the ministerial draft of the government via the discussion and passing processes in parliament right through to publication in electronic form. The parliament's website allows visitors to view draft laws, including comments, and an "online inspection" system is already used in addition to traditional consultation procedures in the field of social insurance logistics (refer to Schefbeck 2007). No data is available with regard to citizens' interest in using these offers. The parliament's administration, however, reports that interest has "increased significantly" since the documents of the pre-parliamentarian inspection procedure have been published online (Schefbeck, personal communication). South Korea offers a similar concept with its "On-nara Business Process System"\textsuperscript{68} and an integration of national online consultations being planned there.

Although the above-mentioned "Regulations.gov" portal in the US does not cover the complete electronic processing of documents, it nevertheless goes one step further than Austria in the field of eParticipation. US citizens can not only perform targeted searches for consultations and inspect comprehensive materials regarding these, they can also directly take part therein. Furthermore, they have the option of being informed per e-mail when new documents (for example, comments from other parties) are added to a procedure.

(2) Some members of the US and UK governments maintain public weblogs where they report on their work and where readers can post comments. The then chairman of the US Federal Communications Commission, Mr Michael Powell, said the reason for his activity was his wish to get into direct contact with technically progressive people (Wyld 2007). In the UK, the Foreign Secretary, for example, maintains his own blog.\textsuperscript{69} His blogs can be commented upon by every reader. The importance of weblogs for the British government is also underpinned by its plan to monitor the contents of blogs in the same continuous manner which is already applied to reports in the mass media (Financial Times dated 15 August 2007).\textsuperscript{70}

Offerings designed to increase transparency

Online offerings designed to increase transparency are the realm of non-governmental organizations on both international and national level. These offerings often address the legislature and the opinion forming process. Since they do not concern the core area of governmental eParticipation, only those offerings will be described here which can serve as examples in order to illustrate how innovative technologies can be used to promote political participation.

The "politix.nl" portal\textsuperscript{71} documents – in a manner similar to "Abgeordnetenwatch" in Germany – voting behaviour in the Dutch parliament, however, without the possibility to contact MPs. In contrast to this, the "Hear from your MP" project of the British "MySociety.org" organization offers the opportunity to contact MPs. Users can research the MP of their constituency and express their interest in his or her work. The MP then receives the collected inquiries from his or her constituency and can reply either directly or enter into a discussion with interested citizens via a connected online forum.

\textsuperscript{67} http://www.digitales.oesterreich.gv.at/site/5290/default.aspx.
\textsuperscript{68} http://www.mogaha.go.kr/gpms/view/english/inno/in_03_01.jsp.
\textsuperscript{69} http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/blogs/david_miliband/.
\textsuperscript{70} http://us.ft.com/ftgateway/superpage.ft?news_id=fto081520070848409134.
\textsuperscript{71} http://www.politix.nl.
A website called "OpenCongress" focusing on information exists for the US Congress. Besides official information about memberships of parliamentarians in committees and their voting behaviour, this website also compiles media reports and blogs on topical debates. To this effect, it uses an interface with the corresponding services of "Google News" and the "Technorati" blog search engine. Furthermore, information from the "OpenSecrets.org" online server is used which documents donors and recipients of campaign contributions. Information concerning the US Congress is made available to citizens interested in politics via a portal.

Two offerings in the US and UK make political debates transparent. The US "Depatepedia" is a wiki system whose users can document and thereby rationalize topical political debates in a logic form. The British "Debatemapper" pursues a very similar goal. This website allows debates to be visualized in the form of a map of arguments and multi-media elements can even be integrated into the presentation.

Another two examples from local level in the UK show how innovative Web 2.0 technologies can be used in order to encourage citizens through information to participate. "Planningalerts" allows users to find out about future planning projects in their direct neighbourhood. Users can enter their postcode and directly select the area in which they are interested from a map integrated as a so-called "mashup". Software continuously monitors the information from currently 156 local authorities and sends alert e-mails to the users concerning potential plans in the selected area. This information is additionally available via an interface (API) for use in other Web 2.0 applications.

"FixMyStreet" also offers borough-based access to information about neighbourhoods. However, this offering is for complaints about local problems which can be directly entered in the map. Users can then view the complaints made by other users in their neighbourhood and have their complaints sent via the website to the administration in charge. (Refer also to the "petitions" form discussed later in this document.)

Transparency is also on demand on transnational level. The US non-profit organization "National Democratic Institute" supports the use of mobile phones (SMS) for election monitoring in developing countries. During elections in Sierra Leone, for example, 500 election observers were equipped with mobile phones in order to send SMS reports concerning irregularities to an independent commission. This information was collected using the institute's election observation methodology and fed into a database. The very quick exchange of information achieved in this way increased the citizens' confidence in the elections and can contribute towards the stability of the democratic process. A similar concept is also in place in Nigeria.

Consultations

Consultations are currently at the heart of eParticipation when viewed on an international scale. Whilst government consultations are offered in Germany primarily on municipal level,
many other national governments involve citizens and the business community via the Internet in decision-making processes on national level. All the leading nations in the UN eParticipation ranking and the European Commission have made online consultations a firm part of their policy. Portals for centrally bundled access to national consultations are the international reference parameter for a leading position in the field of online consultations.

Furthermore, a host of consultation offerings exist which are related to the legislature of a country or which are initiated by regional and/or municipal administrations or which are carried out as informal consultations by non-governmental organizations. The transitions to the "petition" and "cooperation" forms are often flexible, for example, in cases where citizens can post proposals even beyond the scope of ongoing legislation procedures (TOM in Estonia) or where consultation portals invite citizens to take part in long-term cooperation in an online community (ePeople in South Korea, with around 30,000 members already in May 2006; refer to MOGAHA 2006).

The following overview initially addresses examples on the national level (including the UN and the EU); this is then followed by examples of regional and municipal consultations. These examples differ considerably in terms of discussion depth, binding effect, and transparency as regards the use of contributions. Since there are hardly any external evaluations, the following selection can only provide suggestions, however, without granting a good-practice certificate.

On an international level, the "UN Habitat World Jam" is an example of an eParticipation application on a global scale. In December 2005, the United Nations Habitat Programme, together with the Canadian government and IBM, conducted an online discussion in preparation of the third World Urban Forum in Vancouver. Within three days, 52,000 postings were received from around 39,000 participants from all over the world.

In order to also reach citizens in developing countries, who were the group mainly concerned by the conference, dedicated supervised cybercafés were set up in slums where citizens' conventions were held. Of a total of 600 suggestions, 70 were used as inputs for the delegates. The Jam procedure, a form of online idea exchange, was also used within the IBM organization in order to involve staff world-wide in strategy and product development.

The European Commission has officially integrated the involvement of citizens and the business community within the framework of its Legislation Impact Assessment Guidelines and has given online consultations a central position within this framework (European Commission 2005). The executing authorities are supported by a directive ("Minimum standards for consultations", refer to European Commission 2002). Furthermore, a portal has been set up to enable uniform access to online consultations ("Your Voice in Europe") which also refers to discussion forums and chat offerings on topical issues of European policy and provides relevant information concerning citizen participation issues.

The "European Business Test Panel" is a special institution in this context. This panel is a group of around 3,600 companies from member states which reply to online polls of the Commission on a regular basis. The Commission uses this tool in order to directly address businesses and obtain their feedback on legislation initiatives and measures. The panel comprises a representative unit with consultations taking place exclusively via the Internet.

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80 [https://www.collaborationjam.com/](https://www.collaborationjam.com/). Märker et al. (2007) describe a comparable, company-internal participation project in Germany.


On non-governmental level, further portals exist for standardized access to online consultations:

- In the US with the above-mentioned "Regulations.gov" portal which has gradually developed since 2003 to its present, high standard and which is still undergoing further development.
- In Canada, with the bilingual "Consulting with Canadians" website\(^83\) where the government additionally offers an "Online Consultation Centre of Expertise"\(^84\) which advises the administration with regard to the use of methods and technologies for online consultations.
- In South Korea with the "ePeople" portal\(^85\)
- In New Zealand with an information page of the government portal\(^86\) which refers to the corresponding consultations and distinguishes between citizens and the business community. However, postings concerning consultations are possible via e-mail only.
- In the UK where the "Better Regulation Executive" in its capacity as a higher-level organization provides an overview of online consultations and offers guidance for using this tool.\(^87\) Furthermore, a special portal for the business community refers to consultations which are relevant for companies.\(^88\) Every authority additionally publishes in a prominent position on its website references to ongoing and completed consultations. The legislature operates a dedicated portal for online consultations\(^89\) (refer also to Trénel 2005), as well as the Scottish Parliament.
- In Denmark with a section on eDemocracy of the "Borger.dk" online portal\(^90\) which offers central access to online consultations on national, regional and municipal level and also supports administrations in the performance of online consultations (World Bank 2007, p. 55f.).
- In Estonia with the "Osale"\(^91\) portal and also with the TOM\(^92\) offering which enables citizens to publicly post their ideas, wishes or comments on the government's policy and bills and to solicit support for these. The government undertakes to comment on this if sufficient support is recorded. A comment function enables users to discuss the proposals (refer to European Commission 2007).
- In Australia, plans exist to set up a portal for online consultations (AGIMO 2007). A corresponding proposal suggests using a weblog to present the different consultations.

\(^90\) [http://e-demokrati.borger.dk](http://e-demokrati.borger.dk).
\(^91\) [http://www.osale.ee/](http://www.osale.ee/).
\(^92\) [http://www.eesti.ee/tom](http://www.eesti.ee/tom).
However, the plans themselves are currently in a consultation phase (which is, however, not performed as an online consultation).\textsuperscript{93}

Besides these institutionalized consultation processes, many individual activities exist on national level. In the US, the White House and the Department of Education offer a contact form where citizens can ask questions. A selection of questions, along with the department's answers, is documented on the website, so that dialogue with citizens is mapped online.\textsuperscript{94}

Two projects in Canada show that it is also possible to open up central government tasks, such as budget planning and foreign policy, to online consultations. Since 2006, the Department of Finance has been conducting so-called "Online Pre-Budget Consultations" in order to ask citizens for their opinion\textsuperscript{95} exclusively in the form of e-mail communication. In the autumn of 2007, the Department of Foreign Affairs gave citizens the opportunity to take part in the development of a strategy for Canada's role in North America.\textsuperscript{96} As a special target group, university students, scientists and NGOs from Canada and other countries are encouraged to submit draft policies.

In September 2007, New Zealand used a wiki which interested people from all over the world were able to use in order to co-author a draft policy act.\textsuperscript{97} Public involvement in the creation of the document was part of a broad-based consultation process for reforming the Policy Act where selected interest groups at first and subsequently the general public were polled via traditional channels and online questionnaires before the wiki experiment started as an additional participation route.

In this context, international participants were explicitly addressed in order to obtain the largest possible range of expertise. According to the organizers, the response to the wiki surpassed expectations, with 10,000 Internet users visiting the website every day at peak times. After six days, several hundred proposals had been received and the wiki was blocked, apparently because it was no longer possible to handle the moderation requirements. The blogs, together with the other consultation results, are considered in the revision of the bill which, on completion of these steps, will pass through the parliamentarian legislation procedure.

In a communication, the organizers generally consider the wiki experiment to be a success (McCardle, personal communication). It triggered greater interest and more comments than the other consultation channels and the number of misuse attempts remained moderate despite the open and non-moderated structure. However, the organizers recommend a more strongly structured process for a future wiki.

The susceptibility to manipulation of wiki systems results almost inevitably from the principle of fair cooperative work on documents based on equal rights. Examples of manipulation of Wikipedia, especially in the field of politics, are reported, for example, for Germany (Jellen 2007) and the US (Stöcker 2006). However, the system documents all changes and thereby enables services like the "wiki scanner" which disclose manipulation attempts.\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{93} On a regional level, however, the corresponding portals are already in use, for example, in Queensland; refer to http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/.


\textsuperscript{95} http://www.fin.gc.ca/activity/consult_e.html.

\textsuperscript{96} http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/participate/menu-en.aspx.

\textsuperscript{97} http://wiki.policeact.govt.nz/.

\textsuperscript{98} http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikiscanner
The Austrian government's "Austrian Expatriates Network" ("AuslandsösterreicherInnen-Netzwerk") is a target-group-specific online community.99 Citizens living abroad can register on this website and search for other Austrians in the respective countries in order to contact them. Furthermore, the website also offers important information for this target group and supports the government in contacting these citizens, for example, for consultation purposes like in the case of an online poll conducted in 2005.

In the UK a strong eParticipation-culture was developed on all levels of public administration (and especially among non-governmental organizations, see below). Whilst many national consultations only offer e-mail format in addition to traditional channels, certain projects also use online forms,100 online forums101 or online idea exchanges102 in order to increase the efficiency and target orientation of participation communications.

Countless discussion forums (according to the "Have your say" motto or the "Issues Forums" model103) and online forms exist on regional and municipal level which municipal administrations use in order to get to know the citizens' views. The "ICELE" centre of excellence, in particular, is designed to promote local eParticipation. The "SMS consultation programme" of Lancashire county can be regarded as being technologically particularly innovative.104 Citizens can register with their mobile phone number and receive monthly text messages with questions concerning issues of the public sector. The results are published on the website. A similar service is also reported from South Korea for the Guro district (Kim 2007).

In the UK, specialist consultancy agencies, such as Delib105, were formed which offer consultations on behalf of governmental and other organizations on the Citizenspace.co.uk106 website. The service portfolio includes a budget simulator which enables the playful performance of consultations concerning budget planning via the Internet.

In the Netherlands, two projects on municipal level are worth mentioning. The "Heel het dorp" project addresses citizens of the village of Zwaagwesteinde which is considered to have serious social problems. Citizens are approached in different forms, for example, using the new media and are motivated to exchange views on the future of the village. Youths were given mobile phones and were thereby able to participate by answering text messages and/or by posting photos taken with the mobile phone (Demo-net 2007b).

The Dutch city of Eindhoven and the Paris suburb of Issy-les-Moulineaux use online market research techniques in order to improve political decisions. In addition to traditional forms of polling, a so-called "DigiPanel" (Eindhoven)107 and a "Panel Citoyen" (Issy-les-Moulineaux)108 were set up, i.e. a group of citizens who were regularly polled via the Internet on issues related to urban policy and whose responses were extrapolated to representative

100 For example, http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/.
101 For example, http://www.welfarereformforum.net/.
102 For example, http://www.betterregulation.gov.uk/.
103 http://www.e-democracy.org/uk/.
105 http://www.delib.co.uk/.
106 http://www.citizenspace.co.uk/.
results. The results of the polls were used to prepare resolutions by the municipality councils and (in the case of Eindhoven) published on the Internet. In both municipalities, a particularly large number of citizens use the Internet, with penetration rates as high as 80% in Eindhoven (Meissner et al. 2005) and even 89% in Issy-les-Moulineaux.\(^{109}\)

The administration of London's borough of Camden has also set up an online citizens' panel\(^{110}\) where around 2,000 citizens are registered and are regularly approached for consultations on political issues. The panel has its own password-protected website and goes beyond the scope of pure consultation in that it offers not just online polls, but also discussion forums where citizens can contact each other.

The city of Bristol\(^ {111}\) offers in addition to a classical citizens' panel an online community\(^ {112}\) where citizens can sign up, state their interests with regard to the city's policy and express their opinions concerning topical issues in the form of video, audio or text documents. The opinions are summarized on a monthly basis and submitted to the administration. The website also offers webcasts of city council meetings and informs user about ongoing online consultations and petitions.

The community can be accessed not just via the Internet, but also via mobile phones, so that youths, in particular, find it easier to make use of this offering. Although the project manager states that the portal failed to reach youths and attract user-generated content to the desired extent, the project is nevertheless considered to be successful in involving middle-aged and old-aged citizens.\(^ {113}\) However, the number of youths who regularly wrote serious answers remained low.

Projects which bring together experts in eParticipation in online communities tend to belong to a meta level of eParticipation. With the "ePractice"\(^ {114}\) project, the EU supports the networking of eGovernment stakeholders and projects and to this effect uses Web 2.0 technologies such as mutual rating, comments, tag clouds, etc. in order to support the community.

On the level of municipal administrations, the "UK Issues Forums"\(^ {115}\) project which is sponsored by the British government offers a website for the network of the individual municipal forums. Besides information concerning the setting up and operation of these municipal online forums, the website also offers a wiki for the quick and user-friendly exchange of information about the individual projects.

Applications, complaints, petitions

Petitions and comparable forms of eParticipation are apparently becoming more and more important. On the one hand, the exercising of formal petition rights via the Internet is being


\(^{111}\) The city of Bristol has compiled its experience with eParticipation in a dedicated guide which specifically addresses the possibilities of new Web 2.0 technologies in much detail; refer to [http://www.kevinomalley.org/downloads/ebook.pdf](http://www.kevinomalley.org/downloads/ebook.pdf).


\(^{113}\) Interview with Carolyn Hayward, [http://blip.tv/file/483205](http://blip.tv/file/483205).


\(^{115}\) [http://www.e-democracy.org/uk/](http://www.e-democracy.org/uk/).
increasingly enabled, whilst new offerings are being created by governmental (ombudsmen) and non-governmental organizations (complaint offices).

The Scottish parliament’s ePetition system was already addressed in the context of public petitions offered by the German parliament. Pursuant to Australian petition law, petitions must be submitted to parliament by a senator. The parliament of Queensland State which offers ePetitions hence only offers the possibility to co-sign via the Internet. New petitions, in contrast, must be sent to a senator on a printed form. During his 2007 election campaign, then Labor MP and opposition leader Kevin Rudd (today Prime Minister) offered the possibility on his website to co-sign petitions which were in line with his political goals and promised to submit these petitions to parliament.

The British Prime Minister's ePetition offering triggered considerable attention. Internet users can file petitions or support existing initiatives on a dedicated government website. The offering was launched in November 2006 in cooperation with the MySociety.org organization and, according to its own statement, is in the "public beta test" phase. In contrast to the system implemented by the Scottish parliament, discussions between the users are not possible. However, petitioners are asked to find out whether a similar petition already exists before filing a new petition. The most popular petition so far was aimed at preventing a road toll and was signed by 1.8 million citizens.

On municipal level, South Yorkshire County in the UK uses mobile services and interactive TV, in addition to the Internet, in order to enable citizens to submit petitions. New petitions, however, must be written via the website. The alternative electronic channels with their limited communication possibilities are only available for co-signing existing petitions.

Another two municipalities offer TV broadcasts of city council meetings and enable direct interaction with the MPs in this context. In the Spanish municipality of Jun, citizens can submit proposals for the agenda of city council meetings via a website two weeks in advance (refer to World Bank 2007, pp. 131 seq.). The meetings themselves are broadcast live and citizens can actively contribute their comments during the meeting.

The French municipality of Issy-les-Moulineaux (see above) has already been pursuing a similar model since 1997. It offers live broadcasts of meetings via cable TV and the Internet. In this case too, citizens of the municipality can ask questions concerning the meeting by telephone or per e-mail which are then answered within a dedicated framework.

In the Netherlands, it is not only citizens who can lodge complaints about the administration on a website operated by the government. On a website with a very similar make-up, which is apparently operated privately, civil servants are given the opportunity to complain about citizens. Both projects claim that their goal is to improve communication between citizens and the administration.

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118 http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/
120 http://www.ayuntamientojun.org/
121 http://www.epractice.eu/cases/issyicc
122 http://www.lastvandeoverheid.nl/
123 http://www.lastvandeoverheid.nl/
Again in the Netherlands, the administration of Amsterdam's Geuzenveld-Slotermeer district uses the possibilities of Google Maps for complaint management purposes.\(^{124}\) Citizens can use an online form in order to report problems in certain places of the city's district. The reports are then collected and shown on a map on the website.

The European Ombudsman also offers an online form which citizens can use in order to send him their complaints and concerns.\(^{125}\) The complaints received are also used by the EU as indicators for the further development of institutions and laws.

**Cooperation offerings**

According to our definition, cooperation offerings go beyond the collection of expertise, preferences and opinions and aim to achieve closer and often longer-term cooperation, also based on mutual cooperation, between administrations / politicians and citizens as well as stakeholders from business and civil society. Since many of these offerings can also lead to results which deviate from the original positions, this form of demanding, "active participation" (OECD 2001b) is very rare and in these rare cases confined to municipal level.

In Austria, the new media were used in the mediation proceedings in conjunction with the Vienna-Schwechat airport in order to open up another channel of communication in addition to the classical mediation methods.\(^{126}\) From 2001 to 2005, more than 50 groups were brought together at the negotiating table in order to discuss the expansion plans for the airport under the supervision of a team of mediators.

Besides a mediation forum in which the parties met in closed meetings as well as several working groups for handling sub-aspects, special importance was attached to PR work in terms of information for both the stakeholders and the more general public. The Internet was used for these tasks. A collection of documents and the minutes of the meetings were offered on the project website. An electronic newsletter was distributed to informed interested parties and concrete questions could be sent to a "virtual citizens' office" using an online form. Although the mediation process itself was not handled via the Internet, a parallel online forum was offered and widely used.

In the US, the National Mediation Board as an independent conflict-solving institution offers the possibility of Internet-based mediation proceedings in industrial relations.\(^{127}\) Both video conferences and online forums are used to this effect in order to facilitate negotiations and to promote the development of new solution options in an online brainstorming process.

**Activism, campaigns, lobbying**

This category includes offerings which, in technical terms, can be compared to government offerings and which are often implemented in cooperation with or with the support of government institutions, but which go beyond the offering of established formats and methods and which can provide new ideas for government initiatives. Other offerings have created a specific protest and activism culture and do not have very much in common with established forms of political participation. Both types will be briefly outlined in the following.

\(^{124}\) [http://mor.amsterdam.asp4all.nl/MORGeuzenveld.aspx](http://mor.amsterdam.asp4all.nl/MORGeuzenveld.aspx)


\(^{126}\) [http://www.viemediation.at/](http://www.viemediation.at/)

Civil society has initiated many offerings of deliberative discourse which can be interpreted as a means of influencing the agenda setting of political decision-making processes. In contrast to the institutionalized forms of government-initiated consultations, their influence on policy is weaker or more uncertain, but the technical standard is often very much higher.

Interestingly, the geographical distribution of these offerings is similar to that of institutionalized forms, at least in as far as this can be concluded from the research performed for this study. Countries where governments have a strong eParticipation offering also feature a strong offering of non-governmental online consultations.

On a European level, the Belgian King Baudouin Foundation 2006/2007 succeeded in establishing the so-called "European Citizens’ Consultations" in cooperation with other foundations and with support from the European Commission. These consultations represent a multi-stage, eight-month discussion process with selected representative members from different countries which debated the future of Europe both together and in national forums.

The joint meetings were designed as face-to-face events. However, information technologies were used in order to enable constructive debate in view of the fact that up to 200 participants were present. The participants were distributed to small moderated groups. Networked laptops and electronic voting pads were used to merge the results of the small discussion groups and to create a joint result (see below: Methodology). Apart from this, ICT was solely used to distribute information about the project.

A similar procedure was used in New York to debate the future of the "Ground Zero" site and in Berlin in a citizens' convention to plan the Berlin Wall Memorial. London's borough of Harrow used the procedure in order to discuss budget planning issues with more than 300 citizens.

The BBC supports citizens in their local civil-society involvement with the web-based Action Network. It offers services, such as weblogs and "bulletin boards" where citizens can post their requests and search for like-minded people. It offers an online community where citizens can form groups and exchange news. Furthermore, it supports campaigns by offering guides and enabling the creation of special information pages for campaigns.

Most of the information in the network originates from the users themselves. The role of the BBC is limited to the provision of basic information and to monitoring and moderating communication. With this network, the BBC managed to make a large number of users interested in the political issues of their communities and to motivate them to become involved. As an independent and widely trusted provider, the BBC did have an advantage over municipal administrations. However, the BBC is apparently planning to terminate the experiment or to convert it to a citizens' journalism project.

Another project by the King Baudouin Foundation, the pan-European debate on brain research titled "Meeting of Minds" made an interesting observation. Very limited use of

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129 http://www.listeningtothecity.org/.
132 http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork/.
ICT was initially planned in this project too. However, strong demand was found among participants to use the Internet as a means of communication beyond the face-to-face meetings (Goldschmidt & Renn 2006, p. 41). A national group even created an online forum for itself in order to be able to continue the discourse which had started in the meetings on the Internet.

In the US, several organizations are committed to promoting political participation. The National Issues Forums, an initiative for the nation-wide staging of citizens' meetings, used the Internet as early as in 2001 in order to launch a forum on the issue of fund raising for political parties. The America Speaks organization uses, in addition to online forums, electronic voting systems in the citizens' meetings which it organizes (see below: Methodology).

Another initiative titled "By the People", a project by a US TV production firm primarily funded by foundations, organized a US-wide, deliberative poll on "Citizenship in 21st Century America" in October 2007. The project was implemented in the form of citizens' meetings and via the Internet. A deliberative poll is a group discussion with a multi-stage structure in which a representative sample of the population takes part (refer to chapter 4.4.2). The online deliberative poll was conducted in addition to eleven local meetings.

At the same time, the Internet has turned out to be the ideal channel for information dissemination, especially in international cooperation and PR work by activists with an increasingly global orientation as the examples of Amnesty International and Indymedia can show. On the other hand – and this is what is meant by the second type – new Internet technologies, such as Web 2.0, offer networking possibilities which can be used by local initiatives. This is, for example, illustrated by the "Katine" project and "Pledgebank".

Amnesty International uses the Internet for its "Unsubscribe" campaign in order to motivate citizens to protest against the curtailing of civil rights in the war on terrorism. The core of the campaign is an online collection of signatures via the website. Furthermore, users are encouraged to make the campaign more popular through e-mail messages, online banners and interactive widgets.

Users themselves can also become part of the campaign by registering on the website, networking in online groups with other activists, and posting their own photographs and contents to support the campaign. Another Web 2.0 feature of the campaign is that every page show what other users are currently doing on the website. On the one hand, this creates an impression of the activity within the campaign whilst, on the other hand, the activities of users can draw the attention of other users to interesting parts of the website, so that an equally attractive and effective navigation possibility is offered.

The "Dropping Knowledge" project aims to motivate citizens world-wide to join a discourse on the basic questions of civilization in view of the challenges posed by globalization. To this effect, the project, similar to the "1000 Fragen"["1000 Questions"]

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135 For an overview of the US participation culture, refer to Gastil/Levine 2005.
136 http://www.nifi.org/.
138 http://www.americaspeaks.org/.
140 In October 2007, a Europe-wide, multilingual deliberative poll was conducted on the question of Tomorrow's Europe in Brussels – however, without using ICT. Refer to. http://www.tomorrowseurope.eu.
141 http://www.unsubscribe-me.org/.
project of "Aktion Mensch", encourages people to ask questions which can then be answered by other visitors to the website.

In contrast to a targeted consultation, the motivation to ask questions is the key element of this project. As an input, several public figures were asked selected questions. Their answers can be retrieved as videos from the database. Special characteristics of the discourse project are a comprehensive search engine and a visualized theme network, the software for which was contributed by the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence. Another special feature were the special PR measures of the project. In 2006, for example, individual questions were displayed on a media facade (public screen, refer to chapter 4.5) at Berlin's Potsdamer Platz square in order to draw the attention of the general public to the expert discussion with public figures.

Indymedia\(^{143}\) is a world-wide network of independent media centres and citizen journalists who cover political actions. It uses the Internet in order to provide channels for the dissemination of audio, video and text information and thereby enables alternative coverage other than reporting by the mass media. Besides news work, an important part of the work of the Indymedia activists involves developing and integrating open-source technologies for information dissemination.

Within the scope of a local development aid project in Katine, Uganda, Britain's "Guardian" newspaper uses the possibilities of the Web 2.0 in order to recruit support and make the progress of the project transparent.\(^{144}\) Over a period of three years, films, reports and, above all, a weblog titled the "Katine Chronicles" will cover the project. This form of media presentation was chosen in order to involve the general public in the project and to obtain the public's comments on the project and on development aid in general.

The "Pledgebank",\(^{145}\) a project by the British "MySociety.org" organization, is also of special interest for local initiatives even though it is not limited to such initiatives. This website offers users the possibility to propose a project which they would like to carry out together with others. Linked to the proposal is a pledge to carry out the project, however, on condition that a certain number of other people who will do the same are found within a certain period of time; this number can be determined by the initiator (motto: "I will do X if 10 other people do the same").

The website itself already serves as a point of contact for prospective supporters and additionally offers possibilities to find supporters on the Internet. The project promotes social involvement among citizens and additionally enables targeted campaigns for the interests of users.

This generally creates the picture of an active political landscape characterized by participation. However, this impression can be deceiving if the number of online processes is related to the total number of participation processes taking place in the corresponding areas. The online petition offering by the German parliament, for example, is considered to be an internationally outstanding eParticipation possibility - but just 10% of the petitions filed are entered via the online platform.

\(^{143}\) [http://www.indymedia.org/de/](http://www.indymedia.org/de/).

\(^{144}\) [http://www.guardian.co.uk/Guardian/katine](http://www.guardian.co.uk/Guardian/katine).

4.3.2 Summary

The international state of eParticipation, in as far as it is described by the research performed here, largely confirms the results of the quantitative study by the United Nations from 2005. The developed western nations have a pioneering function in eParticipation, notably the UK, the United States as well as Canada and New Zealand and, in Europe, Denmark and Estonia. A new feature is the integration of eParticipation in government programmes, for example, in the UK and South Korea. These governments use information and communication technologies in a targeted manner in order to open themselves up to citizens, civil society and economic stakeholders and to offer these groups the possibility to take part in the political decision-making process. In doing so, they implement the corresponding recommendations of international organizations, such as the OECD and the World Bank.

In as far as "information" participation mode concerned, the level of offerings is high throughout. Especially those offerings which not only provide information, but also edit this information in a user-orientated manner offer added value for participation. This includes, for example, portals with search functions and keyword registers like in the case of some implementations of the information of freedom acts, or filter technologies which edit information according to the user's interests like in the case of the national planning portal in the UK.

Offerings by non-governmental organizations designed to increase transparency often refer to the legislature and/or the opinion forming process. Whilst supplementing the related government offerings on the one hand, they also underpin the need for transparent procedures which is not sufficiently satisfied by government offerings. In this area, information and communication technologies also constitute tools that empower non-governmental players, for example, by providing them with the technical means to combine public sources of information about MPs in order to screen their work.

Most offers are at present found in the consultation field. In many countries, online consultation offerings on national level are firmly institutionalized and readily accessible. However, the quality of consultations varies strongly from purely unilateral surveys to technologically innovative procedures which use new forms of access, such as mobile phones, or new forms of processing, such as automated summaries (in the case of the World Jams).

Online petitions are experiencing a growing trend. Both governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations collect complaints and requests from citizens and process these electronically. The Internet has brought about a change in the quality of participation in this area. Online petitions are often public and can be co-signed by other citizens. They are also frequently used in campaigns. Some procedures also use the possibilities of multilateral communications which enable pre-selection of petitions by participants.

The number of cooperation offerings is very small. This is a very demanding and active form of participation and hence used quite seldom. The use of ICT for this purpose is still limited to a largely experimental level and the subject matter of research projects.

Finally, the activism, campaigns, lobbying category represents the technically most advanced offerings for eParticipation. The campaigns of international interest organizations, in particular, can benefit from the possibilities which the Internet has to offer. Deliberative procedures are also used quite often in order to influence the agenda setting and the opinion forming process. The geographical distribution of these offerings is similar to that of institutionalized forms of participation.
Discourse: "Election campaigns in France and the US"

Introduction

Election campaigns differ from other forms of political participation through an increased information offering from politicians. The information is used to prepare the most important political decision in which citizens in a representative democracy can take part, i.e. electing the people's representatives. Due to this paramount importance, election campaigns bundle a high level of public attention. Both initiators and addressees of the information offerings invest a relatively large amount of resources (time, money, attention) during this phase.

Election campaigns are often also experimental fields and catalysts for new forms of political communication (Sarcinelli 2000). They are characterized by intensified competition for innovative and at the same time also targeted communication formats. They are hence a particularly suitable source of ideas for participation offerings from governments and administrations.

Especially with regard to the use of new media, election campaigns were an early basis for experiments with particularly innovative forms of dialogue with citizens (Hebecker 2002). The last general elections in Germany made political weblogs more visible in Germany for the first time, even though the related activities did not survive the election campaign phase (Albrecht & Perschke 2007).

This discourse addresses the French presidential elections in 2007 and the US primaries for the presidential elections in 2008 as two particularly interesting examples of eParticipation because citizens in both countries have a particularly strong interest in eParticipation, in particular, in as far innovative formats, such as weblogs, are concerned (Schönberger 2007; Cramper 2007).

On a methodological level, first results from scientific observations are already available from France. However, separate research was not possible either because the offerings were no longer accessible or because they had been fundamentally changed after the election campaign. However, reports in weblogs and online magazines were available as additional sources for research. In contrast to this, scientific results are not yet available for the US. This analysis hence focuses on online research and the evaluation of the related press articles.

In both cases, the selection of the offerings described depends on the intention to identify new offerings for citizen participation and for dialogue with citizens. Two criteria were most important in this context: The projects had to be linked with political participation and they had to have been covered in literature and/or reports on the election campaigns. Besides the offerings by political parties, offerings from the media and from civil-society groups were also analyzed.

eParticipation in the French 2007 presidential election campaign

1. General view

The online campaign for the 2007 presidential elections in France promised to become particularly interesting for two reasons. On the one hand, the election campaign had a relatively long lead time (Pratsch-Hucko 2007) and, with Ségolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy, was headed by two very different candidates who actively approached the public and led the campaign in a very controversial manner (Weber 2007). On the other hand, France has a very active weblog culture, with around 60% of Internet users taking part as early as in 2006.
– an outstanding result even when compared with the US (Crampton 2006; refer also to Schönberger 2006).

The 2007 election campaign is in fact referred to as the first "campagne du net" (Arte 2007). In March 2007, a record 123 million websites were accessed, with the Blogopole.fr website counting more than 2000 political weblogs (Weber 2007). In April 2007, the Google blog search listed as many as 40,000 blogs on the keyword "présidentielles" (Initiative ProDialog 2007).

Although television was the dominant medium with a wider range, especially with the debate between the two top candidates of the second ballot which was viewed by 20 million people, the Internet was found to be a popular communication channel, also because it permitted the strict rules, which restrict election campaigns in the mass media, to be bypassed (Weber 2007). Many highly innovative Internet offerings which were created using interactive Web 2.0 technologies show that the most interesting developments occur on the Internet.

Another particularly interesting element of the French presidential elections is also the fact that a high polling rate of 85% of voters was achieved. It is, however, not possible to clearly identify the reasons for this extraordinarily strong motivation to participate. Whilst some authors consider the personal features of the candidates to be responsible for this (Bieber 2007b), others think that greater political awareness among the French population, not least thanks to media activities, is the underlying cause (Weber 2007).

2. Innovative projects

In the Information area, the party-independent "Mon vote à moi" offering should first be mentioned.146 With this website, the "Sitoyen.fr" organization offered a system comparable to the German Wahl-O-Mat election simulation tool which asked users to enter their preferences in a political questionnaire and compared the answers to the programmes of the candidates. The offering was created in cooperation with the Dutch "Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek" which had already invented the "Stemwijzer" that served as the model for the German Wahl-O-Mat.

All the candidates operated comprehensive websites with information about themselves and their programme. Besides the integration of Google Maps and other Web 2.0 technologies (Initiative ProDialog 2007), the central role which online videos were given on the campaign websites was the most prominent feature of the French online campaign (Initiative ProDialog 2007; Bieber 2007a). The "Dailymotion.com" video platform was a French offering which enabled easy online dissemination of user-generated videos (and which was, above all, also used for negative campaigning and satirical postings).

The offering by Mr Sarkozy, who provided a real TV channel in its own right under the "NS TV" label, went particularly far. A team of 8 employees with their own production studio ensured that Mr Sarkozy's messages were delivered to citizens (Pratsch-Hucko 2007). According to Mr Sarkozy, 500,000 users have visited his websites every day since January 2007. 12 million videos were downloaded and more than 60 million pages viewed (Pratsch-Hucko 2007). With the "Débat Sarkozy" platform, the candidate also created a channel where citizens were able to ask him questions. He then answered these questions in his online videos.147

The private TF1 station offered a similar way of contacting candidates on TV (which was subsequently also adopted by other stations). TF1 invited 100 representatively selected

147 http://www.spreeblick.com/2007/05/08/campagne-electorale-deux-zero/
citizens to the TV studio who were given the possibility to ask the candidates a question. Royal and Sarkozy answered these questions in the studio in separate programmes. These broadcasts were viewed by more than eight million citizens (Pratsch-Hucko 2007).

Projects designed to increase transparency have an important role to play in election campaigns in that they compile independent information about the candidates and explore the backgrounds and contexts of the election campaign. Compiègne University of Technology compiled information on the "Blogopole.fr" website about the "blogosphere" of the presidential election campaign in an interactive map, i.e. to represent a network of the weblogs linked to each other.

This offering provided Internet users with a clear overview as to which candidate was supported by how many blogs (refer to Fig. 4.3-2).

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**Fig. 4.3-2:** Interactive map of the "blogosphere" of the French election campaign. In the map, the number of weblogs per party is represented by the size of the respective spheres. By clicking the individual areas, the individual weblogs and the links between them can be seen. Source: Blogopole.fr
Furthermore, the page showed the links between the individual blogs and the political camps. Every user was able to take part in the information collection process by entering the URL of a weblog via an online form.\textsuperscript{148}

The transparency which was increased through weblogs and online videos also led to consequences which were controversially discussed. A TV journalist, for example, was suspended from his duties for the duration of the election campaign for possible partiality after a video clipping of a conference was published on the Internet where he had announced his election intentions. The TV station's decision was criticized on the grounds that the journalist's opinion had already been known for some time (Weber 2007).

Royal herself was almost stopped in her ambitions by an online video as early as during the nomination phase. The video showed her making a derogatory remark on the work of teachers which she had made during a small party convention in the countryside.\textsuperscript{149} The video emerged just one week before the fiercely fought nomination by the Socialist Party. It was advertised by an unknown person with keyword advertising at Google and was viewed 500,000 times within a few days. In this case too, a debate was triggered concerning the importance and influence of online videos and the reasons behind such postings.

The so-called "débats participatifs" which were at the heart of Royal's campaign constitute one form of consultations initiated by political parties. Due also to the lack of support in her own party, she did not start with a final election platform. Instead, she put it up to discussion during the campaign itself.

Royal's website titled "Désirs d'avenir" (approximately meaning "wishes for the future") was an important element of the discussion process offering all Internet users an opportunity to post and discuss proposals for the individual points of the platform. The website integrated and documented the entire consultation process which also included more than one thousand events throughout France.

According to the Socialist Party, more than 2.7 million French citizens took part in the Internet-based debate on Royal's election platform during the course of one year. This led to 100 suggestions for her policy which formed her election platform, as well as to a documentation in which 135,000 proposals on 50 different subjects were systematically compiled and evaluated (Riedel 2007).

Other offerings of the online election campaign which deserve special mention chiefly belong to the activism, campaigns, lobbying area. In order to recruit helpers and supporters for the election campaign, many candidates include a trailer page on their websites. This trailer page encourages visitors to register for cooperation in the campaign. This proactive approach managed to win even those interested citizens to join the supporter team who were no formal party members (Initiative ProDialog 2007).

Fund-raising via the Internet, as it is successfully exercised in US election campaigns, was almost irrelevant in France. Sarkozy's campaign was the only one to support this option; with a separate website dedicated to fund-raising (Initiative ProDialog 2007). Donors were also able to publish a testimonial on this website in which they stated why they considered the candidate to be worth supporting. However, fund-raising measures were limited by strict laws on election campaign financing.

Besides online videos, another feature of outstanding importance in the French online election campaign was the use of the "Second Life" 3D platform for campaign purposes. In this virtual environment, users can present themselves and interact as avatars (3D computer

\textsuperscript{148} Refer to http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/div/art771,2168951

\textsuperscript{149} Refer to http://www.andreas.de/wordpress/archives/2006/11/17/wahlkampf-royal/
figures). Besides Royal and Sarkozy, right-wing politician Jean-Marie Le Pen was also represented there with some kind of "election campaign booth".

Although interactions there were more of a playful character, for instance, when access to an event of Le Pen was blocked by protesters with a sea of (virtual) flowers, the Second Life appearances enabled the candidates to present themselves as open to new technologies and, due to the interest of journalists in this online platform, triggered a great deal of media coverage (Bieber 2007a). However, observers described the format of virtual 3D worlds as not being sustainable and considered activities of this kind to be an "exotic experiment" (Bieber 2007b).

The third central feature of the online election campaign were the weblogs of politicians and supporters mentioned earlier in this document. They were used to spread campaign messages and to quickly exchange information on the one hand, whilst they also enabled the establishment of direct contact with like-minded people through links and the possibility to post comments on the other. François Bayrou, for example, designed his campaign website according to the model of a weblog (Bieber 2007a).

Sarkozy commissioned Loïc Le Meur, one of the most distinguished French bloggers and also founder of a weblog firm, as a campaign advisor to his team. In a manner similar to Joe Trippi in Howard Dean's campaign in the 2003/2004 primaries in the US, Loïc Le Meur initiated a wide range of online activities. Besides the presence in "Second Life", this also included systematic strategic cooperation with French bloggers. In quantitative terms, however, the Socialist Party was able to claim a clearly leading position in the blogosphere (Weber 2007).

The media too promoted the use of weblogs. The France 24 news channel, for example, invited 24 bloggers from different countries to comment the two election evenings with a "live blog" from the editorial office (Initiative ProDialog 2007). The role of weblogs as an independent source of information became evident when bloggers announced their plans to use the Internet in order to bypass the ban on the early publication of election results on the election evening of the first round. The bloggers wanted to obtain information on the outcome of the election from Belgium where the French national laws had no effect. This example illustrates how difficult it is to control election campaign communications. As already noted, the popularity of the Internet for campaign tool is to a large extent due to the restriction of mass media on coverage during election campaigns.

**US primaries for the 2008 presidential elections**

1. General view

The US presidential election campaign 2004 (including the 2003 primaries) is generally regarded as the first campaign in which the Internet had a major role to play. Especially the noticeable success of Democratic candidate Howard Dean in the primaries is said to be due to his innovative Internet campaign in which many interactive elements were successfully used in order to raise funds, mobilize volunteers, organize supporter meetings and disseminate the candidate's messages in the form of blogs and videos. Against this background, the current primaries for the 2008 presidential elections are meeting with strong interest on the part of experts and the media.

One can say that the candidates are using Dean's model more or less as an example which they subsequently intensified, with the Democratic candidates appearing to be particularly

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151 [http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/web/0,1518,478166,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/web/0,1518,478166,00.html)
successful (New York Times, 13 July 2007).\textsuperscript{152} Online donations have changed the way in which election campaigns are financed. Besides wealthy businesses, the willingness of the "man in the street" to donate is becoming increasingly important. The candidates Obama, Edwards and Clinton raised around 30\% of their campaign budgets online, with donations of less than $100 accounting for around 90\% of this. In contrast to Dean four years ago, today's candidates can make use of popular social network websites, such as MySpace or facebook, in order to present themselves and find supporters. All the candidates made extensive use of this option. Candidate Obama, for example, recorded 136,000 "friends" at MySpace and 100,000 at facebook as early as July 2007. Furthermore, 5,500 small groups of campaign helpers were found via his website.

Similar to what was already observed with Dean and in the 2007 presidential election campaign in France, blog communities and video messages initiated by the candidates have a central role to play in the campaigns when it comes to spreading information about the candidates. For example, a video on the website of Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, showing her and her husband Bill Clinton exchanging opinions about the selection of a campaign song was downloaded by one million people. Thereafter, citizens could vote online and pick their favourite campaign song. In a similar manner, Republican candidate Mitt Romney currently encourages Internet users to vote on the selection of a TV spot.

One can conclude that the current Internet campaigns of the candidates differ from Dean's campaign in 2003 merely in terms of quantity, but not in terms of quality. Only the setting up of campaign booths in the 3D world Second Life can be considered to be something really new, but similar to the French election campaign, it does not (yet) have a major role to play. These seem to attract attention especially in cases where sabotage is committed, for example, when the Second Life election campaign headquarters of candidate Edward were vandalized by unknown persons.\textsuperscript{153}

2. Innovative projects

Most of the innovative Internet projects in the current primaries originate from independent (civil-society) initiatives and alliances of TV stations and large Internet portals rather than from the candidates themselves. A dominant format in this context is the collection of questions from citizens a selection of which is subsequently answered by the candidates. The best-known of these projects are the CNN/Youtube debates. Citizens were able to upload videos with their questions to the Democratic and Republican candidates to the Youtube platform. An editorial team of the CCN TV station then selected 40 questions which were presented to the candidates during a live TV show. The format is popular: Around 3,000 questions were submitted for the show with the Democratic candidates in July 2007\textsuperscript{154} and even 5,000 questions were recorded for the debate of the Republican candidates in November 2007\textsuperscript{155}. Around 5 million viewers saw the debate live on TV or on the Internet, more viewers than ever before to watch a TV duel of candidates in primary elections.\textsuperscript{156} Research by the Pew Research Center additionally suggests that 68\% of Americans prefer "the man in


\textsuperscript{153} http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2007/03/01/edwards-second-life-head_n_42368.html

\textsuperscript{154} http://www.youtube.com/democraticdebate

\textsuperscript{155} http://www.youtube.com/republicandebate

the street" to ask politicians questions, whilst only 17% would give preference to professional journalists.157

At the same time, the techPresident civil-society initiative launched a similar project where citizens were given the possibility to submit questions. Although the "10Questions"158 platform met with a weaker response – "only" 217 videos with questions were uploaded – there is one remarkable difference between the concepts compared to the CNN/Youtube debates: The Internet users themselves rated and thereby selected the questions to be put to the candidates. 6,500 people took part in this exercise. Although only two candidates were willing to answer the questions, this – interestingly – also took place during live shows on TV, in this case, within the framework of a cooperation project between MTV and MySpace.159

Another project worth mentioning is "jott the vote"160, which also collected questions for candidates. The special feature in this case is its media-spanning concept: The questions are asked by telephone, converted to text messages on an Internet platform, and then automatically sent to the candidate for answering.

One feature which the above-mentioned projects have in common is that they offer citizens a form of participation similar to the proposals, complaints and petitions formats. Communication in this case, however, is no longer unidirectional, i.e. from the candidates to the citizens, but the reverse channel capability of the Internet is deliberately used to enable a direct exchange between citizens and candidates. The Internet and TV thereby converge to form a mass-enabled format and this, again, strengthens the candidates' willingness to take part in such a process.

Conclusions

Both the French presidential election campaign and the campaigns during the US primaries show trends which can also be relevant for eParticipation. Portals where questions are collected offer (at least in the US) a large mobilization potential, in particular, when questions are submitted as videos and integrated into a TV programme. However, conventional text-based discussion forums can also be attractive for a very large number of citizens as the debate on Royal's election platform has shown. This is likely to require that the forums be integrated into a will-forming process and evaluated.

The comparison of the election campaigns also showed that there are both common features (strong dissemination of online videos, strong integration of weblogs) as well as country-specific differences. Royal's debate format, for example, has not yet been adopted in the US primaries. The other way around, social network websites and portals for collecting questions have a more prominent role to play in the US. A direct transfer of the results to eParticipation in Germany should hence be handled with care. One would, for example, have to examine whether Germans are (already) just as familiar with the viewing and uploading of videos as US citizens before this participation format can be used in Germany.

157 http://pewresearch.org/pubs/645/youtube-debate-republican
158 http://www.10questions.com
159 http://www.myspace.com/election2008
160 http://jottthevote.com
4.4 Overview of eParticipation technologies and procedures

4.4.1 Availability of participation platforms and innovative technologies for eParticipation

Some of the eParticipation offerings identified in this study are implemented in a very simple manner using standard software available, such as online forms or discussion forums. Other formats used include mailing lists, albeit chiefly for internal communications within civil-society organizations, and are today usually no longer used for discussions (refer to Grunwald 2006, pp. 97 and 147).

In contrast to this, many of the more comprehensive offerings use specialized software tools for eParticipation. Not least thanks to European research funding, but also with international projects, such as the "Virtual Agora Project" of Carnegie Mellon University, participation platforms and other solutions have been developed which were directly tailored to different forms of eParticipation.

The Wikipedia example, which is based on a technically relatively simple system, shows that eParticipation can be carried out with very good success using simple tools. The fact that the software is less important than the concept and methodological design of participation offerings is also reflected by the popularity of open-source software.

When it comes to addressing particular target groups, it is not simply the technology which matters but the choice of object and the presentation of the participation offering. Experience with two online discourses in Hamburg has shown that different parts of the population are addressed even with a very similar technical and methodological design of the offering. The debate on the city's future guiding principle saw a clear over-representation of male citizens, whilst more women than men took part in the debate on the city's family-friendliness (Lührs 2006).

However, a look at good-practice projects also shows that all larger projects (a) use custom software. Furthermore, (b) certain basic technologies are relevant for eParticipation, such as software for processing large amounts of text or geographic information systems (GIS). The need to integrate technologies and suitable methods is underlined as a critical success factor for eParticipation (Märker 2007: 262, DEMO-net 2006: pp 57 seq., Klima 2007).

The fact that the German parliament hosts the online petitions on a Scottish server has caused users to ask whether the website is a copy of the German parliament's website. In this context, public agencies in Germany can make use in their own country of a wide range of eParticipation software which features a high level of development.

- **KUBIS** is a participation platform which provides tools for both information and communication. Various features can be integrated into a participation offering on a common user interface, such as a content management system, online questionnaires, online petitions, and other features.

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162 http://virtualagora.org/.
163 Refer to http://www.spreeblick.com/2006/10/20/computerwahl/.
164 http://www.kubis-online.info/.
polls, moderated chats, discussion forums and (interactive) maps. Since all the tools were evaluated with a view to barrier-freedom, they are particularly suitable for public administrations.

The platform is client-enabled, i.e. it offers central hosting as well as independent and organizationally separate access for each project. Different CMSs and layouts can be integrated via CSS. Distribution is ensured by an application service providing model. Cooperation with the entera planning firm also enables the use of a GIS-based map tool and a widely used software for formal participation offerings (refer to Schulze-Wolf 2007).

- Systems for online participation in urban and regional planning also integrate geographic information and participation offerings and are made available by several providers. Users include the city of Oldenburg with the PAR/IS\textsuperscript{165} system and the city of Kamen with the planning and information server P5 (\textsuperscript{166}).

- The "Discourse Machine"\textsuperscript{167} is a comprehensive software system which supports the management of online discussions. In this case too, very different tools, including wikis, weblogs and interactive graphics, can be combined as required. This system has already been used for online participative budgets and eParticipation offerings for youths. Since the range of functions and the user interface can be adapted to the respective requirements, the system can be set up to meet the demands of special target groups.

With the "ICELE" centre of excellence, the British government has set up a dedicated advisory body in order to support municipal administrations when it comes to selecting and using eParticipation technologies. Besides advisory services, the centre offers a toolkit for online portals as well as a range of services, including, for example, weblog and online consultation services\textsuperscript{168}.

Other, special eParticipation systems are, for example, available with the "Vox PopVI"\textsuperscript{169} software which is used, for instance, for online deliberative polls. The special feature here is support of voice-based group discussions in realtime (in contrast to other, mostly text-based systems). Still at a testing stage is the Austrian system for online consultations in legislation proceedings, LEXWAS, which is apparently to be integrated into the eLaw system (refer to Schefbeck 2007). Although the "Bundestagsadler" eagle\textsuperscript{170}, a virtual advisor who can answer questions from visitors to the website, also constitutes a low-threshold offering, it can only be used for information purposes and is not suitable for real interaction. Another Web 2.0 application are wikis which the administration can use to collaborate with other units and with citizens. However, considerable adaptation work will be necessary with regard to quality assurance, usability and barrier freedom in order to enable use by public administrations (Hanke & Schulte 2006).

Besides these modules, which were specifically developed for eParticipation, several basic technologies are relevant for the implementation of online-based participation processes.

\textsuperscript{165} \url{www.oldenburg.planungsbeteiligung.de}

\textsuperscript{166} \url{www.stadtplanung-kamen.de}, Refer to. \url{www.tetraeder.com/produkte/}

\textsuperscript{167} \url{http://www.discourse-machine.de/}

\textsuperscript{168} \url{http://www.icele.org/site/scripts/documents.php?categoryID=7}.

\textsuperscript{169} \url{http://www.polimetrix.com/services_productsVoxPop.html}.

\textsuperscript{170} \url{http://adler.bundestag.de/}. 
These include GIS technologies as well as 3D visualization tools\textsuperscript{171} for spatial planning, as well as language processing systems and software supporting argumentation processes which will, however, not be discussed here further (for details, refer to DEMO-net 2007a). Thorough clarification is still required concerning the degree of acceptance which a toolkit meets in comparison to a client-enabled platform with an application service provider.

Web 2.0 technologies can also be considered to constitute basic technologies. They are relevant for eParticipation because they often constitute a low-threshold offering for interaction. An example of this is the weblog of Nico Lumma, one of Germany’s best-known bloggers and CEO of several Internet firms. He offers readers of his weblog a so-called widget as a possibility to send a short message (instant messaging) to which he can immediately respond when he is online. In this way, the weblog becomes an interface for personal communications and readers find it less difficult to establish contact.

One development which is also relevant for eParticipation is the fact that administrations appear not just as software users, but also as producers of software. In Germany, the Federal Foreign Office is breaking new ground by developing software solutions which are also being made available to other interested parties via an open-source model. A first application is "veraweb", event management software.\textsuperscript{172} In this way, solutions which are developed in model projects can be made available to other parties easily and at a reasonable cost. The Federal Foreign Office also mentions significant cost savings which resulted from the open-source strategy\textsuperscript{173} and the demanding security requirements of the diplomatic service which are addressed by a Linux version that was specifically developed in cooperation with the Federal Office for Information Security.\textsuperscript{174}

4.4.2 Availability of methods and process concepts

Methods and process concepts control the participation processes which are possible within the scope of the different forms of participation. The individual components and the sequence of the process steps should be determined according to the purpose of the application. On the basis of project experience, several eParticipation methods evolved in research which will be introduced here. These methods include discourse methods, multi-stage polls, media-mix concepts, methods to support large-scale conventions and so-called deliberative polls (refer to OECD 2001a, Stiftung Mitarbeit / Agenda Transfer 2003).

Participation researchers and international organizations, such as the World Bank, generally recommend deliberative methods of citizen participation (Langer & Oppermann 2003, p. 304, World Bank 2007: 17). During a deliberation, i.e. a argument-based discussion, it is not only possible to state opinions, but these can also be criticized by other participants. This leads to multilateral communications between the participants which are hence involved to a greater extent and the results are subjected to some kind of quality control.

*Online discourse methods*, such as the DEMOS method (Lühr & Hohberg 2007) or the "webdialogues" in the US (Bonner et al. 2005)\textsuperscript{175} are based on such a structured and

\textsuperscript{171} See, for example, the "Virtual Environmental Planning Systems" research project in Stuttgart, \url{http://www.multimedia.fht-stuttgart.de/veps/index.html}.

\textsuperscript{172} \url{http://veraweb.evolvis.org/}.

\textsuperscript{173} \url{http://www.heise.de/newsticker/meldung/96047}.

\textsuperscript{174} \url{http://www.heise.de/newsticker/meldung/85977}.

\textsuperscript{175} \url{http://www.webdialogues.net/}.
Selection and documentation of exemplary projects (good practice)

Selection and documentation of exemplary projects (good practice) moderated discussion. Their time is limited (a few weeks), they have a defined general subject, and they are aimed at a result (for example, development of guidance).

During a first phase, the participants were informed via background documents and in mutual presentations and involved in the discourse. In this context, the central aspects of the general subject are identified in an open discussion. During the second phase, these aspects are then discussed in more depth, related proposals are collected and problems identified. During this phase, it is also possible to involve experts in order to provide further information.

The third phase bundles the results. Proposals or problems are summarized and evaluated by the participants. Furthermore, a final document can also be drafted during this phase.

In technical terms, the discussion takes place in one or more open online forums. Closed forums (panel discussion) or chats are additionally possible, and wikis can be integrated for the joint drafting of documents and online surveys for opinion polls.

**Multi-stage online surveys** are carried out in order to obtain pre-structured answers of a high quality. In contrast to deliberative methods, communication is limited to a moderated exchange between the participants.

One example of this is the two-stage method from the British "Dialogue by Design" which was used in an online consultation of the German parliament (Fühles-Uhbach 2005b). Invited participants are first given the possibility to voice their opinion on given questions. The answers are evaluated and published as a list. In the second stage, the participants rate the sequence of the proposals. The final result of the survey is a prioritized list.

In technical terms, this process can be handled using online forms. Although moderators are not required, the evaluation of the answers from the participants may then become a relatively complex task.

The "Direkt zur Kanzlerin" ["Directly to the Chancellor"] project is another example of a multi-stage survey. Besides the rating of postings, it also offers the possibility to post comments, so that a discussion can emerge among the participants.

The **media mix** (refer to Westholm 2007a, Kubicek et al. 2007) is a methodological aspect which equally concerns all eParticipation offerings alike: Participation offerings should make use of the possibilities offered by different media and combine these in order to achieve participation on the most inclusive level possible.

This approach requires a clear-cut definition of the target group. This then forms the basis for assessing the target-group-specific benefits of the possible media. The media are selected with a view to the subject matter of the participation offering and the method planned for this. In order to be able to address specific target groups (such as migrants), it is vital that their particular media use patterns be estimated (Westholm 2005).

Various access technologies can be relevant when it comes to addressing exactly the right target groups. Especially on municipal level, public access points are available in some public buildings which citizens without Internet access can use in order to make use of eParticipation offerings (refer to Guidi 2002). Interactive TV has to some degree already been introduced on an international scale and in the UK, for instance, is used by the South Yorkshire municipality to offer the possibility to co-sign petitions (see above).

However, the use of both interactive TV for eParticipation purposes and mobile phones is limited due to the restricted presentation and expression possibilities compared with the World Wide Web. They are most suitable for voting or during the initialization phase of a participation offering when large numbers of participants are to be recruited with the lowest threshold possible.

During this phase, it is also possible to use more futuristic technologies, such as media facades. In 2006, the "Dropping Knowledge" project mentioned earlier in this document cooperated with HVB Immobilien AG in order to be able to use the media facade called...
"SPOTS" of a building at Berlin's Potsdamer Platz square for PR work.\textsuperscript{176} In this project, questions which participants had posted on the website were displayed on the facade of the building which was designed as a huge screen so that they were noticed by passers-by at Potsdamer Platz. A similar project was carried out in 2001 by the Chaos Computer Club at the "House of the Teacher" at Berlin's Alexanderplatz square.\textsuperscript{177} Using the media mix concept, a high degree of attention can be triggered in this way for a participation offering.

As a measure to support large-scale events with electronic media, methods like "World Café"\textsuperscript{178} or "21st Century Town Meetings" (Lukensmeyer et al. 2005) are available. In these projects, many small parallel discussion groups are repeatedly merged to form a large discussion group during the course of the event. Networked laptops as well as electronic keypads are used for voting during these events.

In 2002, this method was used in New York when 5,000 people discussed the future of "Ground Zero".\textsuperscript{179} The method combines discussions and surveys and can generate focused results with large numbers of participants. Since networking of the small groups is carried out electronically, this is even possible over long distances.\textsuperscript{180} In New York, a two-week online discussion was held in addition to the one-day meeting with the online discussion adapting the method of small groups discussing parallel for the Internet.\textsuperscript{181}

The so-called Deliberative Polls (Fishkin 1995) too were originally designed as meetings, but have now also been transferred to the Internet. This method is a strongly structured deliberation where a representatively selected group is to develop equally representative results which are particularly well-deliberated thanks to the deliberative reflection process.

Special features of this method are that participants are refunded their expenses and are intensively informed about the subject matter of the debate. Moreover, they are polled before and after the event in order to record a change in mind.

Supporting scientific research suggests that the method generates learning results and that participants are motivated to continue taking part even beyond the termination of the offering (Fishkin & Farar 2005, p. 76). The adaption for the Internet is a remarkable aspect in that the participants of an online conference are voice-connected in realtime.\textsuperscript{182} An asynchronous, text-based online forum, which is typical for online consultations, is only used as a supplementary format during online conference.

### 4.5 Selection and documentation of exemplary projects (good practice)

The selection of good-practice examples was based on research into the national and international state of eParticipation. The purpose of the selection of examples is to use

\textsuperscript{176} [http://www.spots-berlin.de/de/index.php?col=3&expo=95](http://www.spots-berlin.de/de/index.php?col=3&expo=95)
\textsuperscript{177} [http://www.blinkenlights.de/](http://www.blinkenlights.de/)
\textsuperscript{178} [http://www.theworldcafe.com/what.htm](http://www.theworldcafe.com/what.htm)
\textsuperscript{179} [http://www.listeningtothecity.org/](http://www.listeningtothecity.org/)
\textsuperscript{180} For the "CaliforniaSpeaks" discussion, meetings at 8 different places all over California were networked via interactive TV; refer to [http://www.californiaspeaks.org/](http://www.californiaspeaks.org/)
\textsuperscript{181} [http://weblab.org/](http://weblab.org/)
concrete cases as a basis for identifying the criteria of progressivity and participation quality. However, the cases selected do not necessarily represent good practice in all aspects. They do, however, stand out against the rest of the offering with regard to at least one of the following aspects:

- **Organization**: The examples feature a high degree of innovation from a technological or methodological perspective (or with regard to the integration of both).
- **Process design**: The processes in the cases selected are communicated to the participants in a transparent manner and they are responsive, i.e. an answer is given to the participants’ postings and this answer is openly communicated.
- **Results**: The cases feature a high degree of use in the target group or a strong influence on the political process.

Furthermore, the cases were selected with a view to ensuring that each form of participation and - if possible - each format relevant for political participation was considered (refer to table 4.4-1). The distribution in terms of both national and international cases was also chosen deliberately in order to be able to directly compare the state of development of the different forms of participation.

One separate category of participation projects was not specifically considered in this study, i.e. civic education projects which are primarily offered for children and youths. Although these projects use the new media frequently and in a highly innovative manner in order to encourage participation as illustrated by the examples of the youths’ portal of the German parliament (mitmischen.de), the EU blog of the Federal Ministry of the Exterior (mein-eu-blog.de) or the offerings of the Federal Agency for Civic Education, such as the "fluter.de" youths’ magazine, these participation offerings are not primarily aimed at the political will-forming and decision-making process, but chiefly at exercising democratic and participatory practices. This political socialization is an important prerequisite for participation in general which should not be underestimated. However, this concerns a very wide range of offerings which must also be judged according to very specific criteria, so that these offerings are not addressed in this study.

An exception is the "Wahl-O-Mat" election simulation tool offered by the Federal Agency for Civic Education. Although this tool also constitutes a civic education offering, it is designed to address all voters rather than children and youths only, and aims to increase polling rates and/or bring about less emotional voter decisions, i.e. it is directly aimed at political participation. It is hence also mentioned as a "good-practice" example in the information offerings section.

The selection and description of the cases shown in tables 4.5-1 and 4.5-2 were controlled by an internal selection process of the authors of the study. A total of 24 eParticipation offerings and two cross-section offerings were identified. Some cases were combined with comparable offerings if they were very similar.

The information base for the presentation varies; to the extent to which they were available, scientific (external) evaluations and project reports were used whilst other cases had to rely on the descriptions given by the projects themselves and the inspection of the websites.
Table 4.5-1: Good examples of forms and formats of eParticipation (examples from outside Germany printed in boldface)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation forms / tools</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Transparency through third parties</th>
<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Applications / complaints / petitions</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Activism / campaigns / lobbying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital TV in the narrower sense</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kiosk systems / info terminals</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UN Habitat World Jam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Participation forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Transparency through third parties</th>
<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Applications / complaints / petitions</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Activism / campaigns / lobbying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>Abgeordnetenwatch</td>
<td>Future-of-Food Regionaler FNP Frankfurt ILP Königslutter AskBristol</td>
<td>FixMyStreet</td>
<td>Stadionbad Bremen</td>
<td>1000 Fragen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSS-Feed</td>
<td>Abgeordnetenwatch</td>
<td>Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg</td>
<td>FixMyStreet</td>
<td>Bürgerhaushalt Lichtenberg</td>
<td>Direkt zur Kanzlerin 1000 Fragen Dropping Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weblog</td>
<td></td>
<td>Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg</td>
<td>FixMyStreet</td>
<td>Bürgerhaushalt Lichtenberg</td>
<td>UnsubscribeMe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Audio or video) podcast</td>
<td></td>
<td>Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg</td>
<td>FixMyStreet</td>
<td>Bürgerhaushalt Lichtenberg</td>
<td>UnsubscribeMe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online games and simulations</td>
<td>PlanningAlerts</td>
<td>Regionaler FNP Frankfurt ILP Königslutter</td>
<td>FixMyStreet</td>
<td>Stadionbad Bremen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geodata-based communications / interactive maps</td>
<td>PlanningAlerts</td>
<td>Regionaler FNP Frankfurt ILP Königslutter</td>
<td>FixMyStreet</td>
<td>Bürgerhaushalt Lichtenberg</td>
<td>1000 Fragen UnsubscribeMe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS / MMS</td>
<td>PlanningAlerts</td>
<td>AskBristol</td>
<td>FixMyStreet</td>
<td>Bürgerhaushalt Lichtenberg</td>
<td>1000 Fragen UnsubscribeMe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>Abgeordnetenwatch</td>
<td>Future-of-Food Regionaler FNP Frankfurt ILP Königslutter Familienfreundlicher</td>
<td>E-Petitionen Bundestag FixMyStreet</td>
<td>Bürgerhaushalt Lichtenberg</td>
<td>1000 Fragen UnsubscribeMe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

183 for messages from the editors or all new proposals
| Participation formats / tools | Wohnort Hamburg  
European Business Test Panel Regulations  
AskBristol | Regionaler FNP  
Frankfurt  
ILP Königslutter | Stadionbad Bremen  
Dropping Knowledge  
AskBristol  
Future-of-Food  
YourVoice  
1000 Fragen |  
Abgeordnetenwatch  
Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg | Bürgerhaushalt  
Lichtenberg  
Direkt zur Kanzlerin  
Dropping Knowledge |
<table>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone / call center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regionaler FNP  
Frankfurt  
ILP Königslutter | Stadionbad Bremen |  
Dropping Knowledge  
AskBristol  
Future-of-Food  
AskBristol  
YourVoice  
1000 Fragen |  
Abgeordnetenwatch  
Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg | Bürgerhaushalt  
Lichtenberg  
Direkt zur Kanzlerin  
Dropping Knowledge |
| Webcast (with feedback function) |  
AskBristol | Stadionbad Bremen |  
Dropping Knowledge  
AskBristol  
Future-of-Food  
AskBristol  
YourVoice  
1000 Fragen |  
Abgeordnetenwatch  
Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg | Bürgerhaushalt  
Lichtenberg  
Direkt zur Kanzlerin  
Dropping Knowledge |
| Chat |  
Future-of-Food  
AskBristol  
YourVoice  
1000 Fragen | Stadionbad Bremen |  
Dropping Knowledge  
AskBristol  
Future-of-Food  
AskBristol  
YourVoice  
1000 Fragen |  
Abgeordnetenwatch  
Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg | Bürgerhaushalt  
Lichtenberg  
Direkt zur Kanzlerin  
Dropping Knowledge |
| Instant messaging |  
Future-of-Food  
AskBristol  
YourVoice  
1000 Fragen | Stadionbad Bremen |  
Dropping Knowledge  
AskBristol  
Future-of-Food  
AskBristol  
YourVoice  
1000 Fragen |  
Abgeordnetenwatch  
Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg | Bürgerhaushalt  
Lichtenberg  
Direkt zur Kanzlerin  
Dropping Knowledge |
| Social tagging (folksonomy), social bookmarking |  
AskBristol  
188 | Stadionbad Bremen |  
Dropping Knowledge  
AskBristol  
Future-of-Food  
AskBristol  
YourVoice  
1000 Fragen |  
Abgeordnetenwatch  
Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg | Bürgerhaushalt  
Lichtenberg  
Direkt zur Kanzlerin  
Dropping Knowledge |
| Ranking tool |  
Abgeordnetenwatch  
Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg | Stadionbad Bremen |  
Dropping Knowledge  
AskBristol  
Future-of-Food  
AskBristol  
YourVoice  
1000 Fragen |  
Abgeordnetenwatch  
Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg | Bürgerhaushalt  
Lichtenberg  
Direkt zur Kanzlerin  
Dropping Knowledge |

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184 Recommend site, notification of answers received
185 E-mail notification, send comments
186 Also as an ePostcard for recruiting co-signers
187 E-mail alerts
188 Tag clouds
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation forms</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Applications / complaints</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Activism / campaigns / lobbying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Input form</td>
<td>Abgeordnetenwatch</td>
<td>FNP Frankfurt, ILP Königslutter, Wiki Police Act Regulations, FixMyStreet</td>
<td>E-Petitionen Bundestag, FixMyStreet</td>
<td></td>
<td>Direkt zur Kanzlerin, UnsubscribeMe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick poll</td>
<td>Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg</td>
<td>Future-of-Food, Online-Beurteilung der Finanzämter, European Business Test Panel, AskBristol</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bürgerhaushalt Lichtenberg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online questionnaire / survey</td>
<td>Future-of-Food, Online-Beurteilung der Finanzämter, European Business Test Panel, AskBristol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bürgerhaushalt Lichtenberg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video conference</td>
<td>Future-of-Food, Regionaler FNP Frankfurt, ILP Königslutter, Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg, AskBristol, YourVoice</td>
<td>E-Petitionen Bundestag, Stadionbad Bremen, Bürgerhaushalt Lichtenberg</td>
<td></td>
<td>Direkt zur Kanzlerin, 1000 Fragen, Dropping Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiki</td>
<td>Wiki Police Act</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

189 In the new version as a comment function for the postings published
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation formats / tools</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Transparency through third parties</th>
<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Applications / complaints / petitions</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Activism / campaigns / lobbying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photo / video community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UnsubscribeMe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networking site / online community</td>
<td></td>
<td>AskBristol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UnsubscribeMe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groupware / CSCW</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual worlds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5-2: Examples of good practice for eParticipation selected for the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Most important formats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Information</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>E-Recht [eLaw] (Austria)</td>
<td>Website, special software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Electr. Reading Rooms (USA)</td>
<td>Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wahl-O-Mat</td>
<td>Online game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Planningalerts (GB)</td>
<td>Website, e-mail, maps, API</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Abgeordnetenwatch [MP Watch]</td>
<td>Website, e-mail, form, RSS</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Transparency through third parties</strong></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Finanzämter-Beurteilung Niedersachsen [Rating of Tax Offices in Lower Saxony]</td>
<td>Survey</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Regionaler Flächennutzungsplan Frankfurt / M. [Regional Land Use Plan for Frankfurt / M.]</td>
<td>Form, forum, GIS, telephone access</td>
</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Interaktiver Landschaftsplan Königslutter am Elm [Interactive Königslutter am Elm Landscape Plan]</td>
<td>Form, forum, GIS, telephone access</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg [[Hamurg as a Family-friendly Place to Live]</td>
<td>Forum, weblog, poll, podcast</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Online Citizens' Panel Bristol (GB)</td>
<td>Form, forum, webcast, SMS</td>
</tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>UN Habitat World Jam</td>
<td>Forum</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Future-of-Food (D / NL)</td>
<td>Forum, chat, survey</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Regulations.gov (USA)</td>
<td>Website, e-mail</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Police Act Wiki (NZ)</td>
<td>Wiki</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>European Business Test Panel (EU)</td>
<td>Survey</td>
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<td><strong>Applications, complaints, petitions</strong></td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Öffentliche Petitionen des Bundestags [Public Petitions to the German Parliament]</td>
<td>Form, forum</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>TOM Estland (EST)</td>
<td>Website, form</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>FixMyStreet (GB)</td>
<td>Maps, RSS</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Cooperation</strong></td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Bürgerhaushalt Lichtenberg [Lichtenberg Participatory Budget]</td>
<td>RSS, survey, forum, ranking</td>
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<td><strong>Activism /campaigns /lobbying</strong></td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>1000 Fragen [1000 Questions]</td>
<td>ePostcards, chats, forum, games</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Dropping Knowledge / SPOTS</td>
<td>Forum, ranking, videos, public display</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Direkt zur Kanzlerin [Directly to the Chancellor]</td>
<td>RSS, ranking, form, forum</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>UnsubscribeMe</td>
<td>Community, photo/video, weblog</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Cross-section offerings</strong></td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>iCELE (GB)</td>
<td>Website, RSS, social bookmarking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>ePractice (EU)</td>
<td>Community, ranking, weblog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### E-Recht [eLaw] (Austria) ([http://www.parlinkom.gv.at](http://www.parlinkom.gv.at))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form:</th>
<th>Information</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiator:</td>
<td>Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period:</td>
<td>Since 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political level:</td>
<td>Federal government (executive, legislature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group:</td>
<td>Administration, parliament, interested public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formats:</td>
<td>Website, special software</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What's it about?

The legislation process is electronically handled and comprehensively documented from the first draft on. A parliament website maps the legislation process beginning with its handling in parliament; the draft stage on desk officer level is additionally published afterwards. The following material is published in addition to metadata: drafts, materials, appendices, comments from experts, side letters and other documents. The offering also enables the submission of online comments during the scrutiny process which are also documented.

### Why "good practice"? 

The comprehensive documentation can be used to make the legislation process more transparent and the influence of lobby groups visible. The integration of the scrutiny process simplifies the process for initiators and addressees. The administration achieves significant cost savings thanks to the change to electronic documents. (Engeljehringer 2006)

### Interest in use

The parliament identifies 4 million Austrians as the potential target group. According to the parliament's general administration office, no data is available on actual use. However, the parliament's general administration office estimates that user interest has significantly increased since the documents of the pre-parliamentary scrutiny process went online in 1999 (Schefbeck, personal communication).

### Effect / results achieved

Increased transparency of the legislation process. Printing costs cut by more than €1m (Engeljehringer 2006).

### See also:

[https://www.ebundesanzeiger.de](https://www.ebundesanzeiger.de) (for business-related information)

### References:

Engeljehringer 2006; Schefbeck 2007
### Electronic Reading Rooms (USA) ([http://www.usdoj.gov/oip/04_2.html](http://www.usdoj.gov/oip/04_2.html))

#### Participation form:
- **Information**

#### Initiator:
- US Department of Justice

#### Period:
- Since 1996

#### Political level:
- Federal government (executive branch)

#### Target group:
- No special target group

#### Formats:
- Website

### What's it about?
The Electronic Freedom of Information Act amends the Freedom of Information Act of the US. The law obliges public authorities to make official documents available in electronic form within the scope of the Freedom of Information Act. The electronic reading rooms constitute a central directory which facilitates access via the Internet to the information stored by the different public agencies.

### Why "good practice"?
The proactive offering of information at public authorities on a central platform benefits citizens and the business community as well as public authorities. Public authorities have to process fewer inquiries and this reduces the workload. Interested citizens find it easier to retrieve information relevant for them and do not have to personally visit a reading room.

### Interest in use
No access numbers are available.

### Effect / results achieved
The flow of information between the administration and the general public was to be increased and the administration was to be relieved from some of the obligations under the Freedom of Information Act. However, the response on the part of federal authorities was very weak, so that the president issued an executive order in 2005 obliging the federal authorities to make more use of this possibility and to issue an annual progress report.

### See also:
- [http://www.befreite-dokumente.de](http://www.befreite-dokumente.de) (An attempt to establish a corresponding offering by a private provider in Germany)
### Wahl-O-Mat (no longer available)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form:</th>
<th>Information</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiator:</td>
<td>Federal Agency for Civic Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period:</td>
<td>Episodic offering since the 2002 general elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political level:</td>
<td>Federal government, federal laender (legislature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group:</td>
<td>Voters, in particular, first-time voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formats:</td>
<td>Website, online game</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### What's it about?
Wahl-O-Mat presents the election platforms of the parties with a view to important topics of an election campaign. In a poll, users can compare their opinions about the topics with the positions of the parties. Wahl-O-Mat shows the party with which the user has the most views in common. The explicit goal of the offering is to increase polling rates especially among first-time and young voters. The editors of the offering involve young voters as important members of their team. Wahl-O-Mat is offered before elections on federal and federal-land level.

#### Why "good practice"?
The offering provides the information relevant for the voter's decision in a playful manner and to this effect makes use of the interactive possibilities of the Internet. The effect of the offering is examined by way of independent scientific evaluation (refer to Marschall 2005).

#### Interest in use
Before the 2005 general elections, more than 5 million citizens were polled using Wahl-O-Mat. In 2002, around 90,000 citizens used it in 17 days. The shares of young citizens (40% of users are aged below 30) and of citizens interested in politics (80% of users) are particularly high.

#### Effect / results achieved
Improving voters' decisions by informing voters and arousing the interest of first-time voters in elections. More than 90% of users stated that they had fun using the offering, and 40% stated that it helped them in their decision. A good 8% of users who originally did not plan to vote stated that the offering motivated them to go to the polls. This figure is even higher in the case of elections on federal-land level.

#### See also:
http://www.stemwijzer.nl (An offering developed by Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek, IPP, Amsterdam, a precursor of the German Wahl-O-Mat)

#### References:
Marschall 2005
### Planningalerts (GB) ([http://www.planningalerts.com](http://www.planningalerts.com))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form:</th>
<th>Transparency through third parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiator:</strong></td>
<td>mySociety.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period:</strong></td>
<td>Since December 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political level:</strong></td>
<td>Districts, municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target group:</strong></td>
<td>No special target group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formats:</strong></td>
<td>Website, e-mail, maps, API</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### What's it about?
Interested users receive an e-mail when public authorities announce building projects which concern their area (street, neighbourhood, region). A software system automatically retrieves information concerning current planning procedures from the public authorities' websites. Besides targeted information per e-mail, this information is also made available via an open interface (API) for downstream applications.

#### Why "good practice"?
The usual procedure for informing the general public of planning projects in newspapers or on public authority websites is supplemented by the cheap and proactive possibility of targeted information per e-mail. The implementation is user-friendly and open to amendments. The information enables more targeted participation by citizens.

#### Interest in use
No data is available in this respect.

#### Effect / results achieved
156 territorial communities are presently covered and data is downloaded from the websites of the planning authorities.

#### See also:
[http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/) (Central government portal for planning projects for the whole UK, also informing about participation rights and possibilities)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form:</th>
<th>Transparency through third parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiator:</strong></td>
<td>Abgeordnetenwatch GbR, with the participation of: Mehr Demokratie e.V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period:</strong></td>
<td>Since December 2004 in Hamburg and several other federal laender, since December 2006 for MPs of the German Bundestag, since 2007 for the European Parliament (German MPs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political level:</strong></td>
<td>EU, federal government, federal laender (legislature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target group:</strong></td>
<td>Voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formats:</strong></td>
<td>Website, e-mail, form, RSS, ranking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What's it about?**
All MPs are listed, including their most important personal data (photograph, profession, contact details, subjects). The voting behaviour is documented (as far as possible). Furthermore, the MPs can be asked questions via a moderated online interface and they can then answer the questions via the system. Both questions and answers can be viewed by all Internet users and rated via "read recommendations".

**Why "good practice"?**
The role of MPs as representatives of the people becomes transparent, contacts between MPs and voters are facilitated for both parties. A collective knowledge base with political decisions is developed over the course of time.

**Interest in use**
Almost 125,000 visitors and close to 600,000 website visits were recorded during the first year in Hamburg. The expansion to federal and European level reflects the strong interest in this form of participation. More than 12,000 questions were published in 2007 of which 9,611 were answered (79.5%).

**Effect / results achieved**
The transparency of the parliamentarians' work is increased. An additional channel is made available for direct contact with MPs.

**See also:**
Stock-taking of activities, developments and results in the public administration

**Finanzämter-Beurteilung Niedersachsen [Rating of Tax Offices in Lower Saxony](http://www.ofd.niedersachsen.de/master/C3445177)**

**Participation form:**
Consultation

**Initiator:**
Lower Saxony tax administration

**Period:**
Since May 2004

**Political level:**
Federal land (executive branch)

**Target group:**
Tax office customers

**Formats:**
Survey

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**What's it about?**
The Lower Saxony tax administration is determined to improve service for citizens and hence the atmosphere between taxpayers and the administration. To this effect, citizens are asked to rate their tax office on the Internet. The subject focuses on questions concerning citizens' satisfaction with contacts with the tax office by telephone, post or in person and on rating processing times and the information offered. The responses are stored separately for each tax office and subsequently evaluated automatically.

**Why "good practice"?**
The direct capture of customer satisfaction data via the Internet is an efficient way to provide public authorities with feedback concerning their services.

**Interest in use**
No data available.

**Effect / results achieved**
The evaluated results are made available to the respective tax offices. More details concerning the further procedure are not available.
### Participation form:
Consultation

### Initiator:
Planungsverband Ballungsraum Frankfurt / Rhein-Main [Planning Group for the Greater Frankfurt / Rhine-Main Area]

### Period:
May to July 2007

### Political level:
Region

### Target group:
Stakeholders

### Formats:
Form, forum, GIS, telephone access

### What's it about?
Within the scope of the preparation of a regional land use plan, citizens were given the possibility to formally participate via the Internet (disclosure of plans, submission of comments). Furthermore, an online citizens' office publicly answered questions concerning the plans.

### Why "good practice"?
The use of the Internet lowers the thresholds for comments and simplifies participation. The online citizens' office contributed towards the transparency of the procedure. The linking of the comments to geographic data and the connection to a document management system also generated advantages for the administration.

### Interest in use
The number of users was low in the two-digit range. This is likely to be related to the fact that the instrument of a regional land use plan is still largely unknown.

### Effect / results achieved
The online comments were considered in the planning process in the same manner as the comments received through traditional channels. The integration of the participation offering into a document management system enabled more efficient processing of the comments.

### References:
### Participation form:
Consultation

### Initiator:
Königslutter am Elm city administration, Hanover University: Institute for Landscape and Nature Conservation (ILN), Institute for Applied Systems (IfAS), Federal Agency for Nature Conservation

### Period:
April 2002 to February 2005

### Political level:
Municipality

### Target group:
Residents, stakeholders

### Formats:
Form, forum, GIS, telephone access, learning games

---

**What's it about?**
The city of Königslutter am Elm, together with the entera planning firm and Hanover University, has prepared a landscape plan with the participation of citizens. Interested citizens can post their comments online. The comments can be referenced with geographic data via interactive maps. The project website informs visitors about the progress and the results of the planning process. A "learning world" offers learning games.

**Why "good practice"?**
Planning tasks, technical information, more detailed eLearning modules, interactive maps, petition offerings and meetings were combined with each other in an exemplary manner during the preparation of the landscape plan. The project is also an example of successful cooperation between institutions on different political levels in the development of eParticipation.

**Interest in use**
During the first phase, 220 suggestions from 40 citizens were processed and the maps of 53 areas were corrected.

**Effect / results achieved**
The online comments were considered in the planning process in the same manner as the comments received through traditional channels. The planning processes and results were significantly improved thanks to contributions from local experts.

**See also:**
Online version of the general landscape plan of the Diepholz district
http://www.entera-online.com/diepholz/index.php

**References:**
Von Haaren, C. et al. (2005); Kubicek et al. 2007
Familienfreundlicher Wohnort Hamburg [Hamurg as a Family-friendly Place to Live] (http://www.familienleben-hamburg.de)

**Participation form:**
Consultation

**Initiator:**
Department of Social Affairs and Families of the City of Hamburg

**Period:**
October to November 2005 (4 weeks)

**Political level:**
Municipality

**Target group:**
Families; citizens

**Formats:**
Forum, weblog, poll, podcast, raffle

**What's it about?**
Citizens can use the Internet in order to contribute their ideas for the development of a family policy for the city of Hamburg. The Internet platform offers visitors the possibility to inform themselves about the subject, to discuss political guidelines and to answer previously prepared questions. The results of the discussion were compiled and published as a citizens' guidance. The Hamburg Senate and the public authorities in charge will consider this guidance in all plans which influence family-friendly living in Hamburg.

**Why "good practice"?**
Citizens are given the possibility to cooperate in the development of political guidelines at an early stage. The project offers cooperation options on municipal level even beyond the scope of planning issues. The technical implementation, including target-group-specific web formats and the transparent integration of the offering into administration processes can be considered to be exemplary.

**Interest in use**
Close to 500 registered users, more than 2,000 postings, more than 12,000 visitors to the website.

**Effect / results achieved**
Despite the informal nature of the offering, the results are considered by administrations and politicians. Citizens can monitor the implementation of the ideas via a weblog of the organizer of the discussion (www.demos-monitor.de).

**See also:**
http://familie.portal.muenchen.de (An offering in the city of Munich in May 2006 which can be compared in terms of subject and procedure)

**References:**
Lührs 2006; Lührs & Hohberg 2007
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Participation form:</strong></th>
<th>Consultation, petitions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiator:</strong></td>
<td>Bristol City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period:</strong></td>
<td>Since January 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political level:</strong></td>
<td>Municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target group:</strong></td>
<td>Citizens; especially youths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formats:</strong></td>
<td>Form, forum, webcast, SMS, community</td>
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### What's it about?
The Internet portal reports on political/administrative decisions in Bristol and enables citizens to influence these decisions directly. Visitors to the website can take part in discussions, launch and/or sign a petition, or take part in surveys. Important council meetings are posted as video podcasts.

### Why "good practice"?
The portal offers citizens various forms of access to the policy process. Besides information and consultation, the petitions segment is also covered. Mobile communication forms and elements of an online community are integrated in order to specifically address youths.

### Interest in use
Quantitative use data is not available. Although the project manager states that the portal failed to reach youths or attract user-generated content to the desired extent, the project is nevertheless very successful in involving middle-aged and old-aged citizens (source: interview with Carolyn Hayward, [http://blip.tv/file/483205](http://blip.tv/file/483205))

### Effect / results achieved
Administrations and politicians undertake to consider the results of the consultations. Reports on council meetings create a certain measure of transparency with regard to the further processing of petitions.

### References:
Macintosh & Whyte 2006
| **UN Habitat World Jam**  
(https://www.wuf3-fum3.ca/en/about_habitat_jam_result.shtml) |
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<td><strong>Participation form:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Initiator:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Canadian government, UN</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Period:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2005 (3 days)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Political level:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World community</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Target group:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interested parties, representatives of international interest groups (NGOs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formats:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Forum, cybercafés</td>
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</table>

### What's it about?
The UN World Urban Forum hosts a biannual international conference which attracts several tens of thousands of delegates. The online platform enables citizens and initiatives to contribute their ideas to the conference without being present at the conference. This is achieved by giving them the possibility to exchange their views before the conference online in an English and French forum.

### Why "good practice"?
The consultation is one of the few consultations on an international scale. The organizers managed to handle the cultural diversity and to process a large number of contributions in an efficient manner. In order to reach people with no Internet access or experience, a total of 50 cybercafés were set up as points of access in African, South-American and Asian slums. The contributions were compacted by software developed by IBM and by moderators in order to extract concrete recommendations.

### Interest in use
A total of 39,000 people from 158 countries (25,000 of whom did not have their own Internet access) took part in the consultation and wrote 52,000 contributions. 78% of participants came from traditionally under-represented groups (women, youths, slum dwellers).

### Effect / results achieved
Out of 8,000 ideas put forward, 600 were identified as actionable ideas, and 70 of these were compiled as "key ideas" in a work book and submitted to the Habitat conference in June 2006.

### References:
Spangler et al. 2006  
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>12</strong></th>
<th><strong>Future-of-Food (Germany / Netherlands)</strong> (no longer available)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Participation form:</strong></td>
<td>Consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiator:</strong></td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection (Germany), Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuurbeheer en Visserij (Netherlands)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period:</strong></td>
<td>October to November 2001 (6 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political level:</strong></td>
<td>Federal government (executive branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target group:</strong></td>
<td>Interested public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formats:</strong></td>
<td>Forum, chat, survey</td>
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**What's it about?**
This international online consultation gave German and Dutch citizens the possibility to discuss answers to problems of agriculture. Besides a discussion platform, chats were offered and surveys conducted.

**Why "good practice"?**
The project used the Internet at an early stage as a channel for early citizen consultation concerning a political issue with a long-term range. Embedding in the national level of both countries and the transparent procedure demonstrate the relevance of the offering for the participants. The international discussion was supported by the provision of translations. The project was meticulously organized and met with strong interest among citizens.

**Interest in use**
According to a study by the Office of Technology Assessment at the German Parliament (Bundestag document 15/6015, p. 57), 22,000 citizens visited the website. 2,000 postings to chats and 450 postings to the discussion forums were recorded.

**Effect / results achieved**
The results of the discussion were documented on the website and in the form of a report which was publicly handed over to the ministers.

**References:**
Deutscher Bundestag 2005
### Regulations.gov (USA)  
(http://www.regulations.gov)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form:</th>
<th>Consultation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiator:</td>
<td>US government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period:</td>
<td>Since 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political level:</td>
<td>Federal government (executive branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group:</td>
<td>No special target group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formats:</td>
<td>Website, e-mail</td>
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</table>

**What's it about?**  
The consultation portal of the US government promotes the participation of citizens in the decision-making process on federal-state level. The website gives an overview of ongoing legislation projects, enables the submission and, in part, the viewing of comments on these, and proactively informs users of new information concerning a consultation.

**Why "good practice"?**  
The summarizing presentation of all the consultation processes of the US government is exemplary and constitutes an important contribution towards the transparency of government work. Feedback from participants provides valuable information for government agencies.

**Interest in use**  
Since 2005, the portal has recorded 24 million page views. 310,000 are available for retrieval. 18,000 comments have been posted so far (source:  

**Effect / results achieved**  
The participating government agencies warrant the disclosure of all comments within the scope of a consultation process.

**See also:**  
Comparable portals exist in many countries:  
http://www.consultingcanadians.gc.ca (for Canada);  
http://www.epeople.go.kr (for South Korea);  
http://newzealand.govt.nz/participate (for New Zealand);  
http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/consultation (for the UK);  
http://e-demokrati.borger.dk (for Denmark);  
http://www.osale.ee (for Estonia)
### Police Act Wiki (New Zealand) (http://wiki.policeact.govt.nz)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form:</th>
<th>Consultation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiator:</td>
<td>Government of New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period:</td>
<td>September 2007 (6 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political level:</td>
<td>Federal government (executive branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group:</td>
<td>No special target group, explicitly including foreigners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formats:</td>
<td>Wiki, website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What's it about?
The citizens of New Zealand and other interested parties were given the opportunity to take part in the reform of the Police Act 2008. The project managers of the reform process provided information which could then be amended and modified in any desired manner. The wiki was part of an 18-month consultation process and supplemented conventional consultations as well as online surveys.

### Why "good practice"?
The use of a wiki by a government agency in order to draft the wording of a law is a new stage of citizen participation in legislation which especially makes the influence of lobby groups more transparent.

### Interest in use
As a result of references in various online media, the wiki recorded a visitor rush of almost 10,000 visitors per day, many of whom were from abroad. The wiki led to several hundred proposals and thereby generated a clearly stronger response than the online forms which were also used. The proposals ranged from single words to longer paragraphs and existing proposals were sometimes also corrected. Until a moderator was appointed, some participants also used the freedom of an open wiki to post non-constructive comments. Most of these, however, were neither defamatory nor aggressive, but were mostly either jokes or made no reference to the consultation. Besides the moderators, some participants also removed such comments from the wiki.

### Effect / results achieved
The comments contributed to the wiki are used as documents which are considered in the consultation. Furthermore, the wiki triggered new awareness of the law reform. Another effect was the presentation of New Zealand's government as particularly open to the citizens' opinions and to new participative technologies. According to the project management, a new consultation wiki is planned, however, with restricted access for selected groups only.

### References:
McCardle 2007
### European Business Test Panel (EU)

** Participation form:**
Consultation  

**Initiator:**
European Commission  

**Period:**
Since 2005  

**Political level:**
EU (executive branch)  

**Target group:**
Selected companies  

**Formats:**
Survey  

---

### What’s it about?

With the European Business Test Panel (EBTP), the European Commission conducts regular surveys via the Internet polling businesses on proposed legislation or Commission initiatives which are likely to affect the businesses. The EBTP is representative and made up of around 3,600 companies from all the EU member states.

### Why "good practice"?

The panel enables the targeted and representative consultation of companies and can thereby help to compensate for existing lobby influences. Complete online handling enables efficient organization of the consultation process. The participating companies are informed about relevant legislation projects at an early stage. A multilingual user interface ensures that cultural diversity in the EU is taken into consideration.

### Interest in use

In 2007, between 300 and 500 companies of all sizes took part in the surveys.

### Effect / results achieved

The decision-makers undertake to consider the comments in their proposals. The panel members receive feedback on their comments as well as explanations concerning the subsequent measures resulting therefrom.
What's it about?
In addition to general petition law, petitions of general interest can be submitted which, prior to being discussed by the petitions committee, are published on the Internet and can be co-signed by supporters and discussed in an online forum.

Why "good practice"?
The offering is positioned on a high institutional level, it supports multi-directional communications and presents the way results are handled in a fully transparent manner. It integrates offline and online access, has become very popular among users, and also facilitates the work of the petitions committee (increased efficiency).

Interest in use
By the end of 2006, close to 300 (public) online petitions were admitted, 450,000 co-signers were recorded and 18,000 postings published in discussion forums (refer to Riehm 2007). Around 20,000 traditional petitions are submitted every year, around 10% of which use online forms or e-mail (refer to Toncar 2007).

Effect / results achieved
Greater visibility of petitions by way of publication, publishing of calls for co-signing and the possibility to link up with online campaigns. The results of the procedure are handled by the petitions committee in analogy to other petitions.

See also:
http://www.demokratieonline.de (Dedicated interface with ePetitions, additional discussion forums), online petitions of the Scottish parliament:
http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/vli/publicInfo/htsapp/LeafletIndex.htm

References:
Riehm 2007; Toncar 2007
**TOM (Estonia)** (http://www.eesti.ee/tom)

**Participation form:**
Petitions

**Initiator:**
Prime Minister of Estonia

**Period:**
Since 2001

**Political level:**
Federal government (executive branch)

**Target group:**
No special target group

**Formats:**
Website, forum, form

---

**What's it about?**
The TOM ("Täna Otsustan Mina" – "Today I Decide") citizens' portal enables citizens to participate in political processes. Proposed laws or construction projects currently underway can be viewed and commented upon and new ideas can be contributed. All ideas are first published online for discussion for a period of two weeks and, following a voting process, forwarded to the government which is obliged to respond to the proposals after one month.

**Why "good practice"?**
The website gives citizens a direct line to government. Citizens are to influence the political agency and become involved in existing initiatives. The discussion of the proposals on the website is to increase the quality of the proposals and enable a pre-selection. The process is strictly controlled, so that transparency and responsivity are ensured.

**Interest in use**
By 2007, a total of 6,919 citizens had registered (Registreerunud kasutajaid in 2007). Until June 2005, a total of 1,645 ideas were discussed and passed on via the system to the government (Pratchett 2007, p. 10).

**Effect / results achieved**
The offering is integrated into the system of representative democracy, with citizens' rights restricted to suggestions. However, the government has undertaken to comment upon all suggestions submitted.

**References:**
Pratchett 2007; Narusberg 2004
## FixMyStreet (UK) (http://www.fixmystreet.com)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form:</th>
<th>Complaints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiator:</strong></td>
<td>mySociety.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period:</strong></td>
<td>Since March 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political level:</strong></td>
<td>Municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target group:</strong></td>
<td>No special target group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formats:</strong></td>
<td>Website, form, maps, RSS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What's it about?
Users can report problems with public facilities, for example, potholes in streets or defective street lights. The suggestions and complaints are passed on to the public authorities in charge. The user can track the course of processing and state whether the problem was resolved.

### Why "good practice"?
The offering uses the knowledge of citizens in order to quickly identify and eliminate problems. At the same time, it also enables monitoring of the administration's work. The offering is implemented in a user-friendly manner by reducing to functionalities and using innovative technologies, such as interactive maps and RSS feeds in order to communicate the state of processing.

### Interest in use
1,000 reports were written within the first week; count as per 18 November 2007: 6,183 reports.

### Effect / results achieved
The administration's awareness of problems is improved through citizen participation. The administration's work becomes more transparent, citizens become more interested in their neighbourhoods and in public authorities. The offering is operated by an independent NGO and hence remains trustworthy.
Selection and documentation of exemplary projects (good practice) 115

Zukunft Stadionbad Bremen [Future of Bremens’s "Stationbad" Public Pool]
(http://www.stadionbad.bremen.de)

Participation form:
Cooperation

Initiator:
"Östliche Vorstadt" local authorities, city of Bremen

Period:
May 2004 (6 weeks)

Political level:
Municipality

Target group:
Youths, old-aged, families, swimmers

Formats:
Website, forum, newsletter, telephone access

What's it about?
The online discussion was part of a comprehensive cooperation process to rehabilitate Bremen's most popular open-air swimming pool. The core of the offering was a circle of representatives of relevant groups who developed a concept for the pool's future in a cooperative manner and by way of consultation with the general public. The Internet was used to disseminate information via the website and a newsletter and for an online discussion of open points of the decision.

Why "good practice"?
The participation process concerning the pool's future was characterised by media interaction (papers, Internet, face to face), different modes of participation (mentor group, on-site visits, future party, advocacy planning, etc.) and by the involvement of youths and older citizens. The very far-reaching transfer of decision-making powers to the representatives' group as the organiser of the procedure gives the process a high political relevance.

Interest in use
Around 1,000 citizens took part in the entire process, including around 300 pupils and 100 kindergarten children. Although the organisers rated participation in the online forum as relatively low with around 100 participants per week, the quality of postings was high – 50 mainly constructive and at times very well-founded postings were received even though the "youths" target group was not reached via the Internet.

Effect / results achieved
The department of sports, as the public authority in charge, for example, agreed in advance to accept the results of the consensus-orientated procedure on condition that these results were based on broad-based agreement. The consensus reached during the participation procedure was accepted, however, certain modifications had to be implemented during the implementation of the plans which then had to be agreed to with the representatives.

References:
Kubicek et al. 2007
20  Bürgerhaushalt Lichtenberg [Lichtenberg Participatory Budget]  
(http://www.buergerhaushalt-lichtenberg.de)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form:</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiator:</td>
<td>Lichtenberg district authorities, district council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period:</td>
<td>Since 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political level:</td>
<td>Municipality (district of the city of Berlin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group:</td>
<td>No special target group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formats:</td>
<td>RSS, survey, forum, ranking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What's it about?**
The participatory budget of the Berlin-Lichtenberg district enables citizens to co-determine relevant municipal expenditure. The offering includes not just the online platform where proposals can be posted, discussed and prioritized, but also central and decentralized meetings, a representative survey using questionnaires and an editorial conference. The latter brings together the proposals received through the different channels. All the results are documented on the Internet.

**Why "good practice"?**
The Berlin-Lichtenberg participatory budget features a high degree of continuity, growing participant numbers and an exemplary media mix.

**Interest in use**
Around 1,900 registered citizens and 150,000 visitors (as per November 2007), continuous growth since 2005.

**Effect / results achieved**
The citizens' proposals are considered during meetings of the district council. Implementation is documented in a report.

**See also:**

**References:**
Klages & Daramus 2007
### 1000 Fragen [1000 Questions] (http://1000fragen.de)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form:</th>
<th>Campaign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiator:</td>
<td>Aktion Mensch e.V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period:</td>
<td>Since October 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political level:</td>
<td>Federal government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group:</td>
<td>No special target group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formats:</td>
<td>Website, e-mail, ePostcards, newsletter, RSS feed, chats, online forums, &quot;terminology network&quot;, online games</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What's it about?

The project is designed to trigger public discourse throughout society as a whole in order to enable opinion-forming on bioethical subjects (embryo research, prenatal diagnostics, assisted suicide, etc.).

### Why "good practice"?

The project demonstrates how civil society can be motivated to form an opinion even on unpopular political issues. Online and offline media were cleverly interlinked to this effect, for example, by publishing results of the online discussion in cinema spots. Complex issues are presented in a manner which can be generally understood and the campaign retained its straight-forward focus despite the large target group.

### Interest in use

More than 11,000 questions, 80,000 comments, 600,000 website visitors (data supplied by the provider, as per February 2007)

### Effect / results achieved

Public attention, strong participation in the online discussion. The results were summarized and published in a book which was presented to politicians and representatives of the business and science communities.

### See also:

http://www.diegesellschafter.de (A project similar to "Aktion Mensch")

**Participation form:**
Campaign

**Initiator:**
dropping knowledge e.V.

**Period:**
Since September 2005

**Political level:**
The global society

**Target group:**
No special target group

**Formats:**
Forum, ranking, videos, public display

**What's it about?**
Dropping Knowledge uses innovative web technologies in order to lead a global dialogue on "the most pressing questions of our time". Users can, for example, ask questions and discuss with other users on the online platform. Experts provide first answers which can be discussed further. A thematic map and special search engines network the debate in order to generate a knowledge resource on global issues. Dropping Knowledge uses multi-media campaigns and events in order to convey the debate to the "real world". In 2006, individual questions were projected to a media facade at Berlin's Potsdamer Platz square in order to make people aware of an expert discussion with social visionaries.

**Why "good practice"?**
The initiators manage to make the general public aware of central issues of humankind and to trigger a global debate. The use of custom search engines and media interfaces make the project stand out as a pioneer which can serve as a role model for other eParticipation offerings.

**Interest in use**
The project meets with substantial public attention. According to the organizers, more than 50,000 questions were asked and discussed by June 2007.

**Effect / results achieved**
The project aims to achieve an indirect political effect. It generates public awareness of global issues (agenda setting) and networks interested parties, experts and initiatives in this field (empowerment).

**See also:**
[http://www.whydemocracy.net](http://www.whydemocracy.net) (A comparable project specifically related to the idea of democracy)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form:</th>
<th>Activism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiator:</td>
<td>A group of university students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period:</td>
<td>Since October 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political level:</td>
<td>Federal government (executive branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group:</td>
<td>No special target group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formats:</td>
<td>RSS, ranking, form, forum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What's it about?**
The project creates a channel that can be used to put questions to politicians (in this case: the Federal Chancellor). Questions can be posted online as text, audio or video documents and commented and rated by other users. Every week, the three questions with the highest ranking are forwarded for answering to the Press and Information Office of the federal government. The answers are published on the website and can also be discussed.

**Why "good practice"?**
The combination of questions and rating by other users as a selection criterion shows how modern Web 2.0 mechanisms can be used for transparent and responsive implementation of large-format participation offerings. The discussion option additionally involves participants more intensively than would be the case with questions alone.

**Interest in use**
Around 100 questions are asked every month. According to the providers, the questions portal (for all addressees) recorded 30 million clicks by October 2007.

**Effect / results achieved**
Every week, the Press and Information Office of the federal government sends a direct answer on behalf of the Federal Chancellor to three citizens who have asked a question. Both the type and the scope of the questions from citizens become additionally transparent. For the Chancellor, the platform constitutes an additional channel for communicating her policy. An indirect effect of the project is its pioneering function. According to the Press Office of the federal government, the Chancellor's podcast is to be supplemented by a feedback channel starting in 2008. The lack of a feedback channel had originally triggered the project (http://www.politik-digital.de/forward.php?link=1940, no longer available).

**See also:**
http://www.direktzu.de/bundestagspraesident as well as the offerings for politicians Matthias Platzeck, Christian Wulff and Harald Wolff.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stock-taking of activities, developments and results in the public administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### UnsubscribeMe (UK) ([http://www.unsubscribe-me.org/spreadtheword.php](http://www.unsubscribe-me.org/spreadtheword.php))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form:</th>
<th>Campaign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiator:</td>
<td>Amnesty International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period:</td>
<td>Since October 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political level:</td>
<td>The global society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group:</td>
<td>No special target group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formats:</td>
<td>Community, photo/video, weblog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### What's it about?
Under the "Unsubscribe Me" motto, Amnesty International UK calls upon citizens to withdraw their support from government for the "war on terror". The central platform of the campaign is a website which provides information about human rights violations during the fight against terror, collects signatures for the campaign, networks supporters via social networks and other Web 2.0 technologies and helps to launch its own campaigns on this issue.

#### Why "good practice"? 
The use of Web 2.0 technologies in order to motivate Internet users was managed with great success. The campaign is well networked with other online activities, for example, on weblogs and online communities, and uses viral dissemination forms (videos on frequently used platforms). Documentation of the activities of other users on the websites generates the impression of a highly active community and this triggers further commitment.

#### Interest in use
According to the organizers, 168,029 people had registered by 28 November 2007, of whom 3,929 had joined one of 20 groups.

#### Effect / results achieved
The campaign specifically targets the government in the UK. Furthermore, it shows human rights problems on a global scale, networks interested parties and stimulates the political use of the Internet and Web 2.0.

#### See also:
[http://www.campact.de](http://www.campact.de) (An online platform for organizing protest campaigns in Germany)
ICELE (UK) ([http://www.icele.org](http://www.icele.org))

**Participation form:**
Cross-section offering

**Initiator:**
UK Department of Communities and Local Government

**Period:**
Since October 2006 (preparations started at the beginning of 2006)

**Political level:**
Municipalities

**Target group:**
Decision-makers

**Formats:**
Website, newsletter, RSS, toolkit

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**What's it about?**
The International Centre of Excellence for Local eDemocracy (ICELE) offers practical advice and solutions for local policymakers and administrations in order to promote eParticipation in the UK. The centre mainly works by informing and networking stakeholders at administrations, but also offers tools for use in eParticipation projects.

**Why "good practice"?**
The centre marks the ambitions of the British government in the field of eParticipation. It bundles different national projects and constitutes a central point of contact for advice and information on this subject. The focus on municipalities reflects the greater demand for participation offerings on this political level.

**Interest in use**
No data available

**Effect / results achieved**
ICELE has organized and/or supported several conferences in order to better advertise eParticipation and to network stakeholders. The tools designed for dissemination are extensively used by community groups, but less by local public administrations than had been originally planned.
## ePractice (EU) ([http://www.epractice.eu](http://www.epractice.eu))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form:</th>
<th>Cross-section offering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiator:</strong></td>
<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period:</strong></td>
<td>Since June 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political level:</strong></td>
<td>EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target group:</strong></td>
<td>eGovernment practitioners and interested parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formats:</strong></td>
<td>Community, RSS, videos, tagging, ranking, weblog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What's it about?
The European Commission maintains an online community in order to promote exchange between practitioners in the different areas of eGovernment. The platform is used to describe successful applications, exchange information, make contacts and announce events. The activities of the community also include the awarding of the "European eGovernment Award" to particularly successful projects and the organization of workshops. Furthermore, the organizers publish a scientific magazine.

### Why "good practice"?
The offering uses the possibilities of a Web 2.0 community, in order to motivate people interested in eGovernment to pursue active exchange. The offering provides comprehensive resources for information about eGovernment.

### Interest in use
According to the website providers, more than 11,000 users have registered on the website (as per November 2007). 723 case studies were described. Data concerning visits to the website is not available.

### Effect / results achieved
Improvement of the state of information among eGovernment practitioners. Bundling of information on the subject beyond the boundaries of the EU member states.
5 The view of recipients of eParticipation on federal level

5.1 Survey design

A comprehensive data capturing effort was made in order to map, with the maximum possible precision, the current state of use of eParticipation offerings in Germany (refer to chapter 4.2) and in order to adequately consider the view which citizens, businesses and non-governmental organizations have for the future design of such offerings.

Representative poll

A representative sample was polled by Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Telefonfeld GmbH (FGWT) with regard to willingness to use and experience with (offline and online) forms of political participation, general political views, general Internet use as well as knowledge and expectations with regard to eParticipation offerings in Germany (1,031 citizens polled by telephone).

Online user poll

Since it had to be assumed that the share of eParticipation users would not be as high in the representative citizens' poll and because telephone polls of this kind only permit a certain degree of complexity in the questions, two additional online polls were conducted in October 2007. One of these polls addressed users of eParticipation offerings and asked them for their current experience with and interest in future offerings by the federal government. Furthermore, the citizens polled were also encouraged to make suggestions. The citizens addressed were invited to take part in newsletters from the authors of the study sent to participants in eParticipation projects in Berlin and Bremen, in several newsletters from the federal government concerning eGovernment issues, in newsletters from the providers of the www.abgeordnetenwatch.de website as well as the federal government's website. The feedback was considerably higher than expected and resulted in 320 questionnaires suitable for further evaluation. 20 citizens from this group took part in additional, more in-depth telephone interviews.

Online polls and surveys by business associations and NGOs

The second online poll addressed 45 representatives of large, medium and small umbrella and specialist business associations who were previously selected in targeted telephone calls (including, for example, Bundesverband Metall [Federal Metals Association], Bundesverband Deutscher Stahlhandel [German Federal Steel Trading Association], Bundesverband Erneuerbare Energie e.V. [German Renewable Energy Federation], Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände [Confederation of German Employers' Associations],

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190 The situation and views of citizens with a migration background are under-represented in this representative poll of voters aged 18 and over (and also in the user poll). Complex, multilingual surveys which the ARD and ZDF TV stations generally conducted with a view to media use (ARD/ZDF 2007) were not possible within the framework of this study due to time and cost aspects.
Deutscher Bauernverband [German Farmers’ Association], Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag [Association of the German Chambers of Commerce and Industry], non-governmental organizations (for example, ADFC, BAUM - Bundesdeutscher Arbeitskreis für umweltbewußtes Management e.V. [German Environmental Management Association], Caritas, Dachverband der Weiterbildungsorganisationen e.V. [Umbrella Organisation of Further Training Organizations], DGB [Confederation of German Trade Unions], Flüchtlingsrat Berlin [Berlin Refugee Council], Human Rights Watch) as well as leading municipal associations. The poll was designed to explore the requirements and expectations of these groups, especially with a view to participation by the business community in legislation processes.191

5.2 Present use of the Internet for political information and participation

As already noted in the previous chapters of this document, Germans are generally very interested in politics. A good three quarters of voters aged 18 and over stated that they had a very strong (8.2%), strong (26.8%) or certain (41.6%) interest in politics.192

![Graph of eParticipation offerings](image)

**Fig. 5.2-1:** Use of different eParticipation offerings (as a percentage of the voting population aged 18 and over (n=1,031), multiple answers possible

191 Although those polled were previously informed by telephone about the subject matter and scope of the poll (also in order to be able to directly address those in charge of lobby work), only 21 representatives of these institutions completed the questionnaire. The original aim had been to receive 20 questionnaires each completed by the representatives of business associations and NGOs. However, since these answers reflect the full range of associations (from the Confederation of German Employers’ Associations via the Confederation of German Trade Unions to smaller NGOs and leading municipal associations), it is possible to include these results as qualitative statements. For the questionnaires, refer to Appendices 2 and 3.

192 11.1% of the sample of 1,031 voters aged 18 and over stated in reply to the question "How interested are you in politics?" "hardly" and 11.9% stated "not at all".
The Internet is important as a source of information and is used by 29.7% of those polled for this purpose, i.e. by around every second Internet user. One striking element is that citizens with a higher formal education use the Internet for political information and participation to a much greater extent than others. In contrast to the general use of the Internet among this education group, older people use the Internet for this purpose more than younger citizens with a high formal education. Apart from this, younger citizens use the Internet as a source of information more extensively than older citizens, and men to a significantly larger extent than women (23.5% of men in contrast to 10.8% of women). Internet use for this purpose is far below average among disabled people and is significantly above average among self-employed citizens, whilst people in large cities use the Internet for this purpose more than people in small towns.

The same applies to Internet use for eParticipation purposes which is applicable to 24.9% of all citizens polled, i.e. to almost every fourth voter aged 18 and over. The use of eParticipation was covered by several indicators in the survey, ranging from downloads of policy-relevant information to participation in online discussion forums. These figures show that political participation via the Internet is based on similar groups of the population as "offline participation" and that online participation is hence a suitable way to improve and supplement the possibilities which these citizens have. In other words: eParticipation initially reproduces existing differences in political participation patterns.

If larger groups of the population are hence to be integrated into the political will-forming process, additional efforts and target-group-orientated work are apparently required also with a view to the use of the Internet and other new media – several good examples already exist in the case of youths, for example, and promising approaches also exist for other groups of the population, such as migrants (refer to Neuhaus & Wilforth 2007).

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193 The eParticipation index covers all citizens polled who replied with "yes" at least once to the question (24.9%): "There are different ways to obtain information about politics on the Internet or to participate. What about you: Which of the following options have you already used in recent years? Have you already followed an online discussion forum on the Internet on political issues or even joined the discussion? / … answered questionnaires with political contents? …" …completed an online petition to the German parliament… / visited a homepage or other Internet offering by a politician./ visited websites of federal ministries … in order to inform yourself about issues of federal policy … / ordered or downloaded information material on political issues, … sent a political question or a comment per e-mail, SMS or in a chat to a politician, a public agency, an association or a citizens' initiative? / … donated money to a political organization, party or initiative? / … published political contents on your own homepage, in a weblog or the like?

194 Another striking observation is the significantly lower degree of use of eParticipation by women which is confirmed by both the representative survey and by the online poll of eParticipation users: Whilst 32.2% of men had already used one of the eParticipation offerings stated at least once, this figure was as low as 18.2% for women. This also gives reason for concern because the percentage of women with only a "minor" or "no" interest in politics is not significantly lower than that of men (25.5% of women vs. 20.3% of men).
The question concerning different options for using the Internet as a source of political information or as a means of participation showed that the information on the federal government's websites is of paramount importance (refer to Fig. 5.2-1): More than 20% of all voters aged 18 and over stated that they "receive information from websites of the federal government". Federal government websites are used more by citizens with a good formal education than by citizens with a poorer formal education, and more by younger than by older citizens and significantly more by men than by women.

This use is followed by the group of those citizens who visit homepages of politicians and who order or directly download information material via the Internet or from websites (refer to Fig. 5.2-1). Other applications which have a very minor role to play include the submission of ePetitions, the operation of one's own website with political contents as well as donations to political parties, NGOs or other political groups via the Internet (the percentages in Fig. 5.2-1 refer to the shares in the universe!).

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It should be noted that for methodological reasons the identity of the party commissioning the study was not disclosed to those polled in order to avoid influencing and "undesired reply behaviour" to the maximum extent possible.
Another interesting question concerned the political level for which the Internet was used for political matters, i.e. chiefly on municipal, federal-land, federal or European level. The representative survey showed that the Internet is used primarily on the level of federal policy. Federal-land and European policy have a significantly less important role to play. This applies to both genders, however, with the exception of European level, men are significantly more involved than women in the other political levels (refer to Fig. 5.2-4). However, the reasons for using the Internet differ significantly with regard to the most widely used eParticipation offerings by municipal administrations and/or the federal government. This becomes evident from the direct online poll of users of eParticipation offerings (in the broadest sense): Whilst the aspects of "being concerned" (67.7%) and "expected effect of one's own participation" (64.5%) are the most important aspects on municipal level, they have a minor role to play in interest in and/or commitment to policy on federal level (30.3% and 6.2%, respectively). In this case, personal interest in the political issues is clearly the crucial component (refer to Fig. 5.2.4).

However, the illustration also shows that those who use political offerings on federal level do not automatically expect their involvement to show a particularly strong effect; on the contrary, only 6.2% of those polled believed that they were able to achieve most here (multiple answers were permitted). It is left to the reader to decide whether this is a sign of resignation or of acceptance of the mechanisms of representative democracy.

5.3 Future use of the Internet for eParticipation offerings

5.3.1 Results of the representative poll on future use of eParticipation

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{kann ich mir nicht vorstellen} \\
\text{kann ich mir vorstellen}
\end{array}
\]

[kann ich mir vorstellen
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Frage: “Können Sie sich vorstellen, sich im Internet in Zukunft an einer Diskussion über ein aktuelles Thema der Bundespolitik zu beteiligen, z.B. über die Rente ab 67, zur Bahnprivatisierung oder zur Klimapolitik?”

Fig. 5.3-1: Interest in future use of the Internet for questions to politicians (the figures represent percentages of all voters aged 18 and over (n=1.031)\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{196} These questions were only put to those Internet users who used the Internet at least once a month in order to obtain information about political issues (29.7%).
Two questions of the representative survey of the population addressed the potential use of certain eParticipation offerings in the future. 12.8% of German voters can imagine being interested in future in online forums on topics, such as old-age pension, reform of the German rail or climate policy on federal level, with half of these citizens stating that they would also make their own contributions whilst the other half would tend to use such offerings for reading (refer to Fig. 5.3.-1).

The second question addressed interest in using the Internet in future in order to ask politicians questions per e-mail, in chats or through comparable channels, with the answers to these questions being subsequently distributed via the Internet (podcasts, etc.) again. (Only) 6.2% of all voters aged 18 and over expressed an interest in this application which once again reflects the sociodemographic results reported earlier in this document. The only difference being that in this case citizens not in employment (pensioners excluded) showed a relatively higher interest. For the future too, willingness to participate in federal policy via the Internet is hence rather limited to a comparatively smaller, but possibly politically relevant group of the population (refer to Fig. 5.3-2).

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197 This figure illustrates the problem of cognitive dissonance of questions that address the future – evaluations of online consultations show that the share of “lurkers” (read-onlys) is significantly larger than the share of active writers.

198 These questions were only put to those Internet users who used the Internet at least once a month in order to obtain information about political issues (29.7%).
5.3.2 Results of the online user poll on future use of eParticipation

The online poll of politically interested and committed citizens who also use the Internet for this purpose (taking the representative poll as a basis, this group can be estimated to represent a good 30% of the population) provided indications concerning experience with and expectations for federal government eParticipation offerings. These individuals were first generally asked about further forms of Internet use or other new technologies which they considered to be sensible in communications with institutions on federal level and then two possible offerings were presented to them. These offerings were related to the provision of an integrated web portal by the federal government and all federal authorities, enabling users to directly put questions to politicians, to submit suggestions, and to retrieve answers in the form of video or audio files (for example, as so-called podcasts). Around two out of three responders from the group of eParticipation users consider this to be (very) sensible, whilst only 6.6% are not interested in this proposal (refer to Fig. 5.3-3). 78% see it as a (very) important advantage that this enables direct contacts with politicians; 74.9% see it as a means of creating transparency, 70.3% expect this to provide a good overview of responsibilities, and more than half (56.3%) consider this to be a good measure to reduce disillusionment with politics.

43.9% considered the disadvantages stated in the questionnaire, i.e. a risk of excessive complexity due to an excessive amount of information, to be (very) important; a quarter (23.3%) of those polled considered the risk that the cost of the portal would burden the taxpayer to be (very) important. At this point, however, a large number of other potential disadvantages were stated individually, for example, reduced face-to-face communications; a strong increase in work necessary to answer the questions and suggestions; concerns that politicians would not manage to read and...
answer the postings; uncertainty as to whether the politician really answers in person ("I can hardly believe that Ms Merkel answers when I write to her."). Furthermore, there are concerns of "information contamination by pointless PR" as well as criticism that this does not mean "real participation in decisions".

More than 70% of those polled online considered the second format for participation via the Internet to be sensible or even very sensible: "Public discussion forums on the Internet on proposed laws at a stage where the ministry in charge of the draft is still in the orientation phase - for example, on climate policy, on changing the motor vehicle identification system or on revised data protection legislation" (refer to Fig. 5.3-4). The following advantages were considered to be important or very important out of a given selection:

- Integration of all important arguments is possible at an early stage (88.5%)
- Creation of transparency (78.4%)
- Getting to know the bandwidth of the players (73.8%).

Further advantages described by the citizens polled included that this approach enabled the involvement of citizens affected by revised legislation and that minorities too were given the possibility to state their views, that lobby interests could be identified and that the "usual pressure groups could be neutralized".

The disadvantages mentioned included the risk of staged fights (60%) as well as the risk of misuse (for example, too much spam postings) (52.1%). Other potential disadvantages were not largely considered to be (very) important, such as the low degree of concern at such an early stage (30.2%) or the "additional time requirement with little added value" (27.3%). Further disadvantages described by the citizens polled themselves included that "gabbers and busybodies were given a forum", that the actual influence would be absolutely uncertain and/or that "politicians/ministers would rightly not care about it because it is not representative", that the bandwidth of players would not be recognizable and that lobbying would become even easier via such anonymous channels. The question is raised as to how and who would ensure equitable and fair moderation and as to whether everything would be discussed or ultimately only those subjects which would not hurt politicians. Such an offering would be an "alibi measure" and/or "populism".

5.3.3 Results of the online poll of associations on future use of eParticipation

From the point of view of associations, the survey specifically directed towards this group featuring an integrated web portal by the federal government for the provision of documents pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act meets with a very positive response (mean value of 1.7 on a scale from 1 to 5 from "very sensible" (1) via "worth considering" (3) to "unimportant" (5)). The associations believe that all the other measures proposed to them make less sense. In this respect, we have already interpreted the ticking off of the middle item, i.e. "worth considering" (mark of 3) as scepticism:

- Electronic provision of the written comments of all those involved for all the other parties involved in closed user spaces (2.25)
- Provision of an integrated web portal by the federal government and downstream public agencies (Federal Network Agency, Federal Environmental Agency, etc.) with all hearings and consultations of the federal government with an automated notification function corresponding to an interest profile entered by the associations (2.5)
- Public discussion forums on the Internet on proposed laws at a stage where the ministry in charge of the draft is still in the orientation phase - for example, on climate policy, on
changing the motor vehicle identification system or on revised data protection legislation (2.5)

- Public discussion forums on the Internet on proposed legislation at the stage of parliamentary deliberation – for example, concerning the grant period for 1-stage unemployment benefits or concerning the privatization of German rail (3.0)
- Internet-based group work systems in addition to the work by advisory boards or committees appointed by federal ministries or federal agencies in which the associations are involved on a regular basis (3.1)
- Moderated online hearing to replace expert hearings by the ministries on draft laws or programmes on federal level (3.3)
- Moderated online hearing to replace formal hearings by the Bundestag committees (3.3).

The acceptance of an electronically supported pilot project, such as an online discussion or hearing, is strongly dependent on the particular subject, ranging from 1.7 (on the subject of "measures related to climate policy") to 2.2 (revision of the Data Protection Act) and 2.3 (removal of obstacles in approval procedures, old-age pension at the age of 67).

5.4 Proposals from citizens for further forms of Internet use for eParticipation on federal level

In the online survey, the users of eParticipation were also asked to submit proposals for other forms of citizen participation via the Internet which should be tried out. We consider some of these proposals to be definitely worth considering and have integrated these in part into our recommendations for action (box 5.4-1 is a compilation of several proposals which are neither rated nor weighted by the authors):

- "Queries for all activities by governments and parliament."
- "Citizen participation by selected, registered individuals."
- "Online consultations on clearly defined policy issues. Important: Provision of background information, moderation of the discussion and intensive feedback to the participants on the latest state of the debate and the further decision-making process…"
- "The form is relatively unimportant as long as it is made clear that the opinion of the stakeholders matters, not just to the researchers, but also to the decision-makers. This means that surveys of this kind should be presented on the government's websites."
- "Open consultation hours" – citizens ask, politicians answer (for example, very concrete facts, for example, whether a law has already been passed, who is responsible, whether EU requirements existed in this respect or whether the politicians are making a decision voluntarily…"
- "Policies for the disabled and disabled-friendly Internet without barriers."
- "It would be really helpful if citizens could tell politicians their experience anonymously in certain projects. In discussions on the education system or on recipients of stage-2 unemployment benefits, for example, the citizens affected thereby are never heard."

- Surveys, test votes, 'Politbarometer' – referendum on missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan
- Adaptation of social networking in the citizens' portal
- Forms of participation for use by citizens should be made available on all political levels for political will formation using a participation management system. Modified advisory procedures, future workshops … would be particularly suitable.
Committee hearings
I do not have any proposals other than e-mail communication; it would be good if citizens were better informed about the new technological possibilities and were given an introduction as to how to use them.
Surveys on the relevance of issues which are handled by parliaments.
Suggestion box
Committee consultation hours
Citizens’ polls concerning focal aspects of expenditure of government money
Citizen participation with regard to tax increases, waste of taxes and, very importantly, discussions on how to reduce red tape in municipal administration and federal-land governments
Participative budgets, wide-spread publication of resolutions and minutes, including comment functions.
Chat with members of the federal governments and/or state secretaries on an issue, alternatingly.
Proposal: weekly. As a forum and for mutual suggestions, information.
The greatest challenge is the processing of the host of information and postings (including nonsense) which can be expected, as well as the evaluation and rating of these. A large-scale test should hence be launched taking the example of the pension age in order to assess on the basis of the results whether this test can be transferred.
Download of speeches and position papers, followed by the possibility to vote on what was said. This possibility should be offered by the political parties. This will create more contacts with the people!
Administration procedures via the Internet; transaction of administration products, including the possibility to monitor the processing status; publication via the web.
Some kind of customer reviews (in analogy to Amazon); people who are (feel) concerned by political decisions can subsequently write what the effect was. It should then be possible to read this at certain politicians, parties, committees and articles...
Serious opinion polls, for example: climate, stock market crash, destructive commercialization (privatization), scientific research and other serious opinion polls which do not lead to a subsequent unbearable flood of spam mail.
Nobody cares what citizens want – so why let them participate?
It would already help a lot if politicians could be simply reached per e-mail - without the detour via the secretary who has to print the mails.
Budget deliberations and pre-votes, for example, in Berlin's Lichtenberg district.
Opinion polls like this one on political issues.
Online discussion forums with a limited group of participants.
Test votes on important legislation projects.
Pure opinion forums are worth nothing. Citizens must be actively involved in a political process of consultation. This requires moderated and technically supported workflows.
Participation offerings make sense for concrete questions and projects, for example, on municipal level. However, voluntary commitment should exist on the part of the political bodies in order to ensure that contributions are also integrated and examined.
Electronic (“TED”) voting via popular websites (as far as possible) on subjects related to policy for the disabled in the health sector using an audio function and audio examples for disabled people in order to enable these to take part in the discussions.
Video debates; see US election campaign.
Referendum or votes on specific subjects, so that politicians can assess the people's mood.
Referendums, but this is probably wishful thinking.
Run-up to citizens' initiatives and signature collections, etc.
Elections, live debates

Box 5.4-1: Proposals from users of the online survey for further eParticipation offerings

6 Profile of strengths and weaknesses – Germany in an international comparison

6.1 Evaluation of the as-is situation

What is the state of use of new ICT in Germany for involving the business community and citizens in political decision-making and administrative processes? In order to answer this question, the results of the stock-taking phase and of the surveys for Germany are compiled and discussed with a view to certain target concepts. On the one hand, the target concepts
consist of the authors’ expert opinion concerning the potential of eParticipation and their definition of good practice. Furthermore, international developments and trends are used as references on the other.

The examination of current eParticipation offerings and of scientific literature confirms more or less the picture which the United Nations drew in its 2005 ranking. All in all, Germany ranks among the leading countries offering eParticipation. Within this group, however, Germany does not hold a pioneering position, but comes up behind the UK, the US, Canada, South Korea, New Zealand, Denmark and Estonia.\(^{199}\)

However, in all of these countries eParticipation is far away from being the standard for citizen involvement; it tends to be an exception when the share of consultations carried out electronically or petitions filed electronically is taken as the yardstick. The eRate is then in the one-digit percentage range. Furthermore, citizen participation offerings which really deserve this name are still quite rare on an international scale in many areas of political action. The signatory states of the Aarhus Convention, for instance, not only committed themselves to make environmental information available, but also to formally introduce citizen participation procedures for planning and decision-making processes which are relevant for the environment. A review after ten years states that the commitment to make information available has been implemented to a large extent, but that there are only a few legal participation procedures even though the environmental area is considered to be relatively participation-friendly when compared with other fields of policy.

Furthermore, the international comparative studies hardly differentiate in terms of the quality of participation and seldom contain concrete and validated data concerning the effects of the participation processes.

The following evaluation of the as-is situation in the form of a SWOT analysis is hence not based on well-founded comparisons and proven facts, but instead on views and perceptions which are selective and which can be corrected. The online discussion of the study which will be proposed later in this document should hence also explicitly address the following hypotheses.

The internal situation in Germany is evaluated first, i.e. the strengths and weaknesses of activities so far carried out in the field of eParticipation are identified. This will be followed by an analysis of the external situation, i.e. of the opportunities and threats to be expected for eParticipation in Germany as a result of technological, social or international developments and trends.

### 6.1.1 Strengths

Broken down in terms of participation forms, Germany's strengths can be summarized as follows:

- The standard of ICT use in the information segment is generally very high in Germany. The German "Portal U", for instance, is considered to be an international model for environmental information. However, the international level is also very high (UN 2005).
- The Transparency through third parties aspect is also relatively advanced in Germany thanks to the activities of associations like "Mehr Demokratie e.V." and "Chaos Computer Club", even though a comparison with the UK suggests that there is room for further

\(^{199}\) Against the background of the stock-taking results, it is hence not possible to accept the evaluation of the newer eGovernment study by the United Nations (UN 2008) even though this study constitutes an warning signal and motivation for a more in-depth, international comparative analysis.
development (refer to Mayo & Steinberg 2007). In the case of international organizations, national development differences are quickly levelled out due to strong networking within and between organizations.

- **Consultations** are currently at the heart of eParticipation in Germany. This is reflected both by the number of offerings and the diversity of the formats used which reaches a similar level only in the case of campaigns (refer to Table 4.4-1). In Germany, activities related to planning procedures and participative budgets on *regional and municipal level* reach a high level by international standards. Evaluations rate citizens’ interest in participation and the quality of postings and debates as very good throughout (refer to Wölk et al. 2007; Winkler & Kozeluh 2005; Trénel 2004; Lührs et al. 2004; Westholm 2003) on condition that certain criteria are adhered to in the implementation of online consultations (including, for example, the definition of rules, the identification of benefits for participants, active moderation of forums, pre-structuring of results by participants or organizers). In the consultation area, eParticipation offerings for the business community are identified in addition to offerings for citizens.

- In the *applications / complaints / petitions* segment, Germany provides an offering with the public online petitions of the German parliament which stands out on an international level thanks to its practical concept for use. In other areas, the possibilities for online applications have not yet reached a comparable level of development.

- Besides consultations, the *activism / campaigns / lobbying* segment provides the most offerings which are also technically the most advanced. German and international offerings are generally comparable in this field. Besides aggregative means where influence is sought through the largest possible number of participants, many campaigns also use deliberative means which are designed to explore political alternatives. Campaigns hence often fulfil the democratic function of political opinion forming. It goes without saying that the offerings in this area are of a short-term nature. However, a trend towards perpetuation through online communities of political activists can be seen both in Germany and in other countries. The offerings are often technically very innovative and constitute role models for offerings in other areas too.

eParticipation in Germany has an almost ten-year development history. Experiments on federal level, such as the binational Future-of-Food online consultation or the online debate on the modernization of information law, met with international attention at an early stage. Many municipalities and some federal laender perform regular, formal and informal, online consultations as part of urban and regional planning and with regard to participatory budgets. Tried-and-tested technologies and a wealth of experience are hence available in this field. Our study suggests that the technical implementation of eParticipation offerings in Germany is based on a high technical level throughout. Besides established formats, such as online formats, new formats are also used here, such as weblogs, podcasts and wikis. The offerings by non-governmental organizations also show that the technological basis for eParticipation is also generally very well developed. Today, the grown empirical knowledge and well-designed guidance area already available for using the technical tools and integrating them into the different organizational, cultural and legal contexts. However, well-founded evaluations and comparative studies which support this view on a concrete level are not yet available.

### 6.1.2 Weaknesses

Broken down in terms of participation forms, Germany's weaknesses can be summarized as follows:
International examples from the Information field suggest that Germany has not yet made full use of the possibilities of the Internet for implementing the Freedom of Information Act. Suitable offerings for retrieving and publishing documents are so far lacking at the government end. The civil-society “befreite Dokumente” [“Liberated documents”] initiative by the Chaos Computer Club is unable to close this gap. This project addresses only a small portion of the procedures and processes within the scope of the Freedom of Information Act because the programme is not sufficiently well-known and because there is no automatic mechanism to make use of this web offering.

Although electronic consultation procedures can be found on municipal and regional level in Germany, they are quite rare on federal level. The international top performers in the field of eParticipation offer national consultations on a regular and broad basis. The procedures for online consultations are typically laid down in special policies and procedure statements in these countries (which include the US, Canada, South Korea, New Zealand, the UK, Denmark and Estonia). In contrast to Germany, these countries provide central overviews and/or directories of ongoing and completed programmes which trigger citizens’ interest and facilitate access to the offerings. Furthermore, competence centres at the ministries support public agencies in the performance of online consultations and act as development monitors.

One striking aspect in the applications / complaints / petitions area is that, unlike the British and Estonian governments or the German parliament, the executive branch in Germany does not maintain a dedicated portal for submitting suggestions or complaints even though the federal government employs around 30 commissioners who are responsible for monitoring the interests of certain groups of the population. This may be one of the reasons why Internet users in Germany make use of the ePetitions offering to a lesser extent (1%) than in the UK (7%).

The cooperation segment is represented among the eParticipation offerings to a very small extent only due to the demanding requirements for initiators and addressees of such offerings. These can be found on municipal level and in the field of conflict settlement through mediation.

Although certain creative concepts exist with a view to creating transparency by third parties, these approaches cannot have a sustainable effect due to a lack of resources so that they may fail to achieve the required critical size.

Although the offerings in Germany often use formats of the participative web, i.e. weblogs and podcasts (OECD 2007b), only few of these offerings make use of the full interactive and multilateral potential of these technologies. Examples from the US and the UK show that the opening of a feedback channel is a precondition for the transition from pure information offerings to participative offerings (in the case of weblogs, this means the possibility to write comments and/or to set trackbacks). They do, however, also show that the technical solution must be supported by suitable process concepts and a participation culture in order to come into effect. In many cases, however, providers are reluctant to make sufficient and qualified personnel available to support the technical processes, to perform the required PR work and to carry out a subsequent evaluation unless external funds have been solicited for the project. As a result, the quality of participation often lags behind the original expectations of all the parties involved.

One can generally summarize that the institutional integration of eParticipation offerings in Germany appears to be in need of improvement. Save for a few exceptions, a more continuous and persistent use of information and communication technologies has been seldom achieved so far. Furthermore, transparency and responsivity should also be increased, i.e. providers often fail to clearly communicate what the purpose of the offering is, what will happen to the results and whether a defined response from the political and administrative
stakeholders can be expected. Tracking and tracing, i.e. transparency of the development of a proposal or complaint in a manner similar to the tracing of the status of parcels on the Internet, are still the exception.

Potential for improvement also exists with regard to the inclusivity of eParticipation. Higher education, male gender, an age between 25 and 29 years, and living in a large city strongly favour the use of eParticipation offerings. Our study did not find any activation of groups of the population had not previously participated.

6.1.3 Opportunities

On a technical level, the conditions for eParticipation can be classified as good. Almost two thirds of Germans occasionally use the Internet, with a good 50% of Germans having broadband access. Furthermore, almost all members of the young generation use the Internet. The technical equipment and facilities at public agencies can also be considered to be good.

A good basis also exists at the demand end for eParticipation. There is a host of indications of a keen interest in participation offerings on the Internet:

• Three quarters of German voters have at least a certain interest in politics (refer to chapter 5.2).

• One quarter of the population has already obtained in one way or another information about political matters from the Internet or used the Internet for participation, mainly in matters concerning federal level. 20% of citizens visited the federal government's websites and around 13% of citizens, i.e. a good 10 million people, can imagine using the Internet in future to participate in a debate on a topical subject related to federal policy.

• Civil-society projects, such as abgeordnetenwatch.de and direktzu.de, fill a gap which government institutions fail to close. They enable citizens to put questions to MPs or other high-ranking political decision-makers. Their strong popularity bears witness to the need for direct exchange between citizens and politicians.

• Recent eParticipation offerings demonstrate the "mass suitability" and the mobilization potential of eParticipation. The participative budget of the city of Köln (Cologne) recorded access from around 100,000 different computers (unique visitors), 7,500 users registered on the Internet platform, 5,000 proposals concerning the budget (85% of these were sent via the Internet) and around 9,000 comments. Besides regional TV stations as well as local and supraregional quality papers, the yellow press (Bild newspaper) also repeatedly covered the participative budget.

Further opportunities result from a well-developed history of traditional (i.e. typically face-to-face and paper-based), formal and at times also informal participation offerings which are available on federal, regional or municipal level and which provide a legal and organizational foundation for eParticipation. Besides regional planning or planning approval procedures on federal-land level, these offerings also include participation procedures which are covered by a range of laws and regulations, including the Act on the Assessment of Environmental Impacts, the Federal Immission Control Act, the Ordinance on the Procedure for Licensing of Installations under section 7 of the Atomic Energy Act, the Nuclear Licensing Procedure Ordinance, the Fertilizer Act and the Waste Avoidance, Recycling and Disposal Act.

Citizen participation offerings also have a prominent role to play in the debate on modernizing the administration. With its "E-Government 2.0" programme, the federal government is catching up on countries which pursue an active eGovernment policy (TNS Infratest 2007, pp. 303 seq.). The programme includes the strategic aim to promote eParticipation and thereby constitutes an important interface with measures designed to
6.1.4 Risks

Citizens' trust in politicians and political institutions has been declining for decades. eParticipation can be one measure to reverse this trend. New, modern formats can help to improve participation possibilities and to increase the transparency of political processes. eParticipation can thus help to improve trust in politicians and political institutions. However, there is also a risk that precisely the opposite effect occurs, i.e. that eParticipation could strengthen distrust in politics because participation could lose its positive and desired effects on the political process if:

- many experiments are carried out which remain without any consequences and if the impression of "pseudo participation" arises and/or if too many low-profile participation offerings are created (according to the motto "Tell us what you think") which would banalize participation (Selle, 2006, pp. 501 seq.);
- citizen participation is designed to achieve previously fixed aims rather than to enable learning processes;
- politicians no longer actively develop positions and put these up for discussion, but instead follow the people's voice as perceived during the course of the participation procedure.

Another megatrend which may have an adverse effect on democracy is the breaking down of the general public into sub-sets. Fully differentiated media offerings mean that specific information can be targeted to address each and every sub-group of society. Political opinion-forming is then increasingly limited to circles of like-minded people and confrontation with other opinions or situations becomes rare. The Internet accelerates this trend. Online forums for exchanging similar opinions and for mobilizing people for a common goal are much more common than forums involving people from all groups of the society. This is where the government bears a special responsibility because it can generate strong interest in forums for discussing political decisions on the basis of the relevance of political decisions for very different groups of society. However, this task is probably the more difficult the larger the differences in education, the larger the economic differences and the larger the language barriers in the population.

And, not least, barriers within the administration system can hinder the development of eParticipation. Participation processes are often in conflict with the administration's interests (maintaining responsibilities, avoiding additional work) and communication cultures (processes linked to hierarchical structures). They typically call for the introduction of new workflows and their implementation requires a significant degree of coordination between different public agencies or departments in administrations. The continued or even increasing lack of public sector funds is another adverse factor because the implementation of eParticipation offerings may require significant amounts of support work. Limited funds hence often lead to technical mistakes, for example. Marketing activities to communicate participation offerings, for example, are often omitted because it is hoped that a press release and the diffusion processes resulting from the Internet's intrinsic dynamism will suffice. This is a mistake which is almost always punished by low participation rates. Even worse, these cases neglect precisely those groups of the population which must be classified as
underprivileged in several other respects too. These groups of citizens, such as migrants or people with fewer qualifications, must usually be addressed as specific target groups.

6.2 Optimization strategies

The field of eParticipation is still too young in order to enable a well-founded identification of optimization strategies. This is what the OECD recently stated to its regret in a publication titled "Evaluating Public Participation in Policy-Making". Although the need for evaluations of participation processes has been stressed for more than five years, these evaluations are very rare and, at best, carried out in a methodologically questionable manner, so that there is neither well-founded knowledge of success factors nor any quality standards. The core statement reads as follows:

"There is a striking imbalance between the amount of time, money and energy that governments in OECD counties invest in engaging citizens and civil society in public decision-making and the amount of attention they pay to evaluating the effectiveness of such efforts. However, it is hardly surprising that such an evaluation gap exists. Since public participation in political decision-making processes is still a relatively young phenomenon and evaluation a relatively young discipline, one can rightly say that the evaluation of public participation is still in its infancy" (OECD 2005, pp. 10 seq.).

Against this background, "optimization strategies" can only mean that certain plausible conclusions are drawn from the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks analyzed. These cannot deal with finished and meticulously balanced projects or programmes; instead, they will have to aim to gradually overcome existing knowledge gaps and uncertainties in a process-orientated, step-by-step approach.

The SWOT analysis already suggested that it is hence not possible in the short term and, above all, with isolated technical measures to solve the key problem of long distance and the low level of trust which many citizens have especially with regard to federal politicians; instead, this will require a longer-term, gradual programme which should encompass as many administrative areas as possible where transparency and credibility are the guiding principles and where both sceptical citizens and inexperienced administrative staff experience positive results. The first question to be asked with regard to such a programme is how its stands in relation to neighbouring programmes and, above all, to eGovernment.

6.2.1 eParticipation and eGovernment

The motivation for conducting this participation study is rooted in the eGovernment Programme 2.0. There are, without doubt, several reasons and possibilities to render eGovernment processes more participatory and to improve their quality via participation. However, the overall field of eParticipation also covers sub-areas which have nothing to do with eGovernment processes and where excessively close links with the administration are even counter-productive. This applies, in particular, to the aspect of empowerment of civil-society initiatives and organizations (eCampaigning, eMovements, eActivism). One concrete example is the Campaign Generator developed by the city of Bristol within the scope of the British National Local eDemocracy Project which can be used by initiatives to plan and perform online campaigns. This tool was offered by the city council for free and was not
accepted because the initiatives did not want to become dependent upon an institution against which they might want to campaign at some time in the future.

At an international conference on "Electronic Democracy" held in November 2007 on behalf of the European Science Foundation, almost the same number of experienced researchers favoured closer ties between eGovernment and eParticipation on the one hand as researchers favoured a more clear-cut separation. In his evaluation of the British National Local eDemocracy Project, Lawrence Pratchett concludes from interviews with local politicians and administrative staff that there is often no clear distinction between eParticipation and eGovernment and that these are hence mixed up with the consequence of uncertainty within administrations and in the presentation to citizens. eGovernment processes treat citizens as customers. Policy is made for them. In eParticipation processes, they should be treated as partners and policy must then be made together with them. This different role definition suggests that projects should be clearly assigned to one or the other aim. Both the tools and the political platforms can relate to both areas.

There are reasons of department organization as well as budget-related reasons which support an integrated eGovernment and eParticipation strategy where large parts of eParticipation appear in an eGovernment programme, however, as perceivably independent fields of action and promotion areas. Besides this, however, there should also be an independent eParticipation sector which relates to civil-society empowerment and which deals to a minor extent with civic education and to a larger extent with political culture. This area will be referred to as "eParticipation and civil society". It can be set up at organizations like, for example, the Federal Agency for Civil Education. Although its volume will certainly be much smaller than the eGovernment-near eParticipation areas, it is nevertheless an element that can increase the credibility of government action as a whole.

6.2.2 Combining opportunities and strengths

One great and initially unexpected opportunity which this study has shown is that 20% of those surveyed visit the websites of federal authorities when searching for information. This opportunity can be put to good use if the strength of advanced technical tools is carefully used so that these visitors will experience positive results, visit the websites again and not only retrieve information, but also participate actively in the future. A good 13% of those surveyed said that they were interested in this.

However, the results of the stock-taking efforts and the analysis of strengths and weaknesses also suggest that advanced technical tools are a necessary, but by no means sufficient condition for successful participation processes.

6.2.3 Eliminating weaknesses in order to make use of opportunities

One weakness is the existing and creative, but chronically under-financed civil-society area in Germany and the still low level of cooperation between federal agencies and such initiatives and organizations. In their study for the British Cabinet Office, Mayo and Steinberg (2007) gave many examples which illustrate how government institutions can learn from online

200 "Citizens as Partners" was the title of the first OECD recommendation for citizen participation (OECD 2001b).
offerings by non-government organizations. The fact that their information and feedback offerings concerning individual areas of government activity meet with strong interest shows that the government itself fails to provide the level of transparency and responsivity which citizens expect. It should then be decided from case to case whether such offerings should be adopted by the administration or whether it would be better, in the interest of increasing credibility, to support the quality and sustainability of these offerings in a suitable manner without giving cause to suspect that these offerings are influenced (for example, grants through foundations or other independent institutions).

6.2.4 Using strengths in order to convert risks to opportunities

Insufficient funds were considered to be the greatest risk which leads to disappointment on all sides. One of Germany's strengths is its wealth of financial and human resources. In view of the current confidence and legitimation crisis, a budget for eParticipation projects to the amount of several million euros per annum is a good investment. Cutting back one or the other PR campaign in order to finance these funds may even help to strengthen credibility because trust is only built on positive experience rather than by a constant stream of media exposure.

The financial strength can then also transform into an opportunity the risk that individual parts of the administration may be reluctant to join in because they cannot afford the additional cost. It may sometimes even increase credibility if individual tools or processes are operated or moderated by trustworthy NGOs. Civil-society organizations can support and relieve the government if the necessary funds are put at their disposal.

The risk of fragmentation and frittering can finally also be converted to an opportunity by setting up a competence centre or network on federal level.

6.2.5 Protecting against risks

In view of the low level of knowledge, there is no guaranteed and reliable protection against risks in the sense of a failure of individual measures. Many of the much-feared risks, such as uncivilized or unlawful postings in forums, were seldom in practice. On the contrary, it was frequently found that much fewer people than expected had participated.

Several authors found that previous concerns were overcome as soon as the stakeholders consented to take part in a practical test and heard positive reports. We hence recommend starting with pilot projects in almost all areas, supporting these pilot projects carefully and communicating them intensively in order to trigger a snowball or contagion effect. Since this should take place in a department-spanning manner, a competence centre or network appears to be the organization of choice in this context so that experience can be merged, processed and passed back to both public authorities and the public.
7 Recommendations for action and project proposals

7.1 Overview

The discussion in the foregoing suggests that promising recommendations for action should refer to concrete projects rather than large draft platforms and general appeals because only concrete projects can convince through immediate experience and bring about a change in attitude. The stock-taking of examples of good practice offers a number of suggestions in this respect. The following recommendations are based on such reference projects and thereby demonstrate their feasibility. Crucial for the positive effects which are linked to the suggestions are certain quality requirements which turned out to be success factors in practical applications:

- Transparency by publishing all the contributions wherever this is possible. This creates trust even among those who do not initially post their own contributions, and motivates others to write.

- Promoting responsivity through a clear-cut description of how the participation project is integrated into the political process: Those who participate are interested in hearing what happens to their contributions and what their effects are. Besides clear statements from those responsible for the project, tracking and tracing of one's own postings can be concrete proof of responsivity.

- Involvement of further groups through additional, concise forms of participation, such as polling and rating. Many users are reluctant to write texts. They are more likely to take part if all they have to do is tick off a "yes" or "no" box for a question or express their approval with some stars.

- Simplified access through segment-spanning one-stop offerings, such as in eGovernment.

The first three principles correspond to the expansions of web offerings referred to as Web 2.0 or participative web. They offer additional incentives for use and should hence be given high priority during the next relaunch of web offerings by federal authorities and implemented accordingly. They also form the basis for the concrete project proposals given below. A total of eleven projects or comprehensive measures are proposed which are arranged according to the required lead time and their effects for eParticipation (refer to Fig. 7.1-1).

Two project proposals can and should be implemented at once. These include, with top priority, an online consultation on this study and the eParticipation measures in the eGovernment 2.0 2008 and 2009 implementation plan and, with somewhat lower priority, a minister podcast with feedback.
Four proposals can be implemented in the short term because they can be largely controlled by the Federal Ministry of the Interior. Five proposals require cooperation by a larger number of federal authorities in terms of the contents of these proposals, and should hence be preceded by feasibility studies and/or pilot applications.

Table 7.1-1 gives a brief description of these proposals, showing in each case whether and to what extent they are also suitable for stronger involvement on the part of the business community. No special projects are implemented for participation by businesses and associations. Most of the project proposals are of a generic nature, i.e. they refer to functionalities which can be filled with different contents for different subjects and target groups and which can be used by several federal authorities. Applications which are specifically designed for businesses are also mentioned in each case.

All the project proposals have the same structure. This begins with an outline of the starting situation in the respective field of action, followed by an identification of aims, methods and players, as well as a description of the time horizon, the added value for users and administrations, potential barriers, costs and evaluation criteria. Finally, reference projects are mentioned.
Table 7.1-1: Recommendations for action and project proposals and their relevance for the industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project contents</th>
<th>Relevance for the industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immediate projects (7.2)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online consultation on eParticipation and e-inclusion in the E-Government 2.0 government programme on the basis of the “E-Participation&quot; and “E-Inclusion&quot; studies (7.2.1)</td>
<td>Representatives of business associations should be explicitly invited to take part in the consultation and contribute their comments, ratings and suggestions for amendment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister podcast in the citizens’ dialogue (7.2.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Internet platform which contains both video messages of a minister as well as answers to questions posted by citizens and which also offers a feedback option. This offering enables the direct and publicly perceived exchange between politicians and citizens.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Projects to be implemented in the short term (7.3)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent access control to one’s own data in the central civil register via the electronic ID card (7.3.1).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online consultation on the barrier-free information technology ordinance (BITV) and the draft Federal Data Protection Audit Act (7.3.2).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence network to support and disseminate eParticipation in Germany (7.3.3).</td>
<td>Businesses must be integrated into the network as an important user group and as providers of eParticipation tools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German and foreign expertise from the public, private and civil-society sectors is brought together here in order to gradually set up a virtual centre which serves as a first point of contact, offering technical and procedural support for municipal administrations, federal authorities and members of civil society in the form of training and conferences. The state of development of eParticipation is identified, documented and made available (for example, via databases of tools and their use). Training courses and conferences ensure the required nation-wide dissemination of successful eParticipation in Germany.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidy and promotion programme for civil-society initiatives in the field of eParticipation (7.3.4).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A subsidy and promotion programme by the federal government supports civil-society initiatives and aims to trigger discourse and transparency. Innovative approaches are thereby enabled, the democratic culture is strengthened, and learning processes are triggered at the government end.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Projects to be implemented in the medium term (7.4)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project contents</td>
<td>Relevance for the industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Freedom of information rooms – transparency through and via freedom of information (7.4.1)</strong></td>
<td>Access to information pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act is an important procurement source for companies in certain industries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing obstacles to the exercising of the right of free access to official information are to be removed by expanding the proactive offering by individual public authorities and by providing such offers via a central freedom of information portal. Applications can be entered via an independent unit and answers can be published.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your opinion matters – demand and user-focused online consultations (7.4.2).</strong></td>
<td>Business associations and company representatives are consulted on relevant legislation projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens and representatives of the business community, associations and non-governmental organizations are to be offered online discussions, survey panels as well as target-group-orientated and demand-specific discussions and participation forms, such as wikis and formal hearings, enabling participation in legislative processes and the establishment of programmes. A configurable, client-enabled online platform is to be developed and made available for this purpose.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Platform for public applications to the federal government &quot;Your suggestions and complaints&quot; (7.4.3).</strong></td>
<td>Companies can, for example, report obstacles in approval procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A platform for public applications helps citizens to communicate their interests and demands to the federal government. The transparent handling of the applications generates interest among citizens, strengthens their trust in the executive branch, and promises efficiency gains.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Signpost for public participations (7.4.4).</strong></td>
<td>The directory also includes hearings specifically of business associations and companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The signpost for public participations facilitates access to participation procedures and documents the state of online and offline participation at the federal administration.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>&quot;My Public Agency&quot; user-based description and rating of administrative services (7.4.5).</strong></td>
<td>Business-related services can be rated by companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAQs concerning administrative services can be offered as wikis and hence made more dynamic. Services can be rated and commented by the users.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.2 Immediate projects

7.2.1 Online consultation on eParticipation in the E-Government 2.0 programme

Online consultation with federal ministries and authorities as well as citizens dealing with eGovernment and eParticipation is offered where proposals for the 2008 and 2009 implementation plans are solicited and put up for discussion on the basis of the recommendations for action in the study titled "E-Partizipation – Elektronische Beteiligung von Bevölkerung und Wirtschaft am E-Government" ["eParticipation – Electronic Participation by Citizens and the Business Community in eGovernment"].

Brief overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form</th>
<th>Information, consultation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation formats</td>
<td>Moderated consultation over a limited period of time, implemented with a structured, open and interactive survey concerning the findings and recommendations for action of this study, including the possibility for participants to post comments, to rank contributions and to contribute their own proposals. A clear statement concerning the use of these proposals and ratings intended by the Federal Ministry of the Interior is important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political level</td>
<td>Federal, as well as municipal and federal-land levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority in charge</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of the Interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of formality</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation horizon</td>
<td>Immediate, draws on existing activities in terms of contents and technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current situation

One reason for commissioning the study on "E-Partizipation – Elektronische Beteiligung von Bevölkerung und Wirtschaft am E-Government" ["eParticipation – Electronic Participation by Citizens and the Business Community in eGovernment"] was to develop "recommendations for action, concrete project proposals and measures for implementing the German government's eGovernment 2.0 programme from 2008 onwards". If this study identifies transparency and responsivity as cornerstones of eParticipation and recommends their determined application, they should also be applied to this study and the possible use of its results in future implementation plans for the government's eGovernment 2.0 programme. Online consultation of eGovernment experts at federal ministries and other federal authorities and a broad expert public is hence proposed on the results and proposals of this study.

Aims, methods, players

The aim of such a consultation is to have the results and recommendations judged by other experts and to support or, when necessary, improve these results and recommendations, to

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201 In the same manner and using the same technical platform, it is also possible to put up the results and recommendations of the study titled "E-Inclusion - Digitale Integration durch E-Government" ["e-inclusion – digital integration by eGovernment"] for discussion in parallel.
obtain assessments concerning practical implementation and political response and to make a first step towards establishing a specialist community in order to accompany the next steps. This consultation could start at the 2008 CeBIT. In the interest of transparency concerning the purpose, aims and consequences of consultation, it would be important for either the Federal Minister of the Interior or the federal government's new CIO to give an introduction and present the federal government's intentions with this consultation.

In order to achieve these goals, an Internet platform is used which integrates informative, surveying and dialogue elements. Prior to implementing the platform, the target group must be precisely identified and their availability and willingness to participate assessed because these parameters crucially determine the required activation measures and the design of the platform.

If a reasonable level of response is to be achieved and if this consultation is to motivate visitors to pursue further activities, it will not suffice to publish an HTML version of the study on the web and to connect this to a standard module for a discussion forum. The methodical implementation of a serious online consultation instead also includes further elements, such as:

- **To win and to activate participants:** By way of targeted advertising of the consultation, for example, in the form of a personal e-mail signed by the Federal Minister of the Interior, invitations are put forward to all the contacts relevant for eGovernment at all the federal ministries and authorities as well as the expert public. A video podcast of the Federal Minister of the Interior or of the CIO underlines the importance of the consultation and connects this to a personal note.

- **To inform:** A clearly structured summary of the study in the form of theses informs of important results and recommendations, for example, using an "information wizard" which can be directly followed by polling elements and comment functions (see below). This must be preceded by a brief introduction by the minister or CIO concerning the purposes of the consultation and the use of the postings and contributions in conjunction with the further implementation planning of the government's eGovernment 2.0 programme.

- **To consult:** Central results and recommendations of the study are translated into statements or questions for which given answers can be selected in much the same manner as with a questionnaire; a poll is a particularly low-threshold offering because it requires less time and activity than detailed comments on other people's ideas. Furthermore, statements and theses can be integrated into the survey and – because they are visible for all the participants – commented upon and rated by third parties. Orientation questions can, for example, be:
  - To which formal or informal (participative) offerings can eParticipation offerings be linked best? Which offerings can perhaps be replaced?
  - How must the offerings be designed in order to be interesting enough to motivate potential users to actively participate?
  - Which institutional measures can be implemented in order to ensure that the results of eParticipation offerings are perceived as relevant and considered within the scope of the political and administrative decision-making process?
  - How far does willingness to use eParticipation offerings reach in the respective ministries and public agencies? How can this willingness be improved? Which implementation barriers exist?
Immediate projects

- **To evaluate, comment and amend recommendations for action**: The recommendations for action of the study can be rated using simple voting mechanisms or provided with comments using integrated forum functionalities or supplemented by new, alternative proposals.

- **To read and amend good-practice examples**: The list of good-practice examples is set up in the form of a wiki which can be read, amended or corrected (if necessary, broken down into categories sorted according to techniques, subjects, responsibilities, federal lander, etc.).

- **To network**: Participants can create interest profiles and network with each other by assigning themselves to eParticipation subject areas (which may be pre-set).

- **Optional: To discuss the subject of eParticipation**: Based on the online consultation, subjects received are summarized and put up for discussion in a structured form. This is where it would also be possible to involve a larger group of external experts (outside the ministries and federal authorities). Dialogue is actively supported and accompanied by online moderation.

**Time horizon**

This project proposal should be implemented in such a manner that online consultation is launched shortly before the 2008 CeBit so that the results can be presented at the end of March 2008.

**Added value**

Besides direct suggestions for the 2008 and 2009 implementation planning in the government's eGovernment 2.0 programme, such online consultation communicates the issue of "eParticipation" as an important pillar and engine of the eGovernment reform movement on federal level into ministries and public agencies. Stakeholders are informed about the subject of electronic participation. Furthermore, the results of the study "E-Partizipation – Elektronische Beteiligung von Bevölkerung und Wirtschaft am E-Government" ["EParticipation – Electronic Participation by Citizens and the Business Community in eGovernment"] can in this way be supplemented by the know-how of players "from practice – for practice". Furthermore, this also promotes the networking of players who deal with the implementation of electronic participation and the further development of existing eGovernment offerings by adding participative elements. This will enable the Federal Ministry of the Interior to persistently implement the eParticipation issue from the very beginning: At an early stage, a larger group of players – initially from the inner-ministry and inner-agency public – is already involved and this (also) underlines the importance of the eParticipation subject. The platform to be made available for online consultation can also be used for other consultations and dialogues by the Federal Ministry of the Interior or other players on federal level.

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202 And of the study "E-Inclusion - Digitale Integration durch E-Government" [e-inclusion – Digital Integration by eGovernment"].
Potential barriers

There is a risk that, although the consultation offering is used as a source of information, the level of active participation in the dialogue offered will remain low. It is all the more important that the aims of the offering and the use of the results of consultation are clearly communicated and that ways to exert influence are shown. A mere discussion about a study does not have a high motivation value. However, this can change if the main purpose is to collect proposals for the eGovernment 2.0 implementation programme, and if participation in the consultation is considered to be involvement in the agenda setting process.

Costs

The central contents and a generally suitable technical platform are available. The costs of adapting the functionality and design of a moderator-enabled eParticipation platform with a corresponding functionality will total around €20,000, whilst the online moderation over a period of 4 to 8 weeks will cost around €20,000. Furthermore, sufficient manpower must be made available in order to mobilize the target group(s) with PR measures.

Evaluation criteria

Success criteria which has yet be substantiated in more detail with performance indicators:

- a large number of visitors (as a percentage of the universe) to the platform seeking information about eParticipation;
- a multitude of ratings of the recommendations and theses, comments or statements concerning the recommendations;
- additional recommendations for action submitted by participants;
- networking of players (creation of multidisciplinary working groups on the further development and implementation of recommendations and/or projects).

Reference projects

- Sustainable Development Panel: http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/sd_panel.html
- Comment on this: http://www.commentonthis.com/powerresponse/
- wiki.LIBERAL: http://www.fdp.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-460/_nr-564/_p-1/i.html

7.2.2 Minister podcast in the citizens' dialogue

An Internet platform which not only contains video messages from a minister, but which also enables citizens to publicly ask the minister questions provides a direct and attention-grabbing exchange between politicians and citizens. In order to avoid the impression of pure PR, the citizens should have the first and the last word.
**Immediate projects**

**Brief overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form</th>
<th>Information and submission of questions and rating of answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation formats</td>
<td>Webcast, online input form, forum, rating, tagging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political level</td>
<td>Federal government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority in charge</td>
<td>For example, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, but can also be carried out by any other authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of formality</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation horizon</td>
<td>Can be quickly implemented, based on existing activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The current situation**

High-ranking representatives of a state, such as ministers, have a paramount role to play in the political opinion-forming process because they are in the centre of public interest. Their draft policy crucially shapes public debate. Notwithstanding this, however, the ministers are perceived as being far away from the population because most of the political discourse, especially on federal level, is carried by intermediary players, i.e. journalists and organized lobby group representatives, in their exchange with politicians. Although the important role of these professional players is not to be questioned, one can nevertheless state that direct contact and direct exchange between politicians and citizens can be developed further and that they constitute an important contribution towards promoting democratic culture.

For some time, the Chancellor, some federal ministers, some minister-presidents and a number of party chairmen have been using video podcasts in order to directly communicate messages to citizens. However, this is considered to be more a variant of traditional PR work than a form of communicating with citizens because the initiators select the topic and because viewers cannot respond. Since the Internet is feedback channel-enabled, these options should be integrated into the offerings (refer to the reference projects) in order to support an exchange between politicians and citizens which bears witness to the serious character of the dialogue and this can help to win back lost trust.

Approaches in this direction exist already and set the stage for expectations. There are, for example, several examples where “Web 2.0” technologies are used in order to collect and rate questions from citizens before these are subsequently answered by politicians. In Germany, these examples include the non-governmental www.abgeordnetenwatch.de and www.direktzu.de initiatives which are intensively used by citizens and this underlines the demand for a direct exchange with politicians. The representative poll of citizens conducted within the scope of this study showed that around 6% of Germans already have a strong or very strong interest in using this format (refer to chapter 5.3.1).

**Aims, methods, players**

Video podcasts can be used in future in order to organize at a reasonable cost the direct exchange between ministers on the one hand and interested and concerned citizens on the other.

At regular intervals (for example, on a monthly basis), video messages of the minister are published on a platform of the ministry in which the minister answers previously collected and selected questions. The citizens can use the same platform in order to ask the minister questions. These are published on the platform either as video, audio or text postings and can then be rated by other participants. The ratings form the basis for the structured presentation of the questions on the platform: Questions with the highest rating are positioned further up the page. We recommend the possibility to opt for alternative structuring systems (according
to the time of posting, according to subject, randomly, etc.) so that even newer or initially low-rated questions have the opportunity to be noticed.

The ministers' video messages should be orientated towards the following dramaturgy corresponding to the aim of the platform: The first half is used to communicate the minister's own messages on day-to-day policy or to announce measures and programmes. In the second half of the video, the minister then answers two to three selected questions from citizens. The selection should include in a sensible manner those questions which were rated highest by the users of the platform. However, in the interest of diversity, it should also be left to the minister's discretion to also answer other questions, such as questions with a different opinion background or questions from people from under-represented groups (such as migrants, older citizens, etc.).

Furthermore, we also recommend implementing for each question posted by citizens a comment function for other users. This would underline that politics not only means expressing interests and demands, but also the discussion and weighing thereof. Furthermore, the questions are thereby supplemented by additional information which makes it easier to understand and answer them. Consequently, the minister's videos should also be open for comments. It would have a high symbolic value if citizens were given the "last word", i.e. the opportunity to comment upon the minister's answers. Citizens should in any case have the possibility to rate the answer in order to express their satisfaction. If comments are permitted, the press spokesperson could comment upon the comments after a defined period of time (for example, one week) on behalf of the minister or the minister could address such comments again during his next podcast.

A technical basis with Web 2.0 functions (comments, rating and tagging of postings) is required to implement this concept. The development of related and new workflows at the minister's office should not be underestimated. Postings must be moderated on the one hand, and the questions to be answered must be selected and minister's answers prepared on the other. The workflows for answering questions could be designed in analogy to the workflows for handling minor interpellations from the German parliament.

**Time horizon**

This project proposal could be implemented immediately. A process of gradual implementation and trials is proposed before it goes on stream on a permanent basis. The interactivity of the video podcasts could be increased in several development stages over a period of six months, starting with video messages without a feedback channel (which is already in place, for example, at the Federal Ministry of the Interior), followed by the collection of questions from citizens, before the comment function is finally enabled. In this way, experience with the response of the general public can be gathered in order to enable a more detailed estimate of the work and financial input on the part of the minister's office. This can then serve as a basis for deciding whether a monthly video podcasts of the ministers will suffice or whether a more intensive offering will be needed.

**Added value**

The advantage of the minister podcasts is that a direct exchange between high-ranking government representatives and a large number of citizens is enabled at a reasonable cost. This exchange offers a host of opportunities:

- It is an important element of active democratic culture.
Immediate projects

- It gives an indication as to how politics are received by the individual citizen (without claiming to provide representative results).
- It offers an opportunity to identify gaps and imperfections in the decision-making basis as it currently stands (prospective law evaluation).
- It gives the ministers the opportunity to convince the general public and to direct the citizens' attention to specific issues (agenda setting).

In contrast to other Internet formats, video podcasts feature a very good possibility to link up with television as the traditional mass medium. The potential for promoting the political opinion-forming process among citizens can hence be considered to be high. Past podcasts should be sorted according to subjects and stored in a special archive and/or offered permanently, together with documents published online on the same subject, on the website of the respective ministry.

Another positive aspect is that the coordination effort required for implementation is relatively small because all the parties involved are the minister's office and an external provider of the technical basis. Diffusion paths from one ministry to another would proceed via imitation rather than coordination processes.

Potential barriers

There is a risk that individual citizens may post insults, defamatory comments or unlawful statements on the platform. Attentive moderation is hence necessary in order to remove such statements from the platform. When cases of misuse abound, the moderator can change to safe pre-moderation mode, i.e. questions and comments are not posted until they have been checked and released by the moderator.

Furthermore, it is conceivable that political interest groups could misuse the platform for a campaign. In order to effectively counter this, the view showing the questions rated highest should be supplemented by other views in which the questions are sorted according to other criteria (chronological, randomly, etc.). This concept prevents questions with very high ratings from unreasonably dominating the platform. We also warn against using inflexible rules for selecting the questions to be answered, instead, it should be left to the minister to address different questions as a compensatory measure.

One big challenge for the providers of the platform is to establish and maintain the credibility of the offering in the sense of an authentic dialogue offering. This touches a critical aspect which can strongly influence the intensity of use, the perception by the general public and hence the success in achieving the aims of the project. The credibility of the minister podcast with feedback channel depends, on the one hand, on the reliable and regular provision of the offering. This means that a frequency should be selected which the minister can realistically maintain. On the other hand, credibility is increased if the questions platform is handled with maximum transparency. This also means that deleted comments are not fully removed, but (following elimination of problematic sections) shifted to a separate area which is not positioned in a prominent place and where rating or comments are not possible. This concept, for example, has proven to be a suitable approach for the ePetitions platform of the British Prime Minister.²⁰³

²⁰³ [http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/]
Costs

Each video message by a minister costs between €5,000 and €10,000 for technical equipment, camera team and post-production.\footnote{Refer to http://www.golem.de/0710/55205.html} The development of the podcast platform with a feedback channel costs between €30,000 and €60,000, depending on its complexity. Given a monthly publication frequency, the manpower required for the technical handling and moderation of the platform corresponds to a quarter to half an assistant desk officer's position as well as further manpower demand for the editorial preparation of the minister's address and his answers to the citizens' questions. This estimate is based on experience with the "Rütters direkt" video podcast (refer to reference projects). It is assumed that a video podcast with a minister can potentially trigger up to twice this response. In the case of "Rütters direkt" rule violations or fake postings are very seldom (around 5%), but the share of undesired postings could be much higher in the case of video podcasts by federal ministers.

Evaluation criteria

The most important evaluation criteria include the following:

- a large number of participants, questions and comments;
- a large diversity of opinions among the questions posted;
- a large diversity of participants with different social backgrounds;
- the majority of comments should come from "simple" citizens rather than from representatives of well-organized interest groups;
- positive rating of the minister's answers.

Reference projects

- Video podcast of the Chancellor: http://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Webs/BK/DE/Aktuelles/VideoPodcast/video-podcast.html
- CNN-Youtube Debates: http://www.youtube.com/debates
- 10 Questions: http://www.10questions.com
- Ihre Frage nach Berlin (ARD): http://frage.tagesschau.de/
7.3  Projects to be implemented in the short term

More comprehensive platforms should be created in the areas of access to information and consultation in the medium term. However, smaller pilot projects can be launched in both areas in order to support the process of soliciting further partners.

7.3.1  Transparent access control to data of the central civil register

The implementation of the Freedom of Information Act is one of the explicit aims of the E-Government 2.0 government programme. This mainly concerns access to documents and data from information systems. However, information where government organizations access personal data of citizens is an issue of particular interest. This holds especially true when data that was previously kept in distributed databases is centralized as is currently being carried out with the establishment of a central federal civil register. Concerns which many citizens have regarding proliferating access by many organizations to this central data can be countered by offering citizens the possibility – like, for example, in Belgium – to view not only their own data records but also the logfile of accessed by other organizations to these data records. This possibility was opened up in Belgium with the newly issued digital ID card. This motivated citizens to obtain such an ID card even before expiration of the old one and to use the new ID card for eGovernment applications.

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The current situation

In its E-Government 2.0 government programme, the federal government has announced the further development of the structure of citizen registration services and the introduction of an electronic ID card to be used for authentication in conjunction with online eGovernment offerings. The 2007 implementation plan promises, amongst other things, to facilitate the use of citizen registration data by public and private users and to enable a central online information function from the citizens' register. Both concept preparations for the establishment of the federal civil register and the development of the Federal Citizens' Registration Act should be started. Even if the access rights of other authorities are in fact not expanded when compared to the former distributed registers, centralization of data in this manner triggers concerns about increased surveillance among many citizens. Such concerns can be countered by affording citizens the possibility to inform themselves as to who accesses their registration data and when.

One means to this end is the electronic ID card which is to be introduced parallel and which is also to serve as a means of authentication in relation to eGovernment online offerings. If the electronic ID card were to be the only way to view one's own data in the central civil register and the logfiles showing access to this data, this would create an additional incentive to apply for an electronic ID card even before the conventional one expires.
Aims, methods, players

We hence suggest integrating into the act on the federal civil register the citizens' rights to access their own data and the related logfiles using the electronic ID card. The corresponding law in Belgium could serve as a model for this.\footnote{Refer to Leyman (2008)}

In functional terms, access by citizens is not generally different from access by authorized government agencies and the planned online register information. Selective access to the logfiles of a citizen's own data requires a more differentiated legal concept than the one currently foreseen. Online authentication using the electronic ID card may mean an expansion of the current concept which is, however, to be developed for other online offerings anyway.

Since the Federal Ministry of the Interior is responsible both for the registration system and for the electronic ID card, the ministry will be able to implement this measure within its own sphere of responsibility.

Time horizon

Access rights should be integrated directly into the ongoing legislation process and the (rough) concepts which are to be adopted in the near future. Implementation will then take place during the course of developing and implementing the central civil register.

Added value

The added value for the civil register and the electronic ID card are factual proof of greater transparency and the simple opening up of access to information. Citizens are thereby given control of their registration data and its use in a manner which did not exist before.

A secondary effect could be greater motivation to obtain an electronic ID card.

Potential barriers

In Belgium, the introduction of the electronic ID card enabled such access to the civil register and the logfiles. The technical feasibility is hence proven. This offering also generally met with a positive public response. However, the number of citizens who actually use this offer is not very large, but this is not relevant for the intended purposes. In order to alleviate concerns and to create trust it is often sufficient to know that citizens can exercise these control rights at any time.

Costs

The implementation of the proposal calls for a functional expansion of the role and rights concepts for the central federal civil register which is likely to remain within a reasonable limit.

Reference projects

- Belgian central register https://www.mijndossier.vrn.fgov.be
7.3.2 Online consultation on the Barrier-free Information Technology Ordinance (BITV) and on the draft Federal Data Protection Audit Act

Online consultations on legislation projects or planned programmes are the core area of eParticipation at federal level. First examples and recommendations in this respect already exist at the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The range of potential electronic functionalities is very large whilst experience with the utilization of these functionalities varies strongly. The provision of a client-enabled participation platform with a wide range of configurable tools should be pursued as a medium-term goal. This requires thorough planning and a feasibility study. However, in order to be able to launch concrete offerings already in 2008, we suggest that two online consultations be performed on highly topical subjects which promise a strong response and which can be kept at a relatively simple functional level. One of these online consultations should address the need to amend the Barrier-free Information Technology Ordinance in the light of recent developments in Internet offerings (Web 2.0) whilst the other consultations should deal with a draft Federal Data Protection Audit Act. Both consultations can be technically implemented using the platform which is also used for this study and for the consultation on the eGovernment 2.0 implementation plan which is proposed as an immediate measure.

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<td>Implementation horizon</td>
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The current situation

Participation of associations and specialist groups in legislation projects is required under the joint rules of procedure of the federal ministries. In individual cases, such as the Freedom of Information Act, this kind of consultation has already been carried out online. In 2003, the Federal Ministry of the Interior also issued guidelines for online forums. However, only very few other online consultations have been carried out since. It hence appears to make sense to create positive examples with two successful consultations which can then be used as a starting point for more comprehensive development of a platform and of training and consultation offerings.

Aims, methods, players

A consultation which receives a positive rating from all those involved addresses a measure which is topical for at least part of the general public and in which the postings and contributions also influence the further planning process for this measure. This is the case with legislation projects which are not controversial between the political parties and for which a defined and active specialist public / community exists. If the subject relates to the Internet, a high level of online participation can be additionally expected.

Finally, advertising for the consultation and the type of moderation also have a role to play. We hence propose performing two consultations with different forms of organization:
Recommendations for action and project proposals

• One consultation on the Federal Data Protection Audit Act should be performed and moderated by the Federal Ministry of the Interior itself in a manner similar to the consultation on the Freedom of Information Act.

• A consultation on the need to amend the Barrier-free Information Technology Ordinance (BITV) should be conducted parallel to this. The need for amendment results from the fact that the technical rules still largely refer to the WWW as it was in the mid-1990s and hence fail to cover recent developments, such as multi-media functions and the functionalities referred to as Web 2.0. The Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs has meanwhile taken responsibility for this. Subject to agreement with the Federal Commissioner for Matters relating to Disabled Persons, a moderator recognized by the specialist community and the citizens concerned, the Aktion Mensch campaign or the Alliance for Barrier-free Information Technology [Aktionsbündnis für barrierefreie Informationstechnik (AbI)], could be solicited.

Such cooperation could generate important suggestions and clues with regard to the design and make-up of a more comprehensive, client-enabled consultation platform. The platform which is used to discuss this study within the scope of the consultation for the eGovernment 2.0 implementation plan can be used as the technical basis.

A congress scheduled for May 2008 provides a good starting point when the "Aktion Mensch" campaign will present and discuss the result of a broad-based study on the barriers of Web 2.0 applications for disabled people. Online consultation could refer to the discussion started there and continue this discussion online.

Added value

Besides the amendment of the law, the consultation on the amendment to the Barrier-free Information Technology Ordinance can provide direct suggestions for the projects contained in the eGovernment 2.0 implementation plan with a view to their barrier-freedom in that these projects would be measured not just against the requirements of the Barrier-free Information Technology Ordinance in its current version, but also against the requirements which are expected in future.

Potential barriers

Online consultations always mean a risk that not enough interested active participants will be mobilized. This risk is small for the issues proposed here because there is an active community in each of these cases. In order to additionally increase willingness to participate, even simple ratings of published postings should be enabled.

What is important in both cases is that the responsible minister or a state secretary must explain the purpose of the consultation and the planned use of the postings.

Costs

The costs for each every single consultation are likely to be somewhat higher than those of the online discussion of this study. Just how high this difference is depends on which type of evaluation is aimed for.

Evaluation criteria

Success criteria which must yet be substantiated in more detail with performance indicators:
• A large number of visitors (as a percentage of the universe) to the platform seeking information about eParticipation
• A multitude of ratings of the recommendations and theses, comments or statements concerning the recommendations
• Additional recommendations for action submitted by participants
• Networking of players (creation of multidisciplinary working groups on the further development and implementation of recommendations and/or projects).

Reference projects

• Sustainable Development Panel: http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/sd_panel.html
• Comment on this: http://www.commentonthis.com/powerresponse/
• BürgerForum Soziale Marktwirtschaft: http://www.buergerforum2008.de/
• wiki.LIBERAL: http://www.fdp.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-460/_nr-564/_p-1/i.html

7.3.3 Competence network to support and disseminate eParticipation in Germany

The "eParticipation Competence Network" ["Kompetenznetzwerk E-Partizipation"] brings together German and foreign experts in the fields of eParticipation and eDemocracy from the public, private and civil-society sectors in order to gradually build a virtual centre which acts as a first point of contact for technical and procedural support for federal authorities, municipal administrations and civil society ("community groups"). The aim is to create the basis for comprehensive eParticipation offerings and to document the current state of development in a manner available to all interested parties. This "hub" would bring together different interested parties (chiefly from federal authorities at federal and municipal level) with experts (who have, for example, gathered experience with eParticipation offerings) and providers of eParticipation formats (application service providers, tool providers and/or developers, moderators, etc.). Databases would be developed in order to improve access to examples of eParticipation offerings and describe the benefits of tools; furthermore, guidelines would be developed and training programmes offered and conferences organized in order to ensure the necessary wide-spread dissemination of successful eParticipation in Germany. Quality standards and evaluation procedures for good eParticipation should also be developed on this basis. The International Center of Excellence for Local Democracy (ICELE) in the UK should serve as a role model.

Project brief

<table>
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Starting situation / problem

In Germany, there is now a fairly large group of individuals and institutions who have gathered considerable competence and experience with eParticipation applications on different government levels, in the business community and in civil society, in the development and provision of eParticipation tools and methods and with scientific support and evaluation. Despite this experience, the entire field of eParticipation is still at an early stage of development and is characterised by a high level of dynamism. One can hence expect that the reasons for commissioning this study will persist. The question as to the form in which eParticipation offerings can be expanded as part of the representative democracy and political culture in Germany will require regular demand identification, practical testing and evaluation efforts.

Significant potential can still be exhausted both at federal authorities and on municipal level. Federal authorities are a frequently selected first point of contact for citizens seeking information. The municipal level is still the level where "democracy" and political participation are learned and practiced. A sensible approach from the perspective of effectiveness and efficiency, similar to other European countries (UK, Italy), is to bundle technical and procedural experience and knowledge from many single pilot projects and to make this visible to interested players through level-spanning initiatives which are supported and/or sponsored by the government. Since there is no technical standard procedure for online consultations, the tools, such as forums and surveys, the organization of the moderation and other factors used in the given case must always be selected and compiled in a thematically orientated and target-group-specific manner, so that there is a permanent demand for consultation and a need for systematic evaluation and dissemination of experience. Furthermore, in view of the significant cost of eParticipation projects, the establishment of quality standards appears to be very urgent.

Aims, method, players

All this is to be handled by a network of different players rather than a centre of competence. Such a competence network requires a core team with both high technical competence and the required management capabilities. The International Center of Excellence for Local Democracy in the UK (ICELE) with a staff of seven was selected as the role model for this.

This "team" is to be responsible for the following tasks:

Networking the players, building a community: The main players are individuals and institutions who already have or wish to acquire experience with immediate implementation (administration staff at different government levels), providers and developers of tools and technologies which were or could be employed in eParticipation, users (citizens or business representatives) as well as institutions (universities, scientific institutes, consultancies) which accompany and evaluate projects. The network will be a primarily virtual one in that information (expert and/or project database) which also fulfils the quality standards yet to be developed (for example, firms claiming to offer such procedures must be capable of providing
suitable credential projects) is compiled on the website to be developed. This work would refer to existing initiatives (such as MEDIA@Komm-TRANSFER, Stiftung Mitarbeit, advisory boards of the projects of the Hans Böckler Foundation on "Medienmix in der lokalen Demokratie" ["Media Mix in Local Democracy"] and on "participative budgets", networks of projects of the Bertelsmann-Stiftung, such as "CIVITAS" or "Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerhaushalt" ["Federal Participative Budget Network"] of the Service Agency Communities in One World, surveys be the German Institute of Urban Affairs (DIfU)). Newsletters and mailing lists would be used to exchange information and conferences and workshops organized by the competence network would give impulses for the further development of specific challenges. The EU Commission's "epractice" good-practice portal is a good example of the functionalities of a corresponding web offering.

**Development of quality standards for eParticipation offerings:** The results of participation offerings are often unsatisfactory because certain requirements concerning technical design, moderation or institutional integration are not fulfilled. It hence appears to be urgently necessary to develop well-founded quality standards as an orientation basis for eParticipation offerings to be planned and for e-post evaluations. Certain requirements and evaluation criteria emerge from the technical discussion concerning the evaluation of eParticipation offerings which can be discussed within the competence network and developed further to form standards. These standards could then serve as a basis for developing concrete guidance for the preparation and implementation of eParticipation offerings.

**Monitoring of eParticipation projects:** Updating the good-practice stock, by using materials from the EU’s DEMO-net project, checking the project of British Council and Politik Digital and as well as the establishment of a database with the corresponding project profiles. The repetition of this study is recommends every two years.

**Description, evaluation and provision of eParticipation tools and platforms:** The development of tools and platforms for eParticipation is very dynamic. Orientation support for public agencies planning an offering is extremely difficult. None of the existing platforms have a major group of permanent customers. Against this background, it does not appear to make sense for the competence network itself to develop and offer a client-enabled platform. It does, however, make sense to generate market transparency through existing offerings and to have these rated by independent institutions, such as Germany’s Stiftung Warentest, and to arrange contracts with providers. This is applicable to standard tools, such as forums or surveys, as well as more complex platforms.

**Provision of consultancy and training services:** The sensible use of technical tools requires consultancy services and often also training of the staff involved (for example, in their capacity as forum moderators). Although the competence network itself can also provide certain consultancy and training services, it should also provide information concerning offerings from third parties and help external parties to establish contacts.

**Organizer of competitions and support/subsidy programmes:** Competitions and support/subsidy programmes are suitable instruments to promote eParticipation on municipal level and in civil society. The core of the competence network can organize projects designed to prepare and implement such measures.

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207 Refer to [www.e-partizipation.net](http://www.e-partizipation.net)
**Time horizon**

Since the competence network is to be established and organized by an independent party on behalf of the federal government, whilst it is not possible to specify the requirements down to the last detail, this project should be organized as a competition and concrete proposals should be requested as to how such a network can be set up and operated over a period of five years. The invitation and awarding process should take place before the end of 2008. Following a one-year set-up phase in 2009, the network can then start working in 2010.

**Advantages / added value**

Besides the direct support of the eParticipation offerings on federal and municipal level, such a competence network also communicates across the borders of the federal laender the fact that federal authorities, municipal administrations as well as the science and business communities in Germany have substantial expertise in the field of eParticipation which is clearly on par with international counterparts. Furthermore, it would be easier for international surveys (for example, by the EU, UN, OECD or the Ad Hoc Committee on E-democracy of the Council of Europe CAHDE) to edit and process such data in a coordinated manner and to subsequently submit a bundled set of data in order improve the international visibility of the German offerings.

The hub configuration of the network also means indirect support for (medium-sized) businesses and secures jobs in the IT area and related services. Increasing the volume of well-planned citizen participation offerings additionally strengths democratic processes and the position of municipalities.

**Potential barriers**

One central precondition for the concept is that the people at the network hub have or win the trust of the addressees in order to act as a real hub making parties demanding and parties offering eParticipation forms and formats talk and do business with each other. Due to its configuration as a network rather than a centre, concerns expressed by existing commercial and non-profit organizations of emerging competition can be eliminated. This requires independence from commercial providers, whilst links with a scientific institute or organization would be desirable.

Another barrier could be that prospective successors underestimate the problems related to the implementation of participation measures and only use of technical tools, rather than also making use of methodological consultancy and training services, the result being that they are then disappointed by the meagre results. The provision of methodological know-how may hence not be neglected in relation to the provision of technical know-how – both elements need to be linked together in a persistent manner. The provider must hence have both technical and social competence.

The provision of tools on the ICELE website, for example, did not generate a higher level of use on the part of municipal administrations; instead, this offering is mainly used by non-profit communities. Experience with the creation of the client-enabled KUBIS platform shows how important it is to provide personal and immediate communication formats especially for the user group of "staff at (municipal) administrations because these users do not avail themselves of the possibilities of the Internet without certain reservations (for reasons of distrust, for example). The involvement of representatives of municipal administrations in committees and working groups is hence equally important as the provision of funds for participation in trade shows and congresses.
Costs

The project should be carried out by an independent organization and should be initially limited to a term of five years. The annual budget for the comparable ICELE network totals GBP 320,000 (around €450,000) in order to finance both staff and projects. For a comparable support programme for municipal administrations in the UK, the British government (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) created a support and financing programme with a volume of around €6m for the first phase (development and testing of applications, November 2003 to March 2005) and another €750,000 for project implementation and its wider introduction and dissemination (April 2005 to March 2006).

Evaluation criteria

The evaluation of the project should be carried out by an advisory board. Certain effects should be presented within the scope of the eParticipation study to be carried out every two years. Success criteria are the use of the website and databases, participation in training programmes and conferences, as well as eParticipation projects carried out in cooperation with the network.

In order to monitor the achievement of the aims and advantages claimed, concepts should be developed as to how such aims and advantages can be defined and measured.

Reference projects

For eParticipation competence centres:
- ICELE.org in the UK: http://www.e-democracy.gov.uk/site/index.php

7.3.4 Subsidy and promotion programme for civil-society initiatives in the field of eParticipation

A subsidy and promotion programme by the federal government supports civil-society initiatives with the aim of triggering discourse and transparency. Innovative approaches are thereby enabled, the democratic culture is strengthened, and learning processes are triggered at the government end.

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208 Paper by Councillor Mary Reid on the Political Forum of the EVOICE Interreg IIIB project on 15 September 2005 in Groningen, Netherlands. URL: http://134.102.220.38/evoice/assets/includes/sendtext.cfm/aus.5/key.118.
The current situation

Democracy requires transparency and discourse. Besides the elected representatives and the media, civil-society organizations also play an important role in this respect. They are also involved in political deliberations in a host of contexts.

National and international experience so far gathered shows that civil-society organizations and institutions adapt the Internet in a very innovative manner and that they often address the need for political participation via the Internet much earlier than government institutions, so that they can then take on a mediating function between the government and citizens (for example, "Abgeordnetenwatch" ["MP Watch"]; refer also to the good-practice cases in chapter 4.5). Government institutions seldom generate new impulses because they are typically endowed with less technical competence and because the strong demand for coordination and agreement with administrations and on political level often hinders innovation.

There are at least three types of civil-society initiatives in the field of political Internet communication:

- portals for collecting questions to politicians or political institutions;
- platforms for discussing political issues;
- platforms for creating transparency by bundling and processing available information as a way of satisfying new information demands (for example, a profile of the voting behaviour of individual MPs).

In as far as this function is concerned, civil-society initiatives are often considered to be more independent and credible than government institutions which are generally suspected of being interested in influencing opinion-forming processes in the direction of their choice. This is what Ed Mayo and Tom Steinberg illustrated by many examples in a report for the British Cabinet Office. They recommend that the British government support web offerings with user-generated contents and to cooperate with such offerings. In its published response to this study, the government announced that it would intensify this cooperation. However, such initiatives often lack the funds necessary to pass the perception threshold and – once this has been achieved – to ensure sustainable operations. This was, for example, the reason why the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science commissioned a foundation to promote innovative civil-society projects in the field of political Internet communications within the scope of the "Digitale Pioniers" project (refer to reference projects). In the UK, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) supports the UK Citizens Online Democracy (UKCOD) foundation which has implemented a host of innovative eParticipation projects in the UK via its subsidiary, MySociety Ltd (including, for example, "Planning Alerts", refer to good practices).

Aims, methods, players

The Federal Ministry of the Interior has commissioned the newly established eParticipation competence network, a foundation or another non-profit organization without any economic

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209 The Power of Information. An Independent Review by Ed Mayo and Tom Steinberg (http://cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/power_information.pdp)

210 http://www.politik-digital.de/node/3229

211 This institution has meanwhile been renamed Department for Communities and Local Government
interests of its own in the field of participation, to administer a support and subsidy programme for such civil-society initiatives which

- function as a mediator in communication between citizens and the political sector (such as question portals);
- encourage the debate on issues in the field of social policy; or
- which increase transparency by bundling and processing information available on political issues, politicians or political institutions.

The purpose is not only to promote the development of software, but also to use existing technical platforms within the scope of new use concepts. Software development projects should be required to use open source licenses in order to encourage copying and adaptation by other civil-society players in this way.

The eParticipation initiatives sponsored and supported should cover the widest possible range of political and everyday life areas. Restricting the initiatives to federal level is not considered to make any sense because the distinction between municipal, federal-land and federal levels is less important from the citizens' perspective.

Subsidy and support criteria as well as financing instruments should hence be specifically geared towards developing independent business models and financing concepts in order to enable the sustainable operation of the projects in question.

The administration of the support and subsidy programme covers not only the tendering process, the receipt of applications, the coordination of a selection body and the earmarking of funds, but also active support and consultancy services for the initiatives supported, for example, when it comes to developing sustainable business models or PR work. Furthermore, the management body of the support and subsidy programme should organize workshops and conferences which are designed to promote the networking and evaluation of the initiatives.

**Time horizon**

In order to support the creation of sustainable eParticipation offerings, the support and subsidy programme should be provided with funds for an initial period of four years. Furthermore, we recommend two tendering dates per year in order to take the pace of development of new Internet applications into consideration.

**Added value**

Although the federal government loses direct control of the eParticipation offerings supported, it also reaps benefits, because civil-society initiatives

- make an important contribution towards the design of the virtual space in the sense of a day-to-day democratic culture;
- are usually faster, more innovative and more efficient than the federal administration;
- take on a role in the public discourse which government institutions could take on with lower credibility only;
- provide government institutions with impulses and hands-on material for their own learning processes.
Potential barriers

Under worst-case conditions, activities by citizens in eParticipation offerings created by civil-society initiatives could turn against the federal government. This possibility should be considered from the very beginning and should be regarded as proof of the independence of civil-society initiatives and as an opportunity to publicly explain the federal government's position in as far as it is criticized in this way.

Costs

A volume of €10m, distributed over a period of four years, is proposed for the support and subsidy programme. This level is considered to be necessary in order to promote the creation of serious and sustainable eParticipation offerings in various areas of the political and day-to-day life. Other European governments have already created comparable programmes designed to promote innovation in the field of eDemocracy:

- Italy, 2005: E-Democracy Programme of the National Centre for Information Technology in Public Administration, CNIPA (€9.5m)\textsuperscript{212}
- UK, 2004-2007: e-Innovations fund\textsuperscript{213} of the Deputy Prime Minister, ODPM (€18m, of which close to €500,000 goes to UKCOD and MySociety\textsuperscript{214}, respectively)
- UK, 2004-2006; 2006-2008: National Local e-Democracy Project followed by the establishment of the Centre for Excellence for Local eDemocracy by the Deputy Prime Minister (€5.3m + €1.6m)\textsuperscript{215}
- Netherlands, 2002-2008: Digitale Pioniers, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (€2m)\textsuperscript{216}

Evaluation criteria

The most important evaluation criteria include the following:

- The number of applications
- The quality of applications (according to criteria yet to be determined)
- The sustainability of the projects

Reference projects

- Digitale Pioniere (NL): \textsuperscript{212}\textsuperscript{213}\textsuperscript{214}\textsuperscript{215}\textsuperscript{216} http://www.digitalpioneers.org

\textsuperscript{212} http://www.epractice.eu/document/932
\textsuperscript{213} http://www.egovmonitor.com/solace/0311/lg05.html
\textsuperscript{214} http://www.ukcod.org.uk/Finances
\textsuperscript{215} http://www.epractice.eu/document/325
\textsuperscript{216} http://www.kennisland.nl/en/projects/open-innovation/Digital-Pioneers.html
7.4 Projects to be implemented in the medium term

The benefit of the four projects for citizens and for the business community described below is that previously disperse, difficult to find and differently designed participation offerings are now brought together and can hence be found and used more easily. The trend towards one-stop portals, which has already been completed in eGovernment applications, is equally relevant for eParticipation offerings. However, such projects require the cooperation of a larger number of parties which are not always very interested in coordination with other parties. We hence recommend performing a feasibility study in the run-up to each portal project proposed below in order to explore the intended synergies and identify the degree of willingness to cooperate.

7.4.1 Freedom of information rooms – Transparency through and via freedom of information

Existing obstacles to the exercising of the statutory right of free access to official information are to be removed by expanding the proactive offering of the individual public authorities and by providing such offers via a central freedom of information portal in the manner in which this is implemented in the form of the electronic reading rooms in the US. For this purpose, it should be possible to enter applications via an independent office which makes the answers available to all interested parties and thereby ensures transparent responsivity.

The E-Government 2.0 government programme announced, amongst other things, that "the electronic availability of data and information from public agencies (will be) increased in order to promote the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act (IFG) also under aspects of economic efficiency" (p. 5, Management Summary). One major cost factor are non-specific inquiries at public authorities which are ultimately not responsible for the matter in question. This is the result of shortcomings of the rules of procedure in their current form.

Brief overview

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<td>Authority in charge</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of the Interior as the initiator, Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information and/or NGO for implementation</td>
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<td>Formal</td>
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<td>Implementation horizon</td>
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The current situation

The transparency of government and administrative activities is a fundamental precondition for democracy. This includes information about resolutions and decisions, the relevant rules and regulations as well as the data underlying such decisions in the forms of reports, expert opinions, statistics, etc. The purpose of freedom of information acts is to contribute towards greater transparency by enabling citizens to access such information even without a need to prove that they are personally concerned.
However, the implementation of this right is subject not only to legal restrictions which result from other rights – such as the right of protection of personal data, business and trade secrets, military and other security interests – but also to factual and financial barriers which can be overcome by a citizen-friendly and user-compatible design.

The practical barriers include, above all, the provision in section 7 of the Freedom of Information Act (Federal Act Governing Access to Information held by the Federal Government from 5 September 2005) pursuant to which the federal authority "authorized to dispose of the information requested" decides on applications for access to official information. This provision requires applicants to know very precisely which public authority has such disposal rights in the case in question. Certain help is expected from the directories of public authorities which are to be maintained pursuant to section 11 (1) and which show existing information collections and purposes. Pursuant to subsection 3, these directories are also to be made available in electronic form.

Another potential obstacles are the administrative fees which are permitted under section 10. The level of these fees has been criticized quite often in the past.

In 1996, the US supplemented the Freedom of Information Act by the Electronic Freedom of Information Act in order to address both problems. Consequently, public authorities are obliged to publish documents in which a public interest can be expected as well as documents which were already the subject matter of an application in so-called electronic reading rooms. The online provision of electronically generated documents reduces the chargeable costs and hence the justified fees to a level close to zero. In order to enable easier retrieval, the individual reading rooms maintain a directory of the documents made available. Ministries, such as the Department of Justice, maintain a directory of the reading rooms of all downstream authorities in the form of a link list. In its freedom of information act, the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen went even one step further and obliged public authorities to maintain distributed registers in which retrieval of the documents is to be possible via key words and which must additionally be compiled in a central register, so that information seekers have a central point of access.

Another practical problem is that many public authorities are still reluctant to adopt the principle of free access to information and hence still continue to request justification or extensively interpret reasons to deny disclosure. After centuries of official secrecy, freedom of information almost means a cultural revolution in Germany. The reporting obligation and evaluation pursuant to section 14 refer more to the act as a whole than to permanent monitoring. In the UK, the My Society non-governmental organization is currently preparing such a permanent monitoring system with its "The Freedom of Information Filer and Archive". A central portal is to be established which interested parties can use in order to submit applications for access to information. These applications are then forwarded via the portal to the organization in charge and information provided is also made available to other interested parties via this portal. For the latter application, the German Chaos Computer Club and the FoeBuD e.V. [Association for the Promotion of Mobile and Immobile Public Data Traffic] association operate the Befreite Dokumente website.

My Society has thereby adopted the portal described earlier under the name "They work for you" where communications to the MP responsible for a particular issue are received and forwarded. The answer of the responsible public authority to every application submitted is then to be published. The way in which this is to be implemented is currently the subject matter of specifications which are publicly developed in the form of a wiki.

217 [www.befreite-dokumente.de](http://www.befreite-dokumente.de)
218 [www.mysociety.org/projects](http://www.mysociety.org/projects)
Aims, methods, players

All in all, measures are proposed which are designed to achieve two goals as follows:

a) Greater transparency by facilitating the exercising of access rights

Like in the Electronic Freedom of Information Act, the federal authorities are to be called upon to list and to make available for online retrieval, in an area of their websites which is specifically and uniformly marked:

- documents which they are already voluntarily publishing on the Internet;
- documents which can be expected to be of public interest; and
- documents which have already been made available pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act.

These lists of distributed online libraries or freedom of information rooms should then be compiled in a central directory, i.e. a freedom of information portal. In the first stage of development, this could be a simple link list. In the second stage, it would then be possible to use a search engine which browses the titles of all the distributed directories in response to a central entry. The third stage could finally see a keyword-based search which provides much better hits, but which also requires a more intensive document tagging effort. This can only be managed and justified if a suitable tagging system is already implemented at the time the documents are created. This means direct relations between this goal of facilitating access to information pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act and the internal document management system of public administrations. Against this background, the meta data record for identifying documents as used in the DOMEA concept should be examined and, if necessary, amended with a view to its use from a freedom of information perspective.

The respective federal authorities are responsible for maintaining the distributed directories and archives. Both the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information would be suitable organizations to maintain and operate the related distributed directory and a corresponding search engine.

Transparency through freedom of information

In order to facilitate the above-mentioned cultural change in the federal authorities' information behaviour, a central point of access should be set up on the Internet via which applications can be submitted and answers and official notices published.

Such a monitoring function is most convincing if it is operated by an independent organization. The Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information is such an institution. However, it will strongly depend on the exact definition of the Commissioner's role in this process whether or not this role is compatible with the Commissioner's supervisory and arbitration function. Alternative solutions would hence be NGOs like in the UK or in the "Liberated Documents" ["Befreite Dokumente"] project.

The concept of the joint development of specifications as adopted by My Society underlines the need for clarification. This concept suggests starting with a workshop as a platform where the freedom of information commissioners of the federal laender and of the federal government can discuss, together with NGOs which are active in this field, requirements concerning content and institutional matters and where they can also expand this debate online. This can then form the basis for a concept and feasibility study in order to prepare a tendering process for this platform.
Time horizon

The establishment of distributed freedom of information archives and their compilation in a central list should not take more than six months. The establishment of a corresponding search engine should then take around one year. The process of clarifying the promotion of transparency through freedom of information will require a lead time of one year, plus another year for the awarding and development of the corresponding platform.

Added value

Many studies examining insufficient perception of participation offerings have identified a lack of transparency as the main cause. The online survey of private users and representatives of the business community conducted for this study showed that there is a strong interest in the provision of information via an integrated web portal.

The low rate of use of the Freedom of Information Act does not mean that there is a lack of interest; instead, it suggests a lack of perception of this instrument which is already being made available by the federal government but which has hardly been advertised in the past.

The advantage of the project is that by upgrading the legal potential already in place it is now possible to demonstrate that these instruments can be improved and made more citizen-friendly and that the federal government proactively pursues the transparency goal and that the federal government is willing to learn in terms of the design of these instruments. All this can be implemented gradually in controlled steps with relatively small financial effort. Furthermore, the proactive provision of documents reduces administrative costs and helps to reduce red tape.

Potential barriers

Potential barriers may result from the fact that, without amended legislation, the distributed freedom of information archives are set up on a voluntary basis and that not all public authorities are willing to join.

Furthermore, the submission of applications via a central submission point - which also enables indirect control – could lead to restrictive behaviour on the part of public authorities or motivate authorities to send answers directly to applicants rather than via the portal.

Costs

The distributed freedom of information archives are set up during the course of updating and upgrading website operations, so that the costs are negligible.

The central link list can be set up at a relatively low cost. In contrast to this, the modification of a search engine will require some €50,000 to €100,000, and half a job for the ongoing maintenance and updating of the portal.

The process of creating transparency will require around €100,000 for the proposed first workshop, the online specifications, as well as the concept and feasibility study.

The development of the platform will cost around €100,000 to €300,000, and its ongoing operations some €100,000 per annum.
Evaluation criteria

The central directory can be evaluated on the basis of the number of times accessed and a moderated forum in which users can discuss problems related to use. (in combination with the proposed "Mein Amt" ["My Public Agency"] project). Cost savings will materialize when the share of documents retrieved online increases and the share of documents retrieved via single requests declines.

Reference projects

With regard to the case of the central inquiry submission point and the documents made available in the archive, the user numbers are the crucial evaluation criterion. The following reference projects were mentioned:


7.4.2 "Your opinion matters" – demand and user-focused online consultations

Based on the pilot projects concerning the consultation on the Federal Data Protection Audit Act and the amendment to the Barrier-free Information Technology Ordinance (BITV), a multi-function and client-enabled consultation platform is to be developed and offered to all federal authorities in a second step. This is to give citizens, the business community, associations and non-governmental organizations the opportunity to participate in different ways in legislation processes and the development of programmes and platforms and to take part in online hearings. A bundle of measures and formats is proposed to this effect, ranging from online discussions in the general public via the institutionalized integration of interested parties on survey panels to the target group and demand-orientated discussion and development of new laws and regulations and formal hearings. These technical formats are to be offered as a modular system on a platform operated by the federal government, with the different consulting parties having the possibility to combine these modules and to select their respective contents (client capability).

Brief overview

<table>
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<td>Political level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authority in charge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree of formality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation horizon</td>
<td>Feasibility study concerning the scope of functions and willingness to use immediately, invitation to tender and start of development in 2009, start of operations in the middle / at the end of 1990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The current situation

The joint rules of procedure for the federal ministries foresee the participation of associations and specialist groups (section 47 (3)). So far, online consultations are only offered very rarely and only a few of them are reactive. Trailblazing model projects (such as Future of Food by the former Ministry of Consumer Protection and Agriculture) or the online consultation on a draft Freedom of Information Act on a technically high level as initiated jointly by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the German parliament are opposed by a low degree of institutionalization and a substantial need for optimization of the design of the process for this form of participation.

With regard to competence promotion, preparatory work has also been carried out in the form of guidance for the use of online forums in the federal administration issued by the Federal Ministry of the Interior (Karger & Ahrens 2003) which should be used as a basis for further work.

Against the background of a changed perception of the state (“good governance”), representative democracies would be well advised to open themselves not just to organized lobby groups, but also to the general public as examples from New Zealand, Austria, the UK and the EU show; online consultations offer a suitable basis for this. The question is hence no longer whether dialogues and consultations should be intensified, but how this can be implemented, i.e. which formats, processes and methods (discursive, multilateral formats or multi-stage surveys) should be adopted in order to avoid overstraining tried-and-tested administrative procedures or triggering any attention-grabbing measures which eventually have no consequences whatsoever during the following process and which hence frustrate the citizens concerned. The online surveys of citizens and representatives of associations interested in eParticipation conducted within the scope of our study showed that the general public has a strong interest in early (!) participation in legislation processes, for example, in the form of online discussions.

Aims, methods, players

All in all, measures are proposed which are designed to achieve the six goals below as follows:

a) Business associations, non-governmental organizations and all citizens interested in politics should be given the possibility during an early stage of suitable legislation processes to contribute their ideas and knowledge concerning electronic formats to the process. Suitable legislation processes would be those which concern groups of citizens who are able to handle the new media (for example, the discussion of an Internet act on federal level), with moderated discussion forums and surveys being the suitable format for this.

b) In the case of selected legislation or subject-specific consultation processes, targeted involvement of concerned groups of the population in the law and programme emergence process should be achieved (for example, citizens with a migration background on issues related to the integration summit, eGovernment experts on the implementation of the federal government’s eGovernment 2.0 programme, disabled citizens and their representatives on the eGovernment strategy for disabled people and on the further development of the Barrier-free Information Technology Ordinance (BITV) or graduates via the Federal Office of Administration (BVA) on the procedure of repaying benefits granted under the Federal Education Assistance Act [BAföG] as an example of an area of the administration which is closely linked to public benefits). Suitable formats include discussion forums (for an Internet act), surveys (Federal Education Assistance Act) as well as wikis (amendment to the Barrier-free
Projects to be implemented in the medium term

Information Technology Ordinance). Idea-finding and discussion of Internet-related subjects, such as the Internet act or expectations for eGovernment services, can be handled by formats like "Jam" or "DEMOS", the former being a highly complex further development of moderated and structured online forums with data mining processes for discussion and opinion aggregation from IBM, whilst the latter was developed within the scope of an EU project of the same name and used on several occasions in the city of Hamburg (refer to chapter 4.4.2 and good-practice example 11).

c) Citizens interested in continuous eParticipation should be afforded the opportunity in addition to representatives of (lobby) groups to be regularly surveyed on certain topics via ePanels. Consultations are typically performed on a concrete once-off occasion. The ministries have advisory boards for long-term, more comprehensive consultation functions. These advisory boards are limited in size and are often unable to really speak for the area for which they were selected. In contrast to this, ePanel members would have the possibility to apply for membership in such a panel and would then be consulted on certain subjects matching the profile which they have entered. The members of ePanels are selected on the basis of data which represents a given socio-demographic pattern to the maximum extent possible, and rotate at regular intervals. ePanels are a cost-effective solution when it comes to expanding the scope of contents which advisory boards have to handle. Federal authorities could set up panels on subjects of medium and longer-term relevance. These authorities themselves or members of their advisory boards could moderate these ePanels and, if necessary, use a wiki in order to work on joint statements or take part in regular surveys.

d) The option to supplement expert hearings by online elements should be explored. The process of obtaining suggestions and comments from associations and/or experts on legislation or regulation projects often involves problems in terms of coordination of time schedules, its access is de facto subject to significant restrictions and the process itself is not very transparent for the general public. Although those polled during the association survey voiced scepticism with regard to online hearings compared to live hearings, they considered such electronic formats to be worth considering as a supplementary element. Such online hearings should be public and enable online access to written comments and – when combined with the formats explained above – could contribute towards greater transparency. Examples of pilot projects include the amendment to the Data Protection Act or the Data Protection Audit Ordinance as well as the amendment to the Barrier-free Information Technology Ordinance.

e) The participation formats which are suitable for these different purposes are to be implemented in parameterizable and scalable tools which must be adapted and tuned to each other. They are then to be offered to interested public authorities as client-enabled applications to be linked to their own websites. In order to identify the requirements of the different technical formats in this way, a feasibility study should be carried out in order to determine the participation and hearing practice of the federal ministries and downstream agencies, to develop a general concept for the participation platform and to identify willingness to cooperate and to use the platform.

f) The subsequent use of the platform should be evaluated externally. The evaluation should not be limited to the quantity of contributions and postings, but should also cover their quality, user expectations and demands as well as the consequences in the back office of the administrations concerned, evaluations by agency staff and the integration of the consultations into the political and administrative processes in order to contribute towards permanent quality improvement. The party commissioning this evaluation must make sure that the contractors performing and evaluating the offering belong to clearly separate organizations.
**Time horizon**

The feasibility study can be performed parallel to the two consultations proposed in sections 7.2.1 and 7.3.2. The invitation to tender for the platform can be published in 2009 with first-time use then to be expected in the middle / at the end of 2010.

**Added value**

With the coordinated implementation of these projects, the federal administration would be able to demonstrate to the general public that it is serious about opening up to citizens seriously. The costs of every single consultation could be significantly lower than in the case of isolated use.

**Potential barriers**

The most serious barrier would be insufficient preparation of online participation as well as insufficient support and evaluation as a result of erroneous thrift. eParticipation offerings which are not properly integrated into the administrative and political process frustrate both addressees and staff in charge of these offerings at the federal administration. Properly integrated processes, in contrast, feature a higher degree of transparency and responsivity. Examples of good practice from other countries show how clearly these countries communicate the purpose for which the procedures are performed and what happens to the results (transparency). Furthermore, participants can expect a previously defined response to their contributions.

The challenge of aggregating and effectively using a potentially large number of contributions from citizens, which has been technically addressed to a very limited extent and in a few formats only, could lead to reluctance on the part of public authorities. This also holds true for ePanels: Users of this format must also be clearly told what will happen to the results.

There is reason to object that such offerings promote elites with strong communication capabilities, so that minority groups in society would hardly have a chance to be considered. This is why pilot projects must be evaluated by independent organizations and why these offerings should be seen as another channel in addition to the involvement of lobby groups.

**Costs**

The projects proposed in subsections (a) and (b) will cost around €100,000 to €300,000 (including external evaluation) during the initial phase. The ePanels proposed in subsection (c) are relatively cheap with annual costs in the 5-digit range. In view of the low moderation effort, 5-digit sums should be calculated for each hearing for sub-project (d).

EU subsidies could also be used to "reduce red tape" ("reducing admin. burden").

Pilot experience from New Zealand with the use of wikis for consultations in legislative processes (refer to the reference projects) suggests that participation offerings which are implemented on a technically simple level can also be handled by the administration itself (with its own staff and without external contractors). According to the project manager (McCarrad, personal communication), the wiki consultation required a total of 60 hours for technical equipment, 80 hours for factual preparations, 150 hours for moderation and 30 hours for external communication.

It should, however, be noted here that the wiki was open for comments for six days only and that it was of an explicitly experimental nature. Furthermore, the wiki consultation was
integrated into a more comprehensive consultation procedure, so that a dedicated project team was already available.

Since these preconditions do not (yet) exist in Germany on federal level, invitations to tender for all the sub-projects proposed should be based on short feasibility studies which also identify the related cost and time requirements in concrete terms. Furthermore, pro-bono contributions from companies could provide favourable access to the pilot experience.

**Evaluation criteria**

The most important evaluation criteria include the following:

- (a) and (b) quantity of the participation, quality (bandwidth of opinions, representation of the views of population groups which are typically less present on the Internet, communication between discussion participants (responsivity and empathy);
- (c) number of citizens interested in ePanels, representation of different groups of the population, work input on the part of the administration;
- (d) achieving of a result in the debate, acceptance of the debate and its results by the external Internet users (public);
- (f) frequency of use of the tools.

**Reference projects**

- Future of Food (2001)
- Central access to online consultations in the US: Regulations.gov
- EU consultations: "Ihre Stimme in Europa" ["Your Voice in Europe"]
- Police Act wiki in New Zealand (development of draft bills at an early stage via wikis)
- Continuous involvement of the business community: European Business Test Panel
- UK: Online hearing on family violence (Coleman & Normann 2000)
7.4.3 Platform for public applications to the federal government: "Your suggestions and complaints"

The eParticipation project by the German parliament has significantly improved the petition process. It is internationally regarded as a model for eParticipation. In the UK, hundreds of thousands of citizens have participated in petitions to Downing Street. The federal government employs more than twenty commissioners who are responsible for addressing the interests of certain groups of the population in certain subjects, but these can, at best, be reached by e-mail. The successful example of the German parliament is to be applied to these commissioners and other federal authorities.

A platform for public applications, complaints and petitions enables citizens to communicate their interests to the applicable institutions at federal level and to reduce the distance from the federal government which is often considered to be too long. The public and hence transparent treatment of submissions promotes the interest among citizens and strengthens their trust in the executive branch. Efficiency gains in the handling of citizens' inquiries can be expected as an additional benefit.

**Brief overview**

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<td>Degree of formality</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation horizon</td>
<td>Medium-term</td>
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</table>

**The current situation**

Article 17 of the Basic Law (petition right) reads as follows: "Every person shall have the right individually or jointly with others to address written requests or complaints to competent authorities and to the legislature." Citizens hence have a right to be heard by the government or by parliament with their concerns, be it complaints or proposals.

In summer 2005, the German parliament's petitions committee adopted far-reaching modifications of its rules of procedure pursuant to which citizens now also have the possibility to use an online form in order to submit requests or complaints. A new feature is that citizens can apply to the German government to have their requests published on the parliament's websites (public petition) in order to solicit co-signers and discuss their petition. This offering by the German parliament meets with keen interest among citizens. However, the processing of petitions by the German parliament often takes as much as one year.

The government has set up citizen service offices at the different ministries in order to effectively respond to requests for information and assistance. These offices can be reached by letter, telephone and via an online form. Some of the answers to frequently asked questions are published on the Internet. Furthermore, a test of a uniform service telephone number (115) for all public authorities is being prepared. Plans exist to open up to this channel so that requests and complaints can be sent to the federal government. The 29 federal commissioners have a special role to play when it comes to receiving applications from citizens. They are in charge of addressing the interests of particular citizen groups (military service draftees, migrants, disabled citizens, victims of the Ministry for State Security of the German
Democratic Republic, etc.). Although the range of activities by the government's commissioners is larger, the handling of requests from citizens forms an important part of this work. However, a strategy designed to assist citizens in approaching the commissioners with suggestions or complaints via the Internet is not yet visible.

**Aims, methods, players**

A central platform for public applications supports citizens in communicating their interests and demands to the federal government units and offices in charge. The downstream suggestion and complaint management system enables the efficient distribution to and processing by the government's commissioners and citizen service offices and/or forwarding to other institutions and organizations (such as the European Ombusman or commissioners of the federal landiden). The public and hence transparent treatment of submissions promotes interest among citizens and strengthens their trust in the executive branch.

At a central, easy-to-find point, citizens are to be able to send proposals and complaints to the federal government via the Internet. Citizens can select whether they wish to have their submission treated as confidential or not. If public treatment is requested, supporter signatures can be collected online (similar to a mass petition) and comments posted in a forum within a defined period of time.

In order to prove responsivity and to generate a certain degree of pressure in the interest of prompt processing, an additional status display (tracking and tracing) should be implemented to show the authors of applications or petitioners the processing progress of their submission. Assignment to one of the following phases, i.e. "receipt confirmed", "forwarded for commenting", "comment written / reply in progress" and "reply posted", would suffice in analogy to the offering of the German Research Foundation in its application monitor.

Another important element of the platform are functions which enable demand-orientated sorting and browsing of postings, for example, in order to identify similar postings. This will require the addition of semantic information (such as subject matter, responsible commissioner) using Web 2.0 technologies (tagging) which can be carried out by citizens themselves, the administration or other website users. The possibility to localize suggestions and complaints using a geographic information system (GIS) would also be desirable. And finally, the authors should be given the opportunity to rate the answers received.

The communication platform should be offered not just as a separate portal, but should also be integrated into every federal commissioner's web offering with a dedicated view. This platform would then show only those public postings which belong to the sphere of responsibility of the corresponding federal commissioner. Postings made there would also appear on the central platform where they would be automatically assigned to the federal commissioner into whose web offering the platform was integrated.

This creates the preconditions for the gradual introduction of the suggestion and complaint management system, i.e. some federal commissioners could already use the communication platform before others follow suit or before the communication platform is positioned in a central place on the government's websites. Another option would be to test the communication platform for a limited period of time during which individual federal commissioners could call for postings from citizens on particular subjects within the scope of a public campaign. The federal commissioner for matters relating to disabled persons, for example, could ask these citizens to post on this communication platform information concerning barriers which they personally experienced during offline and online access to offices of the federal administration ("barrier pillory").
Time horizon

We recommend conducting a feasibility study in order to identify the extent and handling of submissions to the federal commissioners as well as requirements for electronic support and developing a general concept. This could then serve as a basis for an invitation to tender in 2009. Another sensible option would be to perform one or two pilot projects with individual commissioners on the basis of the adaptation of the software of the German parliament.

Added value

Many companies have understood that a suggestion and complaint management system – the so-called customer relation management – is an important element for maintaining relations with customers. The federal government should also make use of this possibility. The public handling of submissions creates transparency with regard to the treatment of suggestions and complaints and thus increases motivation among citizens to contact the government. Positive answers and responses strengthen trust in the government. If these answers and responses are made publicly available, positive perception is no longer limited to the direct authors but also includes the much larger number of users who only watch such processes.

A suggestion and complaint management system not only creates the technical basis for the efficient handling of communications; it also enables the feeding of entries into a knowledge management system which can serve as an "early warning system" and thereby perform an important function within the framework of prospective legislation impact assessment or retrospective legislation evaluation.

The possibility to post an application and to find supporters constitutes crucial added value for Internet users. Furthermore, the tracking and tracing function shows that communications are taken very seriously. Both generate the impression that citizens can exert an influence. The attractiveness of using the Internet could be increased further by making the tracking and tracing functionality available only for postings sent via the Internet.

Potential barriers

The inclusion of many commissioners and citizen service offices can lead to significant coordination requirements. This is why successive implementation must be possible, i.e. commissioners who are interested and who offer favourable preconditions take part first. The coordination of the communication platform with the uniform service telephone number for public authorities (115) as a media-spanning concept does pose a challenge.

One issue to be examined would be how to treat submissions from citizens if it is not possible to verify the authenticity of the submissions on the basis of a signature. In this respect, the German parliament has found a pragmatic solution in conjunction with the introduction of an online form for submitting petitions which could also serve as an example for the government.

There is a risk that individual citizens may post insults, defamatory comments or unlawful statements on the platform. Attentive moderation is hence necessary in order to remove such statements from the platform. When cases of misuse abound, it should be possible for the moderators to change to safe pre-moderation mode which ensures that all submissions and comments are not published until they have been checked and released by the moderators.
Costs

The development of a communication platform which meets the criteria outlined above and, in particular, its combination with a suggestion and complaint management system for efficient processing of postings in the backend area is a relatively complex task. Depending on the design of the system, the related costs would range between €100,000 and €200,000. Depending on the intensity of use, one to two assistant desk officers will be required to manage the system. Additional costs are incurred at regular intervals (annually) for updating and upgrading the system to reflect new requirements.

Evaluation criteria

The most important evaluation criteria include the following:

- a large number of applications (of which few double applications);
- a large number of applications from citizens belonging to the groups represented by the commissioners;
- a large diversity of citizens with different social backgrounds submitting applications;
- a large number of citizens participating in the suggestion and complaint system as supporters or with comments;
- a short processing time of suggestions and complaints by the commissioners and citizen service offices.

Reference projects

- FixMyStreet: http://www.fixmystreet.com
- ePetitions to the British Prime Minister: http://petitions.pm.gov.uk
- Public petitions to the German parliament: http://itc.napier.ac.uk/e-Petition/bundestag/list_petitions.asp
- TOM – Today I decide (EST): http://www.eesti.ee/tom
- Internet offering of the Conciliation Body for Long-Distance Travel of the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection: http://www.schlichtungsstelle-mobilitaet.org/ (including an online form for postings)
- Application monitor of the German Research Foundation: http://dfg/antragsmonitor/

7.4.4 Signpost for public participations

In countries with many online participation offerings, such as the UK and the US, portals with links to the individual offerings have been recently created. Such signposts for public participation facilitate access to participation procedures and document the state of online and offline participation. Such a signpost is initially proposed for participation offerings on federal level only.
**Brief overview**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation form</th>
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<td>Implementation horizon</td>
<td>Short to medium term</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**The current situation**

The federal government has developed the citizens' participation rights in several planning procedures, for instance, in the General Administrative Procedures Act (plan approval procedures), Federal Regional Planning Act (spatial planning procedures), Federal Building Code (land-use planning) and most recently in the Public Participation Act (for example, in the case of strategic environmental assessments). These also concern plans of the federal government, such as the establishment of the Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan and plans for nuclear facilities. Apart from a few exceptions known to us, these participation offerings are not yet Internet-based.

In as far as legislative processes of the federal government are concerned, the joint rules of procedure of the federal ministries control the participation of association and specialist groups (section 47 (3)), and it is left to the discretion of the lead ministry to determine the time, extent and the selection of representatives of associations and specialist groups. The "Legislation Impact Assessment Guidelines" ["Leitfaden zur Gesetzesfolgenabschätzung"] and the draft "Working Guide on Legislation Impact Assessment" ["Arbeitshilfe Gesetzesfolgenabschätzung"] of the Federal Ministry of the Interior recommend the performance of field research and expert workshops. None of the documents explicitly considers participation by the public in the legislative process.

In several areas, such as water management and telecommunications, EU directives oblige member states to consult the general public or consumers regarding regulatory issues.

The stock-taking section shows that the federal government repeatedly offered informal participation procedures inviting citizens and people concerned to voice their opinion on government projects in online forums. However, an exact and up-to-date picture of participation offerings is difficult to determine since there is no directory.\(^{219}\)

However, such an online directory of past and present procedures for consulting the general public as well as associations and experts is an element which unites the leaders in international eParticipation (i.e. the US, Canada, South Korea, New Zealand, the UK, Denmark and Estonia).

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\(^{219}\) The Federal Gazette occasionally publishes participation offerings under the headings of "Participation", "Interpretation" and "Hearing".
Aims, methods, players

A signpost on the Internet leading to public participation offerings facilitates access to participation procedures and thereby increases the participation rate which still often lags behind expectations.

Past and present – both online and offline – participation offerings are listed on a platform. A hyperlink offers access to further information concerning the participation offering (deadlines, address for postings, etc.). Online participation offerings can then be directly accessed from the platform.

Further functions on the signpost platform include sorting and search functions, so that participation offerings can be easily found based on the assignment to particular tags or categories (for example, responsible public authority, subject matter, type of participation offering, geographic location). At least equally important is the integration of push services, such as RSS feeds and automatic e-mail notifications. If these are subscribed to in a demand-orientated manner, the users of the platform can be automatically kept up to date on participation offerings of interest to them (for example, because they concern a particular geographic region or a particular subject) without having to visit the platform again.

The signpost can be implemented in different variants which are in part based on each other.

- It can, for example, be initially implemented for the area of competence of one ministry. Further ministries can then follow suit one by one. In the long term, it would also be desirable to involve public authorities on federal-land and municipal level because the value of the signpost increases the more complex the signpost is.
- One could begin with a collection of formal offerings for citizen participation as well as offerings exclusively for associations and specialist groups. Informal participation offerings could then be added at a later stage.
- The directory platform could be converted to a platform for participation in participation offerings (refer to Regulations.gov in the reference projects), i.e. besides listing ongoing participation offerings, an online input form is offered which can be used to directly post comments which are then forwarded to the public authority concerned. In another step, it would be possible to support public discourse online if the comments can (if desired by the author) be published and rated and commented upon by other participants.
- If comments can be posted via the platform, the technical possibilities for the efficient evaluation and forwarding of the postings to the corresponding public authorities (for example, after elimination of double and multiple entries and sorted according to subject matter aspects) can be used.
- In order to ensure the responsivity of the participation offerings, the directory of past citizen participations should contain the results of the procedures and, following this, the outcome of the planning, regulation or legislative process.
Time horizon

The signpost for public participation is a long-term project. The basic variant (one public authority, formal procedures for the participation of associations and specialist groups) can be quickly implemented. Possible steps for developing the platform further are discussed in the previous section.

Added value

A signpost for online and offline participation offerings has a central role to play in the "concert" of eParticipation applications. It documents growing citizen participation in general and growing eParticipation in particular (at least as far as the area of consultations is concerned). The federal government would need the signpost in order to keep up on an international scale with the leading countries in the field of eParticipation. In conjunction with Portal U, the federal government could make another important contribution towards the implementation of the Aarhus Convention with a signpost for public participation.

At the same time, a signpost facilitates access to participation offerings and triggers interest. Associations and specialist groups, in particular, are likely to be highly interested in this service because they can find out more easily where their view is wanted.

In the case of some informal participation offerings, a certain amount of PR expenditure can be saved because participants can be solicited via the signpost. Furthermore, considerable efficiency gains are to be expected if comments can be entered directly via the platform and forwarded in edited form to the public authorities via a technical system.

Potential barriers

One potential problem might be the fact that the number of citizen participation offerings is currently too small on federal level to justify the need for a signpost. Precise stock-taking makes sense in this case in order to be able to assess the extent of the participation directory.

If only a few public participation offerings are in fact implemented on federal level, it would be worth considering whether the signpost should be (initially) limited to documenting participation offerings with associations and specialist groups in order to promote transparency. However, measures would then have to be taken to ensure that essential preconditions for eParticipation are created (in the field of consultations): If the joint rules of procedure of the federal ministries do not foresee citizen participation offerings, the preconditions for promoting eParticipation would first have to be created here.

Another challenge is the coordination necessary between public authorities in order to provide such a signpost with the appropriate and up-to-date information about participation offerings.

As an alternative option, an external institution could be commissioned to collect the required information about participation offerings from public authorities. In as far as such information is already available – albeit in a disperse form – in the federal administration's Internet offering, technical measures could be taken in order to automatically read (parse) this information and to bundle it in a suitable form on the signpost's website (refer to the "Planning Alerts" project in the reference projects).

Costs

The form in which a signpost is to be implemented for public participation depends heavily on the demands and conditions that prevail at the federal administration (refer to the variants
described in the preceding sections). We recommend commissioning a feasibility study before the costs can be estimated.

_Evaluation criteria_

The most important evaluation criteria include the following:

- number of page visits and unique visitors;
- number RSS feed subscribers;
- number of public participations listed.

_Reference projects_

- Planning Alerts (UK): [http://www.planningalerts.com](http://www.planningalerts.com)
- Zebralog: [http://www.zebralog.de/de/dialogscout.php](http://www.zebralog.de/de/dialogscout.php)

7.4.5 "My Public Agency" – user-based description and evaluation of administrative services

The quality of administrative services includes an understandable description of the services and preconditions which must be fulfilled in order to obtain them. The current administration signposts are written from the perspective and in the language of the administration, even though they are structured in terms of everyday life applications. Citizens and representatives of companies as customers of the administration have a different view, a different language and can contribute their own experience which might be of interest to other customers. These should be included in the specifications.

FAQs concerning administrative services should be offered as wikis and hence made more dynamic. Services can be rated and commented by the users. The process of retrieving contents can be improved if the users themselves tag the contents (social tagging). Pilot projects involving these additions should be the first step in selected projects in the "portfolio" field of action of the eGovernment 2.0 implementation plan.

_Brief overview_

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<td>Federal level (can be transferred to federal-land and municipal administrations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority in charge</td>
<td>A pilot project in the sphere of responsibility of the Federal Ministry of the Interior</td>
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</table>
The current situation

In its E-Government 2.0 programme, the federal government announces that it will gear the expansion of its online services towards the needs and demands of users and maintain ongoing dialogue with users to this effect (p. 11). In the 2007 implementation plan, one goal of the "portfolio" field of action is the "increase in user orientation and increased involvement of target groups during the course of the further expansion of the online offerings" (p. 8). A description, comment and rating function for users of administration services can significantly contribute towards this.

Many services and responsibilities in the administration are either difficult to find or difficult to understand for those concerned. The grounds for claims are often unclear or the list of documents to be submitted is not understandable to everybody. Citizens' phone lines are set up in order to avoid unnecessary visits to public authorities or problems during online use. A uniform telephone number for an administration hotline is even planned within the scope of the "Deutschland Online" eGovernment strategy. A further remedy are administration signposts which are published on the Internet and describe the individual offices of an administration and the related services, as well as FAQs. However, these offerings often fail to overcome the underlying problem because these administration signposts and FAQs are not written from the perspective of the citizens or companies using them. In as far as questions and answers concerning a particular service are exchanged, this is often done in person (by telephone or e-mail) and hence remains invisible to other users who have similar problems.

Wikis are also used on the level of the federal administration in order to support cooperation processes. The Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information additionally creates orientation aids for data protection in cooperation with representatives of the commissioners for data protection of the federal laender whilst consideration is also being given to opening up author access to include further groups.

Aims, methods, players

Administration signposts and service descriptions are to be made more interactive and user-friendly by integrating Web 2.0 technologies. The addressees (for example, citizens who use and claim a service) are to be enabled to jointly design, open up and rate the information.

- FAQ wikis are offered in addition to the existing descriptions of services. This is where users can add their experience to existing collections of questions and answers concerning grounds for claims and documents to be submitted as well as problems experienced and suggested improvements. Furthermore, additional questions and answers can be posted and answered by users with the corresponding experience.

- Integrated tagging functions enable individual users themselves to tag services and responsibilities of offices. In this way, keywords which correspond better to the requirements of the users of the services can be integrated into the administration signposts, so that the services in question can be found more easily and quickly.
• Offices and services can be evaluated by citizens in terms of their quantity (by way of rating) and quality (by way of posting comments) on the basis of relevant criteria (for example, obligingness and competence of officers, opening hours, cycle time, usability of the information provided, satisfaction with the solution to a problem, etc.).

In the 2007 implementation plan, a total of ten projects are listed in the "portfolio" field of action. These projects are to be designed to enable the demand-orientated further development of individual online services and to increase user orientation by involving target groups. These include the customer portal of the German job centres, the federal government's tendering platform ("E-Vergabe"), the online tax return service for large taxpayers and individuals as well as the civil register and the motor vehicle registration offices. An offering which addresses citizens and companies should be tested within the scope of a pilot trial involving user participation via Web 2.0 technologies.

In line with the proposals described earlier, the Web 2.0 formats of wiki, tagging and rating should be integrated in this context. In order to ensure standardized entries and postings (and, if applicable, the offering-independent comparability of the quality of such offerings), certain structures should be defined, for example, in the form of a uniform template for FAQs and a scoring system for given criteria which can be used to rate a service. The ratings can be additionally justified by entering short, user-defined comments.

Parallel to this, the public authority or office in charge in each case should explore the possibilities for comparable functionalities in the planned Internet network of administration portals. The 2007 implementation plan already announces the use of Web 2.0 technologies for public authorities and Internet users (p. 27).

*Time horizon*

Four steps are necessary in order to implement the recommendation for action:

1. identifying demand and needs (in which spheres of responsibility of ministries and public authorities is a sensible use possible?);
2. two pilot projects within the scope of the 2007 implementation plan;
3. transfer to other public authorities and political levels;
4. integration into the "bund.de -Verwaltung online" administration portal.

*Added value*

The expansion of the existing online information offerings of the administration by adding formats that enable users to participate in the generation and opening up of information can improve the understandability and retrievability of contents from the citizens' perspective and hence help to achieve the goal of the administration signposts, i.e. to reduce consultation and processing time through better preparation for both citizens and the administration.

The rating of the services by users gives the public authorities the possibility to permanently evaluate and, when necessary, improve the quality of the services offered.

Improved transparency of information on administrative services and responsibilities as well as a better quality of services and hence greater user satisfaction can be expected in the long term.
Potential barriers

With regard to the use of wikis, the issue of responsibility for contents generated by the users is not clear. Unclear legal problems could constitute a barrier to the implementation of a FAQ wiki. It may also take more time until a critical mass of users is reached who actively contribute their experience and until it will be possible for the user group to check the contents internally. Editorial support is hence urgently required.

Tagging involves the risk that a joint collection of terms (also called folksonomy) prepared by the users may contain a very large number of versions of a key word due to differences in spelling, synonyms, singular/plural, etc. This can lead to different search results for different versions of a key word and additionally make the collection of terms more difficult to overlook, for example, in the case of visualization with a tag cloud. This can be countered if it is possible, for example, when assigning tags to search for all the tags previously assigned or when synonyms are automatically offered. Furthermore, the manual merging of tags should be technically supported.

The expected benefits of the formats proposed here are contingent upon a critical mass of users. Sensible use of these formats will not be possible until many citizens actively participate in the process of writing, tagging and rating.

Costs

The costs involved are mainly related to the provision and integration of the wiki software and the tagging and rating functions into the existing web signposts of the public authorities as well as the technical and editorial support for these. Furthermore, costs also arise during the initial phase for the development of concepts for uniform templates, evaluation criteria, etc. and for the editing of first contents (it will be necessary, for instance, to edit existing FAQs as wiki pages). The evaluation of the ratings given by users for evaluation purposes can be carried out by staff at the public authority concerned as part of their regular duties, so that no additional costs are to be expected in this respect.

A one-year concept and pilot phase will cost between €100,000 and €150,000 and require half a job for technical and half a job for editorial support.

Evaluation criteria

The success of a user-based description and evaluation/rating of administrative services can be chiefly measured according to the following criteria:

- A large number of participants actively take part in the creation and tagging of contents and in the rating of services.
- The number of individual inquiries received by the public authorities (especially of inquiries relating to identical or similar questions) declines because the answers can be taken from the FAQs.
- User ratings are evaluated by the offices at regular intervals and are important for the ongoing adaptation and improvement of the service offered. Parallel to this, the number of positive ratings from users increases.

Reference projects

The project described is based on ideas from the following projects:

- City wikis: for example Stadtwiki http://ka.stadtwiki.net and http://www.sternenfels.org
- Ratings: for example http://www.meinprof.de
- Social tagging: for example http://www.flickr.com
- DIBIS service in the city of Hamburg: http://www.hamburg.de/index.do?ok=21785&uk=21722
8 Sources

References


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Internet sources:


Sources


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<th><strong>High priority</strong></th>
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<td>long-term</td>
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**Online-Konsultation zur Umsetzung der Studien "E-Partizipation" und "E-Inclusion")**  
**Online consultation on the implementation of the "eParticipation" and "eInclusion" studies**

**Minister-Podcast im Bürgerdialog**  
**Minister podcast in the citizens' dialogue**

**Zugriffskontrolle auf eigene Daten im zentralen Melderegister**  
**Access control to own data in the central civil register**

**Online Konsultation zur BITV und Bundesdatenschutz auditgesetz**  
**Online consultation on the barrier-free information technology ordinance (BITV) and the Federal Data Protection Audit Act**

**Kompetenznetzwerk E-Partizipation**  
**eParticipation competence network**

Webseite; Expertendrehscheine; Datenbanken; Tools & Anwendungsbeispiele; Monitoring; Tagungen; Wettbewerbe; Schulungen; Qualitätsstandards; Förderprogramm

Website; expert hub; databases; tools & application examples; monitoring; conferences; competitions; training; quality standards; promotion programme

**Förderprogramm für zivilgesellschaftliche Initiativen**  
**Promotion programme for civil-society initiatives**

**Informationsfreiheitsräume**  
**Freedom of information rooms**

Transparenz durch und über Informationsfreiheit

Transparency through and via freedom of information

**Ihre Meinung zählt - Bedarfs- und nutzergerechte Online-Konsultationen: Foren, ePanels, Fragebögen; E-Hearings**  
**Your opinion matters – demand and user-focused online consultations: forums, ePanels, questionnaires; eHearings**

"Ihre Vorschläge und Beschwerden" – Plattform für öffentliche Eingaben an die Bundesregierung

"Your suggestions and complaints" – platform for public applications to the Federal Government

**Wegweiser für Öffentlichkeits-Beteiligungen**  
**Directory for public participations**

**Mein Amt – Nutzerbasierte Beschreibung und Bewertung von Verwaltungsdienstleistungen**  
**My public agency – user-based description and evaluation of administrative services**

Verwaltung, Politik  
initiiert  
Adressat  
Wahlen, Abstimmungen  
Bürgerbegehren, Volksentscheide  
Kooperation  
Konsultation  
Information  
Eingaben, Beschwerden, Petitionen, Anfechtungen

Administration, politics  
initiates  
Addressee  
Elections, votes  
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<th>Activism, campaigns, lobbying</th>
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<td>Addressee</td>
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<td>Political information</td>
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<td>Politician's website</td>
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<td>Online letter to the publisher</td>
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<td>SMS/Email an Politiker/BI etc.</td>
<td>SMS/e-mail to politician / citizens’ initiative, etc.</td>
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<td>Information material ordered / download</td>
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<td>Politikerhomepage</td>
<td>Politician's homepage</td>
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<td>Petition</td>
<td>Petition</td>
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<td>Fragebogen</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diskussionsforum</td>
<td>Discussion forum</td>
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| Frage: "Es gibt ja verschiedene Möglichkeiten, sich im Internet über politische Angelegenheiten zu informieren oder auch zu beteiligen. Wie ist das bei Ihnen: Welche der folgenden Möglichkeiten haben Sie in den letzten Jahren schon einmal genutzt?" | Question: "There are different ways to obtain information about politics on the Internet or to participate. What about you: Which of the following options have you already used in recent years?"

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<th>Low priority</th>
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<td>eParticipation competence network Website; expert hub; databases; tools &amp; application examples; monitoring; conferences; competitions; training; quality standards; promotion programme (7.3.3)</td>
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<td>Your opinion matters – demand and user-focused online consultations: forums, ePanels, questionnaires; eHearings (7.4.2)</td>
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