

Evaluating Parliamentary e-Participation

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Abstract. Although many countries today exploit the potential of ICT for supporting citizens' engagement in the democratic processes and invest significant amounts of money in e-participation, have do not pay corresponding attention in evaluating these efforts. In this direction, this paper describes a framework that has been developed for evaluating e-participation pilots in the legislation development processes of parliaments. The proposed framework is based on a) the objectives and basic characteristics of the 'traditional' public participation, the e-participation and the legislation development processes, and b) the existing frameworks for the evaluation of information systems, e-participation and traditional public participation. It includes four evaluation perspectives: process, system, context and outcomes evaluation, each of them being analysed into a number of evaluation criteria/variables; also, it includes the assessment of associations between the assessed values of outcomes evaluation factors on one hand and the assessed values of the context, process and system evaluation factors on the other, in order to identify the reasons of positive of negative outcomes.

I. INTRODUCTION

The high potential of modern information and communication technologies ICT for supporting citizens' engagement in the democratic processes is widely recognized by academics and practitioners [1-7]. Local, regional and national governments of many OECD member countries try to extend citizens participation in public decision-making and policy-making through the provision of an additional effective channel of communication with civil society based on innovative usage of ICT for supporting open and transparent democratic processes [3-6]. European Union has developed an ambitious agenda for 'e-Democracy', which includes the online availability of all European legislation and the use of 'interactive policy making' tools for online consultations with stakeholders concerning new legislation [7]. However as the OECD [6] concludes 'There is a striking imbalance between the amount of time, money and energy that governments in OECD countries 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'. For this reason OECD [3] recommends that '...The benefits and impacts of applying technology in

opening up the policy process to wider public input have yet to be evaluated and articulated'. A similar gap can be observed in e-participation research. Rose & Sanford [8] from an extensive review of the existing research literature in the domain of e-participation conclude that there is a lack of evaluation methodologies and studies. Similarly, Macintosh & Whyte [9] argue that there is an 'evaluation gap' in this area and that the evaluation of both off-line and on-line participation 'is still a new and emerging area', which needs much more further research. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to fill in these gaps, taking into account that e-participation is a relatively new approach, so it is of critical importance to evaluate it carefully, in order to understand it better, acquire more knowledge about it, identify the advantages and benefits it offers, and at the same time its disadvantages and difficulties. In this way we can reach higher levels of maturity of e-participation practices and maximize the social benefits from the investments made in this area by governments of many countries. The knowledge acquired through the evaluation of e-participation can be very useful for its sponsors, organizers, participants and the society. It should also be noted that e-participation has quite different objectives and characteristics from the 'traditional' e-government, which focuses mainly on electronic transactions and public services delivery, so methodologies/frameworks and that have been developed for the evaluation of the latter cannot be used for e-participation evaluation.

This paper describes a framework which has been developed for evaluating e-participation in the legislation formation processes of the national parliaments, which constitute fundamental institutions of modern representative democracy. It has been developed as part of the LEX-IS project ('Enabling Participation of the Youth in the Public Debate of Legislation among Parliaments, Citizens and Businesses in the European Union') (www.lex-is.eu) of the 'eParticipation' Preparatory Action of the European Commission [10-11]. Initially, in the following six sections are outlined the methodology and the basic foundations of our framework. In particular, in section II is presented the methodology we adopted for developing the framework. Then in sections III, IV and V are outlined the basic objectives and characteristics of the public participation, the e-participation and the

legislation formation respectively, which are taken into account for developing the proposed framework. Finally the existing frameworks for the evaluation of public participation and e-participation respectively are reviewed in sections VI and VII. Based on the above foundations we have developed a framework for evaluating e-participation in the legislative formation processes of parliaments, which is presented in section VIII. Finally in section IX the main conclusions are summarized and our next steps are briefly described.

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of information systems (IS) evaluation constitutes an important, difficult and highly researched topic [12-18]. The benefits and in general the value created by most categories of IS are complex and multidimensional, both tangible and intangible, so it is difficult to decide “what to measure” for the evaluation and “how”. Also different types of IS have quite different objectives and produce different types of benefits and value, so they require different “measurements” and evaluation methods. Therefore it is not possible to develop a generic “best IS evaluation method” suitable for all types IS, and the optimal approach is to develop specialised IS evaluation frameworks for particular types of IS taking into account their particular objectives and characteristics. Especially for the evaluation of e-government, the relevant literature (e.g. [16]) emphasizes its inherent difficulties, argues that ‘traditional’ investment evaluation methods built around accountancy and monetary terms (e.g. net present value, return on investment, etc.) are inadequate and recommends that a plethora of hard, soft, social and organizational aspects should be taken into account.

Therefore our basic foundations for developing a framework for evaluating e-participation in the legislation formation processes of parliaments should be:

- i) the generic information systems evaluation methodologies and frameworks proposed by the relevant literature [12-18],
- ii) and at the same time the particular objectives and basic characteristics of the ‘traditional’ public participation, the e-participation, and the legislation formation processes,
- iii) and also the existing frameworks for the evaluation of traditional public participation and e-participation.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Held [19], combining the work of three important thinkers, Pateman, Macpherson and Barber, referred to an emergent new model of democracy, which he termed “participatory democracy”. A key principle of this model is that “the equal right to self-development can only be achieved in a participatory society, a society which fosters a sense of political efficacy, nurtures a concern for collective problems and contributes to the formation of a knowledgeable citizenry capable of taking a sustained interest in the governing process” [19] (p. 262). In this direction Row & Frewer [20] define public participation as ‘the practice of consulting and involving members of the public in the agenda-setting,

decision-making and policy forming activities of organizations or institutions responsible for policy development’; they view it as a move away from an ‘elitist model’, in which managers and experts are the basic source of regulations and public policies, to a new model, in which citizens have a more active role and voice. The three main participationist authors, Pateman [21], Macpherson [22], and Barber [23] have formed a core theory about the “educative virtue of participation”, which regards participation, and especially direct and at the local level, as the best way to improve representational practices. That is, by participating, citizens would become more competent, more respectful of other citizens’ rights, and also more committed to democracy. From several OECD studies [1],[2],[6] it has been concluded that governments of many countries have made considerable efforts in order to apply and realize the above ideas in practice, promote public participation and strengthen their relations with the citizens, regarding them as sound investments in better policy-making and as a core element of good governance. In particular governments initiate and support the following three types of interactions with their citizens in various stages of the public policy-making cycle:

- a) Information Provision: an ‘one-way relation’, in which government delivers information to be used by citizens.
- b) Consultation: an asymmetric ‘two-way relation’, in which citizens provide views and feedback to government on issues and questions that government has previously defined.
- c) Active participation: a more symmetric ‘two-way relation’ between government and citizens, in which citizens have a wider role in proposing policy options and shaping the policy dialogue, though the government still has the responsibility for the final decisions or policy formulation.

For supporting these three ways of interaction with citizens governments have started using various ICT-based methods, which are collectively referred to as ‘e-participation’.

IV. ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION (E-PARTICIPATION)

The OECD [3],[5] defines e-participation as the use of ICTs for supporting the provision of information to the citizens, the consultation with them and also their active participation in all the stages of the policy-making life cycle: agenda setting, policy analysis, policy formulation, policy implementation and policy monitoring/evaluation; in these OECD reports for each of the above three basic dimensions of e-participation (information, consultation and active participation) and for each of the abovementioned five stages of the policy-making life cycle are proposed appropriate supporting ICT tools. The e-participation tools and methods can support efficiently and effectively citizen-centric processes, which allow the engagement of citizens not only in the voting of elected representatives, but also in the processes through which policies are shaped and in the decisions referring to the provision of public services as well. Moreover, e-participation tools and methods can provide a podium and extensive participation capabilities even to those being on the fringe and therefore contribute to the reduction of social exclusion.

These electronic initiatives may bring citizens of different groups, mentalities and values closer and allow them to exchange opinions and form networks.

According to the OECD [5] the main objectives of the governments adopting e-participation practices are: a) reaching and engaging with a wider audience, b) providing to them policy-relevant information, c) enable more in-depth consultation, d) facilitating the analysis of citizens' contributions, e) providing relevant and appropriate feedback to citizens, f) producing better quality policy, g) building trust and gaining acceptance of policy, h) sharing responsibility for policy-making, i) monitoring and evaluation of public policies. However, in order to achieve the above objectives the ICT-based public deliberation should be characterised by [24]: a) access of participating to comprehensive, balanced and accessible information on the debated issues, b) agenda open to revision or expansion by the participating citizens, c) sufficient time to consider the debated issues extensively, d) freedom from manipulation or coercion and protection of the free thought of participating citizens, e) an appropriate rule-based framework for discussion, f) participation by a representative and inclusive sample of citizens, which involves confronting digital divide and providing opportunities to citizens who feel politically alienated, socially marginalised, less literate or unconfident, g) scope for free interaction between participants, h) recognition of differences between participants, but rejection of status-based prejudice.

V. LEGISLATION FORMATION PROCESS

The legislation formation process has been analysed and modeled in three European countries (Austria, Greece and Lithuania) as part of the LEXIS project [10-11]; it has been concluded that it is characterized by high complexity and consists of several steps, which differ among countries, and can be grouped into two basic stages: the initial draft legislation formation and the debate on draft legislation. In each of them several meetings take place and numerous documents are produced; in these meetings participate many different stakeholders, such as members of parliament (MP), experts from ministries, independent experts, public servants from the responsible/competent ministry, representatives of the affected socio-economic groups, non-governmental organizations, etc. Each of these stakeholders' groups has a different piece of information, experience and knowledge about the problem or issue addressed by the legislation under formation, so a 'synthesis' of these pieces is required. Also, these stakeholders' groups usually have different values, concerns, interests and expectations concerning the legislation under formation and very often there are conflicts between them. So a basic objective of the legislation formation process, which is of critical importance for the quality and effectiveness of the legislation, is these stakeholder groups to participate actively, communicate, interact and sometimes even negotiate (as it happens in the 'negotiated rule making' [25]), so that a mutual understanding can be developed and

finally consensus can be achieved to the largest possible extent.

It should be noted that most of the previous research on the parliament as a basic institution of modern representative democracy has been focused mainly on its relationship with the executive government; however, recently there is a growing realisation by both parliamentarians and academics of the importance of its relationship with the citizens [26]. It is gradually realised that collecting evidence from the public and organizations representing them (e.g. associations, trade unions, etc.) can be very useful for important functions of parliaments, such as legislation formation and holding government to account. For this reason in many countries parliaments have taken various initiatives for strengthening this link. One of these initiatives is the use of modern ICT, and especially the Internet, for this purpose. From a survey of officials from 36 European national parliaments conducted by Coleman [27] in collaboration with the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) it has been concluded that almost all these parliaments have a web site as a window to the world and most of them (89%) have set up e-mail addresses for all elected members. These parliamentary web sites provide all information about the parliament and future sessions (e.g. agendas) and also links to other government sites. The majority of them have search engine (80%), bills tracking system (73%), links to MPs' web sites (66%) and capabilities for the citizens to state their opinions on issues under discussion (54%); however, less than half of them provide committee working papers (46%), information for young people (41%), MPs' voting records (37%) and capabilities for the citizens to participate in e-consultations about the legislation under formation (27%). The final conclusion of this study is that the European national parliaments use widely ICT for providing some information to the citizens, but still there is limited use of interactive features that enable citizens to comment and deliberate on policy and legislation issues.

VI. EVALUATION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It has been recognized that the evaluation of public participation projects and activities is important for all parties involved in them: the sponsors that initiate them, the organizers running them, the participants and also the uninformed but affected public. For these reasons there are many studies in the literature reporting evaluations of public participation in various public policy domains (e.g. environment, transport, biotechnology, services for ageing population, etc.) using various criteria; comprehensive reviews of these studies are provided by Chess & Purcell [28] and Rowe & Frewer [20]. Although there have been some attempts for specifying complete sets of criteria for evaluating public participation, it is acknowledged that still there are no established evaluation methods and criteria in this area [20], [29]. Also, most of the methods and criteria that have been used in previous studies for the evaluation of public participation are procedural rather than substantive, in that

they relate to what makes for an effective public participation process, rather than how to measure the effectiveness of outcomes; however, it is necessary to pay a balanced attention both to public participation ‘process’ and ‘outcomes’.

It is interesting to analyse the most important of the public participation evaluation frameworks reported in the relevant literature, as they include elements that can be useful for the development of a framework for the evaluation of e-participation in the legislation development processes of parliaments. Weblar [30] proposes a public participation evaluation framework consisting of criteria along two basic dimensions: ‘fairness’ (assessing to what extent it is perceived by the public as fair and democratic) and ‘competence’ (assessing to what extent the conclusions have been drawn in an effective manner). Petts [31] evaluates community involvement and consensus building concerning waste management based on five criteria: impact on decision process, knowledge gained, compatibility with participants’ objectives, representativeness and effectiveness of method and process. It is worth describing in more detail the generic framework for evaluating public participation developed by Rowe and Frewer [29]. It includes two categories of evaluation criteria: the ‘acceptance’ criteria, which are related to the public acceptance of the procedure, and ‘process’ criteria, which are related to the implementation and effectiveness of the procedure. Five acceptance criteria are suggested: a) Criterion of representativeness, b) Criterion of independence, c) Criterion of early involvement, d) Criterion of influence on decisions and policy, e) Criterion of transparency. Additionally four process criteria are proposed: a) Criterion of resource accessibility, b) Criterion of task definition, c) Criterion of structured decision making and d) Criterion of cost-effectiveness. An improved version of the above public participation evaluation framework has been subsequently used by Rowe, Marsch & Frewer [32].

We should also mention the study of Coglianese [25], which concerns public participation in the legislative process; it compares the negotiated rulemaking to the ‘traditional’ rulemaking process, using two criteria: i) the reduction of the time to develop regulations and ii) the reduction or elimination of subsequent judicial challenges.

VII. EVALUATION OF E-PARTICIPATION

It is widely acknowledged that there are no established complete methodologies for the evaluation of e-participation (e.g. see [8], [9]; there are only some high level frameworks suggesting dimensions and criteria that should be taken into account for evaluating e-participation. These frameworks include elements that can be useful for the development of a framework for the evaluation of e-participation in the legislation development process; in the following paragraphs are briefly reviewed the most important of them.

Whyte & Macintosh [33] proposed a framework for evaluating e-consultation from political, technical and social perspective. The political evaluation is based on the clarity concerning the e-consultation objectives, the roles and

responsibilities of both the participating citizens and the competent government organizations, and the extent of influence of participating citizens, the owners and the actors; also to what extent the targeted participant groups have actually participated, how accessible and understandable was the information provided to the participants before entering the e-consultation, and whether the e-consultation took place early enough in the policy lifecycle so that it can influence decisions; and finally adequacy of time and financial, human and technical resources, and extent of giving feedback to the participants during and after the e-consultation. The technical evaluation assesses whether the ICT system that has been used was easy-to-use and appropriate for the targeted participants groups; it is based on software usability and accessibility frameworks and its main criteria are: clarity, organization and consistency of screens, informative feedback, simple error handling, easy reversal of actions, appropriate language, user control of the pace of interaction, adequate shortcuts for the frequent users, accessibility by people with disabilities, etc. The social evaluation assesses to what extent have the social practices and capabilities of the participants affected the consultation outcomes.

The OECD [3], [5] has developed a framework consisting of seven ‘issues for the evaluation of online engagement’, each of them having the form of a basic question further analysed into a number of sub-issues/sub-questions:

1. Was the e-consultation process conducted in line with best practice?
2. Were the consultation objectives and what was expected of the citizens made clear?
3. Did the consultation reach the target audience?
4. Was the information provided appropriate and relevant?
5. Were the contributions informed and appropriate?
6. Was feedback provided during and after the consultation?
7. Was there an impact on policy content?

Coleman [34] evaluated two Internet-based e-consultations conducted on behalf of the UK parliament from the following four outcomes-related perspectives:

- a) Inclusive consultation or ‘the usual suspects’? (to what extent in the e-consultation participate people who would not otherwise participate, e.g. through the ‘traditional’ citizen participation channels of parliaments?).
- b) Creating and connecting online networks (to what extent an interaction between the participants and an online community has been developed?).
- c) Representative – represented interaction (to what extent MPs have been involved in the e-consultation and interacted with the participating citizens?).
- d) Evidential quality (to what extent the evidence, experience and experience of the public collected through the e-consultation were of high quality?).

Henderson [35] provides an ‘e-democracy evaluation framework’, which consists of a set of key evaluation dimensions that address the issues of:

- Effectiveness (Do the initiatives deliver intended outcomes? To what extent are designated objectives met?)
- Equity (Is there equitable access to the benefits of the

initiatives?)

- Quality (What is the level of user and stakeholder satisfaction? Are relevant benchmark standards met?)
- Efficiency (Do the initiatives provide value for money?)
- Appropriateness (Are the particular e-democracy initiatives appropriate for the particular context? Do they provide a relevant response to identified needs in this area?)
- Sustainability (Do the initiatives provide a durable and generalisable approach to achieving the desired outcomes?)
- Process (How can the current initiatives be enhanced to provide better outcomes?)

A holistic approach for the evaluation of e-participation initiatives of local government is provided by Macintosh and Whyte [9], [36] who suggest a framework developed around three dimensions: the evaluation perspectives, the analysis methods and the actors involved. The evaluation perspectives include three overlapping views: democratic, project and socio-technical. In particular the democratic perspective considers the main democratic aspects that the e-participation initiative is addressing, such as to what extent the e-participation affects policy, its effect on representative democracy and involved representative institutions and government, transparency, political equality and community control, and also adequacy of mechanisms for conflict management and consensus building. The project perspective assesses the extent of accomplishment of the aims and objectives of each particular e-participation initiative, as set by its project management team. Criteria of this perspective can be the extent of engaging with a wider audience, obtaining better informed opinions, enabling more in-depth consultation, providing feedback to citizens and cost-effectiveness of contributions' analysis. The socio-technical perspective considers to what extent the design of the ICTs directly affects the outcomes and encompasses aspects of usability, usefulness and acceptability, which can be assessed using established frameworks from the software engineering and information systems domains.

VIII. A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING E-PARTICIPATION IN THE LEGISLATION FORMATION PROCESS

Based on the the foundations described in sections III to VII, a framework for evaluating e-participation in the legislation formation processes of parliaments has been developed. In particular, this framework has been constructed:

- taking into account generic information systems evaluation methodologies and framework,
- in combination with the particular objectives and basic characteristics of the public participation and the e-participation (sections III and IV respectively),
- the particular objectives and characteristics of the legislation formation processes in the parliaments, which have been analysed in the LEXIS Project (section V),
- and also taking elements from the existing evaluation frameworks for public participation and e-participation (sections VI and VII respectively).

For developing this framework we have also taken into account the four main stakeholders' groups of the legislation

formation processes, which were identified from the analysis of these processes conducted in the LEXIS project [10-11]: i) groups of citizens affected by the legislation under discussion and their associations, ii) Members of Parliament, iii) experts from the competent Ministry, iv) independent experts.

The proposed framework for evaluating e-participation in the legislation formation processes of parliaments is organized around four evaluation perspectives: Process (PRO), System (SYS), Context (CONT) and Outcomes (OUT); each of them includes a number of evaluation criteria/factors, which can be analysed further into sub-criteria, etc. It assesses all the three basic dimensions of both 'traditional public participation' and e-participation according to OECD (information provision, consultation and active participation) [1-6] in the legislation formation context. Also, it includes all the seven 'issues for the evaluation of online engagement' proposed by OECD [3], [5], appropriately adapted to the parliamentary context. Furthermore, it assesses all the evaluation dimensions proposed by the model of information systems success of Delone and McLean [17]: information quality, systems quality, use, user satisfaction, individual impact and organizational impact, adapted to the context of the legislation formation processes.

The Process (PRO) perspective aims to assess the process that has been followed in the particular e-participation project. It is based mainly on the 'efficiency evaluation' proposed by Smithson and Hirschheim [13], the 'process'-related dimensions that most 'traditional' public participation and e-participation evaluation frameworks include, and part of the 'political evaluation' of the framework proposed by Whyte & Macintosh [33]; also it includes the 'information quality' dimension proposed by the model of information systems success of Delone and McLean [17]. The Process dimension includes 15 criteria shown in Table I:

TABLE I: EVALUATION CRITERIA OF THE PROCESS PERSPECTIVE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- PRO1: Clarity of objectives- PRO2: Clarity concerning the participants and the roles and responsibilities of each- PRO3: Clarity concerning the main political sponsor- PRO4: Adequacy of time- PRO5: Adequacy of resources (human, technical, financial)- PRO6: Appropriate promotion to potential participants- PRO7: Participants' personal data protection- PRO8: Quantity and quality of the background information provided to the participants (how complete, objective, correct, reliable, relevant, useful and clear/understandable this information was)- PRO9: Quality of the facilitator/moderator- PRO10: Sufficient and appropriate rules of consultation- PRO11: Analysis of contributions of participants- PRO12: Publication of the results and conclusions of the analysis of contribution- PRO13: Feedback to the participants concerning how their contributions will be (or have been) used and integrated in the Parliamentary decision-making process- PRO14: Commitment of the competent politicians and public servants- PRO15: Adequacy of the whole e-participation project design |
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The System (SYS) perspective aims to assess the ICT system that has been used in the particular e-participation project. It is based mainly on the 'ease of use' concept of the

‘Technology Acceptance Models’ (TAM) [18], which is an important determinant of IS acceptance and use, the ‘system quality’ dimension of the Delone and McLean model [17], and the ‘technical evaluation’ of the framework proposed by Whyte & Macintosh [33]; it constitutes another aspect of the ‘efficiency evaluation’ proposed by Smithson and Hirschheim [13]. This perspective includes 11 criteria shown in Table II:

TABLE II: EVALUATION CRITERIA OF THE SYSTEM PERSPECTIVE

- SYS1: Appropriateness of the ICT system for engaging the targeted participants
- SYS2: General ease of use of the ICT system by the participants
- SYS3: Organization, simplicity and clarity of screens
- SYS4: Simple error handling
- SYS5: User control of the pace of interaction
- SYS6: Easy reversal of actions
- SYS7: Accessibility by people with disabilities
- SYS8: Ease of accessing the background information provided to the participants
- SYS9: Ease of posting a contribution in the forum
- SYS10: Ease of accessing the contributions of the other participants in the forum
- SYS11: Technical quality (response time, downtime, etc.)

The Context (CONT) perspective aims to assess important characteristics of the context in which the particular e-participation project has taken place. It is based on the suggestions of the IS evaluation literature [12-16] to take into account the context in IS evaluation; also the e-participation literature [1-6], [24], [27] argues that the context (e.g. the familiarity of targeted groups with ICT, their degree of trust to the political system and institutions, etc.) has a significant impact on e-participation success and outcomes. The Context perspective includes 8 criteria shown in Table III:

TABLE III: EVALUATION CRITERIA OF THE CONTEXT PERSPECTIVE

- CONT1: Familiarity of the affected groups of citizens with ICT and Internet
- CONT2: Familiarity of the Members of Parliament who participated with ICT and Internet
- CONT3: Familiarity of the experts from the responsible/competent Ministry who participated with ICT and Internet
- CONT4: Familiarity of the independent experts who participated with ICT and Internet
- CONT5: Access of the affected groups of citizens with ICT and Internet
- CONT6: Educational level of the affected groups of citizens with ICT and Internet
- CONT7: Level of trust of the affected groups of citizens to the political system and institutions
- CONT8: Level of impact of the legislation under formation on the affected groups of citizens

The Outcome (OUT) perspective aims to assess the outcomes from a political viewpoint of the particular e-participation project, with main emphasis on stakeholders’ extent of participation, contributions, interaction and satisfaction, and also on impacts. It is based on the ‘effectiveness evaluation’ proposed by Smithson and Hirschheim [13], the ‘use’, ‘user satisfaction’, ‘individual impact’ and ‘organizational impact’ dimensions of the Delone and McLean model [17], and the ‘usefulness’ concept of the ‘Technology Acceptance Models’

(TAM) [18]. Also, it is based on the objectives of the governments adopting public participation and e-participation according to OECD [1-6], the ‘outcomes’-related dimensions that most public participation and e-participation evaluation frameworks include (see sections VI and VII), and part of the ‘political evaluation’ of the framework proposed by Whyte & Macintosh [33]. The Outcomes perspective includes 22 criteria shown in Table IV:

TABLE IV: EVALUATION CRITERIA OF THE OUTCOME PERSPECTIVE

- OUT1: Extent of participation of citizens affected by the legislation under development
- OUT2: Extent of participation of the main interest groups affected by or associated with the legislation under development
- OUT3: Extent of participation of less politically involved groups (e.g. young people, minorities, lower socio-economic classes, etc.) affected by the legislation under development
- OUT4: Extent of participation of Members of Parliament
- OUT5: Extent of participation of experts from the responsible/competent Ministry
- OUT6: Extent of participation of independent experts
- OUT7: Informed contributions
- OUT8: Quality of contributions
- OUT9: Pluralism of contributions
- OUT10: Generation of useful information/knowledge/views about the topic of the legislation under discussion, which can be useful for improving it.
- OUT11: Extent of interaction among participants’ (number of contributions on other participants’ contributions)
- OUT12: Extent of participating citizens learning from one another
- OUT13: Extent of conflicts management and consensus building
- OUT14: Impact of participants contributions on the legislation under development
- OUT15: Impact on acceptance and applicability of this legislation
- OUT16: Impact on perceived transparency and trust to government
- OUT17: Extent of strengthening the Parliamentary decision-making process
- OUT18: Satisfaction of the citizens who participated
- OUT19: Satisfaction of the Members of Parliament who participated
- OUT20: Satisfaction of the experts from the responsible/competent Ministry who participated
- OUT21: Satisfaction of the independent experts who participated
- OUT22: Willingness of stakeholders to reuse the systems and processes

We remark that the above four evaluation perspectives are not at the same ‘level’, since the values of the factors of the Outcome perspective depend on/are affected by (at least to some extent) values of the factors of the Process, System and Context perspectives; in that sense the Outcome perspective can be viewed as a ‘second-level’ evaluation perspective, while the the Process, System and Context perspectives can be viewed as ‘first-level’ evaluation perspectives (Fig. 1). For this reason this evaluation framework includes two stages:

I) Evaluation of the particular e-participation project in the above mentioned criteria of the Process, System, Context and Outcome perspectives (based on evidence collected by asking the above mentioned stakeholders relevant questions).

II) Assessment, for the particular e-participation project, of associations between the assessed values of the outcomes evaluation factors on one hand, or at least the ones that have been assessed as very high or very low by the stakeholders in the first stage, and the assessed values of the context, process and system evaluation factors on the other (based on evidence collected by asking the stakeholders relevant questions); in

this way we can identify the main reasons of positive or negative outcomes. For instance, if Output factor OUT_i has been assessed as very high/low, it is useful to understand which Process/System/Context factors have caused this high/low level of the OUT_i factor.

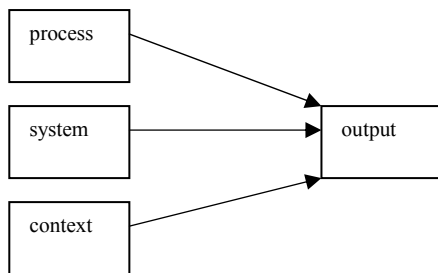


Fig. 1. The relationship between the Process, System and Context perspectives

IX. SUMMARY - CONCLUSIONS

In the previous sections has been described a framework for evaluating e-participation in the legislation development process and its basic foundations: i) existing frameworks for the evaluation of public participation and e-participation, ii) objectives and basic characteristics of 'traditional' public participation, e-participation, and legislation formation processes. This framework will be applied for evaluating the e-participation pilots that will be implemented by the national parliaments of Austria, Greece and Lithuania as part of the LEX-IS project. Based on the experience gained from this practical application an updated and improved version of the proposed framework will be constructed.

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