E-Government in Government Regional and Local Offices

Improved direct services to citizens and internal management

Regarding Public Administration in our territory from the standpoint of a TIC unit in charge of 'technology development', there are two fundamental legal instruments.

First of all, there is Law 6/1997, which states that *'All the territorial services of the General Administration and its Public Agencies shall be integrated into Government Offices.'* This means that Government regional offices shall be in charge of General Administration services within their territory.

Secondly, there is Law 11/2007, recognising citizens' right to relate to the Public Administration through their channels of choice, including electronic media.

These two legal instruments pose challenges to the General Administration in a territory characterised by fragmentation and diversity stemming from different needs at the provincial level, as well as from the variety of laws and competencies resulting from the organisation into self-governing (autonomous) regions.

To this we should add the economic downturn, which discourages investment and technology development in the services offered in the Public Administration.

On the other hand, every step taken by Government Regional and Local Offices is bound to have a great impact on efficiency and effectiveness while saving costs for the Public Administration and citizens alike.

Consequently, this has been a priority to the Information and Communication System Unit at the Office of the State Secretary for Public Administration. This Unit has made progress in two main areas:

- Encouragement of e-procedures at all stages.
- Integration into horizontal systems (mainly ACCEDA and E-Signature Folder).

2012 was, without a doubt, the year of e-government in Government Regional and Local Offices, with major achievements in everyday work for a more agile future, closer to users.

As to specific facts and figures, we should begin with foreign nationals' identity procedures. Considering that immigration is one of the most significant social phenomena of the past few years in Spain, the management of such procedures is really important.

In the past ten years, we moved from independent procedures at provincial Foreign Nationals Registration Offices (varying from simple databases (ACCESS) to Excel spreadsheets or even handwritten documents, depending on each office's possibilities) to an integrated, centralised platform.

The work done came to completion in 2012, coming full circle in the 'electronic cycle' for an administrative procedure that is as complex as it is crucial. Both foreign nationals and civil servants benefit from the new services available, as the procedures become simpler, resulting in shorter queues, shorter waiting times and better time management for individuals and offices.

These are the services now available to citizens at the E-Office of the State Secretary for Public Administration:

- **Appointment system** on the Internet or by phone for citizens who need to submit their renewal applications or have other administrative procedures done at the Foreign Nationals Registration Offices. Currently, almost 800,000 appointments are made on the Internet and 220,000 are made by phone. (Since 2004, over 5 million appointments have been made.)

- **MERCURIO** system, one of the greatest achievements in this field (in operation since early 2012): It makes it easier to submit renewal applications online. At first it was only available for a small number of renewals, but it has expanded steadily to encompass ALL THE renewals envisaged for the next few months. The widespread use of MERCURIO has resulted in savings of dozens of million Euros (in accordance with the Standard Cost Model).

- **E-payment of the fees** applicable to each procedure and full management of payments by the Financial Unit (over €25 million a year in foreign nationals registration feeds, and more than €500 million since 2004).

- **Electronic exchange of documents** with Autonomous Communities and Local Governments, using ACCEDA and the Local Governments portal.

- **Integration with the Foreign Nationals Bulletin Board** of the Ministry of Employment (TEREX), resulting in more than 79,000 edicts being sent online in 2012.

In addition, the integration with the E-Signature Folder (more than 65,000 e-signatures in just eight months) and the upcoming launch of notices for appearance shall place the administrative procedures for foreign nationals fully within the scope of e-services.

As to other services offered by Government Regional and Local Offices in 2012, key actions were undertaken to make procedures fully manageable by electronic media, integrating big-scale applications with the E-Signature Folder and ACCEDA.

For instance, **administrative sanction** procedures (224,343 in 2012) are now integrated with the E-Signature Folder (58,910) and notices for appearance, and headway has been made in integration with Foreign Nationals procedures and connections with other bodies like INTECO or the ID authentication service (55,716 queries).

Seizure-of-drugs procedures (378,752 files) enable the forces involved to open files at the E-Office of SEAP, which reduces queues with healthcare services and simplifies procedures. Users (over 1,500 including the forces) are also integrated into the E-Signature Folder, which means an e-signature is valid for this procedure (over 6,000 e-signatures).

The procedures associated with **Expropriation Courts** evolved along similar lines. Despite the lower number of procedures last year (16,302), e-signature and e-notices for appearance were implemented (more than 7,000 of the former and 2,530 of the latter). Adding the possibility to record the opening of files by the expropriating agency and the upcoming e-procedure for interests on overdue

payments, Expropriation Courts are one of the best-equipped areas in Government Regional and Local Offices.

The **fee payment and management** platform, a unique tool in terms of potential and functions in the Public Administration, managed over €31 million in 2012 (€6 million by electronic media). It is supplemented by a full range of applications for fee payment, payment management, notices from the financial unit, or payment template creation by users. The number of fee models (mainly for foreign nationals) created, more than 9,000 a day, shows the importance of this system.

Protest and Demonstration Management became a key tool for Citizen Security. It keeps record of announced demonstrations (38,253 records) and manages key security issues through georeferencing, simultaneity controls and the identification of hotspots.

In the Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands, the application for and processing of aids to maritime transport was given a boost thanks to e-government (**REB–Mercancías** and **Atlantis** applications, respectively), which is now the mandatory channel for applicants. In this area, e-government led to cost cuts for more than €1 million (SCM) and shortened procedures from 7 to 2 months.

All these applications rely on a fundamental tool when it comes to using the information stored in them: **CRETA**, a statistical platform storing most of the activity at Regional, Local and Insular Offices. The information stored is used for statistical and other purposes, as well as to write an annual report (which is then sent to the Council of Ministers).

In sum, the technology deployed at local-level administration has revolutionised the approach to Public Administration, bringing it closer to citizens.

In its development, the guidelines set forth in Law 17/2007 were taken into account, from the availability of e-services to citizens to the e-exchange of data and documents between Public Administration agencies (at the national and non-national level) to the use of open standards and a wide array of common services.