

Can Internet voting be a new tool for the elections in Moldova?



Today, 3rd October 2018, the Promo-LEX Association launched at a roundtable the “People’s perception of the information technology tools in the perspective of implementation of Internet voting” Study conducted

by Livia Turcanu, independent expert. The study includes a detailed analysis of the international experience on the perception and trust in information technologies and Internet voting, of the situation in our country, as well as of the potential of using Internet voting by the Moldovan citizens.

The need for an Internet voting system is motivated by the importance of ensuring the right to vote for citizens living abroad and for other categories of voters who cannot come to the polling stations on the day of elections. Currently, there are both prerequisites that might facilitate the development and implementation of Internet voting, as well as risks in Moldova. The interviews conducted within the study reveal that the e-governance infrastructure that exists in the Republic of Moldova can facilitate the implementation of Internet voting or, at least, its testing through pilot projects.

In the same context, the study data shows that 100% of respondents of the online survey use social networks, 91% use e-commerce services, and 86% use Internet banking. In addition, 68% of respondents said that they use or know about electronic public services such as e-criminal record, e-declaration of income, etc. Thus, “the previous experience of interaction with various electronic processes, either online

trade, payment with cards, use of electronic mail and social networks might influence positively people's decision to also use electronic voting, in addition to these tools," Livia Turcanu believes. As for the decision to use Internet voting or not, 86% of respondents said that they would use this voting option if it was introduced in the elections in the Republic of Moldova.

On the other hand, the current social-political context and the level of trust in public institutions do not favor the implementation of Internet voting. The study shows that only 11% of respondents fully agree and 21% partially agree that the level of people's trust in the state institutions is sufficiently high for the implementation of an Internet voting system. The study also points out that, even the testing of Internet voting would imply considerable costs and efforts from the stakeholders.

In conclusion, the author of the study says, "at the legislation level, it is necessary to amend the legal framework to include both the regulation of the technical aspects of Internet voting and the procedures of the election process management and other operations in the context of a voting mechanism that is based on information technologies as well". At the same time, people's trust in the public administration and the democratic processes are at the basis of Internet voting that is practiced successfully in countries like Estonia or Switzerland. In this regard, the relevant institutions of the Republic of Moldova should work hard to increase people's trust in the democratic processes, thus ensuring a fair and transparent election system.

The study also makes a set of recommendations, such as: obtain the trust and participation of the key stakeholders who are interested in the development of the Internet voting system; provide access for the diaspora to the electronic signature tools; ensure a high level of transparency of the process; gradually implement pilot projects, etc. All these are meant

to

contribute to enhancing people's trust in information technologies with a view to implement Internet voting,

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