

ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВО И ЦИФРОВОЙ РАЗРЫВ СРЕДИ ПОЖИЛЫХ ЛЮДЕЙ В ИСПАНИИ

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Общества в рамках Европейского Союза переживают быстрый процесс старения. Отсутствие цифровых навыков стоит за новой формой социальной изоляции. Таким образом, "цифровой разрыв". Власти продвигают электронное управление как элемент модернизации. Однако этот процесс несет дополнительный риск, ограничивая доступ к все большему количеству государственных услуг и подрывая социальные права. Поэтому необходимо провести исследования с целью предложить меры по улучшению охвата пожилых людей. Эта работа связана с исследованиями улучшения доступа и использования электронного управления пожилыми людьми, показывает результаты интервью с экспертами в области технологий и оцифровки общества. Они описывают основные преимущества, недостатки и проблемы, которые препятствуют нормализации этой государственной службы для старых людей.

Ключевые слова: Испания; Цифровизация; Электронное правительство; Электронное управление; Пожилые люди; Методология Delphi.

EGOVERNMENT AND DIGITAL GAP AMONG THE ELDERLY IN SPAIN

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Societies within the European Union are experiencing a rapid aging process, people aged 65 and over will account for 25.2% of the total Spanish population in 2033. The lack of digital skills is behind a new form of social exclusion. In this way, the digital divide adds to the process of social exclusion of the elderly. For their part, the authorities are making progress in Electronic Administration as an element of modernization. However, this process carries an additional risk by limiting access to more and more public services and undermining social rights. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out research aimed at proposing measures to improve the inclusion of older people. This work is part of the research on Improvements in the access and use of Electronic Administration by older people, which is funded by the COTEC Foundation for Innovation (Spain). This work shows the results of Delphi interviews with experts in the technological field and digitization of society. These experts describe the main advantages, disadvantages and challenges that prevent the normalization of this public service to this age group.

Keywords: Spain; Digitalization; E-Government; e-governance; Elderly; Delphi Methodology.

Introduction. The aging process of the population of Western societies is a trend that occurs in the long term and that, moreover, has been visible for several decades with the increase in the population over 65 years of age, as well as with the reduction of the proportion of people of working age out of the population as a whole. According to Eurostat (Statistical Office of the European Union), 20.6% of the population of the European Union is older than 65 years in 2020, while 5.9% is older than 80 years.

According to the National Institute of Statistics of Spain, on July 1, 2020, there were 47,353,706 inhabitants, of which 9,301,722 are people over 65 years of age, which represents 19.6%

of the population. Likewise, 2,855,220 people over 80 years of age were counted, representing 6.0% of the total Spanish population. As previously mentioned, this phenomenon has been observable for decades, since in 2002 the proportion of people over 65 years of age was 17.0% and that of people over 80 years of age was 3.9%; while, in 2011, the percentage of people over 65 years old was 17.2% and that of people over 80 years old reached 5.1%.

One of the areas that have been affected by the introduction of technology is the relationship that citizens maintain with Public Administrations. These have followed a process of constant modernization in an attempt to adapt to the technological changes that are taking place in their environment [2]. The implementation of Electronic Administration responds to this process, understood as a "model of public administration, based on the intensive use of information and knowledge technologies" [1] or according to the Ministry of Territorial Policy and Public Function [3], the use of Information and Communication Technologies in Public Administrations, combined with organizational changes and new competences. All this with the ultimate aim of "improving internal efficiency, the Administration's relations with citizens and inter-administrative relations" [3].

The work presented in this document is part of the research: Improvements in the access and use of Electronic Administration by older people (2020-2021) financed by the COTEC Foundation for Innovation and developed by the professors of the Department of Sociology from the University of Murcia (Spain), Salvador Manzanera-Román and Francisco Eduardo Haz-Gómez. Its main objective is to establish what are the causes that prevent normalization in the access and use of Electronic Administration and all its resources and services by older people. Since, the lack of technological skills in the elderly is behind a new form of social exclusion. The digital divide adds to the dependency process of the elderly. In addition, for their part, the authorities are making progress in Electronic Administration as an element of modernization. However, this process carries an additional risk by limiting access to more and more public services and undermining social rights.

Three main questions have been chosen on which to analyze the phenomenon of digital exclusion and the advance of digitization in public services: 1) Know to what extent the implementation of Electronic Administration will affect older people. 2) Know what is the risk assumed by this age group because of this process. 3) What would be the possible actions aimed at avoiding this risk of exclusion.

Methodology. The Delphi technique is a type of interview that allows (using a numerical scale) to establish consensus on different statements. This was created in the 50s in the USA. Its main objective is to obtain a consensus in relation to a proposed problem. In its development [4] [5] this method has been characterized by its ability to obtain an evaluation with some speed.

The main objectives that allow the use of this methodology for this research are the following [6]: a) To know the opinions, assessments and differentiated interpretations of different experts on the current situation of Electronic Administration in relation to its users. b) Develop a quantitative and qualitative methodological model. c) Identify the solutions that, according to the different interviewees, would be adequate to improve the implementation of Electronic Administration in Spain and, especially, with the elderly.

This methodology was carried out through three knockout rounds [7]. In each of them, those questions that have an approval level higher than 75% are selected (only these are posed in the subsequent phase). As a novelty in this research, a mixed methodology (quantitative-qualitative) is integrated into the Delphi technique. In this way, in addition to the Delphi questions, open questions are posed for the experts to reason their answer with new arguments. In this way, the professionals introduced nuances to the answers given.

The panel of experts selected for this work is that of the technological field and digitization of society. This panel was made up of 13 experts with whom the profiles of professionals who dealt with the technological dimension of Electronic Administration and its implementation were represented. Its composition is as follows: five of the experts come from the academic field, mainly experts in the information society and information and communication technologies; five experts in public administration and three private consultants linked to the professional world of technology consulting.

Results. The questionnaire for the panel of experts in the technological field and digitization of society was formed with a block of general questions about Electronic Administration and its implementation process at a technological level, and another with questions related to the social vulnerability generated by the gap digital technology and the application of technology in administrative processes in vulnerable groups such as the elderly.

For this article, four Delphi questions have been selected in their final result, after passing the different rounds until reaching a consensus higher than 75%. The results of these responses are shown below.

Most experts agree that technology has established itself as the central instrument in dealing with public institutions. This statement reached a level of agreement of 81.5%, a standard deviation of 1.63.

On the other hand, these interviewees also affirm that the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the process of implementation of Electronic Administration. This process has undergone significant acceleration. This statement achieved between them a level of agreement of 86.9% (8, 69), a standard deviation of 1.49.

In relation to the challenges faced by the implementation of Electronic Administration, experts agree that it is about training in digital skills by public employees. The experts affirm that it will be necessary the "recycling" or specific training process of the personnel of the public administrations. This statement obtains a level of agreement of 90% (9.00), a standard deviation of 1.08.

Lastly, and in relation to what has been described above, the experts affirm that the main public policy measure to promote digital literacy among the group of older people is training in digital skills. This measure should be carried out by keeping the group in its own context of socialization and creating teams of trainers in digital skills and with experience in learning with older people. In the same way, professionals considered it necessary that it is the obligation of public services to carry out some training for people and / or groups with more gaps in digital skills. This statement reached a level in accordance with 92.3% (9.23), a standard deviation of 1.17.

Conclusions. It is true that it has strengths or direct advantages for citizens, such as immediacy, improved accessibility by saving time on trips and increasing the transparency of administrative procedures. Although these advantages can be extended to the majority of citizens, the inconveniences and problems that the process of implementing Electronic Administration presents are more typical of disadvantaged groups or those affected by the digital divide, such as the elderly. Internal drawbacks are related to the lack of interoperability, the complexity of digital administrative procedures and the mistrust they generate in citizens, especially among those who are not digital natives. Added to these internal problems is the lack of knowledge about digital public services and the digital divide that generates digital social exclusion. All the problems, inconveniences or difficulties raised translate into challenges to be addressed by the Electronic Administration so that it does not generate social inequalities. The two main challenges are to improve accessibility and, above all, to reduce the digital divide in the group of older people. If this is achieved, progress can be made in

improving accessibility, usability, trust in electronic processes and user privacy. To achieve these objectives, the main measure aimed at reducing the digital divide is training promoted by public administrations, whether of a specific or structural type, so that a training itinerary is configured that goes from basic to more specialized knowledge. In short, technology should be seen as a necessary element rather than a core element. In other words, it must be taken into account as an instrument that, together with others, such as an optimal design of administrative procedures, can facilitate the improvement of relations between citizens and the different public administrations.

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