UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA

FACULTY OF BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMICS

EDUARDS LIELPĒTERS

OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF DIGITAL DEMOCRACY IN LATVIA

DOCTORAL THESIS

Submitted for the Scientific Doctor's Degree (Ph.D.) in Economics and Business

Supervisor: professor *Dr.oec.* Biruta Sloka

Riga, 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Topicality

Citizen participation is an important value of a democratic country. However, in Latvia rates of citizen participation in elections are gradually decreasing, a small percentage of citizens are members of non-governmental organisations or political parties, and a small part of society is directly engaged in the decision-making process of public administration. Thus, decisions of public administration that affect everyday lives of all citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs), are taken with a contribution of only a fraction of all stakeholders – society and businesses. The situation when most citizens are not actively participating in the decision-making process becomes a problem if decisions made by public administration are not accepted by citizens and citizens are not trusting public administration in general. This problem exists also in Latvia, hence, there is a necessity to foster citizen participation. That can be done by actively promoting current participation opportunities or by developing new participation methods that can engage a larger part of society.

A wider participation of citizens could help to ensure that their needs and views are included in the new policies developed by public administration and that more citizens are familiar with the policy before it is approved by the final legal entity. For individuals, such an open and collaborative decision-making process could help to increase trust in public institutions and democracy. For entrepreneurs, it could bring a better comprehension of the development of the business environment in Latvia, ensure business-friendly conditions and strengthen trust in institutions, hence, by some degree increase the motivation to organise business in a manner that is following legal rules, without a desire to search for half-legal or illegal individual solutions, for example, tax optimization or unregistered employment schemes.

There is a wide range of areas where citizen participation could help to improve the decisions made by public administration. However, some areas are especially important and topical. One of them is the moving towards a sustainable and green economy which emerged as a possible solution to the climate crisis (known in the European Union as the European Green Deal strategy). Another one is digital transformation which has gained its priority partly as an answer to challenges and needs highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis. Development in those areas is affecting everyone – the public and private sector, everyday habits of individuals and entrepreneurs, and significantly influencing the business environment as well. Closer cooperation between institutions and citizens is needed to successfully adapt to the new situation and use it as a source for growth in the economy and society. Hence, citizens should be part of the decision-making process when public administration is shaping new rules and processes to ensure that changes are not unilaterally

imposed by public administration on the business environment but are developed in close cooperation with citizens and in favour of businesses.

In the 21st century, the digital environment has become a modern information space, that is an everyday necessity for society, businesses and public institutions. The use of the digital environment is changing relations between public administration and citizens, providing access to information and public services. The digital environment provides direct and instantaneous communication, fostering a faster exchange of information, as well as reducing the barrier of physical distance that has been a common obstacle for traditional face-to-face interaction. Thus, the digital environment is offering new solutions that citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) can use to communicate and cooperate with public administration. Stakeholder participation in the decision-making process in Latvia is still organised mainly in cooperation with non-governmental organisations and lobby organisations that are considered to be reliable representatives of citizens – individuals and entrepreneurs. Also, an essential part of the participation process often is face-to-face meetings and document sharing through e-mail. More active use of social media, smartphone applications, participation portals and other digital tools could foster individual participation, helping institutions to increase the number of citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) that are participating in the decision-making process of the public administration of Latvia. Cooperation in the digital environment, hence – implementation of the digital democracy is a modern solution that uses the most advanced opportunities that public administration can use to communicate with citizens. In Latvia, several good preconditions could help to foster digital participation. Public institutions, businesses and citizens in Latvia are extensively using the internet, social media and other digital tools, thus, there is an already existing digital territory where they can meet and where citizens can be potentially engaged in the decision-making process of public administration. However, there is a need for a thoughtful and well-planned digital activity by public administration to ensure that citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) are reached online and can successfully participate in the decision-making process.

To evaluate the current situation and future development of digital participation in Latvia, **the object of the dissertation is** the digital environment, considering it a modern information space for interaction and cooperation between institutions and citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs). **The subject of the dissertation is** the participation of Latvian citizens in the decision-making process of public administration, thereby helping to improve Latvia`s business environment.

Opportunities and limitations are identified in the dissertation that can affect the development of digital democracy in Latvia, considering viewpoints from citizens as well as public administration, and analysing current digital communication style of public institutions – Latvian

ministries. **As a result**, a methodology has been developed for fostering digital participation that could be used to enhance participation of citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) in the decision-making process of public administration. The methodology provides a practical and modern solution for the public administration that could help to strengthen relations with citizens and thus together improve Latvian business environment.

Aim and objectives

The aim of the dissertation is to develop a modern solution for improving Latvia's business environment – a methodology that would help to foster the digital participation of citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) in the decision-making process of the public administration. **Objectives of the research are**: to identify and analyse Latvian and international experience in the field of digital democracy, to evaluate how currently public administration in Latvia uses the digital environment for communication and cooperation with citizens, and to identify and justify Latvia's specific opportunities and limitations that may affect digital participation of citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) in improving Latvia's business environment.

Tasks

1) To collect and analyse scientific publications and academic literature, identifying and evaluating the development of citizen participation, digital democracy, and participation of citizens and businesses in the decision-making process of the public administration.

2) To collect and analyse information and statistical data about digital development in Latvia and compare it with the European Union and international situation.

3) To analyse the current digital communication style of Latvian institutions by conducting a content analysis of social media pages maintained by Latvian ministries.

4) To determine public administration's opinion and habits in the use of the digital environment for communication and cooperation with citizens by surveying public administration representatives responsible for public communication and stakeholder participation.

5) To identify citizen attitudes towards digital democracy and possibilities to foster citizen participation in the decision-making process by executing a survey with representatives of citizens who are already engaged in the participation processes.

6) To compare the results of the content analysis, survey to representatives of public administration and survey to representatives of citizens, indicating digital democracy opportunities and limitations to be considered in Latvia when fostering citizen participation in the decision-making process of public administration.

7) To develop a methodology for improving the business environment through digital participation. Use the results of the research in the development of the methodology, considering also the existing

practice of stakeholder participation in Latvia and current understanding of the future development of digital democracy in the world.

Execution of the tasks provides answers to **the main research question:** Which are the most important opportunities and limitations that need to be considered to improve the business environment in Latvia through the digital participation of citizens?

Theses to be defended

The hypothesis of the dissertation: For fostering digital participation of citizens in Latvia, the main limitations are public administration's current communication style in the digital environment and the institutions' attitude towards citizen participation in the decision-making process. Accordingly, **three theses are proposed**:

1. The digital environment in Latvia can be used to foster the participation of citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) in the decision-making process of public administration. The current situation in Latvia and the limitations and opportunities it sets must be considered for successful application of the digital democracy methods to improve the business environment in Latvia.

2. Latvian public administration institutions are demonstrating heterogeneous opinions and habits in the use of the digital environment for stakeholder participation, also two-way communication is practised insufficiently. It is worthwhile for institutions to share good practice with each other and learn from the behaviour of individuals and businesses in the digital environment to be able to provide quality digital communication and cooperation with citizens.

3. Citizens are interested in communication and collaboration with public administration when the process is organised clearly and preferably in the digital environment. To foster citizen participation and involve them in the improvement of Latvian business environment, institutions should more actively disseminate information on participation opportunities and provide convenient individual participation opportunities for citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs).

Research methods and limitations

Previous scientific studies, academic literature and statistical data about digital democracy, political and civic participation, and participation of stakeholders in the decision-making process of the public administration are analysed in the dissertation.

Citizens` opinion and attitude about digital democracy and participation in the decision-making process are identified by the survey to representatives of citizens. In total, 314 surveys are received, representing citizens who are already participating in the decision-making process or are comparatively active in other forms of civic and political participation.

A survey to public administration representatives is carried out, to investigate and evaluate public administrations` opinion and habits about communication and cooperation with Latvian citizens. In total, 55 surveys are recorded, representing Latvian ministries, Parliament, Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre and several other Latvian public institutions.

For survey data analysis there are used statistical indicators of descriptive statistics (indicators of central tendency of location – arithmetic mean, mode, median; indicators of variability – range, standard deviation and standard error of mean, cross-tabulations, testing statistical hypotheses with t-test, analysis of variance - ANOVA, chi-square, correlation and regression analysis was applied).

Content analysis of the Latvian ministries` social media pages is carried out using a methodology that is developed by the author. In total, 3181 social media entries are analysed according to three groups of indicators (content indicators, message indicators, feedback indicators), analysing the content of 13 *Facebook* pages of Latvian ministries in the six months period – from July 2019 until December 2019.

The research has several limitations. In the survey to representatives of citizens, respondents` digital skills and comprehension of democracy are not measured, although these factors can affect citizen motivation and ability to participate in the decision-making process, therefore, analysis of the research results is providing insight of citizen evaluation of the current level of digital democracy in Latvia and their suggestions for the future development. Similarly, in the survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration, their skills to communicate with citizens online and technical readiness of the institutions to implement digital solutions are not analysed, rather evaluating their opinion and current habits. The limitation of the content analysis is in the specific time period which is six months from July until December 2019, also, only publicly available information is analysed that was available in the Facebook pages of Latvia ministries. It must be pointed out that the acquisition of the empirical research data (survey to public administration representatives, survey to representatives of citizens, and content analysis) was finalised by May 2020. After this time period, since the COVID-19 crisis started in Spring 2020, online communication of some ministries has increased, especially the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since Spring 2020, responding to the stay-at-home rule State Chancellery of Latvia and Latvian Parliament became more active in promoting digital participation opportunities. As well as digital transformation and digital participation since the middle of 2020 has gained much more attention in the EU and in Latvia. Additionally, also the online activity of Latvian public institutions in the time of the COVID-19 crisis is suggesting that institutions are capable of strengthening their online presence and are open to digital solutions, therefore in the close future comparative study would be needed to understand how COVID-19 crisis has changed and fostered

digital transformation process in Latvia. However, that is out of the scope of the particular research as the COVID-19 crisis (in June 2021) still is considered an ongoing process in the world.

Overall, it must be emphasized that national-level digital participation is analysed in the research, looking for solutions to foster individual participation of citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) in the decision-making process, thus, analysing opportunities how to encourage the participation of those citizens who theoretically are represented by non-governmental organisations or lobby organisations but in reality are silent majority.

Scope of the research

Digital democracy is a comparatively new field that has been studied by academia for a little bit more than one decade, still, in a broader sense, civic and political participation is a very well-known subject that has been discussed and analysed for a much longer time period. To identify international experience in this field, several academic journals were used, such as *Government Information Quarterly; International Journal of Public Sector Management; Information, Communication & Society; Intereconomics; Public Administration Review, Industrial and Corporate Change; Journal of the Knowledge Economy; Regulation and Governance; Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy; Industry and Innovation; Journal of Organizational Change Management; Information Polity; Administrative Sciences; Public Relations Review; European Journal of Communication; Digital Policy; Parliamentary Affairs; National Civic Review; New Media & Society; The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies; Records Management Journal; Information Technology & People; Research Policy; Comparative Political Studies; Journal of Information Technology & Politics; Telecommunications Policy; The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology; Computers in Human Behavior; Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication; Journal of Transformative Education.* Electronic databases used by the author are *Web of Science, SCOPUS, Emerald, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Sage Journals Online, Taylor & Francis Social Science & Humanities Library, ProQuest, EBSCOhost.*

Valuable and significant knowledge in the field of digital democracy internationally is brought by many scholars and ideas and findings by several of them have been an important basis in the development of the thesis. Jan Teorell[1] in his studies has outlined political participation and citizen reasons to participate in the decision-making process. B. Guy Peters[2] has shaped academic knowledge about public administration and governance, analysing the contemporary development

---

[1] Teorell, J. (2006). Political participation and three theories of democracy: A research inventory and agenda. *European Journal of Political Research,* 45(5), 787-810.

[2] Peters, B. (2017). Management, management everywhere: whatever happened to governance? *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 30(6-7), 606-614.

of public administration. Mariana Mazzucato[3] has analysed public administrations` role in the economy and emphasized the need for a mission-oriented innovation policy. Sidney Verba has encouraged discussion about political participation and with his colleagues[4] have identified factors that foster political participation. Brian D. Loader and his colleague Dan Mercea[5] have contributed to the discussion on the development of digital democracy and justified youth engagement in the decision-making process. Manuel Castells emphasized the need for public institutions to use social media[6] and developed the concept[7] of networked individualism as the communication pattern in the digital age. Martyn Barrett and his colleague Brunton – Smith[8] has studied youth participation and categorized multiple factors that can affect citizen participation. John Carlo Bertot with his colleagues Paul T. Jaeger and Justin M. Grimes[9] have emphasized that digital technologies could improve transparency and citizen trust in government. Ines Mergel has studied the use of *Agile* methods in the public sector and together with Stuart I. Bretschneider has analysed social media use in government, developing a three-stage model of how the government is adapting to the use of social media[10]. Karolina Koc-Michalska and her colleagues[11] have evaluated online political campaigning in different EU counties and indicated that the role and effects of *Web 2.0.* is the subject that should be studied more actively. Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic has studied European Parliament's communication with citizens and confirmed that youth participation in the democratic processes could be fostered with online communication[12], Communication strategies of public institutions are evaluated by Darren Lilleker and Koc-Mihalska[13] and the use of social media by institutions is studied by Enrique Bonsón and his colleagues[14]. Overall, digital democracy is a widely discussed and analysed topic, especially in the last decade, however, scholars are still discussing and arguing whether the digital environment can foster citizen participation and what

[3] Mazzucato, M. (2016). From market fixing to market-creating: a new framework for innovation policy, *Industry and Innovation*, 23(2), 140-156.

[4] Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., Brady, H. E. (2000). Rational Action and Political Activity. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 12(3), 243-268.

[5] Loader, B. D., Mercea, D. (2012). *Social media and democracy: innovations in participatory politics*. London, New York: Routledge, 275p.

[6] Castells, M. (2013). *Communication power*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 574p.

[7] Castells, M. (2008). The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks, and Global Governance. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616(1), 78-93.

[8] Barrett, M., Brunton-Smith, I. (2014). Political and civic engagement and participation: Towards an integrative perspective. *Journal of Civil Society*, 10(1), 5-28.

[9] Bertot, J. C., Jaeger, P. T., Grimes, J. M. (2010). Using ICTs to create a culture of transparency: E-government and social media as openness and anti-corruption tools for societies. *Government Information Quarterly*, 27, 264–271.

[10] Mergel, I., Bretschneider, S. I. (2013). A Three-Stage Adoption Process for Social Media Use in Government. *Public Administration Review*, 73(3), 390-400.

[11] Koc-Michalska, K., Lilleker, D. G., Vedel, T. (2016). Civic political engagement and social change in the new digital age. *New Media & Society*, 18(9), 1807–1816.

[12] Vesnic-Alujevic, L. (2013). Young people, social media and engagement. *European View*, 12(2), 255-261.

[13] Lilleker, D. G., Koc-Michalska, K. (2013). Online Political Communication Strategies: MEPs, E-Representation, and Self-Representation, *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 10(2), 190-207.

[14] Bonsón, E., Torres, L., Royo, S., Flores, F. (2012). Local e-government 2.0: Social media and corporate transparency in municipalities. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(2), 123-132.

factors should be considered when evaluating this opportunity. The regional context is often mentioned as one aspect, that should be considered, therefore, it is useful to analyse opportunities of digital democracy in specific regions – in the case of the dissertation this region is Latvia.

Digital democracy is a novel field in Latvia that has not gained enough attention from academia. However, also in Latvia several scholars are studying topics that are closely related to the comprehension of mechanisms that are affecting digital democracy, such as civic and political participation, digital communication and the decision-making process in the public administration. Citizens political participation, institutional and non-institutional forms of participation and inhabitants` involvement in the decision-making process are studied by Lilita Seimuškāne[15], as well as political participation is studied by Inta Mieriņa[16] with special attention on developments of political attitudes and by Jurijs Ņikišins[17] with a focus on comparisons of situations in several countries. The use of social media for corporate communication is analysed by Olga Kazaka[18] and online discussions of citizens are studied by Ingus Bērziņš[19]. Several studies are carried out also in the master thesis: Public communication of ministries and their challenges on social media in the Republic of Latvia is analysed by Viktors Vilkaušs[20] with the suggestion that public communication of institutions in social media should be more thoughtful and attractive; Sigita Audere[21] has studied governmental communication policy by State Chancellery of Latvia, suggesting that State Chancellery of Latvia should develop common communication policy for Latvian public administration that would consider different target groups and different information channels. Also, direct and participatory democracy in Latvia is studied by Alise Zeļenko[22] suggesting that municipalities should be more open to citizen participation and provide options how they can participate in the decision-making process; youth participation in the parliamentary decision-making process in Latvia is studied by Vineta Danielsone[23] suggesting that civic and political participation should be taught in the high schools in Latvia to foster youth engagement in the

---

[15] Seimuškāne, L. (2015). *Iedzīvotāju līdzdalība lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā pašvaldībās Latvijā un to ietekmējošo faktoru izvērtējums*, Doktora disertācija, Latvijas Universitāte.

[16] Mierina, I. (2011). *Political Participation and Development of Political Attitudes in Post-Communist Countries*, Doctoral thesis, University of Latvia.

[17] Ņikišins, J. (2016). *Politiskā līdzdalība Eiropā: salīdzinoša analīze*, Doktora disertācija, Latvijas Universitāte.

[18] Kazaka, O. (2014). *Sociālo mediju lietošana korporatīvajā komunikācijā Latvijā (2009-2011)*, Doktora disertācija, Latvijas Universitāte.

[19] Bērziņš, I. (2012). *Interneta diskusijas un publiskā sfēra: iespaida izvērtējums Latvijas gadījumu studijās*, Doktora disertācija, Latvijas Universitāte.

[20] Vilkaušs, V. (2012). *Latvijas Republikas ministriju publiskā komunikācija un to iespējas sociālajos medijos*, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.

[21] Audere, S. (2015). *Valsts Kancelejas loma valdības komunikācijas politikas veidošanā*, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.

[22] Zeļenko, A. (2016). *Tiešās un līdzdalības demokrātijas instrumenti Latvijas pašvaldībās*, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.

[23] Danielsone, V. (2016). Jauniešu līdzdalība lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā parlamentā Latvijā, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.

decision-making process; Marta Nikolajenko[24] has analysed the impact of digital media on decision-making with conclusions that digital media platforms can promote democratic values and enhance the democratic process. Civic education in Latvian society was analysed by Dagmāra Levkāne[25] with a conclusion that civic education could have a significant impact on citizens active participation, development of e-government in Latvia is studied by Evelīna Djadčenko[26] with a conclusion that there is a lack of coordination in the development process of e-government in Latvia. Also, the use of social media in communication between Latvian citizens and European institutions, particularly on European Parliaments` use of *Twitter* and *Facebook* in communication with youth, was analysed by Eduards Gaušis[27], with a conclusion that institutions communication is one-way and top-down rather than two-way and engaging citizens in the dialogue.

As can be seen from the mentioned examples of previous researches, digital democracy is an interdisciplinary field, combining various aspects from politics, communication, public administration, history studies and also economy and business. Although various aspects of digital democracy in Latvia are studied already for more than 10 years and well-elaborated suggestions for public administration have been provided, it is noticeable that in some cases not much progress is reached and similar suggestions are repeated by academia and the non-governmental sector without being included in the agenda of public administration. Some of the reasons for such a situation could be financial aspects or public administration`s upper managements` comprehension of digital issues.

The development of digital democracy in Latvia is influenced also by Latvia`s international commitments: the digital society policy in the EU[28]; Digital government recommendations and analysis of the OECD[29]; recommendations of the Civil Society Division of the Council of Europe[30]; Digital cooperation recommendations of the United Nations[31]; and Open Government Partnership action plans[32]. Substantial role in the development of political and civic participation in Latvia has played also Latvian non-governmental organisations such as *Providus*, *Transparency International Latvia – Delna*, *Sabiedrības Līdzdalības Fonds* and *Civic Alliance - Latvia*.

---

[24] Nikolajenko, M. (2018). *Impact of digital media on decision-making and democracy*, Master thesis, University of Latvia.
[25] Levkāne, D. (2016). *Pilsoniskās izglītības loma mūsdienu Latvijas sabiedrībā*, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.
[26] Djadčenko, E. (2013). *E-pārvaldes ieviešana Latvijā*, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.
[27] Gaušis, E. (2016). *Sociālo mediju izmantošana Eiropas pilsonības izpratnes veidošanā jauniešu auditorijas vidū Latvijā*, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.
[28] European Commission. (2018). Creating a digital society. https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/policies/creating-digital-society
[29] OECD. (2019). Digital government. https://www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government/
[30] Council of Europe. (2018). Civil Society. https://www.coe.int/en/web/civil-society/
[31] United Nations. (2019). Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. https://www.un.org/en/digital-cooperation-panel/index.html
[32] Open Government Partnership. (2019). Action Plan Cycle. https://www.opengovpartnership.org/process/action-plan-cycle/

Scientific and practical novelty

Scientific novelty

1. Opportunities and limitations to improve the business environment are analysed considering the advantage of digital democracy to expand the range of current stakeholders – representatives of non-governmental organisations and lobby organisations by additionally fostering individual participation of citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) in the decision-making process.

2. Advanced justification is provided for the fact that to improve the business environment with participation of citizens, the current top-down and informative communication style used by public institutions should be changed to more open and two-way communication.

3. Content analysis of Facebook pages of ministries covers six-month period and more than 3000 entries, thus, ensuring an overall picture of the current situation that by its size is objectively incomprehensible for the eye of a daily social media follower. This provides a clear insight how citizen participation is currently represented and popularized by the institutions.

4. The digital environment is evaluated as a modern information space that has become an everyday necessity for public administration, society, and businesses, thus can be be used for digital cooperation between institutions and citizens also in the decision-making process.

Practical novelty

5. Methodology for fostering digital participation provides a practical solution for the public administration to improve the business environment. Implementation of the methodology would foster relations between institutions and citizens and help to promote a unified communication style, thereby making public administration more open and understandable to citizens.

6. The proposed solution for the improvement of the business environment encourages Latvia to become an example of digital democracy for other countries. It corresponds to the topical understanding of digital transformation process in the European Union, as well as comprehension of the necessity to foster citizen participation and to develop a citizen-centric business environment.

Approbation

The author has participated with a presentation in eighteen international scientific conferences (in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Slovakia) and three national scientific conferences. Ten scientific articles have been published.

Publications:

1. Lielpēters, E. (2021). Fostering citizen participation: communication of Latvian ministries on Facebook, *New Theories and Practices of Public Governance in the NISPAcee Region - Proceedings of the 2020 NISPAcee On-line Conference for PhD Students*. ISBN 978-80-99939-03-6

2. Lielpēters, E. (2020). Fostering Digital Democracy in Latvia: Opportunities and Limitations, *Proceedings of the University of Latvia Faculty of Business, Management and Economics International Scientific Conference "New Challenges in Economic and Business Development 2020"*. 215-224. Indexed in **Web of Science**.

3. Lielpēters, E. (2020). Fostering Democracy in Latvia. Digital Participation Strategy, *Proceedings of XIV. International Balkan and Near Eastern Congresses Series on Economics, Business and Management*. 128-137.

4. Seimuškāne, L., Lielpēters, E. (2020). Networked Individualism: A New Narrative for Citizens' Participation in Decision-Making Process in Latvia, *E-monograph From Policy Design to Policy Practice in the European Integration Context*, NISPAcee. 239-255.

5. Lielpēters, E. (2019). Engaging Citizens in the Decision-Making Process. Opportunities of Digital Democracy in Latvia, *Regional Formation and Development Studies*, 29(3), 53-63. Indexed in **EBSCO.**

6. Seimuškāne, L., Lielpēters, E. (2019). Networked Individualism and Citizens Participation: Is it a Challenge for Public Administration in Latvia? *From Policy Design to Policy Practice. e-Proceedings of the 27th NISPAcee Annual Conference,* NISPAcee PRESS. ISBN 978-80-89013-99-9

7. Gaušis, E. (2018). Online Communication with Citizens. Should Latvian Public Institutions Learn from Foreign Experience? *Regional Formation and Development Studies*, 24(1), 44-51. Indexed in **EBSCO.**

8. Gaušis, E. (2017). Online Communication and Civic Engagement. A Case Study of the European Parliament on Social Media, *Regional Review.* 13, 28-39, ISSN 1691-6115, Indexed in **EBSCO, WINIR.**

9. Gaušis, E. (2017). Sociālo mediju izmantošana Eiropas pilsonības izpratnes veidošanā jauniešu auditorijas vidū Latvijā, *Vidzemes Augstskolas 11. Studentu pētniecisko darbu konferences zinātnisko rakstu krājums*, 117-124, ISBN 978-9984-633-40-4.

10. Gaušis, E. (2017). European Institutions on Social Media – Shaping the Notion of European Citizenship, *Economics and Business*, 30, 27-39, Indexed in **EBSCO.**

Participation in international scientific conferences with a presentation:

1. "Iedzīvotāju līdzdalības veicināšana Latvijā - no vārdiem pie darbiem", University of Latvia 79th International Scientific Conference, 11.03.2021, Riga, Latvia. *(online participation)*.

2. "Fostering citizen participation: communication of Latvian ministries on Facebook", The 2020 NISPAcee On-line Conference for PhD Students, 29.10.2020, Bratislava, Slovakia *(online participation)*.

3. "Fostering Digital Democracy in Latvia: Opportunities and Limitations", 12th International Scientific Conference "New Challenges in Economic and Business Development – 2020: Economic Inequality and Well-Being", 02.10.2020, Riga, Latvia. *(online participation).*

4. "Fostering Democracy in Latvia. Digital Participation Strategy", XIV. International Balkan and Near Eastern Congresses Series on Economics, Business and Management, 26.09-27.09.2020, Plovdiv, Bulgaria *(online participation).*

5. "Demokrātijas veicināšana Latvijā: digitālās līdzdalības stratēģija valsts pārvaldes sadarbībai ar iedzīvotājiem", University of Latvia 78th International Scientific Conference, 10.03.2020, Riga, Latvia.

6. "Public administrations dialog with citizens - Opportunities of digital environment in Latvia", III International Economic Forum "BUSINESS SUPPORT: critical points, science-based solutions, international cooperation", 31.10.-01.11.2019, Riga, Latvia.

7. "Networked Individualism and Citizens' Participation - Is it a Challenge for Public Administration in Latvia?", The 27th NISPAcee Annual Conference, 24.05.-26.05.2019, Prague, Czech Republic.

8. "Public Administration in Latvia. Opportunities of Digital Democracy", University of Latvia Faculty of Business, Management and Economics International Scientific Conference "New Challenges in Economic and Business Development – 2019: Incentives for Sustainable Economic Growth", 17.05.2019, Riga, Latvia.

9. "Jauniešu plašāka iesaiste publiskās pārvaldes lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā. Digitālās demokrātijas iespējas un risinājumi Latvijā", University of Latvia Faculty of Business, Management and Economics International Scientific Conference "New Challenges in Economic and Business Development – 2019: Incentives for Sustainable Economic Growth" INTERFRAME-LV forum, 16.05.2019, Riga, Latvia.

10. "Engaging Youth in the Decision-Making Process. Opportunities of Digital Democracy in Latvia", University of Latvia 77th International Scientific Conference, 22.03.2019, Riga, Latvia.

11. "Engaging Citizens in the Decision-Making Process. Opportunities of Digital Democracy in Latvia", Klaipeda University International Scientific Conference "E-participation in local governments – developing a comparative view", 28.11.2018, Klaipeda, Lithuania.

12. "Shaping welfare policy. Citizens engagement in the decision-making process", Klaipeda University the 13th International Scientific Conference "Welfare in the 21st Century: Challenges and Solutions", 24.05.-25.05.2018, Klaipeda, Lithuania.

13. "Democracy in the 21st Century. Online Communication with Citizens", University of Latvia Faculty of Business, Management and Economics International Scientific Conference "New

Challenges of Economic and Business Development – 2018: Productivity and Economic Growth", 10.05.-12.05.2018, Riga, Latvia.

14. "Fostering civic engagement. Opportunities of digital democracy", University of Latvia 76th International Scientific Conference, 02.02.2018, Riga, Latvia.

15. "Shaping social policy. Use of social media for civic engagement", The 2nd Conference of the European Baltic Network for Social Policy Analysis (ESPAnet Baltics) "Social Policy in Baltic States through the Lens of Data", 30.11.-01.12.2017, Tallinn and Tartu, Estonia.

16. "Using Social Media for Civic Engagement. Can Latvia Learn from Foreign Experience?", Riga Technical University 58th International Scientific Conference "Scientific Conference on Economics and Entrepreneurship (SCEE'2017)", 13.10.2017, Riga, Latvia.

17. "Online Communication with Citizens - A Case Study Of The European Parliament On Social Media", University of Latvia Faculty of Business, Management and Economics 9th International Scientific Conference "New Challenges of Economic and Business Development – 2017: Digital Economy", 18.-20.05.2017, Riga, Latvia.

18. "European Institutions on Social Media. Constructing Notion of the European Citizenship Among Youth in Latvia", Riga Technical University 57th International Scientific Conference "Scientific Conference on Economics and Entrepreneurship (SCEE'2016)", 29.-30.09.2016, Riga, Latvia.

Participation in local scientific conferences:

1. "Sabiedrības novecošana un noslāņošanās - tendences un izaicinājumi", Valsts pētījumu programmas "Latvijas mantojums un nākotnes izaicinājumi valsts ilgtspējai" vidusposma konference, 27.10.2020, Rīga, Latvija *(online participation with group poster)*.

2. "Sociālo mediju izmantošana Eiropas pilsonības izpratnes veidošanā jauniešu auditorijas vidū Latvijā", Vidzemes Augstskolas 11. Studentu pētniecisko darbu konference, 24.11.2017, Valmiera, Latvija

3. "Sabiedrības Līdzdalība Publiskās Pārvaldes Lēmumu Pieņemšanas Procesos. Sociālie Mediji kā Līdzdalības Mehānisms" Latvijas Universitātes 75. konferences sekcijā "Publiskā sektora pārvaldība un ekonomika", 08.02.2017, Rīga, Latvija

Participation in the national research programme:

Since February 2019, participation in the national research programme "Latvian Heritage and Future Challenges for the Sustainability of the State" Project "Challenges for the Latvian State and Society and the Solutions in International Context (INTERFRAME-LV)".

1. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The core value of democracy for citizens is the opportunity to influence decisions made by the public administration, thus, helping to develop conditions that are corresponding to the desires and needs of citizens – individuals and entrepreneurs. By voting in elections citizens are giving a mandate to the public institutions to make decisions on their behalf. As participation rates in the elections are decreasing, also mandate to the public institutions, given via elections is not representing all citizens but only those who participated in the elections. Still, it is important to ensure that decisions made by public institutions agree to the needs and views of citizens. Public administration can use various methods to reach this level of comprehension as close as possible – by having competent public officials and upper management, by implementing necessary research and field studies, by consulting experts, academia or international experience of other countries and institutions. In the 21st century decision-making process of public administration has become open to citizens much more than it was possible previously. Thus, it is becoming more common that already in the decision-making process public administration is also providing participation opportunities to those citizens that will be affected by new laws, strategies, regulations, and industrial projects. In the development of a business environment that means to engage in the decision-making process also entrepreneurs, representatives of businesses and individuals – possible customers and potential future entrepreneurs. To ensure that a larger part of society is participating in the decision-making process, easy procedures are needed that helps citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) to be heard by public institutions. Not only once in a few years via elections, not only as members of non-governmental organisations, business associations or lobby organisations but on an everyday basis and as individual citizens that have their interests and inputs for the development of their country, economy and society. Therefore, it must be the responsibility of the institutions to provide diverse opportunities for citizens to participate in the decision-making process – in the 21st century that also means by offering digital participation opportunities.

In the first chapter are collected and analysed academic literature and publications about democracy, civic and political participation, public administration impact on the business environment, the decision-making process in the public administration and citizen participation in the decision-making process. Considering that digital democracy and online participation is a comparatively modern concept, analysed materials are mostly from the period of the last ten years. In the analysis, attention is devoted to the development of digital democracy and various aspects that are fostering or hindering citizen participation process in the 21st century. The purpose of the first chapter is to evaluate current international perceptions of digital democracy and related topics to provide a fundamental academic ground to which specific situation in Latvia can be compared and analysed in the second and third chapter.

1.1. Comparison of definitions

Digital democracy is a comparatively new topic, comprehension of it is still developing and improving. Therefore, in this subchapter are discussed definitions that are important to the scope of the dissertation, describing aspects that are considered in connection with citizen participation in the decision-making process and digital solutions that the 21st century can offer for democracy and public administration, as well as, highlighting interrelations with the specific situation in Latvia.

Digitalization and Digital transformation – Digital environment and the new technological innovations is the key aspect of the 21st century. It is, at the same time, both a challenge and an opportunity for the public sector and private sector, for society and business environment. "The digital transformation is challenging almost every aspect of economy and society, which implies that many different policy areas need to be considered in a whole-of-government response"[33]. At the same time, digitalization should not be pursued just for the sake of mere adaptation to the digital environment – it must be taken as a modern solution that can help to foster economic growth and improve the lives of citizens. Nevertheless, the digital environment for public administration and business often is the new and uncovered territory still. Although digitalization has been on the agenda since the beginning of the 21st century, the largest breakthrough in many aspects is seen only recently, since 2020, partly as an answer to challenges highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis, bringing also comprehension that digital solutions are not just the technological trend but a necessity. It is undoubtedly that technological progress will continue its rapid growth and there will come a time when the digital aspect will be an obvious part of the process, thus, digital governance and e-commerce will not be the exception but the customary and standard part of the public administration and business environment. "Economies unable to absorb radical digital innovations and implement them within their specific fabric of incumbent firms will fail to reap the economic benefits and ultimately lose competitiveness"[34], hence, public administration and citizens (individual and entrepreneurs) must act together and immediately to implement digital transformation faster and more successfully, ensuring that their country is not staying behind and not becoming a periphery of the global and digital world of the 21st century.

New Public Management, New Public Governance and Open Government – regulation of public administration and decision-making process is not static, it is constantly changing and developing according to the current national situation and international tendencies. Thus, also changing comprehension of the importance of citizen participation in the decision-making process.

---

[33] OECD. (2017). Going Digital: Making the Transformation Work for Growth and Well-Being. https://www.oecd.org/mcm/documents/C-MIN-2017-4%20EN.pdf

[34] Proeger, T., Runst, P. (2019). Digitization and Knowledge Spillover Effectiveness—Evidence from the "German Mittelstand". *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 11, 1509–1528.

Collaborative governance is described by Chris Ansell and Alison Gash as: "A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets"[35]. Learning from the business environment public administration in the second part of the 20th century developed the concept of New Public Management, which "refers to a set of reforms that have come to radically redefine the nature of public sector organizations. Being inspired by a broad management ideology the reforms have brought forward ideas about "real" organizations, that is, having a clear and unique identity, being able to plan and carry out rational decisions, and having well-defined boundaries and hierarchical structures"[36]. While in the New Public Management citizens are seen as clients, in the New Public Governance they become also co-creators as "public sector invites them to engage in codesign, co-decision-making, co-production, and co-evaluation"[37]. Open Government approach is continuing this course of action, seeking to find new ways how to strengthen relations between citizens and public administration. Open Government that has "risen to prominence rapidly in the early twenty-first century, is a public management reform approach focused on the central organizing principle of openness"[38], in this system citizens are seen as partners in the decision-making process and government activities are made as transparent as possible - relying heavily on the benefits of the digital environment. Latvia has been in strong favour of New Public Management since the mid-1990s[39], and recent public administration activities are shaping a path that could lead to the development of full Open Government or the development of a system that is incorporating many aspects of Open Government.

Public administration and State administration – There are contradictory comprehensions about the definition of public administration. Often by term public administration is understood only national-level institutions of the country, hence, government administration but it is also occasional that the term public administration indicates all public sector institutions of country – national and municipal level. "On one hand, public administration is an integral component of a larger set of governance institutions and processes. In the more traditional, and perhaps also more modern, perspective on public bureaucracy, the individuals involved in those processes utilize their

[35] Ansell, C., Gash, A. (2008). Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(4), 543–571.

[36] Heath, R. L., Johansen, W., Fredriksson, M., Pallas, J. (2018). New Public Management. *In The International Encyclopedia of Strategic Communication*, R. L. Heath and W. Johansen (Eds). Wiley Blackwell.

[37] Schmidthuber, L., Ingrams, A., Hilgers, D. (2020). Government Openness and Public Trust: The Mediating Role of Democratic Capacity. *Public Administration Review*, 81(1), 91-109, https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13298

[38] Ingrams, A., Piotrowski, S., Berliner, D. (2020). Learning from Our Mistakes: Public Management Reform and the Hope of Open Government. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 3(4), 257–272.

[39] Reinholde, I. (2017). Path-Dependency of Reforms in Latvia: A Way Towards New Public Governance. *Proceedings of the 2017 International Conference "ECONOMIC SCIENCE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT" No 46,* Jelgava, LLU ESAF, 27-28 April 2017, 149-157.

often substantial talents to work with political officials and with social actors of all sorts to make and implement policy"[40]. In this dissertation term public administration is used to describe national level public institutions following the interpretation of academic terminology database by the Latvian Academy of Sciences[41] and official translation of the EU's terminology database IATE[42]. However, the term State administration as a definition of national-level public institutions is used in the English version[43] of the State Administration Structure Law of the Republic of Latvia.

Decision-making process of public administration – Process deliberately coordinated by public administration representatives to create new laws, regulations and initiatives that are affecting activities and development of some specific field or industry in the country. According to the Council of Europe, the decision-making process is: "the development, adoption, implementation, evaluation and reformulation of a policy document, a strategy, a law or a regulation at a national, regional or local level, or any process where a decision is made that affects the public, or a segment thereof, by a public authority invested with the power to do so"[44]. The decision-making process can be divided into several steps, for example, in the portal for the drafting of legislation and development planning documents of the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia, four steps are pointed out - agenda setting, policy development, decision-making, and policy implementation[45]. In the decision-making process, public administration representatives can engage contributors that are not from public administration, for example, citizens, non-governmental organisations, business associations or lobby organisations. As there is constant development in the organisation of public administration, development is happening also in the decision-making process. Thus, nowadays public administration is more and more learning also from the business environment, for example, integrating design thinking or agile approach. "In contrast with a traditional bureaucracy, in which decisions are made top-down and complaints from users emerge bottom-up, agile government procedures reframe traditional decision-making by making internal and external users part of the process from day one"[46]. Thus, by learning from the business environment the beneficiaries are not only public administration itself but also stakeholders – society, businesses, individuals and entrepreneurs.

---

[40] Peters, B. (2017). Management, management everywhere: whatever happened to governance? *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 30(6-7), 606-614.

[41] Latvijas Zinātņu akadēmija. (2020). Akadēmiskā terminu datubāze AkadTerm - valsts pārvalde. http://termini.lza.lv/term.php?term=valsts%20p%C4%81rvalde&lang=LV

[42] Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union. (2020). Interactive Terminology for Europe - valsts pārvalde. https://iate.europa.eu/search/standard/result/1593698504130/1

[43] Saeima. (2002). State Administration Structure Law. https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/63545-state-administration-structure-law

[44] Council of Europe. (2017). Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making. https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016807509dd

[45] Valsts kanceleja. (2020). Līdzdalības iespējas. http://tap.mk.gov.lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/

[46] Mergel, I., Ganapati, S., Whitford, A. B. (2020). Agile: A New Way of Governing. *Public Administration Review*, 81(1), 161–165. DOI: 10.1111/puar.13202

Advisory bodies – consultative formation in public administration for stakeholders` participation in the decision-making process. For example: "interinstitutional working groups and advisory councils" as mentioned in the Cabinet of Minister's regulation nr. 970[47]. In Latvian ministries organisation of advisory bodies is various and not always publicly transparent, however, according to the State Chancellery of Latvia,[48] in 2019 there were 147 active consultative bodies with members from 839 non-governmental organisations. Theoretically in the advisory bodies can participate any appropriate stakeholders, still, analysing publicly available information about members of the advisory bodies in Latvian ministries it is noticeable that usually participants are connected with non-governmental organisations, business associations or lobby organisations.

Non-governmental organisations and lobby organisations – formal groups of citizens with similar interests. Non-governmental organisations are: "voluntary self-governing bodies or organisations established to pursue the essentially non-profit-making objectives of their founders or members".[49] In Latvia, non-governmental organisations are acting as representatives of citizens when participating in the decision-making process of public administration - as members of advisory bodies or providing an official opinion in their field of experience. Although non-governmental organisations can act as lobby entity, it is desirable to separate lobby organisations that are defending the interests of businesses and civic-society organisations that are defending the interests of society. This distinction is not well organised in Latvia as the legal status – non-governmental organisation is used both for the lobby organisations and for civic-society organisations. Also, for non-governmental organisations type of activity is not successfully identified[50] and the categorization of non-governmental organisations is incomplete. Contrary to the EU level where lobbing to the EU institutions is partly regulated[51], in Latvia lobbying activities is not strictly regulated, thus, for now, lobby organisation may be registered as a non-governmental organisation, hence, separation is not always obvious and organisations activities and impact on the decision-making process is not always transparent. Nevertheless, in 2021 is planned introduction of the law that will regulate lobbying activities[52], thus some improvements are expected to come.

---

[47] Cabinet of Ministers, Republic of Latvia. (2013). Regulation No. 970 *Procedures for the Public Participation in the Development Planning Process*. Adopted 25.08.2009. https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/197033-procedures-for-the-public-participation-in-the-development-planning-process

[48] Ministru kabinets. (2021). NVO sektora pārskats. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/695/download

[49] Council of Europe. (2017). Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making. https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016807509dd

[50] Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse. (2021). Pētījums: esošās klasifikācijas sistēmas nesniedz skaidru priekšstatu par Latvijas biedrībām un nodibinājumiem. https://nvo.lv/lv/zina/petijums_esosas_klasifikacijas_sistemas_nesniedz_skaidru_prieksstatu_par_latvijas_biedribam_un_nodibinajumiem

[51] Transparency International. (2021). Integrity Watch - EU Lobbyists. https://www.integritywatch.eu/organizations

[52] Latvijas Vēstnesis. (2021). Sabiedriskajai apspriešanai nodod lobēšanas atklātības regulējuma pamatprincipus. https://lvportals.lv/norises/324281-sabiedriskajai-apspriesanai-nodod-lobesanas-atklatibas-regulejuma-pamatprincipus-2021

Businesses, entrepreneurs, and self-employed citizens – In the free-market economy citizens can easily become entrepreneurs, thus fulfil their ambitions and dreams, also, gaining profit and means of subsistence. "Entrepreneurs are deemed to engage in innovation, risk-taking and business activities"[53] that leads to technological progress and facilitates economic growth of the country. Citizens can choose to develop any legal entity that suits their needs, also, to be self-employed or engage in the start-up company. In many of those cases, they also obtain new needs and fields of interests where they are motivated to have an impact on the decisions made by public administration, for example, tax policy, assistance to start-ups, regulations of self-employed citizens, or support to social entrepreneurship. Therefore, those citizens also become interested to participate in the decision-making process and they should be engaged by the public administration. For now, in the decision-making process, similarly, like citizens (individuals) are theoretically represented by non-governmental organisations, individual entrepreneurs and businessmen of small companies are represented by business associations or lobby organisations. In the case of Latvia, the most known and largest lobby organisations are the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia and Employers' Confederation of Latvia, however, as lobby organisations are acting also many other non-governmental organisations which are established by entrepreneurs of specific businesses. Digital solutions could help individual entrepreneurs participate in the decision-making process and defend their interests, without having to spend additional time and financial resources in becoming members of business associations or lobby organisations.

Civic participation and Political participation – Active citizen participation is a cornerstone of the democracy, "While voting has been the primary way for individual citizens to make their voices heard in the political system, social changes and technical advancements have brought about an expansion of political activities. In keeping up with these changes, conceptualizations of citizen participation have been continuously debated and updated"[54]. According to Lars Hasselblad Torres: "Citizen participation is part of a family of democratic reform ideas. These include public participation, public involvement, participatory democracy, deliberative democracy and collaborative governance"[55]. Political participation often is seen as citizen participation in the decision-making process of public administration either voting in elections or engaging in day-to-day processes, also participating in the political parties. When analysed with more scrutiny, "Explanations for political participation are divided into supply-side and demand-side approaches.

[53] Mthanti, T., Ojah, K. (2017). Entrepreneurial orientation (EO): Measurement and policy implications of entrepreneurship at the macroeconomic level. *Research Policy*, 47, 724-739.

[54] Orum, A. M., Åström, J. (2019). Citizen Participation. *In The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Studies*, A. M. Orum (Ed.). Wiley Blackwell.

[55] Torres, L. H. (2007). Citizen sourcing in the public interest. *Knowledge Management for Development Journal*, 3(1), 134-145.

Supply-side approaches stress contextual and situational factors (including institutional and constitutional arrangements). Demand-side approaches identify individual resources, motivations, and social networks as important determinants"[56]. Usually, civic participation is connected with social issues and in Latvia it is often organised with the support of non-governmental organisations. Still, nowadays it becomes harder to make a strong division between social and political issues, for example, with such topics as the climate crisis and sustainable development. According to the Council of Europe, "civil participation is an engagement of individuals, NGOs and civil society at large in decision-making processes by public authorities. Civil participation in political decision-making is distinct from political activities in terms of direct engagement with political parties and from lobbying in relation to business interests"[57]. In Latvia there is not a clear distinction between civic and political participation, often considering that civic participation means also participation in the decision-making process and voting as it is described by the Ministry of Culture, the main institution responsible for the development of citizen participation in Latvia[58]. In the dissertation participation in the decision-making process and voting is seen as political participation.

Public participation, Citizen participation and Digital participation – In academia and public communication of institutions stakeholders` participation is described both as public participation and citizen participation – depending on the source and institution. However, in the dissertation is used the term citizen participation, thus emphasizing that in the 21st century participation can be also organised individually. Digital participation is providing new opportunities to citizen participation, but it "maintains the same goals as traditional citizen participation while bringing new forms of communication, with the aim to increase the involvement of citizens and helping them achieve their communities` objectives"[59]. Digital solutions can help to engage in the decision-making process the silent majority of the population, hence, those individuals who are not participants of non-governmental organisations or those entrepreneurs that are not members of business associations or lobby organisations. It is undoubtedly that in this silent majority there are people that could provide useful input for the decision-making process but maybe they do not have the motivation to become members of non-governmental organisations, business associations or lobby organisations, maybe they do not have time to attend face-to-face meetings, or maybe public administration just has not reached out to them and have not taken an interest in their views.

[56] Deth, van J. W. (2016). Political Participation. *In The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication*, G. Mazzoleni (Ed.). Wiley Blackwell.
[57] Council of Europe. (2017). Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making. https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016807509dd
[58] Kultūras ministrija. (2020). Pilsoniskā iesaistīšanās. https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/integracija-un-sabiedriba/pilsoniska-iesaistisanas#gsc.tab=0
[59] Driss, O. B., Mellouli, S., Trabelsi, Z. (2019). From citizens to government policy-makers: Social media data analysis. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(3), 560-570.

Digital democracy, E-government and E-governance – According to Manuel Castells, "In the early twenty-first century, in a globally interdependent world, democracy is usually understood as the form of government resulting from the will of citizens choosing between competitive candidacies in relatively free elections held at mandated intervals of time under judicial control"[60]. The digital aspect of a democracy is related to the methods of how democracy is realized in everyday life. "Digital democracy can be defined as the pursuit and the practice of democracy in whatever view using digital media in online and offline political communication. The online-offline distinction should be added because political activities are not only happening on the Internet but also in physical meetings where mobile digital media are used for assistance"[61]. Digital democracy refers to a "potential relationship between the affordances of digital information and communication technologies and the normative requirements of effective political democracy. Its origins lie in a long tradition of hope for a more interactive and participatory form of political mediation"[62]. The ecosystem of the digital government is containing "government actors, non-governmental organisations, businesses, citizens' associations and individuals which supports the production of and access to data, services and content through interactions with the government[63]. E-governance is a broader term as it can relate also to simple digital availability of government resources, and "E-Government is commonly conceptualized as governments' use of Information and Communication Technologies combined with organizational change to improve the structures and operations of government"[64]. Usually, at first, E-government initiatives are developed that later provides a digital environment and comprehension to design digital democracy opportunities for citizens. Although digital democracy and e-government initiatives are present in the world since the beginning of the 21st century, significant development in many aspects can be seen especially recently – since the middle of 2020, when digital transformation and digital democracy came in the agenda as an answer to problems recognised by the COVID-19 crisis. For example, in the European Union that is noticeable in the context with *Digital decade*[65] initiatives.

Digital technologies, Digital environment and Open data – Digital technologies refer to Information and communication technologies (ICTs) "including the Internet, mobile technologies

---

[60] Castells, M. (2013). *Communication power*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 574p.

[61] Hacker, K. L., van Dijk, J. (2000). *What Is Digital Democracy?* Digital Democracy. Issues of Theory and Pracitice, Sage, pp.1-9.

[62] Coleman, S. (2016). Digital Democracy. *In The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication*, G. Mazzoleni (Ed.). Wiley Blackwell.

[63] OECD. (2014). Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies, Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate.

[64] Twizeyimana, J. D., Andersson, A. (2019). The public value of E-Government – A literature review. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(2), 167-178.

[65] European Commission. (2021). Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/europes-digital-decade-digital-targets-2030_en

and devices, as well as data analytics used to improve the generation, collection, exchange, aggregation, combination, analysis, access, searchability and presentation of digital content, including for the development of services and apps"[66]. Public institutions are developing open data portals, considering citizens' rights and needs to have free access to the information that is gathered by public institutions. Discussion about the need for open data has been for several decades but the biggest development is made recently because of the opportunities provided by digital technologies. "Freely available government data can be used in innovative ways to create useful tools and products that help people navigate modern life more easily. Used in this way, open data are a catalyst for innovation in the private sector, supporting the creation of new markets, businesses, and jobs. Beyond government, these benefits can multiply as more businesses adopt open data practices modelled by government and share their own data with the public"[67]. Open data are a crucial factor that has an impact on citizens ability to participate in the decision-making process.

WEB 2.0 and Two-way communication – The main characteristics of the WEB 2.0 is various opportunities for interaction between internet users, that were not available in the previous versions of the internet. This term in 2005 was "coined by Tim O'Reilly to refer to a second-generation web-based on the use of novel technologies, such as RSS, podcasting, mashups, folksonomies, widgets and sharing facilities"[68]. As Jonathan A. Obar and Steve Wildman emphasized: "The shift to Web 2.0 can be characterized as a shift from user as consumer to user as participant"[69]. This technical innovation provided the opportunity for personal online blogs and social media. Also, it made possible two-way communication – online communication in social media where everyone could become a content creator and provide his or her input in the information flow. Thus, the development of technology changed the communication habits of people, offering to them new opportunities for interaction, self-expression and networking. At the same time, that also created new challenges for institutions that have to adjust to the new situation, find ways how to impact processes, and regulate the new dilemmas that arise with the digital environment.

Social media and Social networks – one of social media definitions is: "Forms of electronic communication, such as websites for social networking and microblogging, through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content"[70]. Social media can also be described as "the programs and applications that facilitate using the

---

[66] OECD. (2014). Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies, Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate.

[67] Cabinet office. (2013). G8 Open Data Charter and Technical Annex. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-data-charter/g8-open-data-charter-and-technical-annex

[68] Bonsón, E., Torres, L., Royo, S., Flores, F. (2012). Local e-government 2.0: Social media and corporate transparency in municipalities. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(2), 123-132.

[69] Obar, J. A., Wildman, S. (2015). Social media definition and the governance challenge: An introduction to the special issue. *Telecommunications Policy*, 39(9), 745-750.

[70] Merriam-Webster. (2019). *Definition of social media*. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media

internet for both synchronous and asynchronous sharing of the meaning-co-creation process among individuals and publics"[71]. Usually, social networks are seen as a subtype of social media that is providing users to develop online communities, for example, *Facebook* - "an online medium that lets users interact with each other by sharing information about themselves via personal profiles. Users share their information by "friending" others and allowing them access to their profile"[72]. In Latvia there is no consistency about this division and the term social network is often referring to all social media. One of the biggest challenges for institutions is the ever-changing nature of the social media environment. Social media platforms are time to time upgrading their interface and rules, new social media applications are being designed – attracting the attention of youth and early tech adopters, and other social media networks are going out of fashion. This situation is creating a need for public administration to be flexible and follow the evolution process. It is important for institutions not to waste resources, unsuccessfully following some short-term trends. At the same time, public institutions have to be keen enough to be present in those social networks where their audience is being active. Hence, not staying behind the progress and development of the digital environment as it can increase the gap between institutions and citizens.

Participation platforms and smartphone applications for citizen participation - citizen participation platforms and smartphone applications are some of the most advantageous solutions that the digital environment can offer for fast, direct and large-scale cooperation between public administration and citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs). In the last decade has grown the use of them by institutions and civic society, as well as academic interest to analyse the use of them and results that could bring to citizen participation and relations between citizens and public administration. Citizen participation platforms "can generally take on three main forms depending on who produces information and who is its main recipient"[73] - Citizen-to-Government, Government-to-Citizen and Citizen-to-Citizen. In Latvia since 2011 at the national level is maintained Citizen-to-Government participation platform manabalss.lv that has gained comparatively good results[74]. From the middle of 2021, there is also expect the first national-level Government-to-Citizen platform[75], although it will be a good subject for the academic studies, it is already outside the scope of this research as the lunch of the platform has significantly delayed from the initial schedule. In Latvia, there are also several national-level smartphone applications for

---

[71] Botan, C. H. (2018). *Strategic Communication Theory and Practice: The Cocreational Model*. Hoboken: Wiley, 256p.

[72] Conroy, M., Feezell, J. T., Guerrero, M. (2012). Facebook and political engagement: A study of online political group membership and offline political engagement. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(5), 1535–1546.

[73] Cingolani, L. (2020). The survival of open government platforms: Empirical insights from a global sample. *Government Information Quarterly*, 38(1), 101522.

[74] Sabiedrības Līdzdalības Fonds. (2021). Paveiktais. https://manabalss.lv/pages/paveiktais

[75] Ministru kabinets. (2020). Vienotais tiesību aktu projektu izstrādes un saskaņošanas portāls (TAP portāls). https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/projekts/vienotais-tiesibu-aktu-projektu-izstrades-un-saskanosanas-portals-tap-portals

citizen participation. They are not used by many citizens but tends to grow their audience. Overall, participation platforms and smartphone applications for citizen participation is the field of digital participation that still has a significant potential for creative solutions, both in Latvia and the European Union, as the existing experience is heterogenous and there is still the need to find the right solutions how to reach a larger audience, improve participation experience and prolong the life cycle of the platforms and applications.

1.2. Democracy and citizen participation

Citizen participation is important for democracy, not only as the required system how public institutions ensure stakeholders opinion in the decision-making process but also as a catalyst that confirms the legitimacy of democracy itself and decisions made by public institutions. "Although public administration exists in every form of government, it occupies a special place in democracies"[76]. Democratic systems are relaying on public institutions for effective delivery and implementation of services and policies. The support from citizens is necessary for the viability of the institutions and it is up to citizens how much they are ready to participate in the democratic processes. They can choose to participate in elections by voting thus giving their mandate to the public institutions to make decisions on their behalf. Citizens can also seek for more active participation opportunities, such as participating in political parties, becoming members of non-governmental organisations, business associations or lobby organisations, taking part in public consultation processes or providing their opinion about draft legislation and other decisions that public institutions are having on their agenda., For the sake of democracy it is essential that institutions are providing for citizens various participation opportunities and easy-to-use methods for participation in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, it is necessary that public administration is also informing citizens about those participation opportunities and are motivating citizens to take part in those activities, hence – all the time seeking to broaden the population that can participate and does participate in the democratic processes of the country.

Comprehension of citizen participation contains a wide range of activities. In academia, these activities are structured as civic and political participation, or institutional and non-institutional participation, or conventional and non-conventional participation. Lester Milbrath considered[77] political participation as a hierarchy of activities that are leading citizens into more active involvement in political processes. Martyn Barrett and Ian Brunton-Smith suggested[78] division in

[76] Ventriss, C, Perry, J. L., Nabatchi, T., Milward, H. B., Johnston, J. M. (0219). Democracy, Public Administration, and Public Values in an Era of Estrangement. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 2(4), 275–282.
[77] George, J. J., Leidner, D. E., (2019). From clicktivism to hacktivism: Understanding digital activism. *Information and Organization*, 29(3), 1-45. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infoandorg.2019.04.001
[78] Barrett, M., Brunton-Smith, I. (2014). Political and civic engagement and participation: Towards an integrative perspective. *Journal of Civil Society*, 10(1), 5-28.

conventional political participation and non-conventional political participation, Marino and Letizia Lo Presti[79] analysed various aspects of participation looking at them from a civic engagement perspective, but Zúñiga, Jung and Valenzuela analysed[80] citizen participation activities from the political participation and civic participation perspective, dividing political participation into online and offline activities. Jordana J. George and Dorothy E. Leidner suggested that although digital activism at the beginning was "essentially no different than traditional political action"[81] nowadays has evolved as a separate form of participation that has its specific characteristics.

Table 1.1. **Forms of citizen participation**

Forms of citizen participation	Examples of participation activities
Conventional political participation	Voting; Membership of a political party; Running for political election; Working on political election campaigns for candidates or parties; Donations to political parties; Trying to persuade others to vote
Non-conventional political participation	Protests, demonstrations, marches; Signing petitions; Writing letters, emails to politicians or public officials; Writing letters and emails, and making phone calls with political content to the mass media; Writing articles and blogs with political content for the mass media; Using social networking sites to join or like groups which have a political focus; Using social networking sites to distribute or share links which have a political content to friends and contacts; Wearing or displaying a symbol or sign representing support for a political cause; Distributing leaflets which express support for a political cause; Participating in fundraising events for a political cause; Writing graffiti on walls which expresses support for a political cause; Participating in other illegal actions (e.g. burning a national flag, throwing stones, rioting, etc.) in support of a political cause; Membership and participation in activities of political lobbying and campaigning organizations
Political participation	Spectator activities: Exposing oneself to political stimuli; Initiating a political discussion; Attempting to convince others; Wearing a button or putting a sticker on a car. Transitional activities: Contacting a public official or political leader; Attending a political meeting or rally; Making monetary contributions. Gladiatorial activities: Contributing time in a political campaign; becoming an active political party member; Attending a caucus or strategy meeting; Soliciting political funds; Being a candidate or holding office.
Civic engagement	Voluntary work and involvement in actions for the well-being of the society; civic engagement in reference to political participation; civic engagement as a civic and political tool - a set of activities and interventions of a political and social nature that are implemented for the good of society.
Civic participation	Voluntary work for non-political groups; Raising money for charity; Attending a meeting to discuss neighbourhood problems; Purchasing products for the social values advocated by the company; Banning a certain product or service because they disagreed with the social values of the company
Offline political participation	Attending a public hearing, town hall meeting, or city council; Calling or sending a letter to an elected public official; Speaking to a public official in person; Posting a political sign, banner, button or bumper sticker; Attending a political rally; Participating in any demonstrations, protests, or marches; Voting in elections; Writing a letter to a news organization; Participating in groups that take any local action for social or political reform; Participating in public interest groups, political action groups, political clubs, or party committees
Online political participation	Writing to a politician; Making a campaign contribution; Subscribing to political lists; Signing up to volunteer for a campaign/issue; Sending a political message via e-mail
Digital activism	Clicktivism; Metavoicing; Assertion; E-funding; Political consumerism; Digital petitions; Botivism; Data activism; Exposure; Hacktivism.

Source: Author's construction based on Barrett, M., Brunton-Smith, I. (2014); Marino, V., Lo Presti, L. (2018); Zúñiga, H. G. D., Jung, N., Valenzuela, S. (2012); and George, J. J., Leidner, D. E., (1999).

---

[79] Marino, V., Lo Presti, L. (2018). Increasing convergence of civic engagement in management: a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 32(3), 282-301.

[80] Zúñiga, H. G. D., Jung, N., Valenzuela, S. (2012). Social Media Use for News and Individuals' Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Political Participation, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17(3), 319-336.

[81] George, J. J., Leidner, D. E., (2019). From clicktivism to hacktivism: Understanding digital activism. *Information and Organization*, 29(3), 1-45. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infoandorg.2019.04.001

The same activity can correspond to more than one form of participation (see Table 1.1.), because of various and even contrary viewpoints in academia on how citizen participation activities are analysed, and because of changes that citizen participation is facing in the context of digital participation and changes in the public agenda, for example – environmental issues that were seen as civic participation field nowadays are becoming an issue of political participation.

The most common types of citizen participation have not changed much for the last hundred years, however, access to the internet and rapid growth of the digital environment has made significant upgrades in the use of traditional methods. Also, nowadays there are new types of participation that were not possible before the development of the interactive internet - *Web 2.0*, for example, e-voting or active use of social media par political campaigns or gathering people to participate in some civil awareness activity. Additionally, the most often visible digital participation activities that are fostering citizens participation in the decision-making process is also e-petition and new legislation crowdsourcing platforms and participatory budgeting activities that are allowing citizens to decide on the usage of some part of the public budget spending. Hence, the use of the digital environment for citizen participation is becoming more and more common, as well as there are also a growing number of studies that are trying to explain why governments should use digital environment, what are the benefits of digital participation and what new challenges this new order brings to relations between public administration and citizens.

From the perspective of public institutions, citizen participation should be seen as an active and thoughtfully directed process, that is bringing more benefits than losses. Lars Hasselblad Torres[82] stated that six aims of citizen participation are:

- Informing and educating the general public about important policy issues;
- Improving government decisions by improving the information flow from citizens to decision-makers;
- Creating opportunities for citizens to shape and in some cases, determine public policy;
- Legitimizing government decisions by ensuring that the voices of those impacted by government policy have been heard, considered, and addressed;
- Involving citizens in monitoring the outcomes of policy for evaluation;
- and improving the quality of public life by restoring the trust and engagement of citizens.

Ian Thynne and B. Guy Peters emphasized, that "state organisations work flexibly and strategically with organisations of the market and civil society with one or more of three interrelated

---

[82] Torres, L. H. (2007). Citizen sourcing in the public interest. *Knowledge Management for Development Journal*, 3(1), 134-145.

capacities as distinctive features of their existence and modes of operation"[83], and suggested that the three capacities are: state organisation as a service collaborator, state organisation as a network synthesiser, and state organisation as an instinctive adaptor. Hence, public institutions can choose and have to choose which role they are taking in cooperation with citizens - individuals and entrepreneurs. Maureen Taylor and Michael L. Kent suggested[84] that participation should be conceptualized from five perspectives:

- interaction with stakeholders;

- demonstration of positive regard for stakeholders input, experiences and needs;

- interaction with stakeholders also outside of an immediate problem/issue;

- interaction for stakeholders advice and counsel on issues of public concern;

- and interaction that contributes to a fully functioning society whereby organizations and publics recognize their interdependence and act together for the good of the community.

From the perspective of citizens, participation can also happen as an unplanned one-time or irregular activity that is affected by external factors, citizens needs or interest in the specific topics that are in the agenda of public administration, for example, entrepreneurs could be more interested to use participation opportunities if they are seeing the proposed changes in the tax policy as a risk to the future of their business. Adrien Petitpas and colleagues[85] analysed citizens motivation to participate in the elections, considering that there are three groups of voters (frequent voters, occasional voters, abstainers) and each of them have different aspects that can generate their interest to participate in the elections. Occasional voters are more affected by the campaign and ballot-related factors, than frequent voters and abstainers, however, if the political campaign is highly intense that could motivate abstainers as well. As occasional voters are sensitive to context-related factors, they could be also responsive to such innovations as e-voting that would not be as a powerful motivator to frequent voters and abstainers. Vittoria Marino and Letizia Lo Presti after a comprehensive analysis of citizen engagement research papers concluded that "participation requires motivation, interest and a certain predisposition for participation, commitment, dialogue and a strategic plan capable of supporting the new forms of social interaction such as social media"[86]. Verba and his colleagues[87] explained individual participation with the Civic voluntarism model where activity depends on three factors:

[83] Thynne, I., Peters, B. G. (2015). Addressing the Present and the Future in Government and Governance: Three approaches to Organising Public Action. *Public Administration and Development*, 35(2), 73– 85.

[84] Taylor, M., Kent, M. L. (2014). Dialogic Engagement: Clarifying Foundational Concepts, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26(5), 384-398.

[85] Petitpas, A., Jaquet, J. M., Sciarini, P. (2020). Does E-Voting matter for turnout, and to whom? *Electoral Studies*, 102245.

[86] Marino, V., Lo Presti, L. (2018). Increasing convergence of civic engagement in management: a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 32(3), 282-301.

- motivation - a general concern for politics, preferences for particular policies, and desires for other gratifications that might come from political activity;

- resources – the time, money, skills needed for political activity;

- and recruitments – exposure to requests to become politically active.

Nowadays recruitments can also come from social media if a digital community is providing arguments that participation can change decisions made by public administration - for example, recently climate issues are emphasized by youth in the digital environment and are resulting in regular *Fridays for future* climate strikes all around the world.

In 1961 Sherry R. Arnstein proposed her concept of the ladder of citizen participation. In this publication she criticized the existing system where participation often was just an empty ritual and the only result "what citizens achieve in all this activity is that they have "participated in participation." And what powerholders achieve is the evidence that they have gone through the required motions of involving "those people"[88]. Hence, to engage citizens in the decision-making process, public administration should be motivated to do so – that could arise from legal conditions, the attitude of representatives of the institution, or public pressure by citizens or mass media. This comprehension has changed over time, also changing public administrations motivation to engage citizens in the decision-making process – from considering it as a redundant activity, to open government initiatives and active citizen participation. However, it is still a topical question if institutions have developed their comprehension of the value of citizen participation – have they grown from the bitter experience described by Sherry R. Arnstein or do institutions still, 50 years later, imitate the participation process, offering opportunities that seem to expand citizens ability to influence decision-making process but at the end keep their final word even if that is not always in favour to society and citizens - individuals and entrepreneurs.

The recent development of public governance is suggesting that nowadays there are more reasons for public administration to take citizens seriously, as well as more opportunities for citizens to participate in the decision-making process and also promote and emphasize their opinion if that is not recognised by institutions. Still, institutions have a major role in deciding if those contemporary opportunities are really used and offered to citizens. The Decision-making process in public administration is regulated by national laws and regulations and an important role is played also by institutions own rules and habits, how things are done to achieve a result. The Decision-making process usually is divided into several successive and interconnected stages, for example,

---

[87] Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., Brady, H. E. (2000). Rational Action and Political Activity. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 12(3), 243-268.

[88] Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216-224.

Janssen & Helbig has emphasized[89] problem definition, policy development, policy implementation, policy enforcement and policy evaluation as important steps that are forming a cycle of the decision-making process. This framework, on one hand, helps to structuralise the decision-making process but on the other hand that also clearly determines how citizens can participate in the decision-making process, thus – there is a certain limit of options that individuals and entrepreneurs can use for participation. In the study of international trade agreement development, the role of domestic advisory groups was analysed according to the four-rungs model: the bottom level (instrumental) without stakeholders` impact that is followed by low level (information-sharing) and medium level (monitoring) that offers watchdog role for the stakeholders. The high level (policy impact) is the fourth and final rung when stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process and can trigger dispute mechanisms. However, it was concluded that domestic advisory groups do not reach this level and their impact is limited because "they are not actively involved in decision-making and governments do not act upon DAGs' recommendations"[90], thus there is a need for a mentality shift on the part of policy-makers to ensure that participation mechanisms that are developed can really provide stakeholders with an opportunity to have an impact on the decision-making process. Wenche Tobiasson and colleagues[91] emphasized that the rise of conflicts can be lowered and trust between communities and government can be achieved through transparency and by developing guidelines for stakeholder participation, as well as ensuring community involvement at an early stage of the planning process.

Table 1.2. **Actors and models of governance**

	Bureaucratic State	**New Public Management**	**Open Government (or Collaborative Governance)**
Government structure	unitary, hierarchical, professional	flexible and fragmented (autonomous units)	network
Government agency	the dominance of rule of law	managerial and private-sector models	government as a platform and facilitating framework
Citizens	external counterparts	customers and clients	partners
Digital technology	n.a.	e-government, e-service delivery	online platforms to support, dialogue, and collaboration

Source: Author's construction based on De Blasio, E., Selva, D. (2016).

Emiliana De Blasio and Donatella Selva have compared[92] the changes that public governance has gone through in the recent decades, from the concept of the Bureaucratic State in the middle of

---

[89] Janssen, M., Helbig, M. (2016). Innovating and changing the policy-cycle: Policy-makers be prepared! *Government Information Quarterly*, 35(4), 99-105.

[90] Martens, D., Potjomkina, D., Orbie, J. (2020). Domestic advisory groups in EU trade agreements. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Global Policy and Development. ISBN 978-3-96250-748-0

[91] Tobiasson, W., Beestermöller, C. Jamasb, T. (2016). Public engagement in electricity network development: the case of the Beauly–Denny project in Scotland. *Economia e Politica Industriale*, 43, 105–126.

[92] De Blasio, E., Selva, D. (2016). Why Choose Open Government? Motivations for the Adoption of Open Government Policies in Four European Countries. *Policy & Internet*, 8(3), 225-247.

the 20th century until the latest development of Open Government nowadays (see Table 1.2.). There is a noticeable increase in the openness of the government decision-making process and there is a growing role of citizens who are now becoming a significant part of the decision-making process. John Clayton Thomas[93] referred to three main roles that should be considered: public as a citizen in context with the New Public Administration approach; public as a consumer in context with the New Public Management approach; and public as a partner in context with the Governance and coproduction approach. Lisa Schmidthuber and colleague's considered public administration reforms in the context of citizens trust in public administration, emphasizing that with the New Public Management approach trust is based on rational choice, economically defined exchange, and accountability while with the New Public Governance "citizens express trust in their government by collaborating with it, and the public sector invites them to engage in codesign, co-decision-making, co-production, and co-evaluation"[94]. In this context, the Open Government approach is continuing the trust regime of the New Public Governance but the emphasis is given to technological progress and the use of digital opportunities to cooperate with citizens. Hence, reforms in public administration are inevitable as institutions must adapt to external factors, such as global trends, technical progress or changes in citizens mindset, therefore, also changing conditions that are impacting relations between institutions and citizens - individuals and entrepreneurs. Sorin Dan Şandor[95] divided this field into four levels:

- citizenship level where citizens are becoming participants in governance or there is happening a shift to e-democracy;

- level of changes in the nature of public service jobs;

- level of organizational changes that are going from a hierarchical to a more horizontal structure, to network or even virtual organizations;

- level in which the entire government is going through rapid changes - from classic bureaucracy to New Public Management and to network and digital governance.

The probability that citizens will participate, their motivation and access to resources can be determined by the society that is around them since the teenage years – family, school, mass media and community. To some degree also public administration can impact this situation, especially nowadays when institutions can be represented in the digital environment and reach citizens directly and instantly. Brett L. M. Levy and Thomas Akiva have mentioned political efficacy and political

---

[93] Thomas, J. C. (2013). Citizen, Customer, Partner: Rethinking the Place of the Public in Public Management. *Public Administration Review*, 73(6), 786-796.

[94] Schmidthuber, L., Ingrams, A., Hilgers, D. (2020). Government Openness and Public Trust: The Mediating Role of Democratic Capacity. *Public Administration Review*, https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13298

[95] Şandor, S. D. (2012). ICT and Public Administration Reforms. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, 36, 155-164.

interest as the most reliable predictors of political participation, describing political efficacy as "the extent to which individuals believe that their actions can influence the government"[96], and looking into it from two perspectives: internal political efficacy, which is persons individual sense of competence for understanding and acting in the political sphere; and external political efficacy, which is persons believe that their engagement will be responded by the government or society. Both aspects of political efficacy can be stimulated with campaigns or communication activities. Still, at first, public administration must have comprehension that such activities will strengthen citizen participation in the long-term, even if the results at the first moment are not noticeable.

Considering the long-term effects of citizen participation, public administration has to give special attention to youth and their motivation to participate in the decision-making process. It is crucial to understand that in the long-term for public administration it is easier and profitable to develop relations with citizens already when they are young than trying to motivate them to participate when they have become adults. Still, the challenge for public administration could be to understand methods that could help to reach youth and promote participation to them. Youth are interested that their opinion is heard by decision-makers, however, they are looking for new and different participation forms that are going beyond traditional participation in elections. Christopher F. Wells, after the study of the websites and *Facebook* pages of 90 civic organizations dedicated to engaging youth, concluded that "young citizens recognize the power of information and approach the information world as a viable arena for engagement" [97], and when youth are identifying information that corresponds to their interest and concern, they are ready to act on it, especially, by alerting a civic group or a network of their acquaintances. Similarly, in the study of youth civic engagement in the USA, Germany and the United Kingdom James Sloam[98] concluded that youth civic engagement is growing, but it is taking other forms of participation than voting, for example, participation in the protests, and politicians are not able to keep up with youth civic participation interests. It is important to foster youth participation in the democratic processes as they are the ones whose life and future opportunities will be affected the most by decisions that politicians and public officials are making today. Also, youth participation is assuring legitimacy, as "without their consent and commitment, the authority of politicians and policy-makers to represent the values and interests of future citizens is called into question."[99]. Still, for institutions, it is a challenge to decide what types of participation to offer that could attract youth. Meanwhile, participation rates of adults

[96] Levy, B. L., Akiva, T. (2019). Motivating Political Participation Among Youth: An Analysis of Factors Related to Adolescents' Political Engagement. *Political Psychology*, 40(5), 1039-1055.

[97] Wells, C. F. (2011). Engagement in the networked society: How civic and political organizations communicate with young citizens online, Doctoral thesis, University of Washington.

[98] Sloam, J. (2014). New Voice, Less Equal: The Civic and Political Engagement of Young People in the United States and Europe. *Comparative Political Studies*, 47(5), 663-688.

[99] Loader, B. D., Vromen, A., Xenos, A. M. (2014). The networked young citizen: social media, political participation and civic engagement. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(2), 143-150.

suggest that there is a need to find new forms of participation, in general, to ensure that citizens are participating in the decision-making process more actively. That could not only help to foster citizens satisfaction with the decision made by public administration, but also confirm the legitimacy of the democracy as the mode of country`s management where needs and opinion of citizens are represented and considered in the decision-making process.

1.3.   Public administration and business environment

Public administration is responsible for a wide range of policies that are affecting the public and private sector, and the everyday life of citizens - individuals and entrepreneurs. Some of the policies are more essential as they can have a major impact on country`s economic growth and citizens wellbeing – one of them is support and regulation of the business environment. Although in the free-market economy businesses have comparatively large freedom, thoughtful public administration policy is still needed to balance relations between state and businesses and foster economic growth of the country. Implementation of this policy is a continuous development, for which public administration needs not only long-term planning and comprehension of economic processes but also the ability to adapt to various local and international factors, as well as – unexpected challenges and crisis. In the course of time, especially in the latest 50 years, public administration has faced various reforms that have changed not only work procedures but also the decision-making process. Lately, in the 21st century, the changes are seen also in the engagement of stakeholders in the decision-making process. There is growing support to comprehension that citizen participation can help to develop policies that are more successfully meeting the needs and opinions of citizens. Economic policy is developed "through a process of political choices and "social learning" in which policymakers decide on new goals and methods with only partial reference to academic theory or evidence"[100], thus it is in the interests of the citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) to participate in the decision-making process and help the public administration to shape the business environment in favour of citizens.

Ines Mergel and colleagues[101] emphasized that "in contrast with more monumental public management reforms such as New Public Management" public administration nowadays is also adopting practices from the business environment, such as the *Agile* approach. They suggested that it "is a mind-set that initiates a cultural change in bureaucratic command and control organizations" and pointed out several aspects of why it can contribute to a more effective and efficient administration: agile assumes situations can change over time; it privileges adaptive structure over hierarchies; there is emphasized responsible individual discretion over bureaucratic procedures;

---

[100] Laybourn-Langton, L., Jacobs, M. (2018). Paradigm Shifts in Economic Theory and Policy. *Intereconomics*, 53, 113–118.
[101] Mergel, I., Ganapati, S., Whitford, A., B. (2020). Agile: A New Way of Governing. *Public Administration Review*, 00(00), 1–5. DOI: 10.1111/puar.13202

agile emphasizes continuous self-reflective learning processes; and it increases knowledge about processes, procedures, and requirements for new processes and services. Thus, by adapting to methods that are already used by their stakeholders, public administration can become more open to cooperation. And citizens can become part of the decision-making process if they are offered such an opportunity. Lars Hasselblad Torres pointed out that: "The key lesson in citizen participation around the world is that people in communities are eager for their voices to be heard in the decision-making processes that affect their quality of life and their experience of place"[102], thus citizen participation is a cornerstone of legitimate, credible and solid policy advice and citizens should be engaged not only as users but also as makers of policies. Similarly, Mariana Mazzucato emphasized that nowadays policy development needs to be mission-oriented and the direction of investments should be decided by public administration in cooperation with relevant stakeholders because it is easy to identify the key societal challenges (such as climate change, ageing or urbanization) but "translating challenges into concrete missions will require the involvement of an array of stakeholders concerned with sectors and socio-technical fields affected by the challenge itself."[103]. Chris Ansell and Alison Gash[104] emphasized six criteria that are shaping collaborative governance:

- the forum is initiated by public agencies or institutions;
- participants in the forum include nonstate actors;
- participants engage directly in decision making and are not merely "consulted";
- the forum is formally organized and meets collectively;
- the forum aims to make decisions by consensus;
- and the focus of the collaboration is on public policy or public management.

Following those criteria, public administration is giving much more power to citizens, at the same time controlling the process and keeping it in a certain frame. Sticking to a certain pattern can help to facilitate the process and also ensure that the decisions made by citizens can be used and incorporated according to the specific rules and regulations of public administrations decision-making process. Considering the criteria of collaborative governance and extensive literature analysis, Chris Ansell and Alison Gash developed a model of Collaborative Governance, determining the main actors and processes that are influencing and moving the decision-making process. In their model collaboration is a five-step process that consists of face-to-face dialogue, trust-building, commitment to the process, shared understanding and intermediate outcomes. This

---

[102] Torres, L. H. (2007). Citizen sourcing in the public interest. *Knowledge Management for Development Journal*, 3(1), 134-145.
[103] Mazzucato, M. (2016). From market fixing to market-creating: a new framework for innovation policy, *Industry and Innovation*, 23(2), 140-156.
[104] Ansell, C., Gash, A. (2008). Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(4), 543–571.

collaborative process is continued until the outcomes are reached. The model is recognising the impact of long-term factors that can foster or delay the participation process, such as previous cooperation experience and knowledge, also, the impact of institutional design and facilitative leadership are included as important factors that can have significant effects on the success or failure of the decision-making process. In their conclusions, Chris Ansell and Alison Gash[105] emphasized that the three main contingencies that could affect the collaboration process are time, trust, and interdependence.

Laurie Laybourn-Langton and Michael Jacobs emphasized that modern economic history should be analysed from the perspective of the development of the politico-economic paradigms which "generally encompass political/economic goals, analytical/theoretical frameworks for understanding the functioning of economies and societies, narratives which describe and justify the goals and analytical framework, as well as economic and social policies, based on the analytical framework, that seek to achieve specific goals"[106], suggesting that there is noticeable international interest in changing the current neoliberal economic model to sustainable and inclusive growth. In the European Union that is noticeable in the development process of the European Green Deal strategy[107] aiming to make the EU to be climate neutral by 2050 and stating that one of the action areas is support to the innovation process in the industry. Hence, there are economic sectors that need careful policy and special support from the public administration. Support is especially needed for sectors with high national value where private businesses not always are able or motivated to invest time and money, for example, research and development (R&D), digital transformation, sustainable economy, or social entrepreneurship. In the study of social enterprises was confirmed the importance of public mechanisms "as a key factor in the development of social enterprises, which is characteristic for social entrepreneurship in the European context"[108], emphasizing such supportive elements as financial tools and different services (consultancy, training, information). Daniel Smith analysed long-term data from companies that have received Advanced Technology Program funding from the government concluding that "there is significant reason to believe that government R&D subsidies do generally have a positive impact on the growth of the firms that receive them" [109], hence, there is a need for government to subsidize private R&D because most companies are not able to invest in that themselves. Similarly, David Audretsch and colleagues

[105] Ansell, C., Gash, A. (2008). Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(4), 543–571.

[106] Laybourn-Langton, L., Jacobs, M. (2018). Paradigm Shifts in Economic Theory and Policy. *Intereconomics*, 53, 113–118.

[107] European Commission. (2021). A European Green Deal - Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

[108] Pacut, A. (2020). Drivers toward Social Entrepreneurs Engagement in Poland: An Institutional Approach. *Administrative Sciences*, 10(1), 5.

[109] Smith, D. (2020). The Effects of Federal Research and Development Subsidies on Firm Commercialization Behavior. *Research Policy*, 49 (7), 104003.

pointed out that "policies can create the necessary conditions to increase the likelihood of innovative start-ups being created"[110]. Pedro López-Rubio and colleagues emphasized that countries technological dynamics are influenced by a wide range of processes - such as knowledge, skills, demand, finance and institutions, thus also National Innovation Systems (NIS) can be different and policies that work in one country might not be suitable to another, however, results of their research suggest that "developed countries with knowledge-based economies and learning economies focus strongly on NIS research to foster economic growth, competitiveness and diversification"[111], hence, public administration must seek to develop appropriate National Innovation System that is helping economic growth. Mariana Mazzucato supported a shift in the innovation policy suggesting that "the state's ability and willingness to take risks, embodied in transformational changes, requires an organizational culture and policy capacity that welcomes the possibility of failure and experimentation"[112], thus the possible failures should be seen as learning opportunities that can also be financed by the state. Thanti Mthanti and Kalu Ojah[113] used data from 93 countries to calculate Entrepreneurial orientation as a construct that covered risk-taking, innovativeness and proactiveness concluding that governments, who wish to promote economic growth and foster entrepreneurship should support entry of firms with Entrepreneurial orientation and support existing firms with high Entrepreneurial orientation behaviour.

Partly as an answer to challenges emphasized by the COVID-19 crisis, currently as one of the topical fields for businesses has become digital transformation and adaptation to digital technologies. Thus, also here supportive policies from public administration are needed to foster the digital growth of the business environment. Especially that is important for the small and medium-sized enterprises, because "acquiring specific information, making informed business decisions, implementing, evaluating, and improving digital business models are regularly out of reach for SMEs"[114], thus public administration should develop specific policy instruments that can help penetrate knowledge filters and foster digitalization of small and medium-sized enterprises. That must be considered also in the context of the national business environment - although small and medium-sized enterprises as individual entities usually are making an insignificant share of country`s economy all together they are the main actors, thus supportive public policy can make a significant change. In the study of relations between the institutional background and the innovative

---

[110] Audretsch, D., Colombelli, A., Grilli, L., Minola, T., Rasmussen, E. (2020). Innovative start-ups and policy initiatives. *Research Policy*, 49(10), 104027.

[111] López-Rubio, P., Roig-Tierno, N., Mas-Verdú, F. (2021). Assessing the Origins, Evolution and Prospects of National Innovation Systems. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-020-00712-7

[112] Mazzucato, M. (2016). From market fixing to market-creating: a new framework for innovation policy, *Industry and Innovation*, 23(2), 140-156.

[113] Mthanti, T., Ojah, K. (2017). Entrepreneurial orientation (EO): Measurement and policy implications of entrepreneurship at the macroeconomic level. *Research Policy*, 47, 724-739.

[114] Proeger, T., Runst, P. (2019). Digitization and Knowledge Spillover Effectiveness — Evidence from the "German Mittelstand". *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 11, 1509–1528.

performance in 152 countries for the period from 2007 to 2017 it was concluded that for most of the countries it would take a very long time to reach the countries that for now have the best performance in the world, thus "the only way for countries to accelerate the process of improving their innovation performance is through structural reforms that push for a faster change in their institutional background to transform institutions that hinder innovation into institutions that promote innovation"[115]. Thus, from the public administration rapid solutions are needed and to foster the appropriate development process it is necessary that institutions have a full comprehension of the needs that the businesses are having. In the study of digitization of SMEs in Germany it was concluded that "SMEs across markets can achieve high levels of digitization and yield the respective increases in productivity, competitiveness, and growth. Therefore, institutionalized support aimed at penetrating knowledge filter for digitization measures should not be limited to specific sectors or firm sizes but should be open to the full spectrum of SME activity"[116]. Public administration can have a better comprehension of the business environment if institutions have an open dialogue with all stakeholders, not only large lobby organisations and business associations but also small and medium-sized enterprises, individual entrepreneurs and self-employed. Thus, policies that are developed to regulate the business environment and foster growth will be in favour of a larger part of citizens – individuals and entrepreneurs.

Citizen participation in the decision-making process cannot be an occasional or self-organised process, public administration has to consider the best possible participation methods and organise the process in the manner that most of the society is informed about their participation opportunities. Thus, citizens become an important part of the decision-making process or, according to the citizen-centric governance approach, they should be treated even as the main actors. That means to consider the role of citizens in all stages of the decision-making process - design, delivery, implementation and also evaluation, achieving that "by directly involving citizens in decision-making processes and by collecting and analysing data that can be used both to evaluate the performance of policies and services against people's needs and expectations and to anticipate these needs"[117]. Transparency of government processes is providing access not only to information that is needed for the decision-making process but also to information that is helping to evaluate the success of the policy implementation. Regular analysis of the success of previous policies can provide more reasonable argumentation in the future decision-making process. Anna Wesselink and her colleagues have pointed out to evidence-based policy as the preferred way how public

[115] Kafka, K. I., Kostis, P. C., Petrakis, P. E. (2021). Institutional Effects on Innovation and the Requirements for Structural Reforms. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-020-00705-6

[116] Proeger, T., Runst, P. (2019). Digitization and Knowledge Spillover Effectiveness — Evidence from the "German Mittelstand". *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 11, 1509–1528.

[117] OECD. (2019). Government at a Glance 2019. http://www.oecd.org/gov/government-at-a-glance-22214399.htm

institutions can ensure quality in the decision-making process, however, they also indicated the problematics of the evidence-based policy: "Rather than a single problem and only a single policy-maker concerned with solving it, it is more likely that a number of participants will be involved and that they will have distinct, overlapping and perhaps conflicting views on both the nature of the problem and of the sort of knowledge most appropriately mobilised in determining a response"[118]. Thus, the challenge arises how and when the justification and results of policy should be measured and when public administration is deciding which variables should be measured to confirm the results of the policy. In the ideal situation, variables should be decided already at the development stage. In reality that is not always the case, it is also possible that there is not provided a concept of how and when the result of the implemented policy will be ensured. Therefore, transparency of the process and engagement of stakeholders are crucial factors that can confirm that decisions are made with strong consideration and for the benefit of society and businesses.

However, public administration must find ways to motivate citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) to participate in the decision-making process. Voluntary business-government information sharing is possible but "it is essential for there to be a government organisation with a clear view and vision as to why additional business data would bring benefits"[119], nevertheless, public institutions must identify not only their own benefits but also possible gains for businesses that could be emphasized to engage them in such cooperation with government institutions. Nowadays, when public administration theoretically can find technical solutions how to engage citizens in almost all stages of the decision-making process, there is a need not only to increase the importance and value of citizens opinion but also to change the public rhetoric how institutions are speaking about citizens. Hence, to affirm citizens that they are an important part of the decision-making process it should also be emphasized in public messages – that citizens are equal collaborators of the decision-making process, not just clients of the public administration or mere recipients of the policies that are solely designed by the public administration.

1.4. Public administration`s relations with citizens in the Digital era

In the 21st century, the digital environment is offering citizens larger opportunities for communication and cooperation. Individuals can become entrepreneurs faster and easier, also they can promote their businesses and reach the global market. Citizens can interact with public administration in the digital environment. This opportunity could be used by citizens also to participate in the decision-making process of public administration. However, it is the responsibility

---

[118] Wesselink, A., Colebatch, H., Pearce, W. (2014). Evidence and policy: discourses, meanings and practices. *Policy Sciences*, 47(4), 339-344.
[119] Rukanova, B., Tan, Y., Huiden, R., Ravulakollu, A., Grainger, A., Heijmann, F. (2020). A framework for voluntary business-government information sharing. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(4), 101501.

of public administration to provide opportunities that citizens can use to participate in the decision-making process. Either they are individuals who are concerned about the environment or the future of their family, or entrepreneurs that are interested in a supportive national business environment for their commercial interests. Alex Ingram and colleagues pointed out that the Open government model is introducing better participation opportunities for non-profit or private sector organizations and is particularly focused on individual citizens as "open government is explicitly designed to be influenced by a broad array of new actors many of who would be considered traditionally marginal actors"[120]. The development of the digital environment has significantly impacted public administration and the decision-making process. Olfa Belkahla Driss and colleagues[121] after the study of *Facebook* groups confirmed that institutions can use citizens input from social media in the policy cycle, especially in the problem definition, policy modelling and policy evaluation stage. Also, Lucio Todisco and colleagues have pointed out that "the public sector's digital transformation is changing not only the relationship between the public administration and citizens but also the decision-making processes of public administration"[122], considering, that use of social media in the public sector is providing three main groups of outcomes: accountability and trust; consultation, deliberation and satisfaction; and community building, that all are helping citizens to become more informed and involved in the decision-making process. Similarly, transparency, collaboration and e-participation are three pillars that are emphasized by Emad Abu-Shanab[123] as the most crucial characteristics of the open government.

There are various reasons why citizens are not motivated or cannot participate in the decision-making process. As it was structured by Sidney Verba and his colleagues in the Civic voluntarism model, citizens are not participating, because "they can`t; they don`t want to; or nobody asked" [124]. Applying those reasons to the digital environment of the 21st century, it is possible to provide digital solutions for the most common reasons (see Table 1.3.), lowering the impact of the reasons and fostering citizen participation. Still, not all of the solutions can provide immediate effect, for example, publishing infographics, case studies, local examples and statistics on social media to foster citizens comprehension of democracy can take time until the positive results are achieved. Therefore, it is crucial that representatives of the public administration have a comprehension of the

[120] Ingrams, A., Piotrowski, S., Berliner, D. (2020). Learning from Our Mistakes: Public Management Reform and the Hope of Open Government. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 3(4), 257–272.

[121] Driss, O. B., Mellouli, S., Trabelsi, Z. (2019). From citizens to government policy-makers: Social media data analysis. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(3), 560-570.

[122] Todisco, L., Tomo, A., Canonico, P., Mangia, G., Sarnacchiaro, P. (2020). Exploring social media usage in the public sector: Public employees' perceptions of ICT's usefulness in delivering value added. *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences*, Page 100858, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2020.100858

[123] Abu-Shanab, E. A. (2015). Reengineering the open government concept: An empirical support for a proposed model. *Government Information Quarterly*, 32(4), 453-463.

[124] Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

importance to communicate with citizens in the digital environment in a manner that could gradually motivate citizens to participate in the decision-making process.

Table 1.3. **Aspects that are limiting citizen participation and factors that can impact this limitation**

Reasons not to participate in the decision-making process	Factors that can impact the reasons	Digital solutions that can foster participation
Trust that everything would happen without their involvement	Personal interest in the policy matter	Access to information about topics that are discussed (institutions home page, social media posts, participation portal, smartphone application)
Lack of comprehension of democracy and the decision-making process	Information about participation opportunities and significance	Receiving information in social media (infographics, case studies, local examples, statistics)
Do not have time for the participation process	Better organisation of the participation process	Smartphone applications or other direct communication activities
Do not believe that participation matters	Learning about examples of previous situations when citizen participation has made a significant impact	Case studies or local examples that are described in social media or the home page of the institution
No one has asked for their opinion	Reaching out to citizens with personal address and motivating them to participate	Two-way communication on social media, personal invitation to participation portal or via smart-phone application
Cannot access or use existing opportunities for participation	Comprehension from the organiser of the participation process what are the obstacles and ability to remove them	Digital participation as a solution to physical obstacles (time, distance, accessibility of environment)
Is not interested in existing opportunities for participation	Providing new opportunities (if there is comprehension of what type of opportunities would be interesting for participants)	Making participation process as a game or as easy as possible. (smartphone applications, short surveys on social media or easily accessible participation portals)
Do not have information to make a competent decision	Access to information (when is clarified what information is missing)	Access to open data and statistics. Information in simple language on the institutions home page.
Do not want to put in the effort to participate	Personal interest in the policy matter, convenient participation opportunities	Smartphone application, short surveys and participation as a game.

Source: Author's construction based on Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., Brady, H. E. (1995).

To foster citizen participation, it is important that institutions are also actively disseminating information about participation opportunities. As there is only a small part of the society that is actively seeking contact with institutions, the rest of society must be reached by institutions and motivated to participate in the decision-making process. Preferably, public institutions should reach citizens in the places where they are residing. Nowadays having all information published on the institutions home page is less than enough – there is a need for more proactive communication and innovative participation opportunities to reach citizens and engage them in the decision-making process. In the 21st century, that means to be also present in the digital environment where citizens are spending a significant part of their daily life. As Manuel Castells pointed out, that is the sphere where social changes are fostered by companies and non-state actors, thus "...it is essential for state actors ... to relate to civil society not only around institutional mechanisms and procedures of political representation but in public debates in the global public sphere.".[125] Also, Bonsón and his colleagues emphasized the opportunity of participation that social media can provide: "By forming

---

[125] Castells, M. (2008). The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks, and Global Governance. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616(1), 78-93 (Page – 90).

or joining existing online communities that discuss issues of relevance to local policy, service delivery, and regulation, local governments and their officers will become more informed, responsive, innovative, and citizen-centric"[126]. Daniel Halpern and colleagues[127] pointed out that social media might affect the participation as it increases exposure to information about participation opportunities; information shared by others help to learn about political issues; and citizens can be contacted or become followers of political organisation. Information published by institutions on social media can reach citizens at the same time when it is published. Thomas A. Bryer has formulated this situation from an optimistic viewpoint: "Once an internet connection is available, it does not take much effort or time to log in to a city Facebook page or Twitter feed. Thus, a greater number of citizens can be engaged in the governmental and civic process"[128]. Taewoo Nam pointed out that "technology is critical, but it is a tool, not a strategy"[129] and suggested that main strategies a public institution can use for citizen sourcing to acquire the wisdom of crowds are contests, wikis, social networking, and social voting. A study by Saman Arshad and Sobia Khurram[130] demonstrated that information published by institutions on social media has a positive effect on public administrations relations with citizens - the more the institution publishes updated and relevant information the more the followers believe that institution is transparent in its activities, also activity and presence on social media is signalling to followers that the institution is responsive, hence - active dissemination of information helps to develop trust among institutions social media followers. Similarly, a study by Lisa Schmidthuber and colleagues indicated that "the feeling of "having a say" in government increases citizen trust in the public sector" [131] and that citizens have more trust in the public sector in countries where government openness is more successfully ensured.

Brian D. Loader and Dan Mercea discussed opportunities of online communication to foster citizen participation in politics, pointing out that this viewpoint seems overoptimistic if seen from the perspective of traditional definition on democratic activity, they encouraged to "move beyond the traditional engagement with mainstream politics, such as voting, party membership, petitioning representatives and the like, and adopt a more fluid conception of democratic citizenship" that could

[126] Bonsón, E., Torres, L., Royo, S., Flores, F. (2012). Local e-government 2.0: Social media and corporate transparency in municipalities. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(2), 123-132.
[127] Halpern, D., Valenzuela, S., Katz, J. E. (2017). We Face, I Tweet: How Different Social Media Influence Political Participation through Collective and Internal Efficacy. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 22(6), 320-336.
[128] Bryer, A. T. (2013). Designing Social Media Strategies for Effective Citizen Engagement. A Case Example and Model. *National Civic Review*, 102(1), 43-50.
[129] Nam, T. (2012). Suggesting frameworks of citizen-sourcing via Government 2.0. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(1), 12–20.
[130] Arshad, S., Khurram, S. (2020). Can government's presence on social media stimulate citizens' online political participation? Investigating the influence of transparency, trust, and responsiveness. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(3), 101486
[131] Schmidthuber, L., Ingrams, A., Hilgers, D. (2020). Government Openness and Public Trust: The Mediating Role of Democratic Capacity. *Public Administration Review*, https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13298

be more appropriate to contemporary society.[132] In the study on innovative practices in the Netherlands, it was concluded that technology provides new practices of co-production and "new media lower the costs of large scale and dispersed interactions and therefore enable practices of co-production that could hardly be created offline"[133]. Also, Sorin Dan Şandor in his study emphasized that nowadays in any reforms the role of technology should be considered, because "Good implementation of new technologies is one of the conditions for successful reforms"[134]. Hence, nowadays institutions should be ready to use the digital environment not only for better, faster, and cheaper facilitation of conventional processes but also for communication with citizens and their engagement in the decision-making process. Furthermore, it is not enough that institutions are barely using new technologies because others are doing that, institutions have to become proactive innovators that are constantly searching for new methods and opportunities how digital environment can be used in favour of public administration and democratic processes.

Active online communication could help public institutions to reach out to youth and involve them in the decision-making process. As youth are active online, social media might be the place where they can be addressed by institutions. Delia Dumitrica with the case study in Canada confirmed that social media can be used to attract youth and encourage their participation in elections as their engagement is driven by three factors: "the feeling of being part of a community, the ability to access and share information, and the possibility of engaging in personal communication with politicians and other citizens"[135]. Also, Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic in her article about youth and political communication[136] supported the view that the internet can be used to engage youth in democratic processes. Similarly, the authors of the survey analysis of *Facebook* Groups use observed that "While entertainment-purposed Groups users do not contribute to users' participation in political actions, information-purposed users are likely to be involved in political events through friend networking"[137], hence, *Facebook* has a significant role in facilitating youth engagement in civic and political activities. Also, results of the study about the use of social networking sites for mobilizing activists in the USA, China and Latin America supported the notion that social media help people to be more active in political and civic arenas and help promote dialogue, however, authors of the study emphasized regional differences of citizens thinking and

[132] Loader, B. D., Mercea, D. (2012). *Social media and democracy: innovations in participatory politics*. London, New York: Routledge, 275p.

[133] Meijer, A. (2012). Co-production in an Information Age: Individual and Community Engagement Supported by New Media. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 23(4), 1156-1172.

[134] Şandor, S. D. (2012). ICT and Public Administration Reforms. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, 36, 155-164.

[135] Dumitrica, D. (2016). Imagining engagement: Youth, social media, and electoral processes. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 22(1), 35–53.

[136] Vesnic-Alujevic, L. (2013). Young people, social media and engagement. *European View*, 12(2), 255-261.

[137] Park, N., Kee, K. E., Valenzuela, S. (2009). Being Immersed in Social Networking Environment: Facebook Groups, Uses and Gratifications, and Social Outcomes. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*. 12(6), 729-733.

acting as: "activists in China and Latin America assigned more importance to the usefulness of social networking sites in fostering debate, while survey respondents in the United States were significantly more confident in their power to solve society's problems"[138]. Also, in the study of *Facebook* groups it was concluded that: "Online political group membership is positively related to offline political participation" [139]. Similarly, Homero Gil de Zúñiga and his colleagues suggested that "social media social capital is empirically distinct from offline social capital"[140] and social media social capital tends to predict offline social capital more strongly than the other way around. Specifically looking into the use of *Facebook* for citizen participation researchers[141] separated ten different types of participation activities: seeking information, checking on others, following links, posting messages, promoting events on social issues, appealing for donations, calling for volunteers, holding discussions on social issues, scheduling, and lobbying and advocating. Thus, demonstrating that there are various options for how citizens use social media for participation. Hence, it is undoubtful that nowadays digital solutions have become an important part of the participation process that helps to connect active citizens and engage faster in activities.

In the development of digital participation opportunities, it is possible to learn from other countries and governments. Results from several studies and analysis of the citizens' online habits are suggesting that the use of the internet for citizen participation could deliver long-term benefits. Positive aspects of the internet and *Web 2.0* to citizen participation was observed in the study of citizens coproduction in the USA pointing out that it "enhance and expand the viability of and capacity for citizen coproduction, not only in traditional citizen-to-government arrangements but also in arrangements whereby the government informs, assists, and enables private actions or whereby citizens assist one another, with IT replacing government as vehicle for collective action"[142]. Therefore, institutions must be part of the new digital communication order to be able to impact processes and stay in touch with citizens. In the study about national election campaign in Sweden, it was concluded that "use of social media for political purposes can increase political interest and offline political participation over time"[143]. As well as social media can be used to organise offline events and foster citizen participation in various civic and political activities.

---

[138] Harp. D., Bachmann, I., Guo, L. (2012). The Whole Online World Is Watching: Profiling Social Networking Sites and Activists in China, Latin America, and the United States. *International Journal of Communication*, 6, 298–321.

[139] Conroy, M., Feezell, J. T., Guerrero, M. (2012). Facebook and political engagement: A study of online political group membership and offline political engagement. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(5), 1535–1546.

[140] Zúñiga, H. G., Barnidge, M., Scherman, A. (2017). Social media social capital, offline social capital, and citizenship: exploring asymmetrical social capital effects. *Political Communication*, 34(1), 44-68.

[141] Warren, M. A., Sulaiman, A., Jaafar, I. N. (2014). Facebook: The enabler of online civic engagement for activists. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 32, 284-289.

[142] Linders, D. (2012). From e-government to we-government: Defining a typology for citizen coproduction in the age of social media. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(4), 446–454 (Page 451).

[143] Holt, K., Shehata, A., Stromback, J., Ljungberg, E. (2013). Age and the effects of news media attention and social media use on political interest and participation: Do social media function as leveller? *European Journal of Communication*, 28(1), 19-34.

Results of the study about political engagement and social media in the Czech Republic suggested that "those who have been politically active online during the election campaign are also more likely to vote in elections"[144] and they are also more often engaging in offline conversations about politics, participate in demonstrations and are more eager to sign petitions. Similarly, the results of the study about British politician Facebook and Twitter followers suggested that "the social media support for the main political parties in the UK is a significant force"[145]. In the study of an online participation platform in the Netherlands it was concluded that it can be used as a tool to improve inclusivity in citizen participation, emphasizing that "recruitment messages can affect whether citizens participate in online platforms"[146]. Also in the study of the Challenge.gov platform in the USA, it was concluded that "citizens have been active participants in the platform, showing that when given an opportunity, citizens will contribute to the advancement of democracy and the vitality of public institutions"[147]. Hence, good results can be achieved if the online opportunities are used correctly. Therefore, the development of digital participation is a way how public institutions in the 21st century can make a large step closer to citizens, at the same time providing both services for participation and also confirming that they care about citizens and their opinion.

1.5. Digital transformation as a planned process

One of the largest challenges of the 21st century is the growing impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) and the digital environment. The necessity to adjust to the new digital situation is one of the top priorities both for the private sector and the public sector. International experience demonstrates that the digital environment could also be used to foster relations between public administration and citizens, however, to ensure that digital transformation is successful, it must be well planned and comprehensive process rather than a chaotic implementation of various and sometimes even conflicting digital solutions.

Digital transformation is a complex process that is affecting many fields and is a major structural change for public administration. Alex Ingrams and colleagues pointed to three types of barriers that can affect structural changes: institutional large forces, the influence of global powers, and economic and technological barriers, emphasizing that "strong structural change is hard to achieve even if new leaders of new reforms claim that fundamental changes are underway. That is,

[144] Štětka, V., Mazák, J. (2014). Whither slacktivism? Political engagement and social media use in the 2013 Czech Parliamentary elections. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 8(3), article 7.
[145] Bartlett, J., Bennett, S., Birnie, R., Wibberley, S. (2013). Virtually Members: The Facebook and Twitter Followers of UK Political Parties. [http://www.demos.co.uk/files/Virtually_Members.pdf?1366125743 (2017.13.06)].
[146] Berg van den, A. C., Giest, S. N., Groeneveld, S. M., Kraaij, W. (2020). Inclusivity in Online Platforms: Recruitment Strategies for Improving Participation of Diverse Sociodemographic Groups. *Public Administration Review*, 00(00), 1–12. DOI: 10.1111/puar.13215
[147] Mergel, I., Desouza, K. C. (2013). Implementing Open Innovation in the Public Sector: The Case of Challenge.gov. *Public Administration Review*, 73(6), 882-890.

despite changes in government rhetoric and attention-grabbing policy initiatives, the old powers and habits of institutions and groups stay in charge as the most significant external drivers of the reforms"[148]. Thus, digital transformation must be a planned process to lower barriers and identify risks. To ensure that the interests and needs of citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) are well considered in the transformation process, also citizen participation should be planned and directed using all available participation opportunities. In the case of digital transformation that would be also logical to acquire digital participation opportunities not only as a modern method but also as a solution that could help to gather and process a larger amount of information. As Lars Hasselblad Torres emphasized, effective governance depends on the management of knowledge and information because: "when hundreds, sometimes thousands of citizens, are engaged in information and knowledge building exercises in service of decision-making, the careful application of information and communication technologies is a critical factor of success"[149]. Hence, use of technologies in the public sector must be seen as an essential component in the innovation process, as nowadays "is difficult to think of a public problem or government service that does not involve ICT in some substantial"[150]. At the same time in the study by Ines Mergel and colleagues it was concluded that "the demands for digital transformation in public administration are mostly driven by external rather than internal demands, in particular through changes observed in the organizations' environment, technology, and requests made by stakeholders"[151]. Stakeholders – society and businesses are already using digital solutions and are ready to use them also for cooperation with institutions. Therefore, when developing digital relations with citizens, their habits should be considered to achieve results appropriate to contemporary digital situation.

The development of a digital democracy environment should be a gradual process, still, it also must be thoughtfully decided from which side digital development should be started and into which direction it should be continued. In the study of collaborative governance models was pointed out the necessity for public institutions to be able to develop their digital democracy capacity: "The main challenge in smart cities is the movement from experimentation and pilots to large-scale usage of e-participation applications and, therefore, from selected stakeholders' participation to open participation of citizens"[152]. Similarly, in a study of parliaments and their communication on social

---

[148] Ingrams, A., Piotrowski, S., Berliner, D. (2020). Learning from Our Mistakes: Public Management Reform and the Hope of Open Government. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 3(4), 257–272.
[149] Torres, L. H. (2007). Citizen sourcing in the public interest. *Knowledge Management for Development Journal*, 3(1), 134-145.
[150] Vries, de H., Tummers, L., Bekkers, V. (2018). The Diffusion and Adoption of Public Sector Innovations: A Meta-Synthesis of the Literature. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 1(3), 159–176.
[151] Mergel, I., Edelmann, N., Haug, N. (2019). Defining digital transformation: Results from expert interviews. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(4), 101385.
[152] Bolívar, M. P. R. (2018). Creative citizenship: the new wave for collaborative environments in smart cities. *Academia Revista Latinoamericana de Administración*, 31(1), 277-302.

media, authors observed that the use of social media by parliaments is still in its infancy, however, they suggested that there are signs that promise improvement in the future[153]. The study about social media and civic participation in Malaysia concluded that "social media have the potential and the ability to promote online civic participation"[154]. The study of social media in the Italian public sector concluded that there is a need for "more tangible and actual two-way symmetrical communication" as citizens believe that "public institutions are managing their Facebook Pages in a way that is far from fulfilling the expectations of their fans"[155]. Hence, growth in citizen participation rates cannot be achieved if public administration is ignoring or not taking seriously the internet and the digital environment as nowadays it has the potential to become as one of the core places for citizens and institutions communication and collaboration.

The development of the digital environment in the public sector is usually described in the framework of e-governance or e-government. Jean Damascene Twizeyimana and Annika Andersson have conducted content analysis about the value that the development of e-government could bring to citizens. They identified several aspects of the public value of e-government, such as "improved public services; improved administrative efficiency; Open government capabilities; improved ethical behaviour and professionalism; improved trust and confidence in government; and improved social value and well-being"[156].Those aspects are emphasizing that the government must consider the public value in the implementation of their processes and also recognises open government as a concept that is important in the design of e-government. With the study of Web 2.0 integration in the EU local governments, Bonsón and his colleagues[157] recognised that the use of internet technologies can give positive improvement on public sector transparency, policymaking, innovations of public services, knowledge management and cross-agency cooperation. If public institutions desire to engage citizens in the dialogue and increase their civic and political participation, they should be the ones who are making the first step. Thus, public institutions should not only be represented in social media, but they also need to be proactive and purposefully provide citizens with participation opportunities. One of the digital solutions can be the use of participation platforms. According to a study by Luciana Cingolani "governments' institutional commitment towards online platforms and e-participation is critical for digital government's maturity and

---

[153] Leston-Bandeira, C., Bender, D. (2013). How deeply are parliaments engaging on social media? *Information Polity*, 18(4), 281-297.

[154] Warren, M. A., Sulaiman, A., Jaafar, I. N. (2014). Social media effects on fostering online civic engagement and building citizen trust and trust in institutions. *Government Information Quarterly*, 31, 291–301.

[155] Lovari, A., Parisi, L. (2015). Listening to digital publics. Investigating citizens' voices and engagement within Italian municipalities' Facebook Pages. *Public Relations Review*, 41, 205–213.

[156] Twizeyimana, J. D., Andersson, A. (2019). The public value of E-Government – A literature review. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(2), 167-178.

[157] Bonsón, E., Torres, L., Royo, S., Flores, F. (2012) Local e-government 2.0: Social media and corporate transparency in municipalities. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(2), 123-132.

success" [158] and government-to-citizen platforms are the ones that have the biggest probability to survive for a longer time period if compared to citizen-to-government type (the greatest risk of platform termination) and citizen-to-citizen platforms.

The digital environment cannot be seen as the only and ideal solution to the democratic deficit that could engage all citizens in the decision-making process. However, it could help to ease and speed up the participation process, as well as make it available to citizens that are living remote from cities where public administration resides and make it available to disabled people and people with health conditions or impairments. "The change in the relationship between public administration and citizens implies that citizens have a more active part: they are not just seen as a client of public administrations, but as a partner that helps to transform public sector organizations by actively participating in public service delivery enabled by new technologies"[159]. In the study about citizens` intention to use and recommend e-participation Mijail Naranjo-Zolotov and colleagues[160] emphasized citizen empowerment as a core determinant for e-participation, looking to empowerment from four dimensions:

- competence or self-efficacy, defined as the degree to which a citizen can perform an e-participation activity with sufficient required skills;
- meaning or individual judgment of the value of an e-participation action;
- Impact of e-participation that is producing the effects or influence intended by the citizen;
- and self-determination or choice to become responsible for an outcome of e-participation.

Successfully designed and implemented digital communication strategy should take into account technical opportunities that social media are offering, especially opportunities for two-way communication because "active usage of and provision of quality information on social media yields many positive outcomes such as enhanced perception of transparency and responsiveness as well as increased trust of their followers in functioning of the agency" [161]. The unsuccessful use of social media is easily visible and can even repel citizens. In the study about the use of social media in Canadian and USA cities was observed that they viewed social media as a way to inform and communicate with citizens in a "one-way or broadcast style" and in the cases when "two-way" approach existed, "the focus was on service requests, issue management and the need to respond to

[158] Cingolani, L. (2020). The survival of open government platforms: Empirical insights from a global sample. *Government Information Quarterly*, 38(1), 101522.

[159] Mergel, I., Edelmann, N., Haug, N. (2019). Defining digital transformation: Results from expert interviews. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(4), 101385.

[160] Zolotov-Naranjo, M., Oliveira, T., Casteleyn, S. (2018). Citizens' intention to use and recommend e-participation: Drawing upon UTAUT and citizen empowerment. *Information Technology & People*, 32(2), 364-386.

[161] Arshad, S., Khurram, S. (2020). Can government's presence on social media stimulate citizens' online political participation? Investigating the influence of transparency, trust, and responsiveness. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(3), 101486

comments and conversations in a timely fashion"[162]. With their study on how the presidential candidates used Twitter authors concluded that political candidates are not using it to create meaningful dialogue with their followers, although "increasing dialogue would make the candidates seem more authentic and also has the potential to increase support for a candidate because it will allow followers to feel more connected to the candidate"[163]. Similarly, a study from Italy analysed social media activities of municipalities and citizen motivation to become fans of municipalities' Facebook pages, concluding that "citizens believe that public institutions are managing their Facebook pages in a way that is far from fulfilling the expectations of their fans. This problem could be the result of a general lack of strategy and vision among Italian public administrations' PR practitioners."[164]. Public administration can learn digital communication from businesses that have accustomed to make their information attractive to citizens. At the same time, it should be considered, that information in the institutions websites contain distinct characteristics compared to private counterparts. Taejun David Lee and colleagues pointed out three main aspects: for private sector communication is mostly associated with marketing and customer services but government communication is obliged by the values of transparency and accountability to its citizens. Second, private information is targeting specific groups of potential customers, but government information is for the general public. The third aspect – the scope of businesses is connected only with the product/service-related information but government communication "deals with information from all sectors in society and on both outcomes and processes of decision-making"[165]. The use of the digital environment without considerations of the communication style and methods that are suited to the specific information channel can even make damage. Therefore, from the institutions, a well-considered plan is needed to address citizens and stick out in the overall flow of information.

Foreign experience often suggests that the use of social media as a citizen participation tool should be done by firstly developing communication strategies. For the USA agencies, there are recognised four input mechanisms that are influencing the decision to adopt social media: "Observations of citizens use of social media; Passive observations of highly innovative departments and agencies; Active interaction with peers; and formal guidelines developed by lead agencies"[166]. In the study of the European Parliament`s Facebook feed, Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic

---

[162] Evans, L., Franks, P., Chen, H. M. (2018). Voices in the cloud: social media and trust in Canadian and US local governments. *Records Management Journal*, 28(1), 18-46.

[163] Adams, A., McCorkindale, T. (2013). Dialogue and transparency: A content analysis of how the 2012 presidential candidates used twitter. *Public Relations Review*, 39(4), 357-359.

[164] Lovari, A., Parisi, L. (2015). Listening to digital publics. Investigating citizens' voices and engagement within Italian municipalities' Facebook Pages. *Public Relations Review*, 41, 205–213.

[165] Lee, T. D., Lee-Geiller, S., Lee, B. (2020). Are pictures worth a thousand words? The effect of information presentation type on citizen perceptions of government websites. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(3), 101482

[166] Mergel, I. (2013). Social media adoption and resulting tactics in the U.S. federal government. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30(4), 123–130 (Page – 125).

suggested that European Parliament`s social media entries can be grouped into four clusters: persuasive posts; explicative posts; entertaining posts; and informative posts[167], thus suggesting that there is recognisable some kind of communication strategy, planning or concept what information should be published to reach a particular audience. Darren G. Lilleker and Karolina Koc-Michalska studied communication strategies of the members of the European Parliament, identifying that there were three communication strategies used for online communication with citizens - informational service-oriented home style, personalised impression management, and participatory communication strategy. Results of their study suggested that "participatory communication strategy may be the mode of the future"[168]. Proper social media strategies could also help to foster online participation, for example "pull or networking strategy, where citizens could be encouraged to provide input and they can be assured that their input will actually influence policy decisions made by the agency"[169]. Similarly, Staci M. Zavattaro and Arthur J. Sementelli advocated for clever use of digital opportunities, emphasizing that "platforms should be part of a strategic governance program and not simply offered for the sake of offering"[170], suggesting that institutions should ensure staff that is providing content and high-quality feedback to the followers.

Moreno and colleagues[171] have compiled recommendations from several studies on how to better communicate with the audience on social media:

- engage in direct and open conversation, addressing the needs and concerns of the public;
- provide an easy-to-use interface for their stakeholders;
- encourage users to return;
- engage in dialogic communication;
- establish clear rules to encourage and facilitate participation;
- and to balance between participation involving openness and community and effectiveness in representing organizational objectives.

Thereby, Moreno and colleagues are indicating that communication should be a planned process and representatives of the institutions should be aware of which communication style and

---

[167] Vesnic-Alujevic, L. (2012). Political communication on Facebook: A case study of the European Parliament profile page for the elections 2009. CM: *Communication Management Quarterly: Časopis za upravljanje komuniciranjem,* 22, 35–54.

[168] Lilleker, D. G., Koc-Michalska, K. (2013). Online Political Communication Strategies: MEPs, E-Representation, and Self-Representation. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 10(2), 190-207.

[169] Arshad, S., Khurram, S. (2020). Can government's presence on social media stimulate citizens' online political participation? Investigating the influence of transparency, trust, and responsiveness. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(3), 101486

[170] Zavattaro, S. M., Sementelli, A. J. (2014). A critical examination of social media adoption in government: Introducing omnipresence. *Government Information Quarterly*, 31(2), 257-264.

[171] Moreno, A., Navarro, C., Tench, R., Zerfass, A. (2015). Does social media usage matter? An analysis of online practices and digital media perceptions of communication practitioners in Europe. *Public Relations Review*, 41, 242–253.

with what purpose they are using to reach stakeholders – society and businesses. It can be one-way or two-way, informal and friendly or traditionally formal and top-down. Nevertheless, to engage with youth on social media traditional communication style is not enough. As Lusoli, Ward and Gibson have pointed out "it will require a demonstration that their participation and communication are valued and listened to" as well as "the dialogue needs to be ongoing, considerably less top-down and less formalised"[172]. Also, Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic has pointed out that social media can be used for attracting citizens and widening participation with the condition that there is two-way communication in this process, "If citizens do not get the impression that what they say is valued and listened to, the online strategy will not be very successful"[173], hence, it is not enough to listen to citizens, institutions must also prove that this information is heard and where it has been or has been not used in the decision-making process. To foster citizens trust in the decision-making process they should be engaged as early as possible – preferably even in the development of the rules how citizen participation should be organised, thus it "may become in itself a participatory process, as it can be negotiated with stakeholder groups"[174]. That could help institutions to gain a better comprehension of how citizens would prefer to participate in the decision-making process and what are their current digital habits and knowledge of the participation process.

Considering that in the world there already are public institutions which are using social media for more than ten years, it is time to start learning from first experiences of digital democracy as they have shoved "the potential of disruptive moments and actions which open the possibilities for some co-construction of networks and platforms where the formation, maintenance and defence of political positions may be played out"[175]. Dennis Linders and colleagues suggested that for countries, that have reached some basic level of e-government for the future development "most guidance will need to be derived from the real-world experiences (and experiments) of leading e-governments -informed by academic insights - so that they may paint the way forward for one another."[176]. It is acceptable that the first implementations of digital democracy were in the form of small-scale projects – trials without prior evidence, but, when looking to the future development it is important that decisions are taken based on facts and evidence. Still, the ability to measure the current success of digital democracy activities often is a challenge for public administration. The study about the use of social media in the USA indicated that one of the reasons for such situation is

---

[172] Lusoli, W., Ward, S., Gibson, R. (2006). (Re)connecting Politics? Parliament, the Public and the Internet. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 59(1), 24–42.

[173] Vesnic-Alujevic, L. (2013). Members of the European Parliament online: The use of social media in political marketing. [http://www.martenscentre.eu/sites/default/files/publication-files/political-marketing-and-social-media.pdf (2017.14.06)].

[174] Stelzle, B., Jannack, A., Noennig, J., N. (2017). Co-Design and Co-Decision: Decision Making on Collaborative Design Platforms. *Procedia Computer Science*, 112, 2435–2444.

[175] Loader, B. D., Mercea, D. (2011). Networking democracy? *Information, Communication & Society*, 14(6), 757-769.

[176] Linders, D., Liao, C. Z., Wang, C. (2018). Proactive e-Governance: Flipping the service delivery model from pull to push in Taiwan. *Government Information Quarterly,* 35(4), S68-S76.

that "government is currently focusing mostly on push techniques and uses social media channels to provide information that is recycled from other government communication channels, such as publications, reports or the website itself" [177], thus, also outcome is measured similarly with mostly raw data, without gaining comprehension how engagement works in the new digital environment. To evaluate the use of social media it is important also to consider the feedback that published information has gained – that can be in likes, shares, commentary or other measurable activity that a particular social media platform or digital environment is offering.

In the development of the digital transformation process, public administration can learn not only from society and business environment but also from academia that can provide a comprehensive understanding of digital democracy which is an internationally widely studied subject and academic interest in it is still growing. N. Bindu and colleagues[178] in the analysis of e-governance research trends concluded that the first phase until 2005 was focusing on information systems and implementation models; the second phase between 2005 and 2009 was focusing on evaluation models; in the third phase from 2009 to 2012 was analysed social networking and multi-channel communication; and in the fourth phase from 2012 onwards focus was on e-democracy, open data, and e-participation. This evolution of research trends is demonstrating that the development of public administrations presence in the digital environment is becoming more and more comprehensive and inevitable. At the same time, that also gives notion of international tendencies and aspects that are currently topical. Methods that are used to study different aspects of digital democracy are various as each situation is unique and different variables and factors can be considered. According to Bryer[179], all studies can be divided into four types:

- studies of citizen use of social media and networking tools for interaction or engagement with government or in political matters;
- studies of the actual use of social media or networking tools;
- conceptual studies that identify relevant theoretical constructs to guide future research;
- reports on the application of the diversity of social media tools with practical recommendations.

Hepu Deng and colleagues[180] have emphasized the importance of public value in e-government and developed a theoretical framework for its evaluation, proposing dimensions that

---

[177] Mergel, I. (2013). A framework for interpreting social media interactions in the public sector. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30(4), 327-334.
[178] Bindu, N., Sankar, C., P., Kumar, K., S. (2019). From conventional governance to e-democracy: Tracing the evolution of e-governance research trends using network analysis tools. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36 (3), 385-399.
[179] Bryer, A. T. (2013). Designing Social Media Strategies for Effective Citizen Engagement. A Case Example and Model. *National Civic Review*, 102(1), 43-50.
[180] Deng, H., Karunasena, K., Xu, W. (2018). Evaluating the performance of e-government in developing countries: A public value perspective. *Internet Research*, 28(1), 169-190.

should be analysed: quality of information; functionalities of e-services; user-orientation; organisational efficiency; openness; responsiveness; equity; self-development; trust; participatory democracy; and environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, Koc-Michalska and her colleagues have considered that there is still a lack of research on the role and effects of Web 2.0. tools "due to the speed of innovation, of the uptake in use, and the relative youth of Web 2.0"[181]. When analysing governments ability to engage with citizens in the digital environment, researchers are suggesting various e-government stage models. According to Hendrik Scholta and his colleagues[182], stage models typically share five stages:

- publication of information on websites;

- communication with citizens via electronic channels;

- offering transaction services online;

- delivery of integrated e-government services;

- and e-democracy to involve citizens in decision-making.

Ines Mergel and Stuart I. Bretschneider have analysed the use of social media in government, suggesting a three-stage model for the organisation of the adaptation process. In the first stage – *intrapreneurship and experimentation* the new technologies are used informally by those who have some previous experience "During this stage, individual intrapreneurs act as change agents and, through the typical communication model, diffuse the technology locally within their organizations". In the second stage - *order from chaos*, to regulate various activities and praxis of multiple intrapreneurs, organizations initiate standard-setting process such as "Intra organizational task forces, steering committees, policy boards, and technical rule-setting processes". In the third stage – *institutionalization*, "the organization has a set of standards, rules, and processes for managing the process and some resources associated with the enforcement of these protocols"[183]. Lee and Kwak with their Open government maturity model suggested that it is important to develop digital presence step-by-step, in five levels:

1) Initial conditions - where institution focuses on cataloguing and broadcasting information to the public, interaction is seldom happening, and social media is almost never used;

2) Data transparency – the institution is publishing relevant data online and sharing it with the public, using also social media for this purpose;

[181] Koc-Michalska, K., Lilleker, D. G., Vedel, T. (2016). Civic political engagement and social change in the new digital age. *New Media & Society*, 18(9), 1807–1816.
[182] Scholta, H., Mertens, W., Kowalkiewicz, M., Becker, J. (2019). From one-stop shop to no-stop shop: An e-government stage model. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(1), 11-26.
[183] Mergel, I., Bretschneider, S. I. (2013). A Three-Stage Adoption Process for Social Media Use in Government. *Public Administration Review*, 73(3), 390-400.

3) Open participation - institution enhances policy decisions and government services by welcoming and utilizing the input of the public, expressive use of social media allows the public to interact with government and there can also become possible digital participation innovations;

4) Open collaboration – the institution is fostering open collaboration among government institutions, the public, and the private sector, ensuring public participation and co-creation;

5) Ubiquitous engagement - public engagement becomes easier and more universally accessible, and government data, public engagement methods, social media tools and government services are seamlessly integrated making one common space for cooperation.

Thus, at the end "Openness becomes a norm for government culture and the public engages in government throughout their entire lifetime"[184]. The model of Lee and Kwak is suggesting that more openness of government is meaning also more public value. At the same time, it must be notified that each level comes with new challenges and risks for public administration.

The contemporary global world is providing many new challenges that governments did not have to face before the invention of the internet and *Web 2.0.* digital solutions. At the same time, it is also clear that those challenges often are common to many countries, hence, there is no need to develop new methods from the sketch – it is possible to learn from foreign experience and also try to find solutions together. That is the case also with the public administration's digital transformation efforts and communication and cooperation with citizens in the digital environment. Here one of the most important lessons from the experience of the public administration institutions and academia is, that digital presence should be strengthened and extended as a planned and gradual process. Either there are three, four or five stages of the strategic model, the main concept is that at the beginning opportunities of the digital environment are used at the basic level, but at the final stage of the model use of all possible opportunities are providing close connection between citizens and public administration, ensuring that citizens can digitally participate in the decision-making process. Therefore, when relations between institutions and citizens are developed in the digital environment, it is important to make the progress gradually to ensure that public institutions and citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) can adapt to the new situation, as well as any sudden complications could be resolved immediately before the further development is continued.

1.6. Challenges of the digital environment

Digital solutions can help to organise citizen participation and do that more easily and faster. At the same time digital environment is not fully diminishing other factors that are influencing citizen participation – both digitally and traditionally, as well as both on the side of public administration and on the side of citizens - individuals and entrepreneurs. It is important to identify

---

[184] Lee, G., Kwak, Y. H. (2012). An Open Government Maturity Model for social media-based public engagement. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(4), 492-503.

those factors and recognise which ones could be solved or eased and which ones are not resolvable by public administration, thus, they just have to be taken into account when designing strategies or guidelines for citizen participation in the decision-making process. Martyn Barrett and Ian Brunton-Smith[185] suggested that those factors can be divided into four large groups: macro contextual factors, demographic factors, proximal social factors, and endogenous psychological factors. On one hand, it is important to understand this variety of factors, on the other hand, from the perspective of public administration, it is essential to identify that only a few of them can be influenced by public institutions. Hence, institutions must ensure that they are well prepared to make an effect on those factors which public institutions can influence when fostering the participation of citizens – individuals and entrepreneurs, in the decision-making process. The level of education is often mentioned as a factor that is affecting citizen participation. However, in the study about blogging and online political participation was concluded that: "it is those with less education who demonstrate more online expressive participation. This suggests that even the politically cynical or disenfranchised may be using the Internet to express their concerns, potentially offering a pathway to participation for those who feel politically disempowered"[186]. Considering citizens digital skills and habits as a factor that is impacting citizens digital participation Jae Bok Lee and Gregory A. Porumbescu emphasized the need for training programs for citizens suggesting that "vital role IT training programs play in promoting e-government use, especially among vulnerable segments of the population"[187], thus looking on the training programs that could help to promote digital participation between disabled and elderly citizens.

The digital environment of the 21st century can help to solve or ease some of the challenges that citizen participation was facing before the development of the internet and smartphones. At the same time, it brings also new challenges that public administration has to face. Digital technology has a crucial impact on the development of public governance and decision-making process, significantly changing situation as "Vastly more data and information are collected, and the insights and issues they reveal can be circulated inside government and civil society ever more quickly, creating continuous pressure"[188]. Institutions must consider not only what information and by what means is made publicly available but also the way how it is organised "when the information is not presented in a reader-friendly manner, the increased information may dilute the significance of

---

[185] Barrett, M., Brunton-Smith, I. (2014). Political and civic engagement and participation: Towards an integrative perspective. *Journal of Civil Society*, 10(1), 5-28.

[186] Zúñiga, H. G., Veenstra, A., Vraga, E., Shah, D. (2010). Digital Democracy: Reimagining Pathways to Political Participation, *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 7(1), 36-51.

[187] Lee, J. B., Porumbescu, G. A. (2019). Engendering inclusive e-government use through citizen IT training Programs, *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(1), 69-76.

[188] Lindquist, E. A, Huse, I. (2017). Accountability and monitoring government in the digital era: Promise, realism and research for digital era governance. *Canadian Public Administration / Administration Publique Du Canada*, 60(4), 627-656.

important policy information of which citizens should be aware"[189]. Similarly, Justin Longo has pointed out that governments have to consider how results of citizens participation are demonstrated in the situation when digital solutions are providing a massive volume of contributions because "providing additional opportunities for participation that then get accumulated in simple counting tables or word clouds may fail to satisfy participants that their contribution was valued"[190]. Thus, the digital environment can help to develop more thoughtful and data-driven decisions, and more easily engage citizens and organisations in the decision-making process. At the same time, data transparency is putting institutions in the spotlight, making them more accountable of their decisions, which is a good aspect for citizens but can become a challenge for institutions.

When fostering citizens digital participation, many problems are the same as for regular face-to-face citizen participation. Similarly like with the traditional participation methods, also with digital participation challenge is to understand factors that could turn one-time and irregular participation in the decision-making process into regular and active participation. In the study about factors that are affecting the continual use of e-government websites and services, researchers[191] suggested five groups of variables: digital literacy, e-service marketing efficiency, e-service quality, compulsory e-service utilisation, and public staff assistance in regards to the transformation of e-service. One of the new challenges in digital participation is individual citizens participation and the ability to engage simultaneously a larger number of citizens than in the face-to-face meetings or public discussions. As Benjamin Stelzle and colleagues pointed out: "To create a meaningful digital process with a participants number >1000 it is very necessary to clearly outline the overall process as well as the basic criteria to prevent later disruption, and to facilitate a smooth procedure in general"[192], suggesting several factors that should be defined to ensure the quality of the process, such as, parties involved; parties´ degree of influence; veto rights; decision-making criteria; the mandatory degree of criteria; relative weight of criteria; type of scale and value; and fulfilment degree of summarized criteria. Similarly, a study by Sergio Picazo-Vela and colleagues[193] summarized aspects that public institution should consider when fostering digital participation:

- Be aware of the context. Not only incorporate social media into institutions practices but also monitor information and comments;

---

[189] Lee, T. D., Lee-Geiller, S., Lee, B. (2020). Are pictures worth a thousand words? The effect of information presentation type on citizen perceptions of government websites. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(3), 101482

[190] Longo, J. (2017). The evolution of citizen and stakeholder engagement in Canada, from Spicer to #Hashtags. *Canadian Public Administration / Administration Publique Du Canada*, 60(4), 517-537.

[191] Nawafleh, S. (2018). Factors affecting the continued use of e-government websites by citizens: An exploratory study in the Jordanian public sector. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 12(3/4), 244-264.

[192] Stelzle, B., Jannack, A., Noennig, J., N. (2017). Co-Design and Co-Decision: Decision Making on Collaborative Design Platforms. *Procedia Computer Science*, 112, 2435–2444.

[193] Picazo-Vela, S., Gutiérrez-Martínez, I., Luna-Reyes, L. F. (2012). Understanding risks, benefits, and strategic alternatives of social media applications in the public sector. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29, 504–511

- Understand the problem that is to be solved by social media applications;
- Develop a plan, considering the strategic objectives of social media use;
- Develop guidelines for the use of social media;
- Build capacities by training employees and integrating processes.

Future development depends on financial aspects as well, because: "More than technical or theoretical constraints on the rapid development of appropriate solutions, the willingness to invest in the field might be a limiting factor. Software research and development is expensive, and it is more lucrative to invest in video games and e-business applications than in digital systems that foster e-democracy"[194]. Successful implementation of e-governance is determined by the economy of the country, but as other important aspects can be seen also "user trust and adaptability, perceived usefulness, and the relative advantage of promoting e-governance"[195]. Maria Katsonis and Andrew Botros in their study on the digital government in Australia and the United Kingdom emphasized that challenges for the public sector are beyond simple technical solutions and skills, it also requires "addressing leadership, capability, governance, and cultural issues coupled with a relentless focus on putting the citizen first"[196], thus, if public administration would like to engage citizens in the decision-making process, they have to develop a system where citizens have a more important role than it has been so far. As Lindquist and Huse emphasized, digital development is taking place in public institutions but "governments have selectively embraced these tools, and not yet widely embraced them to move governance and accountability to new thresholds"[197], therefore, institutions must have not only a desire and necessity to use digital environment but also comprehension how to do that more successfully. Furthermore, experience from Denmark emphasizes the importance of government regulations: "Public sectors that rely heavily on e-government to function but are unable to execute transformational change processes that also involve e-government, may find their dynamic capabilities severely reduced"[198]. Thus, considering the regulations that are determining the legal limits of citizen participation in the decision-making process, it is important that legal aspects do not become the only obstacle for the development of new methods for participation.

---

[194] Hilbert, M. (2009). The Maturing Concept of E-Democracy: From E-Voting and Online Consultations to Democratic Value Out of Jumbled Online Chatter. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 6, 87–110.

[195] Bindu, N., Sankar, C., P., Kumar, K., S. (2019). From conventional governance to e-democracy: Tracing the evolution of e-governance research trends using network analysis tools. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36 (3), 385-399.

[196] Katsonis, M., Botros, A. (2015). Digital Government: A Primer and Professional Perspectives. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 74(1), 42-52.

[197] Lindquist, E. A, Huse, I. (2017). Accountability and monitoring government in the digital era: Promise, realism and research for digital era governance. *Canadian Public Administration / Administration Publique Du Canada*, 60(4), 627-656.

[198] Pedersen, K. (2018). E-government transformations: challenges and strategies. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 12(1), 84-109.

Institutions and citizens are actively engaging in the new type of relations that was not possible ever before, at the same time not knowing where this path will lead and what are the communication rules in this new environment. John C. Bertot and colleagues have linked the use of digital technologies with opportunities to improve citizen trust in government and are emphasizing the unique momentum that the world is nowadays experiencing: "governments, development agencies and organizations, and citizen groups are increasingly linking investment, governance, and support to the creation of more open and transparent government. It is rare that there is such an alignment of policy, technology, practice, and citizen demand exists—all of which bodes well for the creation of a technology-enabled government that instils the trust of citizens in government"[199]. Trust in public institutions is often connected with citizens opportunities to follow the decision-making process and keep public institutions accountable for decisions that are made. Burt Perrin described accountability as "the legitimization of the exercise of authority, including the most appropriate use of public resources. In this sense, accountability can be viewed as an end in itself, with the objective of providing for greater confidence or assurance in what government is doing and how"[200]. The transformation of public governance from the New Public Management to the Open Government is also having an impact on citizens trust in government as development towards a more transparent and open decision-making process can help to foster citizens trust in government. As David C. G. Brown and Sandra Toze pointed out, "Information has always been a central medium of governance and, in that context, a core asset of public administration"[201], but digitalisation is changing conditions how easy information is accessible – both for representatives of public administration and citizens. Access to information is also reducing classical argument of the top-down governing supporters that citizens ability to participate in the decision-making process is disputable because they do not have sufficient knowledge in certain policy issues, as "there is increasing concern that public sector organisations have themselves, in the past, underestimated the risks involved in public sector provision and not understood properly how services can be quality assured more successfully through involving users and embedding them in the community"[202]. Therefore, open data are playing an important role to ensure that citizens are more capable to participate in the decision-making process, at the same time, for institutions that gives another reason and necessity to change the usual organisation of the decision-making process.

---

[199] Bertot, J. C., Jaeger, P. T., Grimes, J. M. (2010). Using ICTs to create a culture of transparency: E-government and social media as openness and anti-corruption tools for societies. *Government Information Quarterly*, 27, 264–271.

[200] Perrin, B. (2015). Bringing accountability up to date with the realities of public sector management in the 21st century. *Canadian Public Administration / Administration Publique Du Canada*, 58(1), 183–203.

[201] Brown, D. C. G., Toze, S. (2017). Information governance in digitized public administration. *Canadian Public Administration / Administration Publique Du Canada*, 60(4), 581–604.

[202] Bovaird, T., Loeffler, E. (2012). From Engagement to Co-production: The Contribution of Users and Communities to Outcomes and Public Value. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 23(4), 1119-1138.

Meredith Conroy and colleagues pointed out that there is a need to analyse the use of social network sites and political internet usage more closely as "Social network sites are not in the use of themselves, as much as they are a platform for various applications that have important implications for studying how people interact today"[203]. Also, in the study by Halpern and Gibbs was concluded that most of the analysed social media discussants were not debating rationally or deeply, thereby "political exchanges in social media may be more superficial in nature, rather than being characterized by in-depth debate or deliberation, and calls into question their efficacy"[204]. Thus, to foster a better quality of online discussion, people need to have good access to information that can support decision-making and argumentation. At the same time, it is not only a matter of access to information but also a matter of media literacy and a culture of discussion in general. In the study about e-participation in Canada was pointed out the importance of enhancing citizens` technological and psychological capability to use digital services: "Online service should be flexible, easy to navigate and download, and fully available. At the same time, citizens should get technological tips regarding the handling of technological interfaces associated with e-Gov and the mental motivation to use the system"[205]. Josh Lerner argued that there should be included games and game mechanics in democratic processes as: "governments and organizations should make democratic participation more fun, to increase citizen engagement and trust in democracy, and to empower people to democratically decide more issues that affect their lives"[206]. Although this new type of participation could be more motivating to citizens, it can take time until it is successfully incorporated into the current system of the decision-making process.

For public administration, it is not easy to adapt to the fast-changing online environment. As John Carlo Bertot and colleagues indicated, there is a need to change the methods how policies are developed to assure that institutions are not lagging behind the development process as "new technologies that are currently unimagined will continue to emerge and be adopted by government agencies, the development of more responsive information policies that are based on principles that are not tied to specific technologies will be a vital step in ensuring that policies can remain relevant and useful to government agencies and members of the public"[207]. Rik Peeters analysed the use of algorithms in the decision-making process emphasizing that computers are becoming more reliable

---

[203] Conroy, M., Feezell, J. T., Guerrero, M. (2012). Facebook and political engagement: A study of online political group membership and offline political engagement. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(5), 1535–1546.

[204] Halpern, D., Gibbs, J. (2013). Social media as a catalyst for online deliberation? Exploring the affordances of Facebook and YouTube for political expression. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(3). 1159–1168.

[205] Shareef, M. A., Kumar, V., Kumar, U., Dwivedi, Y. K. (2011). e-Government Adoption Model (GAM): Differing service maturity levels. *Government Information Quarterly*, 28(1), 17-35.

[206] Lerner, J. (2012). *Making Democracy Fun? Games as Tools for Democratic Participation*, Doctoral Thesis, The New School for Social Research (New York, USA).

[207] Bertot, J. C., Jaeger, P. T., Hansen, D. (2012). The impact of polices on government social media usage: Issues, challenges, and recommendations. *Government Information Quarterly,* 29(1), 30-40.

and for humans it is becoming more difficult to maintain an adequate level of attention supervising the decisions made by computers, thus although decisions can be made faster as "machines can process more information at a higher speed than even the best trained humans are capable of" [208], that raises concerns about lack of transparency and elimination of human discretion.

The new digital environment has also made a new requirement for digital skills. In public institutions there are employees that are implementing digital participation policies, thus, they must have an adequate level of comprehension of why they are engaging with citizens and how to properly use digital tools. In the study about digital democracy policy design in Sweden, authors pointed out that for the development of e-government is needed knowledge of democratic decision-making process and e-service competencies thus "there is a need to develop the collective competencies of those involved to bridge the gap between policy process and project management by balancing these two perspectives at a designated crossroads"[209]. Results from a study in the USA points out to the lack of digital skills as a challenge of future development of public administrations` digital activities because public relations managers have used to work with traditional communication media but are not comfortable with managing social media, thus "either they have to re-train current public relations managers, or they have the added cost of adding another person to manage public relations activities that involve social media"[210]. Also study by Gustavo Henrique Maultasch Oliveira and Eric W. Welch indicated that: "managers will need to develop clearer strategies that connect tools with work purposes, before they are able to take advantage of social media as a means of communication, collaboration and stakeholder engagement"[211]. As it was emphasized in the case study about the digitalization of services in the Netherlands: "It is likely that if top management is not willing to induce a continuously improving culture throughout the entire organization, this type of culture only becomes established temporarily at the periphery of the organization"[212]. Therefore, for the future development crucial aspect is public administrations comprehension of digital environment.

Participation in the digital environment is also impacted by the level of satisfaction that a person is gaining from this activity. Alcides A. Velasquez Perilla suggested that positive experience of using social media for civic and political participation motivates to continue these online

---

[208] Peeters, R. (2020). The Agency of Algorithms: Understanding Human-algorithm Interaction in Administrative Decision-making. *Information Polity*, 25(4), 507-522.

[209] Melin, U., Wihlborg, E. (2018). Balanced and integrated e-government implementation – exploring the crossroad of public policy-making and information systems project management processes. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 12(2), 191-208.

[210] Kavanaugh, A. L., Fox, E. A., Sheetz, S. D., Yang, S., Li, L. T., Shoemaker, D. J., Natsev, A., Xie, L. (2012). Social media use by government: From the routine to the critical. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(4), 480-491.

[211] Oliveira, G. H. M., Welch, E. W. (2013). Social media use in local government: Linkage of technology, task, and organizational context. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30, 397–405.

[212] Gravesteijn, M., Wilderom, C. P.M. (2018). Participative change toward digitalized, customer-oriented continuous improvements within a municipality. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 31(3), 728-748.

activities, but that can be also contrary as: "in circumstances of successful or satisfactory experiences, political uses of the Internet will increase efficacy perceptions; while in circumstances of negative experiences, the efficacy perceptions might decrease"[213]. Vittoria Marino and Letizia Lo Presti pointed out that it is important to consider the role of social media in the citizen and institutions relations because "if public institutions want to improve the dialogue with their citizen-followers, they need to tune the content by focusing on the goals that the institutions want to reach in their communication strategies"[214]. A study by Tariq Al-Shbail and Aini Aman indicated that the e-government does not achieve accountability by itself, thus "public organizations need to focus on the organizational and environmental elements to mitigate the disorders and dysfunctions of accountability relationships and to ensure greater accountability through e-government implementation"[215]. Similarly, study about direct and indirect e-government adoption is pointing out to risks, that is delaying implementation of digital tools: "trust in internet and trust in government are found to be significant for both direct and indirect adoption of e-government services"[216], thus, it is not enough to offer online participation opportunities to citizens, there are also needed educational campaigns or easily noticeable information that is assuring citizens that digital solutions are safe to use and how the information citizens are providing will be used in the decision-making process. From citizens perspective, social media as a participation tool can be evaluated positively if "government makes a first step towards citizens rather than expecting the citizenry to move their content production activity onto the "official" spaces created for e-participation"[217]. Hence, citizens are more eager to participate in the decision-making process if participation activities are not asking from them very much effort and extra steps. Kristen Lovejoy and colleagues emphasized that communication activities might depend also on comprehension of social media usefulness: "There may be a more simplistic reason for the lack of interaction on organizations' social media accounts. Despite the suggestions by consultants, practitioners may neither understand nor believe that social media is the cure-all for organizational communication efforts" [218]. This effect can be seen also in citizens who are actively using social media for entertainment purposes and are not ready to share this space with serious information and

[213] Perilla, A. A. V. (2012). *Social Media and Individual and Collective Activism: The Role of Interdependence and Online Political Efficacy*, Doctoral thesis, Michigan State University.

[214] Marino, V., Lo Presti, L. (2018). From citizens to partners: the role of social media content in fostering citizen engagement. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy,* 12(1), 39-60.

[215] Al-Shbail, T., Aman, A. (2018). E-government and accountability: How to mitigate the disorders and dysfunctions of accountability relationships. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 12(2), 155-190.

[216] Kumar, R., Sachan, A., Mukherjee, A. (2018). Direct vs indirect e-government adoption: an exploratory study. *Digital Policy, Regulation and Governance*, 20(2), 149-162.

[217] Ferro, E., Loukis, N. E., Charalabidis, Y., Osella, M. (2013). Policy making 2.0: From theory to practice. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30(4), 359–368 (Page – 366).

[218] Lovejoy, K., Waters, R. D., Saxton, G. D. (2012). Engaging stakeholders through Twitter: How nonprofit organizations are getting more out of 140 characters or less. *Public Relations Review*, 38(2), 313-318.

interaction with institutions. In the study about the use of smartphone for public-organization engagement in Israel, researchers discovered that "smartphone users appear to perceive engagement as beneficial primarily for businesses and non-profit associations but as less beneficial to themselves" at the same time more than half of the study respondents agreed that businesses and non-profit associations should use smartphones more often to engage with citizens. Also, researchers pointed out that results of the study suggest that: "the main reason for this lack of engagement is users' lack of willingness to interact with businesses and non-profit associations rather than technological incompetence"[219]. Hence, it is not enough to provide participation opportunities, citizens must also become accustomed to using them and it largely is the responsibility of the public administration to ensure that this educational work is implemented.

In summary, some of the most often emphasized challenges of the digital environment are the digital skills of citizens, their trust in internet technologies and previous experience of using social media for civic and political participation. The digital environment and social media are often blamed as the tool that has lowered citizens trust in institutions and democracy, at the same time thoughtful use of digital technologies is also seen as a solution that can foster citizens trust in institutions. Nevertheless, representatives of institutions should be capable to use digital tools and must have comprehension that digital transformation is needed also for the facilitation of citizen participation. For public administration, some of the largest challenges are institutions` ability to adapt to the use of digital tools in full scale and operate with a large amount of electronic data, presenting electronic information to citizens in a reader-friendly manner, and ability to engage simultaneously larger number of citizens than in the face-to-face meetings or public discussions. Overall, considering many factors that can influence citizens interest to cooperate with institutions in the digital environment and institutions` ability to foster this process, it is important to ensure that citizen participation is a controlled and well-planned process. Furthermore, already in the development of the digital participation solutions there must be involved citizens – individuals and entrepreneurs, to ensure comprehension of the current local situation and stakeholders` habits, thus having a more thoughtful decision about the information channels and digital solutions that can be used to foster citizen participation in the decision-making process.

---

[219] Avidar, R., Ariela, Y., Malkaa, V., Levy, E. C. (2015). Smartphones, publics, and OPR: Do publics want to engage? *Public Relations Review*, 41, 214–221.

2. FACILITATION OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN LATVIA

In the second chapter is evaluated the current situation of citizen participation in Latvia, communication channels that are used by public administration, and the digital environment, habits and digital skills that are influencing the development of digital democracy in Latvia. The last part of the chapter is dedicated to factors that should be considered when thinking about the future development of digital democracy in Latvia and opportunities to foster the participation of citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) in the decision-making process.

2.1.   Citizen participation in Latvia

In Latvia, citizens are still learning about the value of democracy and their opportunities to influence the decision-making process of public administration. From the public administrations` side necessity to foster citizen participation is being reminded occasionally from time to time[220] and in public communication it is emphasized that public administration values citizen participation and is interested to improve[221] the current unsatisfactory situation. At the same time, recently there have been several public scandals which have called into question the will of public administration to consider stakeholders opinion in the decision-making process, for example, in the dispute[222] about the new acoustic concert hall in Riga, the discussions about the support from the Recovery and Resilience Facility[223], or proposed changes in the tax rates[224]. Considering that only a small part of society is participating in the decision-making process and citizen trust in public administration is comparatively low, special attention would be needed to foster cooperation between institutions and citizens, for example, awareness projects about participation opportunities, funding schemes that are fostering existing participation mechanisms or well thought-out strategies that are educating citizens about the positive aspects that can be achieved with active civic and political participation. New types of participation should also be considered that could interest more citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) and make the participation process easier and faster.

For now, the development of citizen participation in Latvia is mainly happening because of activities of the non-governmental sector and Latvia's international commitments. At the EU level, there is strong support for the necessity to foster democracy, looking towards a strong civic society

---

[220]   Valsts   Kalnceleja   (2020).   Nozīmīgāko   valsts   pārvaldes   lēmumu   apkopojums. http://tap.mk.gov.lv/files/Apkopojums2020_110620.pdf
[221] Latvijas Vēstnesis (2018). Pilsoniskā līdzdalība – uz zema pakāpiena. https://lvportals.lv/norises/298303-pilsoniska-lidzdaliba-uz-zema-pakapiena-2018
[222] Latvijas Būvinžinieru savienība. (2020). Valdība atbalsta Rīgas koncertzāles vietu - arhitekti ceļ trauksmi. https://buvinzenierusavieniba.lv/valdiba-atbalsta-rigas-koncertzales-vietu-arhitekti-cel-trauksmi/
[223] Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse. (2021). NVO iebildumi pret ANM izstrādes procesu un ierosinājumi satura korekcijām. https://nvo.lv/uploads/nostajas_vestule_plans_aprilis.pdf
[224] Kultūras ministrija. (2020). Nacionālās kultūras padomes viedoklis par FM priekšlikumiem reorganizēt autoratlīdzību sistēmu. https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/ministrija/jaunumi/nacionalas-kulturas-padomes-viedoklis-par-fm-priekslikumiem-reorganizet-autoratlidzibu-sistemu-5628#gsc.tab=0

with youth participation and thoughtful use of online technologies as a way how democracy could be strengthened. Council of the European Union in the Council Conclusions on Democracy has stated that: "Across the world, people continue to demonstrate the strength and power of their desire for a stronger voice and inclusion in decision-making processes" [225], at the same time pointing out challenges to democracy that has emerged in the 21st century, such as: undermining of democratic processes and institutions, low levels of trust in institutions and politicians, and manipulation using online technologies. As a solution to those challenges Council of the European Union is suggesting several activities that could be implemented, such as supporting participation and representation of women and youth; strengthen civil society; support and protect free and independent traditional and online media; support and promote civic education and online media literacy; promote the use of online technologies in strengthening democratic participation, accountability and access to information. Also, in the State of the Union 2020 address[226] president of the European Commission emphasized that the current near future in the EU should become Europe's Digital Decade, by the development of digital public services and a secure European e-identity. Further support to this attitude and sphere of activity is given also by Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-Based Digital Government[227], emphasizing the need to strengthen citizens digital participation, and COVID-19 crisis recovery plan – "Next Generation EU"[228] that is providing financial support to the digital transformation process of the EU member countries. This framework is giving additional motivation and incentive for the EU member countries to be more active in their digital presence and digital innovations.

United Nations have emphasized the importance of youth participation. In the strategy "Youth 2030 – working with and for youth"[229] from five priorities the fourth one - Youth and Human Rights is also devoted to supporting the civic and political engagement of youth. Positive achievement in this aspect is Latvia`s participation in the United Nations Youth Delegate Programme[230] since 2019 giving an opportunity to promote citizen participation to a youth audience. Council of Europe in 2017 developed their Guidelines for civil participation in the

[225] Council of the European Union. (2019). Council Conclusions on Democracy. https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12836-2019-INIT/en/pdf

[226] European Commission. (2020). State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_1655

[227] Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community. (2020). Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-Based Digital Government. https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/EN/eu-presidency/gemeinsame-erklaerungen/berlin-declaration-digital-society.html

[228] European Commission. (2021). Recovery plan for Europe. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en

[229] The United Nations. (2018). Youth 2030 – working with and for youth. United Nations youth strategy. https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/18-00080_UN-Youth-Strategy_Web.pdf

[230] Latvijas Republikas Ārlietu ministrija. (2019). Ārlietu ministrija atbalsta ANO Jauniešu delegātu programmas pirmo konferenci. https://www.mfa.gov.lv/aktualitates/zinas/64940-arlietu-ministrija-atbalsta-ano-jauniesu-delegatu-programmas-pirmo-konferenci-jauniesi-un-arpolitika

political decision-making process, stating that "participatory democracy, based on the right to seek to determine or to influence the exercise of a public authority's powers and responsibilities, contributes to representative and direct democracy and that the right to civil participation in political decision-making should be secured to individuals, non-governmental organisations and civil society at large"[231]. Accordingly, citizen participation can take different forms, including the provision of information, consultation, dialogue and active involvement, and the main principles that should apply to all actors of the process are:

- mutual respect between all actors as the basis for honest interaction and mutual trust;
- respect for the independence of NGOs;
- respect for the position of public authorities;
- openness, transparency and accountability;
- responsiveness, with all actors providing appropriate feedback;
- non-discrimination and inclusiveness of all voices;
- gender equality and equal participation;
- accessibility through the use of clear language and appropriate means of participation, offline or online, and on any device.

In the annual democracy report by the V-Dem Institute Latvia in 2020 was ranked in 29th place by Liberal Democracy Index, receiving 0.74 score, Estonia was ranked in 9th place with 0.83 score and Lithuania in 23rd place with 0.76 score[232]. According to Democracy Index 2020 that is published by The Economist Intelligence Unit[233], Latvia was evaluated as "flawed democracy" with 7.24 overall score and 6.67 rate in political participation (in the scale from 1 to 10 with 10 being the best), which is lower than Estonia (7.84 overall score) but slightly above Lithuania (7.13 overall score). Overall score for Latvia in 2019 was 7.49 and similar results Latvia in this rating is having for the last decade with the lowest overall score being 7.05 in 2010.[234] According to OECD Indicators of well-being, among all OECD countries, Latvia in 2017 was in 26th place in the Civic engagement & governance rating.[235] According to the evaluation of the global civil society alliance CIVICUS: "The civil society sector in Latvia is relatively small in size due to limited financing and limited popular support."[236] Thereby, according to foreign observers, Latvia`s democracy is stagnating in development and improvements would be needed.

[231] Council of Europe. (2017). Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making. https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016807509dd

[232] V-Dem Institute. (2021). Autocratization Turns Viral. V-dem annual democracy report 2021. https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/74/8c/748c68ad-f224-4cd7-87f9-8794add5c60f/dr_2021_updated.pdf

[233] The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited. (2021). *Democracy Index 2020: In sickness and in health?* The Economist.

[234] The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited. (2020). *Democracy Index 2019: A year of democratic setbacks and popular protest*. The Economist.

[235] OECD. (2019). OECD Economic Surveys – Latvia. http://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/Latvia-2019-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf

[236] CIVICUS. (2018). *Latvia – overview*. https://monitor.civicus.org/newsfeed/2018/04/01/latvia-overview/

The current situation of democracy in Latvia can be evaluated to some degree by using statistical data about citizens participation in non-governmental and political organisations, as well as participation in the democratic processes. The most accessible is data about citizens participation in elections – that is also one of the easiest form of citizens participation as it is happening only once in a few years and by voting in elections citizens are transferring their decision-making rights to politicians, thus, theoretically, citizens can become passive observers until the next elections. However, infrequent participation and low interest in everyday processes of politics can lower citizens motivation to vote, thus gradually reducing citizens activity even further downward.
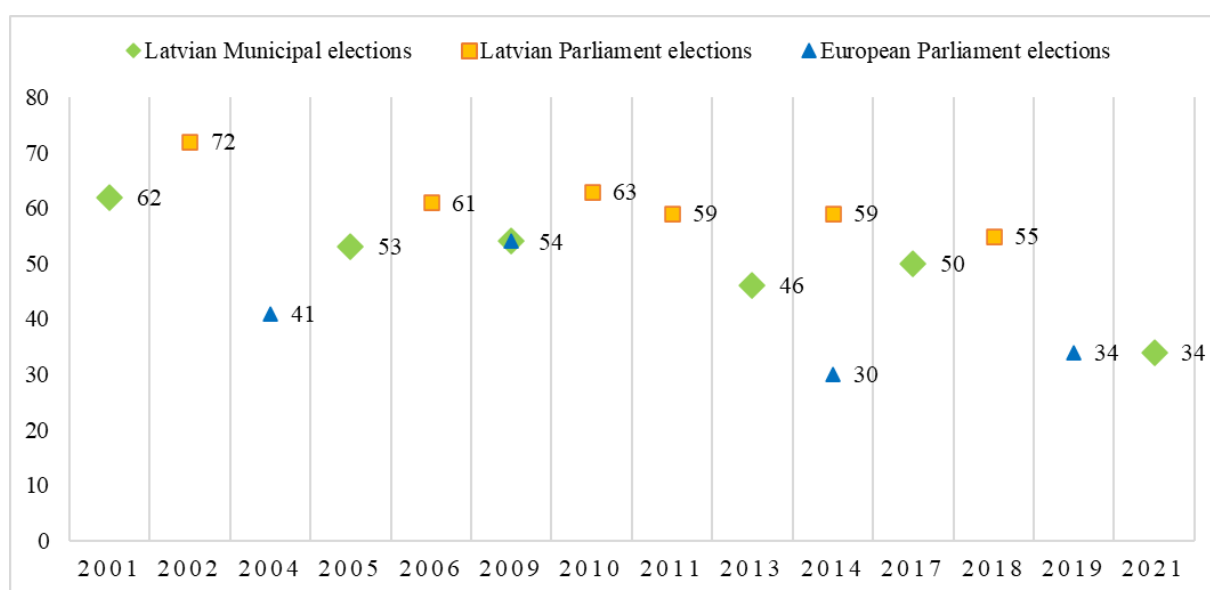

Figure 2.1. **Citizen participation in Municipal, Latvian Parliament and European Parliament elections in Latvia (2001 until 2021), share (in %)**
Source: Author's construction based on data from the Central Election Commission of Latvia, 2021

In Latvia, participation rates in elections are gradually decreasing (see Figure 2.1.). The participation rate for Latvian parliament elections has dropped from 71.90 percent in 1995 to 54.56 percent in the latest 2018 elections[237]. In the municipal elections, the lowest participation rate was in 2021 when 34.01 percent of eligible voters participated[238]. Participation rates in the European Parliament elections are below EU average,[239] except for 2009 elections. The turnout rate in the latest 2019 European Parliament elections was 33.53 percent,[240] which is the lowest result in Baltic states, with 37.60 percent turnout in Estonia and 53.48 percent turnout in Lithuania[241].

---

[237] Central Election Commission of Latvia. (2018). 13. Saeimas vēlēšanas – aktivitāte. https://sv2018.cvk.lv/pub/Activities
[238] Central Election Commission of Latvia. (2021). 2021. gada 5. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas. https://pv2021.cvk.lv/pub/velesanu-rezultati
[239] European Parliament. (2019). 2019 European election results – Latvia. https://www.election-results.eu/national-results/latvia/2019-2024/
[240] Central Election Commission of Latvia. (2019). Eiropas parlamenta vēlēšanas 2019. https://epv2019.cvk.lv/pub/aktivitate
[241] European Parliament. (2019). 2019 European election results - National results. https://election-results.eu/national-results-overview/

Table 2.1. **Citizen participation in Latvia**

Participation activity / indicator	Data	Source of the data and year
Voting in the latest municipal elections	34.01 percent	Central Election Commission of Latvia, 2021
Voting in the latest municipal elections when all municipalities were included	50.39 percent	Central Election Commission of Latvia, 2017
Voting in the latest parliament (Saeima) elections	54.56 percent	Central Election Commission of Latvia, 2018
Voting in the latest European parliament elections	33.53 percent	European Parliament, 2019
Number of political parties (22.01.2021)	50	The Register of Enterprises of the Republic of Latvia, 2021
Proportion of citizens who are members of political parties	1 percent	Van Biezen et. al., 2012
Proportion of citizens who are members of political parties (in 2017)	1.1 percent	Latvijas Sabiedriskie mediji, 2018
Consultative bodies in Latvian ministries (in 2018)	170	State Chancellery of Latvia, 2018
Consultative bodies in Latvian ministries (in 2019)	147	Ministru kabinets, 2021
Number of non-governmental organisations participating in the consultative bodies of Latvian ministries (in 2019)	839	Ministru kabinets, 2021
Number of non-governmental organisations signed cooperation document with Latvian ministries	288	Ministru kabinets, 2021
Proportion of Latvian citizens participating in non-governmental organisations (in 2017)	5 percent	Pārresoru koordinācijas centrs, 2017
Proportion of civic-active citizens (in last two years have participated in a public consultation, picket, donated their time to a problem of public importance, signed a letter of public importance or contacted the elected deputies)	14 percent	Providus, 2021
Civic participation index (in 2015)	10 percent	Pārresoru koordinācijas centrs, 2020
Civil Society Participation Index (in 2018)	7	The World Bank Group, 2021
Public submissions to Parliament (Saeimai) (2019 / 2020)	5467 / 4542	Mandātu, ētikas un iesniegumu komisija, 2021
Number of citizens that have used participation portal Manabalss.lv in time from 2011 until 2021 (have voted at least once)	344074	Sabiedrības Līdzdalības Fonds, 2021
Number of votes casted in the participation portal Manabalss.lv in time from 2011 until 2021	1759019	Sabiedrības Līdzdalības Fonds, 2021

Source: Author's construction based on statistical and public information

Voting in the elections is seen as a traditional political participation activity, additionally to that, there are many other activities – digital, face-to-face, institutional and non-institutional – that can also demonstrate the level of citizen participation in the country (See Table 2.1.). However, it must be noted that registration of the citizen participation activities in Latvia is not performed very well, data of the most recent period often is missing, not all information is publicly available, and statistical data of some activities are not comprehensively compiled at all, for example, about the number of pickets and rallies that are organised. In Latvia still is not implemented clear distinction between civic society organisations and lobby organisations, as the legal status for both usually is the same - non-governmental organisations, but the categorization of non-governmental organisations is incomplete and "does not give a clear picture"[242] of the current situation.

---

[242] Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse. (2021). Pētījums: esošās klasifikācijas sistēmas nesniedz skaidru priekšstatu par Latvijas biedrībām un nodibinājumiem. https://nvo.lv/lv/zina/petijums_esosas_klasifikacijas_sistemas_nesniedz_skaidru_prieksstatu_par_latvijas_biedribam_un_nodibinajumiem

One of the factors, that is influencing citizens motivation to participate is trust in government, politicians, and public administration. In Latvia trust in public administration is comparatively low (See Figure 2.2.). In the period from Autumn 2017 until Summer 2019 trust in public administration was gradually increasing, then fell in Autumn 2019 and returned back to 35 percent in Summer 2020, but a significant reduction of the trust rate is seen in the Winter 2021 Eurobarometer data – 27 percent tend to trust public administration. This fall of the trust rate could be connected with the management problems of the COVID-19 crisis as similar situation was in several other EU countries. However, Latvia's results still are below the EU average and below trust rates in Lithuania and Estonia, hence, low trust in public administration is a long-known problem in Latvia.
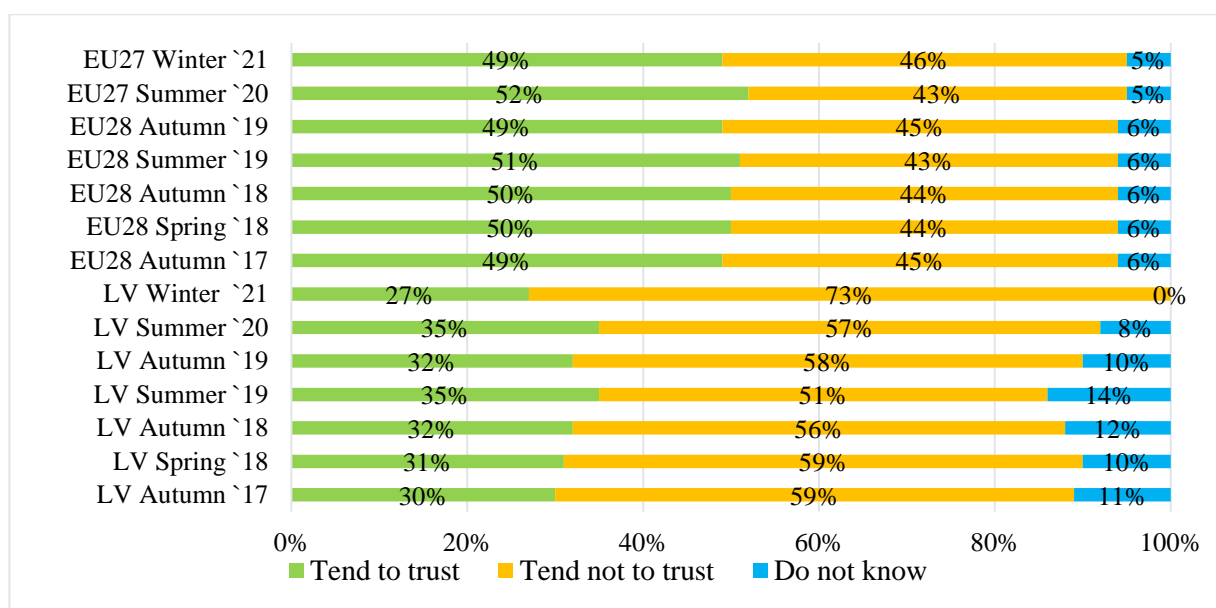

Figure 2.2. **Citizen trust in public administration, Latvia and the EU average (2017 - 2021), share (in %)**

Source: Author's construction based on data from Standard Eurobarometer (88 - 94), 2018 – 2021

Public disbelief in political parties is also considered as one of the reasons why citizens themselves are not ready to become members of political parties.[243] In Latvia, around one percent of citizens are members of political parties when in the EU average is 4.70 percent.[244] Thereby, in Latvia, there is a comparatively large part of society that is not participating in the decision-making process directly and only theoretically are represented by political parties, non-governmental organizations, business associations or lobby organisations. Another reason for low political participation in Latvia can also be because of historical background. Although democracy was restored in Latvia already thirty years ago, comprehension of democracy is still in the development

---

[243] Providus. (2017). Politiskās partijas 21.gadsimtā: domnīcas Providus organizētā foruma ideju apkopojums. http://providus.lv/article_files/3283/original/Partijas21apkopojumsProvidus.pdf?1483956590

[244] Van Biezen, I., Mair, P., Poguntke, T. (2012). Going, going,… gone? The decline of party membership in contemporary Europe. *European Journal of Political Research,* 51, 24–56 (p. 28).

stage. According to a study[245] by Marc Hooghe and Ellen Quintelier, compared to western Europe, people in central and eastern Europe are less likely to engage in institutionalised political action (see Figure 2.3.) such as contacting a politician, working for a political party or organisation, and they are also less interested in non-institutionalised participation opportunities such as signing a petition or joining a demonstration. This tendency is noticeable both in the segments of the younger population and the older population. Analysis of the situation is suggesting that "lower participation rates in post-authoritarian regimes can be explained by current political reality, namely a lack of good governance, continuing high levels of corruption, and relatively poor economic performance, all of which can serve to reduce trust and discourage people from engaging with politics"[246]. Thus, improvement in participation can be reached if the performance of the government is improved.
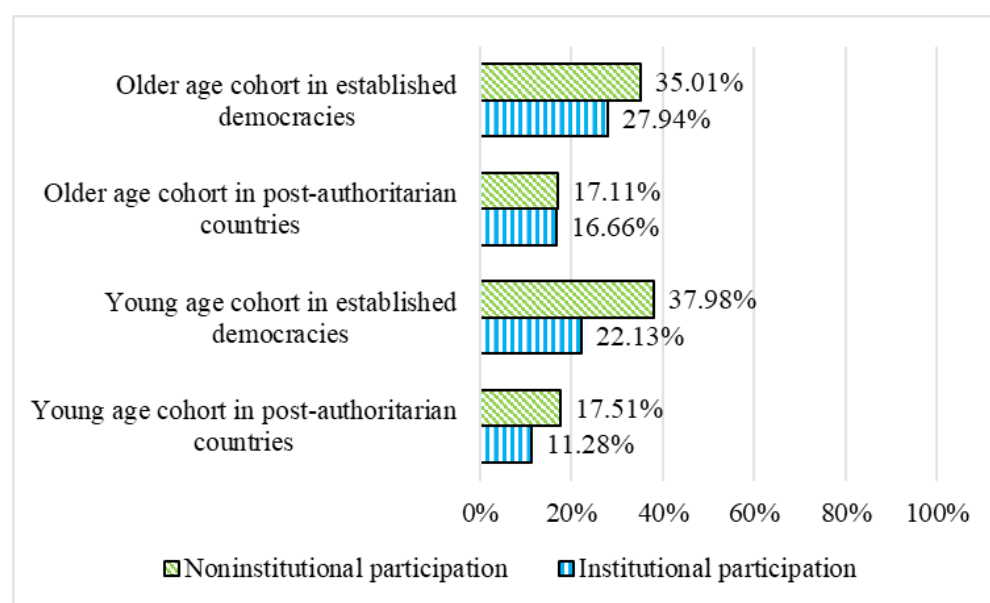

Figure 2.3. **The proportion of citizens in established and post-authoritarian democracies engaging in institutional and non-institutional political action (2002 - 2008)**
Source: Author's construction based on Hooghe, M., Quintelier, E. (2013)

Considering that rates of citizen participation are comparatively low in Latvia, in the national planning documents citizen participation is recognised as a field where improvement is needed (see Table 2.2.). In the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (Latvija2030)[247] citizen participation is described under the priority "Innovative Government and Public Participation", pointing out to Public Participation in the Policy-development, Civic Education and Social Integration, and E-government and Public Innovation as the main directions where future development is needed.

---

[245] Hooghe, M., Quintelier, E. (2013). Political Participation in European Countries. The effect of authoritarian rule, corruption, lack of good governance and economic downturn. *Comparative European Politics*, 12(2), 209-232.
[246] European Social Survey. (2012). Exploring public attitudes, informing public policy. https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/ESS1_5_select_findings.pdf
[247] Saeima. (2010). Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/LIAS_2030_en_0.pdf

Table 2.2. **Support to citizen participation in Latvia (in planning documents)**

Planning document	Arguments supporting the need to foster citizen participation	Highlighted stakeholders	Suggested methods that could be implemented
Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (Latvija 2030)[248]	The need to reform the decision-making process in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. In the policy development involve society as much as possible	Latvian citizens (society), taking into account the diversity of society and social diversity. Also, the activity of social partners and NGOs as important actors of the process	Citizens 'panels, participation in the development process, citizens' juries, civic participation programs, discussions on topical issues in society, mass creativity portal, mass creativity award, interdisciplinary mass creativity coordination institution, introduction of e-government
National Development Plan of Latvia 2021–2027[249]	There is a need to improve participation, as good governance is characterized by the involvement of citizens: participation in open public administration processes and opportunities to influence them; trust in the representatives of institutions - policy developers; and active involvement in civic society	Individuals, NGOs, Social partners, society (knowledge society as a precondition for an active society)	Self-organisation of society. Expanding cooperation and participation skills and opportunities, in particular: by developing civic education for youth; citizen participation in non-governmental organizations, trade unions and volunteering. Implementation of smart, efficient, and open governance in all public administration processes, using new methods and digital opportunities
Guidelines for a Cohesive and Active Society 2021-2027[250]	Development of a culture of democracy, as purposeful and meaningful participatory processes can have a positive impact on the development of democracy	NGOs, active civic society and organized civic society	Knowledge as a resource (for citizens and public administration); access to information about democracy and participation; creating a common space for quality information and democratic debate; forms of participation planned and based on both the local needs of the citizens and digital participation solutions for remote participation
Guidelines for digital transformation 2021-2027[251] (*Project! – as in June 2021 the document was still not approved by Government*)	Digital technology environment as a new space for the public administration, considering the involvement of society in public administration processes as a modern necessity. External openness and cooperation, as well as co-creation with the citizens must become the value of public administration	Latvian citizens and businesses; civic society; representatives of the society, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders	Digital governance tailored to the needs and expectations of stakeholders; opportunities for politicians, public administration and local government employees to acquire the skills necessary to ensure meaningful public participation; to create digital tools and applications that allow to quickly and easily find out the public position on specific issues; to develop platforms for e-participation

Source: Author's construction based on Saeima 2010; Pārresoru koordinācijas centrs, 2020; Ministru kabinets, 2021; Valsts Kanceleja, 2021.

[248] Saeima. (2010). Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/LIAS_2030_en_0.pdf

[249] Pārresoru koordinācijas centrs. (2020). Latvijas nacionalais attistibas plans 2021.–2027. gadam. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NAP2027_apstiprin%C4%81ts%20Saeim%C4%81_0.pdf

[250] Ministru kabinets. (2021). Saliedētas un pilsoniski aktīvas sabiedrības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2021.-2027. gadam. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/320841-par-saliedetas-un-pilsoniski-aktivas-sabiedribas-attistibas-pamatnostadnem-2021-2027-gadam

[251] Valsts Kanceleja. (2021). Pamatnostādņu projekts "Digitālās transformācijas pamatnostādnes 2021.-2027.gadam". http://tap.mk.gov.lv/mk/tap/?pid=40496916

In the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014–2020 citizen participation was mentioned in the context of strategic objective "Belonging to Latvia: Cooperation and Culture" where the goal for civic participation index of the population was set to 19 percent for the year 2020, as a base value was recognised 7.4 percent in the year 2009[252]. The same civic participation index is retained also in the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021–2027 under the priority "Unified, secure and open society". In this document as the base value for the year 2015 is recognised 10 percent of society, the target value for the year 2024 is planned to 25 percent and for the year 2027 to 30 percent of society[253]. Hence, civic participation index in Latvia has grown from 7 percent in 2009 to 10 percent in 2015 showing some positive progress. Still, there will be needed additional effort to reach the desired goal of the year 2027. Analysis of the planning documents is demonstrating that public administration declaratively is supporting the necessity to foster citizen participation and also is aware of various methods that could be used to improve the current situation. Nevertheless, the goodwill demonstrated in the planning documents not always has resulted in the implementation of real activities. It is also noticeable, that public administration is not planning to reach all citizens but is relying on other actors as intermediaries, such as non-governmental organisation, lobby organisations or organized civic society. Consequently, this comprehension is the leading element also in the organisation of citizen participation in the decision-making process.

2.2. Decision-making process and citizens

Traditions of democracy and citizen participation in the decision-making process are comparatively short in Latvia. Since the restoration of Latvia`s independence has passed 30 years and in this time Latvia has experienced constant and rapid development process in all aspects that are shaping country`s identity, structure and management. In many cases, decisions about future development were made, learning from international experience or according to suggestions and regulations from foreign actors. Thereby, also the development of the decision-making process in Latvia is affected by contemporary national tendencies and global concepts on public institutions governance such as citizen-centric approach, new public management approach, open government initiatives and e-government tendencies. Iveta Reinholde in her case study on Latvian public administration noticed that Latvia has been in strong favour of New Public Management since the mid-1990s and "Implementation of New Public Management has turned out to be a new administrative reality with long-lasting improvement efforts to combine elements of different

---

[252] Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre. (2012). National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014–2020. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NDP2020%20English%20Final___1.pdf

[253] Pārresoru koordinācijas centrs. (2020). Latvijas nacionalais attistibas plans 2021.–2027. gadam. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NAP2027_apstiprin%C4%81ts%20Saeim%C4%81_0.pdf

administrative ideologies"[254]. Nowadays in Latvia several elements of open government initiatives are also introduced in connection with country`s participation in the Open government partnership and common ideological directions in the European Union.

Citizen participation in the decision-making process in Latvia is regulated by the Republic of Latvia Cabinet Regulation No. 970 "Procedures for the Public Participation in the Development Planning Process" (entered into force 05.09.2009) emphasizing that citizens can participate in interinstitutional working groups and advisory councils, public discussions and consultations, involve in discussion groups, forums and other participation activities. Citizens can also submit in writing an opinion on a development planning document during its drafting stage and prepare an opinion before a decision is taken according to the procedures stipulated by the decision-making institution, as well as provide objections and proposals according to the procedures stipulated by the decision-making institution during the decision-making process and participate in the introduction of the policy. Several stages of the decision-making process are also pointed out in which citizens can participate:

- the proposing of a development planning process;
- the drawing up of a development planning document;
- the decision-making process according to the procedures stipulated by the institution;
- the introduction of a development planning document;
- the supervision and evaluation of the introduction of a development planning document;
- the updating of a development planning document.

The Republic of Latvia Cabinet Regulation No. 970 is clearly stating that the responsibility for the citizen engagement lies on the representative of public administration as in case of certain "development planning in a field or sector of policy, or territory" the liable institution is responsible for selecting "The most appropriate types of public participation, promoting efficient, open, inclusive, timely and responsible public involvement in the development planning process"[255]. Similarly, citizen participation is emphasized also in the State Administration Structure Law of the Republic of Latvia, stating that "institutions shall involve public representatives (representatives of public organisations and other organised groups, individual competent persons) in their activities, by including such persons in working groups, advisory councils or by asking them to provide

---

[254] Reinholde, I. (2017). Path-Dependency of Reforms in Latvia: A Way Towards New Public Governance. *Proceedings of the 2017 International Conference "ECONOMIC SCIENCE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT" No 46,* Jelgava, LLU ESAF, 27-28 April 2017, 149-157.
[255] Republic of Latvia Cabinet. (2009). Regulation No. 970. Procedures for the Public Participation in the Development Planning Process. https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=197033

opinions"[256] and pointing out that it is an obligation of institutions to considered citizen opinion, because: "In matters important to the public, institutions have a duty to organise a public discussion. If an institution takes a decision that does not correspond to the opinion of a considerable part of society, the institution shall provide a special substantiation for such decision"[257].

In Latvia, there are 152 public administration institutions that are officially considered as direct administration authority[258]. Of all those institutions' ministries and State Chancellery are those who have the largest responsibility about citizen participation, still, according to authors calculations (in June 2021) – from the remaining institutions at least 40 also should have to some degree engage citizens in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the necessity to emphasize and implement citizen participation should also be a responsibility of the Latvian Parliament, the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia and the Chancellery of the President of Latvia. Nevertheless, in the home pages of the mentioned institutions citizen participation is reflected very diverse and often insufficiently. For example, on the home page of Latvian Parliament[259], the situation with collective submissions is very transparent, but for individual applications, the progress is unclear and the status is only available to the applicant himself, thus suggesting that institution do not know how to publicly organise citizen participation or do not want to demonstrate the use of citizens input in the decision-making process.

Table 2.3. **Citizens` opportunities to participate in the decision-making process in Latvia**

Stage of the decision-making process	Participation opportunities	Who can participate
Creating an agenda	Publicly actualize the issue that is important, draw the attention of politicians and the mass media	NGO, lobby organisation, any person
	Cooperate with the candidate of the Prime minister's position and political parties when the government declaration is drafted	NGO, lobby organisation
	Cooperate with ministers and representatives of ministries when the action plan of the government declaration is developed and implemented	NGO, lobby organisation
	Follow activities of the Cabinet of Ministers on the delivery of the promises made in the government declaration, plan your public activities corresponding to relevant topics	NGO, lobby organisation
	Hand in collective submission to Latvian Parliament (at least 10000 citizens together, usually via manabalss.lv)	Any citizen (age 16 and older)
	Hand in individual submission to Latvian Parliament (to a public official, member of the parliament, commission or administrative body)	NGO, lobby organisation, any person or legal entity

[256] Saeima. (2002). State Administration Structure Law. https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/63545-state-administration-structure-law

[257] Saeima. (2002). State Administration Structure Law. https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/63545-state-administration-structure-law

[258] Valsts Kanceleja. (2021). Valsts pārvaldes attīstības politika. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/valsts-parvaldes-attistibas-politika

[259] Saeima. (2020). Iesniegumi un priekšlikumi. https://www.saeima.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/iesniegumi-un-priekslikumi

	Participate in the advisory body or workgroup made by ministry, thus giving input and opinion about the draft legislation	NGO, lobby organisation, expert of the field
Policy development	Encourage public discussion through publications, demonstrations and the mass media	NGO, lobby organisation, any person or legal entity
	Participate in the meeting of the Parliament commission, publicly giving an opinion, also, providing written or oral opinion as an expert in a specific topic that is on the agenda	NGO, lobby organisation, expert of the field
Decision-making	Provide reasoned opinion about the draft legislation in the meeting of State Secretaries, Cabinet of Ministers committee meeting, or Cabinet of Ministers meeting	NGO, lobby organisation
	Encourage public discussion through publications, demonstrations and the mass media	NGO, lobby organisation, any person or legal entity
	Encourage the discussion of the draft legislation at the meeting of the Memorandum Council. Also, provide a reasoned opinion about the draft legislation that is sent to the Memorandum Council for consultation	NGO
	Participate in the public consultation if that is organised by an institution	any person
	Hand in individual submission to Latvian Parliament (to a public official, member of the parliament, commission or administrative body)	NGO, lobby organisation, any person or legal entity
	Participate in the meeting of the Parliament commission, publicly giving an opinion, also, providing written or oral opinion as an expert in a specific topic that is on the agenda	NGO, lobby organisation, expert of the field
	Have a personal meeting with the member of the parliament, explaining personal position in a specific topic that is on the agenda	any person
	Use lobbying – provide information to decision-makers in the institution, encouraging decision that is in the favour of the lobbyist	NGO, lobby organisation
	Hand in individual or collective submission to the president of Latvia, to impact the process of the draft legislation – suggesting changes or affecting the official announcement	NGO, lobby organisation, any person or legal entity
Policy implementation and evaluation	Follow the implementation process and participate in the evaluation if an institution has made a working group or survey. Also, organise projects where policy is being evaluated or specific topics are being analysed	NGO, lobby organisation, expert of the field
	Express opinion on the specific topic or issue – contacting with responsible representatives of an institution or making public announcements	NGO, lobby organisation, any person or legal entity
	Encourage public discussion through the mass media	NGO, lobby organisation, any person or legal entity

Source: Author's construction based on information published by State Chancellery of Latvia (2020) and Saeima (2020)

The decision-making process consists of four steps - agenda setting, policy development, decision-making, and policy implementation[260], according to information published by State Chancellery of Latvia[261] and Latvian Parliament[262] citizens can participate in the decision-making process in all four steps, however, not always as individuals (see Table 2.3.). Thus, citizens in Latvia have legally developed ways how they can participate in the decision-making process, but they need to be proactive to be informed about topical development planning documents and draft legislation, also, to have easier access to most of the participation opportunities, they should be

[260] Valsts kanceleja. (2020). Lidzdalibas iespejas. http://tap.mk.gov.lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/
[261] State Chancellery of Latvia. (2020). Sabiedrības līdzdalības politika. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdalibas-politika
[262] Saeima. (2020). Sabiedrības līdzdalība. https://www.saeima.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba

members of non-governmental organisations, business associations or lobby organisations. Therefore, according to the current situation in Latvia, if a citizen (individual or entrepreneur) would like to make an impact on the decisions made by public administration, it is also officially advised by the State Chancellery that the best choice would be to find a non-governmental organisation or lobby organisation that is already participating in the decision-making process[263] and is acting as a representative of citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) in the specific area. However, this representation only theoretically is covering all society and businesses of Latvia. In 2019 in Latvia there were 172382 active businesses[264], most of them – 161304 were micro-enterprises (with 1 to 9 employees), 9199 were small enterprises (with 10 to 49 employees), 1628 were medium-enterprises (with 50 to 249 employees) and 251 were large enterprises. There is not available exact information on how many businesses are members of lobby organisations that are representing entrepreneurs in the decision-making process. As well as there is not publicly available an exact number of lobby organisations as such, because in Latvia legal status for lobby organisations is the same as for civic society organisations, they both are non-governmental organisations, and the categorisation is not well established[265] – for many of non-governmental organisations their field of activity is unknown. Nevertheless, in the analysis of the consultative bodies of Latvian public administration institutions (See table 2.4.) it can be recognised that there are many small lobby organisations and several large ones. In Latvia, the largest lobby organisations are the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia and the Employers' Confederation of Latvia. They have strong cooperation with many public administration institutions` and they are often represented in consultative bodies. Both are also the two and only non-governmental organisations participating in the National Tripartite Cooperation Council – acting as representatives of all employers and employees of Latvia. According to publicly available information, the Trade Union Confederation of Latvia[266] is combining 20 member organisations with 90 thousand employees, but the Employers' Confederation of Latvia[267] is combining 105 businesses (medium and large enterprises) and 62 business associations and federations. Thus, in reality, there are many businesses that are not included in the representation. In the Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index review it was pointed out that in Latvia "Organisations have relatively easy access to politicians and civil servants who are responsible for various public policy

[263] Valsts kanceleja. (2020). Lidzdalibas iespejas. http://tap.mk.gov.lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/
[264] Oficiālās statistikas portāls. (2021). Uzņēmumu skaits. https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START__ENT__UZ__UZS/UZS030/table/tableViewLayout1/
[265] Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse. (2021). Pētījums par pilsoniskās sabiedrības organizāciju sektoru Latvijā 2020-2024: https://nvo.lv/uploads/nvo_petijums_2021.pdf
[266] Latvijas Brīvo arodbiedrību savienība. (2021). Mēs. https://arodbiedribas.lv/mes/#pll_switcher
[267] Latvijas Darba devēju konfederācija. (2021). Par LDDK. https://lddk.lv/par-lddk/

issues"[268], hence, those citizens who are participating in non-governmental organisations or lobby organisations have a comparatively significant impact on the decision-making process of public administration in Latvia. Overall, in non-governmental organisations in Latvia are participating five percent of the Latvian population,[269] and it can be concluded that civic society organisations and lobby organisations only theoretically are representing all citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs). Thus, in Latvia is existing a small but active civic society with non-governmental organisations that have comparatively easy access to the decision-making process. At the same time, the silent majority of citizens in Latvia is not directly participating in the decision-making process although decisions made by institutions are influencing their lives as well.

Table 2.4. **Advisory bodies in Latvian public administration (situation on October 30, 2019)**

Public administration institution	Number of Consultative bodies	Non-institutional participants in the consultative bodies (NGOs` and Lobby organisations)
Ministry of Defence[270]	No data	25
Ministry of Justice[271]	31	No data
Ministry of Foreign Affairs[272]	5	25
Ministry of Economics[273]	11	51
Ministry of Finance[274]	7	9
Ministry of the Interior[275]	2	35
Ministry of Education and Science[276]	5	40
Ministry of Culture[277]	14	44
Ministry of Welfare[278]	13	40
Ministry of Transport[279]	2	No data
Ministry of Health[280]	11	70
Mo EPRD[281]	28	78

[268] United States Agency for International Development. (2019). 2018 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. https://nvo.lv/uploads/201910041747406956.pdf

[269] Pārresoru koordinācijas centrs. (2017). Nacionālā attīstības plāna 2014.-2020. gadam un Latvijas ilgtspējīgas attīstības stratēģijas līdz 2030. gadam īstenošanas uzraudzības ziņojums. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/lv/valsts-attistibas-planosana/nacionalais-attistibas-plans/nap2020-merki-un-istenosana Page - 74

[270] Ministry of Defence (2019). Sabiedrības līdzdalība. https://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/nozares-politika/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba

[271] Ministry of Justice. (2019). Darba grupas un padomes. https://www.tm.gov.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/darba-grupas

[272] Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2019). Sadarbība ar nevalstiskajām organizācijām. https://www.mfa.gov.lv/ministrija/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba

[273] Ministry of Economics. (2919). Sabiedrības līdzdalība. https://www.em.gov.lv/lv/Ministrija/sabiedribas_lidzdaliba/

[274] Ministry of Finance. (2018). Finanšu ministrijas organizētās darba grupas, padomes, komitejas, komisijas. https://www.fm.gov.lv/lv/sabiedribas_lidzdaliba/darba_grupas/

[275] Ministry of the Interior. (2019). Konsultatīvās padomes. http://iem.gov.lv/lat/sadarbiba_ar_nvo/konsultativas_padomes/

[276] Ministry of Education and Science. (2015). Sabiedrības līdzdalība. https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba

[277] Ministry of Culture. (2019). Nozaru padomes un darba grupas. https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/ministrija/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/nozaru-padomes-un-darba-grupas

[278] Ministry of Welfare. (2018). Sabiedrības līdzdalība. http://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba

[279] Ministry of Transport. (2019). Padomes. http://www.sam.gov.lv/satmin/content/?cat=661

[280] Ministry of Health. (2019). Konsultatīvās padomes. http://www.vm.gov.lv/lv/ministrija/konsultativas_padomes/

[281] Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. (2019). Padomes un komisijas. http://varam.gov.lv/lat/lidzd/pad/

Ministry of Agriculture[282]	8	54
Latvian Parliament (Saeima)[283]	10	No data
The State Chancellery / Government of Latvia[284]	2	10
Total:	149	481

Source: Author's construction based on publicly available information in October 2019

According to the State Chancellery of Latvia[285], in 2014 there were 165 consultative bodies in Latvian ministries and in them were participating citizens from 1128 different non-governmental organisations. It is estimated by the State Chancellery of Latvia that in 2018[286] in Latvian ministries there were 170 consultative bodies, but a year later, in 2019[287] there were 147 active consultative bodies with members from 839 non-governmental organisations, hence, in the time from 2014 until 2019 there has shrunken the number of non-governmental organisations participating in the advisory bodies. Data in table 2.4. indicate - publicly available information on advisory bodies in Latvian public administration institutions (in October 2019) provided a shorter list of advisory bodies and their members than the estimates made by the State Chancellery of Latvia, as not all institutions are publishing comprehensive and up-to-date information about their advisory bodies. Also, not all institutions are publishing information about the members of the advisory bodies, for example, the Ministry of Defence has published the list of non-governmental organisations that are participating in the decision-making process, but not the list of advisory bodies they are engaged in. As a good example (in October 2019) was recognised home page of the Ministry of Economics where was publicly available information about advisory bodies and also their members and minutes from the meetings. Since 2020 home pages of public administration are having transition period that is planned to be finished in July 2021, after that all public institutions will have home pages in similar design with similar functionality[288], it is predictable that it should also improve visibility of citizen participation opportunities and advisory bodies. However, it is not possible to fully identify and analyse the new situation, until all home pages are changed to the new design, for example, the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture in June 2021 still were using their old home pages.

---

[282] Ministry of Agriculture. (2019). Nozares darba grupas, padomes. https://www.zm.gov.lv/lauksaimnieciba/statiskas-lapas/nozares-darba-grupas-padomes?nid=535#jump
[283] Saeima (2019). Saeimas un nevalstisko organizāciju sadarbība. http://www.saeima.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/saeimas-un-nevalstisko-organizaciju-sadarbiba
[284] The State Chancellery. (2018). Līdzdalības iespējas konsultatīvajās padomēs. https://mk.gov.lv/content/lidzdalibas-iespejas-konsultativajas-padomes
[285] Valsts Kanceleja. (2015). 2014. gads sabiedrības līdzdalībā faktos un skaitļos. https://www.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/komunikacijas_files/nvo_infografika_25-02-2015.pdf
[286] State Chancellery of Latvia. (2018). Results of the survey *Public participation in state and local government.* Presentation by State Chancellery of Latvia in connection with the 29.08.18 conference Informesana->lidzdarbiba.
[287] Ministru kabinets. (2021). NVO sektora pārskats. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/695/download
[288] Valsts Kanceleja. (2020). Valsts un pašvaldību iestāžu tīmekļvietņu vienotā platforma. https://www.mk.gov.lv/timeklvietnes

Bryan Evans and Halina Sapeha pointed out in their study of citizen participation in Canada, "if governments are serious about constructing and practising a robust process of policy engagement with NGO stakeholders, they need to establish more opportunities for access and full participation by non-government actors. Importantly, this should include external stakeholders possibly deemed less significant in political and technical terms by the government. Governments might consider how to identify how NGOs with less capacity can be enabled to participate"[289]. As it is emphasized in the Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index review about Latvia: "the quality of the dialogue between state and civil society organisations generally depends on the individuals involved. Also, civil society organisations` often lack the financial resources needed to engage experts in their advocacy initiatives."[290], thus, in Latvia one of the problems that should be solved is also a need to provide financial resources to non-governmental organisations so they can participate in the decision-making process. That rises discussion if public administration is motivated to support innovations of new citizen participation methods or provide larger support to the current participation model with a small but active representation of citizens via non-governmental organisations and lobby organisations. Cooperation with organisations is beneficial to public administration as the members of organisations are providing expertise and it is easy to announce that public participation is happening. If the new participation methods are developed and institutions are trying to reach individual citizens, bypassing the middleman – non-governmental organisations and lobby organisations, that is a bigger challenge and work for the representatives of institutions. There is a need to work with a larger amount of data, as well as foster communication with citizens and develop closer relations with them. Although it is understandable, that for the public administration it is easier to continue the existing model of cooperation, the new open government and transparency tendencies are pushing institutions towards the necessity to communicate with all citizens and ensure communication also in the digital environment.

2.3. Public administration`s communication with citizens

It is the responsibility of public administration to communicate with citizens, explaining actions done by public administration, listening to citizen opinion, and engage citizens in the decision-making process. If citizens are involved in the development of new initiatives, regulations and laws from the beginning, it is much more likely that result will correspond to their needs and views not merely reflect what public administration assumes that citizens wish for. Not listening to citizens might lead to a result that does not correspond to the real situation, thus causing protests from society. Fixing such situations of misunderstandings are financially expensive, time-

[289] Evans, B., Sapeha, H. (2015). Are non-government policy actors being heard? Assessing New Public Governance in three Canadian provinces. *Canadian Public Administration / Administration Publique Du Canada*, 58(2), 249–270.
[290] United States Agency for International Development. (2019). 2018 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. https://nvo.lv/uploads/201910041747406956.pdf

consuming and reduces citizens trust in public administration. Therefore, it should be in the interests of public administration to engage citizens in the decision-making process. And thoughtful communication of public administration is crucial to ensure that citizens are informed and motivated to participate.

Table 2.5. **Analysis of factors influencing information delivery to citizens**

Type of communi-cation	Factors influencing content and delivery of information				
	Content Options	Speed of delivery	Citizen barriers to information channel	Costs for the institution (additionally to content creation)	Guarantee to reach a potential audience
Information to phone (SMS)	Text (short)	Fast (limited by mobile communication technology)	Possession of mobile phone; access to GSM network	Telecommunication companies' price for use of network	Very high
Home page of the institution	Text, photo, video, audio, data	Accessible immediately after publishing	Possession of computer / mobile phone; access to internet	Development and maintenance of the home page	Moderate as citizens themselves have to open a home page to search for new information
Social media	Text, photo, video	Accessible immediately after publishing	Possession of computer / mobile phone; access to internet	Additional costs if the content is promoted to reach new followers	High, but depends if followers have prioritized institutions social media page in their newsfeed
E-mail	Text, photo, data	Fast (depends from receiver's digital habits)	Possession of e-mail address and computer / mobile phone; access to internet	Additional costs if professional newsletter service is used	High, if a message is not lost in spam filters
Smartphone application	Text, photo, video, audio, data	Fast and direct	Possession of mobile phone; access to internet	Development and maintenance of smartphone application	Very high, if push notifications of application are not switched off
Mass media (television)	Video	Can be fast, but limited by the agenda of television companies	Possession of TV, computer or a mobile phone;	Additional costs if the information is broadcasted as a paid content	Moderate, as information is broadcasted at a particular moment
Mass media (radio)	Audio	Can be fast, but limited by the agenda of radio program	Possession of radio, computer or mobile phone	Additional costs if the information is broadcasted as a paid content	Moderate, as information is broadcasted at a particular moment
Mass media (printed media)	Text, photo	Slow, info might be outdated when it has reached the receiver	Purchase of printed media or access to library	Additional costs if the information is published as a paid content	Very high, if receiver have abonnement or strong habit to consume particular printed media
Information by post	Text, photo, printed materials	Slow, information might be outdated when it has reached the receiver	Post box or address for correspondence	Production; post companies' price for delivery	Theoretically very high, practically moderate as citizens not always are living in their official registered address
Face-to-face meetings	Text, photo, video, audio, printed materials	Fast and direct	Possibility to participate at a specific time and place	Additional costs depend from the type of event (catering, renting a place, moderator etc.)	Very high for the particular participants, but there is a limitation in the group size that can be gathered for face-to-face meetings

Public information (outdoor or public spaces)	Text, photo, video, audio, printed materials	Slow, information might be outdated when it has reached the receiver	Limitations of working hours and type of transportation	Production; dissemination; additional costs if the information is placed as a paid content	Low, as the audience is accidental, and it is hard to identify and measure the amount of reached audience

Source: Author's construction, arranged by potential volume of the audience (the largest to the smallest)

Public administration institution can choose which is the best information channel to reach citizens, inform them about the activities of the institution and engaged citizens in the decision-making process. In Table 2.5. are analysed various communication channels available to public administration, considering factors that are impacting the delivery of information to citizens. In the table are not mentioned factors that are impacting recipiency of information in general, such as citizens digital and media skills, as well as special needs of disabled persons that are impacting their ability to receive information from public institutions, for example, home pages that are accessible to visually impaired persons or accessibility of buildings where face-to-face meetings are organised. In table 2.5. information channels are arranged by potential volume of audience, starting with sending information to phone (SMS) as the largest, because almost all citizens are using mobile phones in Latvia, and ranking placement of public information as the smallest, because for this channel audience is accidental and it is hard to identify and measure the amount of reached audience. There is not one particular information channel that would be perfect, as a positive and negative impact of factors must be scaled to a particular situation. Sending information to the phone has a very high guarantee to reach the potential audience, but citizens will not agree that this information channel is used more frequently than only in emergencies. Similarly, face-to-face meetings can deliver information to a particular group of people very successfully, but there is a certain limitation on how much citizens will be able to participate in face-to-face meetings. Furthermore, for each information channel must be considered additional specific costs that are supplementing the initial communication costs of the institution such as salary for responsible employees and technical equipment. Use of social media or e-mail newsletters probably will make the lowest additional costs but publishing information on television as a paid content can be very expensive. Hence, although there are information channels with more advantages than others, none of them could provide the ideal citizen engagement situation. Thus, for the public administration, it is a challenge not only to choose the right information channel for the specific situation but also to be able to use the advantages of the channel and consider the flaws as well.

It is important to explain democracy processes to all generations, but the most important is to educate youth about civic and political participation, to ensure, that gradually there is formed a society that is aware of its capabilities and rights to participate in the decision-making process of public administration. In a study of youth participation in European democratic life, it was pointed

out why there is a need to educate youth about the importance of participation: "The first two elections in the life of a voter are key in determining their long-term participation. Those who do not participate in the first two elections after they are eligible to vote are likely to become habitual abstentionists, but those who do are likely to become habitual participants."[291]. Hence, it is much easier to develop comprehension of participation in youth than interest adults to be active if they have not previous interest and experience in participation. Support and limitations for youth education on participation issues are pointed out by Marie Heath: "Educational technologists should consider the role of citizenship in public schools and consider the role of critical theorists and educational technology. Technology integration in schools should help students develop a sense of identity, place, community and mattering in order to allow students to drive their own learning through affinity spaces, connected learning and participation"[292], therefore, schools that always have had an important role in the development of citizen participation skills also in the 21st century can keep this role but they have to consider the role of technology and channels from where youth can gather the information. Nowadays information published by public administration online and on social media can become one of the primary sources where youth can gain information about participation. As far as public institutions are able to attract attention of youth online.

Latvian public administration is becoming more and more available online and social media are often used for direct and fast communication with citizens. The digital environment helps to organise communication process faster and cheaper, as well as it reduces the effect of distance on the likelihood of cooperation – citizens can be in the other part of the country or even abroad, they are still able to receive information, provide their feedback and participate in the decision-making process. At the same time, it is important for public administration to remember, that there is still some part of society that is not using the internet. This proportion is much larger in the age group of 55 and older, however, there is a downward trend as internet availability and digital skills are becoming more distributed also in the older part of the generation. According to data[293] available in the Latvian Official Statistics Portal (in June 2021), in 2013 40.9 percent of citizens in Latvia were not using the internet for contacting or interacting with public authorities or public services, in 2019 this proportion was fallen to 17.1 percent, although the lowest rate was in 2016 – 11.3 percent. In the Central government communication policy of Norway is pointed out, that: "It must be taken into consideration that people have different needs and qualifications for receiving government

[291] 25. EACEA. (2013). Youth Participation in Democratic Life. LSE Enterprise. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/69761/1/Youth_Participation%20Report%202013.pdf

[292] Heath, M. K. (2018). What kind of (digital) citizen?: A between-studies analysis of research and teaching for democracy. *The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology*, 35(5), 342-356.

[293] Oficiālās statistikas portāls. (2021). Sadarbība ar valsts vai sabiedrisko pakalpojumu sniedzējiem izmantojot internetu. https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START__IKT__DL__DLM/DLM040/table/tableViewLayout1/

information; based on language, culture, abilities, functional ability, lack of competence or access to digital channels. Hence, the government must formulate its information to make it easy to understand for the recipients in the different target groups and make use of the channels and methods that are the most effective in reaching the different groups of people."[294] Hence, there should be a shift from the passive publication of information in the channels that are most easiest for the institution, for example, the home page, to the careful distribution of the information in the manner that is understandable to citizens and is reaching them in the environment that is contemporarily used by them – that can be traditional media and also the digital environment.

The worldwide encouragement that social media can be used not only for entertainment and communication with friends but also for citizen participation purposes was made by the 2008 USA election campaign after which also European Parliament for 2009 elections created accounts in several social media sites.[295] Since then the use of social media by public institutions has grown remarkably. The EU here is a good example - EU institutions are represented in more than 11 different social media sites and the search tool is providing information about more than 16 different EU institutions and agencies.[296] The purpose of using social media is clearly stated by the European Commission: "EU citizens are active on social networks and, therefore, the Commission uses these platforms to reach out and connect with citizens and stakeholders in addition to the communication which takes place via more traditional channels such as written press, broadcasters and EU publications and websites"[297], thus, the main reason to use social media is that this is a good opportunity to communicate with citizens, who are using social media for their personal purposes. European Commission has also developed special guidelines[298] for their employees on the use of social media for stakeholder and campaign communication, communication on political priorities, and use of social media in staff members' own capacity, emphasizing that "social media have an important scope for interaction and engagement with interested groups on EU-related themes and activities, but each Directorate General has to take into account the specific policy, its context, target audiences and the available resources," and that "any decision to engage on social media must be preceded by a "fitness check", i.e. whether the planned action is "fit for purpose" including

---

[294] Norwegian Ministry of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs. (2009). Central Government Communication Policy. https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/fad/vedlegg/informasjonspolitikk/statkompol_eng.pdf
[295] Vesnic-Alujevic, L. (2013). Members of the European Parliament online: The use of social media in political marketing. http://www.martenscentre.eu/sites/default/files/publication-files/political-marketing-and-social-media.pdf
[296] European Commission. (2021). Social networks. https://europa.eu/european-union/contact/social-networks_en
[297] European Commission. (2016). Use of social media in EU communication. https://ec.europa.eu/ipg/go_live/web2_0/index_en.htm
[298] European Commission. (2020). Using social media. https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/WEBGUIDE/01.+Using+social+media

a thorough assessment whether the available resources match the envisaged level of ambition" [299], thus reminding that communication with citizens also on social media must be well planned and the choice of communication channel must be justified. Nevertheless, for institutions use of social media still sometimes can be a challenge. In the report[300] of Latvian E-index 2019, it was concluded that although the use of social media is becoming more and more popular by public administration institutions, there is a lack of purposeful use of these resources - not all institutions with social media accounts use them purposefully for one-way or two-way communication with citizens and are not providing timely answers to citizen questions or are not publishing content often enough.

Since 2018 in Latvia there must be a citizen participation subsection in home pages of public administration institutions - that is regulated by Cabinet of Ministers of Republic of Latvia regulation nr. 611[301]. Nevertheless, according to the Latvian E-index[302], the citizen participation subsection in homepages in 2019 was having 88 percent of ministries and 35 percent of other public administration institutions. The situation might change in Summer 2021 after the project "Unified platform for state and local government websites" is planned to be finished[303]. Still, the current situation is demonstrating that improvements are needed and that there are various attitudes between institutions. Regulation nr. 611[304] is describing also other subsections that should be on the home page or mobile application of the Latvian public institution, such as contact information, the scope of sector activity, public services, current events. It is also regulating the use of Latvian Open Data Portal, Domain names and names of official email addresses, however, this regulation is describing only part of online activities that are managed by public administration nowadays, thus, activity on social media is still untouched territory where each institution can decide its own rules.

According to Latvian E-index, the use of social media by public administration institutions in Latvia is gradually growing[305] (see Figure 2.4.). Since 2017 the most growth is recognised in *Facebook* communication, as well as, in 2019 public administrations Twitter accounts were used more often than in 2016. Also, the speed of response has significantly improved on *Facebook*, 52

[299] European Commission. (2020). Using social media. https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/WEBGUIDE/01.+Using+social+media

[300] VARAM. (2019). Integrēts Publisko pakalpojumu sniegšanas un gala lietotāju vajadzību monitorings. Valsts iestāžu vērtējums un valsts iestāžu E-indekss. Aprakstoša atskaite.

[301] Ministru kabinets. (2018). Noteikumi Nr. 611. Kārtība, kādā iestādes ievieto informāciju internetā. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301865-kartiba-kada-iestades-ievieto-informaciju-interneta

[302] VARAM. (2019). Integrēts Publisko pakalpojumu sniegšanas un gala lietotāju vajadzību monitorings. Valsts iestāžu vērtējums un valsts iestāžu E-indekss. Aprakstoša atskaite.

[303] Valsts Kanceleja. (2020). Valsts un pašvaldību iestāžu tīmekļvietņu vienotā platforma. https://www.mk.gov.lv/timeklvietnes

[304] Ministru kabinets. (2018). Noteikumi Nr. 611. Kārtība, kādā iestādes ievieto informāciju internetā. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301865-kartiba-kada-iestades-ievieto-informaciju-interneta

[305] VARAM. (2019). Integrēts Publisko pakalpojumu sniegšanas un gala lietotāju vajadzību monitorings. Valsts iestāžu vērtējums un valsts iestāžu E-indekss. Aprakstoša atskaite. https://mana.latvija.lv/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2019/12/iestades_eind_2019.pdf

percent of public administration institutions in 2019 were evaluating that they can give a response to citizens on Facebook in less than one hour after they have received citizens question – in 2017 there was 23 percent of respondents who were able to comply with such time limit. Hence, not only Latvian citizens are becoming more active online, but, according to the Latvian E-index data, also public administration institutions are becoming more capable of regular and fast online communication, thus creating an environment that can be used not only for dissemination of information but also for gathering opinion from citizens - individuals and entrepreneurs.
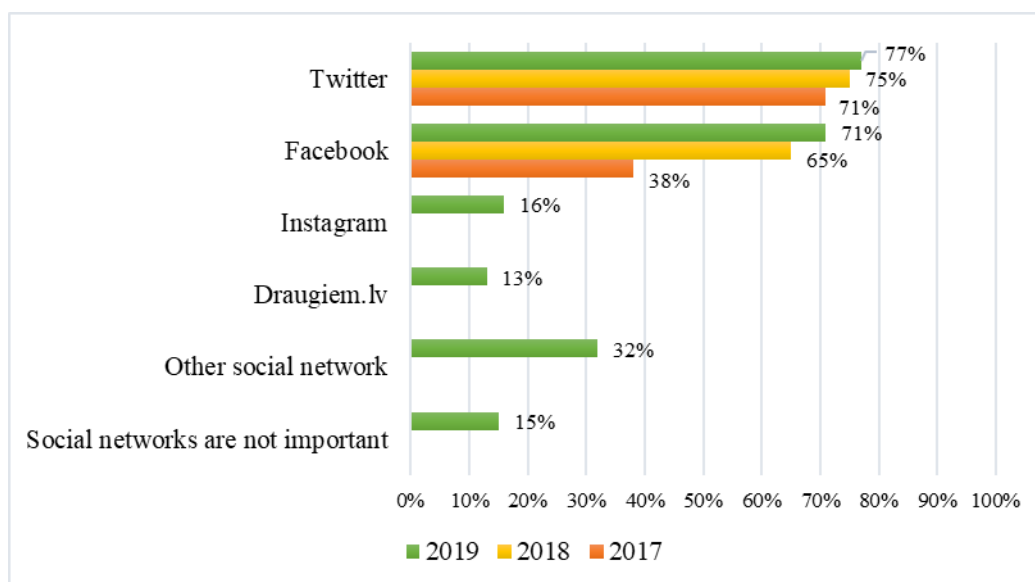
Figure 2.4. **Use of social media by Latvian public institutions (2017, 2018, 2019), the proportion of respondents (in%)**

Source: Author's construction based on data from Latvian E-index, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, 2019

The number of social media accounts that are maintained by Latvian public institutions suggests that institutions in Latvia are very well acquiring modern communication tools. In general, that is true, and Latvia can be an example of how public institutions are being present in social media, but there is needed deeper analysis that goes further than just a statistical presence in social media. Latvian public administration institutions most commonly are using *Facebook* and *Twitter* to communicate with citizens in the digital environment (see Table 2.6.). Most institutions are also using *Youtube*, some of them are active on *Instagram*. Accounts that are summarized in Table 2.6. are only institutions` main ones (See Appendix 4), in addition to the official accounts, separate social media accounts usually are made also for subordinate institutions and public officials of the institutions. It is a common situation in Latvia that for special campaign or funding programs is developed separate social media accounts, such an approach is easier from the perspective of account managers but is luring potential followers away from the institution's main account.

Table 2.6. **Statistics on social media channels that are used by Latvian public administration and number of followers for each channel (situation in October 2019 and September 2020)**

Public administration institution	Number of followers for each information channel									
	Facebook		*Instagram*		*Twitter*		*Youtube*		*Draugiem*	
	2019	*2020*	*2019*	*2020*	*2019*	*2020*	*2019*	*2020*	*2019*	*2020*
Ministry of Defence[306]	1454	2533	-	-	4957	5701	-	-	-	-
Ministry of Justice[307]	2676	3987	-	-	7882	8765	10	51	-	-
Ministry of Foreign Affairs[308]	3270	8323	685	1621	12126	14888	135	161	252	*canceled*
Ministry of Economics[309]	1136	2329	-	-	8459	9404	202	219	-	-
Ministry of Finance[310]	8531	9919	865	1292	10187	11195	81	90	49968	49296
Ministry of the Interior[311]	999	1701	-	-	8180	9038	-	-	171	169
Ministry of Education and Science[312]	7506	14616	-	*Since 11.03.21*	4961	5782	78	1060	124	133
Ministry of Culture[313]	3867	6142	*Since 01.11.19*	1210	2890	3227	22	31	-	-
Ministry of Welfare[314]	5568	8309	318	911	5824	6679	130	255	630	625
Ministry of Transport[315]	1710	3671	607	987	5480	6628	*No data*	*No data*	-	-
Ministry of Health[316]	1816	12321	*Since 20.07.20*	554	5783	10869	138	258	-	-
Mo EPRD[317]	3518	4202	-	-	7672	8286	131	157	-	-
Ministry of Agriculture[318]	1724	2659	*Since 13.01.20*	600	2790	3074	-	-	-	-
Latvian Parliament (Saeima)[319]	4498	6718	2055	2249	17304	18819	812	984	-	-
The State Chancellery / Government of Latvia[320]	4550	12997	1683	3800	16377	18933	705	939	-	-
TOTAL:	**52823**	**100427**	**6213**	**13224**	**120872**	**141288**	**2444**	**4205**	**51145**	**50223**

Source: Author's construction based on publicly available information on October 2019 and September 2020

In some cases (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economics, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Welfare) in the home page of the institution is not mentioned all social media pages that are maintained by the institution. That could be explained with different habits how institutions home page is maintained. This situation can be a

---

[306] Ministry of Defence. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Defence. https://www.mod.gov.lv/

[307] Ministry of Justice. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Justice. https://www.tm.gov.lv/

[308] Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. https://www.mfa.gov.lv/

[309] Ministry of Economics. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Economics. https://www.em.gov.lv/lv/

[310] Ministry of Finance. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Finance. https://www.fm.gov.lv/

[311] Ministry of the Interior. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of the Interior. http://www.iem.gov.lv/lat/

[312] Ministry of Education and Science. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Education and Science. https://izm.gov.lv/lv/

[313] Ministry of Culture. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Culture. https://www.km.gov.lv/lv

[314] Ministry of Welfare. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Welfare. http://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/

[315] Ministry of Transport. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Transport. http://www.sam.gov.lv

[316] Ministry of Health. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Health. http://www.vm.gov.lv/

[317] Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. http://www.varam.gov.lv/

[318] Ministry of Agriculture. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Agriculture. https://www.zm.gov.lv/

[319] Saeima. (2019). Home page of the Latvian Parliament. http://www.saeima.lv/

[320] The State Chancellery. (2019). Home page of the State Chancellery and Government of Latvia. https://mk.gov.lv/lv

burden for citizens to be able to follow the institution on social media. A brief analysis on names of the social media accounts are giving the impression that most of the accounts are made without serious discussion or long-term planning – names are not intuitive, that hinders the opportunity to find institution on social media search engine if citizen would like to start following particular institution. For example, the Latvian Parliament and Government are using their street address as the name of the social media accounts – that can become a good reason not to be able to find this institution on social media. Analysis of the number of followers demonstrates that the situation is very diverse, suggesting that it would be useful for institutions to learn from the experience of their colleagues. For example, Ministry of Finance is having a comparatively large number of followers on *Facebook* and *Twitter*, thus it could be useful to other public institutions to understand what campaigns, communication styles or other activities are ensuring this situation. When analysing the progress that institutions have gained in the period from October 2019 until September 2020, it is noticeable that the Ministry of Education and Science has a significant increase in the number of followers on *Facebook* and *Youtube*, as well as Ministry of Health has gained significant number of new followers that could be explained also by citizens interest to gain information about topics connected with COVID-19 crisis. Also, several institutions have started to use *Instagram*, and the number of their followers suggest that those few ministries without an *Instagram* account should follow the example of their colleagues. Overall, the increase in the number of followers to institutions social media accounts are confirming that citizens are interested to follow institutions on social media, therefore it is worth continuing this digital communication also further.

2.4. Digital environment in Latvia

The situation of citizen participation in Latvia is demanding from institutions to find new ways how to engage citizens in the dialogue.
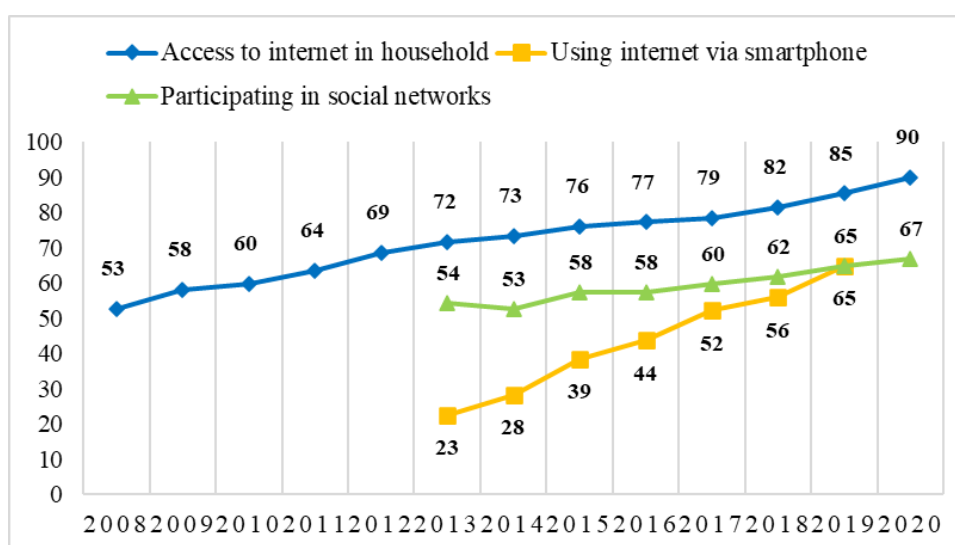

Figure 2.5. **Use of internet and social media in Latvia (2008 until 2020), the share of the population(in%)**
Source: Author's construction based on data from the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2009-2020

Social media could be a convenient tool for this purpose as communication in social media is direct, fast and comparatively cheaper than in traditional mass media, moreover, technical possibilities of social media are ensuring that two-way communication can be maintained. Also, good availability of the internet is increasing the probability that it is easy to reach Latvian citizens online - since 2008 access to internet has grown from 53 percent to 90 percent of all Latvian households in 2020 (Figure 2.5.). To understand, how to communicate with citizens in the digital environment, it is important to identify, which citizens and how often are online, what are their digital habits and skills, for what purposes they are using internet and where in the digital environment they can be reached by institutions. In Latvia the most often used social media is *Facebook* – in May 2021 there were 1 215 000 *Facebook* users in Latvia[321]. Therefore, for the public administration in Latvia social media are essential information channel that could help to reach citizens, especially communication in *Facebook* as it has the biggest number of daily users in Latvia. Between OECD countries[322] there are regional differences in purposes for the use of the internet (see Figure 2.6.). In Latvia citizens are comparatively active on social media and in communication with public authorities, therefore suggesting that public institutions in Latvia must consider online communication in social media if they want to engage citizens in the decision-making process and foster their knowledge about civic and political participation.

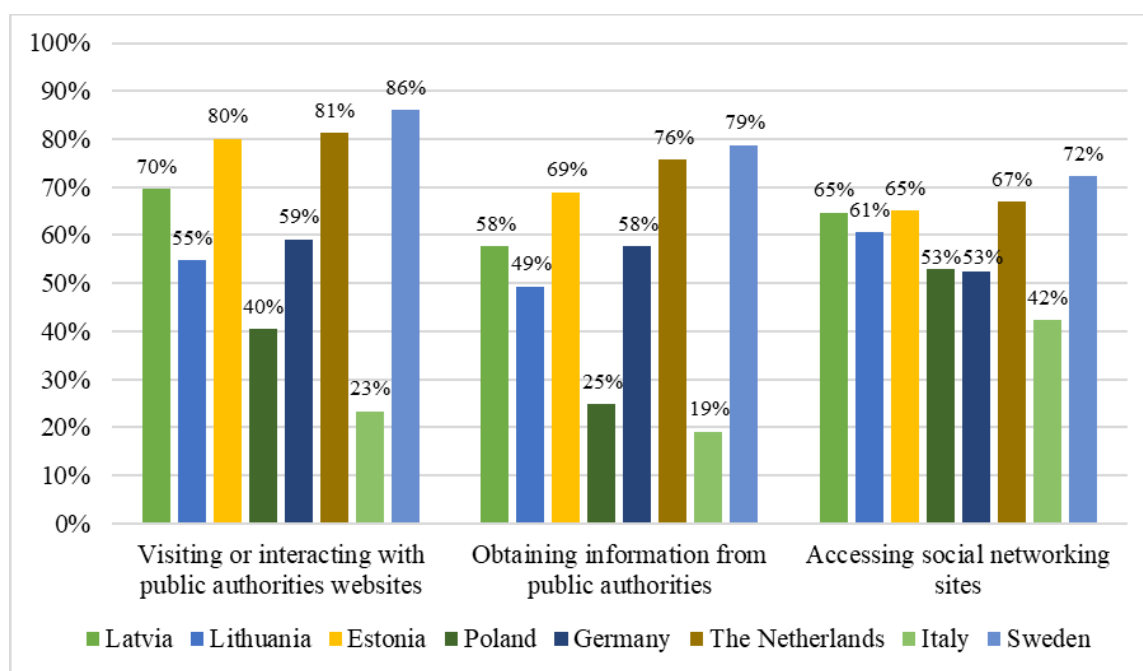

Figure 2.6. **Purposes of internet use in Latvia and selected OECD countries (2019)**
Source: Author`s construction based on data from OECD, 2020

[321] Napoleon Sp.zo.o. (2021). Facebook users in Latvia. https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-latvia/2021/05
[322] OECD. (2020). ICT Access and Usage by Households and Individuals. https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ICT_HH2

Digital habits of citizens are a factor that also has a significant impact on citizen digital participation. According to the study by OECD, although most youth is online, their online habits differ depending on their socio-economic conditions. Youth from disadvantaged groups are spending more time online, but this time is not used qualitatively as they are not aware of opportunities that the digital environment can offer them[323], therefore, additional learning is needed to ensure that citizens can use digital tools. In 2019 Latvia was ranked in the 14th place in the EU according to the Index of readiness for digital lifelong learning, and it was concluded that for Latvia the main weakness is the lack of availability of digital learning tools and one of the main shortcomings is "the lack of teachers' digital skills as well as the inability to synthesise traditional teaching methods with digital learning opportunities"[324]. By the same index, Estonia was rated in the 1st place, Lithuania in the 11th place, but in the 27th place was Germany, demonstrating that country`s digital development is not dependent on wealth, geographic or historical conditions. The Digital skills of Latvian citizens are lagging behind other Baltic countries (see Figure 2.7.). 43 percent of Latvian citizens in 2019 had basic or above basic overall digital skills, with the 56 percent benchmark for Lithuanians and 62 percent benchmark for Estonians. This result is also below the EU average[325] – 58 percent.
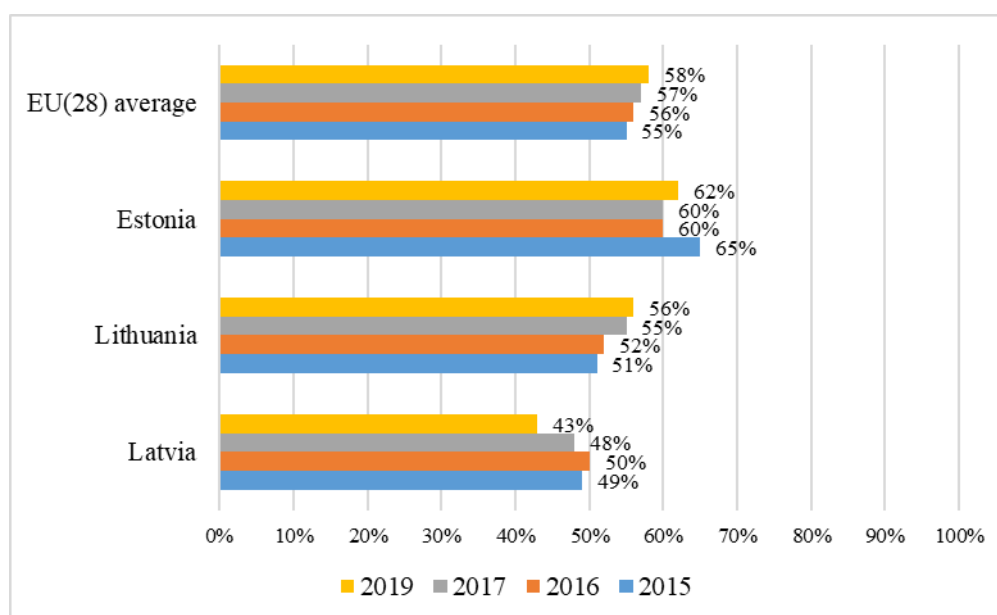
Figure 2.7. **Share of individuals in Baltic states and EU(28) average (in %) who have basic or above basic overall digital skills (2015, 2016, 2017, 2019)**

Source: Author's construction based on data from Eurostat, 2020

[323] OECD. (2016). PISA in Focus - Are there differences in how advantaged and disadvantaged students use the Internet? https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/are-there-differences-in-how-advantaged-and-disadvantaged-students-use-the-internet_5jlv8zq6hw43-en#page1
[324] CEPS. (2019). Index of Readiness for Digital Lifelong Learning, Changing How Europeans Upgrade Their Skills. Final Report - November 2019
[325] Eurostat. (2020). Individuals who have basic or above basic overall digital skills. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/graph.do?tab=graph&plugin=1&pcode=tepsr_sp410&language=en&toolbox=data

Although the situation with digital skills of Latvian citizens is a long-known problem, it was strongly again reminded in 2020 because of COVID-19 crisis, thus Latvia in the national plan[326] for the EU financial support of the Recovery and Resilience Facility has planned several activities as a possible solution that would help to improve digital skills of citizens. Nevertheless, the obtained improvement will be fully measurable only after the end of the financial support period of the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

Digital solutions cannot become the only channel for citizen participation and there should be maintained offline participation possibilities as well. Still, digital participation opportunities should be promoted and endorsed so more people are aware that they can participate in the decision-making process also individually and online. In the case study about e-democracy tools in Estonia, Finland and Latvia it is concluded that: "despite the ever wider use of internet across the world, a rather considerable part of the society does not have access to the internet or use it rarely, even in the Western world, which is traditionally considered to be relatively tech-savvy"[327], thus promotion of digital solutions are needed to ensure the use of them in all groups of society. Also, clever communication strategies are needed to reach citizens, as there are differences that should be considered. Results from the study by Pew research centre suggested that: "older generations are more likely to vote than younger generations" [328] and youth are more likely to post comments on political or social issues online. Therefore, although not all citizens are using the internet and participation habits are different depending on age group, the number of citizens that are regularly using the internet is gradually increasing. Thus, public administration should pay attention to the future development of online communication and citizen digital participation.

The digital environment is built and inhabited by public institutions and their employees as well. This part is important when discussing capacity for the future development of digital opportunities and digital democracy. Similarly to citizens, also institutions and their representatives have various comprehensions about the digital environment, also, various skills to be able to cooperate in the digital environment and use its opportunities in full potential. In the European Union digital competitiveness of the member states and their digital performance is measured with the Digital Economy and Society Index[329]. When comparing results of Latvia, Estonia and

[326] Ministru kabinets. (2021). Par Latvijas Atveseļošanas un noturības mehānisma plānu. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/322858-par-latvijas-atveselosanas-un-noturibas-mehanisma-planu

[327] Mangule, I. (2016). E-democracy in Action. https://www.kogu.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/E-democracy-in-Action_case-studies-from-Estonia-Latvia-Finland_2016.pdf

[328] Wike, R., Castillo, A. (2018). Many Around the World are Disengaged from Politics. Pew Research Center, https://www.pewglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/10/Pew-Research-Center_-International-Political-Engagement-Report_2018-10-17.pdf

[329] European Commission. (2019). The Digital Economy and Society Index. https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi

Lithuania with the EU average[330] in the time period from 2018 until 2020, (seen Figure 2.8.), in the combination of all relevant indicators, Latvia is in 17th place in the EU with a score 50, that is close to the EU average, but below the results of Lithuania and Estonia. However, in some positions Latvia can be a good example already now - when looking more carefully at each indicator, results of Latvia are heterogeneous[331], integration of digital technology is evaluated with 28.3 score (23rd place in the EU), but digital public services is evaluated with 85.1 score (5th place in the EU).
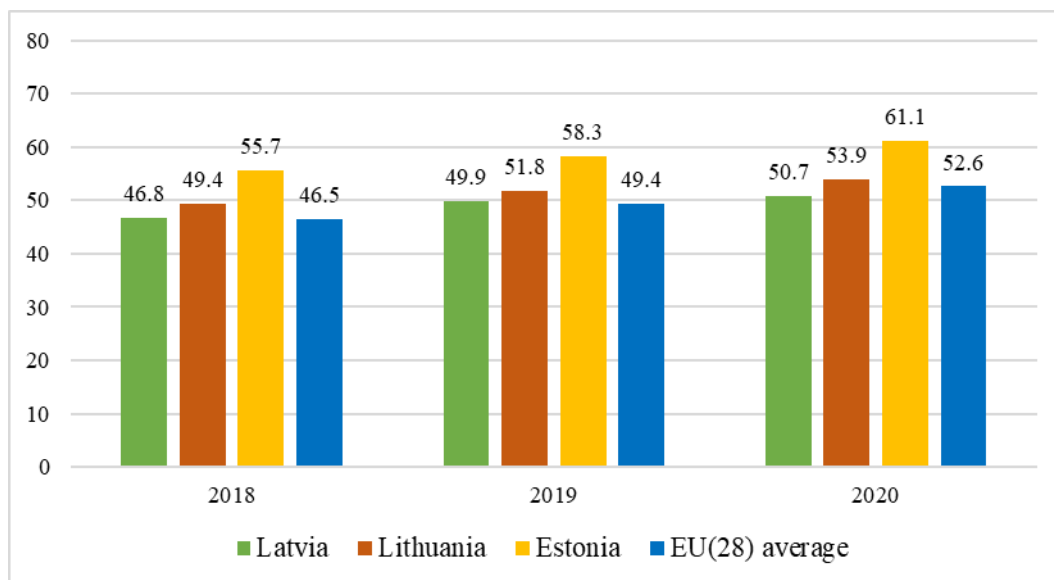
Figure 2.8. **Digital Economy and Society Index in Baltic countries and EU(28) average (2018-2020)**
Source: Author's construction based on data from the European Commission, 2020

According to conclusions of the Digital Economy and Society Index report[332], further progress in Latvia will be reached if there are implemented data-driven innovative products and services, also cross-sectoral partnerships are established. In the evaluation of situation with e-government in EU-28 countries, it was concluded that in the European Union the best ranking obtained Estonia, Finland, Sweden and Malta, ranking Latvia in the above-average countries, concluding that "E-government is a useful tool for reducing the cost of public administration and it is also the benefit for the residents in the form of time savings"[333]. Digital democracy is a comparatively new topic that is continuously developing – new types of communication channels are created, notions about communication limits are changing and citizen habits are advancing. Considering the digital environment of Latvia, public administration has an opportunity not only to reproduce the good practice of other countries but even become innovators of digital democracy. Still, according to OECD Government at a Glance 2019 report, from 36 OECD countries, only 17

---

[330] European Commission. (2020). Countries' performance in digitisation. https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/countries-performance-digitisation
[331] European Commission. (2020). Digital Economy and Society Index 2020, Country Report Latvia
[332] European Commission. (2019). Digital Economy and Society Index 2019, Country Report Latvia
[333] Ardielli, E., Halásková, M. (2015). Assessment of E-Government in EU Countries. *Scientific Papers of the University of Pardubice*, 22, 4-16.

prioritize training in IT skills of government employees. About Latvia`s situation it was stated that "while Latvia includes online course development and executive leadership training and coaching among its training priorities for its central administration workforce it does not prioritize training in IT and digital skills"[334], this attitude can slow down governments ability to react quickly on future challenges that might come from the rapid development of digital environment. As a response to the problems highlighted by COVID-19 crisis, in the national plan[335] for the EU financial support of the Recovery and Resilience Facility Latvia has planned support for digital transformation process in the public administration and also activities that would foster digital skills of the representatives of institutions. Hence, lessons learned in the COVID-19 crisis might have changed public administrations` comprehension of the necessity of digital environment, thus helping to foster further digital development in Latvia.

2.5. Public administration and digital participation

It is the responsibility of the public administration to establish a digital environment that is open to citizen participation. The motivation for such efforts comes from the comprehension that citizens opinion is valued and needed by public administration and digital solutions can help to communicate with citizens faster and easier. Bertot and his colleagues[336] advocated that the use of social media in openness and anti-corruption efforts can potentially promote democratic participation, facilitate co-production of materials between governments and members of the public and help crowdsourcing solutions and innovations. The use of the internet for two-way communication and interaction is possible since the development of *Web 2.0.* that ensured the emergence of social media - Latvian social media portal draugiem.lv[337] since 2004, international social media networks such as *Facebook*[338] since 2004 in the USA and since 2005 worldwide and Twitter[339] since 2007. Other social media platforms and smartphone applications were introduced later. From the academic perspective digital political participation has become an interesting and well-analysed topic since 2008 when Obama`s social media activity before the USA national elections indicated, that social media can be used also for political engagement[340]. Since then social media and digital tools have developed and changed a lot, as well as academic comprehension about digital political participation. However, this field is still in the fast advancement phase, thus, it is

---

[334] OECD. (2019). Government at a Glance 2019, Country Fact Sheet – Latvia. http://www.oecd.org/gov/govataglance.htm

[335] Ministru kabinets. (2021). Par Latvijas Atveseļošanas un noturības mehānisma plānu. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/322858-par-latvijas-atveselosanas-un-noturibas-mehanisma-planu

[336] Bertot, J. C., Jaeger, P. T., Grimes, J. M. (2012). Promoting transparency and accountability through ICTs, social media, and collaborative e-government. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 6(1), 78-91.

[337] Draugiem Group. (2019). Par mums. https://draugiemgroup.com/lv/par-mums

[338] Facebook. (2019). Company info. https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/

[339] Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2019). Twitter. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Twitter

[340] Vesnic-Alujevic, L. (2013). Members of the European Parliament online: The use of social media in political marketing. http://www.martenscentre.eu/sites/default/files/publication-files/political-marketing-and-social-media.pdf

important to follow development processes also from the academic perspective. Since the beginning of the 21st century, public institutions have made many efforts to discover digital territory - starting with home pages and gradually moving towards more active use of digital opportunities. Hence, more and more institutions are being present in the digital environment - not just because they are feeling peer pressure to be present, but because they are recognising positive aspects that online representation can gain to them.

Representation of public administration in the digital environment and a need for more active citizen participation is promoted by international organisations. For Latvia, as a member of those organisations, international decisions and jointly signed documents are binding. And it is important to remember that often also representatives of Latvia are participating in the development of those documents, thus, they cannot be seen as a *dictate from above*, but jointly agreed-on decisions. OECD Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies was published in 2014 with a purpose to "help governments adopt more strategic approaches for a use of technology"[341], suggesting four main goals:

- Ensure greater transparency, openness and inclusiveness of government processes;
- Encourage engagement and participation of public, private and civil society stakeholders in policymaking and public service design and delivery, forming a digital government ecosystem for the provision and use of digital services;
- Create a data-driven culture in the public sector;
- Reflect a risk management approach to addressing digital security and privacy issues.

United Nations are supporting digital cooperation looking at it as a necessary environment that could help governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. In the report "The Age of Digital Interdependence"[342] United Nations suggested fourteen key principles of digital cooperation: consensus-oriented; polycentric; customised; respecting subsidiarity; accessible; inclusive; agile; with the clarity in roles and responsibility; accountable; resilient; open and transparent; innovative; tech-neutral; and with equitable outcomes. European Parliament`s report on e-democracy in the European Union was adopted in 2017, emphasizing that "the purpose of e-democracy is to promote a democratic culture that enriches and reinforces democratic practices, by providing additional means to increase transparency and citizens` participation, but not to establish an alternative democratic system to detriment of representative democracy. E-democracy alone does not ensure political participation,

---

[341] OECD. (2014). Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies, Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate.
[342] The United Nations. (2019). The Age of Digital Interdependence. Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/DigitalCooperation-report-for%20web.pdf

and that a non-digital environment to pursue political participation of citizens must also be addressed in parallel to e-democracy" [343]. Accordingly, at the European Union level, there is noticeable support to foster democracy and find new ways how to encourage citizen participation. Still, the national governments and public institutions have the biggest responsibility for concrete actions and initiatives that would lead the goodwill to tangible results. In the analysis about e-participation in the European Union, it was concluded that digital participation should be fostered in the European Union, as: "E-participation tools can represent an alternative form of engagement for citizens who are tired of 'traditional politics' and help promote more grassroots support for EU policy. The democratic deficit should be grasped as an opportunity for the EU to show that it cares about its citizens by giving them the possibility to participate in the decision-making process in a more collaborative manner"[344]. Nevertheless, the communication of Latvian public institutions in social media mostly is one-way and top-down, informing about topical events and decisions rather than encouraging citizens to two-way communication and dialogue, although social media are already used by other actors to foster citizen participation.

The main types of citizen mobilization that are organised through social media are compiled by the V-Dem Institute in their annual V-dem democracy report[345]. Types of citizen mobilization organized through social media were evaluated on a scale from 0 (not common) to 1 (common), according to this evaluation, social media most often is used to organise street protests – assessment was 0.73 from 1 as maximum. In 2018 that commonly occurred in 155 countries, for example, in Austria, France, Spain, Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, and Poland. The second and third most common activities organized through social media were signing petitions to support different causes (in 140 countries) - 0.66 from 1 as maximum and mobilizing voter turnout (in 133 countries) - 0.59 from 1 as maximum. It was recognised, that social media in 2018 in the world was also used to organise offline activities that are not legal or are reducing democracy and human rights. This matter must not be forgotten when discussing the impact of social media on civic and political activity. Although social media are reflecting and intensifying the already existing problems that are in contemporary society, the main responsibility on the regulation of this matter is to the owners of social media who are too slow in the development of restrictions against hate speech and other activities that are fostering polarisation of society.

[343] European Parliament. (2017). Resolution on e-democracy in the European Union: potential and challenges. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2017-0041_EN.html
[344] Lironi, E. (2016). *Potential and Challenges of E-Participation in the European Union*, Directorate General for Internal Policies - Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs.
[345] V-Dem Institute. (2019). Democracy Facing Global Challenges. V-dem annual democracy report 2019.

Supporting the need for public institutions to be able to adapt to the changing environment, OECD countries, also Latvia, has emphasized the importance of innovation, in the Declaration on Public Sector Innovation[346] stating five commitments:

- Embrace and enhance innovation within the public sector, also by recognising that innovation, similar to other core functions, requires investment and support to do well;

- Encourage and equip all public servants to innovate, also by giving permission to public sector organisations and public servants to take appropriate risks and to explore and engage with new ideas, technology and ways of working as part of their core business;

- Cultivate new partnerships and involve different voices, also by connecting different actors in ways that allow public sector organisations to partner, collaborate and co-create new approaches or solutions to problems;

- Support exploration, iteration and testing, also by recognising and capturing the learning that comes from exploration, and appreciate that often experimenting and innovating may not only be about fixing but also learning;

- Diffuse lessons and share practices, also by fostering networking and peer learning to help public servants learn and borrow from each other.

In response to commitments recognised in the Declaration on Public Sector Innovation, it is expected that also in Latvia there will be given more attention to innovations. First expectations for that are recognisable in the activities of the State Chancellery of Latvia - since 2018 institution is developing innovation laboratory #GovLabLatvia[347], that is helping to find solutions for reduction of administrative burden and providing ideas for strengthening the reputation and image of public administration. Successful implementations of innovative approaches in the public sector can lead also to better citizen engagement and digital participation. In the EU support to digital participation is coordinated with the Digital single market initiative and open government approach that is expected: "to improve the quality of decision-making and promote greater trust in public institutions"[348]. European Commission's vision for public services highlights possible benefits: "Open government empowers users to directly participate in their own service design, creation or selection. It leads to more user-friendly - personalised, pro-active and location-based - services"[349]. In this aspect, Latvia`s public institutions still need to develop their communication strategies and

[346] OECD. (2019). Declaration on Public Sector Innovation. https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0450

[347] Valsts kanceleja. (2020). GovLabLatvia - Latvijas valsts pārvaldes inovācijas laboratorijas. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/content/govlablatvia-latvijas-valsts-parvaldes-inovacijas-laboratorijas

[348] European Commission. (2018). *Open Government*, https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/open-government

[349] European Commission. (2013). *A vision for public services*, Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology.

skills that could be quite a challenge, although foreign experience suggests that this change of mindset is a difficult task also to public institutions in other countries.

Countries on a national level are designing regulations for online communication and coordinated use of social media for participation purposes. Central government communication policy in Norway was established in 2009 with the aim that "the citizens shall get correct and clear information about their rights, responsibilities and opportunities; have access to information about the government's activities; and be invited to participate in the formulation of policies, arrangements and services",[350] setting out five principles for good communication: openness, participation, reaching all, active and coherency. One of the first initiatives for the regulation of public administrations` online communication in Latvia was established in 2011 after the conference "Socialie mediji un web@valsts parvalde.lv"[351] that was organised by the State Chancellery of Latvia. Latvian public administrations attitude towards digital participation was highlighted in the Information Society Development Guidelines for 2014 -2020: "It is important to draw special attention to the development and use of ICT options, which help to organise a dialogue with the public through the social network platforms and common forms of electronic communication; thus, making the communications with the public more modern and accessible. ICT solutions allow reaching the population better since mutual communication is performed through ICT platforms, which people use or more convenient and more rapidly could use on a daily basis."[352], and this comprehension is continued also in the Guidelines for digital transformation 2021-2027[353]. Thus, in the strategic documents, there is support to the future development of the digital environment in Latvia, still, in the reality, the scale and speed of the development are influenced by financial matters, the capacity of the institutions and upper managements` general comprehension of digital innovations and their role in the public administration.

One of the main institution responsible for digital development in Latvia is the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. From April 2018 until June 2020 they were implementing project My Latvija.lv. Do it digitally! / Mana Latvija.lv. Dari digitāli! to promote the use of digital solutions that are provided by Latvian public institutions[354]. In their review of current digital opportunities are highlighted the use of *manabalss.lv* and *Latvija.lv* for supporting citizen-

[350] Norwegian Ministry of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs. (2009). Central Government Communication   Policy. https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/fad/vedlegg/informasjonspolitikk/statkompol_eng.pdf
[351] State Chancellery of Latvia. (2019). Konference „Sociālie mediji un web@valsts pārvalde.lv". http://tap.mk.gov.lv/vk/konference-web/prezentacijas/
[352] VARAM. (2019). Information Society Development Guidelines for 2014 -2020. http://www.varam.gov.lv/eng/darbibas_veidi/e_gov/?doc=13317
[353] Valsts Kanceleja. (2021). Pamatnostādņu projekts "Digitālās transformācijas pamatnostādnes 2021.-2027.gadam". http://tap.mk.gov.lv/mk/tap/?pid=40496916
[354] VARAM. (2018). Par mums. https://mana.latvija.lv/par-mums/ [Accessed 03.12.2019]

led legislative initiatives, and several smart-phone applications: for environmental issues – Environment SOS / Vides SOS, for reporting violations or good examples of Latvian language usage - Language friend / Valodas draugs, and for helping to improve the quality of the services provided by the public institutions - Football / Futbols[355], that was once evaluated as one of the world's best practice for digital communication with citizens[356]. According to the eGovernment Benchmark 2020 Latvia (with 87 percent overall score) is one of the European frontrunners in eGovernment, together with Malta (97 percent), Estonia (92 percent) and Austria (87 percent)[357]. Countries performance in eGovernment Benchmark is evaluated against four benchmarks - User Centricity, Transparency, Key Enablers and Cross-Border Mobility. Hence, there are aspects of the digital environment where Latvia is already an example and there are also several initiatives that are leading to digital participation, but the effect of those activities will be possible to measure only after some time. Still, that must not be the reason for waiting – as the digital environment is still developing and rules of it are constantly changing, for the public administration it is better to be part of those who are shaping this future.

Development stages of e-Government in Latvia were described in the study[358] of digital governance in Latvia, Denmark and the United Kingdom. Since 1991 Latvia has reached significant progress in the digitalisation of public administration processes (see Table 2.7.), granting citizens digital access to government services and fostering a digital environment and ICT structure. In 2019 was launched Open data portal and in 2020 was also launched Official Statistics Portal[359]. In 2019 citizens for the first time could apply for the state-issued official e-mail address[360] that is promising to make easier and faster communication between institution and citizens. In 2019 continued work with the development of the unified platform for state and local government websites, launching the first test pages in the middle of 2020[361], also, in 2019 was organised public discussions about the fourth national plan for the Open Government Partnership[362], in both processes State Chancellery of Latvia was engaging citizens in the development of the new design and ideas with discussions and

[355] VARAM. (2019). No iespējas ziņot par piesārņotu mežu līdz likumdošanas iniciatīvu iesniegšanai – darot digitāli, var paveikt nozīmīgus darbus! https://mana.latvija.lv/no-iespejas-zinot-par-piesarnotu-mezu-lidz-likumdosanas-iniciativu-iesniegsanai-darot-digitali-var-paveikt-nozimigus-darbus-2/ [Accessed 03.12.2019]

[356] Valsts Kanceleja. (2014). Valsts kancelejas mobila aplikacija „Futbols" - starp 40 labakajam pasaule! https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/aktualitates/valsts-kancelejas-mobila-aplikacija-futbols-starp-40-labakajam-pasaule (accessed 08.04.2019)

[357] European Commission. (2020). eGovernment Benchmark 2020: eGovernment that works for the people https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/egovernment-benchmark-2020-egovernment-works-people

[358] Ozols, G., Nielsen, M. M. (2018). Connected Government Approach for Customer-centric Public Service Delivery: Comparing strategic, governance and technological aspects in Latvia, Denmark and the United Kingdom. United Nations University.

[359] Centrālā statistikas pārvalde. (2020). Par portālu. https://stat.gov.lv/lv/par-portalu

[360] VARAM (2019). E-adrese fiziskām personām – vienota un droša saziņa ar valsti. https://mana.latvija.lv/e-adrese/

[361] Valsts Kanceleja. (2020). Valsts un pašvaldību iestāžu tīmekļvietņu vienotā platforma. https://www.mk.gov.lv/timeklvietnes

[362] Valsts Kanceleja. (2019). Latvijas Ceturtais nacionālais rīcības plāns. Diskusiju dokuments. https://www.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/editor/Lidzdaliba/diskusiju_dokuments_ogp_4_12.09.2019.pdf

online surveys, hence, digital development in Latvian public administration has reached the level when citizens can become not only users of digital opportunities but also partners that are helping to design future development of the digital environment, also, using digital opportunities to participate in the public administration's decision-making process in general.

Table 2.7. **Historic development stages of e-Government in Latvia (1991 – 2020)**

Period	Main e-government development focuses and highlights
1991 - 2005	The building of base registers, agencies internal digitalisation, base government ICT regulation and first e-Government plan. Examples: • e-Government program; • Regulation on State Information Systems; • government and citizen electronic communication (including the once-only principle); • digital signature conception.
2006 - 2013 Latvian e-Government Development Programme (2005 - 2009) Guidelines for the development of Information Society (2006 - 2013) Electronic Government Development Plan (2011 - 2013)	Development of e-Services ecosystems (shared platforms), mandatory government service digitalisation, digital skills of citizens and entrepreneurs. Examples: • State Information System Integrator; • citizens portal (*Latvija.lv*); • Qualified Digital Signature; • More than 300 government services available online; • Bank authentication and payment systems become available for government services; • Citizen online initiative platform (*manabalss.lv*) legalised; • Citizen eID cards implemented; • ICT governance model adopted in 2013.
2014 - 2018 Guidelines for the development of Information Society (2014-2020)	Governance, government ICT architecture, data-based innovations and partnerships. Examples: • Government ICT conceptual architecture model; • Chief Information Architect; • Network of State and Regional Unified Customer Service Centres; • Centralised benchmarking and awareness building initiatives; • Horizontal regulation on public service delivery; • Quality assurance and performance measurement; • Open data portal; • The release of agencies data; • Multi-stakeholder initiative on Data-Driven Nation.
2019-2020 Guidelines for the development of Information Society (2014-2020)	Strengthening Open Government and fostering digital cooperation between public administration and citizens. Examples: • Officially launching the Open data portal; • Finishing Open Government Partnership third national action plan and starting the fourth one; • Citizens could apply for the state-issued official e-mail address; • First test phase home pages published in the project "Unified platform for state and local government websites"; • Opening of the Official Statistics Portal; • Implementation of an e-parliament (e-Saeima) platform, allowing plenary sittings to be held remotely; • Use of the State Revenue Service Electronic declaration system for the dissemination of information in the time of COVID-19 crisis; • Work was continued to launch the single portal for the development and agreement upon draft laws and regulations (*TAP portāls*).

2021 (first half) Guidelines for digital transformation 2021-2027	Fostering digital transformation in Latvia and developing closer digital relations between public administration and citizens. Examples: • Development of Guidelines for digital transformation 2021-2027; • Public administration in cooperation with non-governmental organisations continued work with several citizen participation projects (portal for draft laws and regulations, project "Public Participation - Key to the Future of Democracy", and development of digital tool that would help non-governmental organisations to participate in the decision-making process of Latvian Parliament); • Start of discussions about Latvia`s fifth Open Government Partnership plan (2022-2025); • Work was continued in the project for unified platform for state and local government websites - having produced already more than 70 unified style websites; • Activities for the acceleration of the digital transformation planned to be implemented with the financial support of the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

Source: Ozols, G., Nielsen, M. M. (2018) and author`s construction (2019-2021)

In 2020 was continued work[363] with the portal for draft laws and regulations (*TAP portāls*) that is planned to be launched in 2021, helping stakeholders to follow the development of legislation process. In October 2020 State Chancellery of Latvia together with Civic Alliance Latvia started the project "Public Participation - Key to the Future of Democracy"[364] that will be continued until 2022, in the project is planned to develop new digital participation opportunities in Latvia and strengthen citizens knowledge about democracy. The development of new digital participation portal started also NGO "Sabiedribas lidzdalibas fonds" – planning to design tool[365] that would help non-governmental organisations to participate in the decision-making process of Latvian Parliament. Public administrations` ability to adapt to the digital environment was also demonstrated in the first half of 2020 in response to COVID-19 crisis – there was implemented an e-parliament (e-Saeima) platform, allowing plenary sittings to be held remotely and also State Revenue Service Electronic declaration system was used for the fast dissemination of information about the COVID-19 situation. As an answer to lessons learned in the first months of COVID-19 crisis, since middle of 2020 in the European Union started several initiatives that supported faster digital transformation process in the member countries, hence, further development continued also in Latvia. Until the middle of 2021 State Chancellery of Latvia continued work in the project for unified platform for state and local government websites - having produced already more than 70 unified style websites[366]. State Chancellery of Latvia continued work in the previously started projects (portal for draft laws and regulations, and "Public Participation - Key to the Future of Democracy" in cooperation with Civic Alliance Latvia Public) that could improve digital

---

[363] Valsts Kanceleja. (2019). TAP portāls. https://www.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/editor/Lidzdaliba/20190925_tap_memoranda_padome.pdf

[364] Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse. (2020). Uzsākta sadarbības iniciatīva sabiedrības iesaistes un līdzdalības procesu uzlabošanai.https://nvo.lv/lv/zina/uzsakta_sadarbibas_iniciativa_sabiedribas_iesaistes_un_lidzdalibas_procesu_uzlabos anai/

[365] ManaBalss. (2020). Uzsākam īstenot projektu "Automatizētas PSO līdzdalības sistēmas izstrāde". https://parvaipret.lv/pages/organizations

[366] Ministru kabinets. (2021). Projekta dalībnieki: valsts un pašvaldību iestādes. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/projekta-dalibnieki-valsts-un-pasvaldibu-iestades

participation opportunities in Latvia. Public administrations comprehension that it is necessary to foster digital relations with citizens can be identified in the new Guidelines for digital transformation 2021-2027 (still in the project status[367] as in June 2021 the document was not yet approved by Government). The acceleration of the digital transformation process is planned[368] from the middle of 2021 with the financial support of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, fostering digitalisation of public administration, improving digital skills of citizens and representatives of institutions, as well as increasing digitalisation in the business environment in Latvia.

Significant support for the development of open and citizen-centric public administration in Latvia is ensured by country`s international commitments. Since 2011 Latvia is participating in Open Government Partnership which is "multilateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance"[369]. To join Open Government Partnership, countries have to endorse the Open Government Declaration and commit to "foster a global culture of open government that empowers and delivers for citizens, and advances the ideals of open and participatory 21st-century government"[370]. In the framework of Open Government Partnership, Latvia has developed four national action plans[371], of which the newest one was approved in January 2020, and in April 2021 was started first activities in the development of Latvia`s fifth Open Government Partnership plan (2022-2025) - collecting ideas[372] from non-governmental organisations and citizens. In the third action plan[373] Latvia planned to solve 12 commitments, among them several were connected to citizen participation, especially the first commitment - Fostering public participation in the decision-making process, third commitment - Providing access to Open data, and fourth commitment - Ensuring transparency in lobbying. According to the report, published in July 2020, "Most of the commitments in Latvia's third action plan were fully or substantially completed"[374]. Still, the report emphasized that there is a need to "Ensure greater involvement of the Council of Memorandum during the development of the next action plan and publish feedback during consultations" and that citizen participation situation was not fostered as much as it was planned.

---

[367] Valsts Kanceleja. (2021). Pamatnostādņu projekts "Digitālās transformācijas pamatnostādnes 2021.-2027.gadam". http://tap.mk.gov.lv/mk/tap/?pid=40496916
[368] Ministru kabinets. (2021). Par Latvijas Atveseļošanas un noturības mehānisma plānu. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/322858-par-latvijas-atveselosanas-un-noturibas-mehanisma-planu
[369] Open Government Partnership. (2018). Latvia. https://www.opengovpartnership.org/countries/latvia
[370] Open Government Partnership. (2019). Open Government Declaration. https://www.opengovpartnership.org/process/joining-ogp/open-government-declaration/
[371] Ministru kabinets. (2018). Atvērtā pārvaldība. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/content/atverta-parvaldiba
[372] ManaBalss. (2021). Apkopotās idejas. https://atvertalatvija.manabalss.lv/idejas
[373] Valsts kanceleja. (2017). Latvijas trešais nacionālais atvērtās pārvaldības rīcības plāns. https://www.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/editor/atvertas-parvaldibas-plans2017_1.pdf
[374] Open Government Partnership. (2020). Latvia Implementation Report 2017-2019. https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/latvia-implementation-report-2017-2019/

Although the implementation of Latvia`s third action plan has helped to develop a more open government in several aspects, for the situation with citizen participation the results are moderate. Thus, it is understandable that for the fourth (2019-2021) national action plan the amount of commitments is decreased and several tasks are continued from the previous action plan. After the public discussions in the second part of 2019, the new six commitments[375] are:

1) Transparency of public procurement and contracts;
2) Opening of data sets relevant to public transparency of information;
3) The openness of interest representation and lobbying;
4) Open governance in municipalities;
5) High-quality public involvement in reforms and issues of public concern;
6) Anti-corruption measures.

From the six new commitments, four of them are significantly helping further development of the digital democracy environment in Latvia, for example, in the commitment "Open governance in municipalities" there is planned to foster the use of digital solutions in the implementation of participatory-budgeting initiatives, as well as further support to open-data initiatives are planned. Although the emphasis on citizen participation strengthening in the fourth action plan is still on citizen engagement via non-governmental organisations rather than individual participation, successful implementation of the action plan would mark Latvia in the stable second level of the Open Government Maturity Model and ensure further progress towards the third level. As Lee and Kwak have pointed out when describing the third level of their model "It is important … to build the capability to respond to the public's feedback timely and consistently. This capability requires formal processes, coordination mechanisms, and dedicated government employees responding to public comments"[376], thus, to reach the third level more active use of social media and *web 2.0* tools for citizen participation would be needed. As well as citizens access to information that could strengthen their knowledge and ability to participate in the decision-making process. This information could be provided by public administration institution on social media or the home page, but the essential role is also to the access to open data.

Work on the open-data portal in Latvia is also continued in the fourth action plan following the work that was already started in the third national action plan[377] and citizens in the address data.gov.lv now have access to the first datasets – at the end of 2019, there were available more

---

[375] Open Government Partnership. (2020). Latvia Action Plan 2019-2021. https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/latvia-action-plan-2019-2021/
[376] Lee, G., Kwak, Y. H. (2012). An Open Government Maturity Model for social media-based public engagement. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(4), 492-503 (Page – 498).
[377] Valsts Reģionālās attīstības aģentūra. (2019). Open data in Latvia. https://data.gov.lv/eng/about

than 300 datasets that in June 2021 has was grown to 488 datasets[378] from more than 50 publishers, covering such topics as economics, health, environment, public administration, culture, transport, agriculture and food, justice and home affairs. According to Government at a Glance report by OECD[379], since 2017 Latvia has experienced significant progress towards the OECD average indicators of access and availability to government open data. In 2017 OECD average was 0.53 (from 1 as maximum) and Latvia was assessed with 0.19, in 2019 OECD average was grown to 0.60 and Latvia`s indicator was 0.54, hence, significantly approaching the OECD average. Open data are starting to be available in the home pages of institutions, yet, Latvia is still at the beginning and early development phase of the access to open data and notion of opportunities how open-data can be used.

2.6.   Future development of digital participation

Digital democracy is a comparatively new field, and it is still developing and changing. Information and communication technologies are developing due to technological innovations and also citizens are gradually learning and adapting to the use of digital tools and social media. Nevertheless, public administration cannot wait until there will be reached a certain level of development in the technologies and citizen digital skills – digital tools for citizen participation should be acquired already now to ensure that the government is not lagging behind technological progress and, more importantly, is involved in creating the digital environment and setting up the rules and order of the digital environment. It is not possible to fully predict how the digital environment and society will develop in the future, although, OECD has suggested[380] three possible scenarios:

- active citizens form a comprehensive "third pillar" of empowered online communities that provide a counterweight to states and markets;
- governments set up digital platforms that become the backbone of their economies, promoting exchange between countries using the same system but creating barriers with those who do not;
- multinational digital corporations become so efficient and comprehensive in serving their users that many of the roles held by the state are offered by non-state entities.

Therefore, for the public administration, it is necessary to take an active part in the digital transformation to ensure that the digital environment helps to foster economic growth and it can help to strengthen relations between public administration and citizens.

---

[378] Valsts Reģionālās attīstības aģentūra. (2021). Datu katalogs. https://data.gov.lv/dati/lv/dataset
[379] OECD. (2019). Government at a Glance 2019. http://www.oecd.org/gov/government-at-a-glance-22214399.htm
[380] OECD. (2021). Going Digital in Latvia. https://www.oecd.org/latvia/going-digital-in-latvia-8eec1828-en.htm

Discussions about the digital environment and its future development include also comprehension that the environment is in constant development, thus digital transformation strategies must be ready to adapt to new situations and be open to face challenges. One of the topical examples is the use of social media. Russian interference in the 2016 United States election started a discussion if social media is helping democracy or is an encumbrance and threat – the problem since then not only is not solved but has even grown, having an impact also in the time of COVID-19 crisis. Searching for solutions to this problem will change social media as we know them today. "If platforms are tasked with enforcement (and are at significant threat of penalty from the state if they underenforce), then they may reasonably err on the side of caution. However, this could result in (overly) aggressive deletion of posts and raise important issues regarding freedom of speech."[381] The need for future regulations is pointed out also in the publication of Open Government Partnership: "Smarter use of technology, combined with 'European-style' regulation .. working with and regulating tech companies, ultimately shaping a digital era that works for citizens and protects societies from manipulation."[382] Thus, the development of future regulations needs engagement both from government and public administration and from companies that are the owners of social media. For now, the attitude of the social media owners is the biggest challenge as they are interested in the financial benefits rather than moral considerations. N. Bindu and colleagues are suggesting that the adoption of *Web 4.0* technology in the future is expected to bring in radical changes in the government and citizens interaction channels. This scenario "could also provide opportunities for manufacturers to incorporate more features related to convenience into the technical devices used for interaction" [383], and also allow the use of blockchain technology to enhance protection, privacy, and security. New digital innovations could also help to develop new solutions for reliable identity in the digital environment, for now, that can be done by using e-signature in Latvia or banking credentials. Further development could lead to the creation of digital citizenship or digital citizens - a digital avatar that could be used to participate in the decision-making process in the digital environment. This concept is partly similar to Estonian e-residency[384] which for now is used for entrepreneurs. That could help to solve the current dilemma when a person`s identity is not completely reliable on social media, thus limiting the use of social media as a reliable source in the decision-making process. Citizens ability to approve their identity in the digital environment could help institutions to grant individual citizens (individuals and

[381] Trump, K. S., Rhody, J., Edick, C., Weber, P. (2018). *Social Media & Democracy: Assessing the State of the Field & Identifying Unexplored Questions*, Social Science Research Council, 6/4/2018, Stanford University.
[382] Open Government Partnership. (2019). Do We Trust Democracy? A Future Agenda for Europe. https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/do-we-trust-democracy-future-agenda-europe/
[383] Bindu, N., Sankar, C., P., Kumar, K., S. (2019). From conventional governance to e-democracy: Tracing the evolution of e-governance research trends using network analysis tools. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36 (3), 385-399.
[384] Republic of Estonia. (2020). Become an e-resident. https://e-resident.gov.ee/become-an-e-resident/

entrepreneurs) more power in the decision-making process. Thus, citizens could be not only providers of ideas and opinions but also become decision-makers, thus, fostering deliberative democracy methods that have been developed in several countries around the world, for example – citizen assemblies. The use of trusted digital solutions can help to conduct similar activities also in the digital environment.

Considering the future development of the digital environment, there are also discussions on the implementation of electronic voting. In the study about e-voting in Switzerland, it was concluded that "the availability of e-voting does have an influence on turnout, but that this influence holds for specific groups of citizens only. .. Offering e-voting in addition to postal and on-site vote increases participation among abstainers and – to a lesser extent – among occasional voters" [385]. Another aspect is the security of the voting process. Although for now in Latvia there are many arguments against electronic voting[386], in this matter, Latvia could learn from the experience of Estonia where electronic voting is since 2005. To ensure secrecy and security, there are established several principles[387] to which the internet voting system must comply:

- Time framework of e-voting: e-votes may be cast for seven days, from the 10th until the 4th day before the Election Day;
- Possibility to recast an e-vote: during the e-voting period a voter can e-vote as often as they wish, but only the last e-vote is counted;
- The primacy of ballot paper voting: if a voter who has already e-voted goes to the polling station and casts their vote using a paper ballot, then the e-vote is cancelled;
- The similarity of e-voting to regular voting: the collecting of votes must be secure, reliable and verifiable;
- E-voter shall vote themselves: Using another person's ID card (or Mobile-ID) for voting and transfer of the card's PIN codes to another person is prohibited.

Citizens in Estonia after electronic voting can verify if their vote has reached the central server of elections and reflects the voter's choice correctly, for this purpose is developed special application[388], thus it is additionally ensured that citizens are trusting electronic voting and results cannot be manipulated. Experience in Estonia that is gathered analysing results from the electronic

[385] Petitpas, A., Jaquet, J. M., Sciarini, P. (2020). Does E-Voting matter for turnout, and to whom? *Electoral Studies*, 102245.

[386] Latvijas Vēstnesis. (2020). Vēlēšanas tiešsaistē – par un pret. https://lvportals.lv/norises/321011-velesanas-tiessaiste-par-un-pret-2020

[387] Solvak, M., Vassil, K. (2016). E-voting in Estonia: Technological Diffusion and Other Developments Over Ten Years (2005 - 2015). Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies University of Tartu.

[388] Valimised. (2019). Checking of an i-vote. https://www.valimised.ee/en/internet-voting/checking-i-vote

voting from 2005 until 2015 is providing conclusions[389] that electronic voting takes on average less than three minutes, thus saving time for citizens, also, it is much easier for citizens to vote from abroad. However, it was concluded that "E-voting does not address the underlining causes of turnout decline, such as disinterest, political disappointment and partisan dealignment. E-voting simply makes voting easier for people, it will not necessarily engage those for whom the problem lies in politics as such" [390]. Hence, electronic voting cannot be used with the hope that it will increase citizen participation, but it can be used as an additional tool in the complex and well established digital environment, making participation easier for those who are already motivated to participate.

In the report to OECD about Open Referendum Initiation System, representatives from Latvia in 2014 pointed out five conditions that are required to successfully implement state-owned Open Referendum Initiation System in Latvia: Overall democratic values, Supportive legal regulation, Supportive architecture, Cooperation and partnership between public and private sectors and leadership, and Ownership[391], however, the planned version of the Open Referendum Initiation System (Referendumu elektronisko balsu vākšanas sistēma) was not implemented and for state-initiated referendum initiative signatures are collected visiting the signatures collection station in person. For citizen-initiated referendum initiative signatures can be collected online - for this purpose is adjusted State service portal Latvija.lv. In addition, online voting for legislative initiatives in Latvia is possible since 2011 due to the work of NGO *Sabiedrības Līdzdalības Fonds* and their online platform Manabalss.lv where citizens can propose and vote for legislative initiatives that are later given for evaluation to parliament or municipalities. According to statistics of the portal, more than 67 percent of initiatives have had a positive impact on the final decision by the parliament or municipalities[392]. Thus, actors of the non-governmental sector are maintaining activities in the field that should be the responsibility of public administration.

Overall, the main factors that must be considered when thinking about the future development of digital participation in Latvia are:

- development of digital technologies and ICT – although digital technologies and ICT in Latvia are at a comparatively high level, access to them is crucial to ensure the development of digital citizen participation;

[389] Solvak, M., Vassil, K. (2016). E-voting in Estonia: Technological Diffusion and Other Developments Over Ten Years (2005 - 2015). Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies University of Tartu.

[390] Solvak, M., Vassil, K. (2016). E-voting in Estonia: Technological Diffusion and Other Developments Over Ten Years (2005 - 2015). Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies University of Tartu.

[391] OECD. (2015). Digital government toolkit. Digital Government Strategies: Good Practices. Latvia: Open Referendum Initiation System. http://www.oecd.org/gov/latvia-open-referendum.pdf

[392] Sabiedrības Līdzdalības Fonds. (2019). *Paveiktais*. https://manabalss.lv/page/progress

- facilitation of digital skills of citizens and representatives of public administration institutions – a high level of the digital environment is useless if citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) and representatives of public administration do not have sufficient skills to use this environment. Therefore, special trainings and educational campaigns are needed to ensure that the level of digital literacy in Latvia is not hindering technological progress;

- development of social media and digital environment regulations – since the invention of social media, this sphere has developed in favour of their owner's financial purposes, not in the favour of society. Lack of regulations from governments has affected other fields, also democratic processes. Implementations that could solve the current problems should not come from individual countries, but must be conducted globally, in case of Latvia that means to be in strong favour to common EU level procedure;

- exchange of knowledge between countries and public administration institutions – the level of successful use of the digital environment is various in Latvia, the Baltic region and the European Union, more sharing of information could foster the development of digital democracy and save time and resources;

- facilitation of citizens knowledge – using the digital environment to inform citizens of the participation opportunities and providing easier access to them;

- role of open data policies and access to open data – access to information helps to make higher quality decisions, which is particularly important for citizens who are not always knowing information that is available to public administration. Therefore, the development of policies that are granting access to information and prioritizing open data, has a significant impact on citizens ability to participate in the decision-making process.

3. OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

Digital participation cannot be considered a unique solution to the democratic deficit, but it can help to increase the range and availability of participation opportunities. Digital participation should be developed in the context of a particular region, according to citizen digital habits, society's and public administration's attitude to the participation and availability of resources. To propose a digital participation methodology that could be implemented in Latvia, the specific situation in Latvia is analysed in the empirical research (see Table 3.1.), considering attitudes and habits of the citizens and public administration, also, the current digital environment is analysed, providing a notion of the content published by public administration and citizen feedback to this content.

Table 3.1. **Aspects that are analysed and their identification in the research**

Aspects that are analysed	The perspective of public administration	Digital environment (as a common space for cooperation)	Perspective of citizens
Current situation and habits	Internal regulation of communication process, content creation and communication habits, analysis of the reach and feedback	What content is used (text and visual materials), is the content informing, educating or engaging followers? How often topics about participation is represented?	Citizens attitude towards the current situation; reasons that are reducing citizens willingness to participate in the decision-making process
Preferred communication channels	Communication channels that are currently used to reach different audiences	Which communication channels are being used additionally to *Facebook* page, do their content duplicate? Who is the target group?	Do citizens follow public institutions` in social media, what channels citizens are currently using to participate in the decision-making process
Speed of communication	How fast public administration is responding to information provided by citizens, which is currently the fastest way of communication to reach representatives of the institution	What feedback institutions are receiving from followers, how well institutions are responding to feedback in the comment section	What channel of communication would citizens use if they would like to deliver the relevant information for the institution's responsible person as soon as possible
Support for digital solutions	How the use of digital opportunities for stakeholders` participation is assessed, how large is the support for unified regulation of digital communication	What methods are used to develop two-way communication, how much technical advantages of social media are used (tagging, links, emojis, hashtags, promotion)	An assessment of possible improvements in the social media content of public administration and activities that would encourage more active participation in the decision-making process, how large is the support for unified regulation of digital communication
Learning from good practices	How often experience is exchanged with colleagues from other institutions, which other institutions in Latvia could be used as a good example of digital communication	Social media pages that are followed by an institution's account	Which public administration institutions have been noticed by citizens as a good example of digital communication

Source: Author's construction based on objectives of the research

To evaluate the current situation of digital democracy in Latvia the research is conducted in three parts. Public administrations` attitude is identified with a survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration; citizens` beliefs and habits are learned with a survey to representatives of citizens, and the current digital environment is identified with a content analysis of *Facebook* pages that are maintained by all Latvian ministries.

3.1. Description of the empirical research methods applied in the research

To identify the current situation and attitudes towards citizen participation and digital democracy in Latvia, three research methods were used: content analysis, survey to public administration representatives and survey to representatives of citizens. There are several limitations of the research that must be pointed out. In the survey to representatives of citizens is not measured their digital skills and comprehension of democracy – factors that can also affect citizens motivation and ability to participate in the decision-making process, therefore, analysis of the research results are providing insight of respondents evaluation of the current level of digital democracy in Latvia and their suggestions for the future development. Similarly, in the survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration is not analysed their skills to communicate with citizens online and the technical readiness of the institutions to implement digital solutions, results of the survey are demonstrating their attitude and current communication and cooperation habits. Considering that the digital environment is comparatively well developed in Latvia and the population is relatively small, citizens and public administrations` attitude towards the digital environment has an essential effect on the future development of digital democracy in Latvia. Limitations of the content analysis is in the time period – which is six months, although a longer period of analysis would provide broader results, the six-month period gives the first insight and basic notion about the techniques and communication style that is used by institutions. Also, in the content analysis publicly available information is analysed, as the access to information that is available to content creators and owners of social media is hardly available for academic purposes.

3.1.1. Content analysis

Latvian Ministries are selected for the content analysis as they are already obligated to provide opportunities for citizen participation in the decision-making process. Content of *Facebook* pages is analysed because this social media is regularly used by all ministries and it is most often used social media in Latvia – in August 2020 there were 1 060 000 *Facebook* users in Latvia[393], and in Latvia it still has a tendency to grow its audience. According to data collected by the author (in September 2020), *Facebook* pages of ministries are having from 1700 to 14000 followers

---

[393] Napoleon Sp.zo.o. (2020). Facebook users in Latvia. https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-latvia/2020/08

depending on ministry, but only three ministries have less than 3000 followers. The total amount of social media followers for all Latvian ministries according to the author`s calculations, in September 2020 were 80712 followers on *Facebook*, 7175 followers on *Instagram*, 103536 followers on *Twitter*, 2282 followers on *Youtube* and 50223 followers on *Draugiem.lv*. For all social media networks, the number of followers has grown since 2019, except for *Draugiem.lv* where it has decreased.

Table 3.2. **The total amount of *Facebook* entries published by Latvian ministries in the period from July 2019 until December 2019**

	July	August	September	October	November	December	TOTAL (by the ministry)
Ministry of Defence	41	22	49	55	51	28	246
Ministry of Justice	39	42	35	58	38	33	245
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	42	40	55	57	82	74	350
Ministry of Economics	25	26	28	31	50	25	185
Ministry of Finance	21	27	33	78	51	16	226
Ministry of the Interior	25	16	25	36	33	24	159
Ministry of Education and Science	49	46	37	46	60	40	278
Ministry of Culture	15	63	70	60	75	44	327
Ministry of Welfare	35	62	69	56	76	61	359
Ministry of Transport	33	36	34	42	45	38	228
Ministry of Health	19	13	22	27	13	11	105
Mo EPRD	20	29	28	32	21	26	156
Ministry of Agriculture	38	27	49	70	64	69	317
TOTAL (by month)	402	449	534	648	659	489	

Source: Authors conducted content analysis of Facebook pages maintained by Latvian ministries, 2020, n=3181

Content analysis of *Facebook* pages is implemented in 2020 (from January until April), analysing the content of 13 *Facebook* pages of Latvian ministries in the six months period – from July 2019 until December 2019. In this period all ministries together have published 3181 entries (see table 3.2.) – in table 3.2. and further in chapter 3 ministries are arranged according to the order used by Cabinet of Ministers on their home page[394] if not stated otherwise. Social media activity varies both by institutions and by months – the largest social media activity was in November, but the lowest activity was in July. This difference is determined mainly because of the topical events, however, for some institutions, the vacations of representatives might also be the reason as there are noticeable periods of several days when no entries are made. Usually, most of the ministries are

---

[394] Valsts kanceleja. (2020). Ministru kabineta sastāvs. https://mk.gov.lv/lv/amatpersonas

publishing at least one entry per day, however – there are institutions that are more active, such as the Ministry of Welfare or Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as there are institutions that are less active, especially the Ministry of Health that in the analysed period was publishing information on social media irregularly and made almost four times fewer entries than the most active institution - Ministry of Welfare. It must be pointed out that analysed data are only representing the situation in the period from July until December 2019. In the time of the COVID-19 crisis, since Spring 2020, the dynamics of the publication intensity was slightly changed, especially for the Ministry of Health that became much more active on social media.

Content analysis is divided into three sections:

- Content indicators (Use of visual material, Link to external material, Use of hashtags, Use of emojis, Use of tagging);
- Message indicators (Informing, Educating, Engaging, Representation of topics about participation);
- Feedback indicators (Reactions, Sharing, Use of commentary section, Content of the commentary section).

Overall, - 13 groups of indicators which are composed of more than 60 sub-indicators (see Appendix 3 for the complete framework of the content analysis). In the content is analysed text and visual materials; the meaning of the published information, communication style – is it one-way or two-way communication; what digital solutions are implemented to ensure engagement and what feedback is gained from the followers of the *Facebook* page.

3.1.2. Survey to public administration representatives

The survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration was carried out in April and May 2019 using online research survey software *QuestionPro*. Personal invitation to fill out the questionnaire was sent to those representatives of Latvian public administration who are responsible for communication with society and cooperation with citizens (The whole questionnaire is included in Appendix 1). In total 55 surveys were recorded, representing Latvian ministries, Parliament, Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre, and several other Latvian public institutions. In the survey, each representative of the public administration was asked to provide in-depth information on how his/her institution is using tools of the digital environment, such as social media and smartphone applications, to communicate with citizens and to engage them in the decision-making process. Respondents were also evaluating different forms of participation and communication channels from the perspective of the institution they were representing. Indication of the main demographic information was not compulsory, thus, there is missing demographic information about respondents who did not want to indicate their workplace and scope of responsibilities.

Table 3.3. **Distribution of Respondents by Institution they are Representing in the Survey**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ministry	16	29.1	59.3	59.3
	Saeima (Parliament)	1	1.8	3.7	63.0
	Other institution	10	18.2	37.0	100.0
	Total	27	49.1	100.0	
Missing	0	28	50.9		
Total		55	100.0		

Source: Authors conducted survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration, 2019. n=55

Most of the respondents represent ministries (see Table 3.3.). In Latvia, there are 13 ministries and a personal invitation was sent to those persons who are responsible for communication and citizen participation. In each ministry, there are from two to five or a maximum of ten officers that can be identified as responsible ones. It depends on the institution, but often communication officers are also responsible for citizen participation, in some cases that can also be the responsibility of the person who is implementing a particular project or policy.

3.1.3. Survey to representatives of citizens

The survey was designed for representatives of citizens who are already participating in the decision-making process or are comparatively active in other forms of political participation. Considering current participation habits in Latvia, citizens who are already participating in the decision-making process is usually connected with non-governmental organisations - as the categorisation is not well established, that means both civic society organisations and lobby organisation. In 2020 there were 24367 registered and active non-governmental organisations[395]. And it is calculated that in non-governmental organisations are participating around 5 percent[396] of the total population of Latvia. Nevertheless, only some part of those organisations and citizens are engaged in the decision-making process – the exact number is not officially known as there is no such data collected in Latvia, but it is known that in the consultative bodies of Latvian ministries in 2019 were participating members from 839 non-governmental organisations[397] - that is around 3 percent from all non-governmental organisations in Latvia, and the Memorandum of Co-operation between Non-governmental Organisations and the Cabinet in 2020 was signed by 436 organisations[398], hence, around 2 percent from all non-governmental organisations. Consequently, it

[395] Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse. (2021). Pētījums par pilsoniskās sabiedrības organizāciju sektoru Latvijā 2020-2024: Latvijas biedrību un nodibinājumu klasifikācijas problēmas un risinājumi. https://nvo.lv/uploads/nvo_petijums_2021.pdf

[396] Pārresoru koordinācijas centrs. (2017). Nacionālā attīstības plāna 2014.-2020. gadam un Latvijas ilgtspējīgas attīstības stratēģijas līdz 2030. gadam īstenošanas uzraudzības ziņojums. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/lv/valsts-attistibas-planosana/nacionalais-attistibas-plans/nap2020-merki-un-istenosana

[397] Ministru kabinets. (2021). NVO sektora pārskats. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/695/download

[398] Ministru kabinets. (2020). Nevalstisko organizāciju un Ministru kabineta sadarbības memoranda īstenošanas padome. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/nevalstisko-organizaciju-un-ministru-kabineta-sadarbibas-memoranda-istenosanas-padome

can be calculated that the total target set for citizens that are already participating in the decision-making process is between 1 to 5 percent of Latvia`s population, thus – from 19 thousand to 95 thousand, most likely, however, closer to the lowest number. To reach this target group, an invitation to complete the survey was sent out by e-mail to organisations that are participating in the decision-making process, being represented in the advisory bodies: members of the Latvian Civic Alliance (Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse); members of the Latvian Youth Council (Latvijas Jaunatnes padome); and members of The Council for Implementation of the Memorandum of Co-operation between Non-governmental Organisations and the Cabinet (Nevalstisko organizāciju un Ministru kabineta sadarbības memoranda īstenošanas padome). Invitation to complete the survey was published on social media Facebook.com in the specific *Facebook* page that was made for the purpose of the research – this information was promoted to Facebook users in Latvia by targeted ads to those social media users interested in politics, participation and public administration. Also, information was published on social media Facebook.com and Twitter.com by the University of Latvia Faculty of Business, Management and Economics and "LVPortals" which is maintained by Latvian Herald (Latvijas Vēstnesis), the official publisher of the Republic of Latvia. Later those social media posts were shared by several institutions, organisations and individuals.

The survey was implemented in September 2019 - May 2020, using research survey software *QuestionPro*. In this period 314 surveys were received, representing citizens from all regions of Latvia (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4. **Distribution of respondents by socio-economic characteristics**

Age of the respondents		Place of residence		Education		Occupation	
Age group	Amount (in %)	Region	Amount (in %)	Level of education	Amount (in %)	Type of occupation	Amount (in %)
under 15	0%	Kurzeme	8%	primary school	1%	Pupil	1%
16 - 19	3%	Latgales	3%	secondary education	5%	Student	5%
20 -24	9%	Riga (Capital city)	49%	vocational education	4%	Self-employed	7%
25 - 34	32%	Capital region (except Riga)	13%	higher education	79%	Municipal sector	8%
35 - 44	20%	Vidzeme	7%	unknown	10%	Private sector	29%
45 - 54	13%	Zemgale	9%	other	1%	Public sector	19%
55 - 64	8%	unknown	11%			NGO	5%
above 65	5%	other	1%			unemployed	4%
unknown	10%					Pensioner	4%
						unknown	15%
						other	4%

Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted survey to citizens (2019, 2020), n=314

The survey is identifying citizens attitude towards public administrations online communication and digital activities, their willingness to participate in the decision-making process

in the digital environment, and institutions that they are following or have recognised in the social media (the whole questionnaire is available in Appendix 2).

3.2.   Use of social media for citizen participation – content analysis

In the content analysis are analysed entries of *Facebook* pages maintained by Latvian ministries.
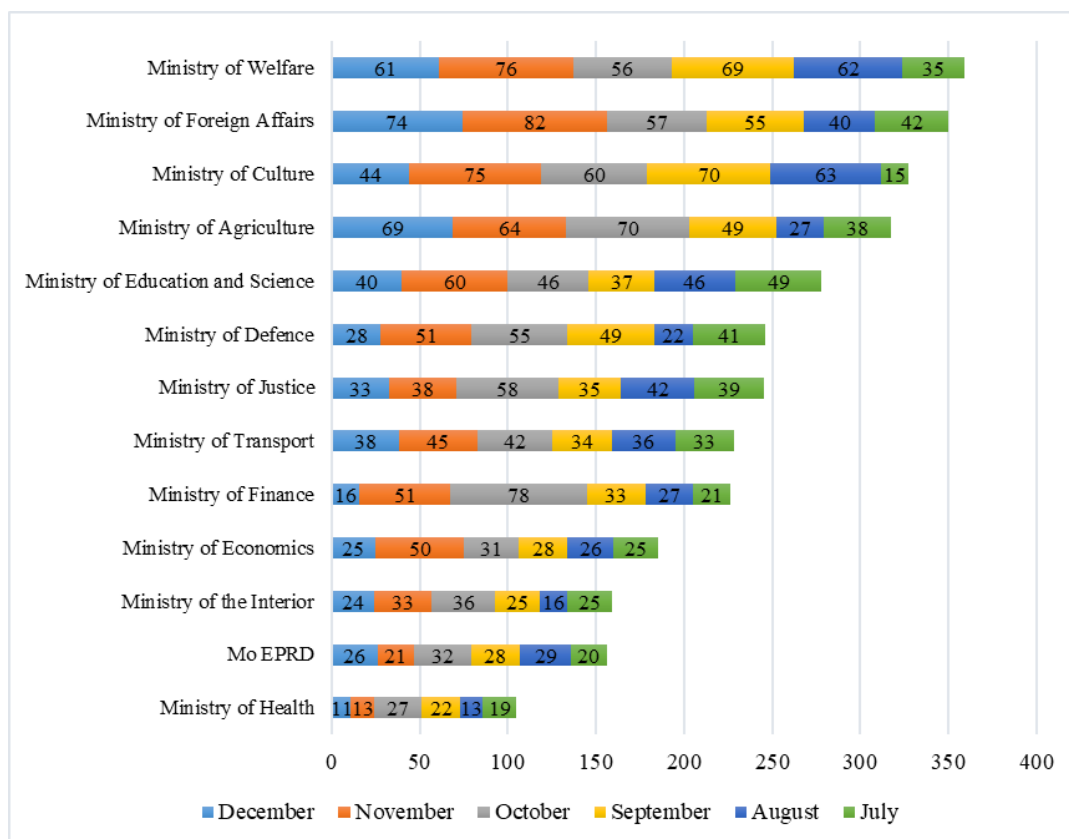
Figure 3.1. **The total amount of posts published in the *Facebook* pages of Latvian ministries (July-December, 2019)**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted content analysis in 2020, n=3181

Content analysis of Facebook pages is implemented in January – April 2020, analysing the content of 13 Facebook pages of Latvian ministries in the six months period – from July until December 2019. In this period ministries were having various activity on social media – in Figure 3.1. institutions are rearranged according to their activity - Ministry of Welfare and Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the most productive and the Ministry of Health has published the least amount of social media entries. It is also observable that there are differences in the monthly activity of each institution – that is mainly determined by the number of topical events and activities of information campaigns that ministries are having from time to time.

3.2.1. Providing content to convey information and maintain interest

This subchapter is corresponding to findings on Content indicators (Use of visual material; Use of emojis; Link to external material; Use of tagging).

Figure 3.2. **Use of visual material in the *Facebook* pages of Latvian ministries (July-December, 2019), amount of entries in each category and their proportion from the total amount of entries**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted content analysis in 2020, n=3181

Appropriate use of visual material and emojis is essential to attract the attention of social media followers and deliver the message. With the successful use of those elements, social media entry can reach a larger audience and ensure that information is not only published but it is also received by the followers. Superficial use of visual elements can result in the lower reach of the message and also lower followers' interest in the content of the social media page. Latvian ministries have very different habits when it comes to the use of visual content in their social media entries (see Figure 3.2.). The most often used content is illustrations – a picture or another visual element that is thematically connected with the message but is not providing real information about the current situation. Most often this solution is used by the Ministry of Agriculture – they are using stock photos to attract attention, but the picture, in general, is not providing any useful information for the followers of the social media page. As often as illustrations are used also photos – from different events and with people and places that are also represented in the message. Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Transport are using this visual element most often. This type of visual element is providing additional information to followers, however, it is useful if followers know the people in the picture or in the text is provided additional information about what is happening and who are the persons in the picture. Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Welfare are comparatively often using video and animation as a visual element. A good example is the use

of infographic that can also provide additional and useful information to followers – the most active in the use of this element was the Ministry of Finance, 40 percent of all their entries used infographics. As a bad example is communication when there is published content without any visual material as it is lowering the possibility that the entry will reach followers attention. This was a case with 24 percent of entries made by the Ministry of Education and Science and 13 percent of entries made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Figure 3.3. **Use of links in the *Facebook* pages of Latvian ministries (July-December, 2019),**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted content analysis in 2020, n=3181

Institutions are actively supplementing their social media posts with links to external material (see Figure 3.3.). Most often links are leading to the home page of the institution or the mass media in cases when mass media are providing news material about the institution, its representatives or a topic that is connected with the institution's scope of responsibilities. In several ministries it was noticeable that the institution is also re-publishing content that is published in the social media page of the public representative – in the case of the Ministry of Defence, the social media page of the minister was often shared and quoted.

In the content ministries (except for the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Agriculture) most often are tagging institutions and public officials. Usually, most of all tagged public official is the minister. Stakeholders' – non-governmental organisations, entrepreneurs and communities are tagged significantly less often. There are differences in the intensity of how much tagging is used by ministries in their social media posts (see Figure 3.4.). Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Finance are using tagging very often, but the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of the Interior is doing it seldom. Also, there is inconsistency in the use of tagging for several ministries - there are

posts where tagging is implemented and at the same time also posts where tagging is not used although it would be appropriate and possible, hence different content creators in the institution have a different attitude or digital skills that are impacting also the style how information is published.
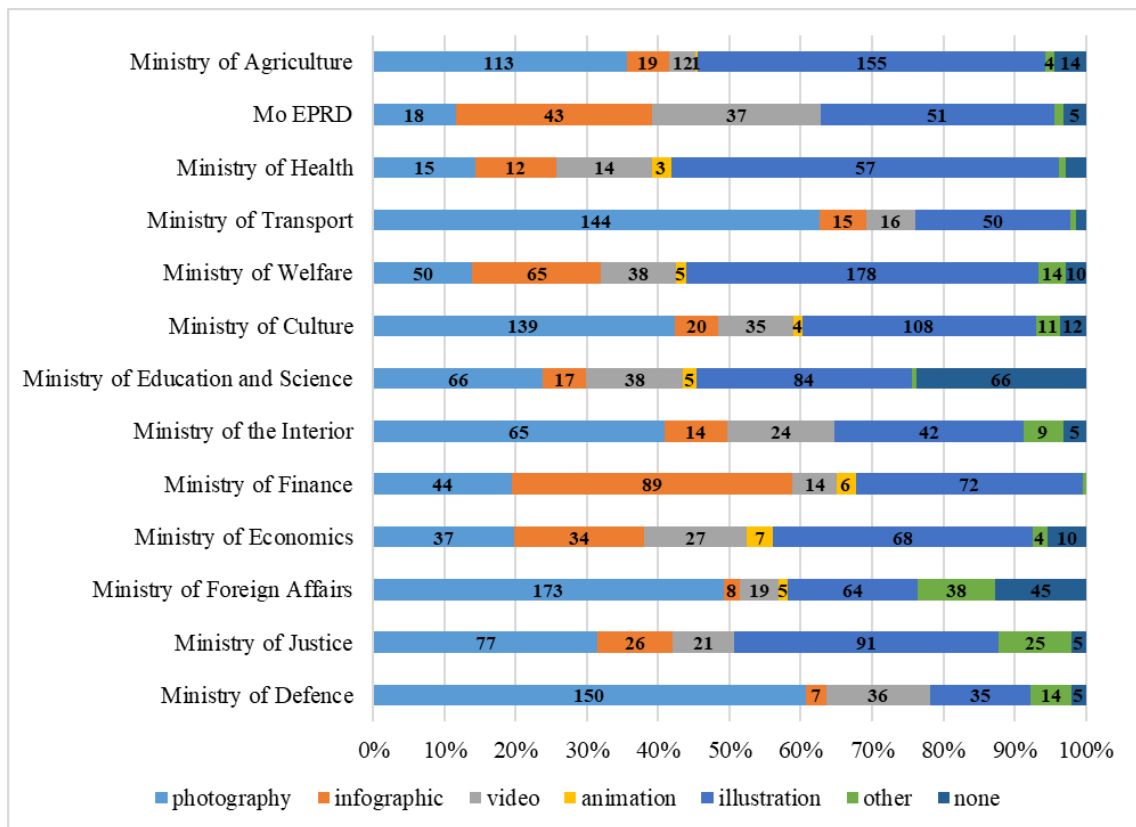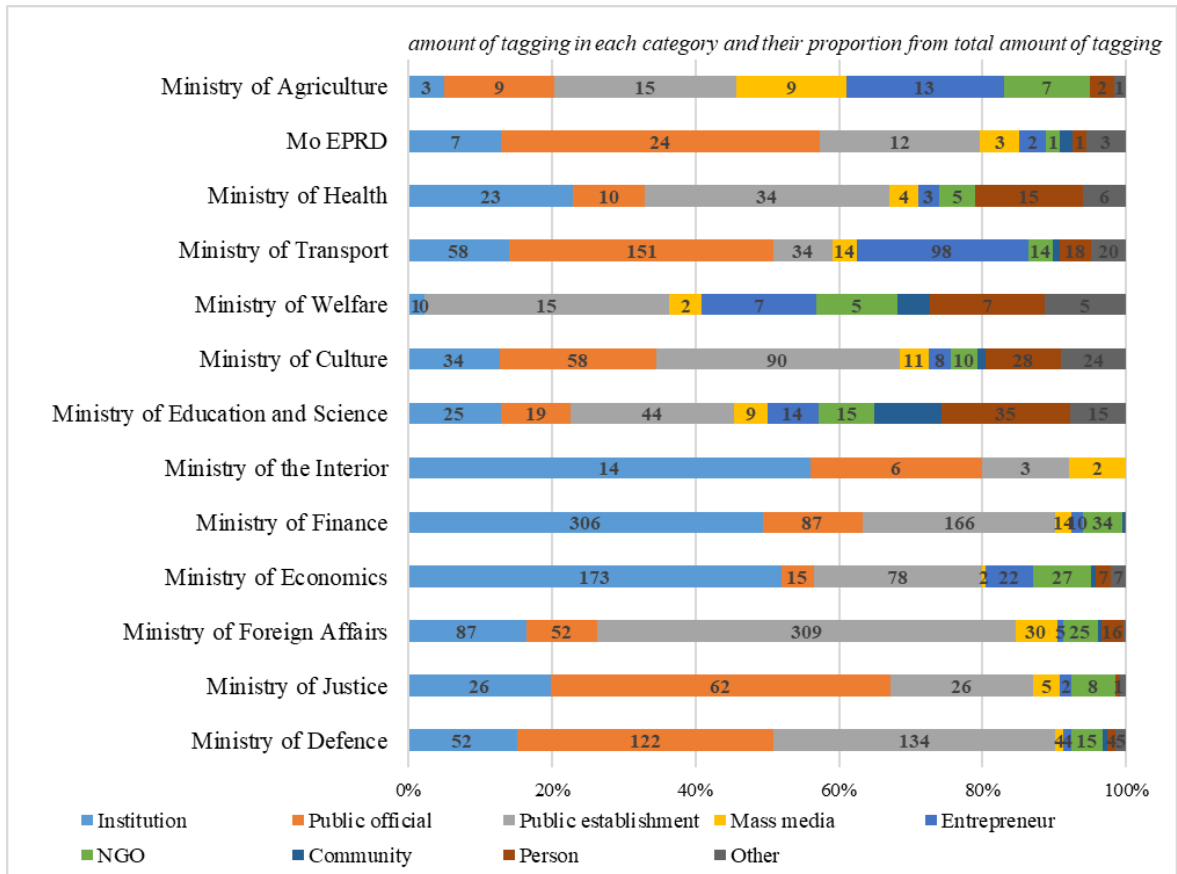

Figure 3.4. **Use of tagging in the *Facebook* pages of Latvian ministries (July-December, 2019), amount of tagging in each category and their proportion from the total amount of tagging**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted content analysis in 2020, n=3181

The use of tagging helps followers to get to know other accounts that are connected with the published message, also, that can help tagged accounts share this content faster as administrators of the account get a notification that they have been tagged. Results from the content analysis are demonstrating that for ministries use of tagging is not always working effectively. Ministries that are active in the use of tagging often do not get a reaction from the tagged accounts – most of them are not liking on sharing message where they have been tagged. For example, on November 13th and 14th the Ministry of Finance published many entries about the new national budget, including entries about each ministry and their thematical part of the budget. Most ministries ignored those entries. There can be several explanations – administrator missed the notification, this message was not fitting in the ministry's agenda, representative of the Ministry of Finance has not informed colleague in another ministry about such activity, Ministry of Finance has used tagging too much and other institutions are used to ignoring entries when they have been tagged. To understand the

real reason additional study would be needed, however, this situation is suggesting that there is a lack of cooperation between representatives of ministries.

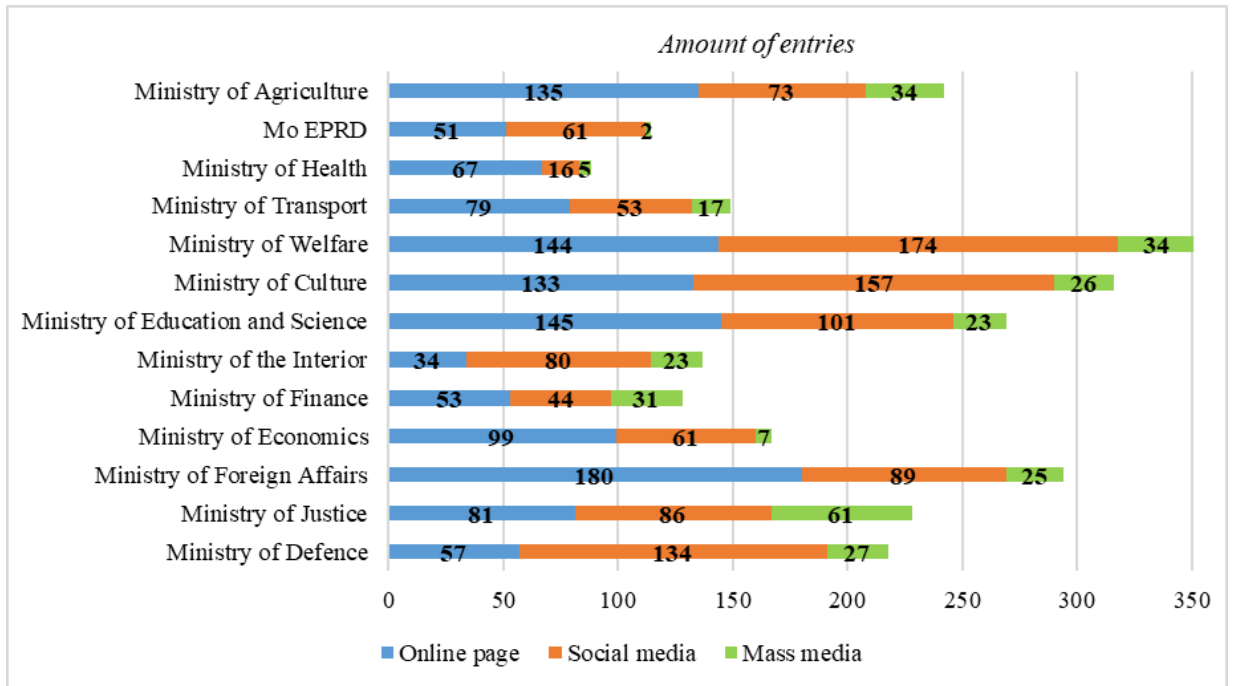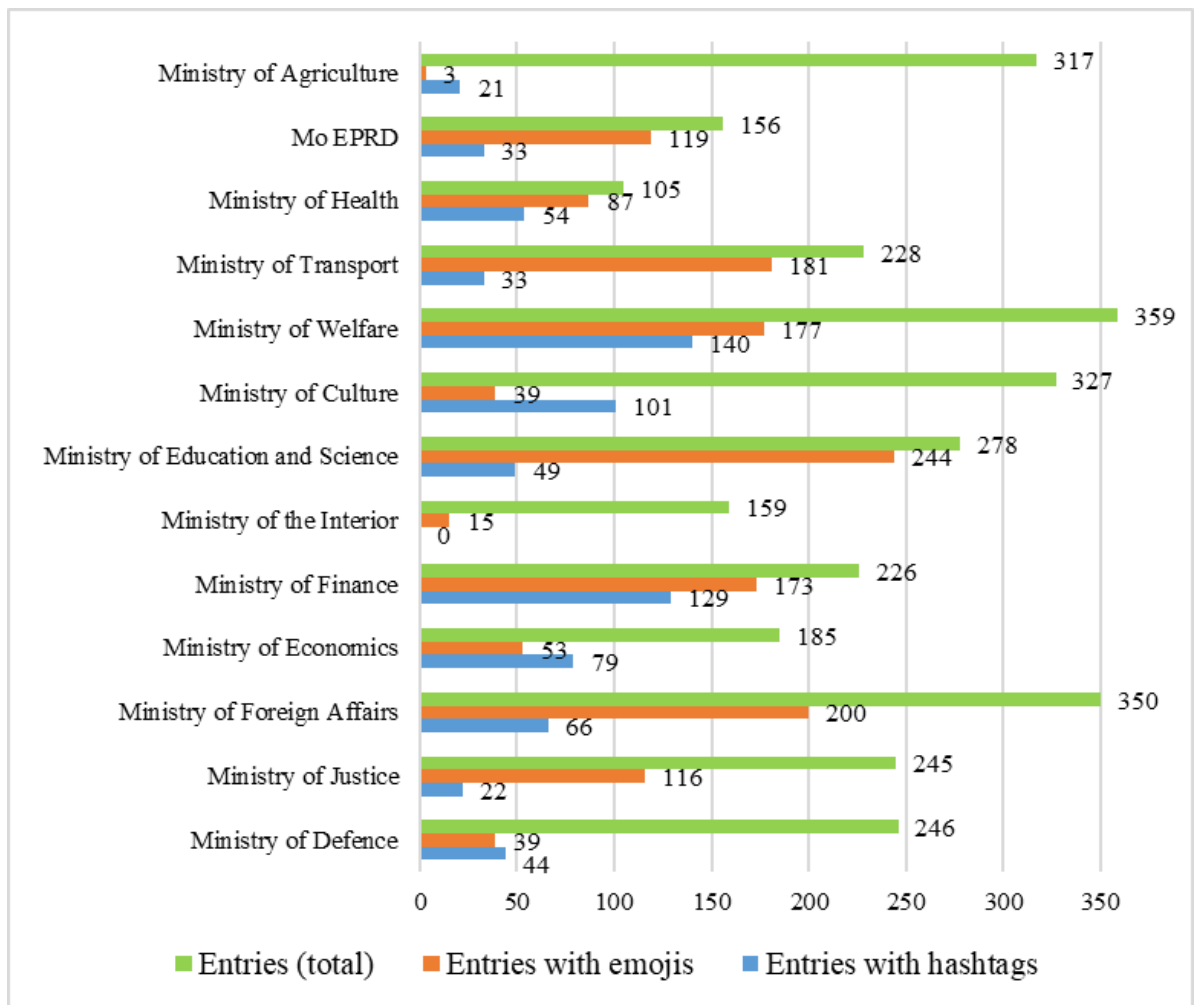Figure 3.5. **Use of emojis and hashtags in the *Facebook* pages of Latvian ministries (July-December, 2019)**

Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted content analysis in 2020, n=3181

The use of emojis and hashtags are common in social media communication, business companies are often using emojis to attract the attention of followers and provide an emotional background of the message, hashtags are used to ensure that specific topic or message are more easily noticeable. Both methods could also be used by public institutions to gain more attention from followers and disseminate the message more widely. However, between ministries is noticeable significant differences in the use of emojis and hashtags (see Figure 3.5.). Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Interior are rarely using emojis. The most active use of emojis can be seen in the entries of the Ministry of Education and Science. Hashtags are used less often, the Ministry of the Interior is not using them at all.

Results from the content indicators factually confirmed that several ministries are regularly strongly highlighting their ministers – often tagging them in the entries, sharing content from their personal social media accounts, emphasizing their participation in events and quoting them more

often than other representatives of the institution. It is very noticeable in the content of the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, and Ministry of Transport. In some of the analysed months also in the entries of Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Welfare. Such disproportion is demonstrating to followers that ministry is only its minister, helping to keep alive prejudice that representatives of an institution are just attending events and shaking hands. Also, as the minister is a political figure, promotion of their personal account can be very close to the political advertisement, especially in the case when the minister is actively promoting his or her political party in the personal account or in the title of account have the name of their political party like it is, for example, with the minister of Welfare.

Overall, differences in the social media content between ministries are noticeable, as well as there are differences in the entries made by the same institution – in the communication style and even quality as sometimes text is with writing mistakes, unworking links, unworking tagging and not correctly written hashtags. For example[399], on the 11th of November, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has twice shared the same entry, hence, the second person has not noticed that information is already published. Reasons for such differences can be a various level of knowledge between persons who are administrating *Facebook* page of the ministry or irresponsible attitude towards the text which is been sent to them for publication from another representative of the institution. Although there are noticeable many entries where social media are used unsuccessfully, there are also many good examples that could be used to design common social media policy for public institutions. Nevertheless, there is not possible to recognise one ministry that can be stated as a perfect example or one ministry that could be recognised as the worst example.

3.2.2. Building discourse and strengthening citizens ability to participate

This subchapter is corresponding to findings on Message indicators (Informing; Educating; Engaging; representing topics on participation)

All entries were analysed by the meaning of the message in the text and visual material, considering that message can be informative, educating or engaging. One entry could consist of several of analysed elements. Overall, from all 3181 entries 49 percent have informative content, 62 percent have educational content and 41 percent have engaging content. Still, when analysing each institution separately, it is noticeable that ministries have different purposes for the use of social media (see Figure 3.6.). Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs are active with publishing messages that are informing about past, current or future events where the institution and its representatives are participating. In nine ministries educating entries are published slightly more

---

[399] Facebook. (2019). Latvijas Republikas Ārlietu ministrija - Pirms 100 gadiem. https://www.facebook.com/arlietuministrija/posts/2025306284239792?__tn__=-R

often than informative entries, for example, the Ministry of Welfare and Ministry of Finance are often publishing information that is educating their followers about various matters of their field of competence.

Figure 3.6. **Distribution of entries in the *Facebook* pages of Latvian ministries, July-December 2019**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted content analysis in 2020, n=3181

Engaging posts are still a minority, hence, communication still is top-down with the exception in some ministries, such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. Furthermore, entries that are about citizen participation were published rarely (see Figure 3.7.). In the analysed period, there were 141 entries that contained information about citizen participation opportunities or decisions made with the participation of citizens or their representatives, hence, only 4 percent of the total amount of entries. The most active was the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development as they were organising discussions in Latvia about regional reform. However, it must be pointed out that entries made by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development that are counted as containing information about the discussion, thus, are about citizen participation not always can be seen as a good example of how to foster citizen participation. Although the information in the entries is motivating citizens to contact with ministry and communicate about regional reform, there is not mentioned that citizens can give their opinion and suggestions on how to develop this reform, rather ministry is just providing answers to citizens questions. Hence,

citizens are seen not as equal partners, but as recipients of policies to which they cannot influence decision-making.
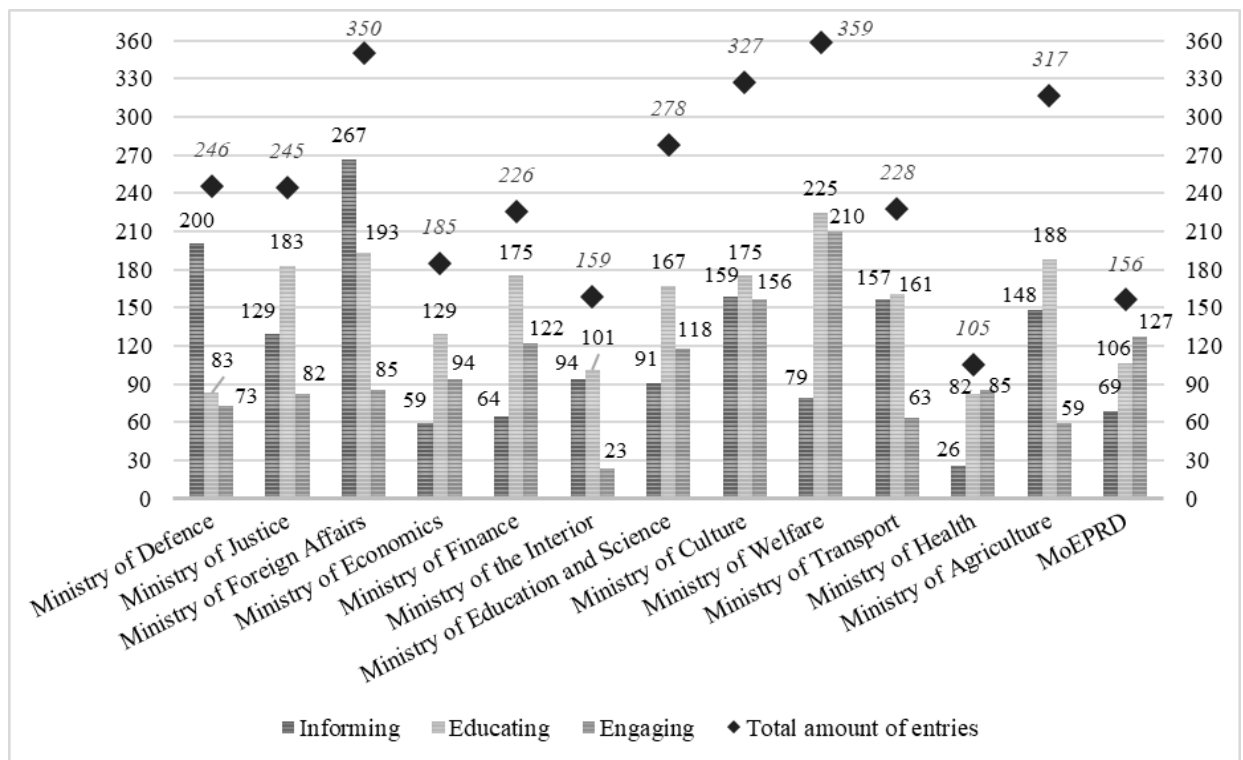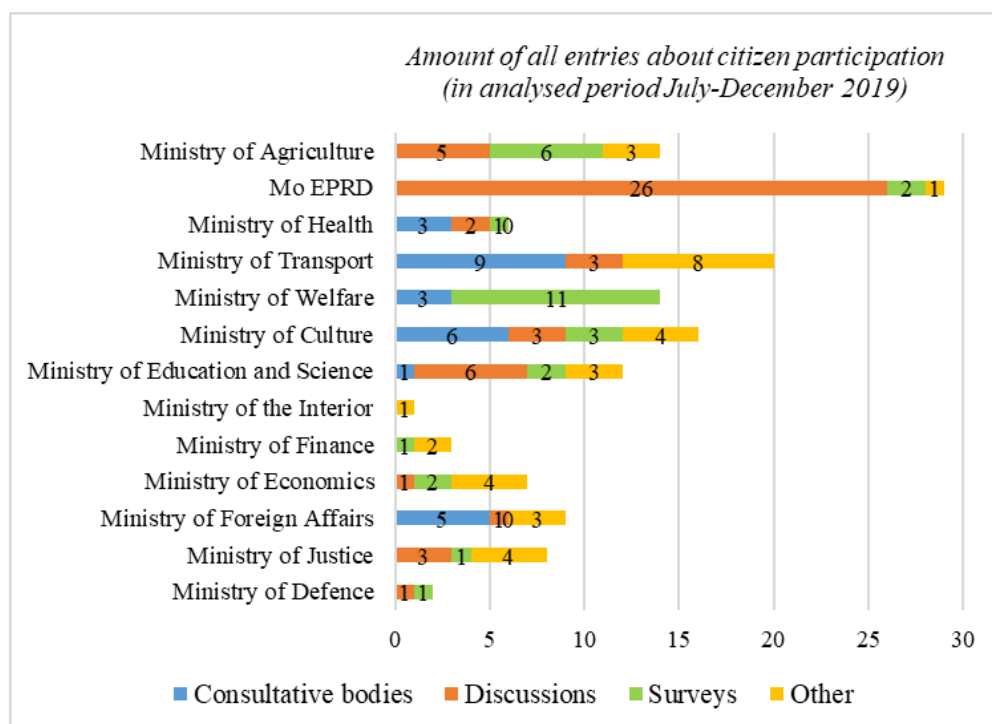

Figure 3.7. **Entries about citizen participation in the *Facebook* pages of Latvian ministries, July-December 2019**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted content analysis in 2020, n=141

Although the work of consultative bodies is a regular activity in the ministries, it was mentioned rarely – 27 times in all analysed period and only by some ministries, thus, keeping this process distant from the followers of social media pages. This situation is illustrating a classical problem – institutions are arguing that citizens are passive and are not participating in the decision-making process, at the same time current activities of the decision-making process are not reflected and promoted sufficiently, thus, most of the citizens do not know about them. If ministries are interested to engage more citizens in the decision-making process, they should significantly increase the coverage of current activities where citizens can participate. Results of the content analysis are suggesting that either representatives of ministries do not know how to promote this information or they do not want to promote it, hence – they are not motivated to increase the number of citizens that are participating in the decision-making process.

One of the main opportunities of social media is the various possibilities for followers to be engaged with the published content. According to content analysis of the Facebook pages of Latvian ministries, not all institutions are using this opportunity actively. A good example is the Ministry of Welfare which is not only using several engagement opportunities but are also using active language that is endorsing engagement. A bad example is the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Agriculture – these institutions are mostly using social media in the format that is

119

ignoring engagement opportunities, having only a few exceptions when two-way communication with followers is initiated. When looking closer to specific engagement methods that are used in the Facebook entries of Latvian ministries in the content analysis were recognised encouragement to provide comment, answer question or survey; follow a link to gain additional information; see live-stream of event, meeting or interview; attend a face to face event; use the opportunity to start working in the institution or study in the field that is connected with institutions field of responsibility; as well as, forward or like entry or engage in some other way. In Figure 3.8. are demonstrated the distribution of the determined engagement methods in entries of five Latvian ministries, those which have been the most active in the use of engaging entries (at least 100 times and more in the analysed period).
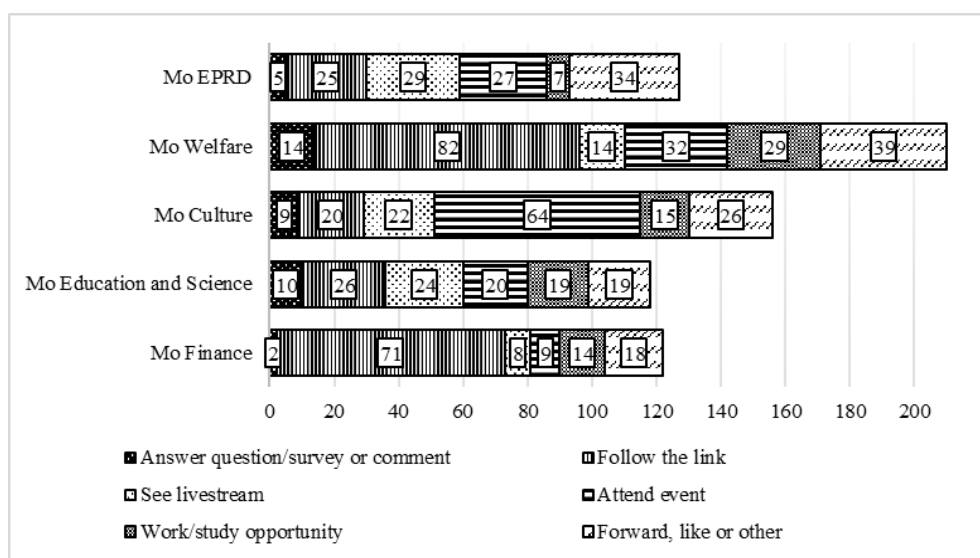
Figure 3.8. **Engagement methods used in the *Facebook* entries of Latvian ministries, July-December 2019**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted content analysis in 2020, n=733

Overall, results of the content analysis are suggesting that for most of the ministries the potential audience for the social media pages must be people who are already well knowledgeable in the main responsibilities of the institution as often context to information is not provided and links to supporting information are not published. Also, there are ministries that are using social media as another one-way communication tool. For example[400], the Ministry of Justice sometimes is publishing entries that are containing exactly the same information which is published in the press release on their home page, only adding some emojis to the text. Also, the Ministry of Agriculture is often publishing educating posts with illustrations (stock photos and similar type visuals without additional message) and short information, providing a link to their home page for further long-read.

---

[400] Facebook. (2019). Latvijas Republikas Tieslietu ministrija - Latvija sniedz atbalstu tiesiskuma stiprināšanai Gruzijā. https://www.facebook.com/Tieslietas/posts/2780896635476457?__tn__=-R

3.2.3. Entangling citizens in the decision-making process and fostering two-way communication

This subchapter is corresponding to findings on Feedback indicators (Reactions; Sharing; Use of commentary section; Content of commentary section)

Table 3.5. **Reactions and shares of the entries by *Facebook* pages of Latvian ministries**

	Reactions (total)	Reactions (Average per post)	Negative reactions (total)	Sharing (total)	Sharing (Average per post)
Ministry of Defence	4394	18	6	1631	7
Ministry of Justice	4834	20	130	3869	16
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	6639	19	10	1429	4
Ministry of Economics	1353	7	1	828	4
Ministry of Finance	2081	9	93	2134	9
Ministry of the Interior	2405	15	2	1285	8
Ministry of Education and Science	6994	25	53	6672	24
Ministry of Culture	7934	24	257	2258	7
Ministry of Welfare	5675	16	48	9244	26
Ministry of Transport	4515	20	16	1374	6
Ministry of Health	1931	18	24	2492	24
Mo EPRD	3106	20	547	1339	9
Ministry of Agriculture	2330	7	2	2243	7

Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted content analysis in 2020, n=3181

In the content analysis was compiled information about reactions and shares that are gained by entries in the Facebook pages of Latvian ministries (see Table 3.5.). The most reactions (on average) are gaining content made by the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education and Science. The lowest rate of reactions is to content made by the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Economics – there are entries that are not gaining reaction at all. From all ministries, the highest amount of negative reactions (in total) received the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development that is mostly connected with entries about regional reform and also entries about 5G internet. The most often shared (on average) is content made by the Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Education and Science, and Ministry of Health suggesting that they can be used as a good example of how to provide content that citizens are ready to share it with their followers. Analysis of the likes and shares that entries are receiving are indicating that some ministries are using Facebook advertising to promote their entries and reach a larger audience. For example[401], that can be seen in several entries made by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional

---

[401] Facebook. (2019). Vides aizsardzības un reģionālās attīstības ministrija - Pašvaldībām ir vienādas funkcijas. https://www.facebook.com/VARAMLATVIJA/videos/2512148795682403/?__tn__=-R

Development. Those entries are receiving more likes and also more negative reactions and commentaries. The use of promoted entries can be a good opportunity to gain more followers and engage in two-way communication with Facebook users that are jet not following institution. But that can also be a challenge and create the opposite effect if an institution has not well targeted their promotion or are not able to deliver fast and correct answers in the comment section. Results of the content analysis are suggesting that in most cases promotion has gained negative feedback and representatives of the institution has not succeeded to deal with it in a considerable manner.
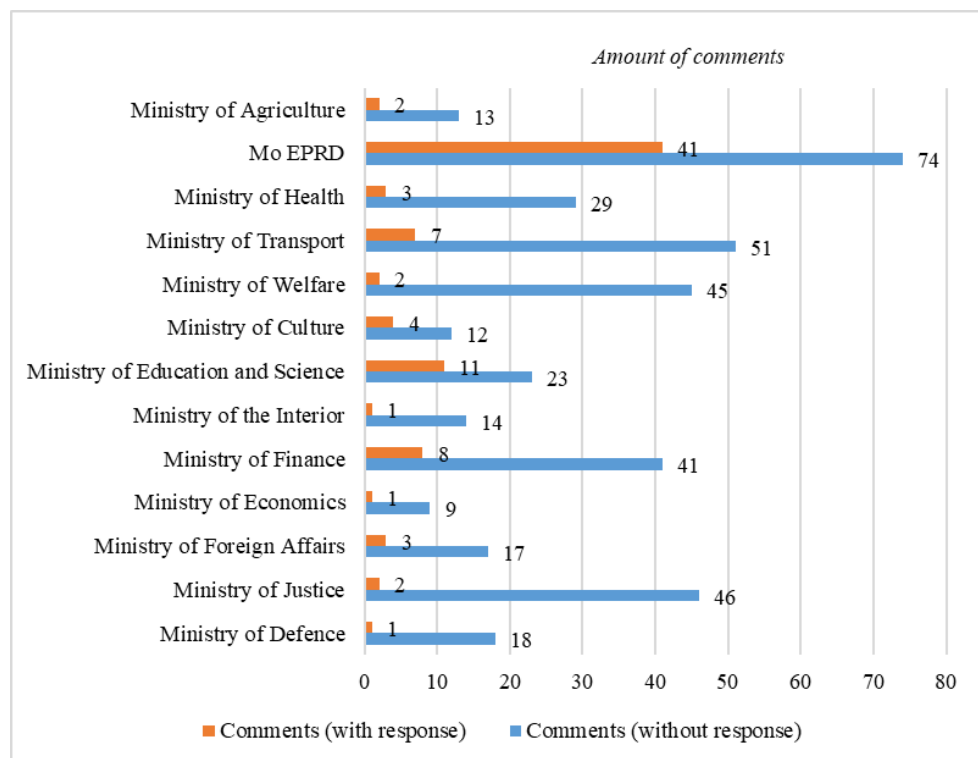
Figure 3.9. **Comments and their responses in the *Facebook* pages of Latvian ministries, July-December 2019, only those comments where reaction from the institution was needed**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted content analysis in 2020, n=478

Analysis of the commentary section is providing a very worrying tendency (See Figure 3.9.). Most ministries are using this section selectively – sometimes engaging with followers in discussions but in most of the times ignoring commentaries that are made by followers and even not providing answers in cases when followers are asking questions about information published in the post. This attitude is demotivating other followers to use the commentary section, thus taking away from social media one of the opportunities that could provide two-way communication and citizen participation in the decision-making process. At the same time, it must be pointed out that in Figure 3.9. are demonstrated only those comments where reaction from the institution was needed. In total, entries from all ministries received 3131 commentaries but most of them were not recognised by content analysis as comments to which institution should provide feedback, for example, commentaries where followers are tagging their friends or commentaries containing hate speech.

This situation arises dilemma for the representatives of institutions – should they ignore the commentary section because many comments are rude, and it is difficult to distinguish the border which commentary should be answered, and which should be ignored. The differentiation becomes even harder, as it was also noticeable, that sometimes questions that should be answered was written in an angry manner, thus looking like hate speech. For now, the results of the content analysis are suggesting that too often representatives of ministries are choosing to ignore the comments section than try to develop dialogue. Losers in this situation are citizens that would like to communicate with institutions in a manner that is the easiest for them – on social media.

Overall, it is noticeable that there are followers who are more active than others, liking content and providing both positive and negative feedback. Results of the content analysis are suggesting that there could be recognised at least several groups of active followers such as representatives of the institution who are proud about their institution; citizens who are angry with a minister or the policy of ministry and are using each possibility to communicate it publicly; persons who are deliberately being active on social media because they are promoting their products or are controlling fake accounts who are paid to push their agenda. Still, there would be needed additional study to understand who those persons are and what is motivating them to like and comment on the content of a particular institution, but this matter exceeds the scope of the particular research.

3.3. Citizen attitude towards the development of digital democracy

In the survey, representatives of citizens were providing answers to ten questions (*the whole questionnaire is included in Appendix 2*). In the analysis, questions are reorganised according to their thematic groups. Responses are indicating the attitude and habits of citizens who are already participating in the decision-making process or are comparatively active in other forms of civic and political participation, thus providing an evaluation of current citizen participation opportunities in Latvia and suggestions for future improvements.

3.3.1. Current participation habits

This subchapter is corresponding to the findings of the survey on questions:

- How often do you get involved in the decision-making process of public administration in Latvia? (1.1. Cik bieži Jūs iesaistāties valsts pārvaldes lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā Latvijā?) – closed-ended question, nine options for activities, five options for frequency;
- Do you participate in municipal, parliamentary, or European elections? (1.2. Vai Jūs piedalāties pašvaldību, Saeimas vai Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanās?) – closed-ended question, four options;
- Which public institutions do you follow in social media? (1.6. Kurām valsts pārvaldes iestādēm Jūs sekojat sociālajos medijos?) – closed-ended question, 18 options;

- If you would like to give your opinion to a public institution on a matter of current concern to you, what you would do to get the opinion to the responsible executive as quickly as possible? (1.10. Ja Jūs vēlētos sniegt kādai valsts pārvaldes iestādei savu viedokli pašlaik Jums aktuālā jautājumā, kā Jūs rīkotos, lai viedoklis pēc iespējas ātrāk sasniegtu atbildīgo darbinieku?) – open-ended question.
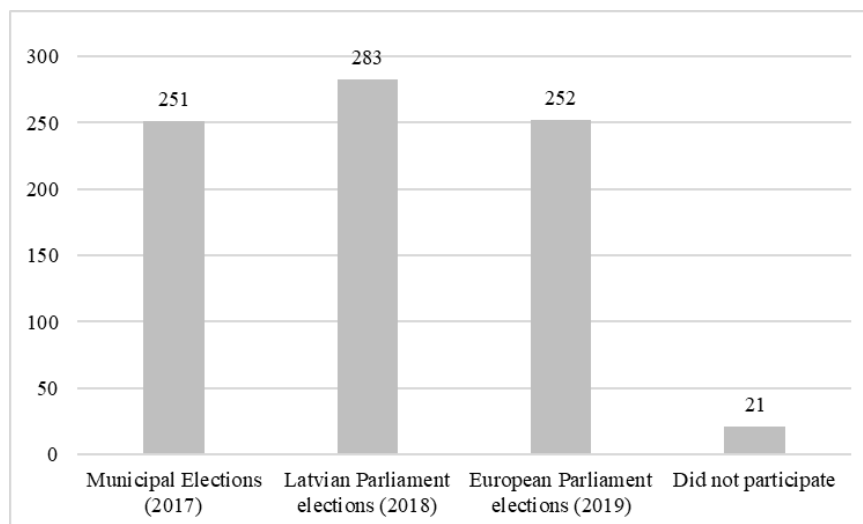
Figure 3.10. **The activity of respondents – voting in the latest elections in Latvia**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted survey to the representatives of citizens (2019, 2020), n=314

Respondents of the survey are representing a comparatively active segment of Latvian society (see Figure 3.10.), most of them voted in the latest elections of Latvian Parliament, they were also active participants of European Parliament elections and Latvian municipal elections, only seven percent of respondents did not participate in any of latest elections in Latvia.
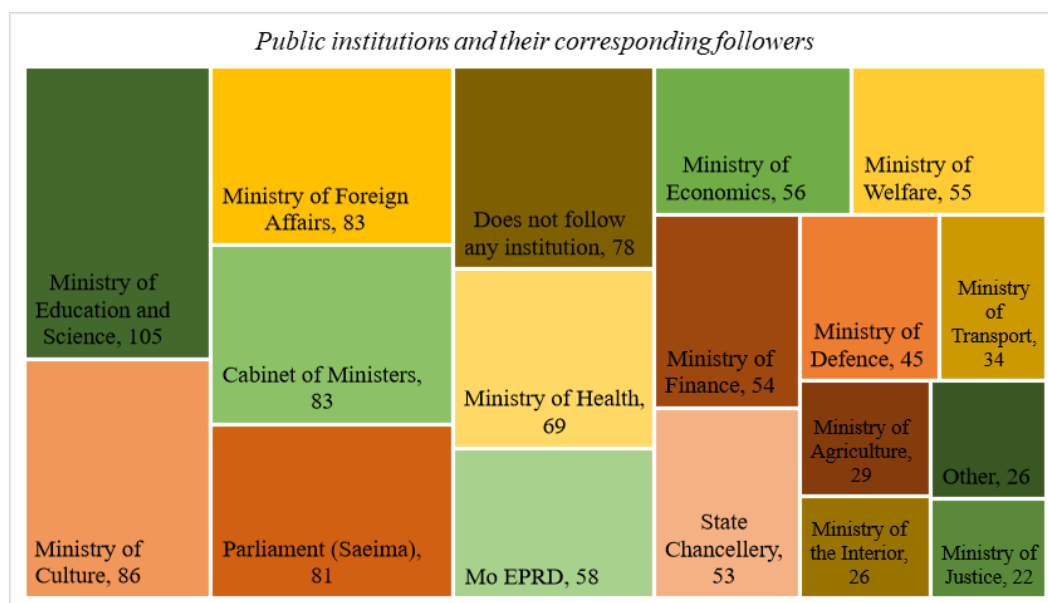
Figure 3.11. **Amount of respondents who are following social media accounts of Latvian public institutions**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted survey to the representatives of citizens (2019, 2020), n=314

At the same time, respondents are not demonstrating large interest in the social media accounts maintained by Latvian public institutions (see Figure 3.11.). 25 percent of respondents emphasized that they are not following any institutions on social media. Respondents of the survey did not recognise one particular institution which would be more preferred, although slightly often respondents mentioned that they are following the Ministry of Education and Science. Also often mentioned was the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cabinet of Ministers, and Latvian Parliament. It must be pointed out that Cabinet of Ministers and State Chancellery in the closed-ended question was separated although both institutions are publishing information in one common account – also respondents often recognised only one of them. From the perspective of citizens, separate accounts for each institution would be needed to ensure comprehension of which institution is implementing activities published in current social media entry.
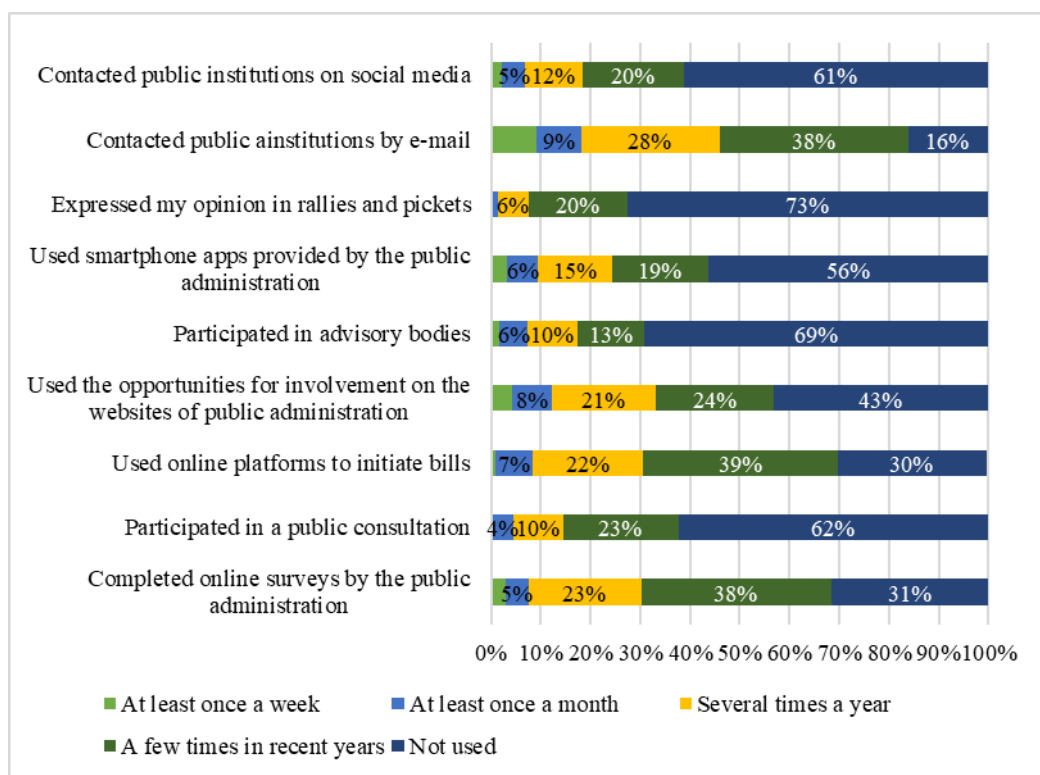
Figure 3.12. **Frequency of participation in various activities of the decision-making process of public administration in Latvia**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted survey to the representatives of citizens (2019, 2020), n=314

In the survey respondents were asked to indicate how often they get involved in the decision-making process of public administration in Latvia (see Figure 3.12.). For respondents, the most mentioned period of time is a few times in recent years and several times a year, but the most often used participation opportunities are to contact public official by e-mail, use online platforms to initiate legislation, and complete online surveys by the public administration. For the respondents of the survey, the least popular activity was indicated participation in the rallies and pickets, as well as

participation in the meetings of advisory bodies and participation in a public consultation. Hence, digital participation opportunities are used more often than face-to-face participation opportunities.
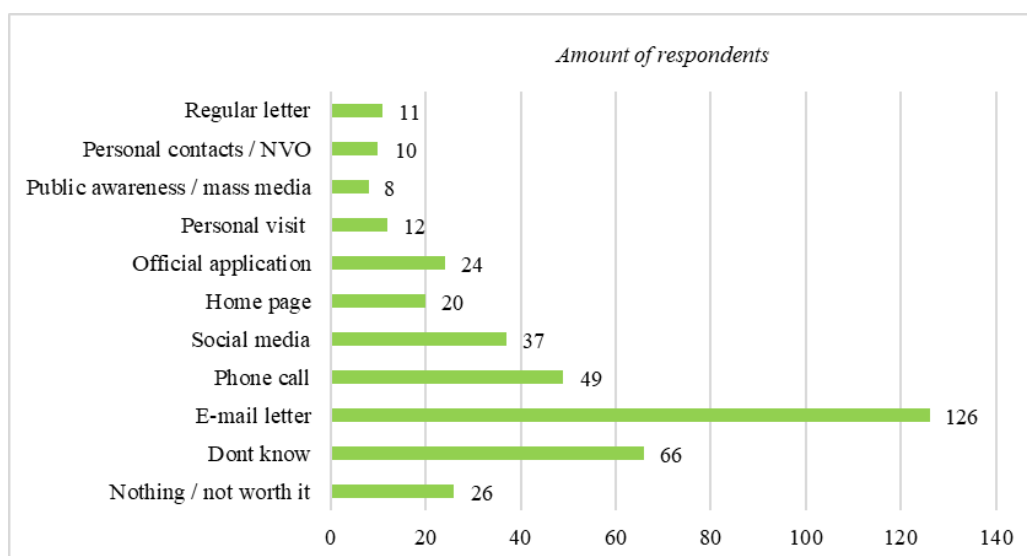
Figure 3.13. **Choice of respondents for providing their opinion to a public institution**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted survey to the representatives of citizens (2019, 2020), n=314

Respondents were asked to indicate what they would do in the situation if they would like to give their opinion to a public institution and would like to be sure that opinion reaches the responsible executive as quickly as possible (see Figure 3.13.). The use of e-mail for this situation was the most popular opinion, it was suggested by 40 percent of respondents. Respondents suggested using a phone and social media, often there was provided a combination of activities, for example, writing an e-mail and then calling by phone. Some respondents indicated that they see social media as a second choice if there is no response to the e-mail, hence, social media can be used to draw the attention of public institution. Of all respondents` 21 percent did not know what to do in such a situation and 8 percent emphasized that it is useless as public institutions don't care about their opinion or will not consider it – those both groups of respondents are providing an opinion that is indicating lack of information from the side of institutions, hence, a field where improvement is very necessary if institutions are interested to foster citizen participation.

3.3.2. Attitude towards digital participation in Latvia

This subchapter is corresponding to findings of the survey to representatives of citizens on questions:

- How do you evaluate the current activity of Latvian public administration institutions in the digital environment? (1.3. Kā Jūs vērtējat Latvijas valsts pārvaldes iestāžu esošo aktivitāti digitālajā vidē?) – closed-ended question, six options, scale from one to ten;

- Please indicate the content components that will encourage your desire to follow a social media account of a public institution! (1.4. Lūdzu, atzīmējiet satura sastāvdaļas, kuru izmantošana veicinātu Jūsu vēlmi sekot valsts pārvaldes iestādes sociālo mediju kontam!) – closed-ended question, seven options, scale from one to ten;

- Should Latvian public administration institutions have a unified style on how to develop and maintain communication with citizens in social media? (1.5. Vai Latvijā būtu jābūt vienotam stilam, kā valsts pārvaldes iestādes veido un uztur komunikāciju ar iedzīvotājiem sociālajos medijos?) – closed-ended question, scale from one to ten;

- Which public institutions would you recommend as an example of good practice in the digital environment in Latvia? (1.7. Kuras valsts pārvaldes iestādes aktivitātes digitālajā vidē Jūs ieteiktu kā Latvijas labās prakses paraugu?) – open-ended question.

To evaluate citizens attitude towards the current situation, in the survey they were asked to give a rating to the digital activities of public administration institutions on a scale from 1 (insufficient activity) to 10 (very good activity). Citizens also had a possibility for each of the six criteria not to provide their evaluation but instead indicate that they do not have an opinion of the current subject (see Figure 3.14.).
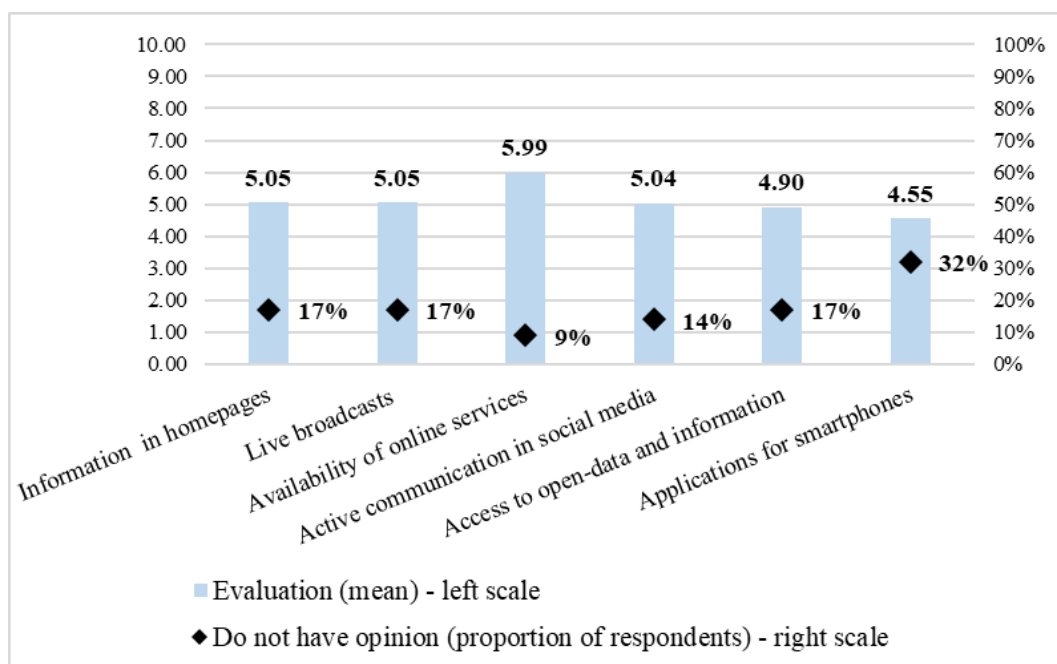
Figure 3.14. **Respondents evaluation of current digital activities of Latvian public institutions**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted survey to the representatives of citizens (2019, 2020), evaluation on a scale from 1(insufficient activity) to 10(very good activity), n=314

The highest arithmetic mean of evaluations (5.99) has received availability of online services, but the lowest arithmetic mean of assessments 4.55 was to participation applications for smartphones. Slightly above 5 on average were evaluated access to information in institutions homepage about participation opportunities, active communication in social media, and availability

of live broadcasts from the decision-making meetings, for example, online translations from the meetings of Latvian Parliament.

For each category there were from 9 to 17 percent of respondents who did not have an opinion about the current subject – they have not heard about this opportunity or had other reasons to consider that they are not able to evaluate it. According to this assessment the most unknown participation opportunity for citizens is smartphone applications – 32 percent of respondents were not ready to provide an evaluation on this subject. One of the reasons for that could be the small number of such applications in Latvia or insufficient promotion of those applications that are already available.
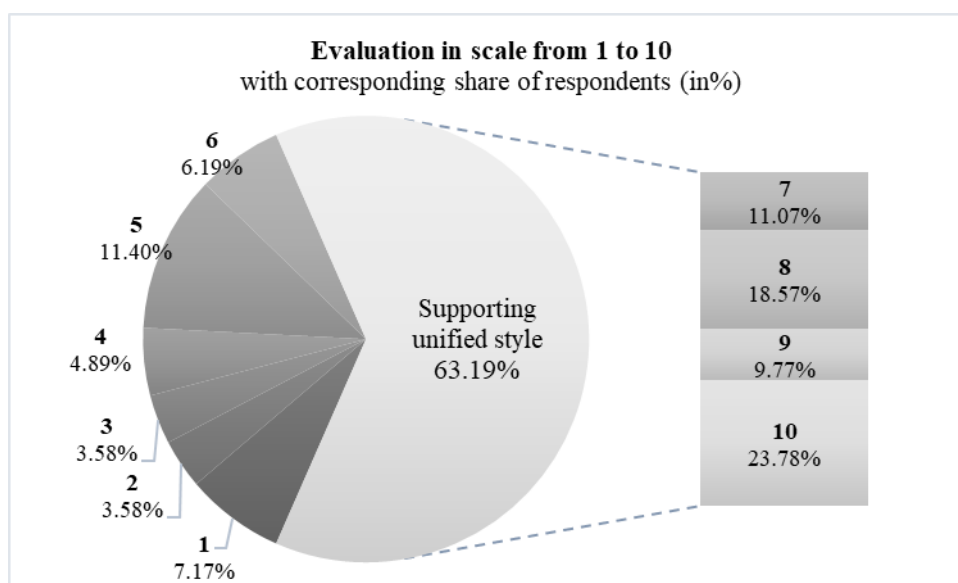
Figure 3.15. **Distribution of evaluations on citizens attitude towards a unified style of communication for Latvian public institutions on social media**

Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted survey to the representatives of citizens (2019, 2020), evaluation on a scale from 1(not needed) to 10(it definitely should be introduced), n=314

Respondents of the survey are demonstrating comparatively large support towards the suggestion that Latvian public administration institutions should have a unified style of how to develop and maintain communication with citizens in social media (see Figure 3.15.). The arithmetic mean of evaluations was 6.91 and, from all respondents` 63 percent are supporting this idea by evaluating it with 7, 8, 9 or 10 on a scale from 1(not needed) to 10(it definitely should be introduced).

In the future development of digital democracy in Latvia should be considered not only international and national experience from other institutions, but also the opinion of citizens and their preferences on how they would like to be engaged in the decision-making process. In the context of social media citizens in the survey were asked to evaluate which content would increase their interest to follow the social media page of Latvian public institution. Respondents had to

evaluate seven options of social media content on a scale from 1(does not encourage a desire to follow) to 10(very stimulates the desire to follow), results of their assessment is reorganised from the lowest-rated option at the top to the most stimulating option at the bottom (see Figure 3.16.).
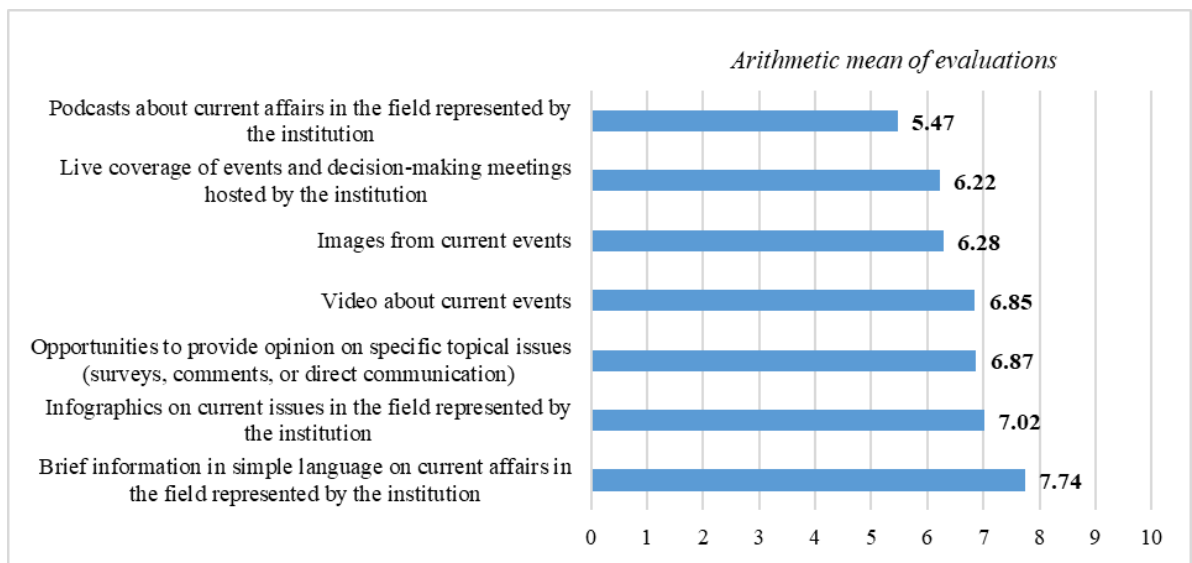
Figure 3.16. **Arithmetic means of citizens evaluations of content options that would increase their interest to follow the social media page of Latvian public institution**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted survey to the representatives of citizens (2019, 2020), evaluation on a scale from 1(does not encourage desire to follow) to 10(very stimulates the desire to follow), n=314

The lowest average (arithmetic mean) of evaluations has gained podcasts about current affairs. Podcasts, for now, are being published only by a few Latvian institutions, thus citizens also might not be familiar with this type of communication. Slightly belove 7 respondents evaluated videos about current events and opportunities to provide their opinion in surveys, commentary sections or by direct communication Slightly above 7, respondents recognized the use of infographics. The highest average result of evaluations 7.74 was for brief information in simple language on current affairs, suggesting that language that is used by public institutions on social media not always is seen as easy to understand by citizens.

It was also asked to respondents to mention Latvian public institutions whose activity in the digital environment they have noticed and would suggest as a good example how institutions should communicate and cooperate with citizens (see Table 3.6.). The most often mentioned examples were the State Chancellery and Cabinet of Ministers (Government of Latvia), it must be pointed out that most of the respondents mentioned them separately although they are communicating on social media from one common account. Often respondents mentioned Latvian Parliament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Culture, and Ministry of Health. Several times respondents also emphasized individual social media activity of the Minister of Foreign Affairs - Edgars Rinkevics. Other public administration institutions were mentioned only a few times, but from all ministries, respondents never mentioned the Ministry of

Agriculture, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice. From subordinate institutions, respondents recognised a good example of CSDD, Latvian State Police; and Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Other institutions were also mentioned, including several municipalities and also examples that are not Latvian public institutions, for example, manabalss.lv and several foreign countries.

Table 3.6. **Public institutions mentioned by respondents as an example of good practice of communication in the digital environment**

Category	Most often mentioned institutions	A few times mentioned institutions
Public administration (91 examples in total)	State Chancellery; Cabinet of Ministers; Parliament (Saeima); Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Health.	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development; Ministry of Transport; Ministry of Welfare; Chancery of the President of Latvia; Ministry of Economics; Ministry of the Interior.
Subordinate institutions (51 examples in total)	CSDD; Latvian State Police; Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.	Latvian Herald; State Revenue Service; Enterprise Register; Investment and Development Agency of Latvia; Agency for International Programs for Youth.
Other examples (18 examples in total)	Riga municipality.	Liepaja municipality; Nica municipality; Grobina municipality; Daugavpils municipality.
Do not have an opinion – 163 respondents		
Have an opinion that there are no good examples among Latvian public institutions – 30 respondents		

Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted survey to the representatives of citizens (2019, 2020), n=314

Of all respondents, 52 percent did not have an opinion about good examples and 10 percent of respondents clearly emphasized that there are no good examples between Latvian public institutions, which might indicate that current activities of Latvian public institutions are not reaching enough attention of citizens or are not sticking out between other content creators on social media, such as mass media, celebrities, entertainment pages, non-governmental organisations and individual persons.

3.3.3. Factors that are impacting citizens` participation in the decision-making process

This subchapter is corresponding to findings of the survey to representatives of citizens on questions:

- What are the reasons that are reducing your willingness to get involved in the decision-making process of public administration? (1.8. Kādi iemesli mazina Jūsu vēlmi iesaistīties valsts pārvaldes lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā?) – closed-ended question, seven options, scale from one to ten;

- Which activities would encourage your more active participation in the decision-making process of public administration? (1.9. Kuras aktivitātes veicinātu Jūsu aktīvāku līdzdalību valsts

pārvaldes lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā?) – closed-ended question, nine options, scale from one to ten.

Considering that citizen participation in the decision-making process of public administration in Latvia is comparatively low, respondents of the survey were asked to indicate reasons that are reducing their willingness to participate. Seven different aspects were provided (see Figure 3.17.) and respondents were asked to evaluate them on a scale from 1 – doesn`t lower interest to participate to 10 - significantly lowers interest to participate.

Arithmetic means of citizens evaluations in scale from 1 (doesn`t lower interest to participate) to 10 (significantly lowers interest to participate)
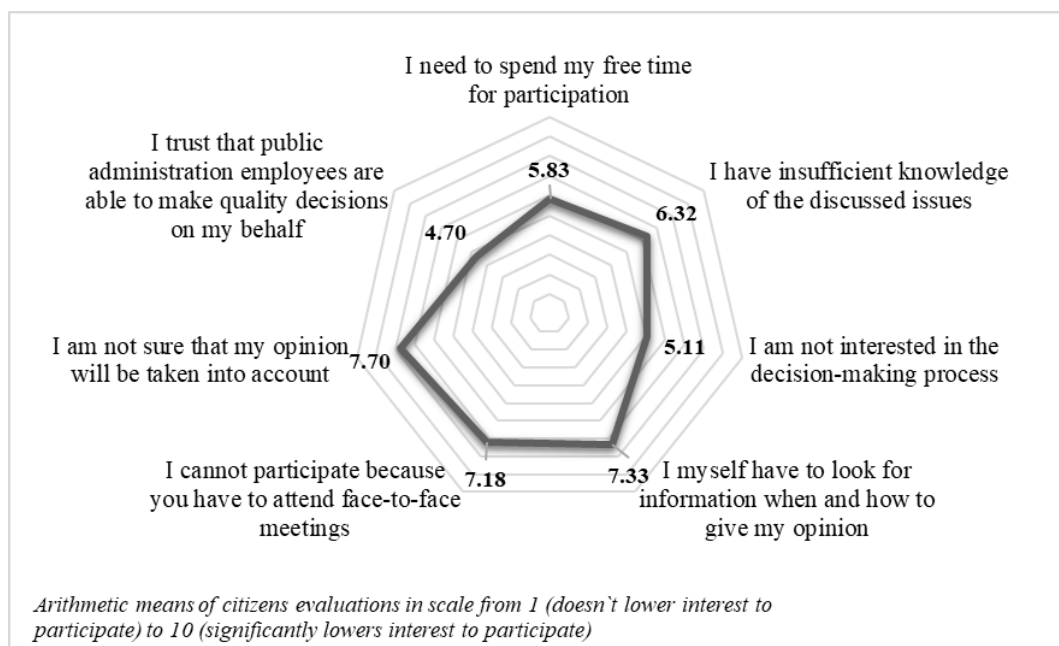
Figure 3.17. **Arithmetic means of citizens evaluations of aspects that are lowering their interest to participate in the decision-making process**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted survey to the representatives of citizens (2019, 2020), evaluation on a scale from 1(doesn`t lower interest to participate) to 10(significantly lowers interest to participate), n=314

The highest assessments were given to the doubts if provided opinion will be considered by public administration (7.70), a requirement to participate in face-to-face meetings (7.18) and the necessity to search for information about participation opportunities (7.33). Those three obstacles can be reduced by some degree with the public administrations` initiatives, for example, more open communication by public administration or digital solutions. The same reasons are often highlighted also in similar questionnaires in Latvia and abroad, thus it is important to understand public administrations reasons not to fix this situation – is this a matter of comprehension or a matter of will, or a matter of other priorities and money.

Although digital participation is faster, easier and financially less expensive from the citizens perspective, it must not become the only channel for the citizens' participation in the decision-making process – there should also be provided face-to-face opportunities and other options accordingly to citizens habits and specific regional situation. To analyse the preferences of Latvian

citizens they were asked in the survey to evaluate activities that would foster their participation in the decision-making process. Respondents were evaluating nine different participation activities on a scale from 1(doesn't help to get involved) to 10(is very helpful in getting involved), activities were listed in alphabetical order and the list consisted of both online and offline participation opportunities (seen Figure 3.18.).
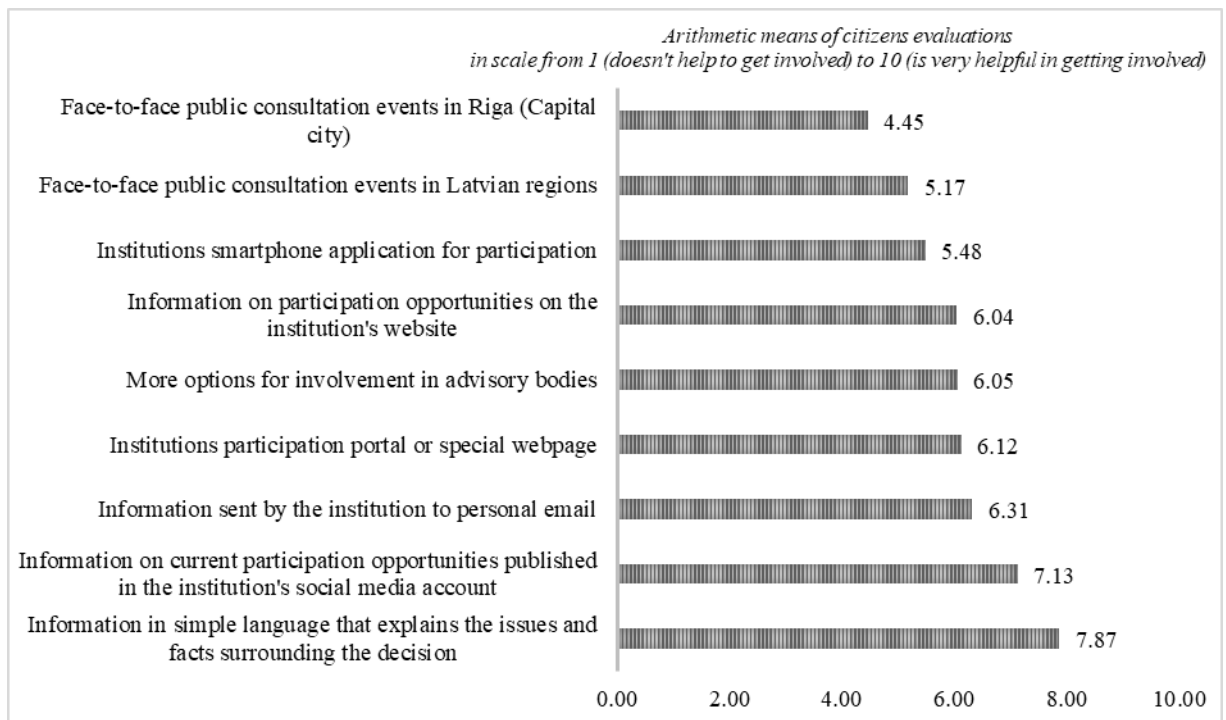
Figure 3.18. **Arithmetic means of citizens evaluations of activities that would encourage their participation in the decision-making process**

Source: Author's construction based on the author's conducted survey to the representatives of citizens (2019, 2020), evaluation on a scale from 1(doesn't help to get involved) to 10(is very helpful in getting involved), n=314

The highest assessment 7.87 received the option to receive in simple language the information that explains the issues and facts surrounding the decision. From the offline participation opportunities, the highest assessment was given to participation in advisory bodies, with condition that they are made open to individual participation for those who are not members of non-governmental organizations or representatives of lobby organisations. From the offline participation opportunities, the lowest assessment was given to face-to-face meetings in Latvia`s Capital city Riga – 4.45, which was followed by face-to-face meetings in regions of Latvia. From the online participation opportunities, the lowest assessment was given to the use of smartphone applications, at the same time information on current participation opportunities in the institution's social media account was valued much higher, although there is a growing tendency that social media is consumed in smartphones, not in the desktop version. Probably, additional research is needed on citizens attitude towards smartphone applications that are designed by public institutions – is the interest to use those applications connected with trust in public institutions in general or previous experience/lack of experience with such applications.

3.4. Public administration`s opinion and habits in the use of the digital environment

In the survey representatives of institutions were providing answers to 13 questions. In the analysis, questions are reorganised according to their thematic groups (*the whole questionnaire is available in Appendix 1*). Answers to the survey are indicating opinion and habits of civil servants that are representing their institution, according to the results of the survey, represented institutions are several Latvian ministries, Parliament, Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre, municipalities and several other Latvian public institutions.

3.4.1. Regulations (external and internal)

This subchapter is corresponding to findings of the survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration on questions:

- What internal regulations affect the creation of social media content in your institution? (1.1. Kādi iekšējie regulējumi ietekmē sociālo mediju satura veidošanu Jūsu iestādē?) – closed-ended question, six options;
- Should Latvian public administration institutions have regulations for unified style how to develop and maintain communication with citizens in social media? (1.2. Vai Latvijā būtu jābūt vienotam regulējumam par to, kā valsts pārvaldes iestādēm veidot un uzturēt komunikāciju ar iedzīvotājiem sociālajos medijos?) – close-ended question, scale from one to ten.
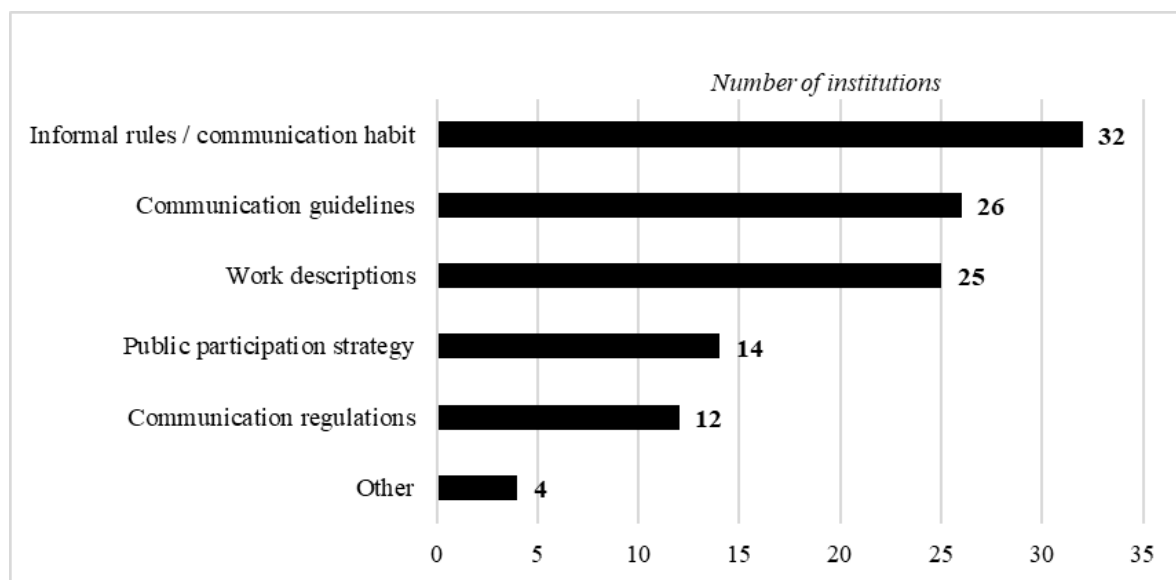
Figure 3.19. **Internal regulations in the Latvian public administration institutions` influencing creation of social media content by the institution (respondents could select more than one option)**
Source: Author`s conducted survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration, 2019. n=55

Like any other organisation or company, public institutions should control their public communication to maintain consistency and a certain level of quality. There are various possible solutions that could be used. Data in Figure 3.19. indicate internal regulations that affect content

creation for Latvian public institutions social media accounts. Accordingly, the most often used internal regulation is informal rules/communication habits (in 34 institutions), then comes communication guidelines (in 26 institutions) and work descriptions (in 25 institutions). This is creating a situation where each institution is speaking to citizens according to their own rules and in their own specific voice. The communication would be more comprehensible to citizens if all Latvian public administration institutions communicated according to the same rules to ensure a unified image of the public institutions and to ease the gathering of information from public institutions, communication with them, and participation in the decision-making process.

Table 3.7. **Main Statistical Indicators on Evaluations for Question** *Should Latvian public administration institutions have regulations for unified style how to develop and maintain communication with citizens in social media?*

N=55	Valid	42
	Missing	13
Mean		5,71
Standard Error of Mean		0,454
Median		6
Mode		8
Standard Deviation		2,941
Variance		8,648
Range		9
Minimum		1
Maximum		10

Source: Authors construction based on the author's calculations based on the author's conducted survey in 2019, n=55, Evaluation scale 1-10, where 1 – not necessary; 10 – is definitely needed

In the survey to representatives of Latvian public administration, respondents were asked to evaluate the necessity for a common regulation by the state on how the institutions are communicating with citizens online. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is not necessary and 10 is definitely needed, respondents evaluated the necessity of common regulations with 5.71 arithmetic mean (see Table 3.7.). Although responses were very heterogeneous, there were several evaluations both for 10 (from all respondents who gave evaluations, grade 10 is given by 14 percent of respondents) and for 1 (from all respondents who gave evaluations, grade 1 is given by 12 percent of respondents) as well.

Data included in Table 3.8. indicate that views on the necessity of common regulations on digital communication with citizens in social media are very different with arithmetic mean of evaluations 5,71 (in 1-10 evaluation scale) and with a modal (most often) evaluation of 8 with half of the respondents giving evaluation 6 or less and half of the respondents giving evaluation 6 or more (characterised by median).

Table 3.8. **Distribution of Respondent Evaluations on Question** *Should Latvian public administration institutions have regulations for unified style how to develop and maintain communication with citizens in social media?*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	5	9,1	11,9	11,9
	2	1	1,8	2,4	14,3
	3	7	12,7	16,7	31,0
	4	2	3,6	4,8	35,7
	5	5	9,1	11,9	47,6
	6	3	5,5	7,1	54,8
	7	4	7,3	9,5	64,3
	8	8	14,5	19,0	83,3
	9	1	1,8	2,4	85,7
	10	6	10,9	14,3	100,0
	Total	42	76,4	100,0	
Missing	0	13	23,6		
Total		55	100,0		

Source: Author's construction based on the author's calculations based on the author's conducted survey in 2019, n=55, Evaluation scale 1-10, where 1 – not necessary; 10 – is definitely needed

It can be observed that there are various and even diametrically opposite attitudes (see Figure 3.20.), still, there is a small preference towards the idea about common regulation on digital communication with citizens.
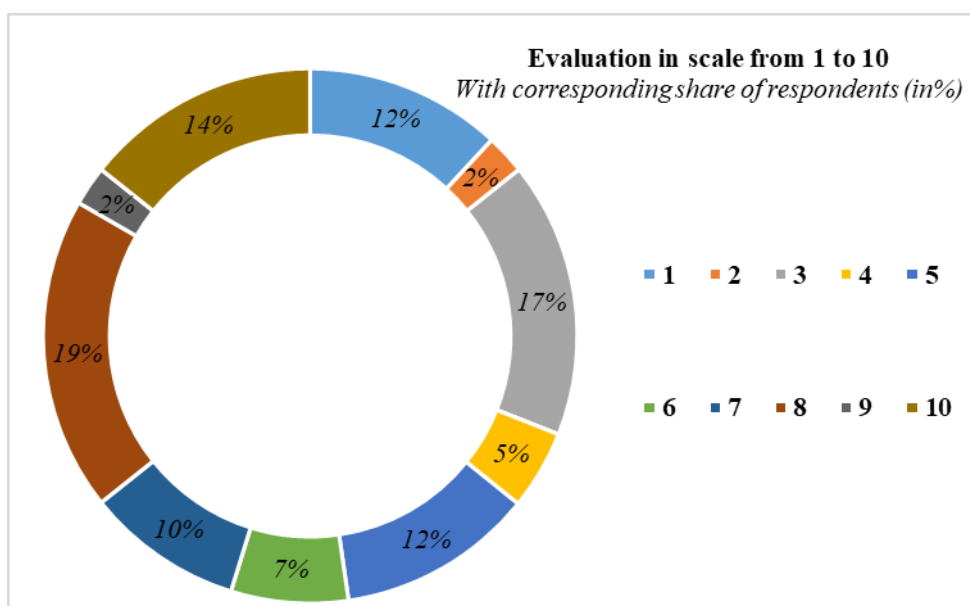
Figure 3.20. **Distribution of respondent evaluations on support for common regulation on digital communication with citizens**

Source: Author`s conducted survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration, 2019, evaluation on a scale from 1(is not necessary) to 10(is definitely needed), n=55

Factors, that are impacting this attituded were not directly measured by the survey, but it can be institutions internal comprehension about the purpose of social media, as well as, experience and knowledge about the use of social media – traditionally, for persons who are not using social media themselves, it is harder to understand opportunities that use of social media can provide for the citizen participation in the decision-making process. Therefore, it is in the hands of senior

management of Latvian public administration whether the institutions will successfully use the opportunities for citizen participation provided by the digital environment as well as support different activities to improve digital literacy for inhabitants.

3.4.2. Providing and evaluating content for digital communication

This subchapter is corresponding to findings of the survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration on questions:

- How the content you post on social media accounts is provided by the institution you represent? (1.3. Kā notiek sociālo mediju kontos publicējamā satura nodrošināšana Jūsu pārstāvētajā iestādē?) – closed-ended question, four options, scale from one to ten;
- How regularly are you analysing the reach and feedback on posts in your institution's social media accounts? (1.4. Cik regulāri tiek analizēta Jūsu iestādes sociālo mediju kontos veikto ierakstu atdeve?) – closed-ended question, six options for frequency;
- How many employees have access to post to your institution's social media accounts? (1.7. Cik darbiniekiem ir pieeja, lai veiktu ierakstus Jūsu iestādes sociālo mediju kontos?) – closed-ended question, four options;
- How often social media content creators and publishers in your institution share the experience with representatives of other public institutions? (1.9. Cik regulāri notiek Jūsu iestādes sociālo mediju kontu satura veidotāju un publicētāju pieredzes apmaiņa ar citu valsts pārvaldes iestāžu līdzīgu atbildību darbiniekiem?) – closed-ended question, six options;
- Which other public administration institution would you recommend as an example of good practice in the digital environment in Latvia? (1.10. Kuras citas valsts pārvaldes iestādes aktivitātes digitālajā vidē Jūs ieteiktu kā Latvijas labās prakses paraugu?) – open-ended question;

In the survey to representatives of the institution's respondents were asked to identify habits in their institution for the creation of information that is published on social media entries. Data included in Table 3.9. indicate that in most cases content publishers request information from the specific employee to ensure the information that will be published in institutions social media account (with the biggest arithmetic mean of the evaluations: 8,15, with the biggest mode (8) and median (8) and no respondents have chosen lowest levels on evaluation scale). Also often are situations when a specific employee sends information to the content publisher.

Table 3.9. **Main Statistical Indicators on Evaluation of Main Aspects for Question** *How the content you post on social media accounts is provided by the institution you represent?*

		Each employee sends information to the content publisher	Specific employee sends information to the content publisher	Content publishers request information from all employees	Content publishers request information from the specific employee
N	Valid	32	33	32	33
	Missing	23	22	23	22
Mean		3,78	6,76	4,03	8,15
Std. Error of Mean		0,538	0,392	0,459	0,279
Median		2	7	3	8
Mode		1	7 and 8	2	8
Std. Deviation		3,045	2,250	2,596	1,603
Variance		9,273	5,064	6,741	2,570
Range		9	9	9	7
Minimum		1	1	1	3
Maximum		10	10	10	10

Source: Author's construction based on the author's calculations based on the author's conducted survey in 2019, n=55Evaluation scale 1-10, where 1 – never; 10 – always

Data of Table 3.10. indicate that in most of the public administration institutions access to social media accounts to make contributions are from two to five persons. As the first suggested frequency (two to five employees) is the biggest, in the next research it would be important to divide this interval including an option that one person is responsible and has access to make contributions in social media accounts in the respective institution of public administration.

Table 3.10**. Distribution of responses on the question** *How many employees have access to make contributions in social media accounts of your institution?*

	Number of employees	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	two – five	26	47,3	86,7	86,7
	six – ten	2	3,6	6,7	93,3
	Other	2	3,6	6,7	100,0
	Total	30	54,5	100,0	
Missing	0	25	45,5		
Total		55	100,0		

Source: Author's construction based on the author's calculations based on the author's conducted survey in 2019, n=55

Regular analysis of the reach and feedback can help to provide social media content that is more successfully attracting the attention of followers.   In the survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration, respondents were asked to identify how regularly their institution is analysing the reach and feedback on posts in the institution's social media accounts (see Figure 3.21). More than half of institutions are doing that regularly – 20 percent once a month, 20 percent weekly and 15 percent daily. One-fourth of institutions are analysing their social media situation less often – 18 percent once a quarter and 6 percent once a year. In 9 percent of institutions analysis is made as often as it is needed, hence – it can be once a week, but it can also be once a month. 12 percent of respondents did not know if their institution is analysing social media reach and feedback – it could mean that their institution is not doing that at all or, as well as there is a person who is

doing that but this information is not shared with the representative who was providing answers to the survey.
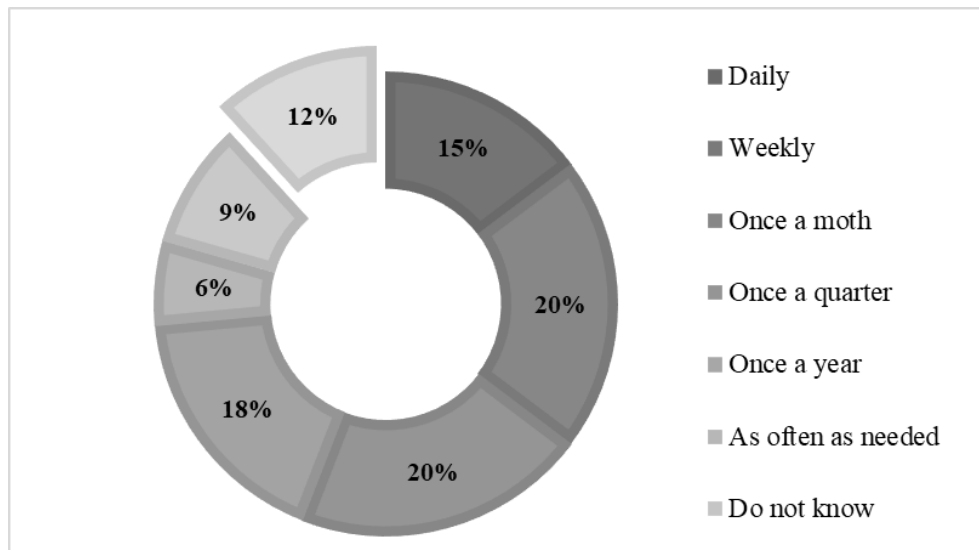
Figure 3.21. **Answers to question** *How regularly are you analysing the reach and feedback on posts in your institution's social media accounts?*
Source: Author's construction based on the author's calculations based on the author's conducted survey in 2019, n=55

The digital environment is developing and changing very fast; thus it is advisable to learn from others who have mastered digital capabilities earlier or are better at implementing and testing digital innovations. It is possible to follow international experience, but also a national level exchange of knowledge can lead to better results. The use of social media by Latvian public administration institutions is very various, both by the level of activity and by the communication style and methods.
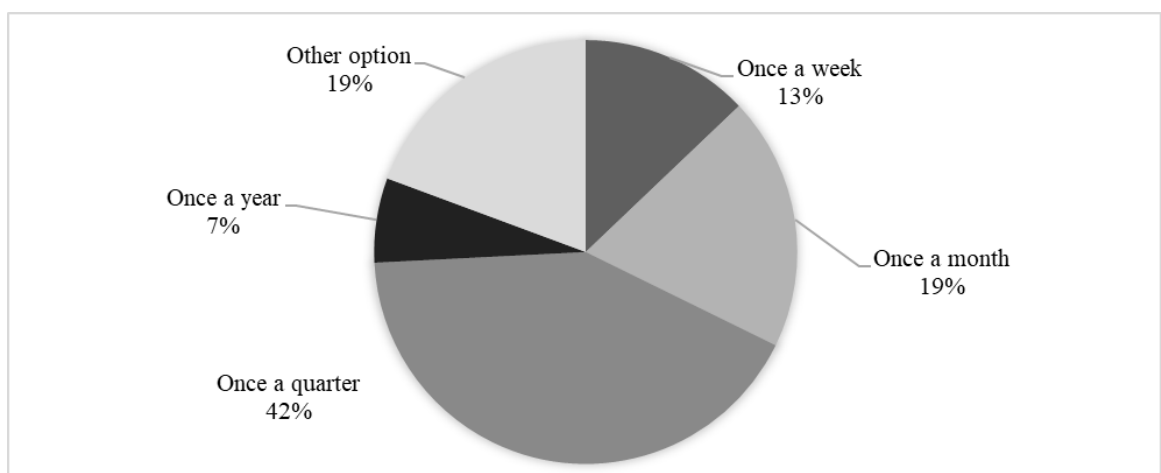
Figure 3.22. **Frequency of exchange of experience between representatives of the Latvian public administration**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's calculations based on the author's conducted survey in 2019, n=55

In the survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration, respondents were asked to identify how frequently they are exchanging experience with their colleagues from other institutions (see Figure 3.22.). Most often an exchange of information is happening once a quarter. One-third of respondents indicated that the exchange of information is happening even more often – 19 percent said that once a month and 13 percent recognised that their institution is exchanging information about social media communication on weekly basis. Respondents who choose to mark "Other option", mentioned that their institution is not exchanging experience with others or are doing that very irregularly or seldom – less than once a year.

In addition to exchanging knowledge directly, it is also possible to make an observation of the social media activities that other institutions are doing. In the survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration, respondents were asked to mention which Latvian public administration institutions other than their own they can recognise as a good example for social media communication. Representatives of the Latvian public administration most often pointed out activities of the State Chancellery and Government of Latvia, several times was mentioned State police, Ministry of Finance and State Revenue Service, as well as respondents emphasized that there are several municipalities whose social media activity could be recognised as a good example of digital communication.

3.4.3. Citizen participation in the decision-making process

This subchapter is corresponding to findings of the survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration on questions:

- What types of communication and information channels does your institution use to identify and gain opinion from citizens? (1.5. Kādus komunikācijas veidus un kanālus Jūsu iestāde izmanto, lai apzinātu un iegūtu iedzīvotāju viedokli?) – closed-ended question, eleven options for communication and information channels, eight options for age groups of citizens;
- If a post made by a social media account follower of your institution to the content published by the institution is useful to the institution, how quickly does this information reach the responsible executive of the institution? (1.6. Ja Jūsu iestādes sociālo mediju konta sekotāja veiktais ieraksts pie iestādes publicētā satura ir iestādei noderīga informācija, cik ātri šī informācija nonāk līdz iestādes atbildīgajam darbiniekam?) – closed-ended question, five options;
- Given the current patterns and practices of information circulation in your institution, if an individual wish to give his or her views on a subject, how should he/she act in order to reach the responsible executive as soon as possible? (1.11. Ņemot vērā Jūsu iestādē pašlaik esošo

informācijas aprites kārtību un paradumus, ja individuāla persona vēlas sniegt Jūsu iestādei savu viedokli kādā jautājumā, kā viņam/viņai ir jārīkojas, lai viedoklis pēc iespējas ātrāk sasniegtu atbildīgo darbinieku?) – open-ended question.

One of the biggest advantages of digital communication is the speed of information exchange and feedback. Representatives of the public institutions were asked to evaluate how fast the feedback made to public institutions social media content can reach the responsible persons in the institutions.

Results of the survey indicate (see Figure 3.23.) that in most situations valuable information from social media followers reaches the responsible persons of the institution in less than three hours (84 percent) and, in half of the institutions (48 percent), in less than one hour. This is a very good result as one of the core characteristics of social media is a fast exchange of information – if the institution is capable to meet this condition, it helps to build a better connection with social media followers and gain their trust for future situations when a fast exchange of information with the institution will be needed, for example, in emergencies.
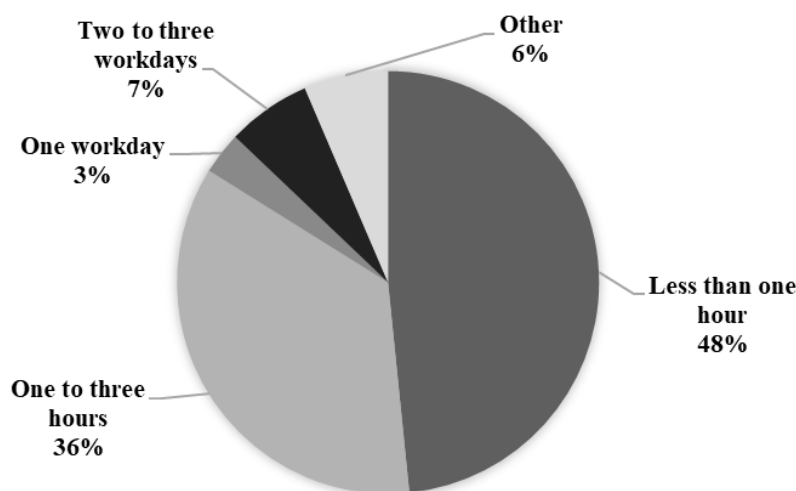
Figure 3.23. **Speed of information exchange between citizen and representative of the institution**
Source: Author's construction based on the author's calculations based on the author's conducted survey in 2019, n=55

Latvian public administration is already using various types of communication channels to identify and gain the opinion of citizens (see Table 3.11.). Institutions are represented in various social media portals and, for each of them, it is possible to recognise that representatives of the institutions have selected slightly different age groups as a primary audience. It is a positive result that shows that public institutions have a notion of different audiences they are working with. However, according to the results of the questionnaire, the most often used channel still is the home page of the institution. Analysis of the age groups that representatives of the public institutions are mentioning as target audience to each channel, one can observe that most of the channels are used

to communicate with citizens 25 years or older, raising a discussion on who is responsible for citizen knowledge on political participation and how one can become an active citizen when public institutions are not actively communicating with them while they are younger than 25.

Table 3.11. **Types of communication channels used by Latvian public administration to identify and gain opinion of citizens**

Age group:	<15	16-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	>65
	Amount of institutions that are using specific communication channel for the indicated age group							
Social network Draugiem.lv	1	2	0	0	1	4	4	3
Social network Facebook.com	2	10	19	26	28	20	16	8
Social network Instagram.com	3	12	13	10	8	7	5	4
Social network Twitter.com	0	2	10	23	27	23	16	7
Social network Youtube.com	1	9	13	19	20	18	11	3
Home page of the institution	5	14	19	24	27	26	25	20
Consultative body / Advisory committee	0	1	5	13	15	17	16	9
Participation portal	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	0
Smartphone application	3	6	6	6	5	3	2	1
Public consultation	4	7	12	14	16	18	17	14
Online survey	4	8	12	14	15	13	12	7

Source: Author's construction based on the author's calculations based on the author's conducted survey in 2019, n=55

In the survey representatives of the public administration were asked to describe the current situation in their institution – mentioning the fastest method of communication that citizens should use to deliver their opinion to the particular official (see Table 3.12.).

Table 3.12. **Responses to question** *Given the current patterns and practices of information circulation in your institution, if an individual wish to give his or her views on a subject, how should he/she act in order to reach the responsible executive as soon as possible*

Suggestion	Amount of responses that mentioned this suggestion (in %)
Sending an e-mail to the main official e-mail address of the institution or directly to official	89
Sending a direct message or use a commentary section on the institution's social media page	58
Make a call to the main official phone number of the institution or directly to official	50
Provide information on the home page of the institution or participation portal	23
Submit an official application or send a letter by post	5

Source: Author's construction based on the author's calculations based on the author's conducted survey in 2019, n=55

Answers demonstrated that, according to current habits of information exchange in the institutions, digital communication with citizens is often accepted: 89 percent suggested that sending e-mail is the best choice, and more than half of the respondents mentioned social media as an advisable channel for communication. However, communication habits vary a lot: several institutions indicated that an official application to the representative still would be the best choice

to guarantee that citizen opinion is noticed. There were also a couple of responses that suggested that a person should make an appointment or find an NGO which is already cooperating with the institution. In some of the answers were mentioned worries that current information channels are not working very well - that information which is written to social media might not be forwarded to public officials but might be read-only by the persons who are operating social media account. Similarly, the same worries were about sending email and respondent were a suggestion that the official application could be a better way how to ensure that information reached the public official.

3.4.4. Fostering citizen participation

This subchapter is corresponding to findings of the survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration on the question – Which activities would help to increase public participation in the decision-making process in your institution? (1.8. Kuras atbalsta aktivitātes palīdzētu palielināt sabiedrības līdzdalību lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā Jūsu iestādē?) – closed-ended question, seven options, scale from one to ten.
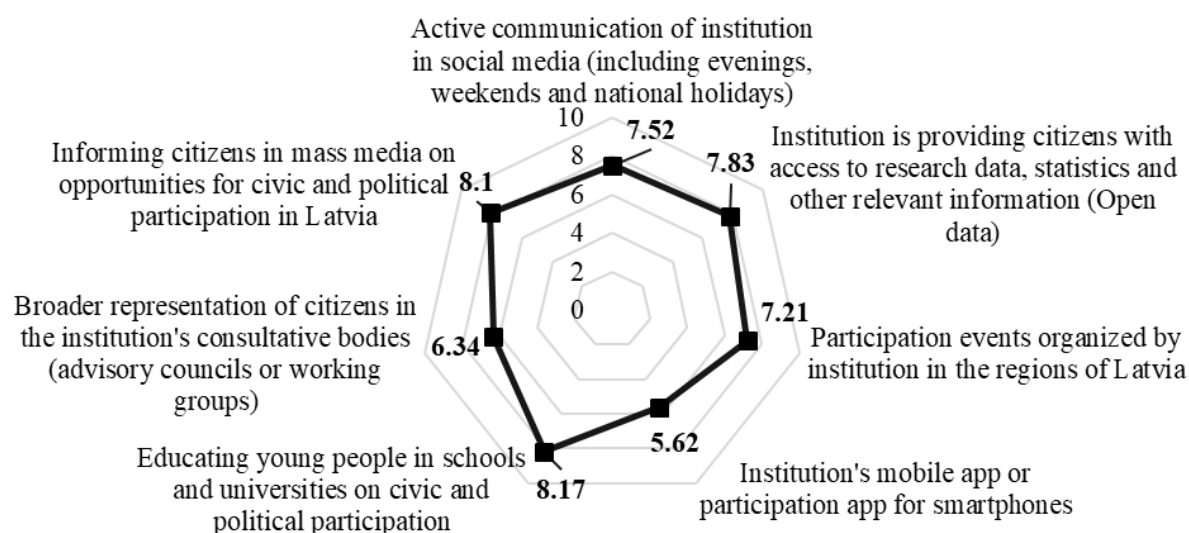
Figure 3.24**. Arithmetic Means of Evaluations by Responses of Representatives of Latvian Public Administration on Activities that could Help Foster Civic and Political participation**
Source: Author's construction based on the results of the author's conducted survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration, 2019. n=55 Evaluation scale 1-10, where 1 – minimal influence on participation; 10 – very important support for participation

WEB 2.0 and social media allows communication without intermediators, thus, public institutions could communicate with youth online and become one of those who are educating youth on civic and political participation as well. Yet, when representatives of public institutions were asked to evaluate on a scale from 1 to 10 different activities that could foster citizen participation (where 1 is minimal influence on participation; and 10 is very important to support for participation), from public administrations' perspective (see Figure 3.24.), the most valued activities

are educating young people in schools (8.17 arithmetic mean) and informing citizens in mass media on their opportunities for civic and political participation in Latvia (8.1 arithmetic mean). High evaluation is also given to access to Open data (7.83 arithmetic mean) and active communication on social media (7.52 arithmetic mean). Although smartphone application could be one of the most effective ways to reach citizens, it is rated with 5.62 arithmetic mean which could be explained by the low number of existing such applications made by public institutions in Latvia, resulting in not enough experience on this type of direct communication.

3.5. Analysis of the results of the research and alternative scenarios

In this subchapter results of the research are analysed according to the initially established aspects: current situation and habits; preferred communication channels; the speed of communication; support for digital solutions; and learning from good practices (for a complete list of sub-aspects see Table 3.1.). In the analysis is considered the representation of the aspects in each part of the research, key observations, common aspects and contradictions.

Results of the survey to representatives citizens are demonstrating that citizens for participation are preferring digital solutions over traditional face-to-face methods, also there are recognised several directions where public institutions should make improvements to interest citizens in the digital cooperation. Results of the survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration suggest that institutions are supporting digital solutions, however, in several questions, there are distinct differences between institutions in habits and attitudes. Content analysis of the *Facebook* pages of Latvian ministries is confirming that various attitudes of the representatives of institutions are reflecting also in the content that is published. There is not one common communication style and there are existing different habits in the use of visual elements and engagement opportunities, there is diversity in the frequency how often information is published. Therefore, the main discussion arises – what should be the purpose of communication of institutions in the contemporary digital environment? One purpose could be creating distant one-way communication environment by providing information about events of the ministry and activities of the representatives of the ministry. The other purpose could be to develop a common space for discussion by educating followers about topics that are behind the activities of the institution and gradually motivate citizens to participate in the decision-making process. Both choices can be useful and even distant communication is better than social media without the presence of institutions themselves. Still, the technological development of *Web 2.0* is allowing the use of the digital environment in the two-way communication capacity, thus citizens can advance from the observers of the decision-making process to participants and partners. The current situation in Latvia is suggesting that this potential is used only partly, although there is interest for further

development of digital democracy in Latvia both on the side of the representatives of public administration and on the side of the representatives of citizens.

3.5.1. Current situation and habits

Currently, each institution has its own internal regulations for digital communication with citizens. From all the institutions represented in the survey to representatives of the Latvian public administration, 62 percent have informal rules and communication habits which they are following. Half of the represented institutions have also communication guidelines and work descriptions which are regulating communication with citizens. This precondition is creating a situation that each institution has its own communication style, thus, there are noticeable differences in the writing style, use of visual materials and utilization of social media specific opportunities. There is a comparatively small group of employees, that are participating in the communication process. In most institutions access to social media accounts to make contributions are from two to five persons and usually content publishers request information from the specific employee or specific employee sends information to the content publisher. Accordingly, communication to/from any employee in the institution is seldom. This reality is increasing the importance of the necessity that content publishers have comprehension about topics that are in the field represented by the institution. Also, it is important that they are not mere publishers of information that is prepared by others but understands the effect that high-quality information and two-way communication can bring to relationships between institution and citizens. Results from the content analysis suggest that superficial and unqualified attitude from content publishers are happening too often, thus lowering institutions ability to attract the attention of followers. Still, the positive aspect is that half of the represented institutions are analysing the reach and feedback on posts already quite often - 20 percent once a month, 20 percent weekly and 15 percent daily. Thereby suggesting that they are thinking about how to provide better content and become more attractive to potential followers.

The most often used visual content is illustrations – a picture or another visual element that is thematically connected with the message but is not providing real information about the current situation. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture often is using stock photos. In the use of other visual elements, there are differences - Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Transport are often using photography's, Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Welfare are comparatively often using video and animation, Ministry of Finance is the most active in the use of infographics. From citizens perspective infographics and video materials are attracting the most attention.

Considering frequency and topics of the social media posts it can be concluded that there is not happening careful planning of the entries – posts are made according to current events and agenda, however, planning is noticeable in the context with awareness campaigns that time to time is developed by ministries or in the context with common topics, for example, when Ministry of Finance is providing visual materials about the new budget to all ministries. Entries that are about citizen participation opportunities or decisions made with the participation of citizens or their representatives were published rarely (in the analysed period only 4 percent from the total amount of entries). For example, although the work of consultative bodies is a regular activity in the ministries, it was mentioned rarely – 27 times in all analysed period and only by some ministries, thus, keeping this process distant from the followers of social media pages. It is positive that most ministries are using social media not only for informative posts but are publishing also entries that are educating their followers - in nine ministries educating entries are published slightly more often than informative entries. However, the proportions of educational posts vary between ministries and engaging posts are still a minority, hence, communication still is top-down with the exception for some ministries, such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. This is a problem that is pointed out in several international studies about the communication struggles that institutions are having on social media. For now, the most often used engagement elements are suggestions to learn additional information by the following link, watching a video or reading infographic, as well as, to watch the live stream from an event or meeting. Active use of language and direct personal address are writing styles that should be used more often as that makes the published content more unofficial and more similar to the communication style of persons and business companies. Results of the content analysis are demonstrating that individual representatives of the institutions can make a significant difference in the content as there is a noticeable inconsistency between different entries of the same institution, hence – representatives of the same institution have different digital skills and habits, thus some posts are carefully made and some are superficial and even with writing mistakes.

Citizens are evaluating the current digital situation as mediocre - all the categories mentioned in the survey was evaluated within margin from 4.55 to 6 (on scale from 1 to 10), also, for each category, there were from 9 to 17 percent of respondents who did not have an opinion about the current subject (for smartphone applications – 32 percent). Thereby suggesting that citizens are not dissatisfied with the current digital activities of the public administration, at the same time demonstrating that more improvements are needed, not only in the quality but also in the promotion of current digital activities. The highest arithmetic mean of evaluations (5.99) was given to the availability of online services – a category where Latvia is above the average also according to the

EU statistics, thus it can be used as a good example and a way of attraction to promote digital cooperation between citizens and institutions also in other situations, hence, including participation in the decision-making process. For now, the main reasons that are reducing citizens` willingness to participate in the decision-making process are doubts if provided opinion will be considered by the institution, a requirement to participate in face-to-face meetings and the necessity to search for information about participation opportunities. More open communication by institutions or digital solutions could help to reduce those obstacles by some degree, but for that is needed public administrations` comprehension about the thoughtful use of the digital environment, also a will to foster citizen participation in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, in public communication, institutions are often referring to citizens and stakeholders as clients. It is an indication that Latvian public institutions are jet not ready to consider citizens as equal partners in the decision-making process and are continuing to perceive citizens mainly as receivers of public services. The change in this comprehension is needed to ensure that citizens role in the decision-making process can increase from receivers of service of equal partners who are also participating in the development of the service.

Overall, in the *Facebook* entries made by ministries are noticeable several common mistakes that are made by the content creators: ignoring commentary section and not providing answers even when followers are asking reasonable questions; having high proportion with informative entries where minister or other public official is attending event, but not providing additional information about decisions made or context of the event; republishing the same entry several times or republishing the same visual material several times; using tagging option not only for those mentioned in the entry but also for those only thematically connected with the subject; publishing several pictures from event without providing information what is happening in the picture or who are the people in it; in case of some important event publish many entries in a short period of time, having quantity over quality; not adding visual material to entry or relaying on automatic thumbnail from link as a visual material; emphasizing important text using caps lock not emojis; sharing social media entries or other outside materials without providing at least one sentence as a context why this has been shared with followers. Avoiding those mistakes could help institutions to demonstrate their followers that institutions are interested in communication and cooperation with citizens, therefore increasing the number of followers and developing a better two-way dialogue with citizens At the same time, there are also many entries which can be seen as a good example, such as the use of active and engaging language by the Ministry of Welfare or attractive contests by that Ministry of Culture that are helping to grow a number of followers to their Facebook page. Thus, considering common digital communication style for all public institutions there should be noticed

both bad examples of what not to do and good examples that are already used by institutions. It is obvious that each institution has its own agenda and different level of how much citizens can be part of the decision-making process. Still, by some degree citizen participation in the decision-making process is possible in all ministries, thus there is also a need for public information that is informing and educating citizens - helping them to become motivated and able to participate in the decision-making process.

3.5.2. Preferred communication channels

According to the results of the survey to representatives of institutions, there are used various communication channels to cooperate with citizens. Digital solutions - *Facebook* and *Twitter* were mentioned more often than face-to-face channels - consultations and advisory bodies, but the most often used channel still is the home page of the institution. There are recognised specific age groups to which is targeted information in certain digital communication channels. *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Youtube* are mainly used for the age groups 25 to 54, *Draugiem.lv* is used to reach 45 years and older citizens, and *Instagram* is used to reach the youngest part of society. Thus, most of the channels are used to communicate with citizens 25 years or older. Considering that digital solutions can help public institutions communicate directly with citizens, there is a need to pay more attention to youth, probably, developing special social media accounts that are publishing content designed for youth. That would help the public administration to develop better relationships with future active citizens, also, develop their comprehension of democracy and participation. Results of the research are suggesting that for now public administration is relying on other actors – school, non-governmental sector, family or mass media that they will develop ready-to-participate citizens who are not worthy to communicate or cooperate before they have reached age eighteen or even age twenty-five.

Different audience and specific digital opportunities that each digital communication channel has would suggest that there must be also differences in the communication style and content. A comparison of the content published by Latvian ministries demonstrates that there are fewer differences than would be expected. *Instagram* is used by seven ministries and entries are published in various capacity, in some cases very seldom, in all cases, content is almost the same or partly the same as on *Facebook*. In the case of *Twitter* Latvian ministries are more active – all of them are having *Twitter* accounts and almost all of the ministries are also actively publishing entries. Still, for five ministries content on *Twitter* is almost the same as on *Facebook*, sometimes there are even no differences in the text and visual material. Six ministries in *Twitter* are using some entries that are published on *Facebook*, but there are also original content and retweets of content made by subordinate institutions and mass media that are not available in the *Facebook* feed. There are only

two ministries that on *Twitter* are publishing mostly different content than on *Facebook* - the Ministry of Economics and the Ministry of Finance. Hence, in most cases, citizens do not have reason to follow ministry in more than one social media platform, as there is not so large difference in the content. At the same time there is a question – is it possible to reach a different segment of the population with the same content, just by changing the social media platform where it is published? To answer that, additional study would be needed to analyse who are current followers of Latvian institutions on social media, unfortunately, this information is not publicly available for all social media platforms and is only partly available to content creators themselves.

In general, ministries and public institutions with some exceptions are having a small number of followers if compared with social media accounts of public figures, influencers, mass media, businesses and entertainment pages. Still, the positive aspect is that for the official accounts of Latvian ministries there is a noticeable significant increase in the number of followers comparing September 2020 with October 2019 – number of followers for *Facebook* has grown by 84 percent, for *Instagram* by 190 percent, for *Twitter* by 19 percent and *Youtube* by 146 percent. That gives several possible conclusions – some ministries are already publishing content that is attracting new followers; it is still justified to use Twitter for communication with citizens; use of Instagram is growing in Latvia, thus it should also be used by those ministries which do not have an official account there jet. It should be emphasized that in Latvia institutions are also having not only their official account but often there are separate social media accounts for subordinate institutions and public figures of the institutions, for example, minister or secretary of State, also for special campaign or funding programs public administration is developing separate social media accounts. Thus, the total network of accounts and the number of followers is even larger. At the same time, separate accounts can take potential followers away from the institution's main account, also, with the special campaign or funding programs problem is a limited period of activity – if an institution is not able to use this account in their favour, then it becomes dead and unusable after the specific financial support is ended. This situation is noticeable in Latvia, however, that is a common problem also to other countries. Overall, results of the content analysis suggest that for most of the ministries the potential audience for the social media pages must be people who are already well knowledgeable in the main responsibilities of the institution as often context to information is not provided and links to supporting information are not published, hence, current content can be one of the reasons why increase in the number of followers although comparatively ascending, still cannot reach the numbers of other actors in the social media – business, entertainment pages, mass media or public figures.

In the survey to representatives of citizens were not recognised one particular institution which respondents would be following more than others, although slightly often respondents mentioned that they are following the Ministry of Education and Science. Also often mentioned was the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cabinet of Ministers (Government of Latvia), and Latvian Parliament. 25 percent of respondents emphasized that they are not following any institutions on social media. This choice is affecting also respondents` ability to mention social media account that they would recommend as an example of good practice – half of the respondents pointed out that they cannot mention any good examples or they do not have an opinion. In the question about current communication channels that respondents are using for participation in the decision-making process as the most often used channels were mentioned contacting public official by e-mail, using online platforms to initiate legislation and complete online surveys by the public administration. For the respondents of the survey, the least popular activity was indicated participation in the rallies and pickets, participation in the meetings of advisory bodies and participation in a public consultation. Hence, digital participation opportunities are used more often than face-to-face participation opportunities.

Since 2018 Latvian public institutions are obliged to provide citizen participation segment in their home pages, however, each institution has their specific situation which person or persons are responsible for citizen participation. It can be a person who is responsible for public communication or person who is responsible for specific policies in the institution. From the perspective of citizens, such a diversity of scenarios serves as an obstacle to participate in the decision-making process, especially, if in the home page this information about responsible persons is not published in a transparent manner. Overall, the results of the research are demonstrating that there exist different comprehensions about the communication channels that are used by the public administration. Representatives of the institutions are considering that for each channel there is a slightly different target group, at the same time analysis of the actual situation is suggesting that content is mostly the same everywhere and it is providing information that is better understood to those who already have some basic comprehension about institutions, politics and democratic processes. The result of this situation is partly demonstrated by answers in the survey to representatives of citizens – part of respondents are not eager to follow public institutions on social media and cannot evaluate their content. Considering that, in general, currently only a small part of society is following institutions on social media, this attitude demonstrated by the respondents of the survey could be similar to the opinion of other members of society as well – individuals, entrepreneurs and other potential stakeholders. Therefore, institutions not only have to consider what content is published and on which communication channel but also be more active in popularizing to society that citizens –

individuals and entrepreneurs can follow social media accounts of institutions. Nevertheless, at first, there must be produced content that is interesting to citizens as no one will start to follow the social media account that is publishing superficial content or is acting arrogant to its followers – seeing them as mere receivers of information or ignoring their communication efforts in the comments section or direct messaging section.

3.5.3. Speed of communication

One of the biggest advantages of digital communication is the speed of information exchange and feedback that can be used to create closer relationships between citizens and institutions, also, to ensure that citizens receive information about participation opportunities and can provide their opinion to institutions. Results of the survey to representatives of public administration are confirming that information from citizens can reach representatives of institution comparatively fast. In case if the information provided by citizens can be useful to the institution in most cases it can reach the responsible person in the institution in less than three hours. Representatives of the institutions in the survey suggested that currently the fastest way how citizens can reach institution is by sending an e-mail (89 percent) and more than half of the respondents mentioned sending a direct message or using a commentary section in the institution's social media page. The worrying aspect was seen in some of the answers as several respondents mentioned that current information channels are not working very well – that information which is written to institutions social media account might not be forwarded to public officials but might stay with the persons who are operating social media account. Similarly, the same worries were about sending an email, therefore, several representatives of institutions indicated that an official application still would be the best choice to guarantee that citizen`s opinion is noticed. There were also a couple of responses that suggested that a person should make an appointment or find an NGO which is already cooperating with the institution, hence, demonstrating that traditional face-to-face methods or usual communication channels can be more reliable. In the survey to representatives of citizens, respondents provided similar answers to the ones mentioned by the representatives of institutions. If they would like to contact public institution as fast as possible, they would use e-mail (40 percent) or would try to call responsible public official by phone. Respondents also suggested that they would use a combination of activities, for example, writing an e-mail and then calling by phone. Use of social media was often mentioned, demonstrating comprehension that social media can be used to draw attention if there is no response to e-mail. At the same time some respondents did not know what to do in such situation (21 percent) and also 8 percent emphasized that it is useless as public institutions don't care about citizens opinion or will not consider it. Those 29 percent of respondents are giving a strong signal that improvements from public administration are needed.

Not only in the promotion of opportunities that citizens can use to contact institutions, but also in the quality of response.

The digital environment and social media are providing an opportunity for two-way communication, thus institutions can also in a short time receive feedback from their social media followers – it can be as commentaries, but indirectly followers attitude can also be measured by likes and shares. According to the results of the content analysis ministries have visibly different relationships with their followers. The lowest rate of reactions is to content made by the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Economics – there are entries that are not gaining reaction at all. The most reactions (on average) are receiving content made by the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education and Science. The most often shared (on average) is content made by Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Education and Science, and Ministry of Health suggesting that they can be used as a good example of how to provide content that is not only interesting but also citizens are ready to share it with their followers. Furthermore, the results of the content analysis also confirmed that there are problems in the communication from institution to citizens – how fast and if information from the institution is reaching citizens if some question to them is asked. Results of the content analysis are demonstrating that ministries sometimes are engaging with followers in discussions but most of the times ignoring commentaries that are made by followers. Hence, representatives of ministries too often are choosing to ignore the comments section than try to develop dialogue. This attitude is lowering trust in the institution and citizens motivation to participate in the discussion with institutions and, accordingly, also in the decision-making process.

The situation in the commentary section is demonstrating that there is needed additional educational campaigns about media literacy – there are many comments that could be described as hate speech. Probably, those who wrote them are not fully aware that this information is and will stay publicly available to everyone, hence, also can be used against them. That is noticeable also between people who are publicly well known, for example, politicians, teachers, and representatives of academia. It was noticed in the content analysis that in a few cases also the communication of institutions and their public officials themselves in the commentary section could be described as aggressive and disruptive to potential dialogue. Therefore, in Latvia citizens and institutions in the digital environment need to learn not only how to communicate but also – how to do that in an equal and respectful manner.

3.5.4. Support for digital solutions

Attitude towards digital solutions is positive and supportive both from citizens and representatives of institutions. Representatives of institutions are considering that citizen

participation can be fostered by access to Open data (7.83 arithmetic mean in scale from 1 to 10) and active communication on social media (7.52 arithmetic mean in scale from 1 to 10). Still, higher rating received educating young people in schools (8.17 arithmetic mean on a scale from 1 to 10) and informing citizens in mass media on their opportunities for civic and political participation in Latvia (8.1 arithmetic mean on a scale from 1 to 10). Hence, although representatives of institutions are thinking that digital solutions can help to foster citizen participation, there is larger support to the idea that responsibility to educate future and current citizens goes to mass media and schools. Considering opportunities that would help to foster participation in the decision-making process respondents of the citizen survey emphasized the need to receive in a simple language the information that explains the issues and facts surrounding the decision (7.87 arithmetic mean on a scale from 1 to 10). Respondents were also giving a higher rating to digital solutions (information about participation opportunities in social media and home pages of the institution or special participation portal) than easier access to face-to-face activities (meetings of advisory bodies, or consultation events in Capital city and regions). However, respondents of the citizen survey are not seeing special smartphone applications as a solution for better participation in the decision-making process, similar not supportive attitude towards smartphone application was recognised also in the survey to public administration representatives, thus, before introducing new smartphone applications additional studies are needed to understand reasons behind this attitude from both citizens and representatives of public institutions. In the context of social media respondents of the citizen survey were asked to evaluate which content would increase their interest to follow the social media page of Latvian public institution. Respondents supported the use of videos about current events and opportunities to provide their opinion in surveys, commentary sections or by direct communication, as the most needed improvement. Respondents also emphasized the use of infographics and brief information in simple language on current affairs as a communication method that would interest them to follow institutions on social media. The ability to use simple language that is understandable to citizens is often mentioned as public institutions` challenge also in international cases. That can still be considered also as a challenge to Latvian public administration institutions, not only to choose the right communication channels but also to develop a communication style that is attractive and understandable to citizens - individuals and entrepreneurs.

Results of the content analysis are demonstrating that for now institutions have various and noticeably different habits in the use of digital opportunities that social media are offering for content creation, network building and two-way communication. Ministries are using emojis irregularly – some are using them rarely, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of

the Interior, some are using emojis very often, for example, the Ministry of Education and Science. Hashtags are used even less often, the Ministry of the Interior is not using them at all. Tagging is used more frequently, still, the situation between institutions is very various – both in the tagging intensity and in the choice of tagged accounts. The most often tagged accounts are institutions or public officials, stakeholders (entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations, business associations, lobby organisations and communities) are tagged less often, hence, institutions are emphasizing governmental network but are not so much showing their relations with representatives of citizens. Ministries that are active in the use of tagging, for example, Ministry of Finance, often do not get a reaction from the tagged accounts – most of them are not liking on sharing message where they have been tagged, thus – more considered use of tagging probably would be needed, probably, tagging those accounts which are mentioned in the text or included in the visual material, not so much adding at the end of the entry list of tagged accounts that often are only partly connected with the entry.

In general, it is positive that most institutions are active in using links in their entries – that helps to widen the network and is also adding educational value to informative entries. Still, in several ministries it was noticeable that institution is also often re-publishing content that is published on the social media page of the public representative, for example, in the case of the Ministry of Defence, it was the social media page of the minister that was often shared and quoted. Also, there are ministries that are re-publishing social media entries from other accounts (mass media, stakeholders, public officials and subordinate institutions) without any description, hence, acting not as content creators or discourse makers, but mere redistributors of the information prepared by others. According to content analysis of the Facebook pages of Latvian ministries, not all institutions are active in using the opportunity to develop two-way communication and engage their followers in further activity. When looking closer to specific engagement methods, often is used encouragement to provide comment, answer question or survey; follow a link to gain additional information; see Livestream of event, meeting or interview; and attend a face-to-face event. Analysis of the likes and shares that entries are receiving are indicating that some ministries are using Facebook advertising to promote their entries and reach a larger audience. It is noticeable that those entries are receiving more likes and also more negative reactions and commentaries. The use of promoted entries is one of the social media opportunity that can help to gain more followers and engage in two-way communication with Facebook users that are jet not following institution. At the same time, that can also be a challenge and create the opposite effect if an institution has not well targeted their promotion or are not able to deliver fast and correct answers in the comment section. Results of the content analysis are suggesting that for now institutions in most cases cannot

handle this situation in a considerable manner, thus they receive a larger proportion of negative feedback than with regular entries.

There is a comparatively good support to common regulation on the social media communication style for public administration. On a scale from 1(not necessary) to 10 (definitely needed) representatives of institutions rated this suggestion with 5.7 (arithmetic mean of evaluations) and respondents of the citizen survey with 6.9 (arithmetic mean of evaluations). Considering that the recipient of this information is citizens, their opinion should be taken into account and there must be developed a common online communication strategy or common digital environment rules for Latvian public institutions. Hence, citizens are more willing to follow the information that is provided in the manner that is appealing to them than receive information published in the manner that was the easiest one for the institutions just to be present on social media without making a big effort for that. Results of the content analysis are demonstrating that two-way communication and engagement opportunities currently are used insufficiently by Latvian ministries, there are still situations when social media are used in a manner that is closer to such one-way communication forms as writing blogs or publishing information on the institutions home page. Considering international examples – such a superficial attitude towards social media content and ignorance of digital engagement opportunities is one of the reasons why citizens are not interested to follow institutions on social media. If there would be common regulation, then institutions could learn from the best examples and also worst mistakes, thus gradually being able to communicate in the digital environment in a manner that is more interesting to followers and can also attract the attention of citizens who are jet not following institutions on social media.

3.5.5. Learning from good practices

Considering various communication styles and different levels of digital skills, learning from good practices is needed in Latvian institutions to improve the common digital environment. Representatives of institutions in the survey as a good example recognised the State Chancellery and Government of Latvia, several times was mentioned State police, Ministry of Finance and State Revenue Service, as well as respondents emphasized that there are several municipalities that could be considered as a good example of digital communication. Respondents of the citizen survey as a good example also emphasized the State Chancellery and Government of Latvia, often mentioned were Latvian Parliament (Saeima), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Culture, and Ministry of Health. For respondents of the citizen survey, it was harder to provide an opinion about good examples - in the survey to representatives of citizens 52 percent did not have an opinion of good examples and 10 percent of respondents clearly stated that there are no good examples between Latvian public institutions.

According to information provided by Representatives of institutions, there is already happening exchange of knowledge between institutions - most often (in 42 percent of represented institutions) exchange of information is happening once a quarter, but there are also institutions that are not exchanging experience with others or are doing that very irregularly or seldom – less than once a year (in 19 percent of represented institutions). The positive aspect is, that one-third of respondents indicated that in their institution exchange of information is happening often – 19 percent said that once a month and 13 percent recognised that their institution is exchanging information on a weekly basis. Additional to exchanging information institutions could also more actively follow each other on social media – currently, ministries are following other Latvian public institutions selectively. A good example is the Ministry of Health that is following subordinate institutions, organisations and companies in their field and mass media. Also, the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Transport are following several *Facebook* accounts. Other ministries are following only a few accounts and often they are without predictive logic. A bad example, in this case, is the Latvian Government that is not following all ministries. One solution that could improve this situation would be a digital map of all social media accounts and other digital solutions that are used by Latvian public administration and its` subordinate institutions. That could help representatives of institutions more actively share content that is created by their colleagues and learn from good examples. Public access to such a digital map could foster citizens knowledge of activities of institutions and help to grow the number of followers, hence, also grow the audience that is interested in developing closer relations with institutions in the digital environment.

Results of the research suggest that for now public administration is relying on school, non-governmental sector, family or mass media that they will develop ready-to-participate citizens. However, in the 21st century, institutions should do completely the opposite and seize the opportunity to communicate with citizens directly, take care that they become active members of the democratic processes and participate in the decision-making process. In the case of future development of the business environment, that means to provide entrepreneurs with convenient participation opportunities, thus future improvements can be made in strong cooperation with citizens for whom these improvements are intended.

3.5.6. Analysis of alternative scenarios

Alternatives to fostering digital participation should be considered in the context of participation traditions in Latvia and other local specifics, such as comparatively small population, habits of use of the internet and digital technologies, and citizens knowledge of democracy and civic and political participation. The aim of fostering digital participation is to provide conditions

that could improve citizen participation in the decision-making process and help to increase citizens trust in public institutions. As alternatives to digital participation are analysed six other scenarios (see Table 3.13.): Easing or supplementing regulations that are controlling current opportunities of participation; Providing bigger support from the state to non-governmental organisations; Broadening the range of citizens who can participate in the advisory bodies; Implementing comprehensive national-level educational program in schools; Making campaign in mass media about current civic and political participation options and necessity to use them. As well as, analysed is a scenario when no changes are made and citizen participation in decision-making processes in Latvia is continued at the same level as it is now and according to current regulations. All alternative scenarios are analysed according to five criteria: Citizens` knowledge of participation; Citizens` trust in public authorities; Availability of participation options; Cost and efficiency; and Results and long-term effects. According to the author's considerations, those should be the main factors that must be considered by public administration when deciding how to develop closer relationships with citizens in the 21st century in Latvia.

Table 3.13. **Scenarios for fostering citizen participation in Latvia**

Alternative scenarios	Criteria				
	Citizens` knowledge of participation	Citizens` trust in public authorities (dialogue and feedback)	Availability of participation options	Cost and efficiency	Results and long-term effects
Continuing the current situation	Level of knowledge is insufficient.	Level of trust is comparatively low, dialogue and feedback are often missing.	Variety of participation options but citizens have to search for them.	No additional cost, current resources could be used more efficiently.	Trust in public authorities and participation rate can grow only because of external actors
Easing or supplementing regulations that are controlling current opportunities of participation	Indirect effect – if more people will participate, more people will be informed.	Level of trust can increase as public authorities are opening up for more participation.	The number of participation options could be increased.	Low additional costs, additional activities are needed to increase the participation rate.	Without additional information campaigns, results will be reached slowly. This could be a good first step that can later lead to the implementation of common digital environment rules.
Providing bigger support from the state to non-governmental organisations	Indirect effect – if non-governmental organisations will inform society.	Level of trust can increase if support to non-governmental organisations is organised transparently.	The number of participation options is not changing.	Finances are needed for funding. Quality of NGOs` participation could increase.	Support for non-governmental organisations could lead to a more active society in the long-term.
Broadening the range of citizens who can participate in the advisory bodies	Level of knowledge could increase, but additional info activities are needed.	Level of trust could increase as public authorities are opening for more participation.	The number of participation options could be increased but it could also stay the same.	Low additional costs, final policies are more corresponding to the needs and habits of citizens.	For a certain level trust in public authorities and participation rate could be increased.

Implementing a comprehensive national-level educational program in schools	Level of youth knowledge will be increased.	Indirect effect – a better understanding of public authorities and participation could improve trust rate.	The number of participation options is not changing.	Finances needed for designing the program and implementing it. Efficiency could be measured only in the long-term.	In long-term it gives a very positive effect on citizen participation and partly also on trust in public authorities.
Making campaign in mass media about current participation options	Level of knowledge will be increased.	Level of trust could increase if the campaign is successful.	The number of participation options is not changing.	Finances needed for designing the campaign and disseminating it in mass media. Could be effective for specific participation options.	Short-term improvement could be reached. In long-term with one campaign will not be enough.
Fostering digital participation in Latvia	Level of knowledge will be increased.	Level of trust could increase if opportunities of digital dialogue and feedback are used successfully.	The number of participation options increases if digital opportunities are implemented in the decision-making process.	Finances needed to support additional digital activity and designing new participation opportunities (smartphone applications etc.)	Level of knowledge on participation and number of participation options will increase. Level of trust will grow if activities are implemented successfully.

Source: Author's construction based on the analysis of alternative scenarios

There is not one perfect scenario that would provide solutions without some additional obstacles that should be carefully considered (see Table 3.13.), still, as a long-term solution fostering digital participation could help to improve citizen participation opportunities at the same time successfully utilizing strengths of the particular digital environment in Latvia. Analysis of alternative scenarios demonstrate that citizen participation could be fostered also without digital solutions or the use of social media if there is a special participation portal or well-designed home page of the institution. Still, direct communication of the institutions on social media could help to remind individuals and entrepreneurs that they can participate in the decision-making process and also provide a shorter digital route to the current draft legislation projects. Although individuals and entrepreneurs could have knowledge in a particular topic and interested to participate it is questionable if they will be motivated to regularly check themselves information in the institution's homepage, especially if they are not connected with a non-governmental organisation or lobby organisations that are used to this process in Latvia. Overall, nowadays digital technologies enable citizens to become more informed and more capable to participate in the decision-making process. Thus, it is in the hands of public institutions to offer citizens – individuals and entrepreneurs more weight and importance in the decision-making process, also the opportunity to make the final decision in situations when it is possible.

3.6. Methodology for fostering digital participation in Latvia

Development of a common digital communication style and consolidation of best digital communication practices would help public institutions to become more attractive to citizens, create a more unified public image of Latvian institutions and provide support to those institutions that for now are not implementing their digital presence as successfully as others. However, considering theoretical aspects and international experience analysed in the dissertation, as well as the results of all three parts of the research, the author is proposing that a common digital presence of public administration is designed and implemented with a purpose not only providing information to citizens in a significantly more thoughtful manner but also gaining feedback, opinions, and ideas back from citizens. This would allow to develop a complex digital participation methodology, thus supporting a long-term goal to foster democracy in Latvia, strengthening relations between public administration and citizens, and increasing citizen participation in the decision-making process in a modern and citizen-centric manner. To ensure a clear representation of the elements contained in the methodology, there is provided a model for fostering digital participation (see Figure 3.25.).
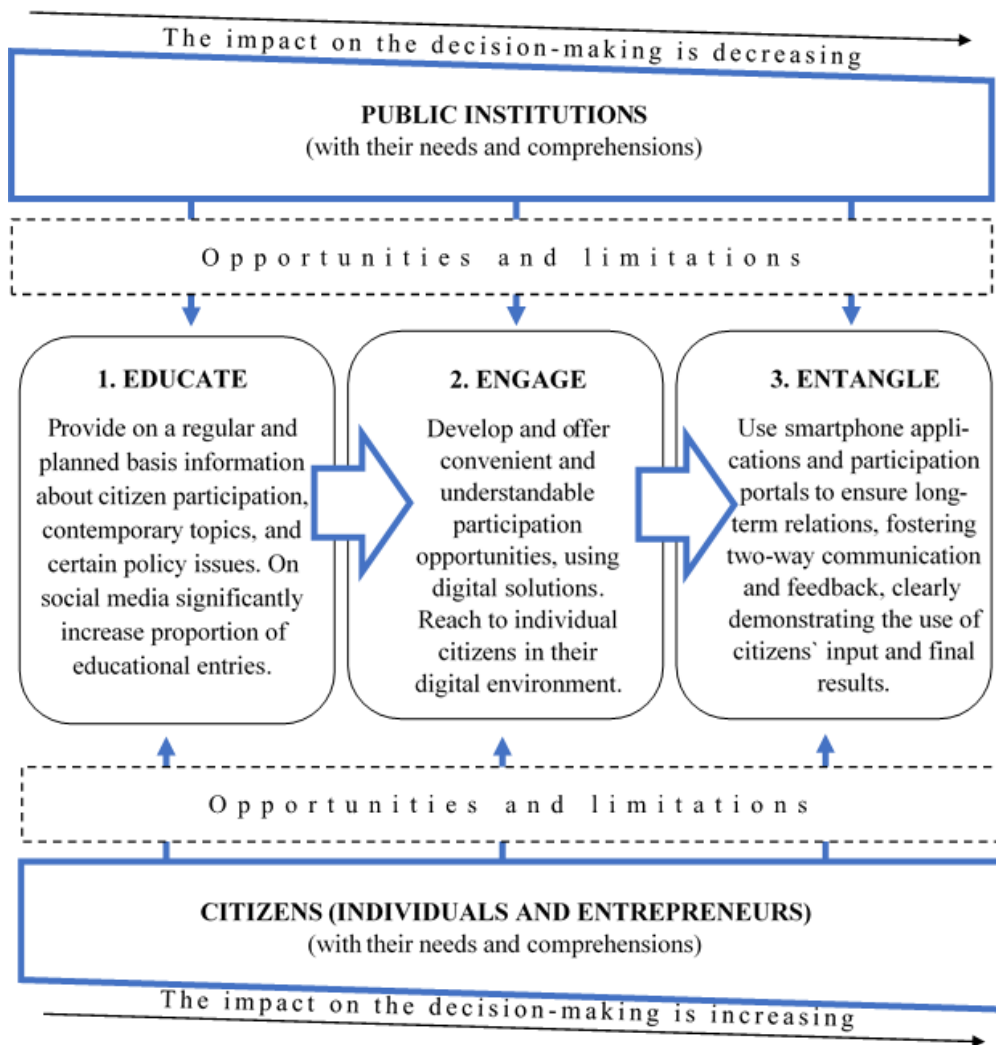

Figure 3.25. **Model for fostering digital participation**

Source: Author's construction

The proposed methodology for fostering digital participation consists of three levels – educate, engage, and entangle that must be implemented sequentially. The purpose and activities of each level are as follows:

- **Educate** - In the first level, citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) are educated about participation and certain policy issues to ensure that they are competent and motivated to participate in the decision-making process. This first level is crucial as it is strengthening citizens ability and motivation to participate in the decision-making process. As it was already pointed out by Sherry R. Arnstein: "Informing citizens of their rights, responsibilities, and options can be the most important first step toward legitimate citizen participation"[402], and that is still an unsolved task nowadays – 50 years later. Wide and thorough implementation of the first level is very important in Latvia because only a small part of the population is motivated to participate in the decision-making process, also, there is a lack of comprehension about democratic processes and the significance of participation. To implement activities of the first level, public institutions must provide information on a regular and planned basis, not only on their home page but also using other communication channels. In the case of social media, that means significantly increase the proportion of educational entries, especially the proportion of entries about citizen participation topics that for now - according to the results of the research - are only 4 percent. In the first level, public institutions should also use non-digital communication channels, for example, disseminating printed information in the public libraries, thus reaching also those citizens who are not using digital tools but can use face-to-face participation opportunities or acquire digital skills in the future.

- **Engage** - The first level is followed by the participation part where digital solutions are used to gain citizens opinions and engage them in the decision-making process, according to the results of the research, both representatives of public administration and representatives of citizens are supporting wider use of digital solutions. Nevertheless, the use of digital tools should not be seen as an end in itself - rather a modern method that helps to significantly wider citizens opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. At this level, citizens can participate in all steps of the decision-making process of public administration, also in the ex-post evaluation of policies where Latvia for now is comparatively lagging behind. The purpose of the second level is to ensure public policies, regulations and implementation of large-scale industrial projects that are more successfully meeting citizens needs and expectations, therefore also lowering the necessity to spend extra finances or time in fixing policies where decisions made solely by institutions later are faced by protests from citizens – individuals and entrepreneurs.

---

[402] Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder Of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216-224.

- **Entangle** - The third level is encouraging citizens to trust in public institutions and the decision-making process. While citizen participation in the second level can still be one-time and irregular, well-considered implementation of the third level activities is ensuring that participation in the decision-making process can become a habit for citizens and an obvious form of cooperation both for citizens and public administration. This purpose is reached by providing feedback on citizens input and demonstrating final results that are gained with the help of citizens participation. To implement activities of the third level and ensure direct cooperation and personal feedback there should be used digital participation portals or smartphone applications – international experience can be used for this matter as there are many success stories and also examples of failures to avoid. The opportunity to use digital solutions for such purposes is the biggest strength of digital participation – traditional participation methods cannot offer similar activities which would ensure the same quality and extend of direct feedback that digital solutions are providing. If the third level is implemented successfully, one of the long-time results could be fostered relations between institutions and citizens, lowering current comprehension in Latvia that public administration and citizens are two separate groups of society. This would bring them closer and make equal partners of the decision-making process, hence, equally responsible for the direction and future development of country's economy and wellbeing.

If the activities of the previous levels are not ensured sufficiently, public administration still can implement activities that are corresponding to the higher levels, nevertheless, that will be project-type progress not providing as good long-term results as can be reached by the complete set of activities suggested by the methodology for fostering digital participation.

Successful implementation of the methodology is impacted by the needs and comprehensions, both from the side of public administration and citizens - individuals and entrepreneurs. For citizens, the main need is a convenient environment (physical and digital, legal and social) where they can feel safe about their current situation and future, as well as are free to achieve their goals – personal and professional, hence, also having a supportive environment to build a business. For a public institution the main need is to be able to successfully meet the objectives of the institution – developing a legal environment, implementing short-term projects and providing services to the citizens and businesses. In the long-term that also means to contribute to the overall development and economic growth of Latvia. Although it is not always clearly stated, that also means to ensure a certain level of satisfaction for citizens that are related to the field represented by the institution. Those needs are also affecting the motivation of institutions and citizens to cooperate in the decision-making process. The development of the decision-making process is strongly affected also by the comprehensions that institutions and citizens are having about democracy and the

significance of participation and, in the specific case of digital participation, also comprehension of the digital environment and contemporary digital solutions. It is important to understand the needs and comprehensions to be able to initiate cooperation in the decision-making process, however, they are not constant values and can change over time and according to cooperation experiences. When the needs and comprehensions of institution and citizens are identified, digital participation can be ensured. In the digital participation methodology is considered also a specific local situation of Latvia, hence, limitations and opportunities that are impacting the development of digital democracy in Latvia.

3.6.1. Limitations

Considering foreign experience and specific Latvian situation, the main factors that must be taken into account in the digital participation methodology when thinking about limitations for citizen participation in the decision-making process in Latvia are:

- Financial aspects – results from citizen participation cannot be measured immediately, therefore, it is a challenge for public institutions to justify the need for financial input as there are many other positions in the national budget where the money is needed;

- The ability of citizens to participate – citizens cannot use current participation opportunities or do not have time for participation;

- Will of citizens to participate – citizens are not interested in the decision-making process, are not believing that their opinion matters, or they are trusting that public administration knows what they are doing;

- Education and knowledge – citizens have limited knowledge about participation and democracy, thus, participation opportunities must be provided together with information about the value of civic and political participation, as well as information about the organisation of the decision-making process;

- Choice of information channels – citizens are not one homogeneous group, their habits of information gathering and mass media consumption may vary depending on age, financial status, education level and other factors. Representatives of public administration have to follow tendencies and use those information channels that can reach citizens;

- Will of public administration to communicate and cooperate with citizens – considering that citizen participation in the decision-making process is extending the process, there is a risk that representatives of public administration can decide to skip this step or imitate that the decision-making is available to citizens. Also, it is easier to justify comprehension, that citizens are not competent enough to be able to participate in the decision-making process than develop information campaigns or provide access to information. Results of the empirical research and

analysis of the current situation on the organisation and promotion of the citizen participation process in Latvia are affirming that currently this limitation is the main one that must be overcome to foster digital democracy in Latvia;

- Digital skills of citizens and public administration – digital skills of the representatives of the institutions can impact availability of the digital participation opportunities that are offered to citizens. The level of citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) digital skills can affect their ability to engage in online communication and provide their input. The level of entrepreneurs` digital skills and comprehension of the digital environment can also affect their businesses, which is also noticeable in Latvia where many companies are comparatively lagging behind the digital transformation process. Thus – digital skills are one of the key limitations that must be fixed and reduced as fast as possible. Nevertheless, COVID-19 crisis has already highlighted this problem and several solutions are on their way also in Latvia.

Thoughtful implementation of the methodology for fostering digital participation could help to tackle citizens limitations. The bigger challenge is limitations on the side of public institutions that can be solved or reduced either by external pressure or the decision of the upper management. In Latvia the largest limitation for public administration is the will to communicate and cooperate with citizens – that is noticeable in the results of the research, in the information that is published by institutions as well as the organisation of current opportunities that citizens can use to participate in the decision-making process. Without the changes in this comprehension, it is doubtful to reach large growth in the citizen participation rates even for the traditional participation methods, not to mention the opportunity to foster digital participation in Latvia.

3.6.2. Opportunities

Although there are various limitations in Latvia that are affecting citizens ability of digital participation in the decision-making process, there are also several opportunities that are specific to Latvia, thus, can be used in favour of better development of digital democracy and implementation of digital participation methodology.

- Availability and speed of the Internet – access to the internet is in most households in Latvia and the speed of the internet is one of the fastest in the EU. Also, the use of mobile internet is growing in Latvia because of the good mobile internet network and comparatively low cost of mobile internet;

- The current online representation of citizens and institutions – citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) and public institutions already are represented in the digital environment, implementation of digital individual participation in the decision-making process would be logical next step to develop closer digital relations between institutions and citizens;

- Current availability of online public services – between the EU countries Latvia is one of the good examples in the access of digital public services, in this aspect cooperation between institutions and citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) are already happening;

- Comparatively small population – in a country with less than 2 million citizens also public administration is comparatively small, thus, it is easier to implement improvements faster and with the participation of all the corresponding institutions and stakeholders;

- Ability to adapt to the situation and make crucial decisions quickly – as proved in the time of COVID-19 crisis in the first half of 2020, public administration in Latvia can make important decisions in a short time period, also implementing digital solutions and fostering communication with citizens;

- International institutional support and expertise – in the EU recently is growing strong support towards public sector digitalisation and necessity to foster democracy and citizen participation, also Latvia`s participation in Open Government Partnership is providing support to the future development of digital democracy in Latvia;

- Current support in the national legislation – in strategic documents is clearly stated need to foster citizen participation. Also, legislation that is regulating stakeholders` participation (for example, The Republic of Latvia Cabinet Regulation No. 970) already now does not restrict individual participation and digital solutions, thus it is a decision of representatives of the institution if current participation methods are supplemented with digital solutions.

3.6.3. Incorporation of the methodology in the decision-making process

Digital participation methodology is designed to supplement and improve the current situation for citizens participation in the decision-making process in Latvia. The proposed methodology is not replacing the usual model of cooperation but is suggesting improvements that are modern and citizen-centric, helping to develop a digital environment where individual citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) are motivated and able to participate in the decision-making process. The methodology suggests digital solutions for each stage of the decision-making process according to the proposed three levels – Educate, Engage and Entangle (see Table 3.14.). Stages of the decision-making process are divided according to the current description of the decision-making process in Latvia[403] provided by the State Chancellery of Latvia, only dividing the *Policy implementation and evaluation* stage into two parts – *implementation* and *evaluation*, thus emphasizing that in Latvia *evaluation* stage is lagging behind and more careful attitude towards this stage is needed. In the methodology for fostering digital participation, an important role is given to the use of social media, because that is the current sector of the digital environment where citizens and public institutions

---

[403] Valsts kanceleja. (2020). Līdzdalības iespējas. http://tap.mk.gov.lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/

are already represented and have the potential to strengthen cooperation. However, it must be emphasized that there is only a certain level of how much social media can be used for citizens participation. For now, social media cannot serve to confirm the identity of the person, thus, they can be used to gain simple opinions and ideas from citizens or to understand public mood, but, when citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) are providing their input for the final decision, for example, voting about one of the ideas that should be implemented, there must be used other digital solutions such as participation portal or institutions home page where person`s credentials can be approved by e-signature or other authentication tools that are accepted in Latvia.

Table 3.14. **Incorporation of the methodology in the decision-making process in Latvia**

Stage of the decision-making process	Digital solutions in the levels of the digital participation methodology		
	Educate	**Engage**	**Entangle**
Creating an agenda	Information in social media page; elaborate information on the home page or participation portal; regular e-mail newsletter	Survey on essential topics in social media and home page; collecting recommendations for future initiatives with participation portal, home page or smartphone application; voting on final ideas in participation portal	Events on social media about suggested topics; statistics about suggested topics and their implementation process on the home page; transparent implementation process on participation portal; individual overview in an e-mail about suggested ideas and their status
Policy development	Online streaming of meetings (advisory bodies, working groups, commissions) in social media and home page; Summaries from meetings on the home page; regular e-mail newsletter on specific topics	Citizen forum on current issues in social media, home page or participation portal; Opportunity to provide suggestions to draft legislation in the participation portal or smartphone application	The transparent development process on participation portal (also identifying the number of collaborators); individual overview in an e-mail about suggested input and its status
Decision-making	Online streaming of meetings (advisory bodies, working groups) in social media and home page; Summaries from meetings on the home page; regular e-mail newsletter on specific topics; half-yearly statistical summaries in social media	Opportunity to provide commentaries on issues represented in the draft regulation and Online voting on issues represented in draft legislation (in the participation portal or smartphone application)	The transparent development process on participation portal (also identifying the number of collaborators); individual overview in an e-mail about suggested input and its status; statistics about draft legislation process on home page
Policy implementation	Information in social media page; elaborate information on the home page or participation portal; regular e-mail newsletter on specific topics	Citizen forum on current issues in social media, home page or participation portal; Opportunity to share information and infographics about the new policy	Individual overview in e-mail or participation portal about participation activities (also point earning system to foster activity); Transparent information on participation portal
Policy evaluation	Information in social media page; elaborate information on the home page or participation portal; regular e-mail newsletter on specific topics	Citizen forum on current issues in social media, home page or participation portal; Opportunity to provide the evaluation to legislation in the participation portal or smartphone application	Survey to previous participants in the participation portal or smartphone application about the satisfaction of implemented policy and proposed improvements

Source: Author's construction

The purpose of the digital solutions is to provide citizens with modern opportunities for participation in the decision-making process, at the same time ensuring that they have to make as few steps as possible. For now, the participation portal most probably could be the most possible option for citizens digital participation that could help citizens to be informed about the decision-making process and engage them in a manner that their identity is approved. Digital solutions could also help in the implementation of the third stage of the methodology for fostering digital participation – to entangle citizens in the decision-making process, motivating them to become regular active members in their specific field of competency. That could be achieved by keeping personal statistics and by providing notifications about topics that are interesting to the individual person. The entangling process could also be fostered by using game elements, such as rewards, rating or other bonus programs. In the long run implementation of such a system could also be used to develop digital citizen assembly - a consultative body where citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) can individually participate in areas which are corresponding to their professional knowledge or educational background. Undoubtedly, that in Latvia already now is possible to find 100 individual citizens that are competent in culture, 100 individual citizens that are competent in finances or 100 individual citizens that are competent in the environment and sustainable development. That is a choice of representatives of public administration if they are interested to address those individual citizens and offer them participation in the decision-making process. Digital solutions could help with both tasks – interest and motivate individual citizens to participate and also provide a modern environment where the participation process is organised.

3.6.4. Measuring fulfilment and results of the methodology

It must be emphasized that the results of the methodology will not be immediately noticeable. However, that does not mean that gradual progress cannot be measured.

Table 3.15. **Criterions for measuring the fulfilment of the methodology**

Stage of the methodology	Measurable criterions	Qualitative indicators	Quantitative indicators
Educate	Activity on institutions social media page	Citizens evaluation on institutions which are a good example	The proportion of educational posts; Representation of topics about participation
	Activity on institutions home page	Citizens evaluation on institutions as a good example	Number of users, number of information shares
	Activity on participation portal	Citizens evaluation on access to information and its quality	Number of users
	Use of e-mail for communication	Recipients evaluation on information and its quality	Number of recipients
	Citizens needs and comprehensions	Citizens comprehension of democracy, participation and topical issues	Number of institutions providing information about participation
	Institutions needs and comprehensions	Institutions representative's evaluation of democracy and citizen participation	Number of public institutions representatives working with communication issues

Engage	Activity on institutions social media page	The proportion of negative reactions; an attitude of the commentaries (supportive, negative, neutral)	The proportion of engaging posts; Link to external material; Use of reactions, commentary section and sharing
	Citizen forum (in social media, home page or participation portal)	Citizens evaluation on the quality of the process	Number of users, Amount of entries, the Success rate of proposed ideas
	Activity on institutions home page	Citizens evaluation on the quality of the process	Number of users
	Activity on participation portal	Citizens evaluation on the quality of the process	Number of users, Amount of entries, the Success rate of proposed ideas
	Use of e-mail for cooperation	Recipients evaluation on information and its quality	Number of recipients
	Use of smartphone application	Citizens evaluation on the quality of the process	Number of users, Amount of entries, the Success rate of proposed ideas
	Citizens needs and comprehensions	Citizens evaluation on institutions which are a good example	Number of citizens engaged in the decision-making process
	Institutions needs and comprehensions	Public institutions representative's evaluation of cooperation with citizens	Number of public institutions representatives working with citizen participation issues
Entangle	Activity on institutions social media page	Citizens evaluation on institutions which are a good example	Number of followers; Activity in commentary section (speed of answering and proportion of answered commentaries)
	Activity on institutions home page	Citizens evaluation on institutions which are a good example	Number of users
	Activity on participation portal	Citizens evaluation on the quality of the process	Number of regular and active users
	Use of e-mail for cooperation and communication	Recipients evaluation on information and its quality	Number of recipients
	Use of smartphone application	Citizens evaluation on the quality of the process	Number of regular and active users
	Citizens needs and comprehensions	Citizens trust in public institutions; Citizens opinion on their ability to impact the decision-making process	Number of citizens repeatedly and regularly engaged in the decision-making process
	Institutions needs and comprehensions	Public institutions representatives evaluation on cooperation with citizens	The proportion of citizens input in the decision-making process

Source: Author's construction

The author is proposing a set of criteria that could help to follow the implementation process in all three stages of the methodology (see Table 3.15.). Observation of the proposed indicators could provide more specific comprehension about the progress of digital democracy in Latvia, supplementing knowledge about the evolution of the digital environment that is already known because of national statistics and ratings (for example, Latvian E-index) and international statistics and rating (for example, eGovernment Benchmark). Most of the proposed quantitative indicators could be measured comparatively easily as this information is available to content creators. For measurement of proposed qualitative indicators more effort is needed, still, considering that they can provide information that could greatly help to improve the process of citizens digital

participation, results of qualitative indicators should also be identified – partly that can be done using the same digital solutions that are used for the participation process itself.

3.6.5. Implementation of the digital participation methodology

Some aspects of the proposed methodology for fostering digital participation are already being implemented in Latvia, especially activities that are corresponding to the first level – educating citizens, however, the methodology is providing a comprehensive view to digital participation and ensures that citizen participation in the decision-making process is a thoughtful and well-driven process, thus providing better final result – public policies, regulations and decisions of public administration that are more successfully taking into account citizens needs and opinions. The decision to implement activities that are covered in the methodology for fostering digital participation cannot be in the single hands of some of the representatives of institutions who are responsible for communication with citizens, it must be a careful decision and will of the upper management. They must be also those who further monitor the implementation process, making sure that each representative of the institution is informed of the purpose their communication activities are providing for the institution's relationships with citizens and their participation in the decision-making process. Hence, methodology for fostering digital participation is suggesting changing current communication style of public administration, driven by topical events and short-term purposes to a well-considered long-term process that is providing better quality relations between public administration and citizens, thus fostering citizens trust in institutions, as well as their motivation and ability to participate in the decision-making process of public administration.

The possibility to implement the Digital participation methodology in Latvia was confirmed in the time of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020 when public institutions demonstrated the ability to work digitally and make urgent decisions quickly. Latvia was one of the first countries to develop the COVID-19 contact tracing application, as well as implement an e-parliament (e-Saeima) platform, allowing plenary sittings to be held remotely. Also, responding to the stay-at-home rule Latvian public institutions become more open to digital cooperation and after that in Summer 2020 State Chancellery of Latvia also started to be more active in promoting citizen participation opportunities. Hence, there is reached undeniable digital progress in Latvia and it was possible to achieve significant growth in a few months period. The lessons learned in the COVID-19 crisis has started acceleration in the digital transformation process. The challenge for the public administration is to be able to use this situation also to foster digital democracy in Latvia and develop decision-making process that is more open and citizen centric. Overall, to ensure that the proposed methodology for fostering digital participation is successful, citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) should participate also in the development process of the final design of activities

included in the methodology, thus, ensuring that the selected information channels, as well as, participation forms and methods are appropriate to citizens habits, thus, will help them to become significant partners to public administration in the decision-making process.

Latvia has many positive preconditions that are ensuring the development of digital democracy more successfully than it could be done in other countries of the world or even in most of the EU countries. At the same time, it is undoubtedly that current limitations are significant and cannot be changed overnight or within one year - especially digital skills of citizens and representatives of institutions, citizens comprehension about democracy and decision-making process in Latvia, and public administrations comprehension about the value of stakeholder participation. Still, the implementation of the methodology for fostering digital participation and gradual direction towards digital democracy would help to decrease the significance of current limitations. Furthermore, participation in the process could also improve the digital competencies of citizens and institutions. Members of the Latvian Parliament could improve their skills to use the e-parliament system in the COVID-19 crisis only by using this new system. Similarly, also public institutions and citizens could improve their ability to cooperate in the digital environment and together make decisions only if such an opportunity in the digital environment is offered and maintained. Without providing innovations to the current decision-making process, it is useless to hope that better results of citizen participation and citizens trust in institutions will be achieved in Latvia. By implementation of the methodology for fostering digital participation, the public institution can demonstrate to citizens – individuals and entrepreneurs that their opinion is valued, and it has a significant impact on the development of policies that are ensuring better living and business conditions for citizens. Most importantly - a living and business environment that is not made by public institutions for citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs), but by public institutions strongly cooperating with citizens for the common good. Considering that in the 21st century digital environment will continue to develop and probably will provide technological innovations that are barely imaginable at the moment, a country that is already now able to develop its digital presence will have success not only locally but also can have an impact in the global relations and economics. A country, whose public institutions are open to digital dialogue with its society is attractive not only to its citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) and businesses – in the global world where everyone is digitally connected, that can also become a good reason for international professionals and businesses to transfer to Latvia.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions are organised in the order corresponding to originally proposed theses, accordingly, conclusions 1 to 6 are confirming the first thesis, conclusions 7 to 12 are confirming the second thesis, and conclusions 13 to 18 are confirming the third thesis.

1. Institutions in Latvia already have digital relations with a significant number of citizens – individuals and entrepreneurs. Following this path, it is possible to upgrade current relations and start digital cooperation also in the decision-making process. Evaluating citizen digital habits, supportive preconditions for the development of digital democracy are broad access to the internet, also, that the use of social media and the internet by computer and smartphones continues to grow in all age groups. Considering the ability of institutions to foster digital participation, the positive preconditions are the current offer of digital public services and reliable e-signature that can be used by citizens to approve their digital identity. Additionally, institutions are also active on social media – in the period from 2017 until 2020, the use of Facebook by institutions has doubled and the number of followers is noticeably continuing to grow.

2. The use of digital democracy methods to improve the business environment is possible in Latvia because digital solutions and the necessity to foster democracy are already emphasized by national and international strategies and guidelines, especially at the EU level. Considering that Latvia in several aspects of the digital environment already is seen as an example, it gives a technological advantage to become an example for digital democracy when it will be fostered jointly by the EU institutions and member countries, for example, in the context with the *Berlin Declaration on Digital Society* and *Value-Based Digital Government*.

3. The largest obstacles that are limiting Latvian citizens ability to participate in the decision-making process in the digital environment are low trust in public institutions and government, and insufficient knowledge about the democracy and decision-making process in Latvia. Digital solutions can help public institutions to directly contact individuals and entrepreneurs and tackle these obstacles by educating citizens about participation opportunities, thus, in the long-term also improving citizens trust in institutions.

4. There are several limitations on the side of institutions that must be very carefully considered and tackled to ensure that digital participation can be used to improve the business environment in Latvia. The main ones are the digital skills of representatives of public administration and their comprehension of the digital environment and citizen participation, also insufficient motivation to promote evidence-based policymaking.

5. Representatives of citizens are evaluating the current digital activity of the institutions as mediocre. The highest-rated is the availability of online services, thus it can be used as a way of

attraction to promote further digital cooperation between citizens and institutions. Currently, relations between public administration and citizens in the digital environment are in the basic phase when face-to-face services and physical paper exchange processes are replaced with digital activity, still not making much difference on the organisation of processes. The sooner institutions will start to become innovative, the larger is the possibility that Latvia could become a digital example for other countries. For digital participation that means to provide more innovative opportunities than mere online participation in the meetings, for example, fostering youth participation with support of gamification elements or implementation of digital assembly for entrepreneurs that could help to much faster and easier gather their opinion and evaluation about future improvements of the business environment.

6. At the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis in the first half of 2020 Latvian public administration demonstrated that it is possible to take fast decisions and introduce digital innovations in a short time period. Online communication of several public institutions increased, especially for the Ministry of Health, and the Latvian Parliament and State Chancellery became more active in promoting digital participation opportunities. Thus, it was demonstrated that some institutions are capable to strengthen their online presence and are open to digital solutions if there is a specific situation and common comprehension that such activities are needed. The motivator there was a crisis and need to adapt to unexpected challenges to citizens, public sector and business environment, but it was confirmed that rapid digital development is possible if it has support from the leaders of public administration.

7. Latvian public institutions are using various types of communication channels to identify and gain the opinion of citizens. Digital solutions – *Facebook* and *Twitter* – were mentioned more often than face-to-face channels – consultations and advisory bodies, but the most often used channel still is the home page. Representatives of the institutions are recognising that each communication channel has its specific target age group. The comparison of the content made by ministries demonstrates that there are not many differences between social media accounts on various platforms. It is questionable whether a different segment of the population can be reached with the same content just by changing a social media platform.

8. Latvian institutions have various communication styles on social media. Ministries are using social media not only for informative posts but are publishing also educational entries. However, the proportion of educational posts vary between ministries and engaging posts are still a minority, hence, communication often is top-down with the exception in some ministries. It is positive that several ministries are using active and engaging language and direct personal address to foster communication with their followers because this writing style is looking more unofficial and similar to the style used by individuals and businesses.

9. For now, institutions have various and noticeably different habits in the use of digital opportunities that social media are offering for content creation, network building and two-way communication. Significant differences were noticed in the use of visual material, emojis, hashtags and links, also in the use of tagging– both in the tagging intensity and in the choice of tagged accounts. Some ministries are also using *Facebook* advertising to promote their entries and reach a larger audience – a method that is widely used by businesses. Although that could help to attract new followers, results of the content analysis are suggesting that institutions in most cases cannot handle this situation in a considerable manner, thus they receive a larger proportion of negative feedback than with regular entries.

10. Considering the frequency and topics of the social media posts, it is obvious that in most institutions there is not happening careful long-term planning of the entries – posts often are reflecting current events and agenda. Results of the content analysis confirmed that institutions rarely are emphasizing stakeholders – businesses and non-governmental organisations, but several ministries are regularly and strongly highlighting their ministers, often tagging them in the entries, sharing content from their personal accounts, emphasizing their participation in events and quoting them more often than other representatives of the institution. Such disproportion is demonstrating to followers that ministry is only its minister, keeping alive prejudice that representatives of an institution are just attending events and shaking hands, hence they are not doing real work and are not trustworthy for cooperation.

11. In Latvia businesses and influencers on social media in most cases have more followers than public institutions. Partially that can be explained by their motivation to follow digital communication tendencies and maintain two-way communication with followers because better relations with followers can result in larger profits. Latvian public institutions should learn from the business environment and be more aware that they also have reasons to maintain good relations with social media followers, not for financial profits but for using it as a direct communication channel that could foster citizens trust in institutions. Results of the research demonstrate that two-way communication and engagement opportunities currently are used insufficiently by Latvian ministries, there are still situations when social media are used in a manner that is closer to such one-way communication forms as writing blogs or publishing information on the institutions home page. Considering international examples – such a superficial attitude towards social media content and digital opportunities are one of the main reasons why citizens are not interested to follow institutions on social media.

12. Institutions have various regulations for communication with citizens - guidelines and work descriptions, but also informal rules and communication habits. Hence, human factor and various experiences have an important role in digital communication and those different situations were

also noticeable in the results of the content analysis. Implementation of the methodology for fostering digital participation would help to make more unified digital communication, changing it from current topical agenda-driven to comprehension of the long-term goal to have digital space as a modern place where citizens can interact with institutions and become an active part of the decision-making process. Improving citizen-government relations from *us and them* to *we who are working together* would help to improve business environment faster and decrease situations when businesses are frustrated by new regulations that are made without consultation with citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs).

13. There is noticeable support towards digital solutions. Representatives of institutions are considering that citizen participation can be fostered by access to Open data and active communication on social media. Representatives of citizens gave a higher rating to digital solutions than easier access to face-to-face activities. There is comparatively good support to common regulation on the social media communication style for public administration both on the side of the institutions and the side of citizens. This attitude is demonstrating that public administration should pay more attention to the digital environment and digital relations with Latvian citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs).

14. Considering that only one-third of Latvian citizens trust public institutions, to improve the situation, it is necessary to assure that citizen opinion is valued by institutions. For now, stakeholder participation in public communication is insufficiently emphasized and rarely is demonstrated how it was considered and applied when the final decision was made. In the *Facebook* content made by ministries, there is an insufficient amount of entries about citizen participation opportunities, work of the consultative bodies, or decisions made with the participation of citizens or their representatives (in the analysed period, only 4 percent from the total amount of entries), thus continuing to maintain the image that decision-making process is mostly happening behind closed doors and only politicians or representatives of institutions can participate there – not any citizens that have an opinion on the subject.

15. Entrepreneurs and public institutions in Latvia already are cooperating in the digital environment, using digital public services and exchanging information in digital formats, even using smartphone applications for support of small businesses and entrepreneurs. Still, in the decision-making process, entrepreneurs are mostly represented by lobby organisations that can only theoretically be recognised as comprehensive representatives of the business sector. If additional improvements are done in the already existing digital relations, then also individual entrepreneurs could be engaged in the decision-making process, thus ensuring that the business environment is much better corresponding to needs and opinions not only of large businesses, but also small businesses and individual entrepreneurs.

16. Latvian public institutions can quickly process information that is provided to them in social media by citizens, this is a good precondition that is suggesting that future development of two-way communication is possible in Latvia. Still, there are problems with the opposite direction – information from institutions to citizens. Results of the content analysis are demonstrating that ministries sometimes are engaging with followers in discussions but most of the time are ignoring commentaries that are made by followers and are even not providing answers in cases when followers are asking questions about information published in the post (response rate varies from 4 percent to 36 percent, depending on the ministry). If the business would act like that, it probably could lose its customers, in the case of public administration, this attitude is working as an additional reason for citizens to have low trust in institutions.

17. Currently, citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) have the opportunity to participate individually in the decision-making process if they are proactive and are regularly following information that is published in the home pages of the ministries, including information about draft legislation and methods how stakeholders can provide their opinion. For now, the most usual method is to write an email to a responsible representative of the institution, hence, a digital e-mail letter has replaced paper application, but the process, in general, has not changed. However, already now in the world there are digital solutions that could help with the dissemination of information beyond just a website and collection of citizen inputs. The current situation in Latvia is suggesting that either institutions do not know how to disseminate information about the topical draft legislation process, or they are not disseminating it by purpose to keep the decision-making process closed or limited.

18. In 2020, several public disputes, for example, discussion about the proposed changes in the tax rates, demonstrated that public administrations comprehension of the value of citizen participation is still a topical problem in Latvia. Suggesting that notion of ritual participation, as it was described by Sherry R. Arnstein 50 years ago, is still sometimes alive in Latvia – institutions are imitating participation process, offering opportunities that seem to expand citizens ability to participate in the decision-making process but do not really increase their possibility to influence the decisions that are made by public institutions themselves. There are certain topics where decisions can be made only by public officials, politicians and representatives of institutions. Still, nowadays when digital solutions can provide citizens with all the necessary information, they can be as able to make a well-thought decision as any average politician in Latvian Parliament or a minister. Hence, the well-elaborated digital environment already nowadays is making it possible to give more power to citizens, allowing them not only to provide their input at some step of the decision-making process but also to have right to determine the final decision (in voting or by other procedures).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendation for representatives of public administration: Citizen participation and democracy are habits that must be developed, and comprehension of their value must be taught to citizens. Previously school, family and mass media were working as main actors that shaped citizens comprehension of democracy. Nowadays public administration can be closer to citizens using digital environment not only for direct communication but also as an information space where public administration can educate citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) about democracy and participation, providing reliable information to citizens, also rebutting myths and ignorance that are affecting citizens trust in public administration.

2. Recommendation for representatives of public administration: Digital participation must be fostered gradually to ensure a better quality of engagement and results that are useful for the decision-making process. Methodology for fostering digital participation in Latvia must be implemented in three levels – in the first level public institutions are educating citizens about participation process and contemporary topics, in the second level public institutions are providing digital opportunities for citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) to participate in the decision-making process. The third level is ensuring that citizens will participate also in the future, this goal is achieved by providing feedback to citizens about their participation and affirming that their decision was considered in the decision-making process.

3. Recommendation for representatives of public administration: To ensure that a wider part of the population is participating in the decision-making process, public administration must be able to communicate with each audience according to their digital habits and provide two-way communication opportunities in those digital environments where each audience is residing regularly. Considering that different social media is used by a different segment of the population, content that is published in each social media account should be suited to its technical opportunities. Also, communication style and visual and textual material should be adjusted to a specific audience, for example, youth, entrepreneurs, or families with children.

4. Recommendation for representatives of public administration: There is a need for a digital map of all social media accounts and other digital solutions that are used by Latvian public administration and its` subordinate institutions. That could help representatives of institutions more actively share content that is created by their colleagues in other institutions. Public access to such a digital map could foster citizens knowledge of digital activities of institutions and help to grow the number of followers, hence, also grow the audience that is interested in active communication with public administration in the digital environment. The development of such a comprehensive digital map is comparatively easy and quick to execute task, that also does not ask for large financial

resources, therefore can be a good first step in the way to strengthen relations between institutions and citizens in the digital environment.

5. Recommendation for representatives of public administration: Development of digital democracy in Latvia and promotion of individual digital participation should be firstly started in those areas where it is already now possible in accordance with legislation that is regulating stakeholders` participation in Latvia. For example, The Republic of Latvia Cabinet Regulation No. 970 already now does not restrict individual participation and digital solutions, thus it is a decision of representatives of the institution if current participation methods are supplemented with digital solutions or current comprehension of appropriate stakeholders is expanded from non-governmental organisations, business associations or lobby organisations to individual citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs). Still, considering future progress of digital environment, especially the implementation of 5G internet, there is a need to carry out an audit in the current legislation to ascertain that there are not strict statements or too specific conditions that could become an only burden for rapid digital transformation in Latvia and development of citizen digital participation in the decision-making process.

6. Recommendation for representatives of public administration: It is necessary to foster comprehension that good relations between citizens and public administration is a value in Latvia. Low trust in public institutions, government and parliament and low participation rates in the decision-making process should be seen as a crisis situation – a problem that must be solved as fast as possible. For that public administration should take the leading role, thus changing the current position when institutions are rather relying on the activities of other actors, such as the non-governmental sector, educational institutions, mass media and citizens themselves. Digital solutions are allowing faster, easier, and comparatively cheaper solutions for communication and cooperation with citizens – opportunities that were not possible before and could be used to foster citizen participation and citizen trust in public administration. Therefore, public institutions in Latvia should become more open to innovations, strengthening their presence in the digital environment and developing relations with citizens in a manner that is more successfully utilizing opportunities provided by the 21st century.

7. Recommendation for representatives of public administration: Institutions not only have to consider more thoughtfully what content is published and on which communication channel but also be more active in popularizing to citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) that they can reach public administration in the digital environment, for example, emphasizing that it is an official, reliable and fast way how to gain information from institutions, as well as communicate with them. Nevertheless, at first, content must be produced that is interesting to citizens as no one will start to follow the social media account that is publishing superficial content or is acting arrogant – seeing

followers as mere receivers of information or ignoring their communication efforts in the commentary section and direct messaging section.

8. Recommendation for representatives of public administration: Successful implementation of digital transformation and the ability to foster digital participation is crucially dependent on the level of digital skills that public administration representatives have and their comprehension of digital democracy. Considering that Latvian public administration is comparatively small and it is possible to identify employees that could be seen as key persons, a training program must be implemented that is fostering their knowledge of the current digital environment and how it could be used for individual participation of citizens.

9. Recommendation for representatives of public administration: To foster citizen participation in Latvia there is a need for more active communication that is confirming to citizens that their opinion is needed in the decision-making process. It could be done by providing easy opportunities for citizens how they can give their opinion, for example, much often providing links to short online surveys – that is already being done by several public institutions in Latvia. Also, it is important to emphasize which parts of the final decision was changed or improved with the help of citizen input.

10. Recommendation for representatives of public administration: Considering that nowadays citizens are more interested in individual and online participation, special attention must be paid to providing opportunities how individual person can participate in the decision-making process without membership in a political party, non-governmental organisation, business association or lobby organisation – digital solutions can be used to provide an appropriate environment for such individual participation.

11. Recommendation for representatives of public administration: Digital transformation in the world and Latvia is happening with or without the involvement of public administration. Still, it is in the interests of public administration and the state that institutions are actively participating in this process to be able to gain the best from digital opportunities, use them to foster economic growth and shape the digital environment in the way that it helps to strengthen democracy and not weaken it.

12. Recommendation for citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) that are interested to participate in the decision-making process: Citizens in Latvia still have to be the ones that are proactively searching for opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. Gradually increasing request for opportunities of digital participation, citizens will motivate public administration to provide a wider supply of opportunities for how citizens can participate in the decision-making process. Although there is still a lot of improvement needed for the qualitative development of digital democracy in Latvia, opportunities of digital solutions are gradually increasing, and citizen participation is becoming comparatively faster and easier in Latvia, thus, citizens must use the

options of digital participation to demonstrate that such methods are needed and also to help to improve the quality of digital democracy in Latvia.

13. Recommendation for citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) that are interested to participate in the decision-making process: Although currently Latvian public institutions in social media have various communication styles and not all of them can seem interesting enough to follow, still, for now in Latvia is the best opportunity for the fast and reliable information about public administrations activities, support that institutions are providing to businesses and possible opportunities that citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) can use to participate in the decision-making process. Considering algorithms of social media, it is also advisable to prioritize accounts of institutions so they are more visible in the main feed.

14. Recommendation for academia: More attention to the development of the digital environment in Latvia is needed and aspects of how digital opportunities are changing or improving democracy in Latvia should be studied more closely. That would help to promote Latvia internationally as a good example of digital transformation - potential that Latvia has not fully exercised, considering that in Latvia there are more opportunities than limitations for the development of digital democracy, as well as Latvia already have several success stories, such as e-ID, e-signature, digital public services and participation portal manabalss.lv. Especially there is a need for academic studies that are analysing the activities of public institutions, citizens and businesses in the digital environment, thus providing reliable data for policymakers and helping to foster digital transformation and digital participation in Latvia.

15. Recommendation for academia: In the implementation of the research and analysis of the research results, author has identified several research directions that are worthy of future study and could bring useful comprehension about relations between institutions and citizens (individuals and entrepreneurs) in Latvia. Briefly described, those research directions are as follows: Analysis of the accounts that are following Latvian public institutions in various social media platforms – their connections with institutions, an overlap of followers and proportion of fake accounts; Performance of the current smartphone applications for citizen participation in Latvia and possible future improvements; Comparison of public institutions performance and presence in the digital environment in all three Baltic countries; Latvian public administration and entrepreneurs in the time of Covid-19 crisis – communication and development of support programs; Latvian ministries on social media – comparison of communication styles, the main represented topics and citizen engagement methods before and after Covid-19 crisis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Abu-Shanab, E. A. (2015). Reengineering the open government concept: An empirical support for a proposed model. *Government Information Quarterly*, 32(4), 453-463.

2. Adams, A., McCorkindale, T. (2013). Dialogue and transparency: A content analysis of how the 2012 presidential candidates used twitter. *Public Relations Review*, 39(4), 357-359.

3. Al-Shbail, T., Aman, A. (2018). E-government and accountability: How to mitigate the disorders and dysfunctions of accountability relationships. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 12(2), 155-190.

4. Ansell, C., Gash, A. (2008). Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(4), 543–571.

5. Ardielli, E., Halásková, M. (2015). Assessment of E-Government in EU Countries. *Scientific Papers of the University of Pardubice*, 22, 4-16.

6. Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder Of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216-224.

7. Arshad, S., Khurram, S. (2020). Can government's presence on social media stimulate citizens' online political participation? Investigating the influence of transparency, trust, and responsiveness. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(3), 101486

8. Audere, S. (2015). *Valsts Kancelejas loma valdības komunikācijas politikas veidošanā*, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.

9. Audretsch, D., Colombelli, A., Grilli, L., Minola, T., Rasmussen, E. (2020). Innovative start-ups and policy initiatives. *Research Policy*, 49(10), 104027.

10. Avidar, R., Ariela, Y., Malkaa, V., Levy, E. C. (2015). Smartphones, publics, and OPR: Do publics want to engage? *Public Relations Review*, 41, 214–221.

11. Bartlett, J., Bennett, S., Birnie, R., Wibberley, S. (2013). Virtually Members: The Facebook and Twitter Followers of UK Political Parties. http://www.demos.co.uk/files/Virtually_Members.pdf?1366125743

12. Barrett, M., Brunton-Smith, I. (2014). Political and civic engagement and participation: Towards an integrative perspective. *Journal of Civil Society*, 10(1), 5-28.

13. Berg van den, A. C., Giest, S. N., Groeneveld, S. M., Kraaij, W. (2020). Inclusivity in Online Platforms: Recruitment Strategies for Improving Participation of Diverse Sociodemographic Groups. *Public Administration Review*, 00(00), 1–12. DOI: 10.1111/puar.13215

14. Bertot, J. C., Jaeger, P. T., Grimes, J. M. (2012). Promoting transparency and accountability through ICTs, social media, and collaborative e-government. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 6(1), 78-91.

15. Bertot, J. C., Jaeger, P. T., Hansen, D. (2012). The impact of polices on government social media usage: Issues, challenges, and recommendations. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(1), 30-40.

16. Bertot, J. C., Jaeger, P. T., Grimes, J. M. (2010). Using ICTs to create a culture of transparency: E-government and social media as openness and anti-corruption tools for societies. *Government Information Quarterly*, 27, 264–271.

17. Bērziņš, I. (2012). *Interneta diskusijas un publiskā sfēra: iespaida izvērtējums Latvijas gadījumu studijās*, Doktora disertācija, Latvijas Universitāte.

18. Bindu, N., Sankar, C. P., Kumar, K. S. (2019). From conventional governance to e-democracy: Tracing the evolution of e-governance research trends using network analysis tools. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36 (3), 385-399.

19. Bovaird, T., Loeffler, E. (2012). From Engagement to Co-production: The Contribution of Users and Communities to Outcomes and Public Value. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organization*s, 23(4), 1119-1138.

20. Bolívar, M. P. R. (2018). Creative citizenship: the new wave for collaborative environments in smart cities. *Academia Revista Latinoamericana de Administración*, 31(1), 277-302.

21. Bonsón, E., Torres, L., Royo, S., Flores, F. (2012). Local e-government 2.0: Social media and corporate transparency in municipalities. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(2), 123-132.

22. Botan, C. H. (2018). *Strategic Communication Theory and Practice: The Cocreational Model*. Hoboken: Wiley, 256p.

23. Brown, D. C. G., Toze, S. (2017). Information governance in digitized public administration. *Canadian Public Administration / Administration Publique Du Canada*, 60(4), 581–604.

24. Bryer, A. T. (2013). Designing Social Media Strategies for Effective Citizen Engagement. A Case Example and Model. *National Civic Review*, 102(1), 43-50.

25. Cabinet office. (2013). G8 Open Data Charter and Technical Annex. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-data-charter/g8-open-data-charter-and-technical-annex

26. Cabinet of Ministers. (2013). Regulation No. 970 *Procedures for the Public Participation in the Development Planning Process*. Adopted 25.08.2009. https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/197033-procedures-for-the-public-participation-in-the-development-planning-process

27. Castells, M. (2013). *Communication power*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 574p.

28. Castells, M. (2008). The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks, and Global Governance. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616, 78-93.

29. Central Election Commission of Latvia. (2019). Eiropas parlamenta vēlēšanas 2019. https://epv2019.cvk.lv/pub/aktivitate

30. Central Election Commission of Latvia. (2018). 13. Saeimas vēlēšanas – aktivitāte. https://sv2018.cvk.lv/pub/Activities

31. Central Election Commission of Latvia. (2013). 2013. gada 1. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas - Vēlētāju aktivitāte. http://www.pv2013.cvk.lv/activities.html

32. Central Election Commission of Latvia. (2017). 2017. gada 3. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas. http://pv2017.cvk.lv/Activities

33. Central Election Commission of Latvia. (2021). 2021. gada 5. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas. https://pv2021.cvk.lv/pub/velesanu-rezultati

34. Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. (2020). Access to a computer/ the Internet by households. http://data.csb.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/zin/zin__01ikt_datori__MS/ITMG010.px/

35. Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. (2020). *Science and ICT*. http://data.csb.gov.lv/pxweb/en/zin/

36. Centrālā statistikas pārvalde. (2020). Par portālu. https://stat.gov.lv/lv/par-portalu

37. CEPS. (2019). Index of Readiness for Digital Lifelong Learning, Changing How Europeans Upgrade Their Skills. Final Report - November 2019

38. Cingolani, L. (2020). The survival of open government platforms: Empirical insights from a global sample. *Government Information Quarterly*, 38(1), 101522

39. CIVICUS. (2018). *Latvia – overview*. https://monitor.civicus.org/newsfeed/2018/04/01/latvia-overview/

40. Coleman, S. (2016). Digital Democracy. *In The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication*, G. Mazzoleni (Ed.). Wiley Blackwell.

41. Conroy, M., Feezell, J. T., Guerrero, M. (2012). Facebook and political engagement: A study of online political group membership and offline political engagement. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(5), 1535–1546.

42. Council of Europe. (2018). Civil Society. https://www.coe.int/en/web/civil-society/

43. Council of Europe. (2017). Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making. https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016807509dd

44. Council of the European Union. (2019). Council Conclusions on Democracy. https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12836-2019-INIT/en/pdf

45. Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre. (2012). National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014–2020. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NDP2020%20English%20Final___1.pdf

46. Danielsone, V. (2016). *Jauniešu līdzdalība lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā Parlamentā Latvijā*, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.

47. De Blasio, E., Selva, D. (2016). Why Choose Open Government? Motivations for the Adoption of Open Government Policies in Four European Countries. *Policy & Internet*, 8(3), 225-247.

48. Deng, H., Karunasena, K., Xu, W. (2018). Evaluating the performance of e-government in developing countries: A public value perspective. *Internet Research*, 28(1), 169-190.

49. Deth, van J. W. (2016). Political Participation. *In The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication*, G. Mazzoleni (Ed.). Wiley Blackwell.

50. Djadčenko, E. (2013). *E-pārvaldes ieviešana Latvijā*, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.

51. Draugiem Group. (2019). Par mums. https://draugiemgroup.com/lv/par-mums

52. Driss, O. B., Mellouli, S., Trabelsi, Z. (2019). From citizens to government policy-makers: Social media data analysis. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(3), 560-570.

53. Dumitrica, D. (2016). Imagining engagement: Youth, social media, and electoral processes. Convergence. *The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 22(1), 35–53.

54. EACEA. (2013). Youth Participation in Democratic Life. LSE Enterprise. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/69761/1/Youth_Participation%20Report%202013.pdf

55. Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2019). Twitter. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Twitter

56. European Commission. (2021). A European Green Deal - Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

57. European Commission. (2013). *A vision for public services*, Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology.

58. European Commission. (2020). Countries' performance in digitisation. https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/countries-performance-digitisation

59. European Commission. (2018). Creating a digital society. https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/policies/creating-digital-society

60. European Commission. (2019). Digital Economy and Society Index 2019, Country Report Latvia

61. European Commission. (2020). Digital Economy and Society Index 2020, Country Report Latvia

62. European Commission. (2020). eGovernment Benchmark 2020: eGovernment that works for the people https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/egovernment-benchmark-2020-egovernment-works-people

63. European Commission. (2021). Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/europes-digital-decade-digital-targets-2030_en

64. European Commission. (2018). Open Government, https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/open-government

65. European Commission. (2021). Recovery plan for Europe. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en

66. European Commission. (2021). Social networks. https://europa.eu/european-union/contact/social-networks_en

67. European Commission. (2018). Standard Eurobarometer 88. http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2143_88_3_STD88_ENG

68. European Commission. (2018). Standard Eurobarometer 89. https://data.europa.eu/euodp/de/data/dataset/S2180_89_1_STD89_ENG

69. European Commission. (2019). Standard Eurobarometer 90. http://data.europa.eu/euodp/de/data/dataset/S2215_90_3_STD90_ENG

70. European Commission. (2019). Standard Eurobarometer 91. https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2253_91_5_STD91_ENG

71. European Commission. (2020). Standard Eurobarometer 92. https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2255_92_3_STD92_ENG

72. European Commission. (2020). Standard Eurobarometer 93. https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2262

73. European Commission. (2021). Standard Eurobarometer 94. https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2355

74. European Commission. (2020). State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_1655

75. European Commission. (2019). The Digital Economy and Society Index. https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi

76. European Commission. (2016). Use of social media in EU communication. https://ec.europa.eu/ipg/go_live/web2_0/index_en.htm

77. European Commission. (2020). Using social media. https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/WEBGUIDE/01.+Using+social+media

78. European Parliament. (2017). Resolution on e-democracy in the European Union: potential and challenges. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2017-0041_EN.html

79. European Parliament. (2019). 2019 European election results - National results. https://election-results.eu/national-results-overview/

80. European Parliament. (2019). 2019 European election results – Latvia. https://www.election-results.eu/national-results/latvia/2019-2024/

81. European Social Survey. (2012). Exploring public attitudes, informing public policy. https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/ESS1_5_select_findings.pdf

82. Eurostat. (2020). Database: Science, technology, digital society – Digital economy and society – ICT usage in households and by individuals - Internet use. http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database

83. Eurostat. (2020). Individuals who have basic or above basic overall digital skills. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/graph.do?tab=graph&plugin=1&pcode=tepsr_sp410&language=en&toolbox=data

84. Evans, B., Sapeha, H. (2015). Are non-government policy actors being heard? Assessing New Public Governance in three Canadian provinces. *Canadian Public Administration / Administration Publique Du Canada*, 58(2), 249–270.

85. Evans, L., Franks, P., Chen, H. M. (2018). Voices in the cloud: social media and trust in Canadian and US local governments. *Records Management Journal*, 28(1), 18-46.

86. Facebook. (2019). Company info. https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/

87. Facebook. (2019). Latvijas Republikas Ārlietu ministrija - Pirms 100 gadiem. https://www.facebook.com/arlietuministrija/posts/2025306284239792?__tn__=-R

88. Facebook. (2019). Latvijas Republikas Tieslietu ministrija - Latvija sniedz atbalstu tiesiskuma stiprināšanai Gruzijā. https://www.facebook.com/Tieslietas/posts/2780896635476457?__tn__=-R

89. Facebook. (2019). Vides aizsardzības un reģionālās attīstības ministrija - Pašvaldībām ir vienādas funkcijas. https://www.facebook.com/VARAMLATVIJA/videos/2512148795682403/?__tn__=-R

90. Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community. (2020). Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-Based Digital Government. https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/EN/eu-presidency/gemeinsame-erklaerungen/berlin-declaration-digital-society.html

91. Ferro, E., Loukis, N. E., Charalabidis, Y., Osella, M. (2013). Policy making 2.0: From theory to practice. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30(4), 359–368.

92. Gaušis, E. (2016). *Sociālo Mediju Izmantošana Eiropas Pilsonības Izpratnes Veidošanā Jauniešu Auditorijas Vidū Latvijā*, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.

93. George, J. J., Leidner, D. E., (2019). From clicktivism to hacktivism: Understanding digital activism. *Information and Organization*, 29(3), 1-45. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infoandorg.2019.04.001

94. Gravesteijn, M., Wilderom, C. P. M. (2018). Participative change toward digitalized, customer-oriented continuous improvements within a municipality. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 31(3), 728-748.

95. Janssen, M., Helbig, M. (2016). Innovating and changing the policy-cycle: Policy-makers be prepared! *Government Information Quarterly*, 35(4), 99-105.

96. Hacker, K. L., van Dijk, J. (2000). *What Is Digital Democracy?* Digital Democracy. Issues of Theory and Practice, Sage, pp.1-9.

97. Halpern, D., Valenzuela, S., Katz, J. E. (2017). We Face, I Tweet: How Different Social Media Influence Political Participation through Collective and Internal Efficacy. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 22(6), 320-336.

98. Harp. D., Bachmann, I., Guo, L. (2012). The Whole Online World Is Watching: Profiling Social Networking Sites and Activists in China, Latin America, and the United States. *International Journal of Communication*, 6, 298–321.

99. Heath, M. K. (2018). What kind of (digital) citizen?: A between-studies analysis of research and teaching for democracy. *The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology*, 35(5), 342-356.

100. Heath, R. L., Johansen, W., Fredriksson, M., Pallas, J. (2018). New Public Management. *In The International Encyclopedia of Strategic Communication*, R. L. Heath and W. Johansen (Eds). Wiley Blackwell.

101. Halpern, D., Gibbs, J. (2013). Social media as a catalyst for online deliberation? Exploring the affordances of Facebook and YouTube for political expression. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(3). 1159–1168.

102. Hilbert, M. (2009). The Maturing Concept of E-Democracy: From E-Voting and Online Consultations to Democratic Value Out of Jumbled Online Chatter. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 6, 87–110.

103. Holt, K., Shehata, A., Stromback, J., Ljungberg, E. (2013). Age and the effects of news media attention and social media use on political interest and participation: Do social media function as leveller? *European Journal of Communication*, 28(1), 19-34.

104. Hooghe, M., Quintelier, E. (2013). Political Participation in European Countries. The effect of authoritarian rule, corruption, lack of good governance and economic downturn. *Comparative European Politics*, 12(2), 209-232.

105. Ingrams, A., Piotrowski, S., Berliner, D. (2020). Learning from Our Mistakes: Public Management Reform and the Hope of Open Government. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 3(4), 257–272.

106. Kafka, K. I., Kostis, P. C., Petrakis, P. E. (2021). Institutional Effects on Innovation and the Requirements for Structural Reforms. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-020-00705-6

107. Katsonis, M., Botros, A. (2015). Digital Government: A Primer and Professional Perspectives. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 74(1), 42-52.

108. Kavanaugh, A. L., Fox, E. A., Sheetz, S. D., Yang, S., Li, L. T., Shoemaker, D. J., Natsev, A., Xie, L. (2012). Social media use by government: From the routine to the critical. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(4), 480-491.

109. Kazaka, O. (2014). *Sociālo mediju lietošana korporatīvajā komunikācijā Latvijā (2009-2011)*, Doktora disertācija, Latvijas Universitāte.

110. Koc-Michalska, K., Lilleker, D. G., Vedel, T. (2016). Civic political engagement and social change in the new digital age. *New Media & Society*, 18(9), 1807–1816.

111. Kultūras ministrija. (2020). Nacionālās kultūras padomes viedoklis par FM priekšlikumiem reorganizēt autoratlīdzību sistēmu. https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/ministrija/jaunumi/nacionalas-kulturas-padomes-viedoklis-par-fm-priekslikumiem-reorganizet-autoratlidzibu-sistemu-5628#gsc.tab=0

112. Kultūras ministrija. (2020). Pilsoniskā iesaistīšanās. https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/integracija-un-sabiedriba/pilsoniska-iesaistisanas#gsc.tab=0

113. Kumar, R., Sachan, A., Mukherjee, A. (2018). Direct vs indirect e-government adoption: an exploratory study. *Digital Policy, Regulation and Governance*, 20(2), 149-162.

114. Laybourn-Langton, L., Jacobs, M. (2018). Paradigm Shifts in Economic Theory and Policy. *Intereconomics*, 53, 113–118.

115. Latvijas Brīvo arodbiedrību savienība. (2021). Mēs. https://arodbiedribas.lv/mes/#pll_switcher

116. Latvijas Būvinžinieru savienība. (2020). Valdība atbalsta Rīgas koncertzāles vietu - arhitekti ceļ trauksmi. https://buvinzenierusavieniba.lv/valdiba-atbalsta-rigas-koncertzales-vietu-arhitekti-cel-trauksmi/

117. Latvijas Darba devēju konfederācija. (2021). Par LDDK. https://lddk.lv/par-lddk/

118. Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse. (2021). NVO iebildumi pret ANM izstrādes procesu un ierosinājumi satura korekcijām. https://nvo.lv/uploads/nostajas_vestule_plans_aprilis.pdf

119. Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse. (2021). Pētījums: esošās klasifikācijas sistēmas nesniedz skaidru priekšstatu par Latvijas biedrībām un nodibinājumiem. https://nvo.lv/lv/zina/petijums_esosas_klasifikacijas_sistemas_nesniedz_skaidru_prieksstatu_par_latvijas_biedribam_un_nodibinajumiem

120. Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse. (2021). Pētījums par pilsoniskās sabiedrības organizāciju sektoru Latvijā 2020-2024: https://nvo.lv/uploads/nvo_petijums_2021.pdf

121. Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse. (2020). Uzsākta sadarbības iniciatīva sabiedrības iesaistes un līdzdalības procesu uzlabošanai.https://nvo.lv/lv/zina/uzsakta_sadarbibas_iniciativa_sabiedribas_iesaistes_un_lidzdalibas_procesu_uzlabosanai/

122. Latvijas Republikas Ārlietu ministrija. (2019). Ārlietu ministrija atbalsta ANO Jauniešu delegātu programmas pirmo konferenci. https://www.mfa.gov.lv/aktualitates/zinas/64940-arlietu-ministrija-atbalsta-ano-jauniesu-delegatu-programmas-pirmo-konferenci-jauniesi-un-arpolitika

123. Latvijas Sabiedriskie mediji. (2018). Latvijā partijās daudzkārt mazāk biedru nekā Lietuvā un Igaunijā. Kāpēc tā? https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/latvija-partijas-daudzkart-mazak-biedru-neka-lietuva-un-igaunija.-kapec-ta.a262825/

124. Latvijas Vēstnesis (2018). Pilsoniskā līdzdalība – uz zema pakāpiena. https://lvportals.lv/norises/298303-pilsoniska-lidzdaliba-uz-zema-pakapiena-2018

125. Latvijas Vēstnesis. (2021). Sabiedriskajai apspriešanai nodod lobēšanas atklātības regulējuma pamatprincipus. https://lvportals.lv/norises/324281-sabiedriskajai-apspriesanai-nodod-lobesanas-atklatibas-regulejuma-pamatprincipus-2021

126. Latvijas Vēstnesis. (2020). Vēlēšanas tiešsaistē – par un pret. https://lvportals.lv/norises/321011-velesanas-tiessaiste-par-un-pret-2020

127. Latvijas Zinātņu akadēmija. (2020). Akadēmiskā terminu datubāze AkadTerm - valsts pārvalde. http://termini.lza.lv/term.php?term=valsts%20p%C4%81rvalde&lang=LV

128. Lee, G., Kwak, Y. H. (2012). An Open Government Maturity Model for social media-based public engagement. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(4), 492-503.

129. Lee, J. B., Porumbescu, G. A. (2019). Engendering inclusive e-government use through citizen IT training Programs, *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(1), 69-76.

130. Lee, T. D., Lee-Geiller, S., Lee, B. (2020). Are pictures worth a thousand words? The effect of information presentation type on citizen perceptions of government websites. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(3), 101482

131. Lerner, J. (2012). *Making Democracy Fun? Games as Tools for Democratic Participation*, Doctoral Thesis, The New School for Social Research (New York, USA).

132. Leston-Bandeira, C., Bender, D. (2013). How deeply are parliaments engaging on social media? *Information Polity*, 18(4), 281-297.

133. Levkāne, D. (2016). *Pilsoniskās Izglītības Loma Mūsdienu Latvijas Sabiedrībā*, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.

134. Levy, B. L., Akiva, T. (2019). Motivating Political Participation Among Youth: An Analysis of Factors Related to Adolescents' Political Engagement. *Political Psychology*, 40(5), 1039-1055.

135. Lilleker, D. G., Koc-Michalska, K. (2013). Online Political Communication Strategies: MEPs, E-Representation, and Self-Representation, *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 10(2), 190-207.

136. Linders, D. (2012). From e-government to we-government: Defining a typology for citizen coproduction in the age of social media. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(4), 446–454.

137. Linders, D., Liao, C. Z., Wang, C. (2018). Proactive e-Governance: Flipping the service delivery model from pull to push in Taiwan. *Government Information Quarterly*, 35(4), S68-S76.

138. Lindquist, E. A, Huse, I. (2017). Accountability and monitoring government in the digital era: Promise, realism and research for digital era governance. *Canadian Public Administration / Administration Publique Du Canada*, 60(4), 627-656.

139. Lironi, E. (2016). *Potential and Challenges of E-Participation in the European Union*, Directorate General for Internal Policies - Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs.

140. Loader, B. D., Mercea, D. (2011). Networking democracy? *Information, Communication & Society*, 14(6), 757-769.

141. Loader, B. D., Mercea, D. (2012). *Social media and democracy: innovations in participatory politics*. London, New York: Routledge, 275p

142. Loader, B. D., Vromen, A., Xenos, A. M. (2014). The networked young citizen: social media, political participation and civic engagement. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(2), 143-150.

143. Longo, J. (2017). The evolution of citizen and stakeholder engagement in Canada, from Spicer to #Hashtags. *Canadian Public Administration / Administration Publique Du Canada*, 60(4), 517-537.

144. López-Rubio, P., Roig-Tierno, N., Mas-Verdú, F. (2021). Assessing the Origins, Evolution and Prospects of National Innovation Systems. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-020-00712-7

145. Lovari, A., Parisi, L. (2015). Listening to digital publics. Investigating citizens' voices and engagement within Italian municipalities' Facebook Pages. *Public Relations Review*, 41, 205–213.

146. Lovejoy, K., Waters, R. D., Saxton, G. D. (2012). Engaging stakeholders through Twitter: How nonprofit organizations are getting more out of 140 characters or less. *Public Relations Review*, 38(2), 313-318.

147. Lusoli, W., Ward, S., Gibson, R. (2006). (Re)connecting Politics? Parliament, the Public and the Internet. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 59(1), 24–42.

148. ManaBalss. (2021). Apkopotās idejas. https://atvertalatvija.manabalss.lv/idejas

149. ManaBalss. (2020). Uzsākam īstenot projektu "Automatizētas PSO līdzdalības sistēmas izstrāde". https://parvaipret.lv/pages/organizations

150. Mandātu, ētikas un iesniegumu komisija. (2021). Par Saeimā saņemtajiem iesniegumiem. http://mandati.saeima.lv/parskati/par-saeim-saemtajiem-iesniegumiem

151. Mangule, I. (2016). E-democracy in Action. https://www.kogu.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/E-democracy-in-Action_case-studies-from-Estonia-Latvia-Finland_2016.pdf

152. Marino, V., Lo Presti, L. (2018). Increasing convergence of civic engagement in management: a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 32(3), 282-301.

153. Marino, V., Lo Presti, L. (2018). From citizens to partners: the role of social media content in fostering citizen engagement. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 12(1), 39-60.

154. Martens, D., Potjomkina, D., Orbie, J. (2020). Domestic advisory groups in EU trade agreements. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Global Policy and Development. ISBN 978-3-96250-748-0

155. Mazzucato, M. (2016). From market fixing to market-creating: a new framework for innovation policy, *Industry and Innovation*, 23(2), 140-156.

156. Meijer, A. (2012). Co-production in an Information Age: Individual and Community Engagement Supported by New Media. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 23(4), 1156-1172.

157. Melin, U., Wihlborg, E. (2018). Balanced and integrated e-government implementation – exploring the crossroad of public policymaking and information systems project management processes. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 12(2), 191-208.

158. Mergel, I. (2013). A framework for interpreting social media interactions in the public sector. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30(4), 327-334

159. Mergel, I. (2013). Social media adoption and resulting tactics in the U.S. federal government. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30(4), 123–130.

160. Mergel, I., Bretschneider, S. I. (2013). A Three-Stage Adoption Process for Social Media Use in Government. *Public Administration Review*, 73(3), 390-400.

161. Mergel, I., Edelmann, N., Haug, N. (2019). Defining digital transformation: Results from expert interviews. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(4), 101385.

162. Mergel, I., Desouza, K. C. (2013). Implementing Open Innovation in the Public Sector: The Case of Challenge.gov. *Public Administration Review*, 73(6), 882-890.

163. Mergel, I., Ganapati, S., Whitford, A., B. (2020). Agile: A New Way of Governing. *Public Administration Review*, 81(1), 161–165. DOI: 10.1111/puar.13202

164. Merriam-Webster. (2019). *Definition of social media*. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media

165. Mierina, I. (2011). *Political Participation and Development of Political Attitudes in Post-Communist Countries*, Doctoral thesis, University of Latvia.

166. Ministru kabinets. (2018). Atvērtā pārvaldība. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/content/atverta-parvaldiba

167. Ministru kabinets. (2020). Nevalstisko organizāciju un Ministru kabineta sadarbības memoranda īstenošanas padome. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/nevalstisko-organizaciju-un-ministru-kabineta-sadarbibas-memoranda-istenosanas-padome

168. Ministru kabinets. (2018). Noteikumi Nr. 611. Kārtība, kādā iestādes ievieto informāciju internetā. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301865-kartiba-kada-iestades-ievieto-informaciju-interneta

169. Ministru kabinets. (2021). NVO sektora pārskats. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/695/download

170. Ministru kabinets. (2021). Par Latvijas Atveseļošanas un noturības mehānisma plānu. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/322858-par-latvijas-atveselosanas-un-noturibas-mehanisma-planu

171. Ministru kabinets. (2021). Projekta dalībnieki: valsts un pašvaldību iestādes. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/projekta-dalibnieki-valsts-un-pasvaldibu-iestades

172. Ministru kabinets. (2021). Saliedētas un pilsoniski aktīvas sabiedrības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2021.-2027. gadam. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/320841-par-saliedetas-un-pilsoniski-aktivas-sabiedribas-attistibas-pamatnostadnem-2021-2027-gadam

173. Ministru kabinets. (2020). Vienotais tiesību aktu projektu izstrādes un saskaņošanas portāls (TAP portāls). https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/projekts/vienotais-tiesibu-aktu-projektu-izstrades-un-saskanosanas-portals-tap-portals

174. Ministry of Agriculture. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Agriculture. https://www.zm.gov.lv/

175. Ministry of Agriculture. (2019). Nozares darba grupas, padomes. https://www.zm.gov.lv/lauksaimnieciba/statiskas-lapas/nozares-darba-grupas-padomes?nid=535#jump

176. Ministry of Culture. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Culture. https://www.km.gov.lv/lv

177. Ministry of Culture. (2019). Nozaru padomes un darba grupas. https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/ministrija/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/nozaru-padomes-un-darba-grupas

178. Ministry of Defence. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Defence. https://www.mod.gov.lv/

179. Ministry of Defence (2019). Sabiedrības līdzdalība. https://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/nozares-politika/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba

180. Ministry of Economics. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Economics. https://www.em.gov.lv/lv/

181. Ministry of Economics. (2919). Sabiedrības līdzdalība. https://www.em.gov.lv/lv/Ministrija/sabiedribas_lidzdaliba/

182. Ministry of Education and Science. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Education and Science. https://izm.gov.lv/lv/

183. Ministry of Education and Science. (2015). Sabiedrības līdzdalība. https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba

184. Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. http://www.varam.gov.lv/

185. Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. (2019). Padomes un komisijas. http://varam.gov.lv/lat/lidzd/pad/

186. Ministry of Finance. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Finance. https://www.fm.gov.lv/

187. Ministry of Finance. (2018). Finanšu ministrijas organizētās darba grupas, padomes, komitejas, komisijas. https://www.fm.gov.lv/lv/sabiedribas_lidzdaliba/darba_grupas/

188. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. https://www.mfa.gov.lv/

189. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2019). Sadarbība ar nevalstiskajām organizācijām. https://www.mfa.gov.lv/ministrija/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba

190. Ministry of Health. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Health. http://www.vm.gov.lv/

191. Ministry of Health. (2019). Konsultatīvās padomes. http://www.vm.gov.lv/lv/ministrija/konsultativas_padomes/

192. Ministry of the Interior. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of the Interior. http://www.iem.gov.lv/lat/

193. Ministry of the Interior. (2019). Konsultatīvās padomes. http://iem.gov.lv/lat/sadarbiba_ar_nvo/konsultativas_padomes/

194. Ministry of Justice. (2019). Darba grupas un padomes. https://www.tm.gov.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/darba-grupas

195. Ministry of Justice. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Justice. https://www.tm.gov.lv/

196. Ministry of Transport. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Transport. http://www.sam.gov.lv

197. Ministry of Transport. (2019). Padomes. http://www.sam.gov.lv/satmin/content/?cat=661

198. Ministry of Welfare. (2019). Home page of the Ministry of Welfare. http://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/

199. Ministry of Welfare. (2018). Sabiedrības līdzdalība. http://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba

200. Moreno, A., Navarro, C., Tench, R., Zerfass, A. (2015). Does social media usage matter? An analysis of online practices and digital media perceptions of communication practitioners in Europe. *Public Relations Review*, 41, 242–253.

201. Mthanti, T., Ojah, K. (2017). Entrepreneurial orientation (EO): Measurement and policy implications of entrepreneurship at the macroeconomic level. *Research Policy*, 47, 724-739.

202. Nam, T. (2012). Suggesting frameworks of citizen-sourcing via Government 2.0. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(1), 12–20.

203. Napoleon Sp.zo.o. (2020). Facebook users in Latvia. https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-latvia/2020/08

204. Napoleon Sp.zo.o. (2021). Facebook users in Latvia. https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-latvia/2021/05

205. Nawafleh, S. (2018). Factors affecting the continued use of e-government websites by citizens: An exploratory study in the Jordanian public sector. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 12(3/4), 244-264.

206. Nikolajenko, M. (2018). *Impact of digital media on decision-making and democracy*, Master thesis, University of Latvia.

207. Norwegian Ministry of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs. (2009). Central Government Communication Policy. https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/fad/vedlegg/informasjonspolitikk/statkompol_eng.pdf

208. Ņikišins, J. (2016). *Politiskā Līdzdalība Eiropā: Salīdzinoša Analīze*, Doktora disertācija, Latvijas Universitāte.

209. Obar, J. A., Wildman, S. (2015). Social media definition and the governance challenge: An introduction to the special issue. *Telecommunications Policy*, 39(9), 745-750.

210. OECD. (2019). Declaration on Public Sector Innovation. https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0450

211. OECD. (2019). Digital government. https://www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government/

212. OECD. (2015). Digital government toolkit. Digital Government Strategies: Good Practices. Latvia: Open Referendum Initiation System. http://www.oecd.org/gov/latvia-open-referendum.pdf

213. OECD. (2021). Going Digital in Latvia. https://www.oecd.org/latvia/going-digital-in-latvia-8eec1828-en.htm

214. OECD. (2017). Going Digital: Making the Transformation Work for Growth and Well-Being. https://www.oecd.org/mcm/documents/C-MIN-2017-4%20EN.pdf

215. OECD. (2019). Government at a Glance 2019. http://www.oecd.org/gov/government-at-a-glance-22214399.htm

216. OECD. (2019). Government at a Glance 2019, Country Fact Sheet – Latvia. http://www.oecd.org/gov/govataglance.htm

217. OECD. (2020). ICT Access and Usage by Households and Individuals. https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ICT_HH2

218. OECD. (2019). OECD Economic Surveys – Latvia. http://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/Latvia-2019-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf

219. OECD. (2016). PISA in Focus - Are there differences in how advantaged and disadvantaged students use the Internet? https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/are-there-differences-in-how-advantaged-and-disadvantaged-students-use-the-internet_5jlv8zq6hw43-en#page1

220. OECD. (2014). Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies, Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate.

221. Oficiālās statistikas portāls. (2021). Sadarbība ar valsts vai sabiedrisko pakalpojumu sniedzējiem izmantojot internetu.https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START__IKT__DL__DLM/DLM040/table/tableViewLayout1

222. Oficiālās statistikas portāls. (2021). Uzņēmumu skaits. https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START__ENT__UZ__UZS/UZS030/table/tableViewLayout1/

223. Oliveira, G. H. M., Welch, E. W. (2013). Social media use in local government: Linkage of technology, task, and organizational context. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30, 397–405.

224. Open Government Partnership. (2019). Action Plan Cycle. https://www.opengovpartnership.org/process/action-plan-cycle/

225. Open Government Partnership. (2019). Do We Trust Democracy? A Future Agenda for Europe. https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/do-we-trust-democracy-future-agenda-europe/

226. Open Government Partnership. (2018). Latvia. https://www.opengovpartnership.org/countries/latvia

227. Open Government Partnership. (2020). Latvia Action Plan 2019-2021. https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/latvia-action-plan-2019-2021/

228. Open Government Partnership. (2020). Latvia Implementation Report 2017-2019. https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/latvia-implementation-report-2017-2019/

229. Open Government Partnership. (2019). Open Government Declaration. https://www.opengovpartnership.org/process/joining-ogp/open-government-declaration/

230. Orum, A. M., Åström, J. (2019). Citizen Participation. *In The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Studies*, A. M. Orum (Ed.). Wiley Blackwell.

231. Ozols, G., Nielsen, M. M. (2018). Connected Government Approach for Customer-centric Public Service Delivery: Comparing strategic, governance and technological aspects in Latvia, Denmark and the United Kingdom. United Nations University.

232. Pacut, A. (2020). Drivers toward Social Entrepreneurs Engagement in Poland: An Institutional Approach. *Administrative Sciences*, 10(1), 5.

233. Park, N., Kee, K. E., Valenzuela, S. (2009). Being Immersed in Social Networking Environment: Facebook Groups, Uses and Gratifications, and Social Outcomes. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*. 12(6), 729-733.

234. Pārresoru koordinācijas centrs. (2020). Latvijas nacionālais attīstības plāns 2021.–2027. gadam. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NAP2027_apstiprin%C4%81ts%20Saeim%C4%81_0.pdf

235. Pārresoru koordinācijas centrs. (2017). Nacionālā attīstības plāna 2014.-2020. gadam un Latvijas ilgtspējīgas attīstības stratēģijas līdz 2030. gadam īstenošanas uzraudzības ziņojums. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/lv/valsts-attistibas-planosana/nacionalais-attistibas-plans/nap2020-merki-un-istenosana

236. Pedersen, K. (2018). E-government transformations: challenges and strategies. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 12(1), 84-109.

237. Peeters, R. (2020). The Agency of Algorithms: Understanding Human-algorithm Interaction in Administrative Decision-making. *Information Polity*, 25(4), 507-522.

238. Perilla, A. A. V. (2012). *Social Media and Individual and Collective Activism: The Role of Interdependence and Online Political Efficacy*, Doctoral thesis, Michigan State University.

239. Perrin, B. (2015). Bringing accountability up to date with the realities of public sector management in the 21st century. *Canadian Public Administration / Administration Publique Du Canada*, 58(1), 183–203.

240. Peters, B. (2017). Management, management everywhere: whatever happened to governance? *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 30(6-7), 606-614.

241. Petitpas, A., Jaquet, J. M., Sciarini, P. (2020). Does E-Voting matter for turnout, and to whom? *Electoral Studies*, 102245.

242. Picazo-Vela, S., Gutiérrez-Martínez, I., Luna-Reyes, L. F. (2012). Understanding risks, benefits, and strategic alternatives of social media applications in the public sector. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29, 504–511.

243. Proeger, T., Runst, P. (2019). Digitization and Knowledge Spillover Effectiveness — Evidence from the "German Mittelstand". *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 11, 1509–1528

244. Providus. (2021). Latvija – joprojām zemas uzticēšanās sabiedrība; iedzīvotāji vēlētos plašākas iesaistes iespējas. http://providus.lv/article/latvija-joprojam-zemas-uzticesanas-sabiedriba-iedzivotaji-veletos-plasakas-iesaistes-iespejas

245. Providus. (2017). Politiskās partijas 21. gadsimtā: domnīcas Providus organizētā foruma ideju apkopojums. http://providus.lv/article_files/3283/original/Partijas21apkopojumsProvidus.pdf?1483956590

246. Reinholde, I. (2017). Path-Dependency of Reforms in Latvia: A Way Towards New Public Governance. *Proceedings of the 2017 International Conference "ECONOMIC SCIENCE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT" No 46*, Jelgava, LLU ESAF, 27-28 April 2017, 149-157.

247. Republic of Estonia. (2020). Become an e-resident. https://e-resident.gov.ee/become-an-e-resident/

248. Republic of Latvia Cabinet (2009). Regulation No. 970. Procedures for the Public Participation in the Development Planning Process. https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=197033

249. Rukanova, B., Tan, Y., Huiden, R., Ravulakollu, A., Grainger, A., Heijmann, F. (2020). A framework for voluntary business-government information sharing. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(4), 101501.

250. Sabiedrības Līdzdalības Fonds. (2019). *Paveiktais*. https://manabalss.lv/page/progress

251. Sabiedrības Līdzdalības Fonds. (2021). Paveiktais. https://manabalss.lv/pages/paveiktais

252. Saeima. (2020). Iesniegumi un priekšlikumi. https://www.saeima.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/iesniegumi-un-priekslikumi

253. Saeima. (2019). Home page of the Latvian Parliament. http://www.saeima.lv/

254. Saeima. (2020). Sabiedrības līdzdalība. https://www.saeima.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba

255. Saeima (2019). Saeimas un nevalstisko organizāciju sadarbība. http://www.saeima.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/saeimas-un-nevalstisko-organizaciju-sadarbiba

256. Saeima. (2002). State Administration Structure Law. https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/63545-state-administration-structure-law

257. Saeima. (2010). Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/LIAS_2030_en_0.pdf

258. Şandor, S. D. (2012). ICT and Public Administration Reforms. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, 36, 155-164.

259. Schmidthuber, L., Ingrams, A., Hilgers, D. (2020). Government Openness and Public Trust: The Mediating Role of Democratic Capacity. *Public Administration Review*, 81(1), 91-109, https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13298

260. Scholta, H., Mertens, W., Kowalkiewicz, M., Becker, J. (2019). From one-stop shop to no-stop shop: An e-government stage model. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(1), 11-26.

261. Seimuškāne, L. (2015). *Iedzīvotāju līdzdalība lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā pašvaldībās Latvijā un to ietekmējošo faktoru izvērtējums*, Doktora disertācija, Latvijas Universitāte.

262. Shareef, M. A., Kumar, V., Kumar, U., Dwivedi, Y. K. (2011). e-Government Adoption Model (GAM): Differing service maturity levels. *Government Information Quarterly*, 28(1), 17-35.

263. Sloam, J. (2014). New Voice, Less Equal: The Civic and Political Engagement of Young People in the United States and Europe. *Comparative Political Studies*, 47(5), 663-688.

264. Smith, D. (2020). The Effects of Federal Research and Development Subsidies on Firm Commercialization Behavior. *Research Policy*, 49 (7), 104003.

265. Solvak, M., Vassil, K. (2016). E-voting in Estonia:Technological Diffusion and Other Developments Over Ten Years (2005 - 2015). Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies University of Tartu.

266. State Chancellery of Latvia. (2019). Konference „Sociālie mediji un web@valsts pārvalde.lv". http://tap.mk.gov.lv/vk/konference-web/prezentacijas/

267. State Chancellery of Latvia. (2018). Results of the survey *Public participation in state and local government*. Presentation by State Chancellery of Latvia in connection with the 29.08.18 conference Informesana->lidzdarbiba.

268. State Chancellery of Latvia. (2020). Sabiedrības līdzdalības politika. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdalibas-politika

269. Stelzle, B., Jannack, A., Noennig, J., N. (2017). Co-Design and Co-Decision: Decision Making on Collaborative Design Platforms. *Procedia Computer Science*, 112, 2435–2444.

270. Štětka, V., Mazák, J. (2014). Whither slacktivism? Political engagement and social media use in the 2013 Czech Parliamentary elections. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 8(3), article 7.

271. Taylor, M., Kent, M. L. (2014). Dialogic Engagement: Clarifying Foundational Concepts, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26(5), 384-398.

272. Teorell, J. (2006). Political participation and three theories of democracy: A research inventory and agenda. *European Journal of Political Research*, 45(5), 787-810.

273. The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited. (2020). *Democracy Index 2019: A year of democratic setbacks and popular protest*. The Economist.

274. The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited. (2021). *Democracy Index 2020: In sickness and in health?* The Economist.

275. The State Chancellery. (2019). Home page of the State Chancellery and Government of Latvia. https://mk.gov.lv/lv

276. The State Chancellery. (2018). Līdzdalības iespējas konsultatīvajās padomēs. https://mk.gov.lv/content/lidzdalibas-iespejas-konsultativajas-padomes

277. The United Nations. (2019). The Age of Digital Interdependence. Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/DigitalCooperation-report-for%20web.pdf

278. The World Bank Group. (2021). Civil society participation. https://govdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/hab8090ea?country=LVA&indicator=28738&countries=LTU,EST&viz=line_chart&years=2006,2018&indicators=944

279. Thomas, J. C. (2013). Citizen, Customer, Partner: Rethinking the Place of the Public in Public Management. *Public Administration Review*, 73(6), 786-796.

280. Thynne, I., Peters, B. G. (2015). Addressing the Present and the Future in Government and Governance: Three approaches to Organising Public Action. *Public Administration and Development*, 35(2), 73– 85.

281. Tobiasson, W., Beestermöller, C. Jamasb, T. (2016). Public engagement in electricity network development: the case of the Beauly–Denny project in Scotland. *Economia e Politica Industriale*, 43, 105–126.

282. Todisco, L., Tomo, A., Canonico, P., Mangia, G., Sarnacchiaro, P. (2020). Exploring social media usage in the public sector: Public employees' perceptions of ICT's usefulness in delivering value added. *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences*, Page 100858, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2020.100858

283. Torres, L. H. (2007). Citizen sourcing in the public interest. *Knowledge Management for Development Journal*, 3(1), 134-145.

284. The United Nations. (2018). Youth 2030 – working with and for youth. United Nations youth strategy. https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/18-00080_UN-Youth-Strategy_Web.pdf

285. Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union. (2020). Interactive Terminology for Europe - valsts pārvalde. https://iate.europa.eu/search/standard/result/1593698504130/1

286. Transparency International. (2021). Integrity Watch - EU Lobbyists. https://www.integritywatch.eu/organizations

287. Trump, K. S., Rhody, J., Edick, C., Weber, P. (2018). *Social Media & Democracy: Assessing the State of the Field & Identifying Unexplored Questions*, Social Science Research Council, 6/4/2018, Stanford University.

288. United Nations. (2019). Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. https://www.un.org/en/digital-cooperation-panel/index.html

289. Twizeyimana, J. D., Andersson, A. (2019). The public value of E-Government – A literature review. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(2), 167-178.

290. United States Agency for International Development. (2019). 2018 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. https://nvo.lv/uploads/201910041747406956.pdf

291. Warren, M. A., Sulaiman, A., Jaafar, I. N. (2014). Social media effects on fostering online civic engagement and building citizen trust and trust in institutions. *Government Information Quarterly*, 31, 291–301.

292. Wells, C. F. (2011). *Engagement in the networked society: How civic and political organizations communicate with young citizens online*, Doctoral thesis, University of Washington.

293. Valimised. (2019). Checking of an i-vote. https://www.valimised.ee/en/internet-voting/checking-i-vote

294. Valsts kanceleja. (2015). 2014. gads sabiedrības līdzdalībā faktos un skaitļos. https://www.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/komunikacijas_files/nvo_infografika_25-02-2015.pdf

295. Valsts kanceleja. (2020). GovLabLatvia - Latvijas valsts pārvaldes inovācijas laboratorijas. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/content/govlablatvia-latvijas-valsts-parvaldes-inovacijas-laboratorijas

296. Valsts kanceleja. (2019). Latvijas Ceturtais nacionālais rīcības plāns. Diskusiju dokuments. https://www.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/editor/Lidzdaliba/diskusiju_dokuments_ogp_4_12.09.2019.pdf

297. Valsts kanceleja. (2017). Latvijas trešais nacionālais atvērtās pārvaldības rīcības plāns. https://www.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/editor/atvertas-parvaldibas-plans2017_1.pdf

298. Valsts kanceleja. (2020). Līdzdalības iespējas. http://tap.mk.gov.lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/

299. Valsts kanceleja. (2020). Ministru kabineta sastāvs. https://mk.gov.lv/lv/amatpersonas

300. Valsts kalnceleja (2020). Nozīmīgāko valsts pārvaldes lēmumu apkopojums. http://tap.mk.gov.lv/files/Apkopojums2020_110620.pdf

301. Valsts kanceleja. (2019). TAP portāls. https://www.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/editor/Lidzdaliba/20190925_tap_memoranda_padome.pdf

302. Valsts Kanceleja. (2021). Pamatnostādņu projekts "Digitālās transformācijas pamatnostādnes 2021.-2027.gadam". http://tap.mk.gov.lv/mk/tap/?pid=40496916

303. Valsts kanceleja. (2020). Valsts un pašvaldību iestāžu tīmekļvietņu vienotā platforma. https://www.mk.gov.lv/timeklvietnes

304. Valsts kanceleja. (2014). Valsts kancelejas mobila aplikācija „Futbols" - starp 40 labākajām pasaule! https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/aktualitates/valsts-kancelejas-mobila-aplikacija-futbols-starp-40-labakajam-pasaule

305. Valsts kanceleja (2021). Valsts pārvaldes attīstības politika. https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/valsts-parvaldes-attistibas-politika

306. Van Biezen, I., Mair, P., Poguntke, T. (2012). Going, going… gone? The decline of party membership in contemporary Europe. *European Journal of Political Research,* 51, 24–56.

307. VARAM (2019). E-adrese fiziskām personām – vienota un droša saziņa ar valsti. https://mana.latvija.lv/e-adrese/

308. VARAM. (2019). Information Society Development Guidelines for 2014 -2020. http://www.varam.gov.lv/eng/darbibas_veidi/e_gov/?doc=13317

309. VARAM. (2019). Integrēts Publisko pakalpojumu sniegšanas un gala lietotāju vajadzību monitorings. Valsts iestāžu vērtējums un valsts iestāžu E-indekss. Aprakstoša atskaite. https://mana.latvija.lv/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2019/12/iestades_eind_2019.pdf

310. VARAM. (2019). No iespējas ziņot par piesārņotu mežu līdz likumdošanas iniciatīvu iesniegšanai – darot digitāli, var paveikt nozīmīgus darbus! https://mana.latvija.lv/no-iespejas-zinot-par-piesarnotu-mezu-lidz-likumdosanas-iniciativu-iesniegsanai-darot-digitali-var-paveikt-nozimigus-darbus-2/

311. VARAM. (2018). Par mums. https://mana.latvija.lv/par-mums/ [Accessed 03.12.2019]

312. Valsts Reģionālās attīstības aģentūra. (2021). Datu katalogs. https://data.gov.lv/dati/lv/dataset

313. Valsts Reģionālās attīstības aģentūra. (2019). Open data in Latvia. https://data.gov.lv/eng/about

314. Ventriss, C, Perry, J. L., Nabatchi, T., Milward, H. B., Johnston, J. M. (0219). Democracy, Public Administration, and Public Values in an Era of Estrangement. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 2(4), 275–282.

315. Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., Brady, H. E. (2000). Rational Action and Political Activity. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 12(3), 243-268.

316. Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

317. Vesnic-Alujevic, L. (2013). Members of the European Parliament online: The use of social media in political marketing. http://www.martenscentre.eu/sites/default/files/publication-files/political-marketing-and-social-media.pdf

318. Vesnic-Alujevic, L. (2012). Political communication on Facebook: A case study of the European Parliament profile page for the elections 2009. CM: *Communication Management Quarterly: Časopis za upravljanje komuniciranjem*, 22, 35–54.

319. Vesnic-Alujevic, L. (2013). Young people, social media and engagement. *European View*, 12(2), 255-261.

320. V-Dem Institute. (2021). Autocratization Turns Viral. V-dem annual democracy report 2021. https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/74/8c/748c68ad-f224-4cd7-87f9-8794add5c60f/dr_2021_updated.pdf

321. V-Dem Institute. (2019). Democracy Facing Global Challenges. V-dem annual democracy report 2019.

322. Vilkaušs, V. (2012). *Latvijas Republikas ministriju publiskā komunikācija un to iespējas sociālajos medijos*, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.

323. Vries, de H., Tummers, L., Bekkers, V. (2018). The Diffusion and Adoption of Public Sector Innovations: A Meta-Synthesis of the Literature. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 1(3), 159–176.

324. Warren, M. A., Sulaiman, A., Jaafar, I. N. (2014). Facebook: The enabler of online civic engagement for activists. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 32, 284-289.

325. Warren, M. A., Sulaiman, A., Jaafar, I. N. (2014). Social media effects on fostering online civic engagement and building citizen trust and trust in institutions. *Government Information Quarterly*, 31, 291–301.

326. Wesselink, A., Colebatch, H., Pearce, W. (2014). Evidence and policy: discourses, meanings and practices. *Policy Sciences*, 47(4), 339-344.

327. Wike, R., Castillo, A. (2018). Many Around the World are Disengaged from Politics. Pew Research Center, https://www.pewglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/10/Pew-Research-Center_-International-Political-Engagement-Report_2018-10-17.pdf

328. Zavattaro, S. M., Sementelli, A. J. (2014). A critical examination of social media adoption in government: Introducing omnipresence. *Government Information Quarterly*, 31(2), 257-264.

329. Zeļenko, A. (2016). *Tiešās un līdzdalības demokrātijas instrumenti Latvijas pašvaldībās*, Maģistra darbs, Latvijas Universitāte.

330. Zolotov-Naranjo, M., Oliveira, T., Casteleyn, S. (2018). Citizens' intention to use and recommend e-participation: Drawing upon UTAUT and citizen empowerment. *Information Technology & People*, 32(2), 364-386.

331. Zúñiga, H. G., Veenstra, A., Vraga, E., Shah, D. (2010). Digital Democracy: Reimagining Pathways to Political Participation, *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 7(1), 36-51.

332. Zúñiga, H. G., Barnidge, M., Scherman, A. (2017). Social media social capital, offline social capital, and citizenship: exploring asymmetrical social capital effects. *Political Communication*, 34(1), 44-68.

333. Zúñiga, H. G. D., Jung, N., Valenzuela, S. (2012). Social Media Use for News and Individuals' Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Political Participation, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17(3), 319-336.

APPENDICES

QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF LATVIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Sabiedrības līdzdalība valsts pārvaldes lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā

Cienījamais respondent! Ņemot vērā Jūsu zināšanas un profesionālo pieredzi darbā valsts pārvaldē, lūdzam aizpildīt aptauju, kurā sniegtās atbildes tiks izmantotas, veidojot ieteikumus digitālās demokrātijas vides uzlabošanai Latvijā.

Aptauja notiek Latvijas Universitātē veiktā pētījuma ietvaros. Tās mērķis ir apzināt Latvijas valsts pārvaldes iestādēs pašlaik esošo situāciju saistībā ar sabiedrības līdzdalību un tās veicināšanas paņēmieniem, tai skaitā digitālo risinājumu izmantošanu saziņai starp iestādēm un iedzīvotājiem.

Jūsu sniegtā informācija ir būtiska, lai pētījumam nodrošinātu padziļinātu izpratni par iestāžu iespējām digitālajā vidē iesaistīt iedzīvotājus valsts pārvaldes lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā Latvijā.

Aptauja ir konfidenciāla, tās aizpildīšanai nepieciešamas aptuveni 10 līdz 15 minūtes. Visi aptaujā iegūtie dati tiks izmantoti tikai apkopotā veidā.

Sīkāka informācija par pētījumu un aptauju - Eduards Lielpēters s30083@lu.lv

Pētījumu atbalsta projekts "INTERFRAME - LV"

1.1. Kādi iekšējie regulējumi ietekmē sociālo mediju satura veidošanu Jūsu iestādē?
Lūdzu, atzīmējiet visus atbilstošos variantus! (Kategorijas sakārtotas pēc alfabēta)
- ☐ Darba pienākumu apraksti
- ☐ Komunikācijas noteikumi
- ☐ Komunikācijas vadlīnijas
- ☐ Nerakstīti likumi / komunikācijas paradumi
- ☐ Sabiedrības līdzdalības stratēģija
- ☐ Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet!*) _____

1.2. Vai Latvijā būtu jābūt vienotam regulējumam par to, kā valsts pārvaldes iestādēm veidot un uzturēt komunikāciju ar iedzīvotājiem sociālajos medijos?
Lūdzu, novērtējiet skalā no 1 līdz 10, kur 1 –absolūti nav nepieciešams un 10 – obligāti būtu jābūt

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

1.3. Kā notiek sociālo mediju kontos publicējamā satura nodrošināšana Jūsu pārstāvētajā iestādē? *Lūdzu, novērtējiet katru variantu skalā no 1 līdz 10, kur 1 - nekad un 10 – vienmēr*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ikviens darbinieks iesūta informāciju satura publicētājiem										
Atsevišķi darbinieki iesūta informāciju satura publicētājiem										
Satura publicētāji pieprasa informāciju no ikviena iestādes darbinieka										
Satura publicētāji pieprasa informāciju no atsevišķiem iestādes darbiniekiem										
Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet un novērtējiet!*) _____										

1.4. Cik regulāri tiek analizēta Jūsu iestādes sociālo mediju kontos veikto ierakstu atdeve
(piemēram, sasniegtā auditorija vai sekotāju sniegtā atgriezeniskā saite)? Lūdzu, atzīmējiet aptuveno datu analizēšanas biežumu!
- ☐ Katru dienu
- ☐ Reizi nedēļā
- ☐ Reizi mēnesī
- ☐ Reizi ceturksnī
- ☐ Reizi gadā
- ☐ Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet!*) _____

1.5. Kādus komunikācijas veidus un kanālus Jūsu iestāde izmanto, lai apzinātu un iegūtu iedzīvotāju viedokli? *Lūdzu, katram komunikācijas veidam un kanālam atzīmējiet, kuru iedzīvotāju vecuma grupu sasniegšanai tas tiek izmantots! (Kategorijas sakārtotas pēc alfabēta)*

	līdz 15 gadiem	16 - 19	20 -24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	virs 65	netiek izmantots
Iestādes konts *Draugiem.lv*									
Iestādes konts *Facebook.com*									
Iestādes konts *Instagram.com*									
Iestādes konts *Twitter.com*									
Iestādes konts *Youtube.com*									
Iestādes oficiālā tīmekļvietne / mājas lapa									
Konsultatīvā institūcija (piemēram, konsultatīvā padome vai darba grupa)									
Līdzdalības portāls									
Mobilā lietotne / Viedtālruņu aplikācija									
Publiskā konsultācija									
Tiešsaistes aptauja									
Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet un novērtējiet!*) _____									

1.6. Ja Jūsu iestādes sociālo mediju konta sekotāja veiktais ieraksts pie iestādes publicētā satura ir iestādei noderīga informācija, cik ātri šī informācija nonāk līdz iestādes atbildīgajam darbiniekam?
Lūdzu, atzīmējiet aptuveno laiku!
- ☐ Mazāk nekā viena stunda
- ☐ Viena līdz trīs stundas
- ☐ Viena darba diena
- ☐ Divas līdz trīs dienas
- ☐ Viena darba nedēļa
- ☐ Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet!*) _____

1.7. Cik darbiniekiem ir pieeja, lai veiktu ierakstus Jūsu iestādes sociālo mediju kontos?
Lūdzu, atzīmējiet darbinieku aptuveno skaitu!
- ☐ Vienam
- ☐ Diviem līdz pieciem
- ☐ Sešiem līdz desmit
- ☐ Vienpadsmit un vairāk
- ☐ Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet!*) _____

1.8. Kuras atbalsta aktivitātes palīdzētu palielināt sabiedrības līdzdalību lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā Jūsu iestādē? *Lūdzu, novērtējiet minētās aktivitātes pēc lietderības skalā no 1 līdz 10, kur 1 – minimāla ietekme uz līdzdalību un 10 – ļoti nepieciešams līdzdalības veicināšanai (Aktivitātes sakārtotas pēc alfabēta)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Iestādes aktīva komunikācija sociālajos medijos (arī vakaros, nedēļas nogalēs un svētku dienās)										
Iestādes nodrošināta iespēja iedzīvotājiem piekļūt pētījumiem, statistikai un citai aktuālajai nozares informācijai (Atvērtie dati)										
Iestādes rīkoti līdzdalības pasākumi Latvijas reģionos										
Iestādes uzturēta mobilā lietotne vai līdzdalības aplikācija viedtālrunim										
Jauniešu izglītošana skolās un augstskolās par pilsonisko un politisko līdzdalību										
Plašāka iedzīvotāju pārstāvniecība iestādes konsultatīvajās institūcijās (piemēram, konsultatīvajās padomēs vai darba grupās)										
Sabiedrības izglītošana masu medijos par pilsoniskās un politiskās līdzdalības iespējām Latvijā										
Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet un novērtējiet!*) _____										

1.9. Cik regulāri notiek Jūsu iestādes sociālo mediju kontu satura veidotāju un publicētāju pieredzes apmaiņa ar citu valsts pārvaldes iestāžu līdzīgu atbildību darbiniekiem?
- ☐ Katru dienu
- ☐ Reizi nedēļā
- ☐ Reizi mēnesī
- ☐ Reizi ceturksnī
- ☐ Reizi gadā
- ☐ Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet!*) _____

1.10. Kuras citas valsts pārvaldes iestādes aktivitātes digitālajā vidē Jūs ieteiktu kā Latvijas labās prakses paraugu?
Atvērts jautājums

1.11. Ņemot vērā Jūsu iestādē pašlaik esošo informācijas aprites kārtību un paradumus, ja individuāla persona vēlas sniegt Jūsu iestādei savu viedokli kādā jautājumā, kā viņam/viņai ir jārīkojas, lai viedoklis pēc iespējas ātrāk sasniegtu atbildīgo darbinieku?
Atvērts jautājums

INFORMĀCIJA PAR APTAUJAS AIZPILDĪTĀJU

Aptauja ir konfidenciāla un visi aptaujā iegūtie dati tiks izmantoti tikai apkopotā veidā. Ja nevēlaties sniegt šo informāciju par sevi, lūdzu, laukā "*Cits variants*" norādies "*Nevēlos atbildēt*"!

2.1. Jūsu pārstāvētā iestāde
Lūdzu, izvēlieties atbilstošo kategoriju! (Kategorijas sakārtotas pēc alfabēta)
- ☐ Ministrija
- ☐ Saeima
- ☐ Valsts aģentūra
- ☐ Valsts kanceleja
- ☐ Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet!*) _____

2.2. Jūsu darba pienākumu saistība ar iestādes komunikāciju ar iedzīvotājiem un sabiedrības līdzdalības veicināšanu. *Lūdzu, atzīmējiet visus atbilstošos amata pienākumu variantus*!
(Kategorijas sakārtotas pēc alfabēta)
- ☐ Atbildu par sabiedrības iesaisti iestādes lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā
- ☐ Nosaku iestādes rīcības politiku komunikācijai ar sabiedrību
- ☐ Nosaku iestādes rīcības politiku sabiedrības līdzdalības jautājumos
- ☐ Publicēju informāciju iestādes sociālo mediju kontos
- ☐ Sagatavoju informāciju publicēšanai iestādes sociālo mediju kontos
- ☐ Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet!*) _____

Paldies par sniegtajām atbildēm!

QUESTIONNAIRE TO REPRESENTATIVES OF CITIZENS

Līdzdalība valsts pārvaldes lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā

Cienījamais respondent/respondente! Lūdzam piedalīties aptaujā, kurā sniegtās atbildes tiks izmantotas, veidojot ieteikumus digitālās demokrātijas vides uzlabošanai Latvijā.

Aptauja notiek Latvijas Universitātē veiktā pētījuma ietvaros. Tās mērķis ir apzināt Latvijas valsts iedzīvotāju paradumus un interesi par līdzdalību valsts pārvaldes lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā Latvijā, tai skaitā, digitālo risinājumu izmantošanu saziņai starp iestādēm un iedzīvotājiem.

Aptauja ir konfidenciāla, tās aizpildīšanai nepieciešamas aptuveni piecas līdz desmit minūtes. Visi aptaujā iegūtie dati tiks izmantoti tikai apkopotā veidā.

Ja nezināt vai nevarat sniegt atbildi uz kādu no jautājumiem, lūdzu, to izlaidiet un pārejiet pie nākamā jautājuma!

Sīkāka informācija par pētījumu un aptauju - Eduards Lielpēters s30083@lu.lv

Pētījumu atbalsta projekts "INTERFRAME - LV"

1.1. Cik bieži Jūs iesaistāties valsts pārvaldes lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā Latvijā? *Lūdzu, atzīmējiet tos iesaistes veidus, kurus esat izmantojis/izmantojusi un novērtējiet to izmantošanas biežumu pēdējo trīs gadu laikā. (Kategorijas sakārtotas pēc alfabēta)*

	Vismaz reizi nedēļā	Vismaz reizi mēnesī	Vairākas reizes gadā	Dažas reizes pēdējo gadu laikā	Neesmu izmantojis / izmantojusi
Aizpildu valsts pārvaldes veidotās tiešsaistes aptaujas					
Apmeklēju publiskās apspriešanas					
Izmantoju tiešsaistes platformas likumprojektu ierosināšanai (piemēram, manabalss.lv)					
Izmantoju valsts pārvaldes iestāžu mājas lapās esošās iesaistes iespējas					
Līdzdarbojos konsultatīvajās institūcijās (piemēram, konsultatīvā padome vai darba grupa)					
Lietoju valsts pārvaldes nodrošinātās aplikācijas viedtālrunim					
Paužu savu viedokli mītiņos un piketos					
Sazinos ar valsts pārvaldes iestādēm e-pastā					
Sazinos ar valsts pārvaldes iestādēm sociālajos medijos					
Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet un novērtējiet!*) _____					

1.2. Vai Jūs piedalāties pašvaldību, Saeimas vai Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanās? *Lūdzu, atzīmējiet tās vēlēšanas, kurās pēdējo trīs gadu laikā esat balsojis/balsojusi!*

2017.g Pašvaldību vēlēšanas	2018.g Saeimas vēlēšanas	2019.g Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanas	Nebalsoju

1.3. Kā Jūs vērtējat Latvijas valsts pārvaldes iestāžu esošo aktivitāti digitālajā vidē? *Lūdzu, novērtējiet analizējamos kritērijus skalā no 1 līdz 10, kur 1 – nepietiekama aktivitāte; 10 - ļoti laba aktivitāte. (Kategorijas sakārtotas pēc alfabēta)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Nav viedokļa
Iespējas iestāžu mājas lapās uzzināt par līdzdalību lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā											
Iespējas sekot lēmumu pieņemšanas procesam - tiešraižu nodrošināšana											
Iespējas veikt un pieteikt pakalpojumus digitāli datorā vai telefonā											

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Iestāžu aktīva komunikācija sociālajos medijos (arī vakaros, nedēļas nogalēs un svētku dienās)										
Iestāžu nodrošināta iespēja iedzīvotājiem piekļūt aktuālajai nozares informācijai (Atvērtie dati)										
Iestāžu uzturētas mobilās lietotnes vai līdzdalības aplikācijas viedtālrunim										
Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet un novērtējiet!*) _____										

1.4. Lūdzu, atzīmējiet satura sastāvdaļas, kuru izmantošana veicinātu Jūsu vēlmi sekot valsts pārvaldes iestādes sociālo mediju kontam! *Lūdzu, novērtējiet skalā no 1 līdz 10, kur 1 – neveicina vēlmi sekot; 10 – ļoti veicina vēlmi sekot. (Kategorijas sakārtotas pēc alfabēta)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Attēli par aktuālajiem notikumiem										
Iespējas sniegt savu viedokli par konkrētiem aktuāliem jautājumiem (piemēram, aptaujas, komentāri vai tiešā saziņa)										
Infografikas par iestādes pārstāvētās jomas aktualitātēm										
Podkāsti (aplādes) par iestādes pārstāvētās jomas aktualitātēm										
Tiešraides no iestādes rīkotajiem pasākumiem un lēmumu pieņemšanas sēdēm										
Video materiāli par aktuālajiem notikumiem										
Vienkāršā valodā uzrakstīta īsa informācija par iestādes pārstāvētās jomas aktualitātēm										
Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet un novērtējiet!*) _____										

1.5. Vai Latvijā būtu jābūt vienotam stilam, kā valsts pārvaldes iestādes veido un uztur komunikāciju ar iedzīvotājiem sociālajos medijos? *Lūdzu, novērtējiet vienota stila nepieciešamību skalā no 1 līdz 10, kur 1 –absolūti nav nepieciešams un 10 – obligāti jābūt.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

1.6. Kurām valsts pārvaldes iestādēm Jūs sekojat sociālajos medijos? *Lūdzu, atzīmējiet tās valsts pārvaldes iestādes, kurām Jūs sekojat sociālajos medijos vismaz vienā no sociālo mediju platformām, piemēram, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube u.c. Tai skaitā arī iestādes vadītāja sociālo mediju kontam! (Varianti sakārtoti pēc alfabēta)*

- ☐ Aizsardzības ministrija
- ☐ Ārlietu ministrija
- ☐ Ekonomikas ministrija
- ☐ Finanšu ministrija
- ☐ Iekšlietu ministrija
- ☐ Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija
- ☐ Kultūras ministrija
- ☐ Labklājības ministrija
- ☐ Ministru kabinets
- ☐ Saeima
- ☐ Satiksmes ministrija
- ☐ Tieslietu ministrija
- ☐ Valsts Kanceleja
- ☐ Veselības ministrija
- ☐ Vides aizsardzības un reģionālās attīstības ministrija
- ☐ Zemkopības ministrija
- ☐ Nesekoju nevienai valsts pārvaldes iestādei
- ☐ Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet!*) _____

1.7. Kuras valsts pārvaldes iestādes aktivitātes digitālajā vidē Jūs ieteiktu kā Latvijas labās prakses paraugu?
Atvērts jautājums

1.8. Kādi iemesli mazina Jūsu vēlmi iesaistīties valsts pārvaldes lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā? *Lūdzu, novērtējiet iemeslus skalā no 1 līdz 10, kur 1 – neietekmē vēlmi iesaistīties; 10 - ļoti būtiski ietekmē velmi iesaistīties. (Kategorijas sakārtotas pēc alfabēta)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Līdzdalībai nepieciešams tērēt manu brīvo laiku										
Man ir nepietiekamas zināšanas par izskatāmajiem jautājumiem										
Man nav interese par lēmumu pieņemšanas procesu										
Man pašam/pašai ir jāmeklē informācija kad un kā sniegt savu viedokli										
Nav iespējams iesaistīties, jo ir jāapmeklē klātienes tikšanās										
Nav pārliecības, ka mans viedoklis tiks ņemts vērā										
Uzticos, ka valsts pārvaldes darbinieki spēj paši pieņemt kvalitatīvus lēmumus manās interesēs										
Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet un novērtējiet!*) _____										

1.9. Kuras aktivitātes veicinātu Jūsu aktīvāku līdzdalību valsts pārvaldes lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā?
Lūdzu, novērtējiet aktivitātes skalā no 1 līdz 10, kur 1 – nepalīdz iesaistīties; 10 - ļoti palīdz iesaistīties. (Kategorijas sakārtotas pēc alfabēta)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Iestādes atsūtīta informācija uz Jūsu personīgo e-pastu										
Iestādes uzturēta līdzdalības aplikācija viedtālruņiem										
Iestādes uzturēts līdzdalības portāls / speciāla mājas lapa										
Informācija par aktuālajām iesaistes iespējām iestādes sociālo mediju kontā										
Informācija par iesaistes iespējām iestādes mājas lapā										
Plašākas iespējas iesaistīties konsultatīvajās institūcijās (piemēram, konsultatīvā padome vai darba grupa), arī neesot NVO vai lobija organizāciju pārstāvim.										
Publiskās apspriešanas klātienes pasākumi Rīgā										
Publiskās apspriešanas klātienes pasākumi Latvijas reģionos										
Vienkāršā valodā sniegta informācija, kas izskaidro ar lēmuma pieņemšanu saistītos jautājumus un faktus										
Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet un novērtējiet!*) _____										

1.10. Ja Jūs vēlētos sniegt kādai valsts pārvaldes iestādei savu viedokli pašlaik Jums aktuālā jautājumā, kā Jūs rīkotos, lai viedoklis pēc iespējas ātrāk sasniegtu atbildīgo darbinieku?
Atvērts jautājums

INFORMĀCIJA PAR APTAUJAS AIZPILDĪTĀJU

Aptauja ir konfidenciāla un visi aptaujā iegūtie dati tiks izmantoti tikai apkopotā veidā. Ja nevēlaties sniegt šo informāciju par sevi, lūdzu, atzīmējiet variantu "*Nevēlos atbildēt*"!

2.1. Jūsu vecums

līdz 15 gadiem	16 - 19	20 -24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	virs 65	Nevēlos atbildēt

2.2. Dzīves vieta
- ☐ Kurzemes reģions
- ☐ Latgales reģions
- ☐ Rīga
- ☐ Pierīgas reģions

- ☐ Vidzemes reģions
- ☐ Zemgales reģions
- ☐ Nevēlos atbildēt
- ☐ Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet!*) _____

2.3. Izglītība
- ☐ Pamatizglītība
- ☐ Vispārējā vidējā izglītība
- ☐ Arodizglītība vai profesionālā vidējā izglītība
- ☐ Augstākā izglītība
- ☐ Nevēlos atbildēt
- ☐ Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet!*) _____

2.4. Nodarbošanās
- ☐ Skolēns/Skolniece
- ☐ Students/Studente
- ☐ Pašnodarbinātais
- ☐ Pašvaldības sektorā nodarbinātais
- ☐ Privātajā sektorā nodarbinātais
- ☐ Valsts sektorā nodarbinātais
- ☐ Bezdarbnieks
- ☐ Pensionārs
- ☐ Nevēlos atbildēt
- ☐ Cits variants (*Lūdzu, ierakstiet!*) _____

Paldies par sniegtajām atbildēm!

The framework of the content analysis

	Indicators	Sub-indicators
1. Content indicators	1.1. Use of visual material	Photography; infographic; video material; animation; illustration (picture or stock photo); other; entry where visual material is not used
	1.2. Link to external material	Link to an online page (also the home page of the institution); link to other social media; link to online mass media; link to survey; link to participation portal; link to some other content, that is not identified in previous sub-indicators.
	1.3. Use of hashtags	Use of hashtags in the text (Yes/No)
	1.4. Use of emojis	Use of emoji icons in the text (Yes/No)
	1.5. Use of tagging	Type of tagged accounts: Institution; a public official; public establishment; mass media; entrepreneur; non-governmental organisation; community; person; other. The total amount of tagged accounts
2. Message indicators	2.1. Informing	Reporting about past events; reporting about current events; information about future events; the activity of the minister or another public official; other
	2.2. Educating	Information on the competencies of the institution; future tasks of the institution; report on the results achieved; other
	2.3. Engaging	Answer a question or write commentaries; forward the message to followers; follow the link that is published in the entry; watch live stream; respond to survey; participate in the event; other
	2.4. Representation of topics about participation	Entries about advisory bodies; entries about public discussions; entries about surveys; entries about elections; entries about other participation opportunities
3. Feedback indicators	3.1. Reactions	Use of reaction icons (total amount); Use of negative reaction icons – sad and angry (from the total amount)
	3.2. Sharing	Share (total amount)
	3.3. Use of commentary section	Commentary (total amount); commentary without reply or reaction from the institution (total amount); how fast institution is replaying to commentaries (less than one hour; less than one day; a few days or slower)
	3.4. Content of the commentary section	Type of the commentary (question; answer; opinion); an attitude of the commentaries (supportive; negative; neutral)

Source: Author's construction based on objectives of the study

SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS OF LATVIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Ministry of Defence
https://www.facebook.com/Aizsardzibasministrija
https://twitter.com/aizsardzibasmin

Ministry of Justice
https://www.facebook.com/Tieslietas/
https://twitter.com/Tieslietas
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8x_f0V1P9Ugo9ZOmTjWdxQ

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
https://www.facebook.com/arlietuministrija/
https://www.instagram.com/arlietuministrija/
https://twitter.com/arlietas
https://www.youtube.com/user/LatvianMFA
https://www.draugiem.lv/arlietas/

Ministry of Economics
https://www.facebook.com/ekonomikasministrija/
https://twitter.com/EM_gov_lv
https://www.youtube.com/user/Ekonomikasministrija

Ministry of Finance
https://www.facebook.com/FinansuMinistrija/
https://www.instagram.com/finansuministrija/
https://twitter.com/Finmin
https://www.youtube.com/user/LRfinmin
https://www.draugiem.lv/finansuministrija/

Ministry of the Interior
https://www.facebook.com/Iek%C5%A1lietu-ministrija-153881208653980/
https://twitter.com/IeM_gov_lv
https://www.draugiem.lv/IeM-gov-lv/

Ministry of Education and Science
https://www.facebook.com/Izglitibas.ministrija
https://www.instagram.com/izglitibasministrija
https://twitter.com/IZM_gov_lv
https://www.youtube.com/user/IZMvideo
https://www.draugiem.lv/izglitibaszinatnesministrija/

Ministry of Culture
https://www.facebook.com/Kulturas.ministrija
https://www.instagram.com/kulturas_ministrija
https://twitter.com/KM_kultura
https://www.youtube.com/user/KulturasMinistrija

Ministry of Welfare
https://www.facebook.com/labklajibasministrija

https://www.instagram.com/labklajibas_ministrija
https://twitter.com/Lab_min
https://www.youtube.com/user/LabklajibasMinistrij
https://www.draugiem.lv/labklajiba/

Ministry of Transport
https://www.facebook.com/satiksmesministrija/
https://www.instagram.com/satiksmesministrija/
https://twitter.com/Sat_Min
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCB7OOBiaVss3iSoQ9ckJyQQ

Ministry of Health
https://www.facebook.com/VeselibasMinistrija/
https://www.instagram.com/veselibas_ministrija/
https://twitter.com/veselibasmin/
https://www.youtube.com/user/Veselibasministrija

Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
https://www.facebook.com/VARAMLATVIJA
https://twitter.com/VARAM_Latvija
https://www.youtube.com/user/VARAMLatvija

Ministry of Agriculture
https://www.facebook.com/Zemkopibasministrija
https://www.instagram.com/zemkopibas_ministrija
https://twitter.com/Zemkopibas_min

Latvian Parliament (Saeima)
https://www.facebook.com/Jekaba11/
https://www.instagram.com/jekaba11/
https://twitter.com/Jekaba11
https://www.youtube.com/user/SaeimaSAB

The State Chancellery / Government of Latvia
https://www.facebook.com/valdibasmaja
https://www.instagram.com/valdibasmaja/
https://twitter.com/Brivibas36
https://www.youtube.com/user/valstskanceleja