



**ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY VIA ICT
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION VIA ICT TOWARDS
A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT**

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“Empowering people to protect their environment is a cornerstone of effective policy-making. Citizens must be given the right to know how good or bad the state of the environment is and to participate in decision-making that will affect their health and quality of life. A well-informed and active public means more effective environmental legislation and better enforcement of environmental policies. Citizens will now be able to act as environmental watchdogs!” said Margot Wallström, Commissioner for the Environment in the EU

ICT tools and its role as a tool in policy-making areas

openness; transparency; and citizens' participation "good governance"

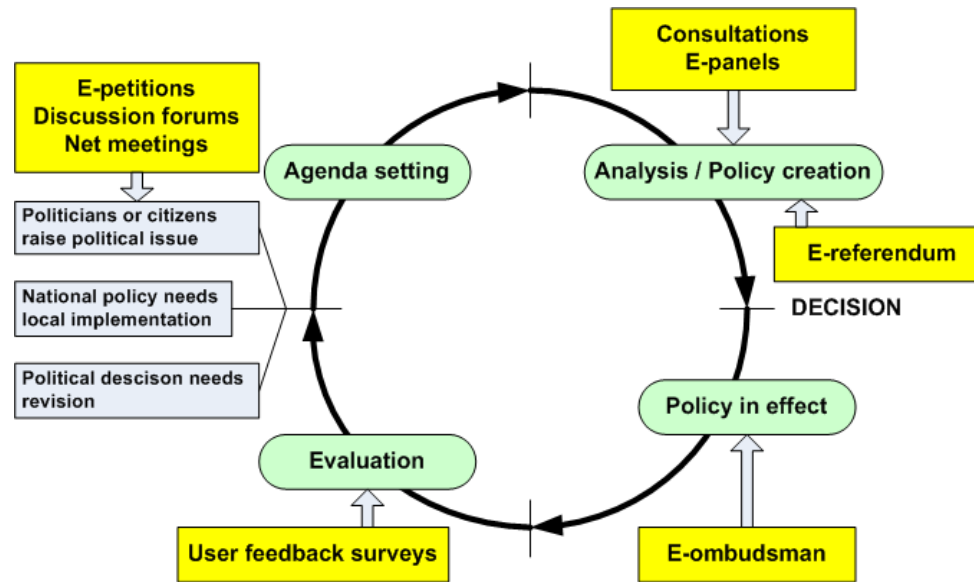
ICT tools as means of the democratization of the decision-making processes in the EU

- ❖ ***COM, 2006/173 final "i2010 eGovernment Action Plan: Accelerating eGovernment in Europe for the Benefit of All"***
- ❖ ***Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states on electronic democracy (e-Democracy)***

**The four themes set out by the Council of Ministers
Recommendation of eDemocracy in the *Recommendation
REC(2004)15* that establishes the main goals for
eDemocracy are as follow:**

- **strengthening the participation, initiative and engagement of citizens in national, regional and local public life;**
- **improving the transparency of the democratic decision-making process and the accountability of democratic institutions;**
- **improving the responsiveness of public authorities;**
- **fostering public debate and scrutiny of the decision-making process.**

POLICY CYCLE



The *Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)1* determines 72 principles, rules and regulatory frameworks of eDemocracy .It also includes the Principle 40 for eEnvironment:

“eEnvironment is the use and promotion of ICT for the purposes of environmental assessment and protection, spatial planning, and the sustainable use of natural resources, and includes public participation. Using ICT to introduce or enhance public participation can improve democratic governance in respect of environmental issues.”

Implementing ICT tools in environmental policy procedures

The 6th Environmental Action Program of the European Community (EAP) 2002-2012 highlights

- ❑ **the importance of providing adequate environmental information and effective opportunities for public participation in environmental decision-making;**
- ❑ **in this manner increasing accountability and transparency of decision-making and contributing to public awareness and support for the decisions taken.**

EU legislation supporting environmental democracy

Directives: **2003/4/EC** “Public Access to Environmental Information”; **2003/35/EC** “Providing for Public Participation in respect of the drawing up of certain plans and programmes relating to the environment and amending with regard to public participation and access to justice Council Directives **85/337/EEC** and **96/61/EC**”; **2003/98/EC** “Re-use of Public Sector Information”; **2007/2/EC** “Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE)” together with the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions **COM(2008) 46 final**: Towards a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS).

Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS)

The general objectives of the SEIS are:

- ***the organisation aspect:*** Sharing with a political commitment, international partnership and networking activities;
- ***the content aspect:*** On-line access to environmental information with horizontal (thematic) and vertical (local to global) integration;
- ***the infrastructure and service aspect:*** A system with tools for interoperability based on the existing ICT infrastructure, current programmes like INSPIRE, Reportnet, GMES and services for eEnvironment

- ❑ The relationship between democracy and the environment is not monodimensional
- ❑ Virtues of democracy as a benign political influence on the environment have a positive impact
- ❑ the implementation of access to information, public participation, and access to justice in decisions that affect the environment is still lacking, however they have become an internationally agreed principle
- ❑ As given in the Report prepared for the European Environmental Bureau with the title “*How far has the EU applied the Aarhus Convention?*” more awareness-raising among the public and more training for public authorities is needed; swift, independent and low-cost mechanisms to deal with the denial of requests are needed; efforts to develop registers and post information on websites should be promoted etc.

- **As Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration 1992, states:**
“Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available”
- **EU citizens should soon be enjoying legally guaranteed rights to access environmental information held by public authorities, to participate in environmental decision-making and to take violations of environmental law to court. European projects such as SEIS thanks to ICT, will assist in strengthening democracy in environmental policy-making and environmental protection, and improve the effectiveness of environmental policies.**

THANK YOU

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