# ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

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## ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL CHARACTERISTIC OF «ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT»: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

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**Abstract**

The article presents the legal analysis of the introduction the information and communication technologies in the government agencies activities in the United Kingdom. The author considers the legal acts' provisions, which regulating the «electronic government» issues in Great Britain and draws a comparison with the methods of informatization government in Russian Federation. Based on the study results, author makes conclusions about the significance United Kingdom's experience in the implementation of e-government.

**Keywords:** e-government, government services, information technology, informatization.

Introduction.

According to data presented in a study, conducted by the United Nations over the past two years, in many countries there is a significant progress in the development of e-government. Such effect is caused by the increasing number of users, the widespread using of mobile communication and mass media, as well as the burgeoning of open government data.

However, despite many optimistic results, it is noted that many challenges remain. In particular, they are including: a low level

of savings, ongoing digital divides, inadequacy of institutional change processes and lack of innovative e-government leadership. Based on the best practices around the world, the authors emphasize, that the effective development of e-government depends on strong political will, inter-agency cooperation and the creation of the new structures for controlling the public services delivery, as well as national policy in the information and communication technologies field [1].

From the foregoing, it should be specify that despite sufficient period of time of delivering public services in electronic form in the Russian Federation, some problems are still require the solution. In this regard, there is important to study other countries' methods of digital services implementation, particularly, the Great Britain. Survey results show, that the United Kingdom (hereinafter – UK) currently occupies the 8th place in the ranking of countries in terms of e-government development, while Russia is on the 27th position.

Materials and Methods.

Before proceeding with the full analysis of information and communications technology (hereinafter – the ICT) usage experience in the UK government, it should be pointed out that the first British state portal, focused on meeting the citizens' needs, Directgov, was launched in 2004. As a consequence, in 2012, to realize the publicity ideas of authorities [2], the UK Government announced the transition of «electronic government» on a new platform – Gov.uk [3], which is currently considered one of the best in the degree of its «openness». The objective of this site is to provide a single point of access to government services, as well as the individual websites of hundreds of government departments and public bodies [4]. By 1 May 2013, it was established, that all 24 ministerial departments and 28 other organizations had moved to GOV.UK [5].

At this moment, this platform supersedes 1700 sites. During the period of its existence since 2013 to 2014, service has saved over £60 million of country's budget [6]. Moreover, the number of visits to a resource in October 2014 average constituted – 1.98 million per day.

The main actions, aimed at the development of e-government in the UK, are performed by the Government Digital Service, part of the Cabinet Office and the Efficiency and Reform Group [7]. The primary purpose of this body is to make electronic services and information easier, clearer and faster, while the key duties of the Government Digital Service include:

- creating GOV.UK, the single website for government, designed to make information and services clear and accessible;

- building new digital services so good, that people prefer using them to the old paper versions they replace;
- making sure people can sign in to government services safely and easily;
- choosing the right technology for government, rejecting big IT contracts in favour of shorter, more flexible relationships with a wider variety of suppliers;
- measurement and analytics, tracking how people use government information and services with the aim of keeping improving them.

From 2014 to 2015, there was established some authorities' priorities, such as:

- transforming 25 of the main government services by March 2015;
- moving 75% of agency and arm's length body websites to GOV.UK by July 2014, and all of them by December 2014;
- publishing clear data on how many people are using digital services and how they're performing including dashboards for all major government departments;
- creating a new, simple, secure way for people to sign in to digital services;
- helping departments leave unsuitable IT contracts, spend less and get better value for money;
- building a new digital marketplace for the public sector to buy digital products and services;
- working with public, private and voluntary sectors to help people go online, so that by April 2016, the number of people lacking basic digital capability is reduced by 25%.

One of the positive moments of British practice is that there set an obligation of Government Digital Service to publish quarterly reports on the progress of departments in meeting the goals of the Government Digital Strategy [8]. The most obvious benefit of this, that it allows visualizing what measures have been taken to improve information and communication technologies services in the country.

However, it seems quit logical to pay more attention to the most significant documents regulating the e-government in the UK - the State Information Strategy [9] (hereinafter - the Strategy). This act was adopted pursuant to the provisions of the Civil Service Plan Reform [10], in the part of the services development, which could provide easy access to information for users, not providers (authorities).

The Government Digital Service is responsible for implementation the rules, contained in the Strategy. Herewith, the act applies to many of the executive bodies, as well as organizations. For

instance, it is established that The Government Digital Service will fulfill the Strategy, supported by the digital leaders' network of senior civil servants, the Digital Advisory Board and the Government Communication Network. Moreover, all 24 departments of the United Kingdom Government were required to develop and publish its own digital strategy, which describes the informatization procedure of their activities. Mainly, it was done in order to set the framework for service transformation and consider future costs, required for the public services improvement.

The Strategy includes chapters, contain the information about achievements and problems existed at the time of publication. The authors examined in more detailed way such issues as increasing the number of users of public portals, developing digital transactions, digital assistance, etc. However, the primary interest for this research is a chapter devoted to the major areas of activity. There are 16 actions aimed at improving the electronic public service delivery. It is worth noting that the authorities published a full report on the results of each action. In this way, it appears urgently necessary to consider these measures:

1. Departmental and transactional agency boards will include an active digital leader. The basic candidate's requirements for this position, its rights and obligations outlined in Annex 4 of the Strategy. Its key role is to act as the single point of contact for the department's strategic interactions with Government Digital Service – including coordinating digital activity for departmental agencies, arm's length bodies and non-departmental public bodies. The main digital leader's responsibilities included: to co–ordinate, direct and lead those involved in the digital agenda across the department; to ensure that the departmental digital strategy and roadmap are embedded in the department's business planning process; to ensure that the departmental digital strategy and roadmap are embedded in the department's business planning process; to ensure that the department has the necessary skilled and knowledgeable staff required; to deliver the departmental digital strategy and roadmap; to actively participate in digital leaders' network meetings, sharing good practice and learning.

It is worth to be mentioned, that the introduction of such position has a positive effect on the whole Department activities, and the departments concepts implementation in particular. It is self-evident, that the establishment of personal responsibility for the final results makes officials feel more serious about their duties. At that moment, in the Russian Federation, there is no such practice. Meanwhile, many researchers identify the e-government services ineffectiveness, due to the low level of servants' interest in the

development and application IT-technologies in their work. It seems that in the near future it is necessary to amend at the legislative level, that impose a similar post in the Russia executive authorities, it should make the process of electronic interaction between government, citizens and business's structures representatives more efficient.

2. Services handling over 100,000 transactions each year will be re-designed, operated and improved by a skilled, experienced and empowered service manager. Strategy authors indicate, that «these are not technical IT posts, nor are they confined to running a website. They are individuals who work full-time to develop and deliver all the changes necessary to provide effective digital services». Also there is set out the requirements, servants should be: experienced leaders, with an in-depth understanding of their and equipped to represent their service and its users' needs at all levels within the organization; have the digital literacy to engage with technical staff and suppliers to define the best system and platform configurations to achieve business/user objectives; be accountable for the quality and usage of their service, and able to iterate the service based on user feedback at least every month and etc.

In our opinion, creation of such service manager post in the Russian Federation will help to control the most popular services provided by the government bodies. As well it will create conditions for departments to operate more efficiently, regardless of how many operations need to be processed.

3. All departments will ensure that they have appropriate digital capability in-house, including specialist skills.

4. Cabinet Office will support improved digital capability across department. In order to fulfill this provision, Government Digital Service has developed three training and retraining programs for specialists [11]. There also have been made some changes into the Graduate Fast Stream programme for young professionals due to the introduction of new course on information technology areas [12].

In this way, the UK authorities pay great attention to ensure public servants with skills, required for a high quality services, providing with the help of information and communication technologies. In Russia, government has also repeatedly highlighted the importance of civil servants training. For instance, there was formed a subgroup of human potential in the context of the Open government project. Nevertheless, despite the existing training programs for official authorities, engaged into public services

provision at regional or municipal level, it is not widely used at the present time.

5. All departments will redesign services handling over 100,000 transactions each year.

6. All new or redesigned transactional services will meet the Digital by Default Service Standard [13] (hereinafter – the Standard). This act was published in April 2014, and it establishes certain requirements in order to set up a single order of providing e-government services to guarantee a consistently high level of their quality. In other worlds, the main idea is to make digital services so good that people would prefer to carry out the transaction online rather than by phone, post or in person.

7. Corporate publishing activities of all 24 central government departments should move onto GOV.UK by March 2013, with agency and arm's length bodies' online publishing to follow by July 2014.

8. Departments should raise awareness of their digital services so that more people know about them and use them.

9. There will be a cross-government approach to assisted digital. This means that people who have rarely or never been online will be able to access services offline, and we will provide additional ways for them to use the digital services. The UK authorities repeatedly stressed that that government should take a consistent approach to providing services for people who have rarely or never been online. In order to realize these provisions, Government Digital Service has published the Government approach to assisted digital [14].

To take a slight digression, it should be point out, that there are 18% of people in the UK, who are offline and will use assisted digital support, according Digital Landscape Research [15]. In this regard , people who need this support should be able to access a service face to face, by phone or in another appropriate non-digital way, with someone either inputting their data into the digital system on their behalf, or helping them put their data into the digital service themselves. All departments were instructed to ensure that digital services include appropriate assisted digital support and follow common its models. Moreover, the Government Digital Service set up an assisted digital programme team for operating the governance structures to ensure coordination and collaboration across government. The authors of Standard indicate, that the Government approach to assisted digital will be governed collaboratively by a cross-departmental board, reporting to departmental digital leaders.

There are also a certain percentage of people who do not use state website for online services in Russian Federation. According to

a survey conducted by Ministry of Economic Development, the proportion of Internet users in Russia amounted only 62% [16]. In this connection, some researchers have express concern on the issue of universal informatization of the authorities activities since part of the population could be deprived of opportunities for public services, which certainly, will be a flagrant violation of human rights. It is necessary to bring the provisions, set forth in the Concept of mechanisms of the development the state and municipal services in electronic form, which stipulates that citizens should be provided with various channels of interaction with the government, including visiting the territorial division in personal [17]. The rejection of traditional (face to face) service delivery channels due to its transfer to electronic form is not allowed. They can only be mounted by the federal law or the law of the subject of the Russian Federation. The principle of accessibility of government and municipal services is fundamental in the Russian Federation and is implemented by means of specially created multifunctional centers providing public services to the population [18].

10. Cabinet Office will offer leaner and more lightweight tendering processes, as close to the best practice in industry as our regulatory requirements allow.

11. Cabinet Office will lead in the definition and delivery of a new suite of common technology platforms which will underpin the new generation of digital services.

12. Cabinet Office will continue to work with departments to remove legislative barriers which unnecessarily prevent the development of straightforward and convenient digital services. Due to the fact that many legal acts have been developed prior to the information technology development, it becomes necessary to amend the current legislation. Additionally, Government Digital Service should offer specialist digital expertise to interpret existing legislation. In that point, the state portal, The Red Tape Challenge [19], deserves a special mention. It was established to provide opportunities for citizens and businesses to participate in the elimination of over-burdensome regulations on the content of regulations. Thus, one of the results of British users' active work, is that 36 million vehicles will no longer need a paper tax disc.

There are also several websites in Russia that aimed at increasing the efficiency of government executive bodies. As for example, the portal Vashkontrol [20] was created by the Ministry of Economic Development. With its help, citizens can leave a detailed review of the provided service and evaluate the agency's work. Perhaps, the results of Russian portals operation have a smaller scale

in comparison with the UK services. Nevertheless, a growing number of users of this service type demonstrate the citizens' interest in improving the government authorities' work.

13. Departments will supply a consistent set of management information (as defined by Cabinet Office) for their transactional services. The Strategy also sets, that in order to ensure a comprehensive monitoring process of informatization, authorities should publish the level of user's satisfaction, transaction completion rates and other information.

14. Policy teams will use digital tools and techniques to engage with and consult the public. Civil servants should use the opportunities of social media, to entering into dialogue with people, consulting and engaging, improving their policy, listening to their concerns. Thus, Department of Health made a draft Bill openly available for comment online using social media in July 2012.

15. Collaborate with partners across public, private and voluntary sectors to help people go online.

16. Help third party organisations create new services and better information access for their own users by opening up government data and transactions.

Results and discussion

Based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that the UK Government is actively involved at implementation of modern technologies in the work of public authorities. Moreover, the Strategy concludes a number of solutions for problems in various areas: the introduction of new posts, the development of standards, monitoring services, training of civil servants, etc. It is also necessary to emphasize the practical nature of the analyzed document, which contains specific measures to achieve goals.

Conclusions.

Although, we would like to note the significant role played by the State Information Service. That authority has a wide range of powers and responsibilities, which is primarily focused on providing high-quality electronic services to the public. From the foregoing facts it seems reasonable to make the following conclusion about United Kingdom's experience, which shows that ensuring regulation at the government level and the establishing a personal responsibility for the implementation of «electronic government» can guarantee the achievement of good results in a relatively short period of time. In this regard, significant effort must be made by Russian Federation authorities to amend and reconcile current legislation so that it can apply the foreign countries' effective practice of ICT usage in order to achieve the simplification and debureaucratization of government service processes.

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