



# Eastern Partnership Conference

## Summary session report on e-democracy

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## Acknowledgments

Thanks to all the speakers and participants for their contributions.

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# 1. Session outline

- Remarks by Boris Demirkhanyan, Deputy Minister of Transport, Communication and Information Technologies of the Republic of Armenia, Vitalie Tarlev, Deputy Minister of IT Technology and Communication, Moldova and Tetyana Girenko, Second Secretary, Directorate General for the EU, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ukraine
- Presentation of the Situation Review 2017 of the EaP countries: Introduction and key findings on transparency of government processes, Kristina Reinsalu, e-Governance Academy
- Case study ProZorro Public E-Procurement System, Ievgen Bilyk, Project Manager, Transparency International, Ukraine
- Panel discussion: What are the potential of ICT in increasing transparency of government processes and inclusiveness of civil society?
  - Panellists: Tetiana Syvolapenko, Head of Department, State Agency for Electronic Governance, Ukraine; Veronica Cretu, President of the Open Government Institute, Moldova; Marina Mkhitatyan, KolbaLabs Programme Lead, Armenia; Teona Turashvili, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, E-Governance Direction Lead, Georgia
  - Moderator: Christine Leitner, Senior Advisor, Centre for Economics and Public Administration, UK; Supervisory Board member of e-Governance Academy

The Conference session on e-Democracy was introduced by statements from the Deputy Ministers from Armenia and the Republic of Moldova, and the Second Secretary, Directorate General for the EU, Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was followed by the presentation of the key findings of the Situation Review on e-Democracy in EaP countries conducted by the e-Governance Academy. In a case study from Ukraine, ProZorro, an innovative approach to e-procurement to combat corruption was presented by Transparency International. This was followed by a panel of experts from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine which focused on the potential benefits of information and communication technology (ICT) for government and society at large.

## Six key learning points emerged from the very inspiring presentations and animated discussions:

1. The Open Government Partnership (OGP) provides an essential framework for the development of e-democracy in terms of guidelines for implementation, frameworks for evaluation and sharing of good practice and experience. This was endorsed by the eGA Situation Review 2017. In addition to that, the Ministers emphasised the importance of a coherent national governance approach. It is not just about designating one department or body in charge of e-democracy development. e-Democracy development should be considered a joint effort of all actors, institutions and bodies involved and must be embedded in all policies as a cross-cutting theme.
2. Establishing trust as the foundation of e-democracy development is crucial. Putting people first is imperative in this endeavour: their needs, fears and expectations must be taken seriously and addressed adequately. However, trust needs to be established with all stakeholders encompassing three levels: citizens, businesses, and public servants (who tend to be neglected).
3. Mere “copying of the original (traditional) processes” is bound to fail. Technology alone will not suffice. We need to identify and apply new design approaches to be able to fully tap into the potential of ICT. As an example the use behavioural insights was mentioned to better understand the actual needs and motivations of citizens. Many countries inside and outside the EU, including some EaP countries present at the Conference have already acquired experience in this regard. Technology offers unprecedented opportunities for new modes of collaboration, co-creation and co-production, including crowdsourcing of activities and services.
4. Combining online and offline methods and activities is the key to success. The focus must be on the local level where most frequent interaction between government and the citizens takes place. This was confirmed by the eGA Situation Review 2017 and highlighted by various speakers and panellists.
5. Transparency and open data are the key to e-democracy. However, open data per se does not ensure transparency. This was demonstrated by the ProZorro case study. Data - the ‘new oil’- needs to benefit all people(who actually provide their data for free), not just the big tech companies. In an ever more connected world it is crucial that the individual remains ‘the master’ of his/her data and that personal data is protected by adequate legal frameworks and

enforcement mechanisms. Regulatory frameworks need to be put in place as the basis for the empowerment and engagement of all stakeholders in the policy process and collaborative service production and delivery.

6. Finally, education was highlighted as key enabler for present and future e-democracy developments. Targeted training for citizens of different backgrounds and age groups as well as civil servant is required urgently. In addition, comprehensive policies and long-term strategies need to be adopted to better inform and equip future generations (citizens, including public servants) on how to best use technology to advance engagement and deliberative discourse.