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# Corporate social integration - electronic business and public policies

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*The concepts of socially responsible business and socially responsible behaviour are part of a broad CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) system of values. The corporate social responsibility and sustainable development are forms of the CSR concepts implementation in public policies, among which the policy of energy efficiency. The authors of this paper regard e-Government as one aspect of e-business implementation. The aim of the e-Government is to make the information of public concern transparent and accessible to the citizens, by way of interactive e-services. Our aim in this paper is to extend the focus of research from the corporate social responsibility to the social responsibility of e-Government. Since the e-Government has the capacity of transforming the CSR concept into the concept of corporate social integration, the authors attempt to prove that, in addition to the profit oriented companies, the socially responsible behaviour incorporates the state administration, governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as the networked community of responsible individuals.*

## 1. Introduction

In addition to technological and economic advantages, the electronic business offers opportunities of highly progressive attributes of business. In the traditional business environment, the CSR was originally introduced as a useful tool in public relations that serves to ensure a consistent management of the company's reputation, and only then as a strategic model of sustainable business doing, thoroughly integrated with the social community. The CSR and the sustainability are the ethical choice and the business philosophy that recognize all the social, cultural, and ecological consequences of the business practice and demonstrate the activities that lead to social welfare, but which are outside the interests of the company itself as well as outside the obligations imposed by legal regulations [1] (Pickton, D. and Broderick, A., 2005:229). The arguments in favour of the CSR are related to the CSR impact upon the community, the culture and the environment in which the companies work [2] (Porter, M. & Kramer, M., 2006:81). The attitude that the CSR includes only the business sector, the companies and firms, and that this value concept should be implemented only by the firms and companies is open to criticism. The largest contribution in the field of the CSR promotion was provided by the European Commission. The Government in Europe contributed to the CSR more than any other civil society organization [3] (Mesanovi, E., 2005).

The CSR concept is based on the analysis of the corporate role in the European Union from the aspect of the importance of the corporate influence upon the society and the future of Europe as an economic power. The use of the term "corporate" brings a certain ambiguity

into the understanding of the corporate social responsibility and integration concept. The understanding of this concept implicitly make one think of large corporations, whereas the governmental and the non-governmental sectors, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises, are usually neglected. The problem results from misunderstandings in the cases corporate is viewed only as the corporation attribute. It is necessary that the concept of corporate be redefined, starting from its etymology: the word "corps" is of French origin, first appeared in the XIV century from the Latin word corpus (body). It is of military origin and signifies:

- a) a separate branch or unit of military forces with special purpose;
- b) a tactical unit of a country's military forces, larger than a division, but smaller than the army, under the command of a general and consisting of at least two divisions and several subsidiary troops for action;
- c) a body composed of people acting together and having a common objective .

The original meaning of the word "corporative" (corporativement, fr., in the company, common) developed a host of meanings used today in the management theory, which, if not understood, prevent one from grasping the broadest context of the meaning of the corporate social integration on the Internet. The "corporate" is most commonly associated with a group and an organization, and only then with an incorporated company; the term "corporate state" denotes a big, powerful state that seems to function without human intervention; it is a

<sup>1</sup> The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language

state in which large organizations such as commercial unions and employer organizations govern the country and appoint the parliament members. The corporation is a legal body, a legal entity, and the corporativism is the government system in which big, powerful pressure groups affect the state policy [4].

## 2. Electronic business as function of public policies

The assessment of the e-business impact upon the public policy practices (PIA, Policy Impact Assessment) highlights a large number of aspects the concept of socially responsible e-business is expected to answer. The analysis of the socially responsible electronic business in the function of public policy practices includes the following aspects [5]:

- a) the assessment of the electronic business impact upon environment (EIA, Environment Impact Assessment);
- b) the assessment of the electronic business impact upon society (SIA, Social Impact Assessment);
- c) the assessment of the electronic business upon technology development (TIA, Technology Impact Assessment);
- d) the assessment of the electronic business impact upon health (HIA, Health Impact Assessment).

Firstly, the Internet is an ideal medium for initiatives that are not enforced by legal regulations. Secondly, the socially responsible electronic business creates socially and ecologically more acceptable dimensions of the relations between companies, organizations and institutions and the social community in the on-line area. The implementation of information and communication technologies provides an opportunity for change management in a broader social community, which includes both the pressure groups and the public administration. Electronic business generates new solutions and social innovations that are capable of overcoming the bureaucratic and budgetary constraints of work in state administration. The CSR concept defines the subject of study of the socially responsible electronic business from the aspects of goals, means, results and manifestation - performance. Is it possible to apply the sustainable development concept to the e-business area in the field of energy efficiency? Can e-business help create preconditions for a sustainable development of the global community and state administration, and to what extent?

The socially responsible e-business in the field of energy efficiency means the implementation of information and communication technologies of a low energy intensity, therefore the selection of such technologies is a priori

considered to be an aspect of socially responsible behaviour. The socially responsible e-business, however, is also the goal, the vehicle and the result of the dissemination of information on public policies via web-based technologies and e-media. Consequently, electronic business is one aspect of social innovation with a high potential for improving the awareness of the importance of the public policies. Electronic business, planned and conducted in a socially responsible manner, may be the driving power of sustainable development. The sustainable development means a dynamic process that allows for the realization of all human potentials and improves the quality of living, simultaneously protecting and fostering the systems that make life on the Earth possible. Here we deal with a socio-economic and ecological project with a highly positive goal of improving the quality of human life [6] (Alakeson, V. et al., 2002:16).

In order that the CSR concept be integrated with the concept of electronic business, it is necessary that the meanings of these concepts should be defined, compared and counterposed in the traditional and the on-line environments, respectively. A socially responsible electronic business is a system of values that integrates the concern about the community into all on-line activities, including e-Commerce and e-Government, and, recently, the increasingly popular social networking platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) even the affinity browsers such as Google created special websites dedicated to CSR [7].

The potential of CSR contents dissemination via information and communication technologies is strikingly high. The syntagm socially responsible electronic business refers to value attribute of business doing via the electronic services and is represented by a new attribute of electronic business, the social responsibility. We do not, therefore, talk only about the traditional understanding of the CSR in the on-line environment; we talk about the potential of the CSR to integrate. Even though the CSR is still thought to lack a clearly defined set of general criteria of what this concept includes and which fields it refers to, a new theoretical concept of corporate social integration is ever more present in the CSR theory.

Contrary to the traditional understanding of this concept, the integrated CSR may refer to any sectors, both profit and non-profit ones, whereas the socially responsible business generally refers to the profit oriented companies. In practice, the concepts of the CSR and the socially responsible business are usually equalized, as in the implementation of this concept the companies see a valuable PR tool for reputation management, their goals being, very often, making profit and achieving competitive advantage on the market. While the socially responsible

business refers primarily to the private sector, whose mission is to generate profits, the CSR integration concept includes much broader interactions and mechanisms regulating the market and the relations with the stakeholders. The CSR is important for any interactions of an individual or a state, of the civil and non-profit sectors, of the public and private partnerships, etc. All the dimensions of electronic business, the G2G, G2B, G2C, B2B, B2C, B2G, C2G, C2B, and C2C can be included into the CSR. The corporate sustainability, the sustainable development, the corporate social responsibility, the social contract, the corporate entrepreneurship [8] (Cingula, M. and Čalopa, K., 2008:199), the corporate citizenship and philanthropy - all these are modern concepts that are not only related to the companies and the relationships they have with the social community and the stakeholders, but also to the communications of the governments, activists and the civil sector. The integration depends on the stakeholder interaction in the broadest sense of the word, where the stakeholders are the parties of interest, not only the interested parties (stakeholders). The stakeholders and multistakeholders multiply in practice just as the various aspects of public multiply in practice. According to the authors, contrary to more clearly identified stakeholders, the stakeholders include all parties of interest, even those that did not develop an interest in a certain issue, but have the potential to affect the problem, regardless of whether they create it or solve it. The stakeholders, contrary to the stakeholders and multistakeholders affect and are affected by the goals of an organization, however not of a problem itself, hence the notion of a multistakeholders and a stakeholders networks may become generically linked to the internet community.

The literature on the importance of the interactivity of the CSR issues in the corporate Web presentations also reveals a number of acronyms, CSR/CC/SD [9] (Capriotti, P. & Morreno, A., 2006:85). The CSR, the corporate citizenship and the sustainable development are notions related to both the private, the civil and the public sectors, whether we have in mind the traditional or the on-line environments.

In the networking phase of the CSR promoting much attention is paid to the internet as a communication channel which contributes to the dissemination of information on energy efficiency as well as to the reduction of information asymmetry in this area. The contribution of the Internet in disseminating information and improving the awareness of the socially responsible practices is great. There are a lot of examples of global activities in which almost all stakeholders participate. One example of socially responsible business, a result of the Networking

and the stakeholders interaction is the global campaign titled "Earth Hour (60 Minutes for the Planet)" and organized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, invited people all over the world to take part in the WWF campaign "Earth Hour" and unanimously demand, via electronic media, that concrete steps be undertaken to stop climate changes. In his video conference address via the Internet, the Secretary General announced that the "Earth Hour" is an expression of public concern for the issue of climate change, the greatest ever. The public attention is thus drawn to the appeal for reaching a global agreement as to the climate changes in the eve of the recent summit of world leaders in Copenhagen, in December 2009. It was in this way that the stakeholders urged that their representatives should sign the contract to protect the people and the planet. "We need an ambitious, effective and fair agreement, the agreement founded on pure science", said Ban Ki Moon, the UN Secretary General. He insisted on the gravity of the climate changes as well as on the magnitude of the task: "We are moving in a very dangerous direction. Our planet is warming. It is urgent that we should change our habits", said he. "What we need is an ecological development that will bring benefit to all the communities. We need sustainable energy in order that we improve the quality of life and the climate conditions worldwide. This is the path to the future that we have to follow together".

The "Earth Hour" is considered to be the widest spread global campaign ever launched; it is a voice for the future of the Planet Earth. Millions of people contributed by turning off their lamps for an hour. The cities from Las Vegas to Sydney, from Capetown to Beijing, turned off their lightings for a period of one hour [10]. The campaign included 80 countries and 9,000 cities, among them some in Serbia: Belgrade, Novi Sad, Vršac, Niš, etc. A powerful message was sent to the world that it is possible to prevent global warming by a unanimous campaign, via the Internet. The campaign was conducted in print and electronic media, via direct marketing, e-mail and on the most popular social networking platform, Facebook. By way of networking, in only a month, the campaign attracted more than a million followers.

The documents of the Department of Trade and Industry of the Government of the United Kingdom, as well as the Conclusions at the World Bank's conference on CSR, stress the impact of the government and other organizations in the non-profit sector upon the community and the developmental prospects of the CSR [11] (World Bank/DevComm-SDP, 2003). Mr Stephen Timms, Minister of Energy, electronic business and postal services of the UK defines the CSR as the behaviour of the or-

ganizations in the private sector and their contribution to the sustainable development goals. However, he simultaneously insists that this approach and the values it advocates is also important for the organizations, including e-Government. The socially responsible behaviour is an implicit attribute of the companies' business, but also of the business operations of organizations and institutions. The local and the global communities are the end users, and frequently the initiators of business processes, the advocates of two-way communication, which is a specific feature of e-Government. It is not only the companies that have an impact upon the society; the institutions do too, be they profit or non-profit ones. [12] (Valentino, B., 2008:17). The non-governmental organizations are known for their progressive activities, because they "act locally, and think globally". In the integral system of the society's corporate body [4] made up of all the institutions together, the e-Government may also be incorporated into a virtual mechanism of the state which coordinates the work of the system.

If the examples of successful practice are presented via the concern for the community promoted by the most successful companies in the world, the error that it is only them that do business responsibly may be corrected by the examples of successful practice conducted by the European Union, via its directors and the respective agencies. The biggest contribution in the field of the CSR promotion was made by the European Commission. The European Government did more for the CSR than any other civil society organizations [3] (Mesanović, E., 2005). Many Government agencies on all the levels were formed for the purpose of creating the conditions for the implementation of this concept, however, they did not expressly declared themselves as socially responsible organizations. This is because the state is expected to be responsible to the community, therefore the issue of good will is actually a point at issue only in case the principles of obligation and responsibility are not precisely defined. The socially responsible electronic business creates the social community according to the affinity and not the geography principle, nor the principle of hierarchy. Whether the on-line community is profit-oriented or not is another question.

In addition to the free flow of people, goods, capital, and services, the socially responsible electronic business promotes the fifth type of freedom: the free flow of information and knowledge, i.e., the free access to the information of public importance. The information of public importance include financial statements and the reports on the condition of the environment, all the information the governmental bodies collect as they do their job. In the sense of communications, the free access to the in-

formation of public importance and the public right to know are the basic preconditions for the development of democracy and the overall sustainable development of the society. The electronic business creates a knowledge based society and thus contributes to the sustainable community [13] (Turk, V., 2003). E-Business is said to be socially responsible if it incorporates the concern for the society and ecology into all communication processes in the on-line environment. It is in this way that the reengineering of the relationships between the public sphere participants is made and a new quality is added to their networking. The technology itself does not contribute to the sustainable development; it is rather the method of the technology implementation as well as the method of information exchange between the stakeholders, in this case, the e-media, that do it.

The Internet offers a new potential for creating social capital, social debate and interaction in the public sphere. A socially responsible e-business is a set of value concepts, present in the Internet public sphere. Electronic business includes information exchange and building relationships that will be realized via the e-media within the organization and with its external participants and stakeholders. Having in mind that the socially responsible e-business is primarily a value concept, we here analyse those e-business aspects that contribute to the welfare of a broader social community. A socially responsible electronic business creates a knowledge society, a prosperous information society that communicates, exchanges information and does business transactions via electronic services, thus also showing concern for environmental protection.

The technology itself, as well as the techno-economic justification of information and communication technology implementation are not sufficient, although they are the basic preconditions for creating social capital and social innovations as a new manner of organization and building human relations. The social capital here means a social network and the reciprocity norms related to it [14] (Putnam, R., 2002). In addition to the natural, human, manufacturing and financial types of capital, the social capital makes one of five types of the sustainable development capitals [6] (Alekeson, V. et al., 2003:16). In the absence of social innovations, technology would slip away before we managed to use all its potentials in creating a sustainable society [6] (Alakeson, V. et al., 2003:23).

It should not be forgotten that, in addition to social, the socially responsible electronic business includes the ecological innovation, this in turn including the energy efficiency. To take the advantage of digital technologies needs the business policies and governments that foster

social innovations and are in step with technology innovations in the Internet public sphere [15]. The notion of public sphere was elaborated by the German philosopher Habermas, J. (1969). He defined the public sphere as a virtual and imaginary community which does not necessarily exist in a clearly defined physical space [16]. According to Habermas, J. (1969), the public sphere is a homogenous space of incarnated subjects in a symmetric relation who reach the consensus through an argumented debate and presenting value assumptions [17] (Sitarski, M. et al., 2007: op.cit. 9-17). The so far most important results in satisfying the needs of the research into the socially responsible business on the Internet in Serbia are shown in the findings of the empirical research conducted by the Centre for Research into information technologies (CePIT) of the Belgrade Open School (BOŠ), in the publication titled "The Internet and the Public Sphere in Serbia" (2008). Not one research immanently contains the notions of corporate social responsibility and socially responsible electronic business, however, the CePIT research actually deals with the issues of how much, how and whether the Internet is used in Serbia as a means and the medium for discussions on the topics of overall, public concern; which are the websites that serve as the points of exchange of opinions, which issues the discussions deal with, whether these issues have any impact upon the social life, etc. It is in this way that the importance of the Internet is promoted as a social innovation and the use of the information and communication technologies in the public sphere is favoured over the number of the Internet users. The CePIT research pays special attention to the analysis of the websites of the Serbian state institutions, the institutions of local autonomies, the manner in which the socially useful information is presented, the openness of these institutions in terms of their readiness to interact with the visitors, as well as the issues and discussions going on on the interactive services of these websites, provided they are created and available [17]. The conclusion the CePIT has come to in their research of the Internet and the public sphere in Serbia is that the Internet is today one of the social spaces in which citizens can debate on the issues of general concern or at least help introduce some of the issues they find important into the public discourse. The Internet, however, is not only a social space in which such a debate is conducted; it actively transforms the communication to create a new, authentic public sphere [17] (Sitarski et al., 2008:19). It is in this "new, authentic public sphere" that the potential of the "corporate social integration" is perceived.

A socially responsible electronic business in this context refers to the impact the organization has and the services it provides through the digital technologies to the

general social community, the impact including all the stakeholders. The corporate social responsibility of the e-business could be understood as a specific CSR dimension concerned with ecological, economic and social aspects of transactions, generating, exchange and dissemination of information.

The dissemination of information improves our awareness by using information and communication technologies in e-business, e-government and in the information society. In a sense, the socially responsible electronic business implements the same conceptual framework for comparative understanding as is the case with the CSR in the traditional business environment. Contrary to the traditional model, the model of socially responsible electronic business is more dynamic and more transparent. The difference in the CSR between the electronic and the traditional models is in that the structure of stakeholders is more heterogeneous in the socially responsible e-business. Another specific feature of the socially responsible e-business concept is the choice of the communication channel(s). Contrary to the traditional business environment, the communication in the e-business is conducted exclusively via the Web-based technologies and e-services. The **socially responsible electronic business** is the e-business as a function of the corporate social integration which is concerned with the following criteria of impact upon the society:

- a) economic, ecological, cultural and social impact of a company, an organization, an institution and its/their services upon a wider social community and stakeholders with whom the company/organization/institution communicates via information and communication technologies;
- b) economic, ecological, cultural and social impact of a company, an organization, an institution and its/their services upon a wider social community and stakeholders with whom the company/organization/institution exchanges information and services via information and communication technologies;
- c) ecological, cultural and social impact of a company, an organization, an institution and its/their services upon a wider social community and stakeholders with whom the company/organization/institution builds relationships, and whose communication/interaction requires the use of the computer network.

Numerous authors, however, are anxious about the negative impact the digital technology has upon the social capital and business. They oppose the glorification of the Internet role in the creation of sustainable community as they maintain that the Internet hinders

the alternative types of thinking and confines the individuals into specific "echo chambers", groups of individuals that think alike [18] (Susnstein, C.R., 2004). Such arguments that oppose a monolithic way of thinking stem from the fact that virtual communication tends to be as short and as sporadic as possible, thus seemingly hindering the building of powerful social networks and social capital. The information and communication technologies, the e-mail, the mobile telephony and video conferences may estrange individuals from the real world, which may in turn result in a situation that we are neither here nor there [19] (Prusak, L. and Cohen, D., 2001).

Some authors maintain that the debate on the Internet should not be focused upon the technology issues anyway, since the Internet is primarily a social space, not a tool [20] (Poster, M., 1995). The Internet is also regarded as a space suitable for a social innovation [6] (Alakeson et al., 2003:23).

### 3. Information symmetry and network externality

A holistic approach to electronic business integrates technology, economics, society, and ecology. This approach provides a vision of corporate social integration as one aspect of the social innovation and a new method of building the relationship between the organization and its stakeholders. On the basis of the information symmetry and the network externality it is possible to establish a more effective system of socially responsible electronic business in the field of public policies, including the policy of energy efficiency.

The networking perspective and the building of specific relations of interactions between the organizations, the business, the local community and the region in the Internet public sphere may contribute to establishing a more energy efficient ecological system. The electronic business in the field of energy efficiency yield benefits for everybody: the local, the global communities, the planet Earth. Nevertheless, the social potentials the electronic business provide in the field of energy efficiency in the public sphere are not being exploited to a sufficient extent yet.

The reason for this is that the adoption of electronic business is under a significant impact of technological, organizational, management and ecological factors [21] (Tornazky, L.G. and Fleischer, M., 1990). Electronic business is implemented by the middle management - the executives, and the upper management, officials and managers employed in the economy sector and in public administration; however, they

are not all equally involved in the decision making process when the issue of low energy intensity technologies selection for electronic business arises.

A decisive factor for an efficient and socially responsible electronic business in the e-Government is the **information symmetry**, the theory opposite to that of information asymmetry [22] (Lee, H. et al., 2004:1975-86; Chen et al., 2000:436-43; Lai, F. et al., 2007:728). The starting point of the information asymmetry theory is that the information that is subject of exchange and transaction is not evenly distributed throughout the network of participants [23] (Anthony, W.P. and Gales, L.M., 2002). The situation in the exchange of information in which one participant has an advantage over the others is called the information asymmetry [24] (Stigler, G.J. 1961; Akerlof, G.A. 1970). The information symmetry is important for the e-Government users, in this case, the citizens, since it is they who use public services. The same applies to the customers and consumers in e-commerce.

The **network externality** significantly contributes to the institutionalization of electronic business and the reduction of information asymmetry, by disseminating knowledge and collecting information in the network [25] (Lai, F. et al., 2007:728). The network externality may be positive or negative. We talk of a positive externality when the value of the product or a service grows for a consumer with the rise in the number of consumers of identical products and services [26] (Srinivasan, R. et al., 2004:41-58), as is the case of exponential growth in the number of Internet users throughout the world. We have a negative externality in case the value of products and services declines as regards the total number of the users of these products and services, such as is the case of mobile telephony. A positive network externality is also supported by the famous Metcalfe's Law by which the value of the network is proportional to the square of the number of its users [27] (Metcalfe, B., 1995:53). The difference between the positive and the negative network externalities is in the quality, more precisely, in the method and purpose of the network use.

The electronic business in the field of energy efficiency, together with all its ecological, economic, cultural and social, but also with its integrative aspects, is a suitable research area for both the academics and the practitioners. A socially responsible electronic business is intended for both the professionals and the lay public, primarily for the state government institutions which are obliged to do business with the taxpayers in a responsible way.

The definitions of the e-Government basically cover the field of socially responsible electronic business, although

not all its aspects and interactions. They exceed the management of public policies by the central government, since e-Government does not embrace only the local community, but the global community too. The e-Government includes all individuals that use information and communication technologies and are connected via the Internet, but also all the industry sectors.

#### 4. Social responsibility in e-government

A socially responsible electronic business has a potential to use electronic services intended for citizens to the purpose of managing changes in the public government and thus improve the quality of the services provided by the state administration to a significant extent in comparison with the traditional models of communication "over the counter". The question is whether the relationship of the socially responsible electronic business can by any means be regarded as analogue to the relationship between the corporate social responsibility and the business doing in the traditional environment. As regards the fact that the impact factor of the electronic business upon the global community is by far more powerful, it is necessary that the CSR concept be especially directed towards information society, this being the responsibility of the public institutions, primarily the state administration.

The socially responsible electronic business in e-Government can be observed through the economic, social, political, and ecological aspects of information exchange and transactions resulting from the information and communication technologies implementation in the public administration. The results of the CSR realization in the electronic business can be classed into four categories [28] (Codagnone, C., Wimmer, M.A., 2007:16), as follows:

- e-Government,
- information and communication technologies and sustainable development,
- information society,
- Internet economics.

A specific feature of the research into the socially responsible electronic business is in its interdisciplinary character, hence the need for an integrated approach. Such an approach requires the competencies of the experts from various disciplines resulting into innovations and new solutions. Moreover, it is a challenge to go from one discipline to the research and analysis of the interaction of a variety of aspects and their holistic interactions, which presents e-Government as a socio-technical system [28] (Codagnone, C. and Wimmer, M., 2007:14).

The examples of corporate social responsibility can be found not only in the industry sector, but in the public sector as well, just as the examples of socially responsible electronic business are present in the non-commercial services of e-Government and not only in e-commerce.

The dynamics of the Serbian information society development depends on its capability of identifying the barriers to benefits from the e-Government concept. The e-Government services are pointless if the percentage of citizens using these services is low. The change in the perception, attitudes, convictions, behaviours and the raising awareness of the importance of electronic business can help overcome the obstacles in introducing the socially responsible e-Government in both the end users and the state administration itself. The electronization of the state administration, the e-Government, the implementation of the information society development strategy, as well as the e-business strategy, will in the long run result in the improvement in the relationship between the government and government agencies and the internal and the external stakeholders. This interaction can result into a more intensive exchange of information with the stakeholders, and consequently, into the reduction of the information asymmetry.

The sustainable development strategy of the Republic of Serbia (2008) is implicitly based upon the CSR concepts and the socially responsible business. This is by no means accidental, since the exhaustion of fossil fuels and the climate changes have become a global problem, therefore, all the segments of the global community connected via the Internet need to be activated. The raising of awareness of the importance of energy efficiency, of the importance of a rational use of energy and energy sources, as well as a broader use of renewable energy sources via the information and communication technologies is one possible solution to the problem the global community encounters today. In order that the value system underlying the social responsibility as part of the concept of sustainable development be implemented through socially responsible business in e-Government, it is necessary that all these concepts should be integrated into a unique e-Government development strategy, since the socially responsible electronic business is a source of a great potential of the information society.

Starting from the general criteria of the socially responsible electronic business, and taking into consideration the potentials of the impact of the socially responsible electronic business upon the information society, specific categories have been identified that the electronic business and the e-Government should satisfy. In order that an adequate level of social innovation be achieved



in the fields of electronic business, e-Government and the Internet economy it is necessary to:

- Research into the needs of the public sector for new concepts, frameworks and solutions;
- Place emphasis on the innovative solutions that can be developed within the public sector (for example, database on the energy consumed in public facilities, energy balances of cities and municipalities);
- Highlight the innovative application solutions that allow for the implementation of energy efficient technologies in the public sector (for example, tracking and measuring the savings in public lighting via digital technologies);
- Evaluate and analyse the extent to which the issues of energy efficiency are present at the state administration websites, given the complex factors that mutually affect the objectivity of facts as well as the specific interests in a given context;
- Contribute personally to the international standardization and to integration efforts;
- Perform a knowledge transfer and improve the competencies of the ICT sector in the e-Government field;
- Accept the position of a precursor-pioneer and a promoter of socially innovative solutions in the public sector.

The category is defined as a set of attributes (dimensions) that lead to a holistic understanding of e-Government [28] (Codagnone, C. and Wimmer, M., 2007:185). The mutual interactions of the categories of socially responsible electronic business in e-Government are possible to class into seven new sub-categories (according to Wimmer, M., 2008:16) [29]. Their relations of interaction define the specific criteria of the socially responsible electronic business, and these are:

- the state administration / ICT relations: show the manner in which state institutions use ICT in their work and services, whether the interactions are internal or interinstitutional;
- the state administration / society relations: define the quality of interaction between the state administration and society; this quality is also defined by the public services, the e-participation of citizens, orientation towards the user, the users' expectations that the institutions provide services in a traditional way instead in the on-line environment, etc;
- the state administration / economy relations: define whether and in which way the institutions

achieve their goals, whether they do it efficiently and effectively, whether they provide value for money, whether they take into account the cost/benefit analysis and whether they resort to modernization to reduce their costs;

- the society / ICT relations: define in which way and whether citizens use the ICT in their daily activities, what the problems of social changes are and what their impact upon digital stratification, informatic illiteracy, dependance on the ICT is;
- the state administration / economy / ICT interaction relationship: shows the manner in which institutions improve their efficiency and effectiveness through the ICT implementation; the modernization through the ICT implementation is based upon economic factors; the interactions within institutions and between institutions; the focus today is upon the modernization from the economic point of view;
- the state administration / society / economy interaction: shows the manner in which institutions improve their effectiveness and efficiency in their interactions with their users, through organizational change and modernization; this category focuses, among other things, upon efficiency, as well as upon other areas of interaction with those users that do not use the ICT;
- the state administration /society / ICT / economy relationship: achieves improved effectiveness and efficiency as it implements the social values via the modernization of all interactions with the users in that it implements the ICT extensively.

The electronic business in the field of energy efficiency is the object of all the above listed interactions designed to raise awareness of the importance of energy efficiency issues. Only an efficient interaction results in the citizens' e-participation as an institute of effective government. The socially responsible electronic business is expected to bring a larger number of freedoms to the citizens, and requires a greater transparency and flexibility of the electronic public administration.

## **5. Prospects of csr concept implementation in electronic business**

In the first decade of the new millenium, many issues in the fields of economics, law, ethics, social welfare policy, environmental protection and relations between business and the community have become the subjects of scientific study. The new economy is characterised by significant changes in business doing, but also in the social community. The beginnings of the democratization of the society and of the ownership

transformation in the economy have been in progress alongside the informatization of the society. Almost all the changes in the society are preconditioned by the implementation of innovative technologies that allow for the global connections and the sustainable development.

The supreme legal act, the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, introduced the institute of free access to information of public importance. The Act on free access to information of public importance (2004) acknowledged the citizens the right to be informed of facts of public importance. This right led to the reduction in information asymmetry, which is further corroborated by the fact that in response to this Act, numerous state institutions became more responsible towards the citizens and their human rights. It is for the first time that citizens have the opportunity to actively participate in the decision making process and to use their own initiative, in case the state is not in a position to help them, exercise their basic human rights through the institute of the Commissioner of Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection. The electronic business in e-Government resulted in the standardization and automatization of business processes, as well as in a more proactive approach of the institutions and organizations themselves as regards the right of the public to know/to be informed. The greatest benefit from electronic business is enjoyed by the citizens since now they are in a position to actively participate in almost all the processes of public concern. Such is also the right to the access to the information normally available to the state organs in the administration of public control. The prospects of the development of socially responsible electronic business is in the first place in the improvement of the effectiveness and the efficiency of public on-line services towards the citizens. The side effects of this phenomenon are the decentralization of the public administration system and the deregulation process. This threatens the state apparatus. The objectivity, transparency and anti-discriminatory practices are the qualities provided by the information market, and should be the quality of the global Internet economy. The information and communication technologies themselves, however, do not bring the spread, the productive implementation, the management and the access to information of public importance. The ICT themselves do not bring a more democratic society, either. The manner in which the public use the information and communication technologies to access information, the motivation and the level of proactivity of a wider community drives the society nearer to this goal. It is to be assumed that the liberalization in the field of

communications, social and business networking as a result of a rapid development of the Internet will lead to the creation of the information society that will implement a socially responsible electronic business.

The first decade of the twenty-first century was characterised by two big changes:

- One is - globalization. It came as a result of the interdependence of world economies.
- The other is - technological e-volution, the result of the technological revolution of the 1990s.

Both changes are brought forth by the Internet, in that in Serbia a broader implementation of the Internet marked a complex period of transition, too. All these crucial phenomena had their impact upon the present profile of the information society in Serbia. The implementation of the information and communication technologies and the e-Government as part of public sphere, in the context of free access to information of public importance and the socially responsible electronic business, will certainly contribute to the development of e-democracy, but to the overall better life and a more satisfied citizen as well.

The sustainable development means an integral economic, technological, social and cultural development, adjusted to the needs of environmental protection and improvement. It allows for the present and future generations to satisfy their needs and improve the quality of their living (Wikipedia). The term sustainable development itself is linguistically somewhat inadequate and ambiguous. The question is how it is possible to sustain something that is prone to constant change. The development means change, that is, growth, stagnation, or recession. The time we live in is dynamic. In order that the stagnation and recession be prevented, it is necessary that a balance between the natural systems, natural resources and social and ecological challenges the society, the state and the mankind in general are faced with be established.

Starting from 2005, Europe provides to its citizens the modern, on-line public services including the services of the government, the training, and the health care services. The users have the access to the broadband Internet at rather competitive prices [30]. In its Communication to the European Parliament, the Council of Europe and the European Economic and Social Committee (COM 2005) the Commission of European Communities expressly states that Europe is the pillar of excellence in the field of corporate social responsibility and that the CSR role can be crucial in the sustainable development in raising the innovative European potential and competitiveness.

If the broadband Internet access is ensured and the techno-economic moment is met, with the achievement of a certain level of social cohesion, e-Government may well become the most highly developed form of socially responsible electronic business.

Having in mind the right to the free access to information of public importance, the information as a means and the information as a goal, the e-Government is a social space and a public sphere for generating, storing and using information of public importance, using information and communication technologies. It fosters the citizens' e-participation and strives to improve the efficiency, performance, and transparency of the state administration activities.

The state government collects, processes and offers the information provided in the course of its work, and besides, it generates information necessary in the work and in its decision making process. This information becomes ever more important if used by those it is meant for. The success of e-Government depends upon the proactivity of the citizens as latent decision makers.

The conclusion of the Communication (COM 2006) of the i2010 e-Government Action Plan on fostering the e-Government in Europe says that an effective and innovative public administration is of crucial importance for a global competitiveness of Europe. E-Government is regarded as a key to open the potentials of information and knowledge in the public sector. The socially responsible electronic business is possible to be most broadly understood as a response of organizations and institutions to the concept of sustainable development, but also as the response of e-Government to the demands of sustainable development. If the prefix e- marked a new channel of communication via digital technologies, a specific framework would be established that would exceed the meaning of the notion of the socially responsible business to translate it into the concept of corporate social integrations.

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