Foreword

E-GOVERNANCE: TAKING A STEP FORWARD

Information and communication technology (ICT) in public administration has been an issue since the earliest applications of ICT. Although these early applications may be unique and have contributed to some change, all too often adoption and diffusion was difficult. Only in the last decade, we have seen that ICT can have an enormous impact on the entire governance system. Governance has to do with reinventing relationships between the various parts of society. It is also about putting the citizen at the centre, stimulating economic developments and bridging the digital divide. It involves looking beyond what we are doing now and shaping society. Given its relevance and potential to contribute to a better society, it is with great pleasure that I write a foreword of a book that addresses such an important topic.

Taking e-governance a step forward requires sharing experiences and creating new knowledge. Given its complexity and scale, the actual adoption and diffusion of e-governance is a daunting task, some of which needs to be managed carefully to reduce manage risk and deal with the complexity involved, while other elements need to be realized as soon as possible, preferably yesterday. A typically complex task involves the creation of horizontal and vertical interoperability at all levels of government, which requires the creation of an interoperable infrastructure. Although by now the digital divide should already have been bridged, we are still removing the barriers to a free and effective interaction. The chapters in this book clearly demonstrate that, although bridging the social divide and realizing democracy in an online world is no easy task, it can be achieved if we keep on trying and learn from past experiences.

To develop effective e-governance, we need to overcome tremendous technological, managerial, institutional and political challenges. The need for e-governance is clear. It should be realized as soon as humanly possible, which is why the adoption and diffusions of e-governance is an increasingly important issue that is high on the political agenda. This book contains a variety of case studies and useful insights, and provides a rich set of relevant examples. The inhibitors and facilitators of adoption and diffusion, and of the digital divide and democracy, are discussed with regard to various areas of e-governance and by various authors, providing support to elected officials and public servants as well as consultants and service providers in their attempts to take the next step and realize e-governance. We need to be aware that, despite this valuable support, it will still be an arduous process. However, once the barriers will be overcome, the results will be worthwhile.

I hope you will enjoy reading this book, as I did, use the knowledge it provides in your everyday practice and let it inspire you to generate new knowledge,

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