Chapter 12
The E–Parliament in Lithuania:
The Way Ahead from the Outset

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ABSTRACT
This chapter analyses the features of development of the e-Parliament in Lithuania. It describes a unique situation in the country where, since 1990, a representative legislative institution has been successfully developed from the outset together with information and communication technologies. Using documentary analysis, statistical information, and research from websites of members of the Parliament, it discusses the e-Parliament development model in the Parliament of Lithuania, its implementation, and results. It shows to what extent information technologies support the legislative process and help to build a relationship between democratic institutions and citizens in Lithuania. It describes future changes of the legislative process in Lithuania related to implementation of the information technologies. Conclusions are based on Lithuania’s experience in developing e-Parliament.

INTRODUCTION
The rapid evolution of information and communication technologies (ICT) both pressure democratic institutions to change and also provide new opportunities to improve their work. The use of ICT to support the democratic decision-making process was named e-democracy (Macintosh, 2004). Successful creation of e-democracy is impossible without the use of ICT to improve parliamentary processes. Therefore, the e-parliament concept defined as the “use of ICT in parliamentary institutions with the objective of enhancing and strengthening their core functions and operations” began to evolve (United Nations Development Programme, 2006, p. 6)1.
The E-Parliament in Lithuania

There are various comparative case studies analysing ICT development models in the parliaments, but mostly in countries with long-lasting parliamentarian traditions. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the development of ICT in the parliament of a young parliamentarian democracy country like the Republic of Lithuania. This analysis could be very valuable to other countries in transformation.

During the 20th century, Lithuania didn’t create strong parliamentary traditions: in 1918 the Republic of Lithuania was established and then in 1940 was occupied by the Soviet Union. The next 50 years were lived under the rule of the Central Communist party of the Soviet Union, where state governance was its instrument. Lithuania was the first country that seceded from the Soviet Union, accelerating its demise. Under difficult political and economic conditions Lithuania started building institutions of the democratic parliamentary state practically from the ground up, including the Parliament known as the Seimas.

This e-parliament development model in the Parliament of Lithuania is discussed in this chapter, emphasizing to what extent information technologies support the legislative process and help to build a relationship between democratic institutions and citizens in Lithuania. The article also highlights future changes of the legislative process in Lithuania related to the implementation of information technologies and conclusions based on Lithuania’s experience in developing ICT in the Parliament.

BACKGROUND

The birth of e-democracy and e-parliament proposed a new impulse to strengthen the democracy. ICT provide wide opportunities for the member of parliaments (MPs) both to access the innumerable knowledge networks and to connect with constituents. According to Daniel Brassard (2006),

In this way, citizens have better access to – and increased participation in – their legislatures, as democracy is brought closer to the people. Parliamentarians can enjoy greater freedom, and the legislative process can be enhanced. The technology also provides useful information for those reviewing legislation or working on parliamentary committees, and facilitates communication among parliamentarians and various stakeholders (p. 12).

Consequently, enhanced citizens’ participation may lead to stronger trust in democracy. Recently, these and other issues related to the e-parliament emerged in the academic field. E-parliament research is carried out according to the following trends:

- One case study, which defines the development of e-parliament in a particular country (e.g. study of Portugal, see Leston-Bandeira, 2007).
- One case study, which explores perceptions, ICT knowledge, and ICT activities of MPs as well as personal MPs’ websites (e.g. research of the European Parliament, see Coleman & Nathanson, 2005).
- Several or multiple comparative case studies, which compare models and trends of the ICT development in parliaments. See a comparative study of the US Senate and the European Parliament (Griffith, 2006) or survey in Latin America (Frick, 2005).
- Global studies such as annual surveys and reports (e.g. Global Centre for ICT in Parliament & United Nations, 2010).

Authors choose various research topics, including the development of ICT and practical usage at a parliament, friendly or sceptical attitudes towards e-parliament, development of democracy. Some authors choose to discuss several topics (e.g. Brassard, 2006), others focus on just one particular aspect (Conway & Dorner, 2004). This chapter
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