Electronic parliament as a factor of sustainable development: History and prospects

Tamara Mazur[*]

Doctor of Law
National Academy of Internal Affairs
03035, 1 Solomyanska Sq., Kyiv, Ukraine
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6220-5827

Spiros Flogaitis

Professor
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
10672, 30 University Str., Athens, Greece
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7510-0792

Abstract

The relevance and significance of the study of the history and prospects of electronic parliamentarism as a factor of sustainable development is conditioned upon the anthropocentric vision of the idea of digitalization of the parliament. For the purpose, the authors chose to consider the system of digital tools that make up the e-parliament in the context of its role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions". The main methods of scientific cognition, which were used when drafting the study, were the methods of content analysis, analogy, and comparison. The levels of the multi-level system of information and data security as a key element of the security of digitalization of the parliament were defined, challenges related to the legal, economic, social, and technological aspects of the process were outlined. Based on the analysis of legal acts and directly on the websites of the parliaments of countries with different democracy indices (Great Britain, Iceland, Sweden, Poland, the Czech Republic, the Baltic countries), global trends in the specified area were formulated. The author emphasized the inherent nature of certain features and the uncertainty of the consequences of digitalization of the parliament in states with various levels of democratic development and different economic indicators. It was established that the transition of parliamentarians in communication with voters from conventional communication in an offline format to an online format contributes to the implementation of openness, inclusiveness, cooperation, and participation in the political sphere. The results of the study were designed to update the issue of the need to introduce new electronic parliamentary tools for the implementation of digital democracy mechanisms in society

Keywords:

e-parliament; participation of citizens in decision-making; inclusiveness of the parliament; parliamentary digital tools; digitalization

[*]Corresponding author

Introduction

The relevance of the anthropocentric vision of the digitalization of the parliament corresponds to the goals of sustainable development (16 SDGs) – Peace, justice, and strong institutions, – involves promoting the development of a peaceful and inclusive society for sustainable development, ensuring access to justice for all and creating effective, accountable and inclusive institutions for all levels (Transforming our world…, 2015). Therewith, the main value is the person, not the institution. A person must take part in the development, adoption, and monitoring of the implementation of management decisions that affect their life. The vision of the e-Parliament, the functioning of which is based not only on technology, but also on cooperation, inclusiveness, participation, and openness for people (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021) fully corresponds to the anthropocentric vision of sustainable development.

Another essential element that connects sustainable development and e-parliament is information technology. For instance, in the scientific literature, attention is drawn to the fact that in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of information and communication technologies for the implementation of the SDGs and the ability of citizens to take part in public life was revealed. Therefore, it is of interest to propose the introduction of an added 18th SDG – Digital Connection, which can contribute to accelerating the implementation of other SDGs (Clark *et al*., 2022). Information and communication technologies, and especially new forms of social media, provide parliamentarians with the opportunity to communicate with citizens online and more effectively involve them in the legislative process (Anderson *et al*., 2022). Furthermore, as C. Leston-Bandeira (2022) points out, in recent years, the importance of public involvement in the decision-making process has been increasingly recognized to solve some of the problems of modern democracy.

The author's research interest is determined not only by the above but by the opinion in the scientific community about the insufficiency of e-government research at the pan-European level (Rodriguez-Hevía *et al*., 2020). Therewith, it is worth noting certain works that somewhat expand the scope of issues that should be studied. Of particular interest are articles that consider the practices of digitalization in states that do not have stable democratic traditions. According to the results of the study of the state of digitalization of the Parliament of Nepal, it was noted that it does not correspond to the digital technologies available in the modern world. It is recommended to develop a strategic plan for the implementation of IT technologies in the activities of the parliament (Sharma & Kautish, 2021).

Close to the author's interpretation of the digital modernization of the parliament is presented in the article "E-parliament and its role in the implementation of democracy". Improving direct communication is considered as an opportunity to actualize the positive role of direct democracy (Zargabad & Malakouti Hashtjin, 2021).

An unexpected and difficult group of countries for comparative research (Estonia, Finland, Nigeria, Ghana, Australia, and South Korea) was chosen by Azerbaijani scientists. The study focuses on the shared challenges of digitalization: limited resources, insufficient IT skills of parliamentarians and parliamentary service workers, lack of open information about the parliament, digitized archival materials, the problem of timeliness of posting information about the activities of the parliament and cyber security (Mustafa & Sharifov, 2018).

Predictions regarding the consequences of the development of artificial intelligence deserve special attention. The problems of responsibility, transparency, and ethics are considered fundamental to the study of the impact of artificial intelligence on communication in society and democratic institutions. There is also an urgent need for interdisciplinary research on the desired properties of artificial intelligence and the limits of its application (Huang & Peissl, 2023).

Fundamentally important in the context of the theory and practice of digitalization is the conclusion that emphasizes the limited nature of the digital transformation of public administration in general. Since mainly information systems are being transformed, organizational structure, management culture, and employee responsibilities undergo minimal changes (Tangi *et al*., 2021).

In the selected context of consideration of the e-parliament, as of today, the questions posed by scientists many years ago have not lost their relevance: does the digitalization of communication lead to institutional reform; whether citizens use new web tools to communicate with parliamentarians; whether the new format of communication contributed to the growth of citizens' interest in the activities of the parliament (Leston-Bandeira, 2007). It should also be noted the update of certain data of the Report on e-Parliament in the world for 2020 regarding the introduction of legislative regulation of remote plenary meetings in Great Britain (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021).

Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine the role of the e-parliament in the implementation of 16 SDGs. In contrast to the existing studies about digitalization of the legislative body, the author considered the e-parliament precisely in the context of its role in the implementation of 16 SDGs, which constitutes the scientific originality of this study.

Materials and Methods

The main stages of this study were the determination of the relevance and problematic issues of the research, the review of scientific publications on the topic of e-parliament, specifically, the main questions that became the subject under study were formulated, the theoretical and documentary basis of the study was determined, the

current world trends regarding the digitalization of parliaments were considered, the emphasis was placed on the priority of expansion access of citizens to take part in decision-making as one of the main goals of digitalization of the highest legislative body, certain challenges and prospects of digitalization of individual processes of the functioning of the parliament were considered, emphasis was placed on the nature of certain features of the digitalization of the parliament in states with different levels of development, as well as conclusions were formulated and promising areas of research.

During the study, the authors relied on the principal provisions of the theory of participatory democracy (Botwinick & Bachrach, 1983) and the theory of e-democracy (Lindner & Aichholzer, 2020). In addition, the study was based on the theory of legal culture (Friedman, 1969) and the concept of legality culture (Yarmysh & Tielkiniena, 2021). This approach is conditioned both by the author's anthropocentric vision of digitalization of the parliament and by the purpose of this study.

The main method used in the present study was the method of content analysis. Analogy and comparison methods were also used to investigate the documentary material, which contributed to its division into the following groups: firstly, statistical materials, namely the results of surveys of 116 parliamentarians in 91 countries, which are presented in the World e-Parliament Report 2020, prepared by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021); secondly, legal acts governing the functioning of the parliament of some Central and Eastern European states: Latvia[1], Lithuania[2], Poland[3,4], the Czech Republic[5], Estonia[6]; thirdly, the websites of the parliaments of Iceland and Sweden.

Thanks to the analysis of statistical materials, certain areas of digitalization of the parliament were determined, for instance: the spread of remote work practices, increasing the flexibility of the parliament, the introduction of new tools and practices. The development of regulations governing the activities of the parliaments of

Latvia[7], Lithuania[8], Poland[9,10] the Czech Republic[11], and Estonia[12] , helped determine one of the promising areas of the digitalization of the functioning of the parliament – the introduction of changes to the current legislation that will ensure the smooth operation of the parliament not only offline, but also online. The study of the websites of the parliaments of Iceland and Sweden revealed certain differences in approaches to the digitization of the parliament in countries with fairly similar indicators of socio-economic development. Considering this, during the development of the concept of digitalization and its implementation, national political traditions and the current political situation should be carefully considered.

Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis of the Report on the e-Parliament in the world for 2020 (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021), it is possible to determine certain current global trends regarding the digitalization of parliaments.

Thus, the spread of remote work practices increased trust in cloud technologies and digital solutions have been observed, which led to certain changes in the organization of the work of the parliament. For instance, in 2020, among the parliamentarians surveyed, 65% took part in online or online-offline committee meetings, and 33% took part in online or online-offline plenary meetings. The following data are indicative: among the parliamentarians surveyed, 76% use social networks, 39% Þ instant messages, and 30% – mobile applications with access to parliamentary information (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021).

The acceleration of the pace of modernization of parliaments is based on innovative principles. For instance, 26% of parliaments have adopted innovation strategies, and in 35% at least one member of the parliamentary service handles introducing innovations into the activities of the parliament. According to experts, the key innovative tools are technologies based on artificial

[1]Rules of Order of Saeima (1994, July). Retrieved from https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=57517.

[2]Seimas No. I-399 of the Republic of Lithuania Statute. (1994, February). Retrieved from https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/381 cfeb2292011edb36fa1cf41a91fd9?jfwid=6plip4g6w.

[3]Resolution "On the Sejm of the Republic of Poland". (1992, July). Retrieved from https://oide.sejm.gov.pl/oide/index.php?option=com_conte nt&view=article&id=14673%3Awersja-skonsolidowana-traktatu-o-unii-europejskiej&catid=7&Itemid=361/.

[4]Act "On the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies". (1995, April). Retrieved from https://www.psp.cz/docs/laws/1995/90. html#117.

[5]Law No. 59/1996 "About the Seat of the Parliament of the Czech Republic". (1996, February). Retrieved from https://www.senat.cz/kancelar/ zakony/zak59_1996.php?ke_dni=19.8.2020&O=12.

[6]Riigikogu Rules of Procedure and Work Act. (2007). Retrieved from https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/12850761.

[7]Rules of Order of Saeima (1994, July). Retrieved from https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=57517.

[8]Seimas No. I-399 of the Republic of Lithuania Statute. (1994, February). Retrieved from https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/381 cfeb2292011edb36fa1cf41a91fd9?jfwid=6plip4g6w.

[9]Resolution "On the Sejm of the Republic of Poland". (1992, July). Retrieved from https://oide.sejm.gov.pl/oide/index.php?option=com_conte nt&view=article&id=14673%3Awersja-skonsolidowana-traktatu-o-unii-europejskiej&catid=7&Itemid=361/.

[10]Act "On the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies". (1995, April). Retrieved from https://www.psp.cz/docs/laws/1995/90. html#117.

[11]Law No. 59/1996 "About the Seat of the Parliament of the Czech Republic". (1996, February). Retrieved from https://www.senat.cz/ kancelar/zakony/zak59_1996.php?ke_dni=19.8.2020&O=12.

[12]Riigikogu Rules of Procedure and Work Act. (2007). Retrieved from https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/12850761.

intelligence and software for drafting laws, but as of 2020, the rates of their use by parliamentarians are low: 10% and 6% (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021). At the same time, even a few years ago, the reality of such a practice in the highest body of legislative power was quite difficult to even imagine. Therewith, the use of information tools common to a modern parliamentarian is substantially accelerated. Thus, from 2018 to 2020, the use of cloud programs and applications for data storage increased by 86% (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021).

Updating the parliamentary regulations to legalize the remote form of work contributes to the organizational flexibility of parliamentarians' work and strengthens the institutional stability of the parliament. Therewith, it is worth noting the lack of a stable practice/tendency to legislate the use of a remote voting system in parliaments. As an example, one can cite Great Britain – a country with stable traditions of parliamentarism. Thus, on April 22, 2020, the House of Commons temporarily allowed online voting by parliamentarians. The new voting system was tested for the first time on 12 May 2020 after a general debate on COVID-19. However, the new voting procedure expired on May 20, 2020 (Priddy, 2020). Instead, the offline voting of parliamentarians, who observed certain safety measures during the pandemic, was broadcast live. Furthermore, it is worth noting the unsuccessful attempts to introduce online voting in the British Parliament even before COVID-19. One of the factors of its non-acceptance by most parliamentarians is the establishment of the voting procedure with their physical presence and the possibility of personal direct communication and discussions before making decisions (Priddy, 2020).

The presence of a tendency to increase the flexibility of the parliament, the introduction of new tools and practices, as well as the prompt resolution of emerging problems, are confirmed by all the above-mentioned facts and statistical data.

On the one hand, the above creates a positive picture of the gradual and relentless informatization of the parliament in most states. On the other hand, it is worth addressing the fact that the pace of this process is determined by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It should be emphasized that digitalization has a massive potential to facilitate the access of most different groups of citizens - regardless of place of residence, etc. – to participation in decision-making at the highest level, which will contribute to increasing the efficiency, accountability, and inclusiveness of the parliament. The e-parliament is not an end in itself, and the digitalization of the conventional parliament should be anthropocentric, i.e., contribute to the development of a comprehensive society for sustainable development, ensuring everyone's access to the procedures for making administrative decisions at the highest level (Meeting times of…, n.d.). In this way, the widespread introduction and use of modern information and communication technologies in the highest body of the legislative power will contribute to the implementation of the 16th SDGs. Special attention to the anthropocentric vector of the functioning of the e-parliament is due, specifically, to the personal conviction of the author, which is fully consistent with the modern conceptual vision of this institution. Thus, experts of the international organization of national parliaments emphasize as follows: if the operational procedures of the e-parliament are based on technologies, knowledge, and standards, then its legislative activity is based on the values of cooperation, inclusiveness, participation, and openness for people (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021).

There is often a question about the reality or pretentiousness of the anthropocentric vector of the functioning of the e-parliament, the availability of factual data confirming the introduction of relevant digital innovations even today. As shown by the results of the analysis of the array of statistical data, the latter indicate that as of 2020, 63% of the parliamentarians who took part in the survey for the preparation of the named report use digital systems in their activities to reach and attract voters, and 81% report an increase in their use (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021).

The following web tools are most actively used for communication with citizens: e-mail (76% of parliamentarians) and social networks (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021). Notably, the steady spread of relevant practices and the first victories of web tools in competition with conventional means of communication between parliamentarians and voters have been observed only recently. For instance, social networks overtook radio and television in 2016. It is appropriate to note that apart from parliamentary radio, blogs and online discussion groups are also declining in popularity. At the same time, parliamentarians not so actively use certain interactive digital tools now: electronic petitions f 23%, special smartphone programs for communication with the public - 30%. Therewith, the prospects of these means as appropriate communication tools can be discussed, since 28% of the polled parliamentarians are planning or considering the use of electronic petitions shortly, while 34% of the surveyed parliamentarians are considering special programs for smartphones for communication with the public (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021).

The most popular digital tool for parliamentarians to communicate with citizens at the committee level, according to a survey conducted during the preparation of the World e-Parliament Report 2020, is the parliament's website, second only to e-mail and social networks (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021). Furthermore, statistical data suggest the inherent nature of communication both at the level of individual parliamentarians and at the level of parliamentary committees of the same trend – a constant increase in the use of digital tools.

Given the special interest in the issue of the impact of digitalization of the parliament on the involvement of citizens in decision-making procedures, it is worth addressing those areas of communication with citizens that are considered priority by parliamentarians because its effectiveness depends to a large extent on their attitude towards and readiness for close cooperation with civil society. It is possible to state the insignificant interest of parliamentarians in the involvement of citizens in the decision-making process – 27% compared to informing citizens about political issues and draft laws – 70%, increasing the involvement of citizens in political processes – 69%, explaining the activities of the parliament – 64% (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021). The statistical data presented above give grounds, according to the authors, to assert that the digitalization of means of communication between parliamentarians and citizens contributes to the implementation of such values as openness to people and inclusiveness and creates favourable conditions for the further implementation of the values of cooperation and participation. This sequence can be explained as follows. Cooperation and participation presuppose the parity of the subjects of these processes – parliamentarians and citizens – however, the latter in the absolute majority do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to take part in law-making. Therewith, thanks to the openness of the parliament, which is ensured, specifically, by posting on its website information about the procedure of this institution, the legislative procedure, etc., citizens get the opportunity to increase their level of awareness of the specified issues and increase their importance as subjects of cooperation and participation.

The functioning of the e-parliament is associated with several challenges and threats. That is why, when introducing e-tools into the law-making process, all levels of protection should be ensured as much as possible. The risks should not exceed the expected positive results. Considering the above, special attention should be paid to the level of information security. Thus, the multi-level system of information and data security as a key element of information security of the e-parliament includes the following levels: legal, economic, social, technological.

The concept of e-parliamentarism should be based on the norms of the Constitution and laws because the purpose of digitalization of the law-making process is the maximum exercise of the principles of democracy in society. However, legal support for the functioning of the e-parliament should be at the highest professional level since the legislative basis is decisive in the specified process. Among other things, issues of legal regulation of digital transformation are raised by K.A. Rozha *et al*. (2021). Particular attention should be paid to the financial and economic side of the functioning of the e-parliament. Usually, the use of e-tools requires added expenses from the budget, and at the first stage the project is

expensive, but in the following years, only the technical support of the system and its security will become an expensive part. Society and individual citizens play a key role in the implementation of e-Parliament. To eliminate corruption and reputational risks, it is important to connect civil society institutions and independent experts to the process of developing e-tools. The technological level is considered the main one and is accompanied by many internal and external risks. Considering the determining role of the institution of law-making in state creation, the greatest attention should be paid to the technical support of the e-parliament and cyber security.

One of the priority areas of digitalization of the parliament is the development of a modern and comprehensive cyber security strategy, which should include the most modern software and hardware protection systems, which should be as isolated as possible from any cyber-attacks. This is especially relevant in the conditions of the challenges that exist in the world today. Parliament must work in case of emergencies or events, the introduction of martial law, or a state of emergency. To ensure the information security of the e-parliament, it is necessary to develop, implement, and ensure the functioning of a single localized digital protected system that would factor in external threats, such as military operations, natural disasters, anthropogenic disasters, cyber-attacks, and their consequences (damage to infrastructure, loss of connection to the Internet, light, communication), which Ukraine felt especially keenly in the conditions of a full-scale invasion of Russia in 2022.

When implementing the e-parliament, all levels of information protection and an elevated level of requirements for the identification and verification of parliamentarians should be ensured, which will ensure that voting in committees and at the session was carried out openly, and legitimately, according to the regulations. In this case, such results will be recognized by society and the international community. The security of the system can be achieved by modern certified means of protection, such as, e.g., FaceID, fingerprint, biometric data for the digital identification of a people's deputy, as well as the use of an electronic key of cryptographic protection by all participants in the law-making process.

The parliamentarians' view of the risks of digitalization of the parliament is also of scientific and practical interest. Based on the survey for the World e-Parliament Report for 2020, we have a corresponding list dominated by citizens' lack of awareness of the legislative process – 50% (World e-Parliament Report 2020, 2021). The risks identified by parliamentarians can be divided into the following groups: 1) lack of certain knowledge and skills of both parliamentarians and citizens, specifically, to resist the abuse of online tools for disinformation and manipulation of public opinion, as well as to determine the level of representativeness of citizen responses; 2) technological factors; 3) poor involvement of citizens; 4) the need for significant resources and

efforts, the need to process an unusually large amount of information.

According to the results of the analysis of specialized scientific literature and other materials, it is possible to determine certain promising areas of digitalization of individual processes of the functioning of the parliament:

◾ it is advisable to consider the digitalization of the parliament not as a process of mainly technological modernization, but primarily as a factor in the transformation of the institution of the parliament;

◾ the leadership of parliamentarians and the management of parliaments in directing the use of new web tools to ensure greater transparency, inclusiveness of parliament and citizen involvement;

◾ amendments to the current legislation, which will ensure smooth operation of the parliament not only in the offline mode, but also in the online mode. Conventionally, the regulations of parliaments usually directly or indirectly regulate the physical presence of parliamentarians in the meeting hall of the parliament without the alternative of online presence. Considering the interest in digitalization of the parliament in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which on the one hand have a rather ancient history of parliamentarism, and on the other hand, in the second half of the 20th century, passed the stage of state monopoly over all spheres of public life, legislation was developed to regulate the functioning of higher bodies of legislative power in Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia. Notably, the special law on the procedure of work of the Parliament of Estonia (paragraph 57)[1] makes provision for the possibility of appointing a place other than the meeting hall of the Toompea Castle in Tallinn and the place of the meeting of the Parliament;

◾ expanding the list of materials that will be posted on the parliament's websites: clear information about law enforcement, various video content, new opportunities for citizens to take part in the legislative process through blogs and forums;

◾ development of flexible working conditions for employees of parliamentary services and remote participation of parliamentarians in plenary and committee meetings;

◾ activation of inter-parliamentary cooperation for the exchange of experience, which will accelerate the spread of innovations and saving of resources.

Of practical interest are the specific features of digitalization of the parliament in states with various levels of development. Their separation will contribute to more effective borrowing and use of foreign practices by those countries whose parliaments are at the beginning of the path of digital modernization. It is worth noting the possibility of a negative effect of the incorporation of foreign practices without the consideration

of the socio-economic and political specificities of both the recipient and donor countries. For instance, in countries with high indicators of gross domestic product in terms of purchasing power parity per capita and democracy index, the digitalization algorithm of the highest body of legislative power is quite realistic - quite fast pace and a fairly wide range of new digital tools, as well as a considerable number of citizens who use them - hardly has prospects for implementation in the parliaments of countries with correspondingly low indicators. However, the desire of the leadership of the parliaments in such countries to follow the best world practices can contribute to the benefit of pragmatism and consideration of objective factors: financial and organizational capacity of the parliaments, etc. In this case, good intentions, which will not have resource support, can lead to technologically and organizationally "poor" informatization, which discredits the very idea of e-parliament both among citizens and parliamentarians.

One of the countries that has quite high indicators indicated above, and where the level and pace of digitization of the public administration system is ahead of the average statistical indicators of the European Union, is Iceland (Digital government Factsheet - Iceland, 2019). As for the presence of e-parliament elements in this country, the following should be noted. The website of the Parliament of Iceland lists issues to be discussed in the upcoming committee meetings. Citizen participation is ensured not only through the involvement of stakeholders, whom the committee turns to for comments. Each citizen can, on their own initiative, send their written comment to the committee, which will have the same status as the comment of the stakeholder addressed by the committee (Want to post…, n.d.).

For the meaningfulness of comments and the effectiveness of cooperation between parliamentarians and citizens, a detailed and clear instruction for preparing feedback on an issue to be considered by the committee is posted on the website (Guideline for writing…, n.d.). In addition, video recordings of open meetings of parliamentary committees for the period from October 8, 2008 to April 25, 2023, the schedule of meetings of standing committees of the parliament, video recordings of parliamentary sessions from September 13, 2022 to April 25, 2023 are freely available, and viewing is provided complete recording, as well as the possibility of searching and viewing or listening to individual speeches (Recordings of open committee…, n.d.; Sessions and cases, n.d.; Sessions of the…, n.d.).

Therewith, the pace and scope of the informatization of the parliament is also determined by the country's political traditions. For instance, citizens of those countries where free public access to open meetings of the parliament has a long history, their broadcasting on the websites of the parliament is unlikely to be

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[1] Riigikogu Rules of Procedure and Work Act. (2007). Retrieved from https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/12850761.

perceived as a manifestation of maximum transparency and inclusiveness of this institution. Furthermore, parliamentarians are used to long and complex political discussions and the adoption of compromise decisions. The efficiency of this process will only be hindered by publicity, especially in the online format, as the parliamentarians believe. Thus, the critical attitude of members of the British Parliament towards online voting was already mentioned in this paper. An analogous opinion is held in Sweden, where meetings of parliamentary committees take place behind closed doors (The parliamentary committees…, n.d.).

Among the challenges of digitalization of the parliament in countries with incomplete democracy or transitional regime, one can also count the presence of certain problems regarding the participation of citizens in the decision-making process in an offline format, namely, its imperfect legal regulation, which will complicate the introduction and effective use of new digital tools. One of the examples of such a situation is the long-term debate in Ukraine regarding the quality of draft laws, which were proposed to modernize the legal regulation of public consultations at the level of parliamentary committees (Yarmysh *et al.*, 2021).

In this context, the questions raised when studying the use of information and communication technologies in Latin American parliaments deserve special attention: should parliaments promote e-participation in societies where there is a massive digital divide, or should participation be a top-down process initiated by governments and parliaments. As of today, we share the author's doubts about the uncertainty of the consequences of the digitalization of parliaments and the contradiction of the potential advantages of electronic participation of citizens. At the same time, similar considerations apply not only to the countries of the region studied by Y. Welp (2012) but to all those belonging to the group of countries with incomplete democracy or a transitional regime.

Since the end of the 1990s, the topic of e-parliament has increasingly attracted the attention of researchers, and during the last decade, an increasing number of relevant scientific literature has appeared. Among researchers, a comparative approach is common, which is used to consider certain aspects of digitalization of parliament in different countries of the world (Borg & Hassall, 2007; Sobac, 2012). At the same time, certain aspects of digitalization of the parliament in a certain country were also the subject of scientific research. Thus, two collective works of scientists from Great Britain, which investigated the impact of Internet development on citizen activity during parliamentary elections, are widely cited (Ward *et al.*, 2003; Gibson *et al.*, 2005). The studies note that the spread of the Internet increases the number of politically active people due to the involvement of those groups of society that are not active in conventional forms of political

participation. The findings also emphasize the need for scholars to develop more sophisticated theoretical and empirical models of online participation. Therewith, the results of surveys that British scientists conducted later prove that expectations about the scale of the Internet's influence on the sphere of political relations were overestimated. Therefore, digitalization has, albeit limited, potential to attract new people to the political process, and can deepen and improve the experience of citizens' participation in elections and other forms of political activism.

In their study on the presence of parliament on the Internet as a tool designed to support several key parliamentary functions operating in a comprehensive democratic structure, L. Berntzen *et al.* (2006) compare how parliaments in several countries use information and communication technologies to increase transparency and promote citizen participation. S. Leston-Bandeira (2007) conducted a study of the impact of the Internet on parliaments from the perspective of legislative research.

The questions that were most often investigated in the studies of both types can be conditionally divided into several groups. First of all, consideration of digitalization as a tool for improving parliamentary democracy with an emphasis on finding an answer to the question of the presence or absence of the impact of the introduction of new web tools on the parliament as an institution (Leston-Bandeira, 2007; Williamson, 2009; Leston-Bandeira, 2022).

Attention is drawn to the findings of the Australian scientists P. Chen *et al.* (2006), formulated back in the mid-2000s using evidence from a study of democratic practices in Australia. However, it is probably appropriate to apply these theses at the general level, because they have a balanced nature. Among the factors of the impact of information and communication tools on democratic political culture named by the author, we will single out political culture in the broad sense, the logic of political life, and the creativity of individuals and organizations in using these tools. Furthermore, the authors focused on certain positive and negative manifestations of the corresponding influence.

The first category: new forms of direct communication between citizens and individual members of parliament; expanding the range of forms of cooperation between citizens and state authorities through the dissemination of information on the Internet, the use of online systems that allow citizens to comment on policy development processes, as well as electronic voting systems, etc. The second category: is the general practice of avoiding direct communication between state authorities and community members, especially in the process of policy development; lack of resources, which prevents wider use of new technologies by civil society to encourage public participation; spread of practices of using digital technologies to monitor the behaviour of citizens (online and offline); the general reluctance of

the wider Australian community to engage in political action through the variety of new information and communication tools available.

Furthermore, the problem of digitization was investigated in combination with the problem of raising awareness and participation of citizens. Digital technologies are arguably creating new spaces for civic engagement and participation (Global Parliamentary Report, 2022). The complexity and permanent relevance of research on e-parliament and the impact of new web tools on the cooperation of parliamentarians and citizens is evidenced by the correction of the research results, which were introduced even after a small period. For instance, in the study by S. Ward *et al.* (2003) regarding the impact of the Internet on political participation in the UK notes the prospect of relatively few changes in the attitudes or behaviour of most citizens. Instead, as early as 2005, it was suggested that the Internet increases the number of politically active people, especially in terms of reaching groups that are usually inactive or less active in conventional/offline forms of politics (Gibson *et al.*, 2005). Notably, researchers of digitalization of the parliament emphasize the anthropocentric purpose of parliamentary digital tools (Papaloi & Gouscos, 2012). Specifically, the issues and possibilities of their introduction were considered, factoring in the needs of different population groups, and the dual nature of the orientation of these innovations: on the one hand, the e-parliament should become more attractive to citizens, and on the other hand, it should offer more effective feedback tools and promote more effective online public participation (Papaloi & Gouscos, 2012). Using the example of the European Control Conference answers to questions regarding the creation of useful tools for sharing experience and strengthening trust between citizens and MEPs are being sought. In addition, a priority question is the ability of public consultations to become a workable form of e-parliament tool used to strengthen political representation in Europe (Karlsson, 2012). We consider certain research results using the evidence from Latin American countries to be practically important for the effective implementation of the e-parliament concept in countries with low indicators of economic and democratic development. Foremost, in terms of the need to consider the socioeconomic and political features of different countries when applying foreign practices (Kanjo, 2012). A critical assessment of Latin American parliamentary digitization practices should also be considered (Perna & Braga, 2012).

The warning of scientists regarding the use of modern technologies by parliaments, which was expressed twenty years ago, has not lost its relevance. The authors agree with them: online counseling should not be used as a gimmick. Suggestions received from citizens must be integrated into the political process, otherwise, citizens will be less interested in participating in such communication in the future, and distrust of parliament in general will increase (Coleman & Gøtze, 2001).

The third group of issues, which have been the subject of special attention of scholars, include web-based tools introduced in parliaments (Borg & Hassall, 2007). Based on the results of the search and analysis of relevant publications, we can note that websites are most often the subject of research. The studies contain examples of communication on parliamentary websites that are both conceptually and practically interesting (Leston-Bandei, 2022). Specifically, targeting different audiences – citizens in general and lawyers - and developing different communication models on the website of the Senate in France. Citizens were offered information about the role of this institution, stages of the legislative process, etc., while lawyers - a thematic newsletter, free e-mail notifications, etc.

C. Leston-Bandeira (2022) produced extremely important recommendations based on parliamentary web-based tools of interest. For instance, a list of web design principles for official websites of parliaments. Firstly, focusing primarily on the needs of users of different groups: ensuring full accessibility of site materials for people with visual impairments, presenting information about the work of the parliament in a language that will be understandable for professionals and all citizens, having a universal search function, presenting information in a popular form. Secondly, digital longevity, and thirdly, digital transparency. C. Leston-Bandeira (2022) investigates such a digital parliamentary tool as e-mail. The author poses debatable and acute questions regarding the legal regulation of communication between parliamentarians and voters using e-mail.

The fourth group of issues relevant for scientists includes the problems of using digital tools in parliament. Notably, most of the studies on the topic of e-parliament cover this issue briefly or extensively.

Conclusions

The digitalization of the parliament is not a purely technical modernization of the legislative body because it is based on the worldview position of anthropocentrism. The results of the analysis of statistical data give reason to believe that the transition from conventional offline communication between parliamentarians and citizens to the online format contributes to the realization of such values as openness, inclusiveness, cooperation, and participation in the political sphere.

Current world trends regarding the relevance of digitalization in the parliament were analysed, and attention was focused on the main goal of this innovation – expanding citizens' access to decision-making. The problems, specific features, and prospects of digitalization of individual processes of the functioning of the parliament were defined, which also applies to countries with a low level of development.

The effectiveness of the functioning of the e-parliament is largely determined by considering both the

challenges and the prospects of digitalization of the offline parliament. Given this, it is worth paying attention to the multi-level information security of the e-parliament and the need to develop the digitalization of the parliament not as a process of mainly technological modernization, but primarily as a factor in the complex transformation of the institution of the parliament. It is advisable to consider the socio-economic and political specificities of the donor and recipient countries to more effectively borrow and use the best foreign practices by those countries whose parliaments are at the beginning of the path of digital modernization.

The role of the e-parliament in the implementation of the 16th SDG is that digitalization, thanks to which the conventional parliament is transformed into an e-parliament, has the potential to increase citizens' trust in this institution and involve them in the decision-making process at the highest level. At the same time, further theoretical and empirical studies of all possible aspects of

this topic will contribute to the identification of achievements and gaps on the way to the realization of the idea of e-parliament as the most effective, accountable, and inclusive institution. The practices of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the Baltic region in this area, specifically, the phased digitalization of the parliament, is particularly relevant for Ukrainian scientists to investigate. Therewith, one should consider the factors that correlate with the features of the digital modernization of the legislative body, namely, the population size, the level of the gross domestic product at purchasing power parity per capita, and the democracy index.

Acknowledgements

Conflict of Interest

None.

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Електронний парламент як чинник сталого розвитку: історія та перспективи

Тамара Мазур

Доктор юридичних наук
Національна академія внутрішніх справ
03055, пл. Солом'янська, 1, м. Київ, Україна
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6220-5827

Спиридон Флогайтіс

Професор
Афінський національний університет імені Каподистрії
10672, вул. Університетська, 30, м. Афіни, Греція
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7510-0792

Анотація

Актуальність і значущість дослідження історії та перспектив електронного парламентаризму як чинника сталого розвитку обумовлена людиноцентристським баченням ідеї цифровізації парламенту. За мету автори обрали розгляд системи цифрових інструментів, що утворюють е-парламент, у контексті його ролі в реалізації Цілі сталого розвитку «Мир, справедливість та сильні інститути». Основними методами наукового пізнання, які використано під час написання статті, є методи контент-аналізу, аналогії та порівняння. Визначено рівні багатоступеневої системи захищеності інформації та даних як ключового елементу безпеки цифровізації парламенту, окреслено виклики, пов'язані з правовим, економічним, суспільним, технологічним аспектами процесу. На підставі аналізу правових актів і безпосередньо вебсайтів парламентів держав різного індексу демократії (Велика Британія, Ісландія, Швеція, Польща, Чехія, країни Балтії) сформульовано світові тенденції означеного напряму. Автор акцентує на притаманності певних особливостей і невизначеності наслідків цифровізації парламенту в державах, які мають різний рівень розвитку демократії та різні економічні показники. Встановлено, що перехід парламентарів у спілкуванні з виборцями від традиційної комунікації в офлайн форматі до формату онлайн сприяє реалізації в політичній сфері відкритості, інклюзивності, співробітництва й участі. Результати дослідження покликані актуалізувати питання необхідності введення нових електронних парламентських інструментів для впровадження механізмів цифрової демократії в суспільстві

Ключові слова:

е-парламент; участь громадян в ухваленні рішень; інклюзивність парламенту; парламентські цифрові інструменти; цифровізація