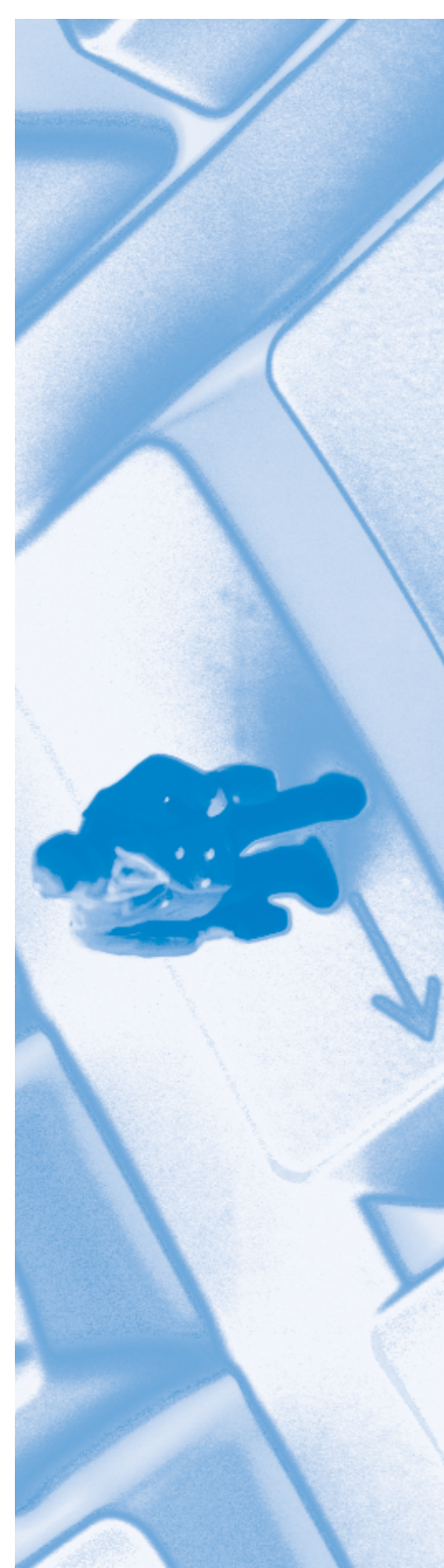


## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





## METHODOLOGY

As in the last four years Region Emilia-Romagna undertook the measurement of the quality of the web sites and of the level of sophistication of 19 on line services offered by local Public Administrations providing final services to citizens and enterprises irrespective of their legal status.

In the benchmarking web based analysis in 2006 three new measurement lines – usability, accessibility and multichannel delivery – have been added to the usual availability, quality and interactivity. In addition sets of new indicators were added to all the lines. Comparability with previous years and trends have been in any case granted.

These changes turned the regional benchmarking report into a true supporting tool for the integrated analysis of on line supplied services (front office): each report is aimed at checking the progress in the quality of the web sites and of the public services starting from the on line availability, mandatory condition to be satisfied to make the user accede to a public service on line up to the multichannel delivery service supply, through all the above mentioned features. This is the logical path followed in the analysis that will also be used to present the most relevant results.

## AVAILABILITY ON THE INTERNET

The availability on line of Local Public Administrations does not highlight significant changes in comparison to the past years, even though some progress are apparent due to the verification of an increased number of institutions with their own site domains. Only 2 Municipalities – at the time of the report publication – are not available on line (3 at the time of the web analysis). Institutions representing associated Municipalities rank at the bottom as 27% of them are not on line yet.

## QUALITY: A GENERAL PICTURE AND SPECIFICATIONS

Overall, the quality of the sites that have been analysed has increased further in 2006, a positive trend which is continuing: the regional average reached 40% (Figure 1). This trend is confirmed at provincial level: Modena, Bologna, Ferrara and Ravenna are above the regional average whilst Parma equals it. Piacenza has still the worst results, but mostly due to the initial disadvantaged position: in 2006 in fact it has increased at the same rate as other provincial areas.

The average quality of the web sites of our municipalities has improved on the whole, thanks to the increased number of municipalities that reached a level of 50% and above: from 95 municipalities in 2005 at that level we have moved to 120 in 2006.

Also small municipalities (with less than 5000 inhabitants) have showed a better quality: in 2006 there are 27 municipalities of this kind above 50%, versus 16 in 2005 and 8 in 2004. Of the 27, half manage the information services in an associated manner, and 8 belong to the provincial area of Bologna.

As regards the single groups of indicators, the more evident improvement is related to the group “Specific offices and services”, “Transparency” and “Relational nature of the web site”; smaller steps have been taken in the “e-procurement” area, in “multiple languages” and “user centricity/web site organisation”. This indicates that Municipalities still find it difficult to use innovative tools, closer to users’ needs and still prefer more traditional forms of contact, particularly when it comes to particular users groups (immigrants, elderly, etc.) (Figure 2).

Focusing on individual indicators a positive effect can be derived from projects co-ordinated by the regional government.

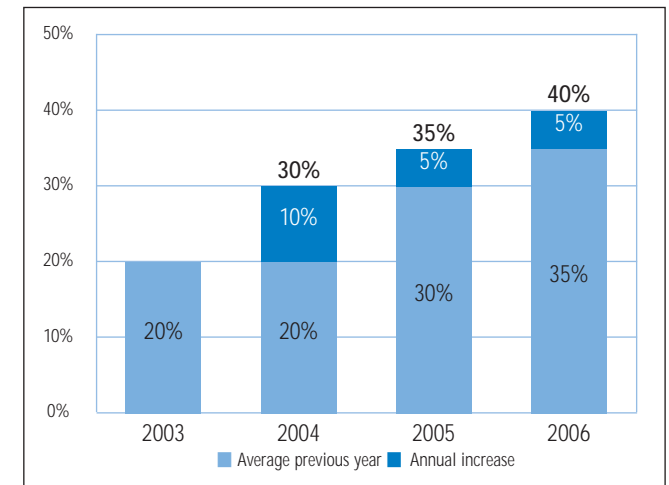


Figure 1 – Regional average for the web sites quality (comparison 2003/2006)

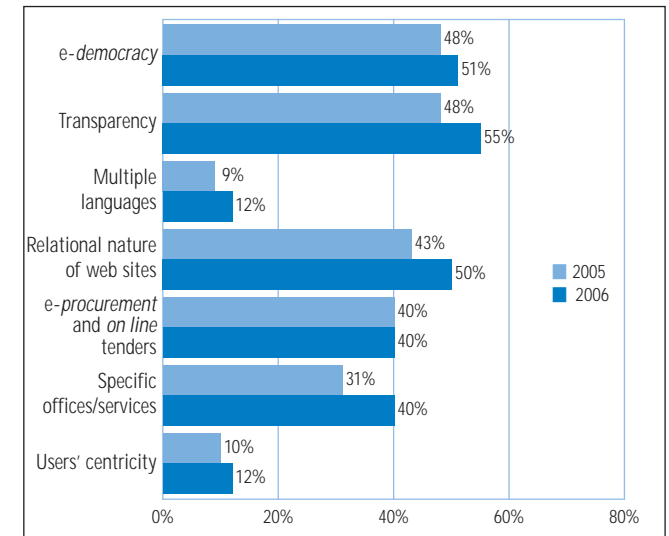


Figure 2 – Regional Average on groups of indicators (2005-2006)

The small but evident increase in forum and opinion pools is mostly due to the implementation of the regional web site <http://www.partecipa.net> realised by the Partecipa.net project, a joint product from regional and national programmes, that provided all local authorities with an e-democracy kit.

As per the data on e-procurement, almost all municipalities had a better result, thanks to the regional web site <http://www.intercent.it/rer/index.html>, implemented by the regional agency IntercentER, to which various sites are linked. From IntercentER 2006 report a data is clear: whilst the registration to the web site is quite diffused, the usage is less ample; whilst 69% municipalities registered, only 54% purchases through the platform.

Critical elements revealed by the analysis are due to the still lacking innovation of the information organisation in the sites and on the multiple languages indicator. Sites today still reproduce the traditional organisation based on offices or, at best, operational area (ie: personal identity, constructions, ); less common is the organisation on life events (having a child, travelling...) or on personalisation (citizen, parent, student)

Besides, still a minority of web sites offer pages in a different language, and when it happens it is mostly related to other European languages translated pages aimed at tourists; still services aimed at non UE immigrants or coming from eastern Europe (social services, labour, register office) have not developed adequate translations:

in this context a positive example is provided by Casalecchio di Reno (Bo) with <http://www.stranieri-acasalecchio.com/> that offers information for immigrants and a guide to registry office services in French, English Arabian and Albanian.

### INTRACTIVITY, COMPLETENESS, EXHAUSTIVENESS AND PERSONALISED SERVICES

When measuring the interactivity of on line service we assess Public Administration ability to interact with users via web: in 2006 it increases by one point (63%). The services' level is medium-high but to reach a faster increase rate (as it was witnessed in the past) a joint effort is necessary

Tabella 1 – Regional average on interactivity – all services

| Servizi                                      | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Change of address                            | 24%  | 30%  | 34%  | 35%  |
| ID request                                   | 22%  | 27%  | 30%  | 32%  |
| Building permission                          | 22%  | 33%  | 36%  | 42%  |
| Unique authorisation/Environment permit      | 41%  | 44%  | 45%  | 44%  |
| Municipal tax on real estates                | 57%  | 76%  | 79%  | 82%  |
| Payment of waste disposal tax                | 29%  | 47%  | 52%  | 53%  |
| Payment of car fines                         | 15%  | 28%  | 34%  | 35%  |
| Application to kindergarden                  | 41%  | 60%  | 59%  | 64%  |
| Loan of books in public libraries            | 71%  | 79%  | 87%  | 91%  |
| Registration with the GP                     | 4%   | 24%  | 21%  | 35%  |
| Health tests and medical visits booking      | 16%  | 35%  | 32%  | 41%  |
| Fuel grants for agricultural machine         | 14%  | 31%  | 39%  | 47%  |
| Job search                                   | 70%  | 92%  | 92%  | 96%  |
| ESF training                                 | 97%  | 98%  | 100% | 100% |
| Enrolment to universities                    | 81%  | 91%  | 95%  | 100% |
| Company registration                         | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Cadastral services                           | 50%  | 50%  | 50%  | 50%  |
| Regional corporate tax                       | 100% | 100% | 100% | 50%  |
| Enterprise communication with the job centre | 0%   | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Average on all services                      | 47%  | 60%  | 62%  | 63%  |

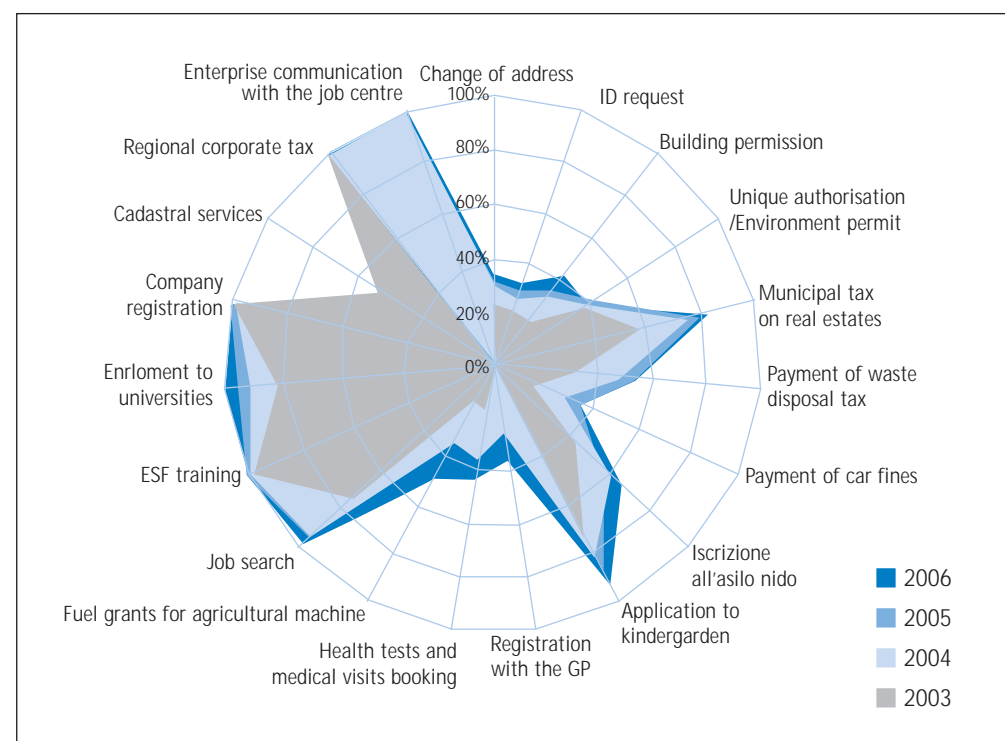


Figure 3 – Regional average on interactivity (2003-2006)

Notwithstanding this element, there are many best practices in our region, (Parma, Modena, Argenta, Riccione) that need to be valued and promoted to start the necessary road to imitation for all the other municipalities that can get added value out of this experience, also by using different tools and methodologies.

Services with higher interactivity are those deployed on a provincial scale, municipal in nature but delivered by the provincial administrations or other bodies. It is the case for the payment of ICI (municipal tax on real estates), TARSU (tax for waste disposal) or the loan of books by public libraries. Services directly managed by municipalities stay on medium-low levels.

A small decrease (-38%) has been witnessed due to the request of authorisation to new industrial plants (due mostly to the still on going revision of the web site of Provincia di Bologna) and to the Regional corporate tax payment, that requires various steps (and visits to different sites) before allowing for payment (Table 1, Figure 3).

The series 2003-2006 at a provincial level on all services proves a constant improvement in time, that now comes to a stop.

The 4 municipalities with better performance are Parma, Modena, Argenta (FE) e Riccione (RN): the first two are main cities in their provincial area and stay along the Via Emilia, whilst the second two have more than 15.000 inhabitants. This fact proves the close link between dimension and location of the municipality, on the one hand, and quality of services/interactivity on the other. But it does not suffice.

As a matter of fact the first 3 cities in the list have always given proof of their specific entrepreneurship, investing in services technological innovation and reaching a high level of interactivity, so that they came to be recognised as best practices to be followed at regional level.

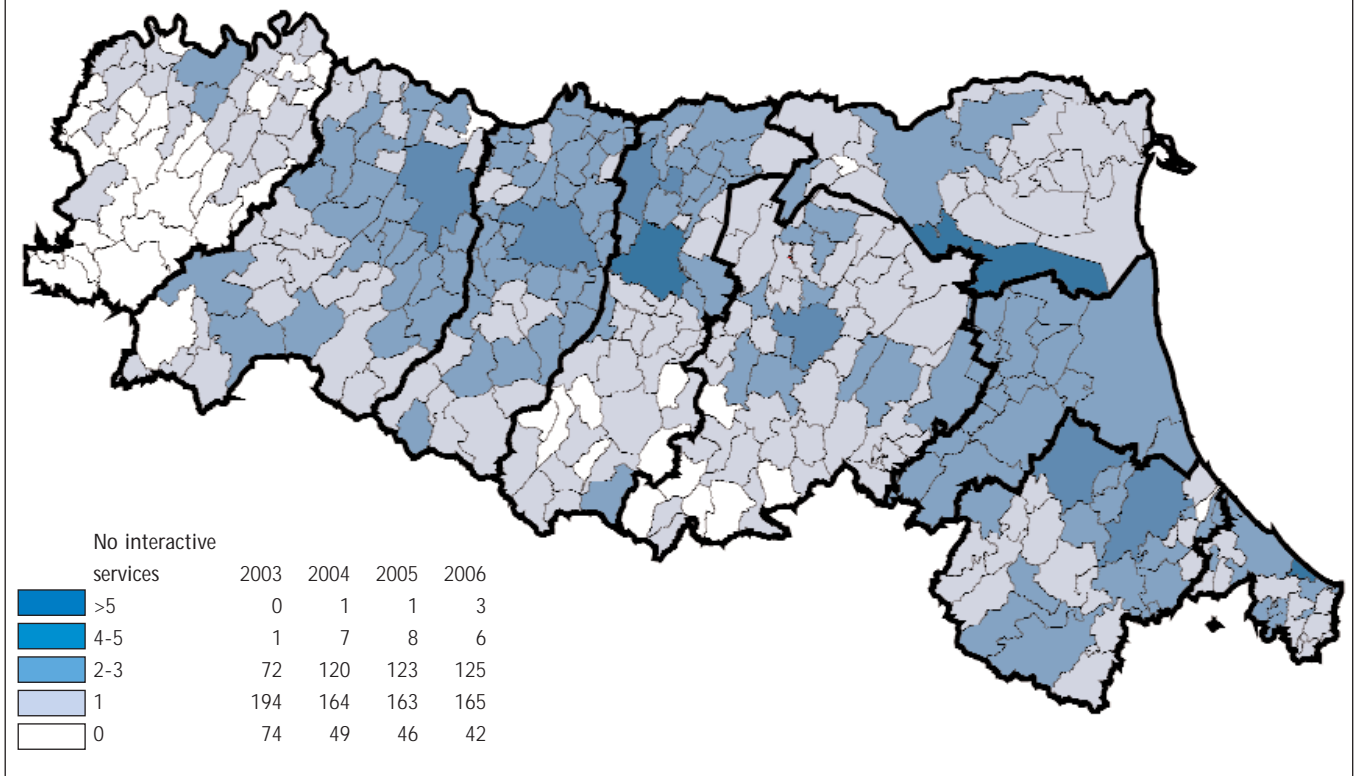
Moving to measure the number of interactive services (level 3 in eEurope) by each municipality, the number of municipalities with more than 5 such services has increased, as the ones which have 2-3. The 3 services which are highly interactive and present in many municipalities are the ones which are deployed by the provincial administration or other such bodies (Figure 4).

We have also considered the territorial cohesion level, valuing the territorial homogeneity of the data referred to municipalities in the same provincial area. The result is a general decline of the cohesion element: in none of the nine provincial territories this item has been increas-

ing constantly in the last four years. In other words, inequalities among municipalities as regards interactivity of on line services tend to increase (Figure 5).

A further analysis was made on small municipalities, verifying the possible influence of the shared management of the ICT department on the interactivity level: it was aimed at understanding if this element can constitute a support to bridge the gap with larger municipalities and their performance. This analysis tells us that the shared management of lct amongst various municipalities has a positive effect: for micro municipalities (up to 5000 inhabitants) this element makes a difference, but

Figure 4 – Number of effective interactive services (at least at level 3 of e-Europe) by Municipalities



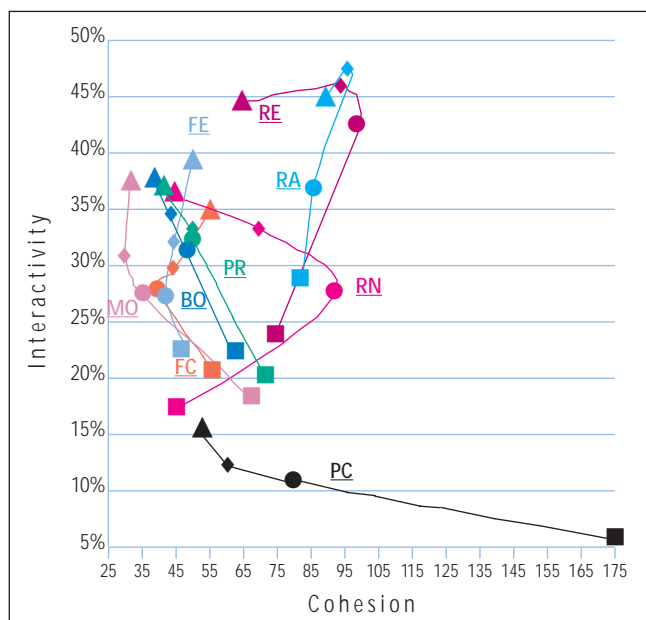


Figure 5 – Average interactivity a territorial cohesion of municipalities in the nine provincial territories. 2003-2006

not in the other classes of municipalities (Figure 6). In 2006, municipalities that still scored 0% on average interactivity of their services were 14 (Besenzone, Bettola, Calendasco, Coli, Corte Brugnatella, Farini, Ferriere, Morfasso, Ottone, San Pietro In Cerro, Travo, Vernasca, Zerba, Camugnano), all but one in the Piacenza provincial area. Municipalities with no interactive (level 3) services are 42, more than half in Piacenza area. The group is peopled mostly of small (under 5000 inhabitants) municipalities, a part from 2 (Cadeo: 5.631 and Gatteo: 7.475). From this breakdown one can list elements which are common to local authorities with some tendency to implement interactive services: belonging to a specific provincial area, number of inhabitants, whether in plain/mountain area.

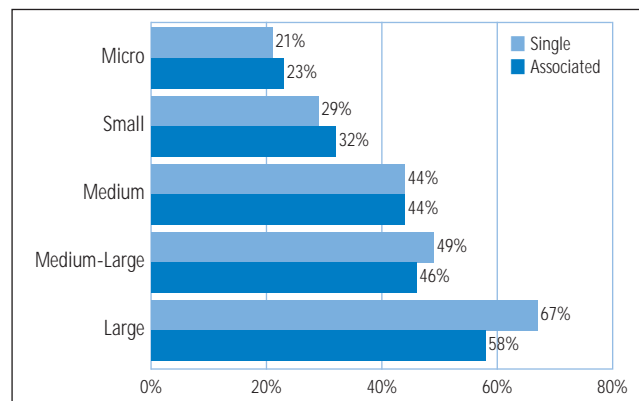


Figure 6 – Interactivity levels of Municipalities by size and shared management of ICT (municipal data, 2006)

Completeness has to do with services' quality, and measuring it implies using further indicators from the ones devised by eEurope: these are tracking (the possibility to follow on line a specific procedure) or the possibility to consult databases. Comparing the tendency

for interactivity with the one of completeness one can see that not always they coincide: in services such as enrolment to university, job search, training courses search, libraries loans and ICI one observes a gap between interactivity levels (high) and completeness (low). This means that some complementary functionalities that would make the service more interesting for the users and increase the quality of the overall service have not been implemented.

A further element to explore is exhaustiveness: it means verifying the presence of all the interactivity indicators in all eEurope levels reached by the service. So, if we have a level 4 service, it will be considered exhaustive only if all interactivity indicators are present also at level 2 and 3: only in this way the service can be the reference point for the citizen from the action of finding information (level 1) to the end of the procedure (3 or 4).

The evaluation of exhaustiveness has led to the classifi-

Table 2

| Kind of services in relation to exhaustiveness                  | Services classified in the different categories (as really interactive at least at level 3 of e-Europe)  |
|---|--|
| All exhaustive (positive judgment)                              | Enrolment to universities – Registration to enterprises register<br>Regional corporate tax payment<br>Communication on jobs – Libraries' loans   |
| Many Pas, little exhaustive (negative judgment)                 | Job search<br>Municipal tax on real estate (payment)<br>Search of training courses   |
| Little Pas, but exhaustive (neutral judgment, towards positive) | SUAP unique autorisations/Environment permit – Fuel grants for agriculture machine<br>Application to kindergarten – Change of residence<br>Tax for waste disposal (payment) – ID request |
| Little Pas little exhaustive (negative judgment)                | Car fines payment<br>Permission to build<br>Booking of medical tests   |
| No interactivity (negative judgment)                            | Choice of registration with the GP<br>Cadastral services<br>Regional corporate tax payment   |

cation of Table 2 (Figure 7).

Last element taken into account is the personalisation of services, which allows the distribution of a CUSTOMISED service, with all function that can satisfy users' requirements.

Such functionality are: request for authentication, user recognition, pre-populated forms, the check of the state of a procedure, access to the completed procedures "archive", communication of deadline via SMS, other info via SMS.

Indicators with highest values for each service are those

related to authentication, check of the state of a procedure, procedures' archive; with lower values: user recognition, pre populated forms, deadline via SMS, other info via SMS/email (Figure 8).

#### ACCESSIBILITY AND USABILITY

As per accessibility, there are 195 (57%) municipalities with no "objective" indicator (for objective we intend: W3C mark A or above, CSS mark, XHTML mark, accessibility declaration according to national law 4/2004). There are anyhow positive trends that need to be under-

lined: first of all the provincial area of Ravenna shows great attention on this issue, even if with different results among different authorities; the provincial area of Parma shows attention, even if on a limited set of indicators, the plain area of Piacenza, Reggio Emilia and Modena have good results. 3 specific municipalities Sant'Agostino (FE), San Mauro Pascoli (BO) and Pianoro (BO) have all objective indicators regarding easy access as positive.

Indicators related to empirical test (possibility to browse with keyboard, possibility to enlarge the types, SW vali-

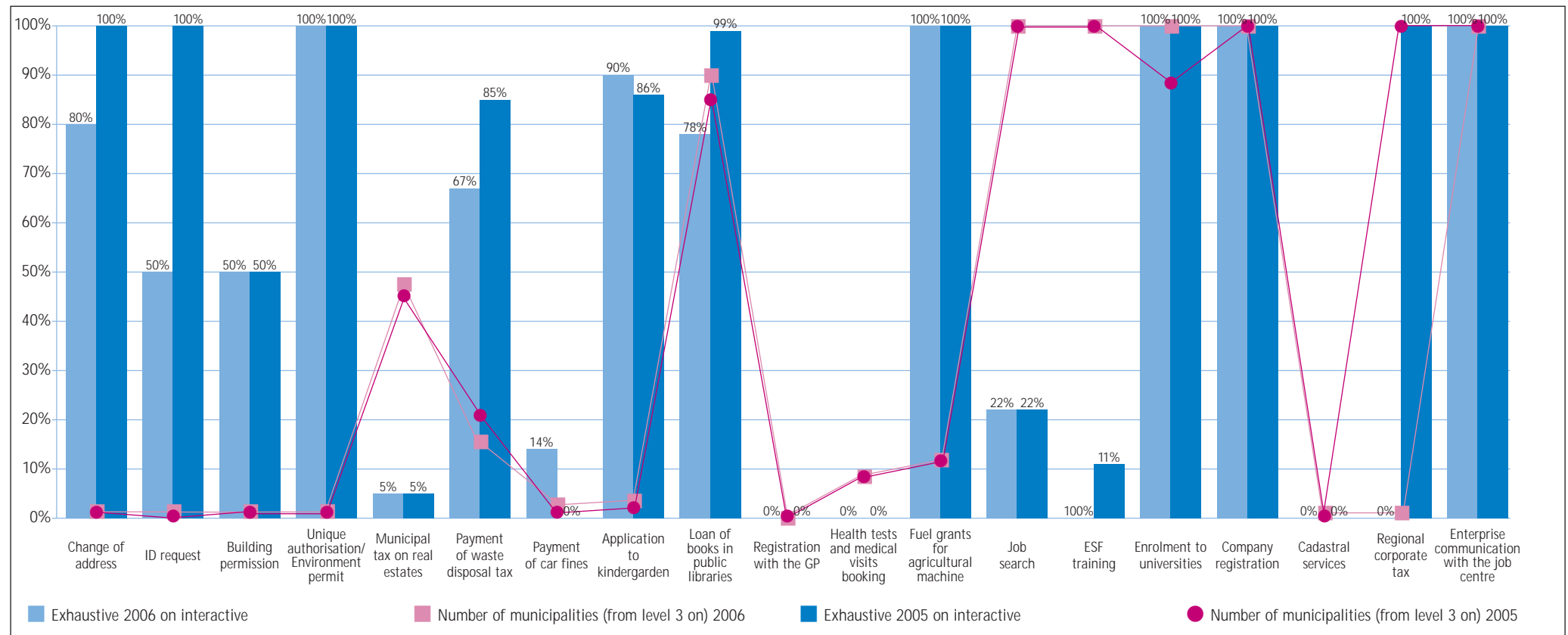


Figure 7 – Exhaustiveness of really interactive services (per number of PAs providing the service at level 3)

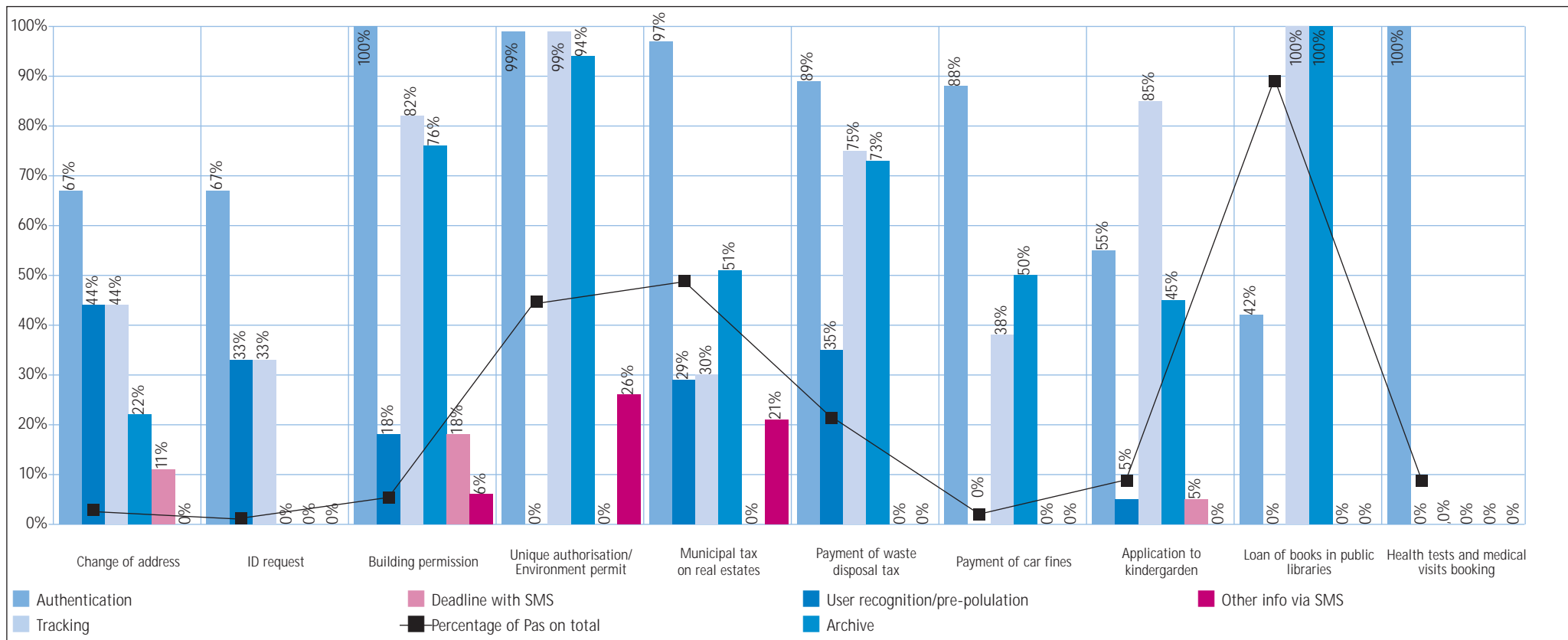


Figure 8 – Personalisation indicators by all relevant services

dation) are present only in some of the main cities and with little territorial homogeneity. Romagna scores better than Emilia. There are 5 municipalities with three positive indicators on empirical test: Monte San Pietro (BO), Mordano (BO), Cento (FE), Sant'Agostino (FE) e Savignano Sul Rubicone (FC).

Regional average for all local authorities web sites in respect to usability (it measures easiness and quality of the interaction with a web site or a software) are quite good, with a regional average reaching 50%.

The best provincial results are reached in Ravenna,

which scores 11 points above the regional average; the worst provincial area is Piacenza, with 37%.

A further item related to usability is the easiness in finding on line services; the majority of municipalities has an average result on this indicator quite high: only 17 do not reach 50%, and 8 do not give any information on their services. 41 municipalities have all municipal services easy to be found. Services easier to be located are: job search, registration to enterprises register, communication linked to employment, Cadastre, Regional corporate tax.

The usage of a search engine is working particularly well in the case of enrolment to universities: this means that on line enrolment is not particularly evident in the web sites. Anyhow it needs to be said that the survey was made in a period in which universities' enrolment was over, so it did not appear in the home page. The service which is harder to be found ("you reach it if you are lucky") is the libraries' loan: this is distributed via one web site per provincial area and if the single municipalities (who own the libraries) do not offer a link to that site the search results complicated. This happens for

44% municipalities in our region.

At last, the service "Unique authorisation for new productive plants – Environment permit " is the one for which it is more usual not to find information, as per the vast majority of services which are the sole competence of municipalities.

#### MULTICHANNEL DELIVERY

This indicator has improved in relation to the previous year but stays rather low. Four alternative channels have been studied: toll free number, call centre, SMS and Digital television. The one most used is SMS, to inform citizens on municipal activities. This service is activated by a registration on the web site, where citizens can choose issue they'd like to be kept updated on. Mostly this service is available for a limited number of activity areas. It is followed by the toll free number, normally attached to the Office for relationship with citizens. Only 11% municipalities have activated one or more alternative channels, and they are almost all in the plain area (Collecchio (PR), Castelnuovo Rangone (MO), Bologna, Carpi (MO)).

#### THE GUIDELINES FOR THE NEW TELECOMMUNICATION PLAN OF THE EMILIA-ROMAGNA (2007-2009)

With the approval of the guidelines to the new Telecommunication Plan of Emilia-Romagna (2007-2009) – PITER starts the new three years planning period whose modality for the first time were described in the text of a Regional Law. (11/2004 "Sviluppo regionale della società dell'informazione") In particular the law sets in an institutional framework all the initiatives and the policies linked to telecommunications. Main distinctive features are: the participative approach at the base of its preparation, focusing on the requirements of the regional territory and promoting networking actions;

unitary initiatives on telecommunications have been planned by the different regional General Directions; the supporting role provided by the Region Emilia-Romagna to the Local Public Administrations in identifying and purchasing technological services (authentication tools, data center, document archiving etc.). In practice this strategic design will foresee the development of some infrastructural projects based on LEPIDA – the broadband regional network - that will supply to all the public local administrations homogeneous and shared services.

#### USAGE OF E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES BY ENTERPRISES/CITIZENS

Notwithstanding the clear efforts on the part of Emilia-Romagna Public administration to substantiate the concept of e-government, usage of such services is not very relevant. It is therefore strategic to understand the "demand" side, describing how final users – citizens and enterprises – use these tools, what they prefer doing on the net and what they wish to find on line in the future.

#### E-government services' demand from enterprises

The survey on the usage of internet from enterprises in Emilia-Romagna (including the use of the web to relate to the public administration, that we comment here) has touched on three sectors: agro-industry, tourism and multimedia.

Almost 2 enterprises on 3 (63,7%) of the analysed sectors have used internet to communicate with the public administration in the last 12 months, and it proved a satisfactory experience.

Mostly, companies use the web in relation to the PA to gather information (87%) and download forms (86,6%). The less frequent action is payment on line (on average 53,2%): this goes to confirm an inferior availability to

use the net for complex procedures.

Which are the most used services?

Top of the rank we find the service for tax declaration, used by an average 52,9% of enterprises that used the web to communicate with PA. It is followed by the service for certification request (on average 40%). These percentages are encouraging and push PA to strengthen this offer.

Less frequent though is the use of services in the realm of request for authorisation and search for funding (with an average 28% for both options). Still small is the percentage of PA using on line tendering.

The graph that follows indicates reasons for not using on line services (Figure 9).

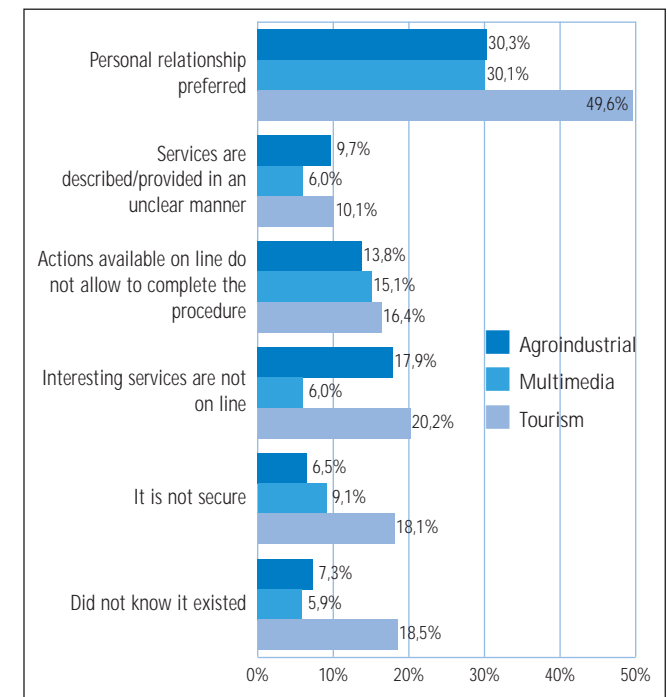


Figure 9 – Reasons for enterprises not to use the web site while communicating with the Pa in the last 12 months

To better understand these data and identify a possible peculiarity in the on line relation between enterprises and PA, we have analysed also the more general attitude from the part of enterprises to use internet in their relations with their partners (in traditional and strategic functions).

From the interviews it is quite evident that companies use Ict and internet in a very intensive way only for the internal activities (ie: documents interchange among colleagues) but much less when it comes to other functions, where it stays well under 50%.

In this picture the PA features a role of privileged partner for enterprises in the usage of this communication channel. It is therefore even more relevant that PA develops an offer more coherent with this audience needs: in doing so it will in fact develop and support a more general fluency with this media, and not only for procedures having to do with PA itself.

## Demand of e-government services from citizens

For data on 2006 we have utilised the Multiscopo survey from ISTAT that in our region has covered 2563 persons (in 1091 families): the surveys covers many issues, among which the use of ICT. The ISTAT methodology differs from the one used in the UNDERSTAND project, that we have used in the past, but in general there is coherence among the sets of data and trends are not dissimilar.

The survey indicates a still partial usage of the web site to communicate with the PA on the part of citizens. In 2006 37,17% of internet users has obtained information form PA web sites, one on four citizen has downloaded forms and 11% has sent filled forms. These percentages are much lower when calculated on the basis of total population.

The fact that 35,87% of Internet users are potentially interested in the use of the on line PA is quite encouraging.

Analysing services reveals that users (be them actual or potential) express a strong demand for General Registry Office services: request of personal certification and delivery of certificates are interesting for 82% and 79% of potential users. They are followed by health services (with reference to on line booking of hospital visits and admission) with 78%.

A more general observation: the examined on line services show very different rates of interest when considering actual users and potential ones. It is interesting to note that a higher potentiality of usage is expressed for those services that are perceived as non too complex, based on standard procedures and where the personal contact is not too relevant.

This reflection is reinforced from the examination of the motivations expressed by Internet users who did not visit a PA web site: for most of them the main motivation is the fact that they prefer personal contact.

The Multiscopo survey allows us to compare the performance in this area among the different Italian regions: Emilia-Romagna is basically in line with the national average, taking into consideration the demography factor: our region in fact is distinguished by a high percentage of old people, on average less in the habit to use new technologies. So, in Emilia-Romagna percentage of internet users that choose to communicate via web with the PA is 37,2% against a national average of 37,4%. The result is slightly under the national average when it comes to more complex actions such as download and send forms: 24,8% and 11,8% respectively in Emilia-Romagna, 26,8% and 13,8% on average in Italy.