

## **SUMMARY OF MAIN RESULTS**







## WEB PRESENCE

In October 2007, 97% of institutions taken into consideration (341 Municipalities, 52 types of association, 9 Provinces and the Region) were represented on line, although with differences in their presence. The other organizations, which were the focus of regional benchmarking analysis, such as Universities, AUSL, Chambers of Commerce, had already been present on line for several years. The organizations not present on line were 11, and for the most part types of association.<sup>1</sup> The first analysis of web-available contents seems to stress that only 30% of Municipalities have in place sites which are rich in information and services. At the extreme opposite, ca 10% show a backbone structure or at most provide tourist information and general descriptions of their territory. Finally, 60% offer innovative information and functions only for a limited number of online services.

## QUALITY

For the fifth consecutive year, the quality value of Public Administration sites has reported a 5 percentage-point increase, touching 46%. If we consider all quality indicators, and not solely the ones which are comparable with the previous years, 286 out of 341 Municipalities have

shown a quality value exceeding 50% (namely, their web sites have more than half the analysed indicators) and only 4 are at zero value. The Municipalities of Piacenza, Modena, Bologna and Cesena (with a value of 95%) are in the first places.

At Municipal level, the web sites, where qualitative features are better developed, are organised by authorities located in the plain area, and around the main cities, while lower attention to quality is paid in web sites from the areas around Piacenza and in the mountains. Smaller Municipalities, although reporting higher improvement rates than bigger municipalities, seem to be less ready to add innovative items: only 22% of Municipalities with less than 5000 people, have sites with medium-high quality percentages, with respect to their bigger counterparts. For these Municipalities, their small size has not been a constraint, due to their participation in Provincial activities and in associations, which manage on behalf of Municipalities the services of information systems and other initiatives linked to the e-government in 63% of cases.

During the past year, the PA web sites have been enriched with tools and information for all the examined areas (e-democracy, transparency, multilingualism, e-procurement and on line calls for tender, special offices and services, and site organization), although the areas where most efforts have been made, include content organisation in the sites, and the setting up of virtual offices and services relating to specific functions.

The following are the most relevant features found in each thematic family:

■ **E-democracy:** In comparison with a thorough presence of indicators of general contact, such as the availability of information on the management of institutions, or the mayor's e-mail, found in 89% and 71% of cases, the presence of tools for an increased citizens' participation in government is much lower. Only 49%

of institutions make available on line their binding resolutions; also the presence of forums and on line polls has been reported only for 16% of analysed institutions. However, the highest growth rate (+6%) has also been reported for the tools of direct interaction between citizens and Public Administration.

■ **Transparency:** As already indicated, between 2006 and 2007 indicators showing internal reference points (e-mail address book) and the creation of contacts with the institution (information e-mail) were consolidated and are available in 80% and 82% of cases. Indicators measuring the extent by which an institution is willing to provide information on its operations via the web, such as the right to access to proceedings and information about URP, are much less widespread; they are present in 42% and 48% of cases, respectively (+5 and +2 with respect to 2006). Finally, only in 43% of cases, the date of site updating is reported (+7 with respect to 2006); also one site out of three has a certified e-mail (32%, +20% with respect to 2006). E-mail has become one of the most available tools to contact Public Administration. The review of URP's response time has shown a not very timely response to citizens' enquiries (45% of institutions did not respond or did it one week after request).

■ **Multilingualism:** In 2007 institutional sites offering pages in foreign language were 93 out of a total of 403 (23%). Of these, the majority have pages in foreign language only for tourist information, often located in separate portals, specifically dedicated to these activities. The only institutions providing infor-

<sup>1</sup> Updating note: In 2007 10 associations and 1 Municipality (Gattatico, which activated its web site in 2008) were not on line. At the time of publication of the present report, all the Municipalities in the region are on line.

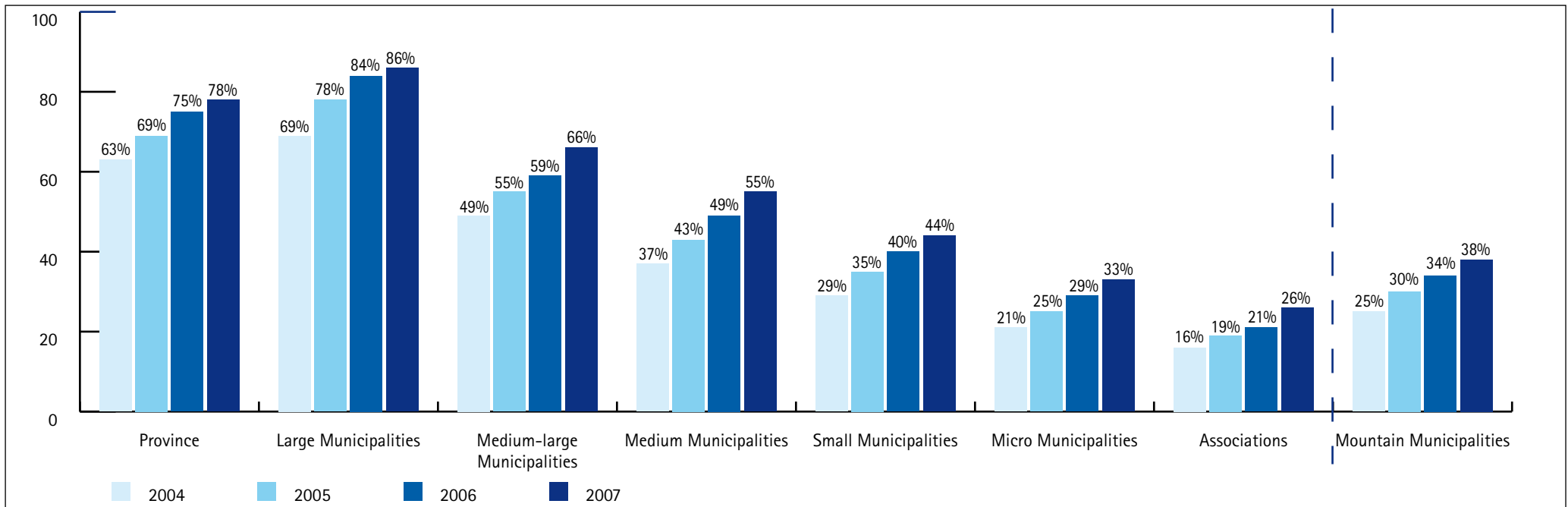
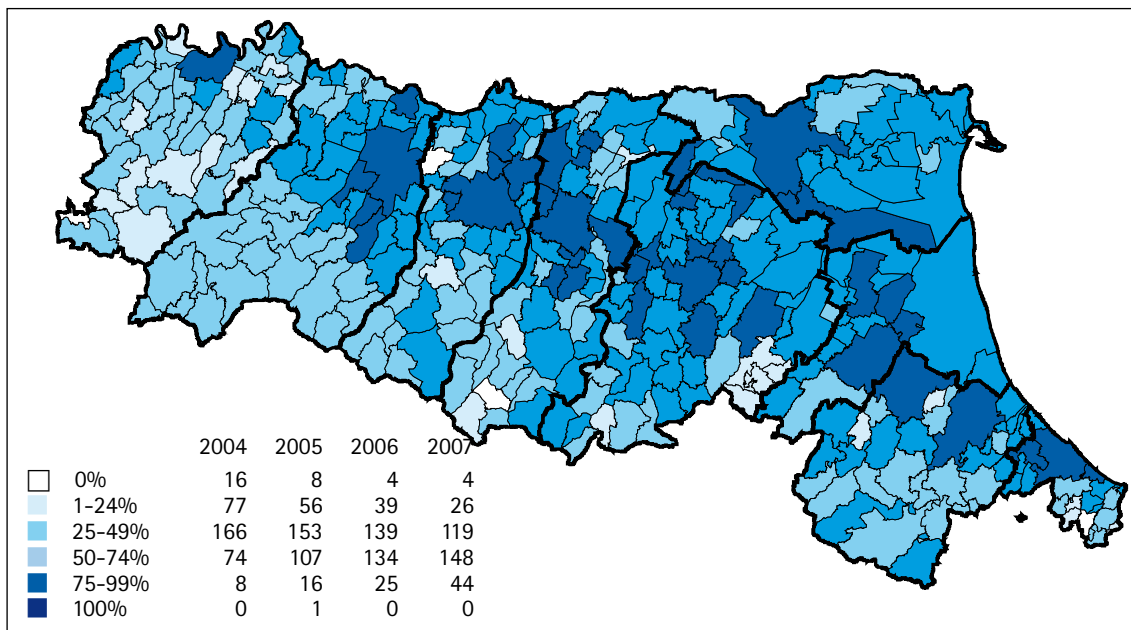
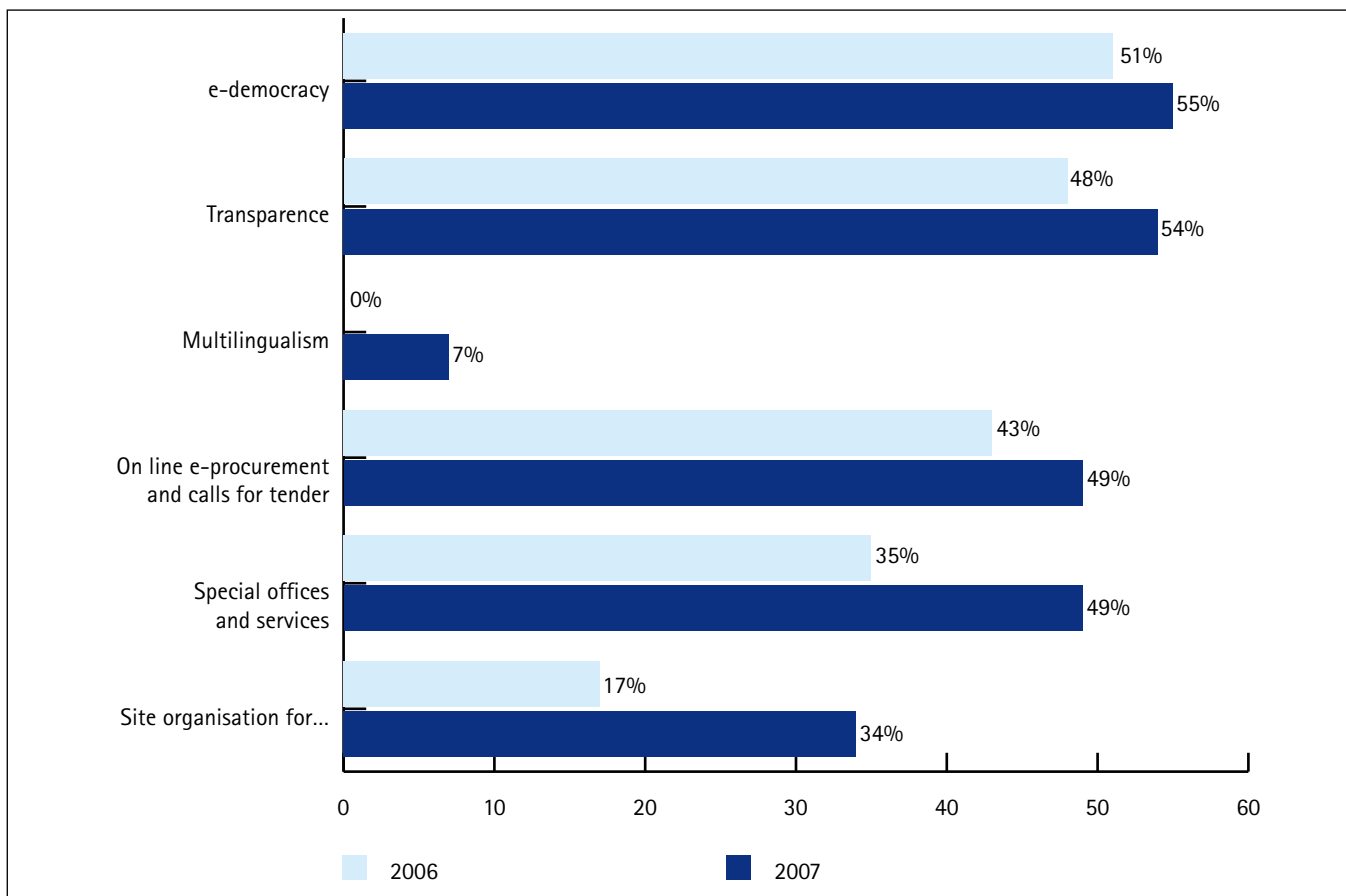


Chart 1 – Web site quality averages per type of analysed institution (only comparable ones)



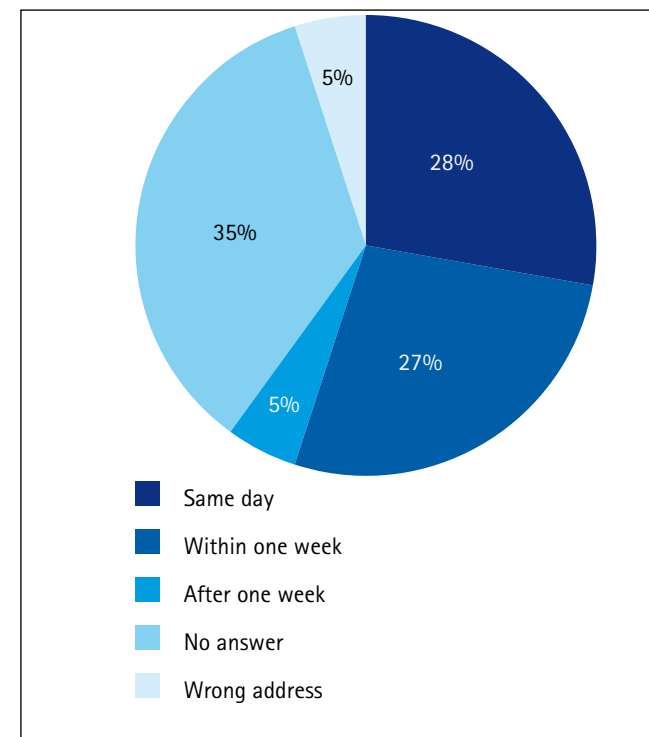
Map 1 – Number of Municipalities by quality average – in % (only comparable indicators)



**Chart 2** – Regional percentages for families of quality indicators (all detected indicators)

mation in foreign languages regarding their governance and institutional activities are the Municipalities of Ligonchio (RE) and Pianoro (BO), the Province of Piacenza and Emilia-Romagna Region (in some thematic portals). As regards the languages, in 80% of cases, the mostly used European languages (English, French, Spanish, German) are to be found, and in the remaining 20% there are pages and services also in other languages (Chinese, Arabic, Albanian, Romanian, Croatian, etc.).

The analysis of some of the services used by foreign citizens in the registry office has shown that there are pages available in foreign language in 7% of Municipalities, and for employment services, in 4 out of 9 Provinces. It should also be underlined that institutions providing services in the areas of Emilia-Romagna with higher presence of non-EU citizens have difficulty in providing services in foreign languages. Only Bologna seems to respond to this demand. These services seem to be more easily available in areas



**Chart 3** – Distribution of URP's response time to an enquiry mail in the sites with institutional mail

where the foreign population is less present (Piacenza, Ferrara and Romagna Provinces).

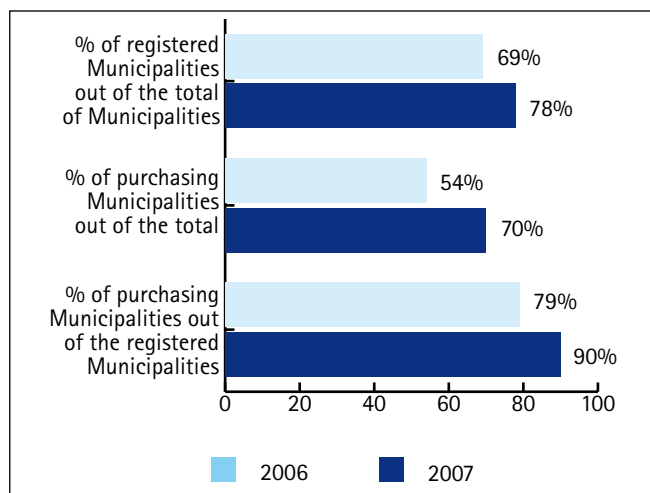
- **E-procurement:** With its 11 percentage-point increase, the presence of PA web sites in Emilia Romagna which publish their calls for tender on line is quite widespread (equal to 86%). Less frequent is the presence of databases with expired calls, which has been detected in 57% of cases (+9% with respect to 2006). An e-procurement platform widely used by institutions deserves a special mention; however, it is

perceived as a back-office tool for which there is no need to place a link in institutional web sites. In Emilia-Romagna 81% of analysed institutions<sup>2</sup> are registered in the regional platform Intercent-ER<sup>3</sup> (+3% with respect to 2006). Of these 90% have made purchases on the platform with an 11 percentage-point increase with respect to the previous year.<sup>4</sup>

- **Presence of specific offices or services:** In 2007 the presence on the web of specific offices and services increased relevantly for Territorial Information Systems (SIT) (+15 percentage points) and One-Stop Shops for building (SUE) (+7 percentage points). These desks are available in Emilia-Romagna in 39% and 32% of cases.

The presence of pages dedicated to One-Stop-Shops for Production Activities (SUAP) is stable, and is found in 56% of cases.

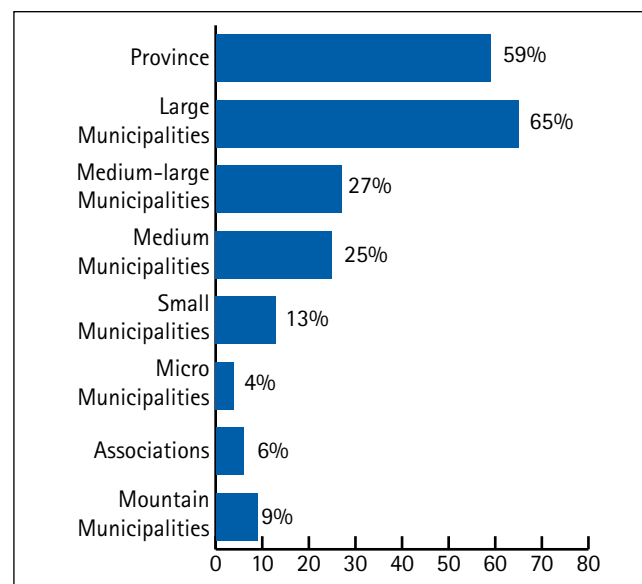
By furthering the analysis of functions pertaining to mapping, the existing big gap is confirmed, between large Municipalities and Provinces on the one hand,



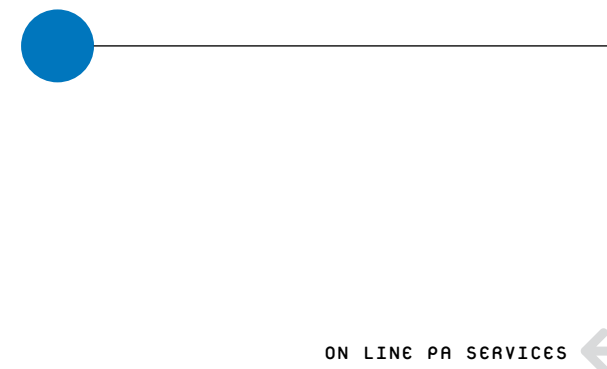
**Chart 4** – Comparison between registered institutions and buyers with Intercent-ER

and Municipalities with less than 50,000 inhabitants and types of associations. The former provide functions comprising descriptive layers, customised search tools, and often integration with SUE, alongside the technical map; the latter instead enable at most the displaying of the technical map and a few descriptive layers.

- **Site layout (users' guidance):** In 2007 41% of institutional sites were still organised in departments/offices only. The remaining part (59%, +15% with respect to 2006) highlighted a layout based on thematic areas and/or keywords (41%). Of these half envisages modes attempting to 'come closer' to users' problems, by presenting contents on the basis of life events (having a child, marriage, etc.), found in 18% of institutions, and customisation (I am a woman, an elderly) in 17%.



**Chart 5** – Percentage value per type of institution, with respect to SIT functions and/or digital maps

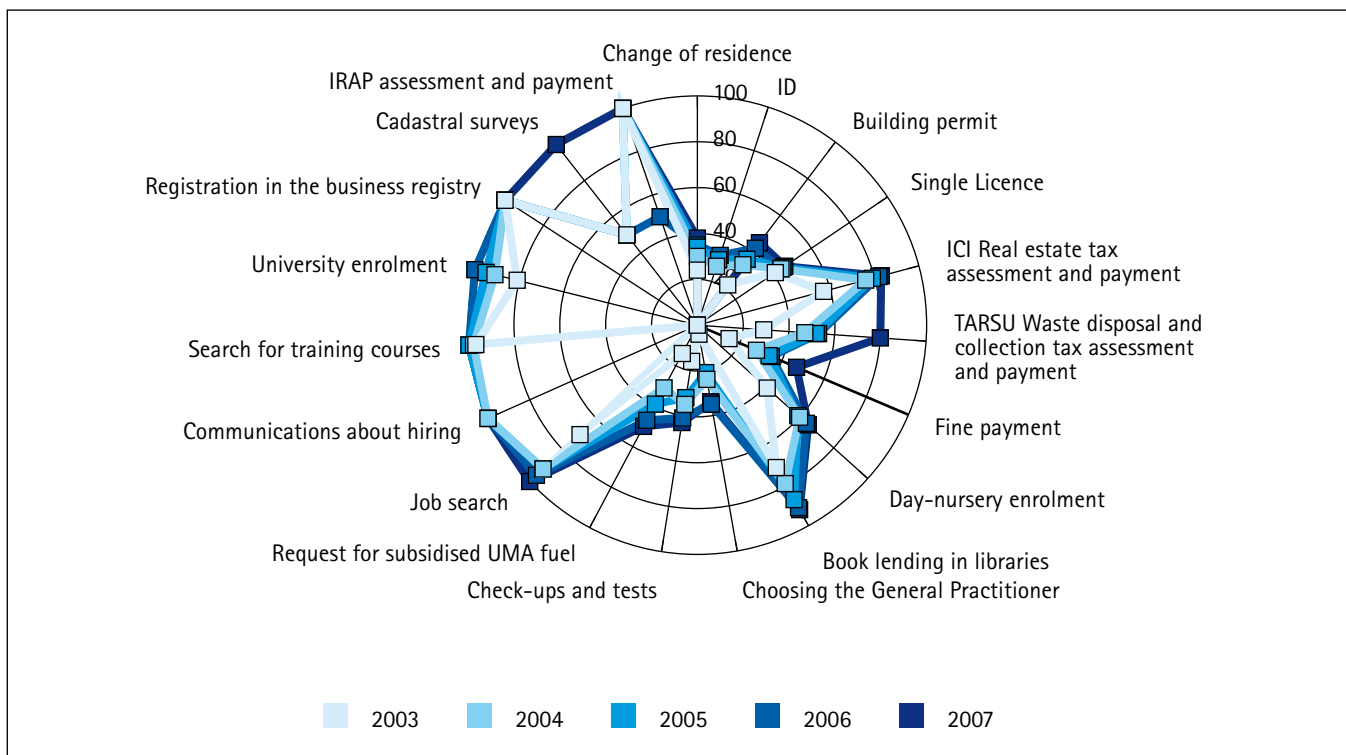


ON LINE PA SERVICES ←

### INTERACTIVITY, EXHAUSTIVENESS, CUSTOMISATION AND COMPLETENESS

- Both the provision of online PA services, and their level of interactivity were progressively expanded in the 2006-2007 period. The regional interactivity average summarising this trend reached 71% in 2007 (+6% with respect to 2006). The increase in the regional average is mostly due to the growth of only 4 services: TARSU/TIA waste disposal and collection tax assessment and payment; payment of fines; cadastral searches, and IRAP assessment and payment. The dissemination and sophistication level of on line services provided by PA in Emilia-Romagna have increased in all provincial areas: from a minimum of +6% reported in the Provinces of Ferrara and Ravenna, to a maximum of +12% for the Provinces of Piacenza and Forli-Cesena. These deviations confirm that this growing trend is widespread all over the region.
- In an international comparison exercise, Emilia-Romagna is placed at a high level, and shows to be com-

<sup>2</sup> 341 Municipalities, 52 associations, 9 Provinces and the Region.  
<sup>3</sup> The analysed institutions do not comprise Rimini and Castel San Pietro, which have their own platform.  
<sup>4</sup> Elaborations by ERVET on IntercentER data



**Chart 6** – 2003-2007 comparison of the regional interactivity averages for comparable on line services

petitive with other European counterparts: for some comparable services, such as library book lending, the level of interactivity of services provided in the Region is equal to 92%, markedly higher than the national average of 12 percentage points and 17 points with respect to the EU average.

- At Municipal level, the real provision of interactive on line services – enabling a two-way exchange between citizens and PA via the web – is not particularly high. In 2007 out of 341 Municipalities in the Region, 85.3% delivered 1-to-3 interactive services (out of 9 which could be compared on a yearly basis). The figures do not change, if we expand the analy-

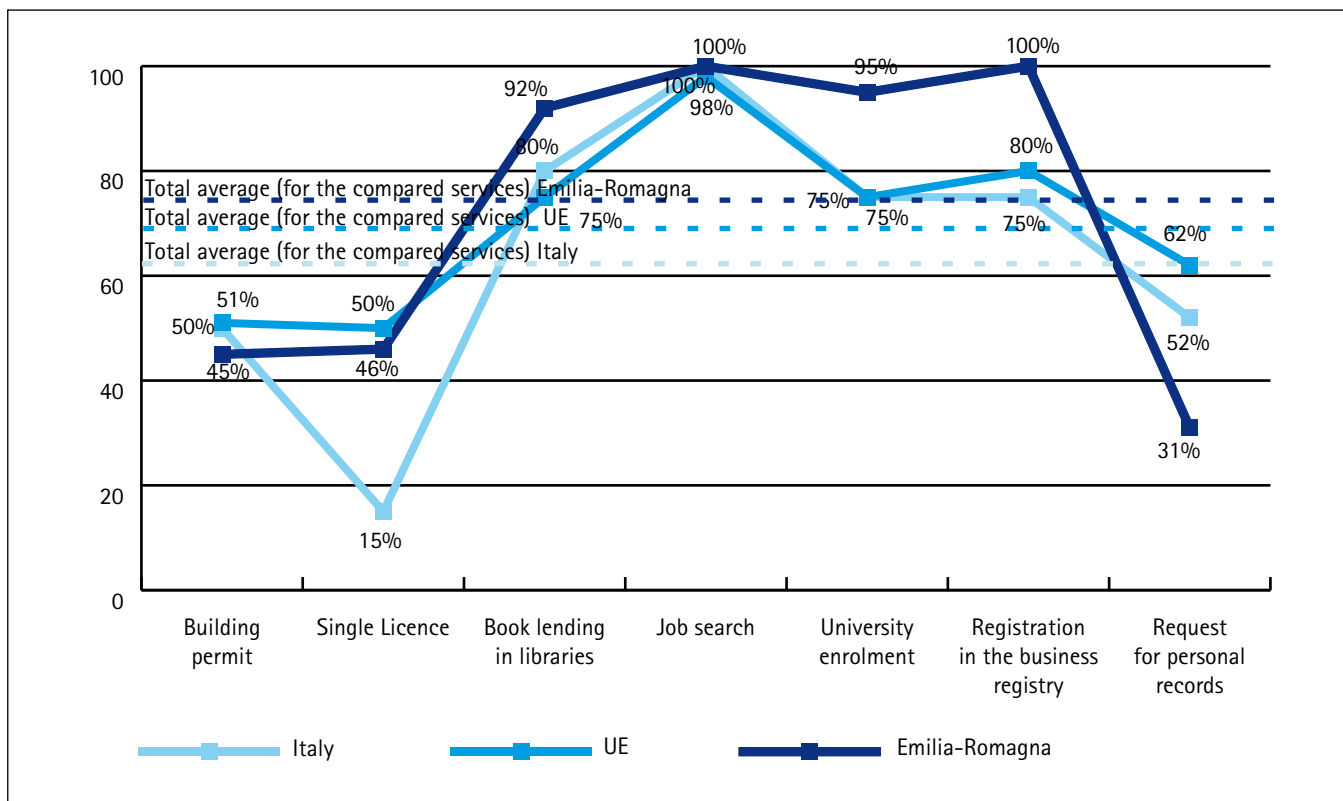
**Table 1**

Number of interactive services per Municipality	Number of Municipalities with interactive services (out of the Municipal 9 detected in 2003)	Number of Municipalities with interactive services (out of the Municipal 12 from 2007)
0	35	34
1	125	124
2-3	166	162
4-5	9	12
+5	6	7

sis to the 12 services taken into consideration since 2007. 84.4% of Municipalities delivered 1-to-3 interactive services. The majority of the Municipalities are located alongside or around the via Emilia, with also a presence in Romagna's Apennines and Ferrara areas. 40% of the regional population can have access to at least 4 fully-interactive Municipal services, and only 2% are not reached by any service at e-Europe 3-4 level.

Only 12 Municipalities in the Region do not provide any information nor any other function on line, with respect to the 9 services, which have been usually measured. If we consider the 12 services, the institutions drop to 9. They are found in the Provinces of Piacenza (7) and Modena (2), have less than 3000 inhabitants, and their citizens and companies are not covered by broadband technologies (ADSL).

- From 2003 to 2007, the number of e-government services and their level of sophistication did not grow evenly in the individual Provinces. By analysing the level of territorial cohesion, deriving from the joint analysis of the interactivity average for the 9 services under Municipal pertinence and existing uniformity between Municipalities in the same Province, it emerges that since 2003 only in two of them (Ferrara and Ravenna) an interactivity increase by Municipal web sites has corresponded to an increase for all the Municipalities. In the remaining provinces (Piacenza, Parma, Reggio Emilia, Modena and Forlì-Cesena) the interactivity increase has been accompanied by a loss of cohesion. The progression of interactivity seems therefore to be due only to initiatives carried out by few Municipalities (often the largest ones), thus contributing to increase disparity in terms of citizens' access.
- As for the 12 Municipal services analysed in 2007, the presence of services with some customisation in



**Chart 7** – Comparison of the Regional average with Europe's and Italy's on 9 comparable services with the eEurope benchmarking

the truly-interactive services (with an e-europe level equal or higher than 3) and/or services envisaging some authentication is infrequent. The presence of one condition or another is reported in 38% of Municipalities taken into consideration with respect to TARSU/TIA Waste disposal and collection tax; in 41% for single Building licence; in 49% for ICI real estate tax assessment and payment, and in 90% of cases for library book lending. For all other services taken into consideration, the institutions which have set up customisation systems do not exceed 7% of the total for each individual service. Having said so, the use of

authentication systems, the case tracking and – for some services – the access to case history, are widely disseminated in this best-practices framework. Rare is the presence of systems for sending SMS. The situation of supra-municipal services taken into consideration is different showing a high level of customisation for all the analysed features.

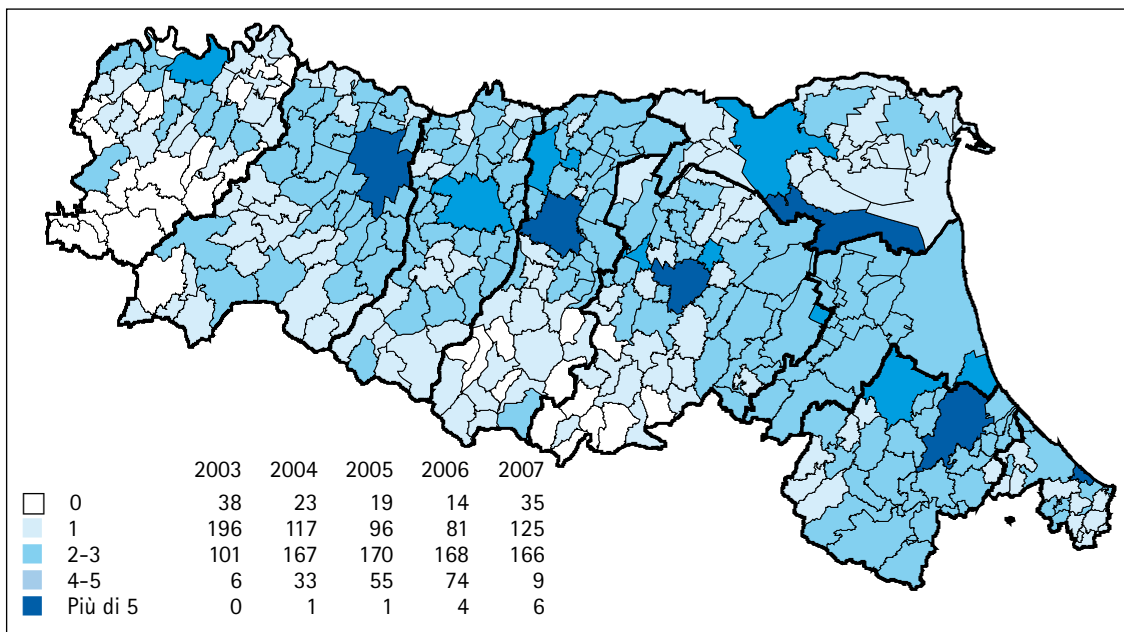
- The regional average of exhaustiveness is in constant growth, and in the past year it shifted from 70% to 82% (+12 percentage points). Therefore, beside the presence of increasingly complex functions, which have expanded opportunities of on line interaction,

the trend towards the translation into the web of all procedural stages, from information to document downloading, and the sending and completion of the online transaction, is expanding. Despite that, at Municipal level, there are still few institutions enabling to carry out all procedural stages entirely on line. For example, 49% of cases relating to real estate tax assessment/payment enable a true interaction (level 3 and 4 of e-Europe), but only in 5% of cases all the procedural phases are available on line. As for book lending in public libraries, in 90% of cases booking on line is possible, but only in 69% of cases, both information on the service and lending, together with reference catalogues, are present. The situation of services of provincial or regional pertinence is different, as they are mostly quite exhaustive.

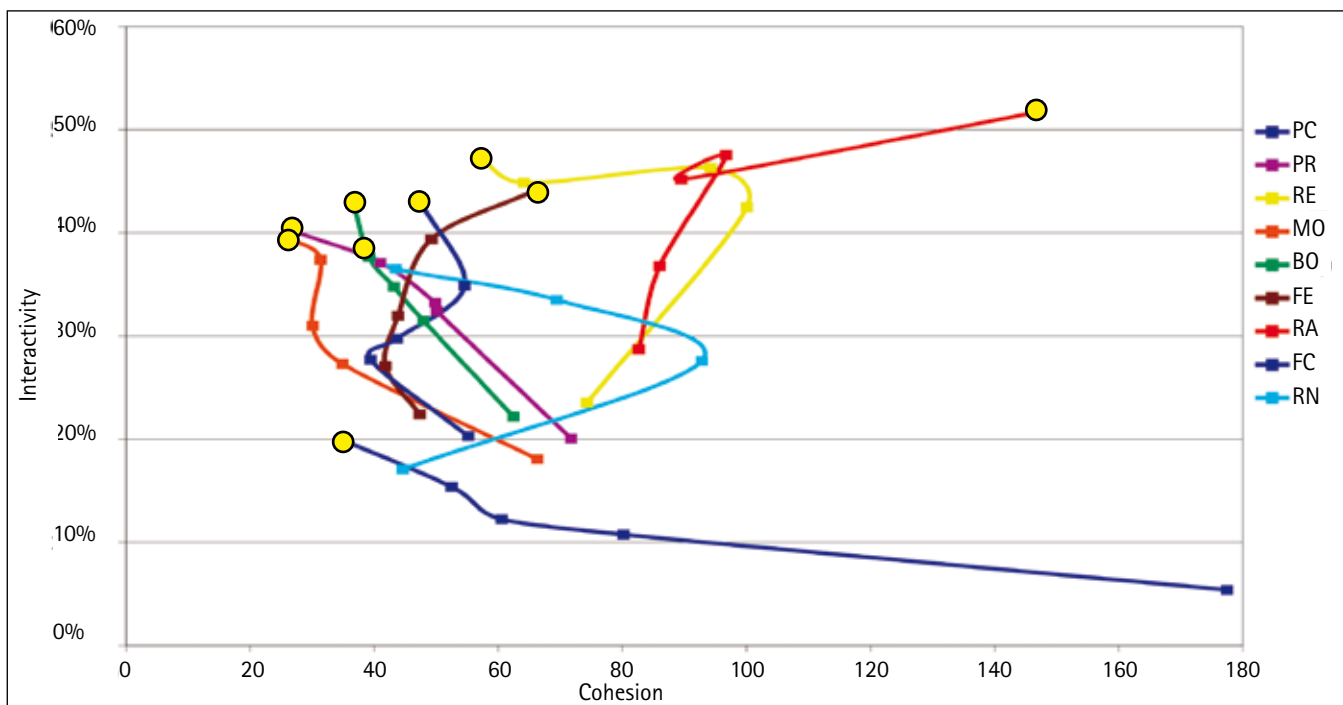
- The presence of a good level of interactivity is not always matched by the availability of a complete service, provided with accessory tools, to give users a support or as much information as possible on the handling and processing of their case (on line tracking, database search), or the availability of additional services (e.g. for specific categories, such as professional, technical intermediaries, etc.). Despite the relevant increase with respect to the previous year for the regional completeness average (53%, + 9% with respect to 2006), the most relevant feature refers to services of Municipal pertinence. In 2007 for the 12 services of Municipal pertinence, only 11 Municipalities reported a completeness average exceeding 50%. If we consider only the 9 traditional services, the Municipalities become 16.

#### ACCESSIBILITY

- The regional average for accessibility to local PA web sites, with relation to the presence of given indica-



**Map 2** – Number of interactive services (reaching an interactivity level of at least 3) per Municipality, in the 9 comparable online services, of Municipal pertinence



**Chart 8** – Average interactivity and territorial cohesion of Municipalities in Emilia-Romagna provinces - Historical Series 2003-2007.

The yellow dots represent the 2007 value: it enables the immediate perception of the trend of territorial cohesion.

tors (with reference to W3C stamps level A or higher, W3C XHTML; W3C CSS; statement I. 4/2004; accessible version of the site; CNIPA stamp) increased by 9 percentage points, reaching 33% in 2007. At provincial level, the first place is reported for Ravenna (63%), followed by Bologna (45%).

- The regional average for measured indicators based on an empiric review of some accessibility conditions (with reference to surfing support as "skip link" functions, the validity of XHTML code, and used language) reports lower values (equal to 22%), thus stressing the complexity in the management and maintenance of accessible web sites. At provincial level, in the first place we find the Province of Ferrara (46%), followed by Ravenna (43%). At Municipal level, despite overall improvement with respect to 2006 declared indicators, there are still 183 Municipalities (out of 341) which are at 0% for accessibility average, and only 73 exceed the 50% value. The territorial coverage for these indicators is relevant for the provinces of Bologna, Ferrara and Ravenna, while it is quite uneven for the westward remaining of the region (in particular for Parma and Piacenza) and Forlì.
- In order to assess the accessibility in PA web sites in the region, a review has been carried out on the language used in the pages, as required by the first of the 22 requisites of Act 4/2004 for accessibility. Only in 16% of cases can a positive opinion be given concerning the suitability of adopted language.
- As regard services, the possibility of page and reference form surfing via the keyboard has been reviewed. This exercise, limited to the entirety of interactive services, has shown an overall high accessibility level. For 7 services, namely the ones managed within a single site (provincial, regional or national), or using the same standard system (libraries, regis-

tration in the business registry, work-related communication, etc.) keyboard surfing is always possible. The situation of typical Municipal services, such as ICI real estate tax assessment and payment, is less consolidated, in which case out of 166 Municipalities providing an interactive service, 28 of them cannot be surfed via the keyboard.

- In a setting characterised by widespread caution in the utilisation of WEB channel in contacts with PA, there are however areas of excellence. Of the mostly-used services, let us mention book lending in the Province of Ravenna, which is part of the library pool of Romagna and handles 70% of overall bookings via the web channel. The on line enrolment service for day nurseries is used frequently in the Municipality of Bologna where – in 2007 – 21% of handled cases (556 out of 2632) were processed through the web. Finally, for payment services, let us mention the Municipality of Carpi whose payment platform has processed 547 cases.

#### USABILITY

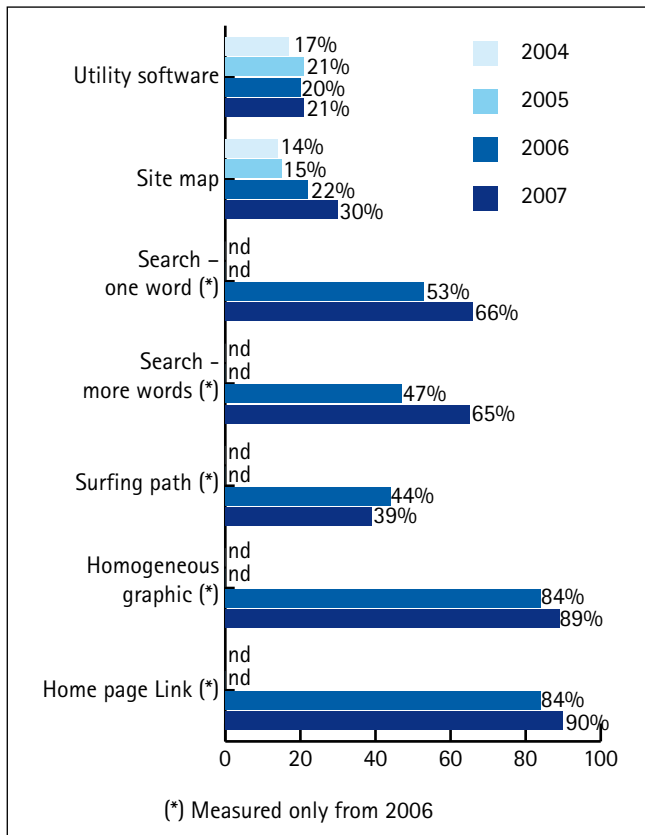
- Usability in PA sites at regional level shows one of the highest overall average in comparison with the other families of indicators (57% +7% with respect to 2006). The presence of homogeneous graphics and images in the site and home page links are the most common indicators and are thoroughly widespread in PA sites (in 89% and 90% of cases, respectively).
- In analysing whether on line services are easy to retrieve, reference points have been identified in the responsible departments, from which the search for the service may be started. The approach implies an understanding of the PA, which is not always the case. The results seem nonetheless quite useful in highlighting PA's attitudes with respect to these themes. In general, the services

seem to be easily found, given the fact that 17 out of 24 can be reached in less than 5 clicks, for at least 78% of cases. The lack of attention for the following aspects should also be mentioned: Single Licence – SUAP (only in 52% of cases, it is easy to find, in 26% the service is not present in the site, and in 21% you'll find it, only if lucky); TARSU/TIA waste disposal and collection tax assessment and payment (in 26% of cases, it can be found only by chance); Book lending in libraries (only in half the cases, easy to find, while in 41% only by chance).

- At quality level, let us mention that often "reaching the service" means just finding a telephone number or a contact person, and not getting concrete information on the services. Information of this kind can be found especially in Municipalities, heads of Province, and surrounding Municipalities in the plain area. There are instead 71 Municipalities where more than half of services taken into consideration can be found, but they provide only a reference contact.

#### MULTICHANNEL DELIVERY

- Multichannel delivery is one of the least developed traits in PA sites and on line services. Only in 13% of institutions, there is the presence of at least one channel alternative to the web, mostly SMS and toll-free number, enabling a simple access to general information. Only the Municipality of Ferrara reports in 2007 the presence of three channels (besides the web) indicated in the site (toll-free number and SMS for the entire activity of the institution, and call center for art events, exhibitions and museums). Then, 12 Municipalities have two alternative channels, and 36 only one. 292 Municipalities (86%) do not report any alternative channel in their web site.
- The availability of alternative channels to the web is higher in the individual services, with respect to the

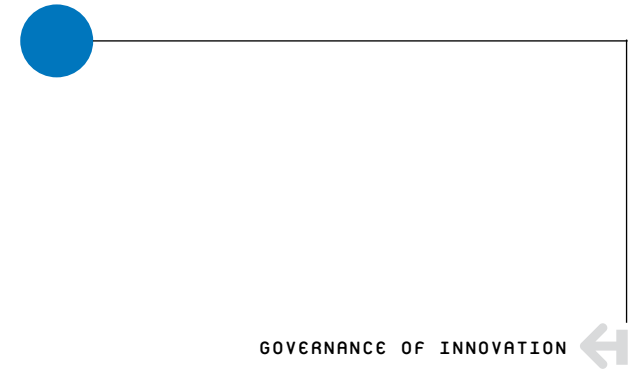


**Chart 9** – Regional percentages referring to all usability indicators

institutional site of the institutions. The overall interactivity level is still quite limited (28%), thus allowing for just a one-way communication.

- At Municipal level, 40% of institutions (138 out of 341) envisage at least one alternative channel for the delivery of their services (12 services taken into consideration). The Municipalities of Collecchio (PR), Reggio Emilia, Cavezzo (MO) and Castelfranco Emilia (MO), show the highest number of available channels. As regards interactivity, the Municipality of Modena

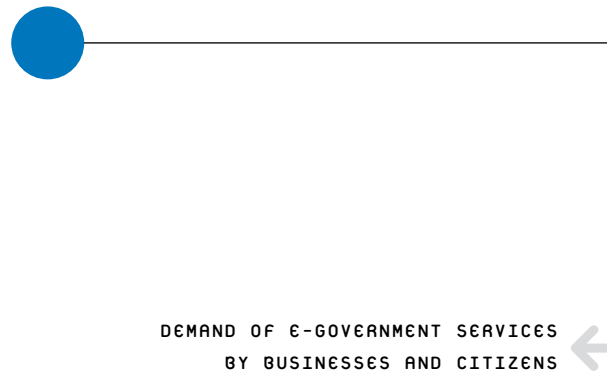
(22%) is in the first place: this means that, although there is a limited number of channels for service, the interactivity level enabled by them is in any case higher than for the others.



- The analysis has outlined existing relations between the responsible institutions and the other actors in service management (both on line and via traditional means). This is fundamental if we want to reason on the effectiveness of organisational solutions already implemented in Emilia-Romagna, on which the new project of the Networked Regional System of PA will have an impact (based on the regional community network). However it should be mentioned that sometimes Municipalities are not aware that some phases of the service are delivered in another site: we realised that during the direct contacts we had, when surveying customisation criteria. For example, the possibility of paying the TARSU waste disposal and collection tax on line on the web sites of some municipally-controlled public utilities is not known nor mentioned by the Municipalities which provide information on this tax. Therefore, these data refer to an effective opportunity for citizens and businesses of which Local Authorities of pertinence may not be fully aware. Having said so, the highest delivery percentages in an external site (more than 20%), are found for some services of Municipal pertinence (4), followed by Provincial (3) and other institutions (the three "one-stop" services of the Chamber of Com-

merce, the Territorial Agency and the Region). The regional site represents a valid point of reference for the services enabling citizen to choose their General Practitioner; UMA requests; Communication about hiring, Search for training courses: these are services touching on issues of regional pertinence in terms of planning, coordination, and assessment (besides control), while their management is assigned to health boards, for the former, and Provinces, for the latter ones. The Province is the reference point for Municipal services of Book lending in libraries; single SUAP Licence; Building DIA, and building permit. Joint management associations provide information and functions in their sites, especially for the services of Fine payment; Day-nursery enrolment; Building permit; Building DIA, Single SUAP licence. Collection agents and previously municipally-controlled utilities are reference points for Municipal services of ICI real estate tax and TARSU/TIA waste disposal and collection tax payment.

- The trends towards cooperation in PA service delivery between different institutions stress how in general Municipalities establish relations with 'all subjects capable of helping them', except for the Region, which does not have institutional competence for direct operational support to Municipalities, as this is an area of pertinence for Provinces, and types of joint associations. In general, co-operation between different levels of government is widespread, all participating in service management. This confirms the importance of joint and homogeneous initiatives, covering a wide area of reference, as this facilitates the dissemination of online sophisticated services.



- Internet use to contact the PA is a widespread practice for companies with 10 or more employees, operating in agri-food, services to companies, biotechnologies, biomedical. In fact about 84% of companies in these sectors have used the web channel to contact public authorities in the last 12 months. It should be remarked that contact with public administration via the web channel has been judged sufficiently or very satisfying by 90% of companies which used it, thus confirming the advantages that this mode offers, and the quality level of provided services.
- Of the activities carried out, information search (98% on average) involves all the companies, independently from the sector of reference, and the downloading of documents and forms is quite widespread (89% on average); a difference can be found between agri-food companies – less prone to use communication technologies in general – and the ones belonging to other sectors. Activities of growing complexity, such as sending of forms and on line payment in PA sites are carried out with less frequency by companies. In particular, reference is made to 61% and 52% of companies,

respectively, thus confirming a decreasing interest in carrying out increasingly complex actions online.

- As regard specific e-government services, companies carry out on line their tax filing and payment – 45% and 52% of companies, respectively – for which there is an additional share of potential users (equal to 16% and 13%, respectively).
- Companies which do not interact with PA via the web (equal to 16% of the total) indicate preference for personal relationship – with 64% of average answers – out of habit – with 55% – and the presence of intermediaries operating on their behalf – equal to 64% of cases – as the main reasons for their choice.
- The use of the Web in the interaction with the PA is not widespread among citizens – even the ones who are Internet users. The most widespread activity is again the search for information which between 2006 and 2007 grew at fast pace (+10%) and was carried out by 42% of Internet surfers in the region. In absolute value, about 650,000 citizens have communicated on line with the PA. There is a consolidation of form downloading (+1,5 %) while the percentage of Internet surfers carrying out activities requiring two-way interactivity with the PA remains stable.
- Internet use in contacts with PA is less frequent than reported for private services of similar complexity, as for example on line banking. Also growth rates between 2006 and 2007 underline an essential stability in the use of transaction opportunities provided by e-government services, in comparison with the steep growth for private services. This trend is common also in other European countries. In a comparison at international level, our region

with 45% of e-government users<sup>5</sup> is placed above the national average (equal to 43%), but 10 percentage point below European averages (equal to 52%).

<sup>5</sup> The figure refers to Internet users in the last 3 months with an age between 17 and 74, who have contacted the PA via the web in the last three months. Source Eurostat, year 2007.

