



## Chile: a model for e-government in Latin America

In July 2014, according to a report by the UN<sup>1</sup>, Chile was ranked second in Latin America for progress in the area of e-government<sup>2</sup>, and number thirty-three worldwide. As early as the 1990s, the country began to offer its citizens public services electronically, and very quickly became a pioneer in this domain.

Up until its recent decentralisation reforms<sup>3</sup>, Chile was still highly centralised with very little regional devolution of its administration. Moreover, the length of the country, which extends over 4,300 kilometres from Peru to Cap Horn, made access to administrative services difficult for many citizens. Information and communication technologies (ICT) were therefore developed early on, so that from 1991, Chile was already starting to connect to the internet<sup>4</sup>.

After the country's return to democracy in 1990, the main concerns centred around reforming and modernising the state. E-government was one of these areas<sup>5</sup>, which led to the creation of an information technology group within the Ministry of Home Affairs.<sup>6</sup> Political willingness<sup>4</sup>, as affirmed by President Ricardo Lagos on 21 May 2000<sup>7</sup> and reiterated by President Sebastián Piñera who, on 21 May 2011, proclaimed the advent of a "state that is 100% at the service of its citizens", provided the necessary impetus.

### A long process that put citizens at the centre of the state's concerns

Three separate periods stand out as part of the development of Chile's e-government:

- the 1990s, during which the state drew on information and communication technologies (ICT) to upgrade its systems. This involved the creation of an ad hoc commission to define the country's strategy for participation in an information society, and the Interministerial Committee of Public Management which was tasked with promoting the use of ICT<sup>5</sup>;
- 2000-2005, which saw the introduction of the massive state modernisation and reform project, the presidential instruction which was issued in 2001, and enactment of the e-government agenda for the period 2002-2005<sup>5</sup>;
- post-2005, with the launch of the digital strategy in 2007 under the presidency of Michelle Bachelet, the set-up of a committee of ministers for digital development in 2010 and, finally, the strategic plan for e-government for 2011-2014<sup>8</sup>.

Chile's e-government is designed to meet several objectives<sup>9</sup>:

- improve citizen services: a website for each ministry and public service, and in 2012 the introduction of a single window, ChileAtiende<sup>10</sup>, to guide the public in using e-government services (in December 2013, this portal provided access to 30 government services and could be used to perform 188 online transactions<sup>11</sup>);

<sup>1</sup> <http://paisdigital.org/chile-subio-6-posiciones-en-ranking-onu-de-gobiernos-digitales/>

<sup>2</sup> The Chilean term is "gobierno electrónico".

<sup>3</sup> <http://chiledescentralizado.cl/sitio/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://users.dcc.uchile.cl/~prossel/descarga/articulos/PaperIN3Final.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.busquedapoliticas.cl/v04n01/indice-de-participacion-electronica-municipal-gobierno-electronico-local-en-la-region-metropolitana>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.e-derecho.cl/downloads/gobiernoelectronicoenchilepdf.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [http://download.rincondelvago.com/gobierno-electronico-en-chile\\_1](http://download.rincondelvago.com/gobierno-electronico-en-chile_1)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.agesic.gub.uy/innovaportal/file/1339/1/ballroom\\_quiterrez\\_4.pdf](http://www.agesic.gub.uy/innovaportal/file/1339/1/ballroom_quiterrez_4.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <http://siare.clad.org/revistas/0050421.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.chileatiende.cl/contenidos/que-es-chileatiende>

- optimise the governance of public services: the use of new technologies helped to improve internal procedures: up-to-date databases, automated transactions and dematerialisation;
- develop citizen participation: in addition to accessing information, citizens must play an active role in decision-making. For example, the website [www.gobiernodechile.cl](http://www.gobiernodechile.cl) offers an interactive platform while [www.participemos.gob.cl](http://www.participemos.gob.cl) and [www.portalciudadano.cl](http://www.portalciudadano.cl) inform citizens of the role of civil society;
- develop international competitiveness: by demonstrating its capacity to use ICT, Chile can more easily attract foreign investors and better integrate the global economy<sup>8</sup>.

## Symbolic e-government projects in Chile

Certain public services have been particularly innovative. One case in point is the Civil Registration and Identification Service<sup>12</sup>, "a bellwether of technological modernisation",<sup>5</sup> from which birth, marriage and death certificates, car registration documents and driving licences, extracts of police records and certificates of disability can all be obtained over the internet<sup>8</sup>.

To combat tax evasion<sup>5</sup>, the tax administration<sup>13</sup> also looked to the internet at a very early stage, with such success that it is considered an "example for many other public bodies"<sup>14</sup>. From 2001, tax payers were able to receive a pre-completed tax return from the tax administration (SII), complete their tax returns online (99% of tax payers do so<sup>15</sup>) and pay their taxes online. The tax administration continues to modernise today,<sup>14</sup> offering modules to help tax payers with their 2015 income tax declarations and the rollout of a communication campaign to facilitate tax payment by bank transfer rather than by cheque.

The portal tramitefacil.cl was established in May 2001 to provide detailed information on more than 1,600 government procedures. It also received and managed requests from users. In 2003, it was recognised as one of the top five government websites in the world<sup>16</sup>. In 2012, it was replaced by ChileAtiende, which operates through three channels: online access to more than 2,200 services, 200 service points located throughout the country, and a call centre. In two years, 35 million transactions were performed<sup>12</sup>.

ChileCompra<sup>17</sup> was created in 2000 to manage state procurement. Its "tell us once" approach means that companies are only required to submit documents once in order to participate in a call for tenders. In 2012, around 850 public bodies issued more than 2.1 million orders via the platform<sup>17</sup>. In October 2014, its public market watchdog<sup>18</sup> received an award for innovation in procurement services by the Annual Conference of the Inter-American Government Procurement Network. Other services worth mentioning are customs, the National Health Fund<sup>7</sup>, the state budget portal [www.dipres.cl](http://www.dipres.cl), the electoral process website [www.servel.cl](http://www.servel.cl), and the website for draft legislation [www.senado.cl](http://www.senado.cl)<sup>19</sup>.

## Provide new impetus

These advances are remarkable, but there are also weaknesses<sup>20</sup>: no internet access in certain remote areas of the country<sup>21</sup>, infrastructure and telecommunication problems<sup>23</sup>, for several procedures citizens must be physically present<sup>23</sup> and a lack of training in new technologies<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, while the Subdere<sup>22</sup> portal was created for local municipal procedures, further progress is still necessary<sup>6</sup>. In certain key sectors, such as healthcare, new technologies are still underdeveloped. The challenge now, in order to foster real interaction with citizens<sup>9</sup>, is to provide new impetus for e-government.

Virginie Ma-Dupont

11 <http://www.emol.com/noticias/nacional/2014/01/16/640042/chileatiende-cumple-dos-anos-de-funcionamiento-y-suma-35-millones-de-operaciones.html>

12 <https://www.registrocivil.cl/>

13 <http://home.sii.cl/>

14 [http://www.observateurocde.org/news/archivestory.php/aid/398/A\\_lheure\\_de\\_ladministration\\_fiscale\\_E9lectronique.html](http://www.observateurocde.org/news/archivestory.php/aid/398/A_lheure_de_ladministration_fiscale_E9lectronique.html)

15 <http://diarioeldia.cl/articulo/economia/operacion-renta-2015-buscara-eliminar-cheques>

16 <http://www.redgealc.net/evolucion-del-e-gob-en-chile/contenido/2558/es/>

17 <http://www.chilecompra.cl/>

18 [http://www.comprassustentables.cl/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=185:observatorio-chilecompra-recibe-premio-internacional-a-la-innovacion-en-las-compras-gubernamentales-de-la-ricg-&catid=6:noticias&Itemid=8](http://www.comprassustentables.cl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=185:observatorio-chilecompra-recibe-premio-internacional-a-la-innovacion-en-las-compras-gubernamentales-de-la-ricg-&catid=6:noticias&Itemid=8)

19 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3ea5ul-r8o&feature=plcp>

20 <http://noticias.terra.cl/tecnologia/bits-ciencia-sociedad/blog/2014/03/11/gobierno-electronico-%C2%BFdonde-estamos/>

21 <http://www.partidopirata.cl/plan-de-gobierno-electronico-una-oportunidad-para-mejorar-nuestra-democracia/>

22 <http://www.subdere.gov.cl/>