The New Generation of E-Government Common Services

Enabling the creation and interconnection of electronic and traditional registers

The General Administration has a long tradition in the development of e-government common services and infrastructure. Connected to SARA, all levels of government in Spain have access to the signature validation eID platform, @firma, the intermediary for the exchange of administrative certificates or e-notifications, among others. These are success stories in the history of e-government, considered to be good interoperability practices at the international level and consolidated by intensive use.

These positive experiences have led to the development of new common infrastructure. Even in their infancy, these new services mean taking a qualitative leap in the development of e-government in Spain.

Administrative registers are the entry point for citizens' or companies' requests and applications. As such, they are one of the nerve centres of public administration. Article 38 of Law 30/1992, of 26 November, on the Legal Provisions Government Public Administrations (LRJPAC) and Common Administrative Procedures, includes the obligation to keep registers in electronic media. Law 30/1992 also introduces the concept of the register system as a global unit at the service of citizens, who can submit their forms or documents in the register of any administrative unit, irrespective of their final destination. This view is strengthened by Law 11/2007, of 22 June, on Citizen's E-Access to Public Services and enforcement regulations. In an effort to realise it, the Register Interconnection System (SIR) was launched. Following standard SICRES 3.0, developed as part of the Technical Interoperability Standard for Register Interconnection, SIR enables the exchange of register entries and the transfer of digitised attached documents in compliance with the Technical Interoperability Standards for Document Digitisation and for E-Documents.

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Currently, these tasks can be performed for all the register offices and e-registers of the General Administration, as well as for over 40 town councils and 29 register offices in the Community of Madrid.

The enabling role of SIR is complemented by ACCEDA and ORVE, two solutions now offered in the application mode and soon to be offered following the cloud computing model. The former includes an e-register application, whereas the latter is a traditional register solution including document digitisation. Both were developed in accordance with the standards National Interoperability Framework.

ACCEDA is a flexible e-office solution aimed at becoming the key node in e-relations between citizens and public entities. It allows for the implementation of the whole life cycle of administrative procedures, and it can be customised to match each entity's corporate image thanks to an open-source content management system (CMS) solution. It also includes the necessary interfaces for its e-register to be connected to SIR and the other common services (@firma, e-notifications and so on). Finally, its features make it a back office solution of the life of the public administration, thanks to a procedure processing system including e-signature services. At present, ACCEDA is implemented in the unit that first developed it, the State Department of Public Administrations of the Ministry of the Treasury and Public Administration, and in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Presidency.

As to ORVE, it coordinates the integration of traditional procedures with e-government. It is a support tool for register offices, for both citizens' requests and inter-administrative procedures. It can be fully integrated with the jobs of civil servants and the websites of local entities, which facilitates procedures for register office at the municipal level. The application makes it possible to send digitised material objects by electronic means. ORVE is already in use, although in pilot mode, at the Alcobendas Town Hall and several register offices in the Community of Madrid.

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Together, SIR, ACCEDA and ORVE will have a positive impact on all the courses of action leading to sustainable development, especially in local environments. Their implementation, alongside that of other solutions already deployed by local entities, could lead to full automation in the relation between society and public administrations. This could in turn be a factor for inclusion, bringing agile electronic means to rural environments, enabling the easy construction of e-offices and making it possible to digitise traditional procedures. Furthermore, considering that every citizen needs to make four register entries per year from their local town hall (one with the General Administration and three with the regional government)[1], 80% digitised communications using SIR (in traditional or electronic offices) would mean a reduction of administrative burdens for €9,000 million[2], procedure savings for over €1,800 million[3] and CO2 emission cuts for more than 11 million tons.

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[1] Based on INE data the number of inhabitants, this would amount to a total 235,952,465 register entries.

[2] According to the 'Guía Metodológica para la elaboración de la Memoria del análisis de impacto normativo' (Guidelines to Write the Regulatory Impact Analysis Report), the reduction of administrative burdens caused by transferring a traditional procedure to electronic means is €75.

[3] An estimated €10 is saved internally when a traditional procedure is done electronically according to studies conducted in public administrations in other EU countries.