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**Citizen Participation in the Digital Age:  
The Initial Experience of Mexico**

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## *Abstract*

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*ICT is considered to hold a significant potential for strengthening citizen participation. This study attempts to assess that potential as it relates to the impact of Mexico's initial experience with online participation mechanisms recently launched by the executive and legislative branches of the federal government. The first part documents and analyzes the internet based public deliberation that took place with respect to the reform of the Federal Telecommunications Law (FTL) which represents a break from traditional policy making practices. The second part goes beyond the FTL reform process to identify the obstacles which must be overcome to prospectively strengthen online citizen participation.*

## *Resumen*

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*Se considera a las tecnologías de la información y Comunicación (TICs) como un mecanismo importante para fortalecer la participación ciudadana. Este artículo examina la experiencia inicial en México en materia de los mecanismos de participación ciudadana en línea recientemente puestos en marcha por los poderes ejecutivo y legislativo. La primera parte del documento analiza el debate público generado en torno a la reforma de la Ley Federal de Telecomunicaciones (LFT), el cual representa un rompimiento con las prácticas tradicionales en la creación de políticas. La segunda parte va más allá del proceso de reforma de la LFT en orden de identificar los obstáculos que necesitan ser superados para fortalecer la participación ciudadana en línea.*

## Introduction

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The Fox Administration has moved assertively towards e-government by facilitating the migration of certain governmental functions and services - namely, citizen participation, civil servant declarations (*Declaranet*), official solicitations and registrations (*Tramitanet*), procurement (*Compranet*), and tax filings (*e-SAT*) - to the expanding network of government operated portals which collectively comprise the *Sistema Nacional e-México*.

Increased levels of political awareness and competition, together with an Internet driven explosion of information and the passage of landmark transparency legislation have given rise to unprecedented expectations regarding the emergence of a more open and participatory process of law and policy making. This article examines Mexico's initial experience with online citizen participation mechanisms.

The first part of this article documents and analyzes the Internet based public deliberation that took place with respect to the reform of the Federal Telecommunications Law ("FTL") between March 2001 and May 2002. To the extent it constitutes one of Mexico's initial attempts to subject the design of a public policy to an expanded range of citizen input this initiative represents an important break from traditional policy making practices. In this connection, the creation of an ICT driven deliberative forum provided the Mexican telecommunications community with a practical and equitable mechanism for expressing their opinions and perspectives regarding the reform of the FTL. The second part of this study goes beyond the FTL reform process to examine Mexico's experience and identify the obstacles which must be overcome to prospectively strengthen online citizen participation.

Numerous studies suggest that online participation may enable a more direct form of democracy (Gally, 2000; Ferdinand, 2000; Smith, 1995). This article is cautious in supporting a technological optimism. Indeed, the Internet introduces easier ways of communication and potentially makes dissemination of information and direct participation easier. Moreover, online citizen participation may represent a valuable tool to address increasing levels of voter apathy and an anemic quality of political productivity that have given rise to concerns of civic disengagement (Putnam, 1993). Civic disengagement manifestations have been attributed - in part - to the perception that individual participation through the electoral process does not meaningfully impact the law and policy making process. Online citizen participation mechanisms may represent a valuable tool for *i*) reinvigorating citizen interest and involvement in the affairs of government, *ii*) serving as a check against the power and

influence of narrow interest groups in the law and policy making arena (Mazaar, 1999),<sup>1</sup> and *iii*) enhancing outcome transparency.

However, this article argues that the Internet is neutral in its capacity to shape the process of public policy making. It is the political and institutional context in which it emerges and is applied that shapes its impact on society. The initiatives examined in this paper represent a significant step in the creation of a more participatory and transparent public policy process; the information derived from the operation of online citizen participation mechanisms has positively informed the policy and law making process in Mexico. This article concludes by suggesting that the potential of the Internet as a citizen participation mechanism that moves public policy to a more deliberative process in Mexico may be achieved as current obstacles are addressed. Among them are the low and regionally disparate levels of Internet access, the functionality of government portals, the regulation of lobbying practices and the low levels of digital culture.

## **Political Context**

Although Mexico's constitution is based on Rousseau's ideas of popular sovereignty and Montesquieu's notions of a separation of powers, Mexico has not had a strong tradition of citizen participation. The predominance of the executive over coordinate branches of government (i.e., the so-called presidential system) was nurtured by and reflected in the existence of a hegemonic party (the PRI) and a circumscribed flow of relevant and reliable information regarding public sector activity. Following seven decades of uninterrupted power, the PRI lost control of the Congress in 1997 and the executive branch in 2000. The historic losses suffered by the PRI profoundly impacted law and policy making processes in Mexico. The country's evolving electoral preferences are manifest in the currently divided state of the national Congress. Divided government began to change the logic and nature of relations between the executive branch and the legislative branch and led to unparalleled forms of political bargaining and compromise (Ugalde, 2001).

With the convenience and certainty of a top-down approach to law and policy making having been foreclosed by the alteration of executive power, the inception of real political competition (Cansino, 2000), and the emergence of an expanding range of increasingly organized and informed constituencies, (Keohane & Nye, 1998)<sup>2</sup> Mexican legislators found themselves in the unfamiliar

<sup>1</sup> Pointing out the revolutionary shift away from a republican government of de facto elites and towards a government of more direct participation, along with the consequent emergence of "unitary" democracy.

<sup>2</sup> It's noted the way in which the leveraging of the dissemination opportunities associated with the Internet enables groups to use the power derived from their bases of support to force the nation's political leaders to focus on their agendas.

position of having to refine their outreach techniques and to develop consensus and coalition building skills.

The aforementioned political developments, coupled with the contemporaneous expansion of political awareness either made possible by the rapid spread of ICT or anticipated in conjunction with the *Ley Federal de Transparencia y Acceso Público a la Información Gubernamental*,<sup>3</sup> have opened up unprecedented opportunities for direct citizen participation in Mexico. Surveys show that indeed, political participation has increased in the country (Table 1).

**T A B L E 1**  
**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN MEXICO, 1981-1997**

ACTION UNDERTAKEN BY RESPONDENT	1981*	1997**
SIGNED A PETITION	8%	28%
ATTENDED A LAWFUL DEMONSTRATION	8%	10%
PARTICIPATED IN A BOYCOTT	1%	9%
JOINED AN UNOFFICIAL STRIKE	2%	6%
OCCUPIED A BUILDING OR FACTORY	1%	4%

Sources: World Values Surveys for 1981 and 1995-1997, Roderic Ai Camp

\* Based on a survey of 1,837 respondents

\*\* Based on a survey of 1,511 respondents

In recognition of the strengthening political significance of the Mexican citizen, the Fox Administration initiated the establishment of digital channels whereby individual citizens, civic groups, and corporate entities could participate in the formulation of contemporary Mexican law and policy. These initiatives follow the observation that the “information highway is bringing politics closer to people” (Meyrowitz’s, 1985).

Having seen the communicational benefits which accrued to the executive branch following the launch of its *Atención Ciudadana* portal, Mexico’s Congress determined to use ICT for the purpose of strengthening citizen participation. Mindful of the way in which the closed and opaque nature of earlier efforts at telecommunications reform had consistently failed to produce an investment and institutional framework that was capable of supporting the sector’s maximum future development, the then current round of telecommunications reform became, by default, one of the legislative branch’s first test cases with respect to the issue of online citizen participation.

<sup>3</sup> “Ley Federal de Transparencia y Acceso a la Información Pública Gubernamental,” D.O., 11 de junio de 2002.

## Online Citizen Participation & the Reform of Mexico's FTL










### Background Information on the Telecommunications Law Reform Process

The first round of telecommunications reform took place in 1990 and involved the privatization of the public telephone company, Telmex. One of the fundamental outcomes of the privatization was the permanence of a vertically integrated firm in the market. This led to consequential subsequent costs to the regulation of the industry. Moreover, due to the speed with which it was carried out, this reform lacked the institutional and legal foundation necessary for the creation of a competitive and level playing field.

### The Congressional Initiative

A bi-partisan commission was established by Congress in March 2001 with the objective of updating the legal framework and strengthening procedures and regulatory bodies. The *Conferencia Parlamentaria en Materia de Telecomunicaciones* ("CPT") was formed with the participation of five senators and five members of the lower chamber. As Table 2 shows, of the ten members of the commission, four pertained to the PRI, four belonged to the PAN and two came from the PRD. In May of that same year the executive branch through the Ministry of Communications became a member of this committee.

**T A B L E 2**  
**CPT MEMBERS**

SENATORS		REPRESENTATIVES	
	JOSÉ MOISÉS CASTRO CERVANTES		VÍCTOR MANUEL CAMPOSECO
	JAVIER CORRAL JURADO		EMILIO GOICOECHEA LUNA
	EMILIO GAMBOA PATRÓN		JESÚS OROZCO ALFARO
	HÉCTOR GUILLERMO OSUNA JAIME		JAVIER SÁNCHEZ CAMPUZANO
	ERIC RUBIO BARTHELL		ALONSO ULLOA VÉLEZ

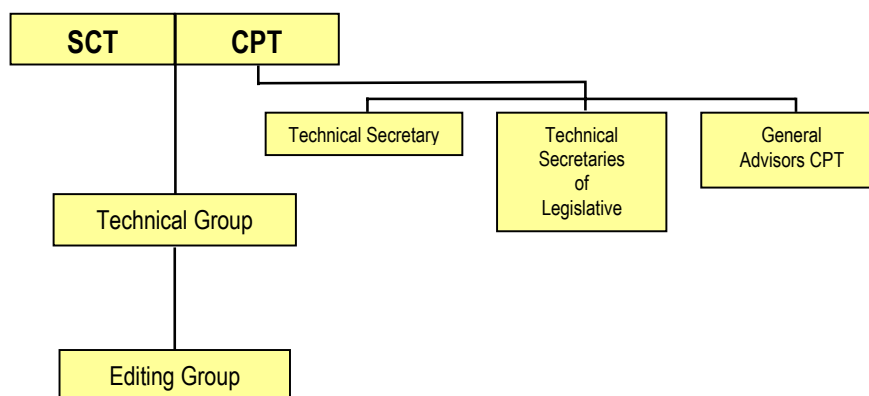


One of the first tasks of the CPT was the articulation of ten principles that would guide the reform. These were the promotion of telecommunications penetration and connectivity; expansion of the network; technological convergence; competition; rights of users; and the governance capacity of the regulatory agency.

The idea of opening up an online deliberative process to the telecommunications community in the country fulfilled various needs. For one, the legislative branch had neither the sufficient knowledge on the subject to understand the issues involved nor on the appropriate regulatory tools to use in addressing the problems. Thus, it needed information from industry and academic experts. Industry perspectives provided a valuable source of perspective for policy makers with respect to divisions and alliances within the sector. Also, an open online process would help to preclude the effective operation of concealed alliances and mitigate against demands from narrow interests that could not be sustained in public. Finally, the most important benefit of an online deliberation was the legitimacy that would be imputed to the final initiative by virtue of having been subjected to an open participatory process.

The CPT was organized as follows:

**F I G U R E 1**  
**CPT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



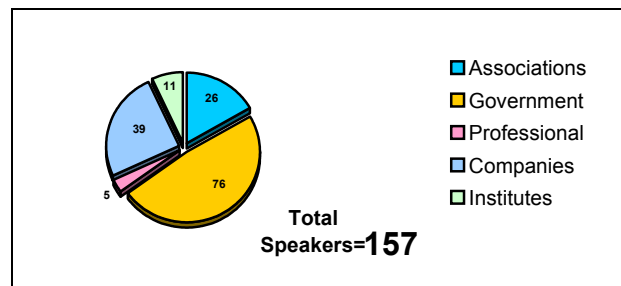
**T A B L E 3**  
**EDITING & TECHNICAL GROUPS**

EDITING GROUP	
CPT	SCT
TECHNICAL SECRETARY OF THE CPT <i>DIONISIO PÉREZ JÁCOME</i>	OSCAR MUIÑO (SCT) ADVISORS (COFETEL)
TECHNICAL GROUP	
CPT	SCT
REP. EMILIO GOICOECHEA LUNA SEN. EMILIO GAMBOA PATRÓN ADVISORY GROUP	JORGE ALVAREZ HOTH (SCT) ADVISORY GROUP

The CPT operated for sixteen months and reached 249 agreements before the meetings to discuss the proposals took place. These sessions were broadcast over the congressional channel.

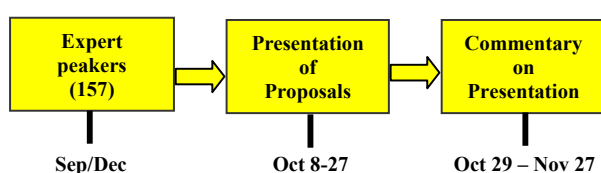
The actual online deliberative process was opened to the telecommunications community on October 8, 2001. Participation in this process required an invitation with web page access information. Invitations were sent to carriers, equipment providers, chambers of commerce, universities, state governments, Cofetel (the regulatory agency), the *Comisión Federal de Competencia* (the antitrust agency), and Profeco (the consumer agency). The composition of the participants is shown in Figure 2. A significant defect in the design of this process was the fact consumers were not included. As was stated in interviews with legislators, telecommunications consumer groups were not represented and Profeco did not participate significantly in the process.

**F I G U R E 2**  
**PARTICIPATING SPEAKERS**



A law firm, Deschamps and Luna, was retained as a consultant. This firm spear-headed the development of the process at the same time that it created and maintained in-house software and content. The cost of the operation was U.S.\$500,000. As Figure 3 illustrates, the online process consisted of two modules - the presentation of proposals and the commentaries to these proposals.

**F I G U R E 3**  
**ONLINE CONSULTATION PROCESS**



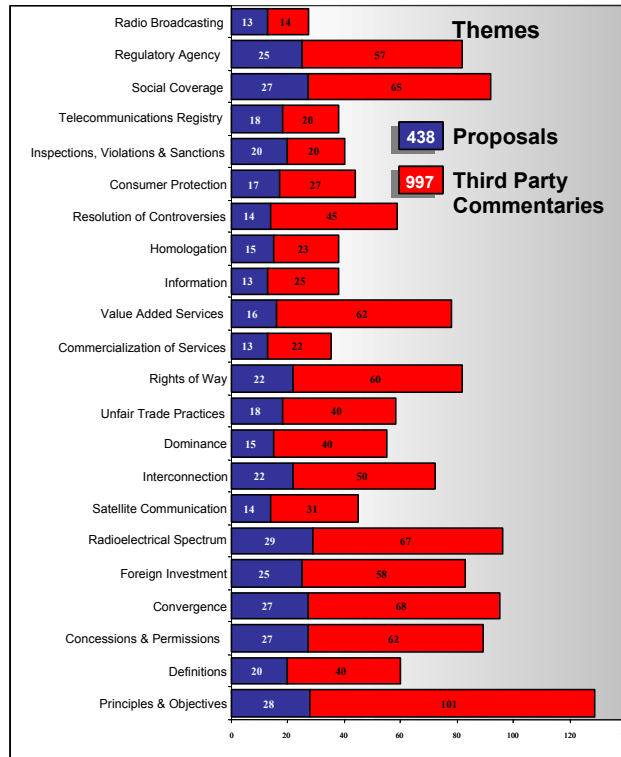
¡Error!

Proposals were accepted under the twenty-two issue areas enumerated in Figure 4. A total of 438 proposals for themes to be included in the reform were received from participants. Another 997 commentaries to these initial proposals made were submitted by third parties. Figure 5 shows the significant number of hits that were received by the web page in both stages of the process.

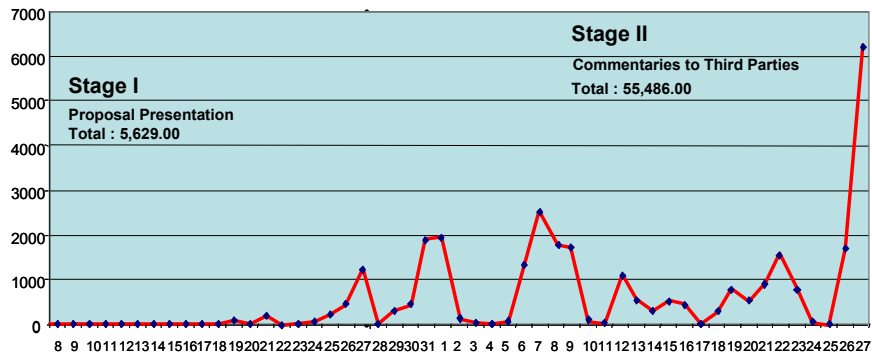
Perhaps one of the fundamental achievements of this initiative was the engagement of citizens in a public deliberation. Close to one thousands commentaries were received from third parties to initial proposals. Moreover, the process captured the constant attention of the community as seen by the 60, 000 hits to the web page during the process opened to commentaries. This represents a significant attainment in the context of a community that has never profited from even the simplest form of open participation; the regulatory agency, Cofetel, does not hold public hearings.

Figure 6 depicts the timeline of the initiative. On May 30<sup>th</sup> the CPT informally distributed a version of the first draft of the FTL reform. This version created a highly politicized debate that led to a rupture between political parties within Congress. Two months later, a representative from the PRD, Víctor Manuel Camposeco, presented a different initiative of law that included a more nationalistic perspective and was thus less pro-competition. Moreover, it did not have the legitimacy imputed to the first initiative by virtue of its inclusive process. However, the first initiative that apparently was the result of the deliberative process was not fully supported by any of the major players involved. The legislative period was concluded without a reform to the FTL.

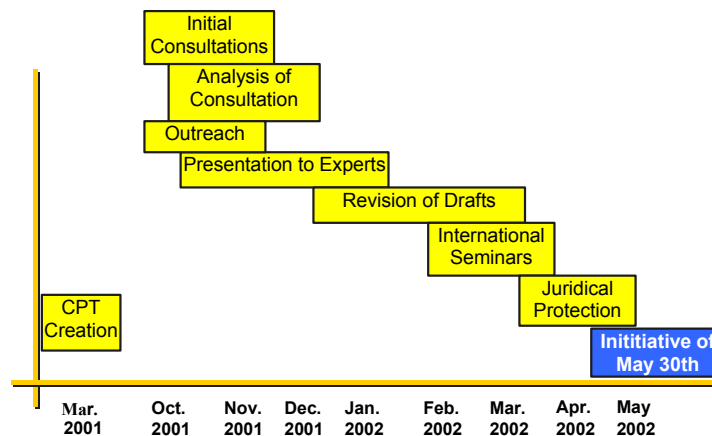
**F I G U R E 4**  
**ISSUES OPENED TO PROPOSALS & COMMENTARIES**



**F I G U R E 5**  
**THE EVOLUTION OF FTL REFORM PROCESS**  
**IN TERMS OF WEB PAGE HITS**



**F I G U R E 6**  
**FTL REFORM PROCESS ACTIVITY TIMELINE**



The creation of an online forum pertaining to the FTL reform process was, to the extent it resulted in the input of an expanded range of citizen and private sector entities, a positive undertaking. That is, the Internet was successfully used in soliciting information from key players during the law making process; it improved citizen to government communication and created a forum for public deliberation of issues. However, not all parties participated in this forum; consumers were not involved in the process. Moreover, it is equally important to know how this input was evaluated and used, if at all. There is, in this regard, substantial room for improvement.

The criteria under which the contributions from the different parties were taken into account were not clear. Given the divergent nature of the proposals it appears this was a difficult process; how do you add or otherwise assign value to divergent preferences? Interviewers involved in the final decision process claim issues were resolved primarily in accordance with preferences stated by the majority of comments and, failing that, in furtherance of the public interest. Within this process there was a black box where the commentaries entered and the initiative was developed. There was no framework provided to resolve differences in perspectives. The non-dissemination of information regarding the methodology and criteria used for the evaluation of citizen input, considered in conjunction with the fact that consumers were not able to participate in the process, effectively demarcates the limitations currently associated with Mexico's online citizen participation mechanisms.

## **Beyond The FTL Reform Process: The Current State of Online Citizen Participation in Mexico**

### *Online Citizen Participation in Mexico*

The Mexican Congress' initial foray into the realm of online citizen participation constitutes an important - and, in relative terms - fruitful step towards the long term goals of constructing a democracy attuned to Mexico's unique social, political, historical, legal, and economic reality and accomplishing ICT driven government modernization and transformation. This said, however, much work remains to be done in terms of maximizing the potential for online citizen participation along both the horizontal (i.e., across the executive, legislative, and judicial branches) and vertical (i.e., federal, state, and municipal) axes of government.

Mexico can, in this regard, learn much from the digital government experience of other countries. Responding to the demands of local constituents, governments around the world have taken steps to strengthen online citizen participation mechanisms.<sup>4</sup> For example, detailed information regarding the leadership and lawmaking activities, committee memberships (where applicable), and individual voting records (also where applicable) of elected officials is increasingly available online.<sup>5</sup> Focusing, more specifically, on the legislative function of government, many national congresses and parliaments (as well as those legislative bodies which operate at the sub-national levels of government) have used ICT to make it possible for citizens to "attend" virtual public hearings an/or subscribe to and receive electronic bulletins pertaining to specific committees or issues.<sup>6</sup> And, in what represents the strongest example of ICT enabled citizen participation, national, state, and municipal governments are demonstrating a greater willingness to accept the proactive presentation of legislative proposals by citizens<sup>7</sup> and/or conduct online plebiscites,<sup>8</sup> referenda, and votes.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Latin governments which have set up online "foros" for the exchange of ideas with respect to certain legislative topics include, *inter alia*, Argentina (<http://www.nacion.ar/espaciocivico/foros/foros.asp>), Chile ([http://ww2.minvu.cl/minvu/new\\_foro/tema.asp](http://ww2.minvu.cl/minvu/new_foro/tema.asp)), Colombia (<http://www.aganda.gov.co>), Mexico (<http://www.secofi-ssci.gob.mx/siger>), and Venezuela (<http://www.gobiernoenlinea.ve/gobierno>).

<sup>5</sup> A good example in this connection involves the web page of U.S. Congressman Acevedo-Vila. See <http://www.house.gov/acevedo-vila/> (last visited March 10, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> An example of this capacity involves the U.S. Senate. See <http://www.capitolhearings.org/> (last visited March 10, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Brazil has established an online mechanism for the presentation of citizen generated legislative proposals. See *Comissão de Legislação Participativa*, at <http://www.camara.gov.br/Internet/comissao/index/perm/clp/apresentacao.htm> (last visited March 10, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> The city of St. Paul, Minnesota conducted an online plebiscite in 2002. See *City of St. Paul*, at <http://www.ci.stpaul.mn.us/mayor/00budget/00mayormsg.html> (last visited March 10, 2003).

## The Online Participation of Individuals before the Executive and Legislative Branches of Mexico's Federal Government

Notwithstanding the advanced state of its overall program of e-government,<sup>10</sup> Mexico's online citizen participation mechanisms are, viewed in relation to the aforementioned series of potential applications, lagging. Information pertaining to the actual state of development of these mechanisms by the executive and legislative branches is set out in the following sections.

### A. The Executive Branch

The Fox administration has, as part of its digitally grounded plan for introducing a new administrative culture premised on more personalized and efficient service (i.e., the "*Agenda de Buen Gobierno*"), made it possible for individual citizens to participate in online fora and submit electronic petitions/proposals through either the *Presidencia*<sup>11</sup> or the *Atención Ciudadana*<sup>12</sup> portals. The launching of these portals has added a new dimension to the long stagnant constitutionally guaranteed rights of citizen petition and participation.<sup>13</sup> In this regard President Fox's observed that "...the process of modernizing and improving the *Sistema Nacional de Quejas, Denuncias, y Atención a la Ciudadana* has begun with the establishment of guidelines and criteria for the reception of citizen petitions (i.e., complaints, denouncements, suggestions,

<sup>9</sup> Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones, *Elecciones 2002*, at <http://www.tse.go.cr/votoelec.htm> (last visited August 21, 2002) (noting progress of Costa Rica's "*Proyecto de Voto Electrónico*"); *Prueba Francia Voto Electrónico*, Reforma, April 21, 2002, at 3A.

<sup>10</sup> Consistent with this state of progress, a recent U.N. benchmarking study concluded that Mexico has a "high capacity" for e-government. United Nations, *Benchmarking E-Government: A Global Perspective*, at <http://www.unpan.org/e-government/global%20leaders%20tables.htm> (last visited August 19, 2002). Another e-government benchmarking study gave Mexico a ranking of 48 (out of a field of 196 nations). Darrell M. West, *WMRC Global E-Government Survey, October 2001*, at <http://www.insidepolitics.org/egovt01int.html> (last visited August 20, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.presidencia.gob.mx> (last visited March 10, 2003).

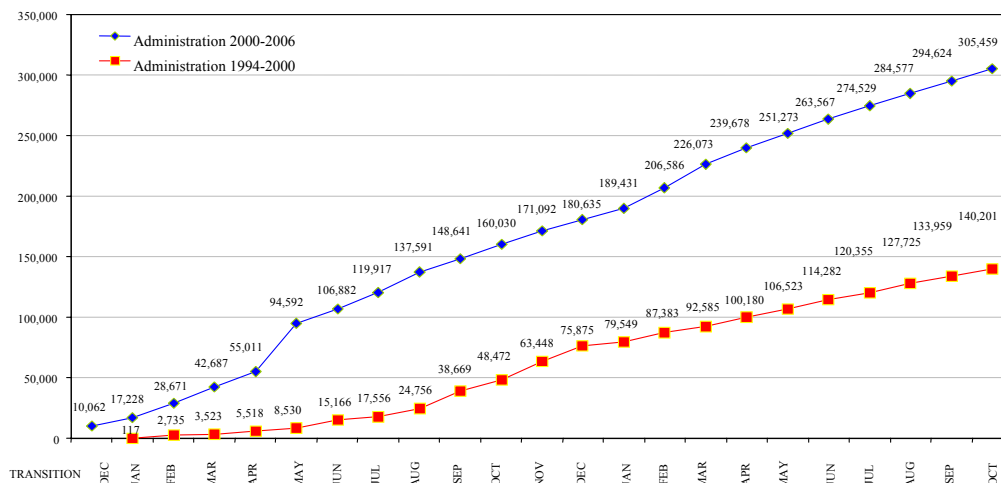
<sup>12</sup> See <http://ciudadano.presidencia.gob.mx> (last visited March 10, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> The passage of Diputado Villa Preciado's bill regarding the submission of popular initiatives would reinforce the individual guarantees set forth in articles 8 and 9 of the Mexican Constitution. See "Decreto por el que se Reforma el Artículo 41 y se Adicionan el Artículo 71 con una Fracción IV y el 99, con una Fracción V Bis., de la Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, se Crea la Ley Reglamentaria de la Fracción IV del Artículo 71 de la Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos y se Reforman Diversas Disposiciones del Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales, de la Ley Orgánica del Congreso General de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, del Reglamento para el Gobierno Interior del Congreso General de los Estados Mexicanos, de la Ley General del Sistema de Medios de Impugnación en Materia Electoral y de la Ley Orgánica del Poder Judicial de la Federación," *Gaceta Parlamentaria*, 26 de septiembre de 2001, at <http://gaceta.cddhcu.gob.mx/Gaceta/58/2001/sep/20010926.html> (last visited December 6, 2001).

requests, and acknowledgments) and the delivery of government services which inspire certainty and confidence.”<sup>14</sup>

Underscoring the practical way in which ICT can open up opportunities for citizen participation, executive branch statistics (see Figure 7, *infra*) indicate that the launch of the *Atención Ciudadana* portal has resulted in the receipt of an average of 750 e-mails per day and the approximate doubling of the number of citizen petitions addressed to the President.

**F I G U R E 7**  
**NUMBER OF CITIZENS PETITIONS PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT**



While *Presidencia* maintains that the majority of these matters are attended to within the time frame established by law (see Figure 8, *infra*),<sup>15</sup> the fact that test questions presented by CIDE remain unanswered almost five months after having been submitted raises doubts regarding the significance and scope of the this mechanism’s impact.<sup>16</sup> This outcome raises questions similar to those presented by the FTL reform process insofar as it again appears to be the case that a government sponsored citizen participation mechanism conduces primarily to “front end” involvement. Without detracting from the significance of being able to use ICT for the purpose of providing input, the full

<sup>14</sup> *Presidencia, Primer Informe de Gobierno*, at <http://www.informe.presidencia.gob.mx/Informes/2001Fox1/> (last visited August 23, 2002).

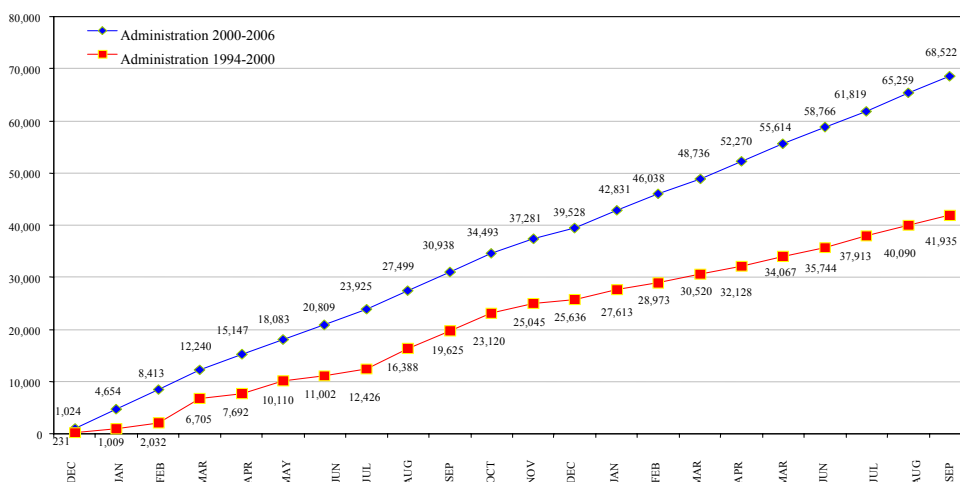
<sup>15</sup> The Office of the Presidency attended to 169, 498 petitions between December 2000 and August 2001. Of these, 25,668 were resolved immediately. Notwithstanding the CIDE’s experience in this regard, *Presidencia* maintains that the average number of days required for a response to a citizen solicitation has dropped from 268 to 30 days between the Salinas and Fox administrations.

<sup>16</sup> Generic auto replies were received immediately following the submission of the test questions. Substantive answers to the questions have yet to be received.



value of online citizen participation mechanisms will only be realized when it becomes clear how citizen contributions are evaluated and used, if at all.

**FIGURE 8**  
**NUMBER OF PETITIONS ATTENDED BY PRESIDENCIA**



Alternatively, neither the *Presidencia* nor the *Atención Ciudadana* portal presently provide for the online realization of plebiscites and/or referenda or individual citizen subscriptions to issue-specific electronic bulletins.<sup>17</sup> A complete analysis of the citizen participation features available at the *Presidencia* and *Atención Ciudadana* portals is presented in Annex I.

Another executive branch example of the way in which ICT can facilitate citizen participation involves the *Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes* (“SCT”) “*Foro de Discusión e-México*.”<sup>18</sup> Consisting of 193 registered users, this forum provides citizens with an electronic space for making their views known with respect to various aspects<sup>19</sup> of the SCT and *Presidencia*’s ongoing development and implementation of the *Sistema Nacional e-México*. In contrast to the *Presidencia* and *Atención Ciudadana* portals, it is possible to review citizen submissions to the e-México discussion forum. It is again the case, however, that no indication is provided as to the evaluation and use of the content of citizen input.

Turning, finally, to the issue of an online space dedicated to the formation of a better informed and more participatory civil society, the Fox Administration, acting in furtherance of the coordination mandate established

<sup>17</sup> It is possible to sign up for and receive weekly public relations type bulletins regarding the activities of President Fox.

<sup>18</sup> SCT, *Foro de Discusión e-México*, at <http://www.e-mexico.gob.mx/index.php?id=169> (last visited March 23, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Specific fora include e-government, telemedicine, distance learning, e-science, and e-commerce.

by the *Acuerdo* of December 13, 2000, launched the *Alianza Ciudadana* portal.<sup>20</sup> However, in a development that raises further questions regarding the viability and impact of online citizen participation mechanisms, this portal failed even before its content was fully uploaded. According to government officials within *Presidencia*, the failure of the *Alianza Ciudadana* portal reflects a lack of shared vision and understanding as between the executive branch and Mexican civil society. The rectification of this situation will assure the availability of an effective forum for the presentation of the views of Mexico's vibrant civil society.

## B. The Legislative Branch

Mexico's National Congress has come to appreciate the importance of the Internet as a "communications medium which facilitates the interchange of ideas between civil society and government."<sup>21</sup> Both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies have, in this regard, launched portals offering citizens *i*) legislative information (including, for example, a searchable version of the *Gaceta Parlamentaria*, searchable initiative archives, and a compilation of current laws and regulations), *ii*) relatively static information regarding elected officials,<sup>22</sup> *iii*) a limited capacity to receive transmissions of select congressional hearings, and *iv*) a "contact us" feature.<sup>23</sup>

Notwithstanding this good start, however, the opportunities which exist for online citizen participation with respect to Mexico's federal Congress are weaker than those available through the executive branch. As the analyses of the citizen participation features incorporated into the Senate and Chamber of Deputies portals set forth in Annex II indicate, neither legislative body provides citizens with a permanent virtual forum for the presentation and exchange of ideas, a mechanism for subscribing to and receiving issue and/or committee specific electronic bulletins, or the chance to participate in online plebiscite or referenda. This situation contrasts with that found, for example, in the United States where there are at least 600(+) Internet pages offering the general public detailed information pertaining to the congress at large, congress men

<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.alianzaciudadana.presidencia.gob.mx> (last visited March 10, 2003) (link to now defunct *Alianza Ciudadana* portal).

<sup>21</sup> La Comisión de Participación Ciudadana, *Programas de Trabajo 2001*, at <http://www.cddhcu.gob.mx/camdip/comdip/comparc/present.htm> (last visited June 29, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> An example of the limited and static nature of the information pertaining to Mexico's elected officials presented on congressional portals is available at the *Cámara de Diputados*. See <http://200.15.46.216/apoyopar/principal.htm> (last visited March 10, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Unlike the CIDE's experience with executive branch websites, the test question submitted to the Mexican Senate for the purpose of evaluating that body's responsiveness received a substantive answer within a matter of five days. The test question submitted to the Mexican Chamber of Deputies has, on the other hand, yet to receive an answer.

and women, and the work of congressional committees.<sup>24</sup> Mexico's National Congress will, going forward, likely expand the range of information and services it makes available to the public. It is, in this connection, noteworthy that the National Congress has been conducting focus groups and surveys since 2001 for the purpose of understanding the desires and expectations of voters, journalists, and other interest groups with respect to the issue of a digital congress.<sup>25</sup>

### Online Voting in Mexico

Other nations have reported abundant benefits in conducting online elections. Among these are the preservation of scarce government resources, the attainment of improved voter turnouts, and the elimination of illiteracy, physical disability, and distance as obstacles to effective electoral participation, the realization of more expeditious and accurate vote tallies and the mitigation of lingering notions of socio-political disenfranchisement.<sup>26</sup> Brazil's experience in this matter is noteworthy (see Table 4). However, and, in spite of the fact that the legitimacy of federal, state, and municipal elections continues to be questioned with an elevated degree of frequency<sup>27</sup>, Mexico has not, to date, carried out an online vote

**T A B L E 4**  
**THE EVOLUTION OF E-VOTING IN BRAZIL**

E-VOTING ISSUE	1996	1998	2000
NUMBER OF ELECTRONIC URNS	77,469	167,200	354,800

<sup>24</sup> Gabriela Montes de Oca Torres, *Congreso en Línea: Un Nuevo Esquema para el Trabajo Legislativo*, at <http://www.puntogob.gob.mx> (last visited March 20, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> Juliana Viegas, "Brazil: Electronic Elections," at <http://www.bmck.com/elaw/getarchive.asp?action=ISO> (last visited October 9, 2000) (noting that in October 2000, over 100 million Brazilians representing more than 5,199 municipalities participated in the electronic election of mayors and representatives); Tribunal Superior de Justicia Electoral, *El Voto Electrónico Se Aplica en 33 Distritos Electorales y 3.812 Mesas*, at <http://www.tsje.gov.py/voto/donde.htm> (last visited April 24, 2003); The Electoral Commission, *Modernising Elections: A Strategic Evaluation of the 2002 Electoral Pilot Schemes*, at [http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/files/dms/Modernising\\_elections\\_6574-6170\\_E\\_N\\_S\\_W\\_.pdf](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/files/dms/Modernising_elections_6574-6170_E_N_S_W_.pdf) (last visited May 9, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> Federal electoral processes have improved since 1988, largely in response to the legislative strengthening of the IFE, the presence of international observers during key votes, and the changing nature of Mexico's political culture. This said, however, examples of Mexican electoral disputes abound. See *Roban Paquetes Electorales en Atenco*, Reforma, March 9, 2003, at 4A; *Denuncian Anomalías en 28 Municipios*, Reforma, March 9, 2003, at 2A; Enrique Gomez, *Inician Impugnaciones Contra Elecciones*, Reforma, March 19, 2003, at 3A; Sandra Isabel Jiménez, *Deja Riña Poselectoral 24 Heridos en Veracruz*, Reforma, August 6, 2002, at 16A; Jorge Escalante, *Piden a Fox Anular Elecciones*, Reforma, April 1, 2002, at 19A; *Roban 150 Mil Micas Electorales*, Reforma, April 19, 2002, at 5A; *Destruyen 139 Casillas en Once Municipios de Chiapas*, at <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/9707/970707/nac21.html> (last visited June 25, 2001).

PERCENTAGE OF ELECTORATE THAT VOTED ELECTRONICALLY	20.59%	47.02%	100%
COST OF ELECTRONIC URN	U.S.\$945.00	U.S.\$700.00	U.S.\$550.00

Source: Tribunal Regional Eleitoral

This situation appears, however, to be changing. Over the past two years at least two local government authorities (the state of Nuevo Leon<sup>28</sup> and the Federal District<sup>29</sup>) have announced plans to conduct pilot electronic votes in 2003 as a first step towards the subsequent introduction of full-scale e-voting. The Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) has, moreover, announced its intent to investigate the possibility of making online voting available to Mexican citizens residing outside the country.<sup>30</sup> The key issues that will bear on the long term viability of online voting in Mexico include the necessity of reforming Mexico's electoral codes so as to provide juridical certainty with respect to electronic ballots and lingering concerns (on the part of citizens, NGOs, and government officials alike) regarding system security and capacity, voter privacy, voter coercion (i.e., the elevated possibility which exists for coercing citizens which vote outside of the presence of citizen poll watchers), and the cost of digitalizing the extant electoral system.<sup>31</sup>

### *The Future of Online Citizen Participation in Mexico*

As noted, *supra*, Mexico has made good progress in terms of using ICT to strengthen citizen participation. If, however, the country is to fully develop the potential of an ICT based model of citizen participation, it must eliminate the obstacles which currently impede the equitable obtainment of the communications and interaction benefits associated with such mechanisms.

To begin with, increased rates of citizen participation will remain elusive absent the rectification of Mexico's generally low and regionally disparate levels of Internet access. While the government and private sector have begun to address this problem by installing, for example, *Centros Comunitarios Digitales* in marginal locations, Internet connections in government buildings,

<sup>28</sup> Nuevo Leon's *Comisión Estatal Electoral* plans to make 115 electronic urns available for the July 6, 2003 vote for the state's governor. The cost of conducting said pilot is estimated to be U.S.\$600,000. See Comisión Estatal Electoral, at [http://www.cee-nl.org.mx/CEE\\_html/default.htm](http://www.cee-nl.org.mx/CEE_html/default.htm) (last visited April 15, 2003); Alejandro Salas, *Lanza NL Plan Piloto de Voto Electrónico*, Reforma, June 29, 2002, at 13A.

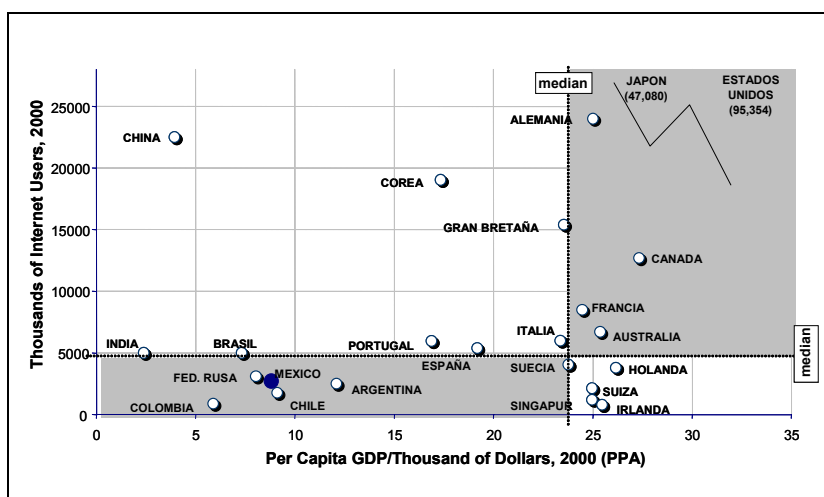
<sup>29</sup> The Federal District's *Instituto Electoral del Distrito Federal* plans to make 50 electronic urns available for the July 6, 2003 elections. The cost of conducting the Federal District's pilot electronic vote is estimated to be U.S.\$150,000. Electoral authorities in the Federal District aim to conduct a full electronic vote by 2006. Jonathan Hernandez Sosa, *Preparan Voto Electrónico*, Reforma, December 9, 2002, at 5A.

<sup>30</sup> IFE, *Coordinación de Asuntos Internacionales*, at <http://www.ife.org.mx/intranet/dirsecre/infotri/1tri2002/cai.htm> (last visited April 28, 2003); Clara Ramirez, *Confian Lograr que Paisanos Voten en 2006*, Reforma, April 19, 2002, at 8A.

<sup>31</sup> Manuel Callejas, *e-Democracia*, at <http://www.puntogob.gob.mx> (last visited March 20, 2003); Rebecca Fairley Raney, *Study Warns of Risks in Internet Voting*, N.Y. Times, August 14, 1999, at 4.

and LADANET kiosks in public places, the fact remains that only an estimated 3.48 out of 100 Mexican citizens have the Internet access required for the development of a meaningful form of online citizen participation.<sup>32</sup> This figure serves to place Mexico towards the bottom of the ranking which compares Internet access to GDP for OECD member nations (see Figure 9, *infra*). According to government projections, the aforementioned remedial measures will succeed in putting 98% of the population online by 2025.

**F I G U R E 9**  
**INTERNET USERS IN RELATION TO PER CAPITA GDP**



Source: World Bank, ITU

A more subtle issue that needs to be addressed involves the functionality of government portals. For example, in spite of the fact that an estimated 7-10% of the population still speaks an indigenous language, Internet content is presented in Spanish (or, less frequently, in English). In a similar vein, there is currently no requirement that the government purchase and deploy information systems and computers accessible to people with disabilities. Absent the introduction of systems which can accommodate the special needs of those citizens with physical impairments, an entire segment of Mexico's population will be unable to take full advantage of the participation opportunities made possible through the Internet.

A third fundamental obstacle impeding the obtainment of the benefits which flow from online citizen participation entails the generally weak state of

<sup>32</sup> CIDE, *Telecom-Data*, at <http://telecom.cide.edu/basededatos.html> (last visited March 10, 2003).

“digital culture” in Mexico. In this connection, low levels of confidence in computer based transactions are compounded by similarly low levels of public awareness regarding the possibility which exists for using ICT to participate in the political life of the country. This reality is reflected in Mexico’s low score on the World Economic Forum’s recent global survey on the use and application of ICT<sup>33</sup> (see Table 5, *infra*).

**T A B L E 5**  
**RESULTS OF WEF GLOBAL SURVEY ON USE & APPLICATION OF ICT**

COUNTRY	SCORE	COUNTRY	SCORE	COUNTRY	SCORE
FINLAND	5.92	HONG KONG	4.99	CHILE	4.14
U.S.A	5.79	FRANCE	4.97	SOUTH AFRICA	3.94
SINGAPORE	5.74	JAPAN	4.95	INDIA	3.89
SWEDEN	5.58	IRELAND	4.89	LATVIA	3.87
ICELAND	5.51	BELGIUM	4.83	POLAND	3.85
CANADA	5.44	NEW ZEALAND	4.70	SLOVAK REP.	3.85
U.K	5.35	ESTONIA	4.69	THAILAND	3.80
DENMARK	5.33	SPAIN	4.67	GREECE	3.77
TAIWAN	5.31	ITALY	4.60	CHINA	3.70
GERMANY	5.29	LUXEBURG	4.55	BOTSWANA	3.69
NETHERLANDS	5.26	CZECH REP.	4.43	ARGENTINA	3.67
ISRAEL	5.22	BRAZIL	4.40	LITHUANIA	3.65
SWITZERLAND	5.18	HUNGARY	4.30	MEXICO	3.63
KOREA	5.10	PORTUGAL	4.28	CROATIA	3.62
AUSTRALIA	5.00	MALAYSIA	4.23	COSTA RICA	3.57
AUSTRIA	4.99	SLOVENIA	4.23	TURKEY	3.57
NORWAY	4.97	TUNISIA	4.16	JORDAN	3.51

Source: WEF

Mexico is presently working to overcome this barrier by increasing the availability of international agency, government, academic institution, and corporate sponsored IT training programs for the benefit of both public servants and individual citizens.

The fourth obstacle which hinders the optimal development of online citizen participation mechanisms in Mexico is legal in nature. Despite significant efforts to the contrary, Mexico has yet to pass a free standing law that guarantees the privacy of personal data. This shortcoming is particularly significant in the context of a “low trust”<sup>34</sup> society whose publicly outspoken members have, in the past, been the object of direct and indirect retaliation. The eventual passage of the long pending *Ley Federal de Protección de los*

<sup>33</sup> World Economic Forum, *Global Information Technology Report 2002-2003*, at <http://www.weforum.org> (last visited March 10, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> Lagos, *supra* note 9, at 127 (noting statistically significant level of inter-personal distrust amongst Latin Americans); Benito Jimenez, *Desconfían los Mexicanos de Políticos e Instituciones*, *Reforma*, August 15, 2002, at 7A.

*Datos Personales*<sup>35</sup> - a key objective of which protects the right of online anonymity - will do much to restore citizens' faith in the privacy of electronically submitted and archived personal data in the aftermath of the Choice Point scandal<sup>36</sup> and displace Mexico's traditional "culture of secrecy" (Krauze, 1997). The other citizen participation related legal issue which must be resolved involves the necessity of regulating Mexico's emerging class of political lobbyists.<sup>37</sup> Though not a pressing issue during the decades of a meta-constitutional executive and a rubber-stamp congress, the advent of real political competition and divided government has opened up hard and soft influence peddling opportunities. The future passage of a law such as that introduced last year by *Diputado* Efrén Leyva Acevedo for the purpose of regulating lobbying practices could smooth Mexico's ongoing transition to a new political reality characterized by intensified competition for both access and influence and ensure the striking of an equitable balance between the narrow objectives of specific interest groups and collectively beneficial political action.<sup>38</sup>

The final - and perhaps the most significant - obstacle to enhanced levels of citizen participation involves not technology but, rather, the enduring strength of previously established citizen-government interaction practices and customs. Leaving relatively recent signs of improvement aside, Mexico has not, over the course of the last seventy years, had a strong tradition of grass-roots organization or proactive and widespread popular political intervention.<sup>39</sup> Cognizant of the fact that the absence of these practices will complicate its endeavor to increase citizen participation, the government has, during the past two years, taken measures to *i)* strengthen the legislative framework in support of citizen participation,<sup>40</sup> *ii)* encourage the creation and registration of new

<sup>35</sup> "Decreto Por el que Se Expide la Ley Federal de Protección de Datos Personales," approved by the Senate on April 30, 2002. A competing personal data protection law has been introduced in the Chamber of Deputies by Dip. Barbosa Huerta. See "Iniciativa de Decreto que Expide la Ley Federal de Protección de Datos Personales," *Gaceta Parlamentaria*, 7 de septiembre de 2001, at <http://www.cddhcu.gob.mx/servicios/datorele/cmprvts/1po2/set/2.htm> (last visited August 5, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> This scandal was caused by the sale of Mexico's *Registro Federal de Electores* to Choice Point, a U.S. data management company. The sale violated art. 135 of the *Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales*, the third paragraph of which states "the documents, data, and reports provided by citizens to the *Registro Federal de Electores* ... will be strictly confidential." See "Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales," D.O., 15 de agosto de 1990, art. 135.

<sup>37</sup> Sam Quinones, *The New Influence Peddlers*, *Latin Trade*, November 1999, at 24; Fernando F. Dworak, *Asuntos Legislativos: Cabildeo Peligroso*, *Enfoque*, August 4, 2002, at 6.

<sup>38</sup> "De Ley Federal para la Regulación de la Actividad Profesional del Cabildeo y la Promoción de Causas, Presentada por el Diputado Efrén Leyva Acevedo, del Grupo Parlamentario del PRI," *Gaceta Parlamentaria*, 29 de abril de 2002.

<sup>39</sup> The earthquake of 1985 has, in this regard, served as a strong catalyst. Since that tragic event, Mexico's civic consciousness has expanded significantly. Example of this trend include the *Alianza Cívica*, *El Barzón*, and *Vamos México*.

<sup>40</sup> In its attempts to implement contemporary best practices in public administration, Mexico has, over the course of the last two years, legislated on the subject of citizen participation. An example of this effort includes *Diputado* Villa Barbosa Huerta's bill regarding the participation of civil society in the fight for transparency. See "De la Ley de Participación de la Sociedad Civil para la Transparencia," *Gaceta Parlamentaria*, 15 de mayo de 2002, at

NGOs and/or political parties,<sup>41</sup> iii) offer a course on “Ethics, Responsibility, and Transparency” in the country’s universities,<sup>42</sup> and (iv) prioritize the offering of citizen participation workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns.<sup>43</sup> These developments, considered in conjunction with the creation of an increased number of digital citizen participation spaces, hold some promise for enriching the level and nature of citizen involvement in the affairs of the Mexican government.

<http://gaceta.cddhcu.gob.mx/Gaceta/58/2002/may/20020517.html#Ini20020514Barbosa> (last visited June 10, 2002) (emphasizing the creation of mechanisms for the purpose of enhancing the participation of civil society in the campaign to strengthen transparency). The Federal District’s *Ley de Participación Ciudadana* similarly provides for the presentation of popular initiatives. See “Ley de Participación Ciudadana del Distrito Federal,” D.O. del Distrito Federal, 21 de diciembre de 1998, art. 36, at <http://www.df.gob.mx/leyes/participacion/> (last visited June 23, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> Jorge Octavio Ochoa, *52 Agrupaciones Buscan Registro*, *El Universal*, January 4, 2002, at A8; Guadalupe Irizar, *Convierten a las APN en Trampolín Político*, *Reforma*, May 27, 2002, at 4A (noting registration of 39 groups with the IFE).

<sup>42</sup> Hanako Taniguchi, *Definen Línea de Educación Cívica*, *Reforma*, April 15, 2002, 8A. This endeavor has been spearheaded by the SECODAM, the SEP, and the ANUIES (*Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior*). Universities have the freedom to accept or reject the new civic material. Daniel Lizarraga, *Aclaran que Será Optativa la Materia de SECODAM*, *Reforma*, March 6, 20003, at 19A.

<sup>43</sup> La Comisión de Participación Ciudadana, *supra* note 37; IFE, *Campana Nacional de Promoción de Participación Ciudadana*, at <http://www.ife.org.mx> (last visited May 3, 2003).



## Conclusion

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Mexico has been experiencing a forward momentum in terms of political participation that is evident in the elevated levels of citizen participation observed between 1981 and 1997 (see Table 1). Real political competition with the accomplishment of an alteration of political power have combined in such a way as to enable Mexico to rightfully claim that it has succeeded in establishing a democratic form of government, in accordance with a minimalist definition of democracy (Kenney, 2001).<sup>44</sup> The meaningful integration of an increased number of citizens into the legislative and policy arenas may strengthen Mexico's political liberalization and move towards a more comprehensive democratic experience characterized by the effective and equitable functioning of the system of checks and balances set forth in the Constitution.

Mexico's struggle to break with the inertia of a past characterized by informational opacity has coincided with the advent of ICT. The experience of other nations indicates that ICT can facilitate the availability and flow of information, eliminate distance driven urban-rural divergences/distinctions in terms of political activism and improve the quantity and quality of citizen input.

Although Mexico's online citizen participation mechanisms have not, to date, resulted in the widespread disintermediation of political processes projected by cyber-democracy proponents, the country's experience is consistent with the preceding observations insofar as the operation of mechanisms such as the FTL reform, *Atención Ciudadana*, and *Sistema Nacional e-México* fora have yielded rich matrices of citizen generated information and perspectives that would not otherwise have been available to inform the policy and law making process. Viewed in light of the OECD's model for evaluating the inter-relationship between ICT and citizen participation, Mexico has passed the static information (i.e., government to citizen) and consultation (i.e., government to citizen to government) stages and is poised to enter the active citizen participation stage (i.e., the establishment of a government-citizen "partnership" wherein citizens take an active role in proposing policy options and shaping policy dialogue). The linkage between ICT and citizen participation in Mexico will likely be reinforced given *i*) the introduction of transparency inducing laws and institutions, *ii*) the imminent passage of a free-standing federal privacy law, *iii*) the executive branch's growing emphasis on the impartation of civic education, *iv*) the conduction of citizen participation workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns, *v*) the conceptual and functional similarity between traditional (i.e., letter writing, signature drives, etc.) and Internet based advocacy tools (see Table 7, *infra*) (INEGI, 2001) and

<sup>44</sup> Matthew T. Kenney, *Transition to Democracy: A Mexican Perspective*, in *Citizen Views of Democracy in Latin America* 107, 111 (Roderic Ai Camp ed., 2001).

vi) the global trend towards enhanced levels of citizen interest in using ICT for the purpose of becoming more engaged in law and policy making processes.<sup>45</sup>

**T A B L E 7**  
**AMENABILITY OF ICT TO TRADITIONAL CITIZEN PARTICIPATION TOOLS**

TRADITIONAL ADVOCACY TOOL	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION WHICH USES TOOL FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION PURPOSES	AMENABILITY TO ICT
LETTER WRITING	12.24%	YES
SIGNATURE DRIVE	19.84%	YES
PRESENTATION OF COMPLAINT TO AUTHORITIES	19.47%	YES

Source: INEGI

These developments must now be definitively incorporated into the political, social, and, indeed, psychological fabric of the country. It is, in this regard, critical that Mexico leverage the legislative and technological foundation it has created to expand the number of online citizen participation mechanisms, introduce the next generation of ICT based participatory features and services, and, most importantly, strengthen the capacity of citizens to perceive the connection between input and impact.

Certainly, the Internet has the potential to create open forums of communication and provide free access to information. But strong citizen participation will not be realized only by introducing Internet as a mechanism into political cultures and institutions. As the online process of reform to the FTL proved, the Internet provided an online arena for playing out the same conflicts that appear in conventional participatory methods. In this regard, the question that remains unanswered is how to aggregate or choose between incompatible citizen's perspectives? How to avoid controversy or integrate interests? These piecemeal advances need to be integrated in the reflective process by which lay perspectives and knowledge are built into the policy-making process. The realization of these objectives cannot be reached without a strong and earnest political leadership to guide the process.

<sup>45</sup> KPMG Consulting, *E-Government for All*, at <http://www.kpmgconsulting.co.uk> (last visited August 2, 2002).

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## V. Annexes

## Annex I

**MULTIPLE VARIABLE SITE ANALYSIS:  
EXECUTIVE BRANCH ONLINE SPACES FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY  
DECEMBER 2002**

ISSUE/FEATURE	ATENCIÓN CIUDADANA	PRESIDENCIA
OFFICE LOCATION/STAFF DIRECTORY INFORMATION	YES	YES
GENERAL INFORMATION	YES	YES
SPECIFIC/QUANTITATIVE INFORMATION (REPORTS, PROJECTIONS, ARTICLES, ETC.)	NO	YES
ABILITY TO SUBMIT INFORMATION (UNIDIRECTIONAL FLOW)	YES	YES
ABILITY TO REQUEST AND RECEIVE INFORMATION (BIDIRECTIONAL FLOW)	YES	YES
ABILITY TO REVIEW SUBMISSIONS OF OTHERS	YES	YES
ABILITY TO SUBSCRIBE TO ELECTRONIC BULLETIN/UPDATES	NO	NO
ABILITY TO LEARN SPECIFICS/DETAILS OF RESOLUTION TO CONTROVERSY	NO	NO
RESPONSE TIME (IN CONNECTION WITH A SPECIFIC REQUEST FOR INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY E-MAIL)		
DATE SUBMITTED	22 AUG. 02	22 AUG. 02
AUTO-REPLY/GENERIC RESPONSE (FROM WEBMASTER)	SAME DAY	SAME DAY
RESPONSIVE/PERSONALIZED REPLY	NONE	NONE
ABILITY TO SCHEDULE MEETINGS WITH EXECUTIVE BRANCH ENTITIES AND/OR OFFICIALS	NO	NO
ABILITY TO ATTEND VIRTUAL HEARING/MEETING	NO	NO
ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN ONLINE PLEBISCITE OR REFERENDA	NO	NO
ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN ONLINE OPINION POLL	YES	YES
ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN FORA/CHATS	YES	YES

**FUNCTIONALITY**

ISSUE/FEATURE	ATENCIÓN CIUDADANA	PRESIDENCIA
Registration Required	Yes	Yes
Total Online Registration Capability	Yes	Yes
Physical Presence Required for Registration	No	No
Content in English Language	No	Yes
Content in Indigenous Language	No	No
Disability Access Provided	No	No
On-Site Search Capacity	No	Yes
Off-Site Search Capacity	No	No
Intra-Branch Horizontal Links (between same level agencies)	Yes	Yes
Inter-Branch Horizontal Links	No	No
Vertical Links (between levels of government)	No	No
Links to Non-Governmental Sites	No	No
Digital Signature Enabled	No	No
Transactional Capability (browse products, place orders)	No	No
Electronic Payment Capability	No	No
Call Center Available	Yes	No
Call Center Operational	Yes	No
Online Tutorial Available	No	No
Posting/Expiration Information Provided With Respect to Potentially Time Sensitive Content	Yes	Yes
Online Site Evaluation Mechanism Provided	No	No

**SITE SPECIFIC LEGAL INFORMATION**

ISSUE/FEATURE	ATENCIÓN CIUDADANA	PRESIDENCIA
PRIVACY POLICY POSTED	NO	NO
INFORMATION REGARDING SECURITY FEATURES POSTED	NO	NO
INFORMATION REGARDING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ISSUES POSTED	NO	NO

**OTHER**

ISSUE/FEATURE	ATENCIÓN CIUDADANA	PRESIDENCIA
SITE STATISTICS AVAILABLE (FOR EXAMPLE, HITS OVER TIME)	NO	YES
EXISTENCE OF NON-PUBLIC SECTOR ADS	NO	NO



## Annex II

**MULTIPLE VARIABLE SITE ANALYSIS:  
CONGRESSIONAL ONLINE SPACES FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY  
DECEMBER 2002**

ISSUE/FEATURE	H. SENADO DE LA REPÚBLICA	H. CÁMARA DE DIPUTADOS
OFFICE LOCATION/STAFF DIRECTORY INFORMATION	YES	YES
GENERAL INFORMATION	YES	YES
SPECIFIC/QUANTITATIVE INFORMATION (REPORTS, PROJECTIONS, ARTICLES, ETC.)	YES	YES
ABILITY TO SUBMIT INFORMATION (UNIDIRECTIONAL FLOW)	YES	YES
ABILITY TO REQUEST AND RECEIVE INFORMATION (BIDIRECTIONAL FLOW)	YES	YES
ABILITY TO REVIEW SUBMISSIONS OF OTHERS	NO	NO
ABILITY TO SUBSCRIBE TO ELECTRONIC BULLETIN/UPDATES	NO	NO
ABILITY TO LEARN SPECIFICS/DETAILS OF RESOLUTION TO CONTROVERSY	YES	YES
RESPONSE TIME (IN CONNECTION WITH A SPECIFIC REQUEST FOR INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY E-MAIL)		
DATE SUBMITTED	22 AUG. 2002	22 AUG. 2002
AUTO-REPLY/GENERIC RESPONSE (FROM WEBMASTER)	NONE	NONE
RESPONSIVE/PERSONALIZED REPLY	27 AUG. 2002	NONE
ABILITY TO SCHEDULE MEETINGS WITH EXECUTIVE BRANCH ENTITIES AND/OR OFFICIALS	YES	NO
ABILITY TO ATTEND VIRTUAL HEARING/MEETING	NO	NO
ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN ONLINE PLEBISCITE OR REFERENDA	NO	NO
ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN ONLINE OPINION POLL	NO	NO
ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN FORA/CHATS	NO	YES

**FUNCTIONALITY**

ISSUE/FEATURE	H. SENADO DE LA REPÚBLICA	H. CÁMARA DE DIPUTADOS
REGISTRATION REQUIRED	No	No
TOTAL ONLINE REGISTRATION CAPABILITY	No	No
PHYSICAL PRESENCE REQUIRED FOR REGISTRATION	No	No
CONTENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE	No	No
CONTENT IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE	No	No
DISABILITY ACCESS PROVIDED	No	No
ON-SITE SEARCH CAPACITY	YES	No
OFF-SITE SEARCH CAPACITY	No	No
INTRA-BRANCH HORIZONTAL LINKS (BETWEEN SAME LEVEL AGENCIES)	YES	YES
INTER-BRANCH HORIZONTAL LINKS	YES	YES
VERTICAL LINKS (BETWEEN LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT)	YES	YES
LINKS TO NON-GOVERNMENTAL SITES	No	YES
DIGITAL SIGNATURE ENABLED	No	No
TRANSACTIONAL CAPABILITY (BROWSE PRODUCTS, PLACE ORDERS)	No	No
ELECTRONIC PAYMENT CAPABILITY	No	No
CALL CENTER AVAILABLE	YES	YES
CALL CENTER OPERATIONAL	YES	YES
ONLINE TUTORIAL AVAILABLE	No	No
POSTING/EXPIRATION INFORMATION PROVIDED WITH RESPECT TO POTENTIALLY TIME SENSITIVE CONTENT	No	No
ONLINE SITE EVALUATION MECHANISM PROVIDED	No	No

**SITE SPECIFIC LEGAL INFORMATION**

ISSUE/FEATURE	H. SENADO DE LA REPÚBLICA	H. CÁMARA DE DIPUTADOS
PRIVACY POLICY POSTED	No	YES
INFORMATION REGARDING SECURITY FEATURES POSTED	No	No
INFORMATION REGARDING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ISSUES POSTED	No	No

**OTHER**

ISSUE/FEATURE	H. SENADO DE LA REPÚBLICA	H. CÁMARA DE DIPUTADOS
SITE STATISTICS AVAILABLE (FOR EXAMPLE, HITS OVER TIME)	YES	YES
EXISTENCE OF NON-PUBLIC SECTOR ADS	NO	YES

### Annex III

**ONLINE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION SPACES  
AT THE STATE LEVEL IN MEXICO (INCLUDING D.F.)  
DECEMBER 2002**

STATE/ENTITY	NO CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISM	CITIZENS CAN SUBMIT COMMENTARIES AND/OR PETITIONS ELECTRONICALLY	CITIZENS CAN SUBMIT COMMENTARIES AND/OR PETITIONS ELECTRONICALLY AND REVIEW OTHER PARTICIPATION RELATED INFORMATION	STATE PIB, PER CAPITA (ADJUSTED U.S.\$, 2000)
AGUASCALIENTES		X		9,443.00
BAJA CALIFORNIA		X		9,571.00
BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR		X		8,722.00
CAMPECHE		X		13,153.00
COAHUILA		X		10,808.00
COLIMA	X			8,048.00
CHIAPAS			X	3,302.00
CHIHUAHUA			X	10,324.00
DISTRITO FEDERAL		X	X	17,696.00
DURANGO		X		6,725.00
ESTADO DE MÉXICO			X	5,672.00
GUANAJUATO		X		5,376.00
GUERRERO		X		4,112.00
HIDALGO		X		4,690.00
JALISCO			X	7,412.00
MICHOACÁN			X	4,785.00
MORELOS			X	6,820.00
NAYARIT		X		4,709.00
NUEVO LEÓN			X	13,033.00
OAXACA		X		3,489.00
PUEBLA			X	5,976.00
QUERÉTARO			X	9,562.00
QUINTANA ROO		X		12,039.00
SAN LUIS POTOSÍ		X		5,699.00
SINALOA			X	5,905.00
SONORA		X		8,761.00
TABASCO		X		4,960.00
TAMAULIPAS		X		7,757.00
TLAXCALA		X		4,221.00
VERACRUZ		X		4,535.00
YUCATÁN		X		6,342.00
ZACATECAS	X			4,210.00

## Annex IV

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### KEY FTL, EXECUTIVE BRANCH, AND CONGRESSIONAL CITIZEN PARTICIPATION URLS

LEY FEDERAL DE TELECOMUNICACIONES	<a href="http://www.cddhcu.gob.mx/leyinfo/118/">HTTP://WWW.CDDHCU.GOB.MX/LEYINFO/118/</a>
PRESIDENCIA DE LA REPÚBLICA	<a href="http://presidencia.gob.mx/">HTTP://PRESIDENCIA.GOB.MX/</a>
ATENCIÓN CIUDADANA	<a href="http://ciudadano.presidencia.gob.mx/">HTTP://CIUDADANO.PRESIDENCIA.GOB.MX/</a>
ALIANZA CIUDADANA	<a href="http://alianzaciudadana.presidencia.gob.mx/">HTTP://ALIANZACIUDADANA.PRESIDENCIA.GOB.MX</a>
SENADO DE LA REPÚBLICA	<a href="http://www.senado.gob.mx">HTTP://WWW.SENADO.GOB.MX</a>
CÁMARA DE DIPUTADOS H. CONGRESO DE LA UNIÓN	<a href="http://www.cddhcu.gob.mx/">HTTP://WWW.CDDHCU.GOB.MX/</a>

## Annex V

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### **Summary of Key Lessons Learned from Mexico's Initial Online Citizen Participation Experience**

1. *ICT Based Citizen Participation Mechanisms Can Facilitate a Radical Departure From Traditional Political Practices:*

The advent of ICT, together with the promulgation of the LFTA and the inception of real political competition, has resulted in *i)* the increased availability of previously undisclosed public sector information and *ii)* an enhanced level of citizen participation in the process of shaping law and public policy. Important examples of these inter-related outcomes are the FTL reform process and the SCT sponsored online forum regarding the *Sistema Nacional e-México*. These developments, to the extent they increase the likelihood that the needs and desires of a broader range of citizens and interest groups will enter the overall law and policy equation, represent a sharp break from past traditional practices and provide direct support for Meyerowitz's theory of ICT bringing politics closer to people.

2. *ICT Based Citizen Participation Mechanisms Neither Disintermediate nor Significantly Illuminate the Internal Processes in Accordance with which Ultimate Decisions are Taken:*

Contrary to early expectations regarding the inevitability of an ICT driven disintermediation of politics, the inception of online participation mechanisms has not eliminated the necessity of interacting with an elected representative or appointed official. The basic corollary to the foregoing point is that in spite of the enhanced opportunities presented by ICT based citizen participation mechanisms for contributing to the general debate regarding an issue, Mexico's experience with the FTL reform clearly indicates that the internal processes associated with the reaching and taking of an ultimate decision remain firmly within the domain of elected and/or appointed officials. Mexico would likely receive a superior return on its investment in online citizen participation mechanisms were it to strengthen the capacity of citizens to perceive the connection between input and impact.

3. *Impediments to the Maximum Development of Online Citizen Participation Mechanisms Must be Recognized and Resolved If Mexico Is to Succeed in Strengthening the Involvement of Citizens and Civil Society in the Political Affairs of the Country:*

Mexico will not, in the long term, succeed in using ICT to strengthen the involvement of citizens and civil society in the legislative and political affairs of the country absent the creation of a critical mass of Internet users. The network of CCDs, *salas de Internet*, and *kioskos* currently being constructed by the government should do much to facilitate the establishment of said critical mass. The other issue that must, in this connection, be addressed involves the necessity of making ICT based citizen participation mechanisms as responsive as possible to the needs and limitations of an expanded range of citizens. As noted, *supra*, this entails making content available in all the major languages used within the country and taking into consideration the needs of those citizens with physical disabilities. The rectification of these usability and functionality issues will, in turn, facilitate the participation of an increased number of citizens.