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## **Digital Gap as the Rational Choice: Successes and Failures of the e-Government Project in Belarus**

Rapid Internet development and its interweaving into everyday life led to heated academic debates about how new information-communication technologies may impact social practices and political processes. Some scholars argue that the Internet contributes to increased efficacy of public administration systems thanks to introduction of digital workflows and digitalization of public services. This idea is shared even by public management of authoritarian countries: as early as in May 2013, Belarusian President, A. Lukashenko, urged businesses and local authorities to establish e-government. Recognized as an “effective and transparent” system that is designed to “improve communication between the citizens and public officials” it is not fully implemented in practice. Technological infrastructure of public bodies still comes short of satisfactory, and key e-government principles are not shared by the public officials. The 49th position of Belarus in the 2016 UN E-Government Development Index confirms that. The country has made the least progress in e-participation component (76th place), which is the key condition for developing an effective interactive e-government system. In this paper, I argue that a purely “technical” enactment of the system is a cost-benefit calculation within changing political and economic contexts. It is a pragmatic response to challenges to authoritarianism in modernizing and increasingly emancipated society. This paper presents an analysis of the progress made by the Belarusian governing bodies in the implementation of e-government mechanisms in the following spheres: e-Health, e-Services, e-Democracy, e-Procurement. It concludes with a discussion on efficacy of those efforts based on interviews with experts and public officials..