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Assessment of the Transparency of Spanish Local Public Administrations: Methodology and Results

Abstract. The availability of information about public management is a key factor in the democratic participation of citizens, as it enables public management to be assessed and makes contributions to the decision-making processes regarding public affairs. In this article, we present some results of the Infoparticipa Project, whose objective was to determine to what extent local public institutions meet the minimal requirements of transparency and whether there is a relationship between the behaviour of municipal governments and the number of inhabitants, the governing political party and the mayor's gender. In order to do this, in a first phase, the information published by the websites of the local public administrations was analysed through 41 indicators. In a second phase, the geolocalized outcomes were published and disseminated through the media and a consultancy procedure was offered to the administrations' politicians and policymakers. The results of the evaluation of municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants in six Spanish Autonomous Communities indicate that the information published by the councils is still very scarce, especially in those with fewer inhabitants. No clear relationships could be established between the political party governing in each municipality or the mayor's gender and the level of transparency on their websites. However, we have been able to confirm that the full application of the Project, including the consultancy phase, has led to an improvement in the information published by the municipalities in which it was applied.

Keywords. Transparency. Public communication. Local governments. E-government. Democracy. Citizenship.

1. Transparency and Government

The increasing demand for transparency does not only affect the governmental sector. Consumers are demanding greater transparency when obtaining mortgages, loans and carrying out financial transactions and company stakeholders want to know in greater detail the internal functioning and the decisions taken at the heart of corporations. Internationally, pro-transparency activists are emerging and even the creators of open code software are positioning themselves in favour of sharing information and against the defence of its ownership [1]. In the context of governments, transparency is considered to be a democratic value that should be present so that governments are reliable, effective and responsible [2]. Thus, parliaments and municipal administrations are encouraged to be more transparent, despite their public audiences, public access to records and written declarations.

Transparency is developed through two different dimensions: as a facilitating element of democracy that regulates inadequate behaviours by enabling the reduction of corruption, bribery and other forms of government misbehaviours, and as a vehicle for the monitoring of governors by their governed individuals, which is an essential aspect of democracy, as it makes public control possible. From this perspective, the availability of information makes it easier to make decisions in democracy, which is a relevant component of governability [1]. Some authors maintain that further research is needed regarding the relationship between the process of citizen participation and its impact on the building of public trust in government and its legitimacy [3]. Nevertheless, in the study carried out by Kim and Lee [4], a positive association was verified between satisfaction of citizens with participation applications and the capacity they had to assess government transparency. Likewise, it was demonstrated that citizens were more satisfied when they perceived they had the capacity to influence directly the decision-making process. Other studies [5] [6] [7] [4] have shown that when governments make efforts to interact with citizens and allow the evaluation of public management and participation in decision-making, they develop a greater trust towards the government offering them these opportunities. Understood from this perspective, transparency is not only openness and the availability of information, but also includes operative processes and the way they are organized [8]. Transparency exists to the extent that an organization provides complete information about all its attributes freely and universally, and also maintains timely communication directly with all key public audiences [9].

For Schauer [1], the most important virtue of transparency is accountability due to the power it grants to citizens. When talking about transparency, there is reference to citizens controlling government and public powers as the basis of representative democracy [10]. When citizens have access to information about governmental management, they can evaluate this management and try to prevent those politicians who did not perform adequately from having access to power and, on the contrary, vote for those who have done their job

correctly [11]. However, without governmental transparency, it is difficult to assign responsibilities to elected and appointed officials through their actions. Therefore, publication of information promotes democratic accountability [12]. In this sense, use of ICTs is one of the most efficient ways of spreading information about public management, communicating with citizens and creating a more transparent government in the digital era [13] [8]. E-government and institutional websites facilitate the dissemination of public information to citizens, who can access them without visiting public entity offices and without any spatial or time limitations. In addition, technology considerably reduces the costs of collecting, distributing and accessing government information [14].

Citizen participation in the decisions of public administrations also takes advantage of Internet-based applications, which facilitate the development of community, bidirectional communication with governors and the offering of online services [4]. This possibility of electronic participation, which allows voters to directly intervene in public decisions, has opened “unprecedented avenues in the field of immediate democracy” [15]. The dissemination of financial information through the Internet enables public administrators to be publicly held accountable and to promote dialogue regarding the use of public financial resources [16]. E-government is a tool to make the relationships between governors and citizens closer and more open and to involve individuals in public interest affairs, to have access to services and to interact [17].

Hence, the official websites of public administrations have become the corporative image, the first and most significant, of these administrations before the citizens. They are a powerful instrument to justify and maintain legitimacy and an important technical support on which to make concepts such as responsibility and accountability operational [18]. However, on many occasions government structure, bureaucracy and partisanship interfere in the implementation of e-government [19]. Governors often use digital media as a bulletin board or as party political noticeboard [20]. Governments are often reluctant to provide information because the disclosure of this information entails transferring power in the favour of citizens [8].

In order to elucidate the indicators and the degree of transparency of governments, and to determine whether these issues are directly related with specific features such as the size of municipalities, political affiliation of the governors or the institutional structure itself, different studies have been carried out. One of these includes the study of West [21], which focused on recognizing particular traits with regards to transparency presented by the different classes of government. West did not find significant differences in the executive, legislative or judicial branches, but he did find that urban and rural local governments do not offer the same access to information on their websites, nor do they have the same resources available to provide online information.

The research of Armstrong [19] focused on the websites of counties and school committees in the State of Florida, which has one of the most open laws of public records of the United States. The results demonstrated that the objectives of a local government website play an important role in determining the availability of public records within that community. The smallest communities, which are more focused on guaranteeing a greater access to information, were found to be more transparent than large communities with different priorities. Websites of school committees in Florida provide more public information than counties. This is partly due to the fact that they work in a more autonomous manner before State and Federal governments than counties, which depend much more on changes in State and Federal laws and suffer greater inequalities in financing. Finally, the results indicated that counties with a higher proportion of Republicans had a greater level of transparency.

Sanders, Crespo and Holtz-Bacha [22] evaluated the transparency of governments by analysing the degree of professionalization of the communication of central governments in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. The results of this research show that, although formal rules have been drawn up that distinguish between partisan political communication and the management of public information, and that mechanisms to enhance the communication process are being implemented, practices in the three countries analysed are still far from systematic. Foremost in the case of Spain is the lack of professionalization of official spokespersons along with the presence of press offices in ministerial departments that are almost always headed by journalists with a questionable degree of independence. The coordination and participation of public officials in the strategic planning of communication continues to be one of the main challenges. Likewise, improvisation and the lack of evaluation of public perception are also problems to be solved. Other studies confirmed the endemic nature of these problems, since in Spain, from the start of democracy at the end of the 1970s, the use of public

communication to convey partisan or personalistic messages to the benefit of individuals in the governing administration has been usual [23].

The work of Rivero, Mora and Flores [18] focused on evaluating the websites of large Spanish local governments with more than 300,000 inhabitants in order to determine the amount of information related to accountability offered by local municipal entities. It showed that 86% of them provided budgetary and financial information but that it was not enough, since although they published the annual budget, very few detailed their chapters or informed about their efficient settlement. Similarly, although the purposes of the entity were made explicit through government plans or municipal action plans, information related to the monitoring of the compliance of those objectives was not published. Moreover, although information regarding the organizational structure of the local governments was present in all the entities and that 95% of them published the minutes of the plenary sessions, the salaries of government positions were only found in 7 of the 22 local governments analysed.

Likewise, a project conducted by the University of Vigo measured budgetary transparency in Galician municipalities using a questionnaire of fifteen questions based on the second, third and fourth pillar of the revised Code of Good Practices on Fiscal Transparency of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) dated 2007. Officials in charge of transactions and/or the pre-audit accounting of 40 municipalities answered the questionnaire and the results showed that political polarization increased transparency, although they also showed that a more polarized system of government could hinder a coherent reform policy and become an obstacle for transparency. It was also demonstrated that governments are more likely to increase transparency when they inherit a high level of debt [24].

2. Infoparticipa Project

2.1 Objectives

The current research is part of the project Infoparticipa (www.mapainfoparticipa.com), which started before the approval of the Law of Transparency, which has been in effect in Spain since December 2015.¹

The purpose of the project was to get public administrations to improve their quality of information and transparency, as well as:

- To demonstrate the relevance of the Internet as a facilitating tool for participation and for monitoring and assessing the actions of political leaders and public policies by citizens.

- To determine to what extent the public institutions meet the minimal requirements of transparency and whether there are relationships between the behaviour of municipal governments and some of its basic characteristics such as the number of inhabitants and the gender of mayor.

This was carried out through the analysis of information published by public local administrations on their websites through the study of 41 indicators and the posterior application of a communication and consultancy procedure for political leaders and policymakers of administrations.

2.2 Methodology

In a first phase, the information that local governments published on their websites was analysed. For the analyses, a relationship of 41 indicators were defined and divided in four groups of issues [23].

The evaluation process was conceived as a civic audit. Evaluators searched for information on the website as any other citizen would do and answer to the question affirmatively or negatively without intermediate responses. The results obtained in each analysis, both the compliance percentage as a whole as well as the indicator-by-indicator results, were published on the website www.mapainfoparticipa.com. In order for any person to compare the results with their own findings, the same page included the guideline used by the evaluators to clarify the indicators and the application criteria. In this way, both the political leaders and policymakers and any other citizen could know how it was assessed and manifest their disagreement in any way.

¹ Law 19 of December 9, 2013 (Ley 19/2013), on transparency, access to public information and good government, is available at: <http://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2013-12887>

These results were also presented in a geolocalized manner, that is, on a map where populations could be selected individually or by groups of municipalities, applying criteria such as territorial areas (district, region, etc.), number of inhabitants, political party of the mayor or mayoress, and others. These functions allowed the evaluation of the results by comparing them with nearby localities or localities of similar characteristics or using any other criteria that could be of interest for the visitor of the website.

Following the analysis and publication on the project's platform, the municipality leaders were informed of the availability of this evaluation on the website in order that they could review it, have the opportunity to improve or to dispute with the assessment team any incidence or discrepancy regarding the results presented and that could be publicly consulted on the digital platform of the Infoparticipa Map. Reports of the results were then also published and sent to the media for publication. This communication strategy ensured that local governments became interested in the procedure and used the indicators as a guideline to the good practices they needed to comply with.

When this was the case, the project team responded to the requests, advising on compliance with each indicator. Similarly, they received news regarding any improvements made and, once their suitability had been confirmed, the project team modified the results of the first assessment and the information published on the platform.

The procedure was first applied in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia in a first wave between 2012 and 2013. Also in Catalonia two more waves took place, in 2013 and in 2014. From the second wave onwards, the Infoparticipa Seal was created as an award to those local governments that best met the criteria. In the Autonomous Community of Aragon, two assessment waves were carried out and in the last one (2014) Seals were also awarded. In contrast, just a single assessment wave was carried out in the communities of Andalusia, Canary Islands, Galicia and Madrid.

2.3 Sample

The sample was comprised of the websites of 34 municipalities of more than 20,000 inhabitants from the 6 Spanish Autonomous Communities. The distribution by Autonomous Communities is as follows: Andalusia, 83 municipalities; Aragon, 4; Canary Islands, 27; Catalonia, 64; Galicia, 22; and Madrid, 34.

All the results correspond to the ones obtained on April 7, 2015 but, as mentioned before, some Autonomous Communities were assessed in one occasion and others in two or three occasions: Catalonia, 3 assessment waves; Aragon, 2 waves; and Andalusia, Canary Islands, Galicia and Madrid, 1 wave.²

The four Communities where one assessment wave was already carried out totalled 166 municipalities of more than 20,000 inhabitants, 65 of them with more than 50,000 inhabitants and 29 of more than 100,000 inhabitants. The two communities where the two or three waves were conducted have 68 municipalities of more than 20,000 inhabitants (although only 4 of these belong to Aragon and the rest to Catalonia). Of these, 25 have more than 50,000 inhabitants and 11, more than 100,000 inhabitants.

3. Results

3.1. Results of the Assessment

Percentage compliance	Municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants (234)		Municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants (90)		Municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants (40)	
	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%
100	19	8.12	13	14.44	7	17.50
Between 90 and 99.99	19	8.12	11	12.22	6	15.00
Between 80 and 89.99	10	4.27	3	3.33	0	0
Between 70 and 79.99	22	9.40	14	15.56	8	20.00

² Data of the first wave re-elaborated from the reports with the results of Aragon of November 7, 2013, "Report about information published on websites of local governments of the municipalities of Aragon with more than 10,000 inhabitants", and Catalonia, of October 25, 2013, "Report about information published on the websites of local governments of municipalities of Catalonia with more than 50,000 inhabitants". Data of the last wave in all Communities, April 7, 2015.

Between 60 and 69.99	28	11.97	17	18.89	9	22.50
Between 50 and 59.99	30	12.82	13	14.44	5	12.50
Subtotal >50%	128	54.7	57	78.88	35	87.5
Between 40 and 49.99	36	15.38	6	6.67	2	5.00
Between 30 and 39.99	37	15.81	9	10.00	3	7.50
Between 20 and 29.99	27	11.54	3	3.33	0	0
Between 10 and 10.99	4	1.71	0	0.00	0	0
Between 0 and 9.99	2	0.85	1	1.11	0	0
Subtotal <50%	106	45.29	19	21.11	5	12.5

Table 1. Results of the assessments in the 6 Autonomous Communities. Source: Authors

Table 1 presents the results of the analysis of all the municipalities in the sample. From the total studied (234), 54.7% exceeded 50% of compliance. With regard to the 90 municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants, compliance was exceeded by 78.88%, while this figure was 87.5% for the 40 municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. It can also be seen that no municipality of more than 100,000 inhabitants obtained lower than 30%.

Therefore, a clear direct relationship can be seen between the number of inhabitants of a municipality and the percentage compliance; therefore, the greater the number of inhabitants, the higher the percentage compliance.

However, although the percentage of municipalities achieving 100% compliance was greater in the municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants compared to the sample total, it was very low in any of the population bands (8.12%–14.44%–17.5%). The same occurs for municipalities surpassing 90%, although the percentage is higher (16.24%–26.66%–32.5%) and the percentage of those achieving between 80 and 89.99% compliance is always extremely low (4.27%–3.33%–0.00%). Lastly, the greatest percentage of cases in the three bands was seen among those obtaining between 50 and 79.99% compliance: 34.19%–48.89%–55.00%. Despite these results, in the two only Spanish cities with more than a million inhabitants, Madrid (3,165,235 inhabitants), the capital, achieved 90.24% compliance, while Barcelona (1,611,822 inhabitants) achieved 100%. These results reveal that the level of compliance is rather low considering any studied parameter: very few municipalities reached 100% or surpassed 90% in all bands. The highest percentage of municipalities obtained between 50–79% compliance, which is clearly not enough. The percentage of municipalities that did not reach 50% was very high among municipalities of more than 20,000 inhabitants and, although lower, it is intolerable in municipalities that manage the lives of more than 50,000 or more than 100,000 individuals. Finally, it is worth mentioning that Madrid, which should be a model, did not reach 100%.

Percentage compliance	Municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants (234)				Municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants (90)				Municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants (40)			
	Ar/Cat	%	ACGM	%	Ar/Cat	%	ACGM	%	Ar/Cat	%	ACGM	%
100	18	26.5	1	0.6	12	48.0	1	1.5	6	54.5	1	3.4
Between 90 and 99.99	18	26.5	1	0.6	10	40.0	1	1.5	5	45.5	1	3.4
Between 80 and 89.99	7	10.3	3	1.8	1	4.0	2	3.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Between 70 and 79.99	7	10.3	15	9.0	1	4.0	13	20.0	0	0.0	8	27.6
Between 60 and 69.99	4	5.9	24	14.5	0	0.0	17	26.2	0	0.0	9	31.0
Between 50 and 59.99	8	11.8	22	13.3	1	4.0	12	18.5	0	0.0	5	17.2
Subtotal >50%	62	91.2	66	39.8	25	100.0	46	70.8	11	100.0	24	82.8
Between 40 and 49.99	4	5.9	32	19.3	0	0.0	6	9.2	0	0.0	2	6.9
Between 30 and 39.99	2	2.9	35	21.1	0	0.0	9	13.8	0	0.0	3	10.3
Between 20 and 29.99	0	0.0	27	16.3	0	0.0	3	4.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
Between 10 and 10.99	0	0.0	4	2.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Between 0 and 9.99	0	0.0	2	1.2	0	0.0	1	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Subtotal <50%	6	8.8	100	60.2	0	0.0	19	29.2	0	0.0	5	17.2

Table 2. Results of the assessment: Autonomous Communities in which two or more assessment waves were conducted (Aragon and Catalonia: Ar/Cat) and Autonomous Communities in which a single assessment was conducted (Andalusia, Canary Islands, Galicia and Madrid: ACGM). Source: Authors.

Table 2 shows the results, differentiating the Autonomous Communities where two (Aragon) or three (Catalonia) waves of assessments were carried out from the Communities where a single wave of assessment was conducted.

It can be seen that more than 90% of the municipalities assessed exceeded more than once half of indicators and that 53% exceeded a 90% positive evaluation. In addition, none of these municipalities achieved an evaluation lower than 30% and only 8.8% obtained less than 50%.

Continuing with the municipalities that were assessed more than once, all with more than 50,000 inhabitants surpassed a 50% positive evaluation, while 88% exceeded 90%. If we reduce the band to those with more than 100,000 inhabitants, all achieved a result superior to 90% and 54.5% reached 100%.

In contrast, municipalities assessed once presented practically inverse results: 60.2% did not reach a 50% positive evaluation and only 3.0% exceeded 80%. When we only consider municipalities of more than 50,000 inhabitants, their results improved, with 70.8% exceeding a 50% positive evaluation, while only 6.1% exceeded 80%. Only 6.8% of municipalities of more than 100,000 inhabitants exceeded 80%, although in this band, 82% achieved a result greater than 50%.

Therefore, it is clear that municipalities assessed more than once obtained results that were significantly superior to those obtained by municipalities that were assessed just once, which indicates that the procedure has been useful. Not only did they obtain better results as a whole, but it was also observed that a high percentage of municipalities with more than 50,000 or 100,000 inhabitants obtained a level of compliance of 100% or very close to it when they were assessed more than once, while very few of those that were assessed just once achieved these compliance figures.

These data gain a greater sense if we compare results of the first assessment of municipalities in Catalonia and Aragon with the later ones in order to know the starting situation and the subsequent evolution.

Percentage compliance	Municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants. Aragon and Catalonia (25), first wave		Municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants. Aragon and Catalonia (25), final wave		Municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants. ACGM (65), single wave.	
	Ar/Cat	%	Ar/Cat	%	ACGM	%
100	1	4.0	12	48.0	1	1.5
Between 90 and 99.99	2	8.0	10	40.0	1	1.5
Between 80 and 89.99	4	16.0	1	4.0	2	3.1
Between 70 and 79.99	6	24.0	1	4.0	13	20.0
Between 60 and 69.99	9	36.0	0	0.0	17	26.2
Between 50 and 59.99	2	8.0	1	4.0	12	18.5
Subtotal >50%	25	96.00	25	100.0	46	70.8
Between 40 and 49.99	1	4.0	0	0.0	6	9.2
Between 30 and 39.99	0	0.0	0	0.0	9	13.8
Between 20 and 29.99	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	4.6
Between 10 and 10.99	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Between 0 and 9.99	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.5
Subtotal <50%	1	4.0	0	0.0	19	29.2

Table 3. Results of the assessments of the first and last wave in municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants in the Autonomous Communities in which two or more waves of assessments were conducted (Aragon and Catalonia: Ar/Cat)² and of the Autonomous Communities in which only a single wave was conducted (Andalusia, Canary Islands, Galicia and Madrid: ACGM). Source: Authors

In Table 3, we observe that only 12% of municipalities in Aragon and Catalonia with more than 50,000 inhabitants that were included in the first wave, performed in 2013, exceeded 90% of results, while after the last wave, this figure rose to 88% municipalities. Meanwhile, in the case of municipalities where just a single wave was conducted, only 3% exceeded 90% in the assessment. Therefore, although municipalities of Aragon and Catalonia obtained better results than the results of communities analysed in the first wave, the percentage of those obtaining satisfactory results, that is, over 90%, was also very low.

On the other hand, in the first assessment in Aragon and Catalonia, only 4% of municipalities did not reach 50%, while in the last wave, none achieved below 50%. Meanwhile, in the municipalities where just a single wave was carried out, 29% did not reach 50% of the evaluation and 19.5% of municipalities did not reach 40%

of the evaluation. It was also observed that in the first evaluation in Aragon and Catalonia no municipality achieved below 40%.

Hence, we conclude that although the starting situation was somewhat better in the Communities of Aragon and Catalonia, the analysis confirmed that the procedure was effective, since in these Communities the results improved substantially and, especially, 88% of the municipalities exceeded 90% on assessment, whereas in the first wave only 12% exceeded this.

3.2. Results of the Assessment According to the Mayor's Gender

Mayor/ mayoress	Inhabitants	Aragon-Catalonia		ACGM	
		N° of municipalities	% evaluation	N° of municipalities	% evaluation
Mayor	20,000-100,000	45	79.3	113	44.0
	More than 100,000	9	98.1	23	62.0
Mayoress	20,000-100,000	12	77.8	24	39.1
	More than 100,000	2	97.6	6	68.3

Table 4. Results of the assessment according to the gender of the mayor in the Communities in which more than one wave (Aragon and Catalonia) or a single wave (Andalusia, Canary Islands, Galicia, Madrid: ACGM) was conducted. Source: Authors.

In Table 5 we can see that there are no very significant differences in relation to whether the government was led by a mayor or mayoress. In the case of Communities where more than one wave was conducted, although in the two bands by number of inhabitants slightly better results were obtained when a man governed, the difference in the number of municipalities governed by a mayoress or a mayor was so significant that a different proportion could modify these results.

In the case of local governments assessed only once, the municipalities governed by mayors and with less than 100,000 inhabitants obtained better results. On the other hand, municipalities larger than this obtained better results when they were governed by a mayoress, with a similar difference percentage. As in the previous case, the difference in the number of municipalities could be determinant in the results.

We therefore conclude with the following considerations:

- The large difference in the number of municipalities governed by a mayor (190) or a mayoress (44) does not allow the results to be analysed in a conclusive manner.
- The differences observed are very small and a significant variation in the percentage of municipalities governed by a mayoress could produce noticeable variations.
- Considering the results obtained, the man-woman condition in government is not a significant variable for the incorporation of good practices on transparency in local governments.

4. Conclusions

The analysis performed on the 6 Autonomous Communities studied gives us a panoramic view of the situation of local governments in Spain prior to the Transparency Law coming into effect and before new councils were constituted following the municipal elections in May, 2015. These results can be subsequently compared in order to appreciate the possible impact that the application of the Transparency Law may have and the change in behaviour of the new governments.

On the other hand, the results allows a balance to be obtained of the application of the procedure designed by the Infoparticipa Project team when comparing results in different Autonomous Communities where one or more waves were conducted or from different waves.

Firstly, a general lack of information was observed. It was also observed that, although larger municipalities offered more information, in the Communities where the Infoparticipa Project did not have any impact due to just one wave of assessments being conducted, the results are significantly inferior to the ones obtained in Communities where more than one wave was carried out. This indicates there was no clear will from the councils to apply transparency policies and also that they did not have clear criteria regarding how to develop them. The methodology of the project has been useful in offering these criteria and advice on how to apply

them, without forgetting that the procedure of communication and granting of certified seals has encouraged compliance.

It is surprising that although political discourses call for transparency and that its application is constantly demanded, very little has been done to put it into practice. The indicators used in the Infoparticipa project refer to elemental practices and it has been confirmed that even in the Community municipalities where the methodology was applied, no general compliance occurred prior to the electoral process in May 2015 in which citizens could evaluate local governments, granting them a new mandate or preferring a change of political party. It is evident there has been a lack of will with regard to transparency and lack of criteria and examples to follow that would hinder the immediate application of the Law. The results also show that where the Infoparticipa methodology was fully applied, the situation improved and that political leaders and policymakers were better prepared.

The territorial analysis also shows how among the Communities in which only a single wave was conducted, there are some noticeable differences, highlighting the low results in Andalusia especially in and Galicia, although in the Canary Islands and Madrid, although better, they are still very low.

Lastly, we observed that there was no clear influence on the results if a mayor or mayoress governed. This work also reveals, in an indirect but clear way, the huge disproportion still existing in this area, which is unfavourable for women.

The Infoparticipa Project differentiates from others because it does not only intend to diagnose reality, but also to transform it, contributing to the improvement of municipality websites through a methodology of communication and consultancy. Therefore, its continuity is required to keep guiding the work of political leaders and policymakers of the public administrations.

The new platform Infoparticipa Map has been adapted to the demands of the Transparency Law in Spain and Catalonia in order to continue the work of improving the information and transparency of local governments in order to guarantee the rights of citizens to information and participation. This adaptation obliges an assessment with new and greater number of indicators, considering the obligations of law, which will complicate comparisons between the previous results and results obtained in the future. We cannot overlook the fact that the law must encourage public administrations to improve their transparency. Knowing which improvements are consequences of the application of the law and which are due to the influence of different aspects of the Infoparticipa Project will oblige the results to be analysed incorporating qualitative methodologies that have not been considered up until now.³

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