

The Integration Of E-Government Systems Into Hellenic Social Security

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Abstract: This study examines the digital transformation of the Electronic National Social Security Agency (e-EFKA) in Greece/Hellas as a vital endeavor for ensuring long-term social security sustainability. Successful e-Government integration depends on prioritizing three primary reform axes: (a) human resources, which dictate reform acceptance and require a participatory mindset and skill enhancement; (b) technological infrastructure, centered on archive digitization, system deployment, and inter-agency interoperability; and (c) organizational structure and procedures, necessitating job redesign, process simplification, and Artificial Intelligence integration. Addressing resistance rooted in fear of uncertainty, loss of control, and skill deficits requires strategic change management—specifically through transparent target-setting, certified lifelong learning, co-designed changes, productivity incentives, and continuous support. To guide implementation under fiscal constraints, the study adopts Kotter's eight-stage model, progressing methodically from substantiating institutional sustainability to anchoring digital practices into the organizational culture. Ultimately, this transition to New e-Public Administration replaces legacy bureaucratic paradigms with an agile, efficient framework benefiting both civil servants and citizens.

Keywords: Electronic National Social Security Agency (e-EFKA), sustainability of social security, interoperability, effective change management, Kotter's "eight-stage" model

1. INTRODUCTION

The present study investigates the feasibility of ensuring the successful integration of e-Government systems into the Social Security system of Greece. More specifically, in Greece, e-EFKA is responsible for administering social security matters. Furthermore, the State holds a full guarantee obligation—not only for covering the national pension expenditure through taxation, but also for all social security benefits and for ensuring the sustainability of the Funds, pursuant to Article 2 of Law 4387/2016. Since January 2017, the "Unified Social Security Agency" (EFKA) has been operational. Pursuant to Article 55 of Law 4387/2016, this entity covers insured persons, pensioners, and their dependent family members, as well as public sector insured employees, pensioners, and their dependent family members. EFKA was renamed e-EFKA, i.e., "Electronic National Social Security Agency," as of March 1, 2020, under the provision of Article 1 of Law 4670/2020, which added Article 51a to Law 4387/2016.

The author proposes appropriate elements of organizational change for the Hellenic Social Security Agency (e-EFKA), prioritized according to their degree of importance (2), in order to achieve efficient resource management aimed at attaining the set objectives. Furthermore, the primary obstacles (challenges) are identified, and the most suitable ways to mitigate them are proposed (3). Finally, an appropriate "change implementation model" is applied to achieve the aforementioned integration of a modern e-governance system (4).

2. ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES: ELEMENTS AND DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE

In this chapter, the proposed reforms are examined and categorized based on their degree of importance. Specifically, within the framework of Change Management, reforms are proposed whose management by the Social Security Agency must be executed in the most effective manner to achieve the desired goals of e-Government (Mixiotis et al., 2023, p. 118 [1]; Apostolakis et al., 2008, p. 45 [2]; World Bank, 2002, p. 1 [3]).

Based on the above, the primary element of organizational change proposed in this study is human resources (employees/executives) (encompassing managerial, organizational, learning, and psychological dimensions). This is because the human factor ultimately executes reforms or rejects them; even if modern technological/information systems are implemented, they remain a "dead letter" without acceptance from end-user employees. Thus, it is proposed, on the one hand, to transition to a more participatory workplace culture while enhancing the competencies of existing personnel, and on the other hand, to shift employee mindsets toward innovation. Consequently, its degree of importance should be classified as "highest/critical."

Subsequently, a highly significant element of change is the introduction and effective operation of new technologies/information systems (technical and managerial dimensions). This entails installing and configuring the new information system, digitizing physical archives, and, most importantly, establishing substantive interconnection with other public service electronic platforms within the framework of interoperability (Pombortsis, 2025, p. 405 [4]). This element is substantial, following human resources in sequence; thus, its degree of importance is "very high."

Equally important is the reform of the Social Security Agency's organizational structure regarding job descriptions (organizational and managerial dimensions). These descriptions have remained unrevised for a considerable period, rendering their update imperative, primarily due to modern socioeconomic and technological shifts. Consequently, redesigning these descriptions and broadening their span of control is essential. Although significant, they play a supporting role in the overall reform, given that human resources and new technologies take precedence. Therefore, its degree of importance is classified simply as "high."

Procedures (managerial, technical, and organizational dimensions) also fall within the same level of importance ("high"). As an element of organizational change in this context, procedures must be simplified (streamlined digital workflows) and made more accessible (remote access for insured individuals to electronic platforms), primarily by abolishing manual paper processes and replacing them with digital equivalents. Reference must also be made to the introduction of innovative Information and Communications Technology (ICT) systems (Pombortsis, 2025, pp. 237 et seq. [4]) and Artificial Intelligence into administrative procedures (Moukiou, 2025, p. 27 [5]; Inglezakis, 2024, pp. 311 et seq. [6]). This implies faster (Boukouvala, 2025, p. 388 [7]) and more accurate administrative decision-making, as more complex criteria and parameters are accounted for, despite inherent risks (Mixiotis et al., 2023, p. 118 [1]; Apostolakis et al., 2008, p. 45 [2]; Pombortsis, 2025, pp. 241 et seq. [4]).

3. OBSTACLES AND WAYS OF ADDRESSING THEM

Parallel to the aforementioned reforms, corresponding obstacles, reactions, and challenges emerge that warrant appropriate mitigation. This represents a case of "major change management" (Johnson et al., 2008, pp. 15, 477 [8]; Apostolakis et al., 2008, p. 45 [2]), encountering obstacles and "resistance to change" (Johnson et al., 2008, pp. 518, 538–539 [8]; Balogun et al., 2004, pp. 56 et seq. [9]; Apostolakis et al., 2008, p. 45 [2]).

Primarily due to the Social Security Agency's prolonged stagnation regarding organizational change, the author considers the human factor (employees) itself to be the chief obstacle. This is because "humans generally tend to resist anything that alters their habits and existing work patterns" (Apostolakis et al., 2008, p. 45 [2]). Public Administration theorists elaborate on this scholarly position, noting that it stems from fear and uncertainty—feelings typically experienced by employees when conditions in their work environment shift, altering the previously stable workplace status quo and leading them to anticipate potential demotion or a reduced level of basic need satisfaction (Apostolakis et al., 2008, p. 46 [2]). Concurrently, another source of fear and uncertainty is the effort required of employees to undergo training in new technological systems and modern work practices, which often diverge significantly from traditional methods (Apostolakis et al., 2008, p. 46 [2]). Consequently, the fear of failure, the perceived loss of control previously possessed, and a lack of adequate digital skills act as impediments to the entire modernization process.

To overcome these obstacles, various measures are proposed, the primary being information dissemination and communication with employees (a) and employee training (b). Specifically, communication serves as a core tool for driving change, as it reduces employee anxiety, fear, and insecurity; employees are reassured when informed about exact objectives and operational plans, preventing speculation or catastrophic assumptions (e.g., risk of dismissal). Effective communication must be substantive to yield full information benefits; indeed, the absence of clear communication and detailed goal-setting is a major driver of occupational stress and anxiety.

Another pivotal solution is structured employee training, delivered through modern lifelong learning and executive training programs rather than informal "on-the-job" instruction. All personnel involved in the upcoming reforms should undergo formal training, transitioning from empirical learning to structured programs and seminars on new information systems.

Furthermore, employees must understand the drawbacks of the status quo alongside the benefits of reform within the organization's strategic scope. Through clear and specific targets, they will recognize the necessity of adopting ICT in their daily operations to facilitate their workload. Additionally, introducing performance

rewards/productivity bonuses can serve as an incentive for staff to accept rather than reject organizational changes.

Moreover, negotiation and co-designing reforms alongside employees can mitigate these challenges. Participatory change and negotiation between staff and leadership foster a perception that management regards employees as "partners" rather than "pawns." Through this psychological approach, management may even engage in strategic persuasion ("manipulation"), convincing staff that they are co-decisive in impending changes (even if nominally so), thereby neutralizing pushback.

Finally, management must reassure personnel of its continuous support, underscoring that any operational issues arising from changes will be absorbed flexibly by the administration rather than individual employees, thereby instilling technical and psychological support.

4. THE PROPOSED "CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION MODEL"

Various "change implementation models" exist, including the Lewin-Schein model, the Kotter model, the Robbins model, the Balogun & Hope model, the Cook & Hunsaker model, and the planned change model. In this case, Kotter's model is selected. This choice is made because the model offers greater clarity and precision through its discrete "8 stages" (Kotter, 2007, p. 99 [10]), thereby mitigating employee anxiety and uncertainty. Regarding modernization efforts, Kotter's model targets the Social Security Agency holistically rather than in isolation. Furthermore, its dynamic nature makes it particularly suitable during periods of financial distress and fiscal recession.

Specifically, the aforementioned model comprises 8 stages, namely:

In Stage 1 (Kotter, 2007, pp. 97–98 [10]), the need for reform is recognized, establishing that change is not only necessary but urgent. In this scenario, Social Security Agency must remain viable amid new economic realities (fiscal crisis/economic recession/debt crisis) and in light of the World Bank mission report.

In Stage 2 (Kotter, 2007, p. 98 [10]), the guiding coalition is formed. In this case study, it consists of board members, professional chamber executives, and technocrats.

In Stage 3 (Kotter, 2007, pp. 98–100 [10]), strategy and vision are formulated. Here, digitization will be tied to servicing sector professionals (engineers), highlighting the benefits of achieving the proposed objectives.

In Stage 4 (Kotter, 2007, p. 100 [10]), the reform vision is communicated to all stakeholders. Specifically, the vision is conveyed individually to each of the organization's employees, actively involving them in the impending changes.

In Stage 5 (Kotter, 2007, pp. 100–102 [10]), broad-based empowerment is enabled. Bureaucratic obstacles are eliminated across the institution, and all job descriptions are updated.

In Stage 6 (Kotter, 2007, p. 102 [10]), short-term wins are generated. For example, digitizing frequently issued social security documents for automated distribution demonstrates immediate practical value, persuading staff of the modernization's efficacy.

In Stage 7 (Kotter, 2007, pp. 102–103 [10]), gains are consolidated, enabling the digitization of more complex administrative functions in Social Security Agency following successful initial implementations.

In Stage 8 (Kotter, 2007, p. 103 [10]), a new organizational culture is anchored. The e-EFKA firmly embeds change into its culture to prevent reversion to legacy practices, establishing digitization as the new baseline.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, comprehensive reform across hellenic social security system is an imperative necessity to ensure modernization, financial viability, and proper operational performance amidst economic recession and in response to the World Bank report. Specifically, these objectives encompass employee skill and knowledge development, the adoption of ICT systems through new information infrastructure, organizational restructuring, administrative procedure refinement, culture transformation (primarily shifting employee mindsets), and leadership practices. Ultimately, the core of this transformation requires shifting traditional employee skepticism toward innovative practices and technological advancement. This supports efficient institutional

operation, directly benefiting both public servants and citizen-clients within the framework of New (Electronic) Public Management.

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