**Prime Minister's Office**

The Association of Local Authorities in Iceland

The Threads and Merits of Government Websites – 2007

Main conclusions – brief summary

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SJÉ

Introduction –performing the assessment project

The purpose of this assessment was to analyse the status of electronic services on government websites in Iceland and to present a comprehensive survey of the online public services on such websites, in addition to providing authorities with information on where they stand in comparison with others.

The assessment's objective was to evaluate how well official websites perform and manage to support the development of online public services as presented in the national government document *Resources to Serve Everyone – Policy of the Government of Iceland on the Information Society, 2004 – 2007*.

This is the second time an assessment has been conducted of government websites, the previous one having occurred in 2005.

All in all, 262 websites were evaluated, including 194 state government sites and 68 municipal government sites. In 2005, 246 websites had been evaluated, of which 175 were for national bodies and 71 for municipalities.

The survey response rate was 89%, with 91% of national bodies answering and 76% of municipal bodies. From 36 national bodies, no response was received; the percentages never replying to the survey were 24% of municipal governments and 9% of the national bodies.

Response rates in the preceding survey were similar to those this time, or 85% overall. However, the response rates rose somewhat for both national public bodies and local governments, with the latter going up from 75% in 2005 to 76% this year, while national bodies climbed from 87% in 2005 to 91% this year.

The conduct of the survey was slightly modified from 2005, when the questionnaire was sent in an email attachment to contacts within national bodies and local governments. The contacts were asked to comment on the website assessment for their respective body and to answer the survey on its behalf.

This time, Sjá's findings were published on a website where each contact had access to a specific area. The contact received an email containing the URL for the survey, together with a user name and password. The survey page displayed the questions for the various bodies as well as an assessment of the particular contact's website and an opportunity for the contact to comment on the assessment.

The survey findings were not processed in as much detail as before; rather, the decision was taken to summarise the most important findings and place a greater emphasis on increasing public access to the data by electronic means.

It should be made clear that there have been significant alterations in public body websites during the meantime. Thus, the websites in this survey are not necessarily the same ones as those appraised in 2005. Not only is the number of websites within each category different, but municipalities have merged, new sites have been added
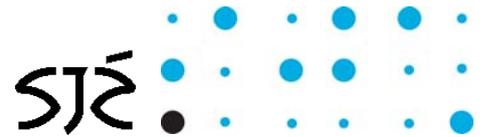
Online public services were assessed by Sjá specialists and categorised in accordance with set definitions as basic services (*Basics*), services that aid and speed up self-service (*Facilitation*), services providing electronic reception or self-service (*Self-service*) and services in which the case is handled electronically (*Case handling*).

Another addition lacking in the 2005 assessment is that of functions supporting *e-democracy*. Below are more exact definitions of online public service categories and functions facilitating e-democracy.

Basics: A website exists where data on the public body and its purpose can be accessed as well as general information, such as its email address.

Facilitation: Data about the public body is provided online, facilitating self-service without actually being interactive. Functions that aid in understanding or in the flow of information to users are also included here. Printable forms, enquiry blanks, a searchable database, calculators, opinion polls, the possibility of registering on a mailing list or of personalising the site, together with links to specific pages on the particular public body, are all examples of services within this category.

Self-service: Electronic processes, often including some means of logging in, fulfil the aim of user convenience. Interactive forms (which can be submitted directly through the website as opposed to using email), forums and e-commerce are examples of electronic self-service.

Case handling: Complete electronic handling of a client's affairs, including not only applications and requests but also decisions and replies on conclusions. This entails users having to identify themselves by logging in or presenting an electronic ID. Users enjoy personalised access and can request services or obtain information on the conduct and outcome of their case through the website.

E-democracy: Users are provided with an opportunity to comment on matters which are topical at the moment and which concern the public body, such as proposed legislative bills and site or master plans. In addition, users can participate electronically in meetings or events arranged by the public body, and can even express themselves.

A few examples of functions that tend to increase e-democracy for the body involved are question forms that users can use to submit comments and suggestions to individual sectors or departments, electronic newsletters and bulletins, chat options for collecting feedback and opinions on various issues, Web discussions on specific policies/temporary concerns, online meetings (where users can keep track of a meeting, send in questions, etc.), Internet surveys to compile information/resident viewpoints, and polls on the services and performance of a public body. Electronic newsletters are also included here, since they render it easier for residents to obtain information on the public body, even though the process is not interactive.

Main conclusions

Various background factors were collected for the bodies studied; further details on these factors may be viewed where the survey results appear at www.ut.is, as stated in the introduction.

As the figure below indicates, only 2% of the public bodies now use outsourced web services, as opposed to 5% in 2005. In 2007, far more public bodies than before have staff who tend to web-related matters rather than contracted parties, or 18%, up from only 7% in 2005. Moreover, a significantly lower proportion of public bodies are in the position of having staff who handle not only web services but also other responsibilities, constituting a drop of 12% during the period.

More public bodies have hired a specific staff member to take charge of web concerns; this ratio was 28% in 2005 but has climbed today to 31%. These findings suggest that online services have gained importance in comparison with 2005. A considerably greater number of bodies, or 11%, now have not only specific staff but also contract services for web matters. On the whole, therefore, developments show a positive trend: specific employees are in charge of web-related issues, staff members handle such issues in addition to utilising contracted services and, finally, the percentage of public bodies lacking an employee who tends exclusively to online services has diminished.

Figure 1. Percentage of public bodies with an employee hired specifically to handle web services
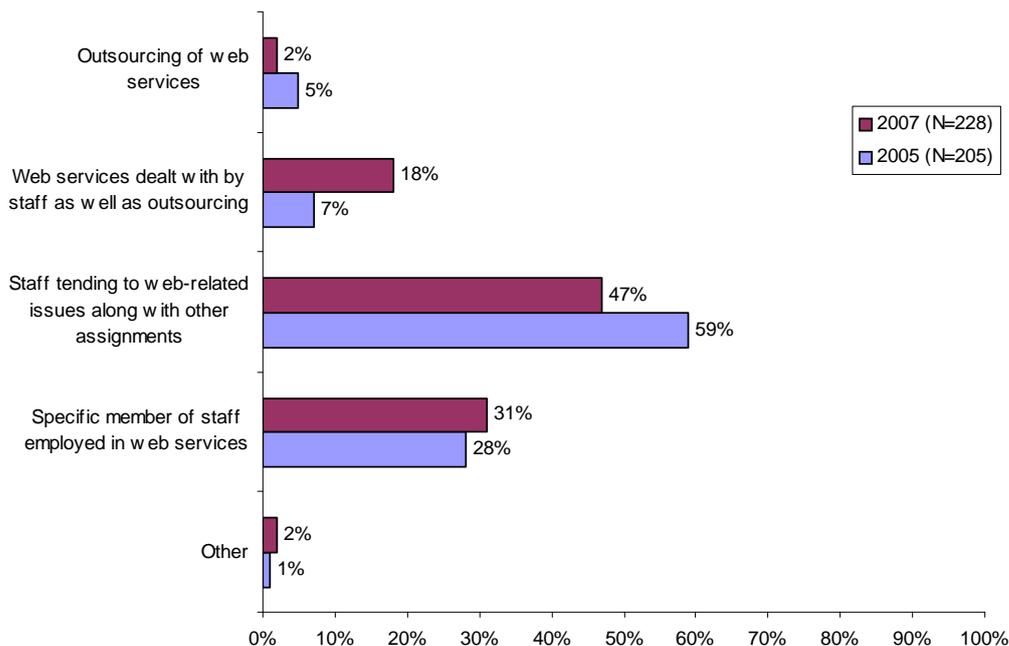
Main conclusions

**Figure 2. Categories of online public services, 2005 and 2007**
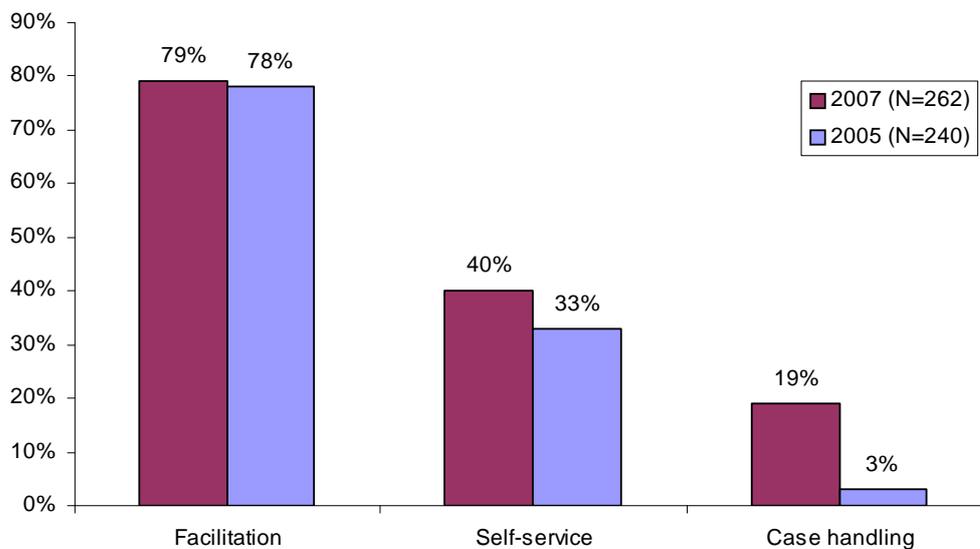
Three categories of online public service are shown in the figure above. It was considered unnecessary to show figures relating to basic services (*Basics*) since the assessment only involved public bodies that have websites and email addresses and therefore fulfil the criteria for that category. There is only one national body which has no website, while there are 13 local governments, or 16.5%, which have none.

The proportion of public bodies providing services in the *Facilitation* category remains virtually the same, having risen by only 1% since 2005. The ratio of public bodies with offerings in the *Self-service* category, however, went up up by 7% during the period, from 33% to 40%, and *Case handling* grew substantially or by 16%, escalating from 3% to 19%.

It is obvious that the public bodies which are forging ahead and have been improving their services have done so by emphasising the installation of complete online public services, rather than by contemplating simpler solutions, and therefore fall under the category of *Case handling*. On the whole, developments have been very positive.

Main conclusions

Figure 3. Online public services – Facilitation, 2007
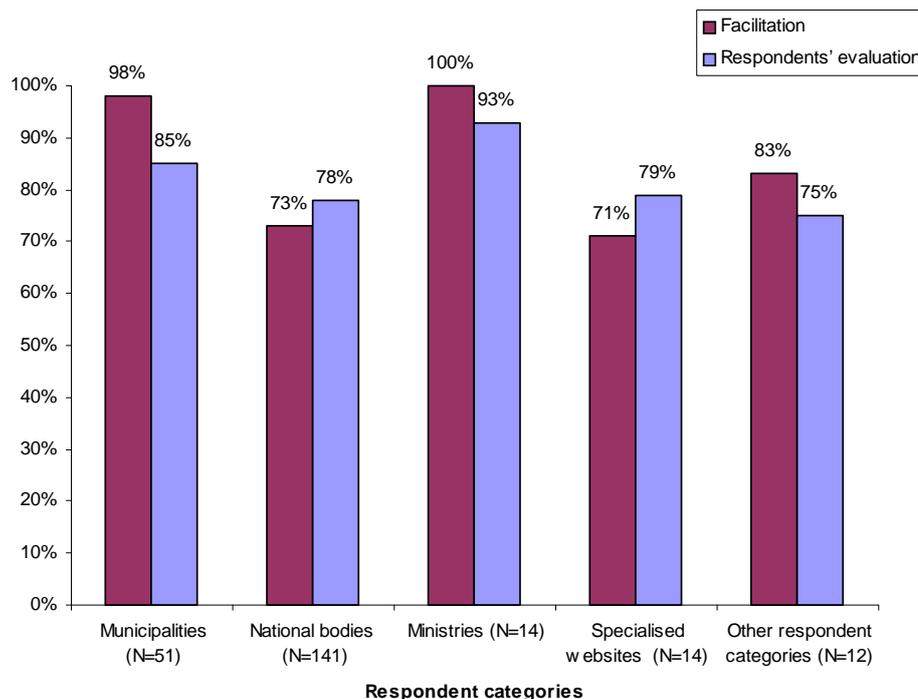
The left column of each pair in the figure above shows the percentage of public bodies providing *Facilitation*, according to the type of body. The right column of the pair shows the respondents' evaluation of whether the public body ought to be offering such services or not.

On the whole *Facilitation* did not increase much, rising by a mere 1%. When these findings are viewed according to the type of public body, it becomes apparent that 98% of local governments offer *Facilitation* (in contrast to 87% in 2005), while 78% of national bodies offer *Facilitation* (compared to 74% in 2005).

Respondents were asked whether the public body should be providing the respective services online, considering its statutory purpose. When the results with regard to *Facilitation* are compared with the respondents' evaluation of whether the public body should provide services in that particular category, some interesting findings are revealed. Whereas 98% of local governments provide services categorised as *Facilitation,* only 85% of respondents believe the municipalities should be doing so. All of the ministries offer *Facilitation*; however, only 93% of respondents believe the ministries should be providing such services. It could well be that the reason why respondents' assessments regarding

Facilitation are not   higher is that the solutions being examined are more advanced or up-to-date and fall under the *Self-service* or *Case handling* categories.

Main conclusions

Figure 4. Online public services - self service 2007


Respondent categories
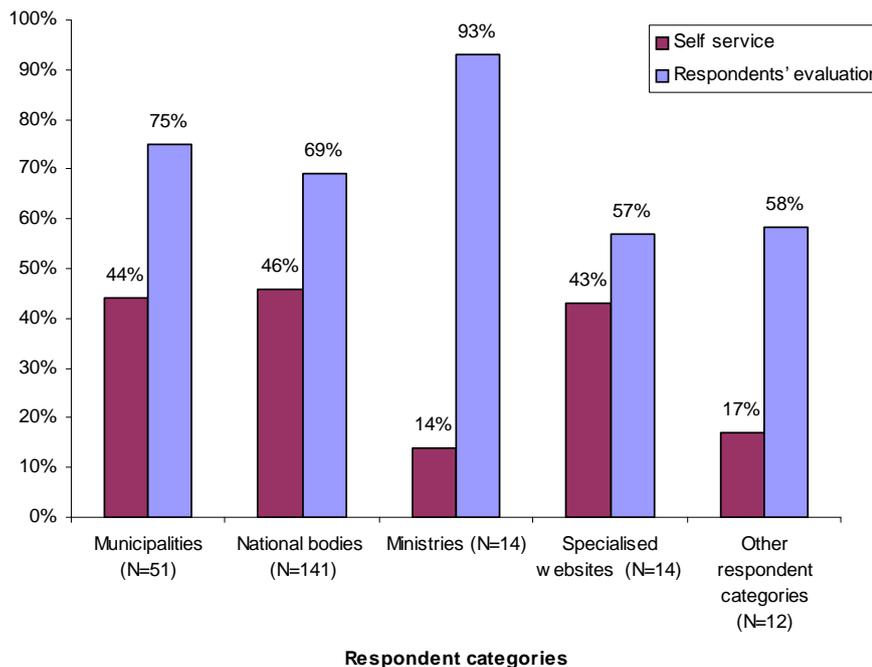
The left bars in the figure above show the percentage of public bodies providing *Self-service*, according to the type of public body. The right bar, on the other hand, shows the assessment of respondents as to whether the public body should offer these services or not.

In respect of local governments, the percentage of those with offerings in the *Self-service* category had not risen significantly, edging from 43% in 2005 to 44% two years later. Upon examining national bodies, however, the percentage of websites that include such services rose substantially, reaching 46% by 2007 (up from 34% in 2005). Readers who wish to familiarise themselves with the 2005 survey findings can access the report at www.ut.is.

Asked whether they felt there was any reason for the public body to provide online public services in the *Self-service* category, respondents' answers clearly indicated that a substantial majority believed this should be done. Therefore, there are clearly opportunities for improving services in this category, with respondents believing that the current status of online self-service is far from what they feel it should achieve in the future. As an example, 93% of ministry respondents believe they should offer a *Self-service* facility, whereas only 14% of ministries offer such services today.

Main conclusions

Figure 5. Online public services - case handling 2007
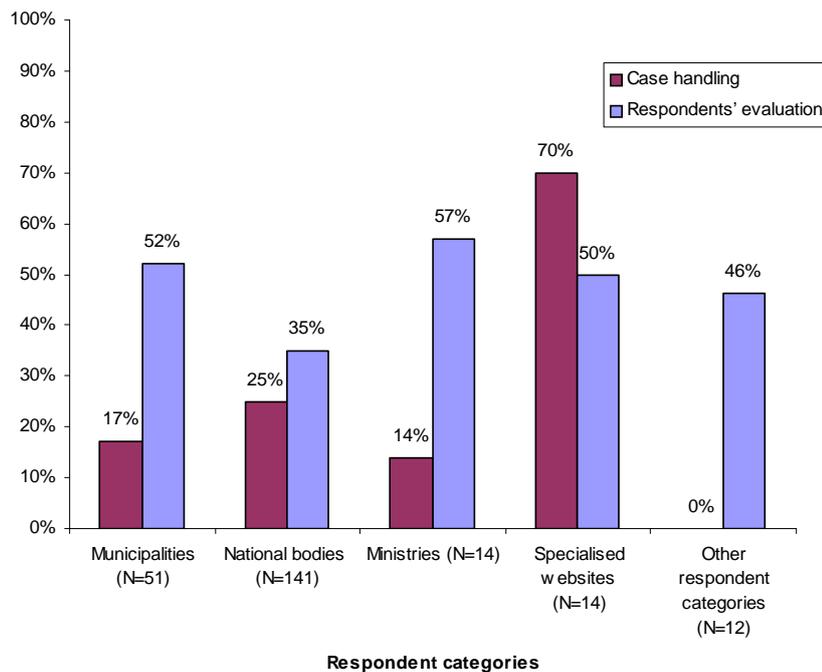

For each type of public body, the left columns in the figure above show the percentage of this type which provided *Case handling*. The right columns indicate the opinions of respondents on whether or not the public body should be offering such services.

As mentioned earlier, *Case handling* has become much more common, increasing by 16%. In relation to types of public bodies, one notes that 17% of local governments (up from 4% in 2005) and 25% of national bodies offer online public services in the *Case handling* category (in comparison to 3% in 2005). This is a substantial rise, and quite clearly represents a major positive development in this category.

According to Figure 5, respondents believed public bodies should have progressed even farther than they have, based on their legally defined purpose. On the other hand, the findings for *Specialised websites* constitute an exception, as only 50% of the contacts felt they should offer *Case handling,* though it was in fact being offered by 70% of such websites. *Specialised websites*, for instance www.island.is and www.rikiskassinn.is, are sites with a specific purpose, so that people may consider the purpose of these less clear than in the case of websites for individual public bodies.

Main conclusions

**Figure 6. Online public services – E-democracy**
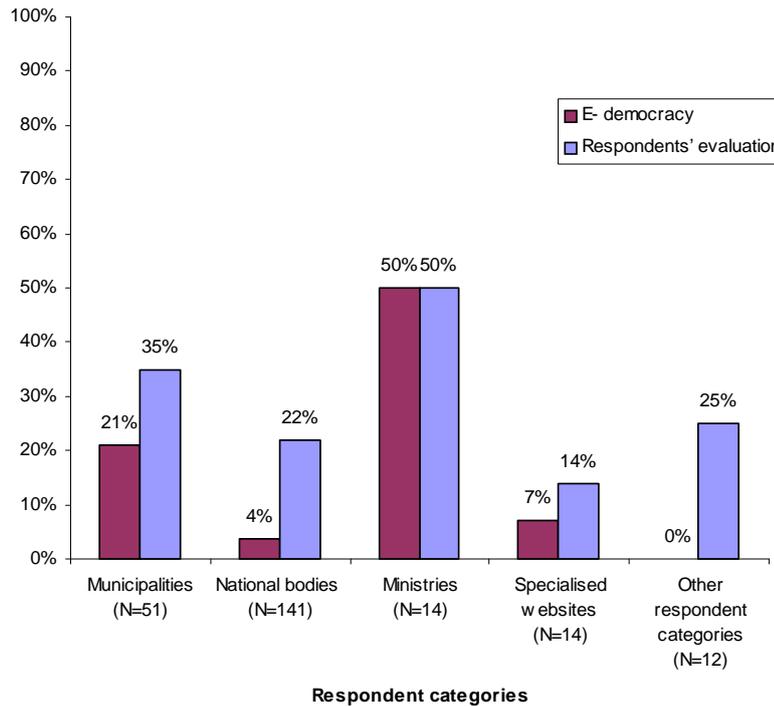
As pointed out above, the 2007 assessment attempted to determine whether the bodies involved offered online functions tending to support or promote e-democracy. Included were functions which help residents to see what is happening with public bodies, as well as functions which allow residents to express their views on particular issues and participate in official procedures.

E-democracy is a new component, not yet studied in the 2005 survey. The potential presence of online functions enabling users to express their views on the affairs of each public body was examined, as e-democracy augments the transparency of government bodies for the public, enabling the latter to become involved in government processes.

Findings are somewhat disappointing on the need for e-democracy, as perceived by the public bodies themselves. This may perhaps be explained by an insufficient understanding of the concept and by the mindset prevalent in official circles regarding e-democracy. The debate on e-democracy has not properly begun, so that the notion remains a novelty to many people.

Main conclusions

**Figure 7. Percentage of websites with forms, based on
the type of public body**
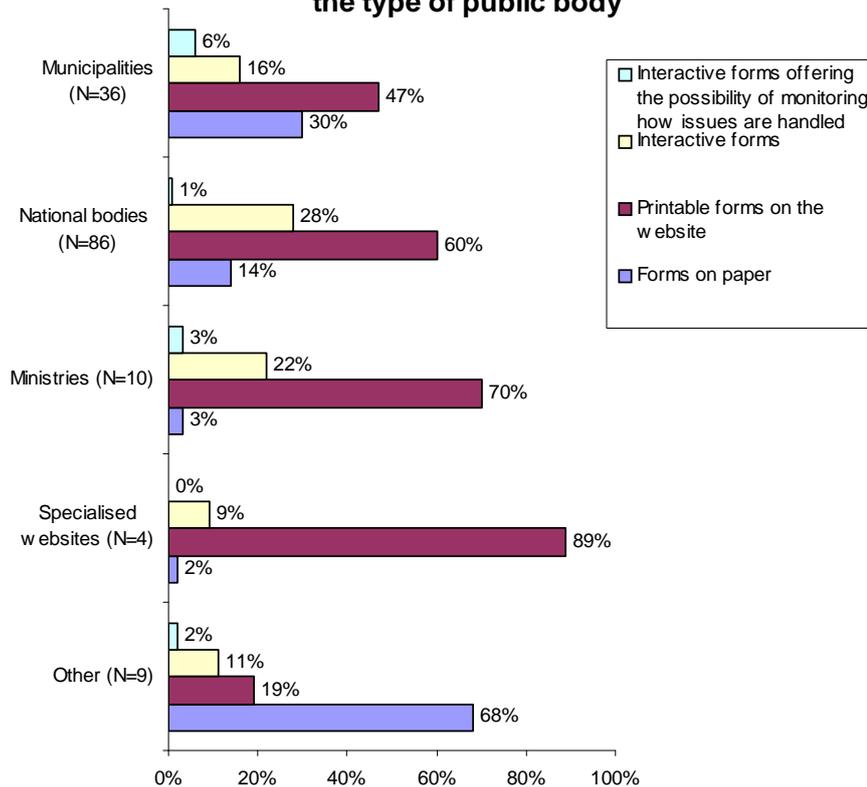
There was an awareness in 2005 of limitations in the criteria for online public services. Then, as in 2007, the website services were counted under *Case handling* if any single service on the site fulfilled the conditions for it. Similarly, the website services were entered in the *Facilitation* category if any online form could be found. Clearly, this method resulted in widely diverging public bodies being evaluated as equal, since some provided only one online form while others presented most of their forms in electronic format. The 2007 survey thus endeavoured to gain a more precise view of the developments in online services.

There were fewer responses to this question than expected: only 145 out of 262 respondents, or 55%. The main conclusion is that the lion's share of forms is now available online, with a mere 20% only being offered on paper.

The results show the ratio of printable forms to range from a low of 19% up to 89%. Specialised websites have the highest percentage; this is due to the portal www.island.is, which accesses more than a thousand forms from national and local governments.

Fewer interactive forms are provided by local governments than by ministries and other national bodies. On the other hand, local governments offer the highest proportion of forms in the electronic case handling category, or 6%.

Main conclusions

Figure 8. Case handling – 2005 to 2007 differences, based on full-time equivalent employee positions
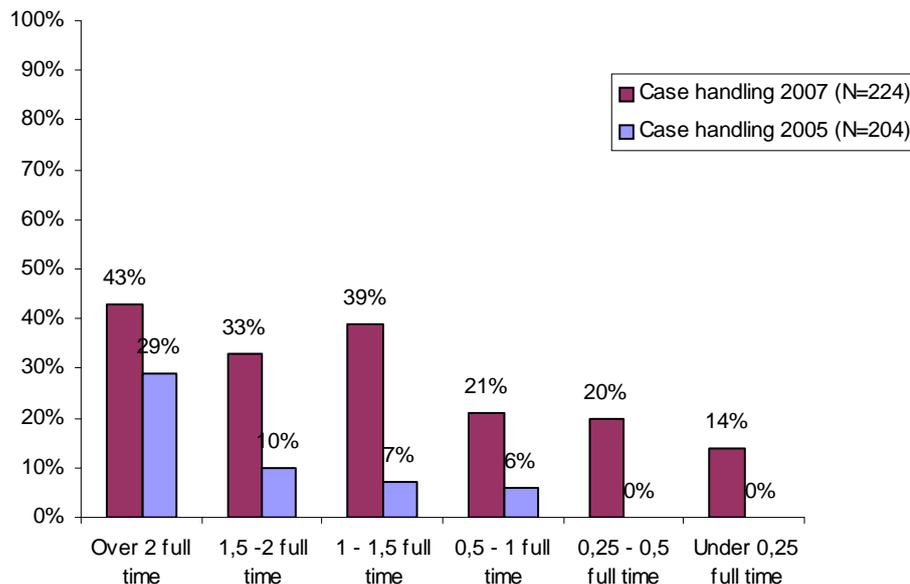
The survey contacts were asked to estimate how many full-time equivalent employee positions were required for attending specifically to web-related matters of the public body. The focus here was on the public bodies offering online services in the *Case handling* category, with a comparison to the findings of 2005.

According to the 2007 findings, the number of public bodies that offer *Case handling* rises in direct proportion to the number of full-time employee equivalents engaged in website affairs. A certain dichotomy appears to exist, in which public bodies with more than one full-time employee equivalent in web-related affairs evidence from 12% to up to 33% more online *Case handling* than those with less than one full-time equivalent devoted to website concerns.

Main conclusions

Table 1.1. Electronic case handling 2007 - Highest rated municipalities (N=51)
Árborg
Garðabær
Hveragerðisbær
Reykjanesbær
Reykjavíkurborg
Seltjarnarnes
Ölfus

Table 1.2. Electronic case handling 2007 - Highest rated national bodies (N=141)
Communication Centre for The Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Consumer Agency
Directorate of Customs
Environment Agency
Housing Financing Fund
Icelandic Student Loan Fund
Internal Revenue Directorate
National Centre for Educational Materials
Official Gazette
Road Traffic Directorate
University of Education
University of Iceland
Upper secondary schools

Tafla 1.3. Electronic case handling 2007 - Highest rated ministries (N=14)
Ministry of Agriculture
Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

In 2005 only a handful of public bodies provided electronic case handling: the Internal Revenue Directorate, the Directorate of Customs, Garðabær municipality, the City of Reykjavík, the University of Iceland and the Iceland University of Education. Now 42 additional public bodies offer electronic case handling.

Main conclusions

**Figure 9. Automated back-office processing**
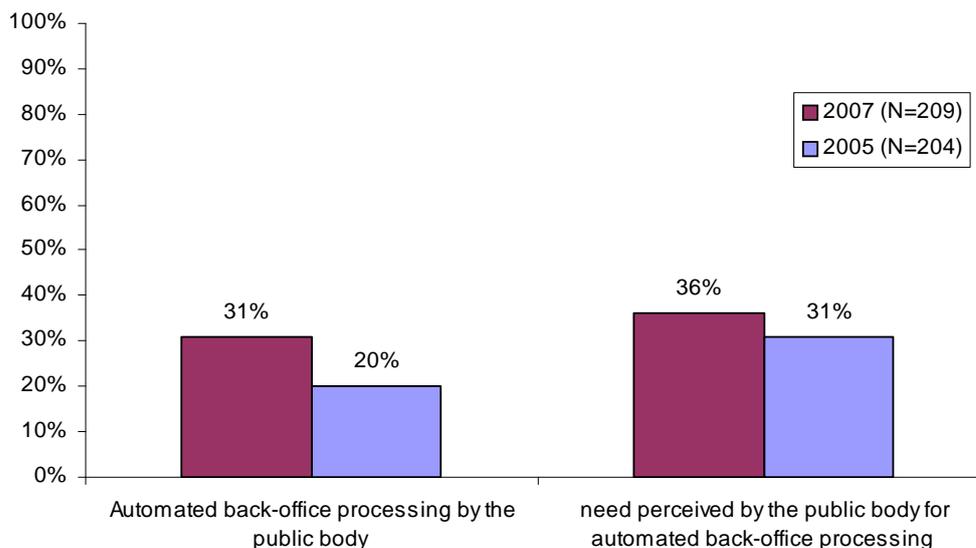
The survey asked each public body whether it conducted automated back-office processing. The purpose of this query was to obtain further information on the internal systems which receive the digital messages arriving through the body's online services. Furthermore, respondents were asked to assess whether they thought the adoption of such systems was needed within the respective body, in consideration of the number and nature of cases arriving.

On the one hand, the contact was asked whether automated back-office processes were present, and, on the other hand, whether the body had a need for such processes.

Since 2005, the instances of automated back-office processing had increased from 20% to 31%, or by 11%. It is worthy of note that in 2005, 31% of the contacts believed back-office processes were called for. By 2007, such processes had actually reached this percentage, while at the same time the perceived need for such processes grew by 5%, which indicates an ongoing development. However, this could also indicate that the number of cases received by public bodies has risen during this period, resulting in a greater perceived need than before.

Main conclusions

**Figure 10. Does the public body anticipate user needs by pre-entering
data in order to simplify the filling in of blanks and forms? (N=152)**
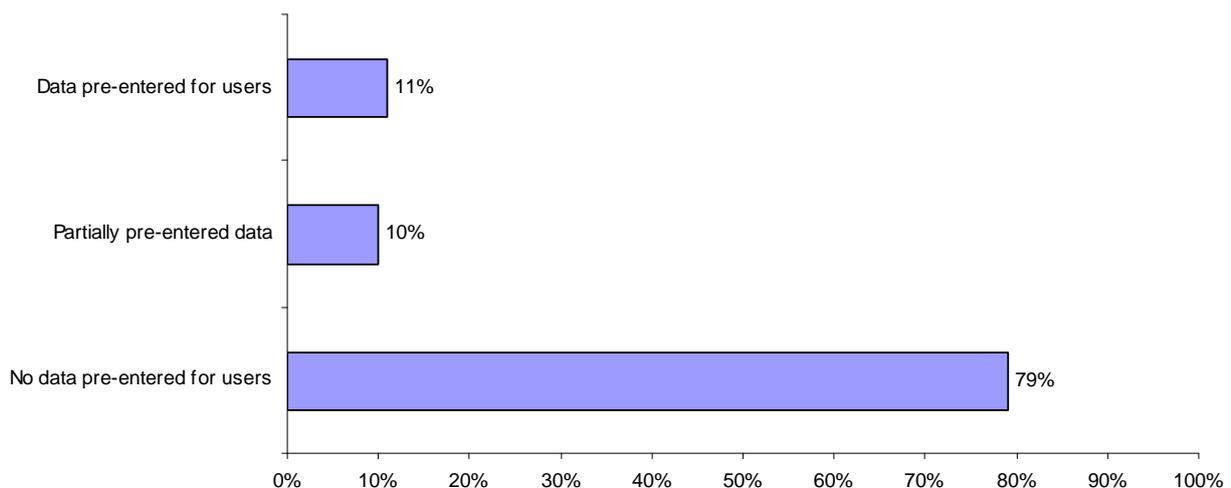
The reason for this question was to investigate how far public bodies have advanced in regard to pre-entering data and completing forms automatically for users. Most public bodies have information on the public available (for instance from the National Register of Persons), so that it ought to be easy to meet user needs by gathering this information when the user logs in. Nor should users who are re-applying at a public body need to re-enter certain information that they have previously recorded at the same body. The proper routines save the user time and add to consistency of the data recorded.

An example of this function would be when a public body already has information on the user in its database and automatically transfers this information into the form for a new application arriving from the same user. By utilising this method, information previously recorded by a user may obviously be reused, provided the user has given permission for it; alternatively, data from the National Register may be automatically entered in the appropriate blanks. If the user for instance entered her/his ID number, her/his name, address and various other data would automatically appear in the correct blanks on the form. Such functions may multiply through the introduction of digital certificates and will accelerate the process for users seeking services from public bodies by their not being required repeatedly to fill in identical data.

Currently, only 16 public bodies offer this service, so there is great room for improvement in the pre-entering of data. Nonetheless, the greater automation of back-office processes will create opportunities for progress.

Main conclusions

Figure 11. Is the public body capable of automated user enrolment? (N=130)
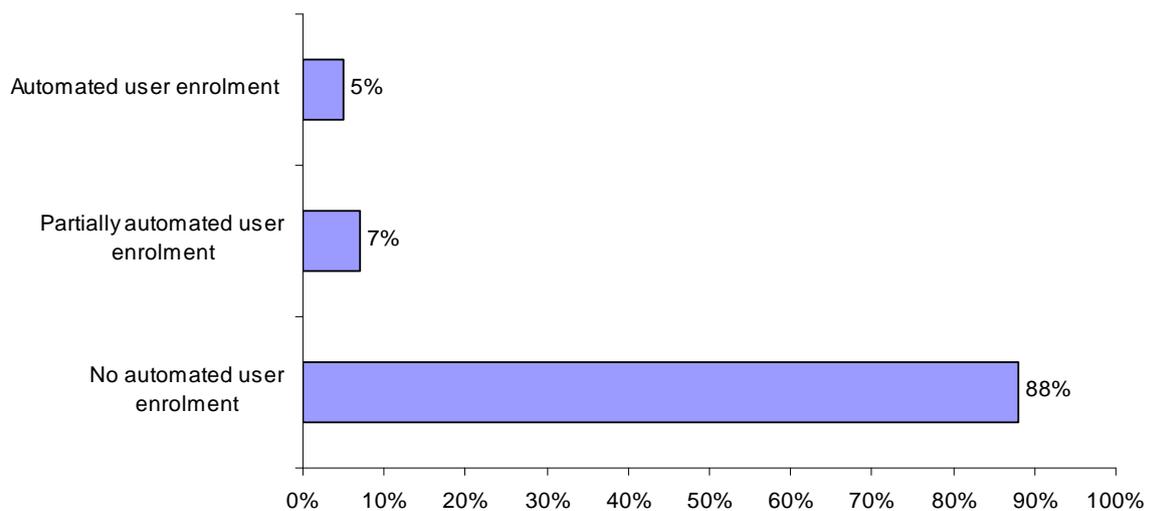
In instances of automated user enrolment, it is presupposed that the majority or possibly even all of the residents will apply for the service in question. Therefore, users are not expected to apply for the service in particular, as the public body has assumed this will happen and has rendered application processes unnecessary. By these means, the body has taken a further step towards reducing user inconvenience in regard to applications for public services.

Personal tax returns, where every resident in a certain age bracket is presumed to submit data, represent an example of such services. These users are not required to apply specifically for access to the service, since everyone is expected to wish to make use of it, so that information on how to do so is sent to the users. Only six public bodies offer such provisions: the Internal Revenue Directorate, Educational Gateway, University of Iceland, National Broadcasting Service, Directorate of Fisheries and City of Reykjavík.

Main conclusions

The checklist was divided into three sections; these measured content, usability and accessibility.

Sjá's specialists reviewed each website included in the survey and assessed it, using the following checklists.

The contact at the public body inspected the findings and was allowed to comment on or endorse the assessment. There were three checklists, each described in more detail below.

The content was evaluated on the basis of whether or not fundamental information about the public body was present on its website, such as its address, purpose, policy or relevant statutes and regulations. In connection to municipalities, it was also considered proper to publish financial information and the minutes of meetings. Other points observed were whether links to relevant websites were provided, whether the website existed in more than one language, whether organisational charts were shown and information given on contacts, staff and departments and, finally, whether it was clear where to seek information on job vacancies.

Usability was evaluated regarding features generally seen as enhancing user-friendliness, following guidelines which have been developed through testing website users and which aim at making web design clear and web usage convenient. Some of the guideline items include a navigation system, for instance through main and sub-categories, the coordination of the navigation system in different website sections, a web tree, changed colour in visited links, the screen height of the home page, links for specific target audiences, a search function, and uniform font sizes, types and colours.

Accessibility covers needs of the physically disabled, blind, deaf, dyslexic, epileptic and mentally or visually impaired when viewing the website. The evaluation covered general aspects which must be considered for a website to be accessible, as well as paying special attention to factors such as language clarity, congruity, form, tables, graphics, buttons, feedback, and colour and contrast.

Main conclusions

Figure 12. Checklists – Content, compared between years
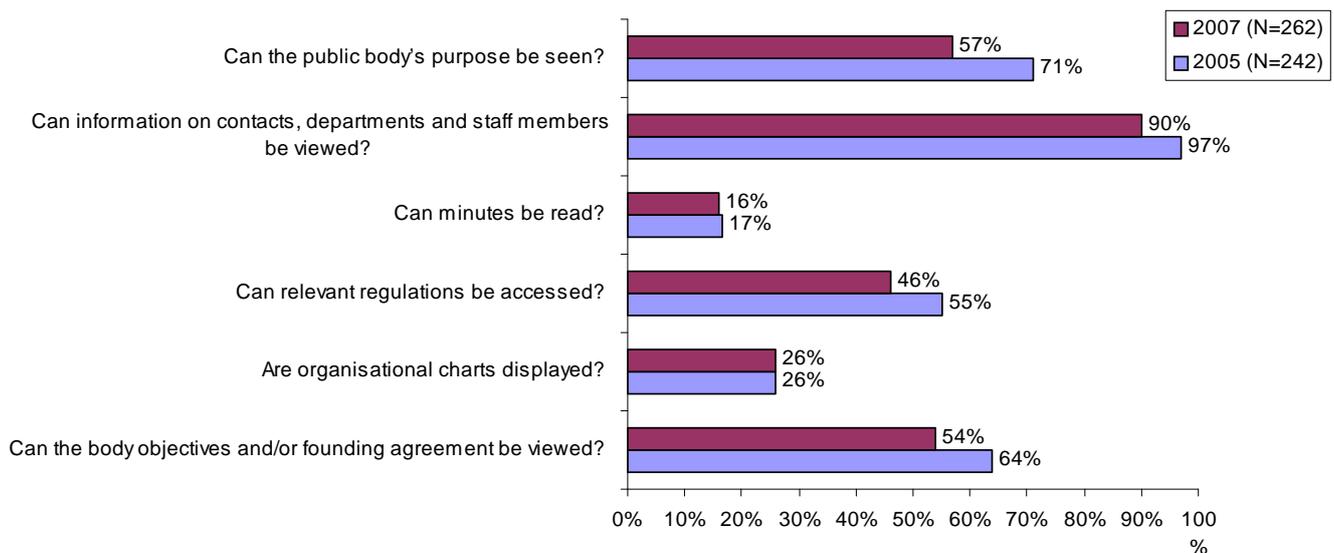
The figure above compares checklist findings between years with regard to content. The checklist items summarised here are those which had lower percentages than in 2005.

It should be noted that various factors can explain these decreases, for instance the number of websites has multiplied and new ones have been introduced. Also, *Specialised websites* have been added to the assessment, and findings on them affect the percentages. Since specialised websites are often subsites or parallel websites for other public bodies, there is less occasion to include information on contacts, departments or staff members. Nonetheless, it cannot be ruled out that changes in the content of those websites that were also evaluated in 2005 have turned out to be for the worse in this regard.

The most obvious step backwards relates to each body's purpose, since a great deal fewer websites now mention it than in 2005, comprising a decrease of 14%.

The proportion of websites including information on contacts, departments or staff also decreased from 2005, differing by 7%. Furthermore, regulations were to be found less frequently than in 2005, and comparatively fewer bodies presented their policies and founding agreements online.

Main conclusions

Figure 13. Checklists – Content, compared between years
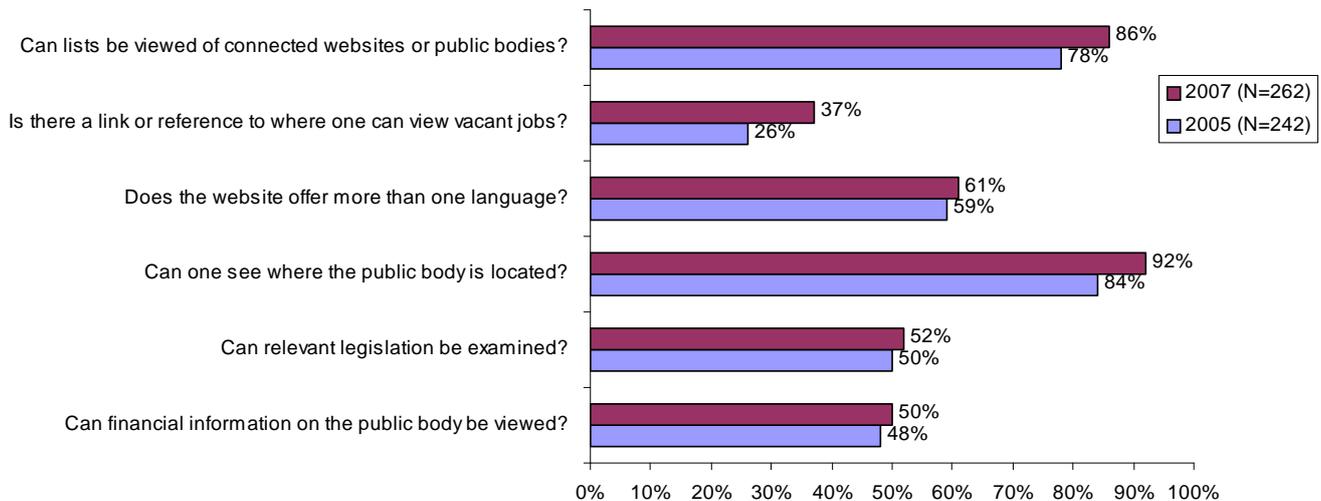
The figure above shows items in the content checklist that have increased between the years. Apart from the fact that these conclusions show a positive trend, there is not much to say about these findings.

Main conclusions

Figure 14. Checklist - Content - institution variety
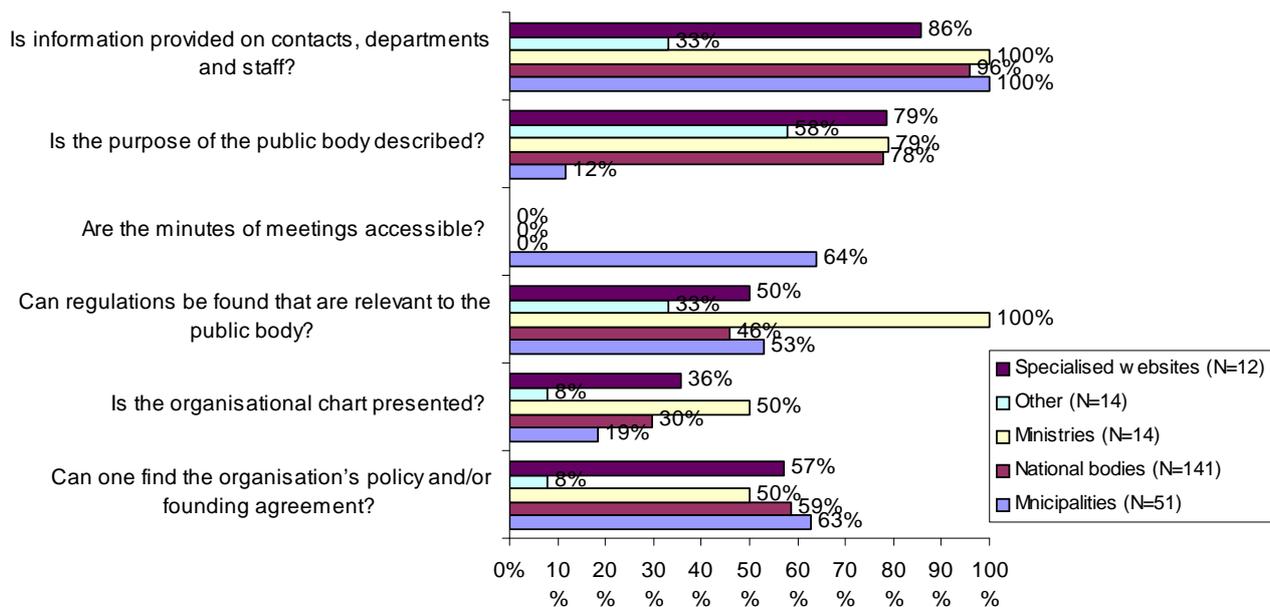
The figure above shows website content, categorised by the type of public body. A comparative decline had occurred since 2005 in instances of websites showing information on contacts, departments and staff. While the websites of local governments, ministries and national bodies included this information on their websites, only 33% of websites categorised as *Other* provided this information, a considerably lower proportion than for other types of websites.

With regard to information on purpose, municipalities differ significantly from other bodies in that only 12% present such information on their websites.

Minutes could be found on 64% of local government websites, which, on the whole, is quite similar to the 2005 findings.

All of the ministries published website information on regulations. Bodies categorised as *Other* were least likely to include this information, or in 33% of instances. Other categories published such information in around half of the instances.

Organisational charts are least likely to be found on local government websites and on websites in the category *Other*. A high proportion of national bodies had information about staff and the purpose of the body online.

Only 8% of websites in the *Other* category presented their policy and founding agreement online.

Regulations and information on staff members could be accessed at all of the ministry websites. Having minutes only applies to local governments. The figure above shows bodies in the *Other* category, i.e. those not classifying themselves as national bodies, to have earned low percentages in these respects. Municipalities earned high percentages, other than in relation to organisational charts and purpose. Only 19% of municipalities displayed organisational charts and 12% information about their purpose online. A high proportion of national bodies presented information on their staff and purpose.

Helstu niðurstöður

Figure 15. Checklists – Content, by type of public body
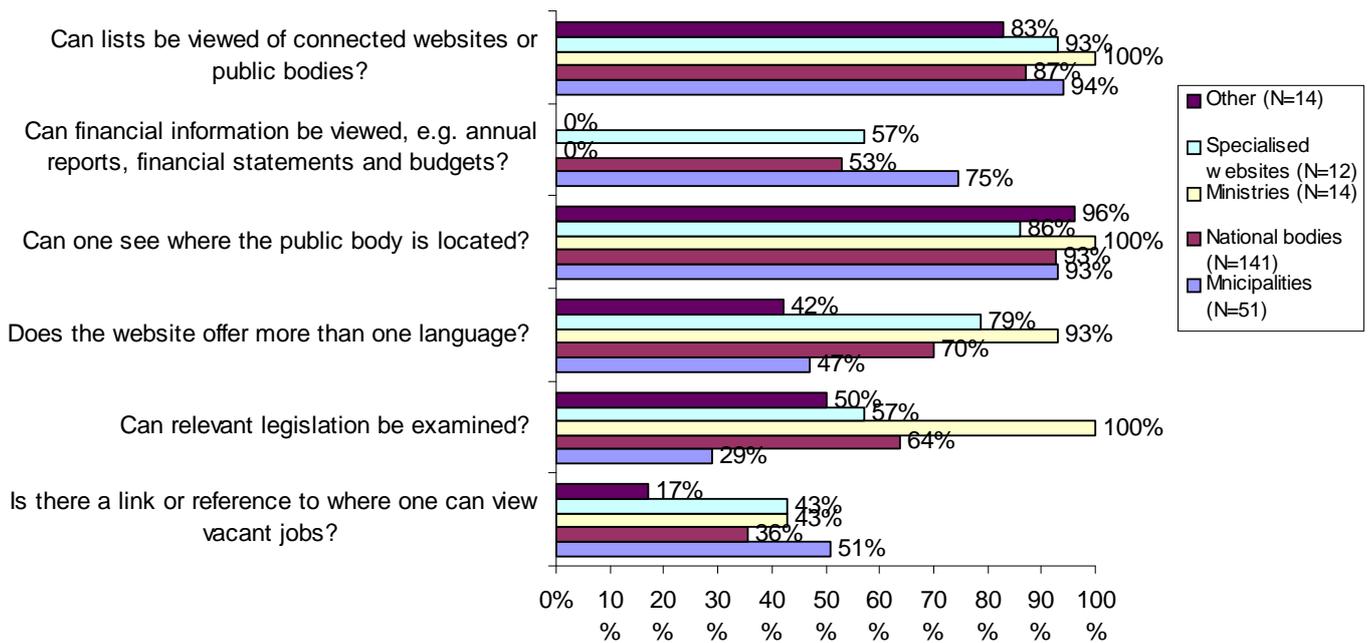
The figure shows items in the content checklist according to the type of public body.

It is not customary for ministries to publish annual reports, since their finances are channelled through the national budget each year; therefore, the findings on this may come as no surprise. The same applies to websites under *Other* (including for instance Parliament and the Supreme Court), where it is in some instances doubtlessly not the custom to publish annual reports.

Only 47% of the municipalities offer an alternative language on their websites. This cannot be regarded as satisfactory, especially considering how municipalities are expected to provide residents with fundamental, localised services.

Local governments provide links to relevant legislation in a great many fewer instances than other bodies, or in only 29% of the instances.

Links to view vacant jobs only appear on 17% of the websites classified as *Other*, with national bodies standing out in this respect and needing to improve their performance. It is hardly up to par that so few of them, or only 36%, should present links on their websites to available openings.

Main conclusions

Figure 16. Checklists – Usability, compared between years
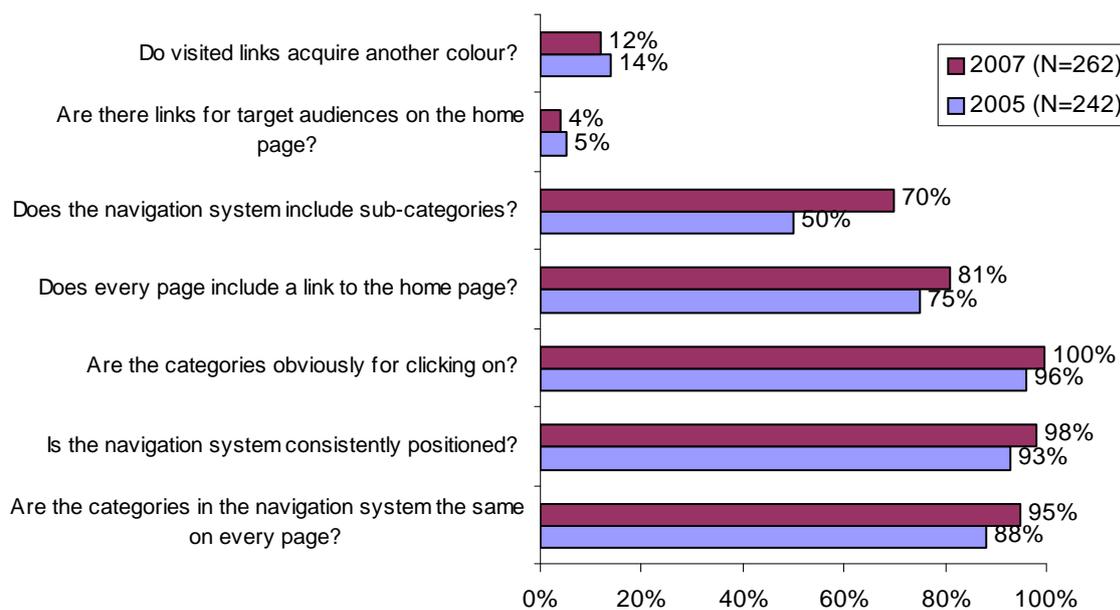
The figure shows findings for items on the usability checklist, with a comparison between years.

It should be noted that the proportion of public bodies which indicated visited links has declined slightly between years. This may be explained by the fact that the function of changing colours for visited links has to some extent been gradually phased out of mainstream web design, except on massive websites expecting a high volume of searches and lists of hits.

Links tailored for target audiences had decreased in number; however, it is considered highly important from a usability perspective to cater to target audiences in a clear and decisive manner. Companies which formulate a website strategy undertake a target audience analysis which assists them in organising their topics to suit users. The findings could suggest that the websites need to improve their strategy development.

Still, it is particularly pleasing to note that the other usability aspects detailed in the figure above had improved since 2005.

Main conclusions

Figure 16. Checklists – Usability, compared between years
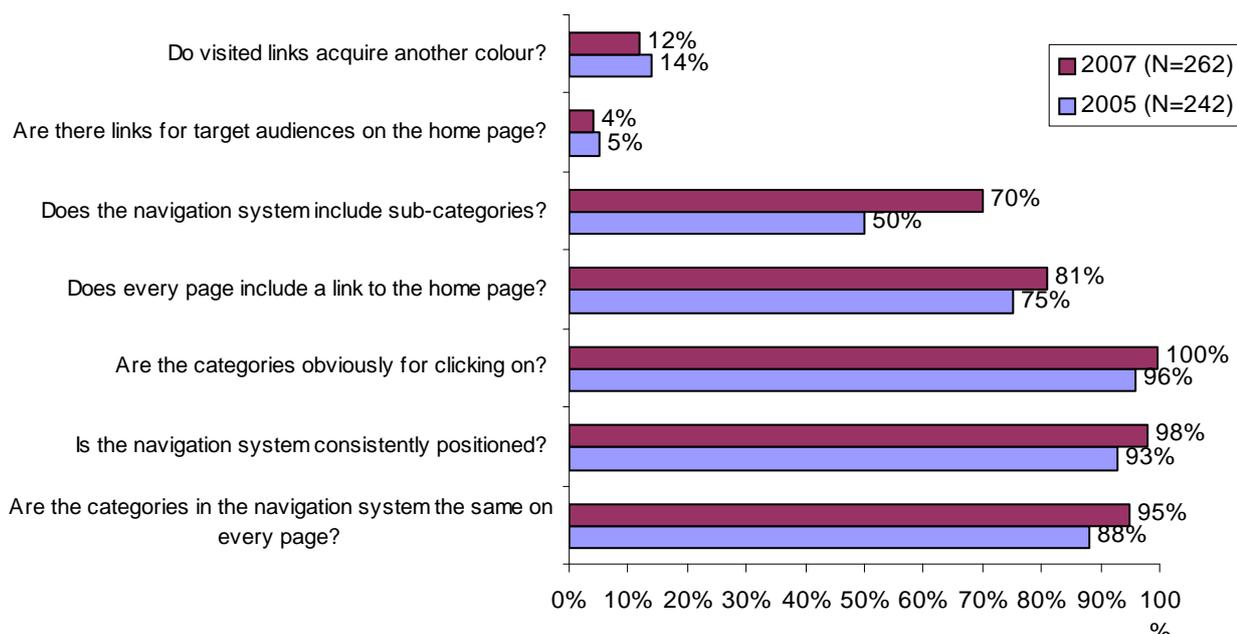
The figure above shows the findings on various items in the usability checklist. In comparison to 2005, the results on most points reveal the websites as having become more user-friendly.

However, the trend concerning one point stands out: the height of the home page, which is shown to have lengthened since 2005. Many of the websites in question have substantial content, calling for excellent organisation and clear rules on using the home page. In Sjá's experience, problems of this sort are common, with abundant demands for material to be displayed on the home page.

As can be seen, items relating to website searches are important when it comes to usability. The findings illustrate an increase in the percentage of websites offering search options, and websites constructed in such a way as to have search functions available at all times had increased in number by 22-23% during the period.

Main conclusions

Figure 18. Checklists – Usability, by type of public body
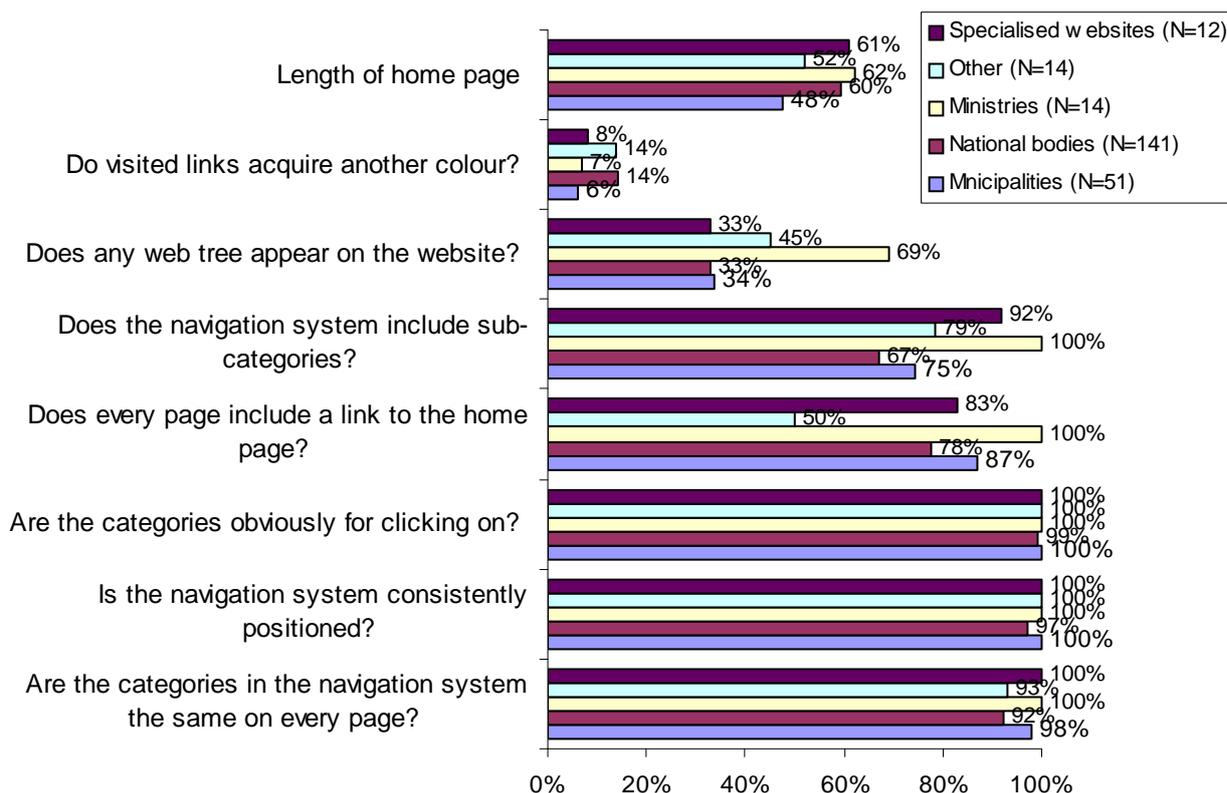
This figure presents findings from the usability checklist, categorised by the type of public body. Based on these findings, the length of website home pages probably needs shortening. Here, local government websites and the websites of bodies classified as *Other* came out worse than sites in other categories. Ministry websites clearly surpassed other web categories in regard to web trees.

Local governments, national bodies and websites belonging to the *Other* group did not use sub-categories as frequently, with ministries and specialised websites performing much better in this respect.

In respect of links to the home page, the websites under *Other* need drastic improvement, as only 50% of them provided these adequately. Although all of the ministries had included such links wherever needed, there was room for improvement among other types of public bodies. It is essential that the user can always see a clear route back to the home page.

The findings may be regarded as positive as regards the other aspects shown above.

Main conclusions

Figure 19. Checklists – Usability, by type of public body

Legend:
- Specialised websites (N=12)
- Other (N=14)
- Ministries (N=14)
- National bodies (N=141)
- Mnicipalities (N=51)

Is it possible to confine searches to specific website sections?
- 42%
- 43%
- 93%
- 15%
- 18%

Is help available for the search function or are advanced searches possible?
- 58%
- 21%
- 93%
- 14%
- 24%

Is the search function always accessible?
- 88%
- 79%
- 100%
- 70%
- 78%

Does the website have any search function?
- 92%
- 82%
- 100%
- 70%
- 78%

Are there differences in font colour, size and type between titles and headings?
- 100%
- 100%
- 100%
- 98%
- 100%

Are font colours and types consistent?
- 100%
- 100%
- 100%
- 100%
- 96%

Are there links for target audiences on the home page?
- 8%
- 7%
- 0%
- 3%
- 8%

The ministries performed well on the points shown in this figure, with percentages above 90% in every item except links for target audiences, where they score 0%. The first two items illustrate that the ministries did exceptionally well concerning search functions, whereas municipalities and national bodies will have to improve their performance in this area significantly. Websites in the *Other* category should contemplate whether they need to add an advanced search option.

The accessibility of search functions seemed to be in fairly good order, since full credit was only given if a search option was accessible on every page, not just the home page. Nonetheless, since a capable search function is believed to boost the usability of websites considerably, it is noteworthy that around 20-30% of local governments and national bodies provided no such function on their websites.

Main conclusions

The consistency of captions in regard to font type, colour and use was exemplary, reaching 96%. On the other hand, a particularly low proportion of websites featured links for target audiences, with ministry websites offering none at all. Some examples of links for target audiences might be identified as "Media", "Children" or "Students", presented to guide each specific group to the material particularly intended for it.

In this connection, there is reason to emphasise the universal importance of examining and defining target audiences and designing websites based on their needs rather than on the structure of the organisation. To some extent, the findings may be interpreted as saying that public body websites are excessively institution-oriented and insufficiently focused on the targeted users; however, this discussion is hardly new.

Main conclusions

Figure 20. Checklists – Access, showing the difference between years

Question	2007 (N=262)	2005 (N=242)
Can users enlarge the screen fonts?	45%	17%
Is the entire content readily understandable?	62%	54%
Does the user have control over screen animations?	0%	15%
Are language changes taken care of in HTML?	20%	1%
Are Flash advertisements prepared for screen readers?	0%	8%
Do graphic buttons and links, script pieces and similar items have matching text labels?	43%	28%
Do all of the images have ALT texts?	42%	16%

Generally speaking, accessibility had improved since 2005, which is a highly positive development. Enhancement was most prominent in the option of enlarging font size, the occurrence of which rose from 17% to 45%.

Content presentation had also improved, as the number of available wordlists and definitions has increased and more was done to clarify complex concepts and abbreviations. The difference compared to 2005 was 8%, up from 54% to 62%.

In 2007, no website with screen animations provided the option of turning it off (for instance, stopping a text moving quickly across the screen). The difference from 2005 represented a decline of 15% by 2007. Twelve websites had animations in 2005, but two of them offered the option of switching it off, while in 2007 none of the four websites with animations allowed for turning it off.

The identifying of language changes in HTML had also shot upwards, from a mere 1% to 20%. The ministries had performed well in this respect, as will be discussed later.

The Flash content that was correctly labelled in 2005 was incorrectly labelled in 2007. In order for Flash to be identified as accessible, it needs to be labelled specifically for screen readers. However, it is quite uncommon to use Flash on public body websites, with just over 30 websites presenting Flash movies (most of them the websites of national bodies).

Most of the websites had improved their ALT text labels, especially those of the ministries. However, as may be noticed, fewer than half of the websites were using ALT text properly. Accurate ALT texts are especially important for blind users.

Main conclusions

Figure 21. Checklists – Accessibility, showing the difference between years
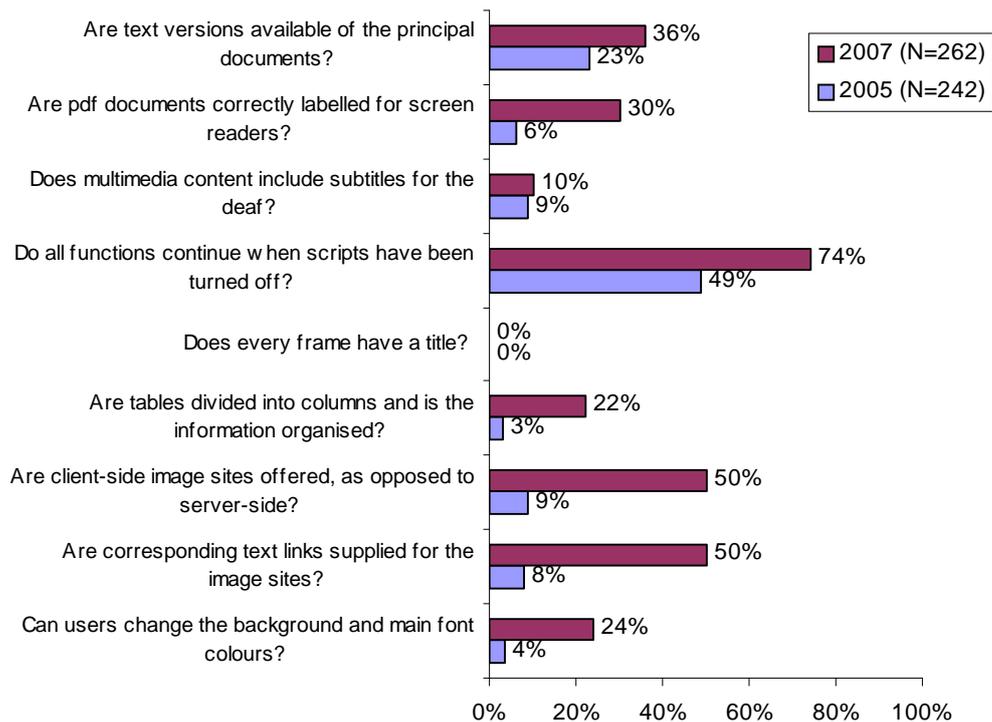
The offering of text versions for the most important documents on the website had increased by 13% from the year 2005. Such documents include applications, brochures and various other publications.

The handling of pdf documents, which mostly involve reports and shorter articles, has greatly improved. Although there is always room for doing even better, the difference from 2005 registered 24%.

Multimedia materials (introductions, live broadcasts, advertisements, etc.) were in most instances incorrectly labelled or did not include sign language or subtitles. On the other hand, the difference between years was insignificant.

The use of JavaScript underwent a radical change between years. By 2007, a large majority of websites (75%) with JavaScript retained functionality when JavaScript was turned off, whereas in 2005 only half of those with JavaScript worked when scripts were turned off.

Thirty-two websites contained frames in 2005, all of which were wrongly labelled. It came to light in 2007 that only nine websites contained frames, although none of them proved to have correct labelling.

The handling of image sites had greatly improved. Where such sites were used in 2007, they were generally in good condition. A similar number of image sites were used in 2005, but only one of them had correct labelling. Image sites can be problematic for those using screen readers, but proper labelling permits adequate access for the blind.

Helstu niðurstöður

Figure 22. Checklists – Accessibility, by type of public body
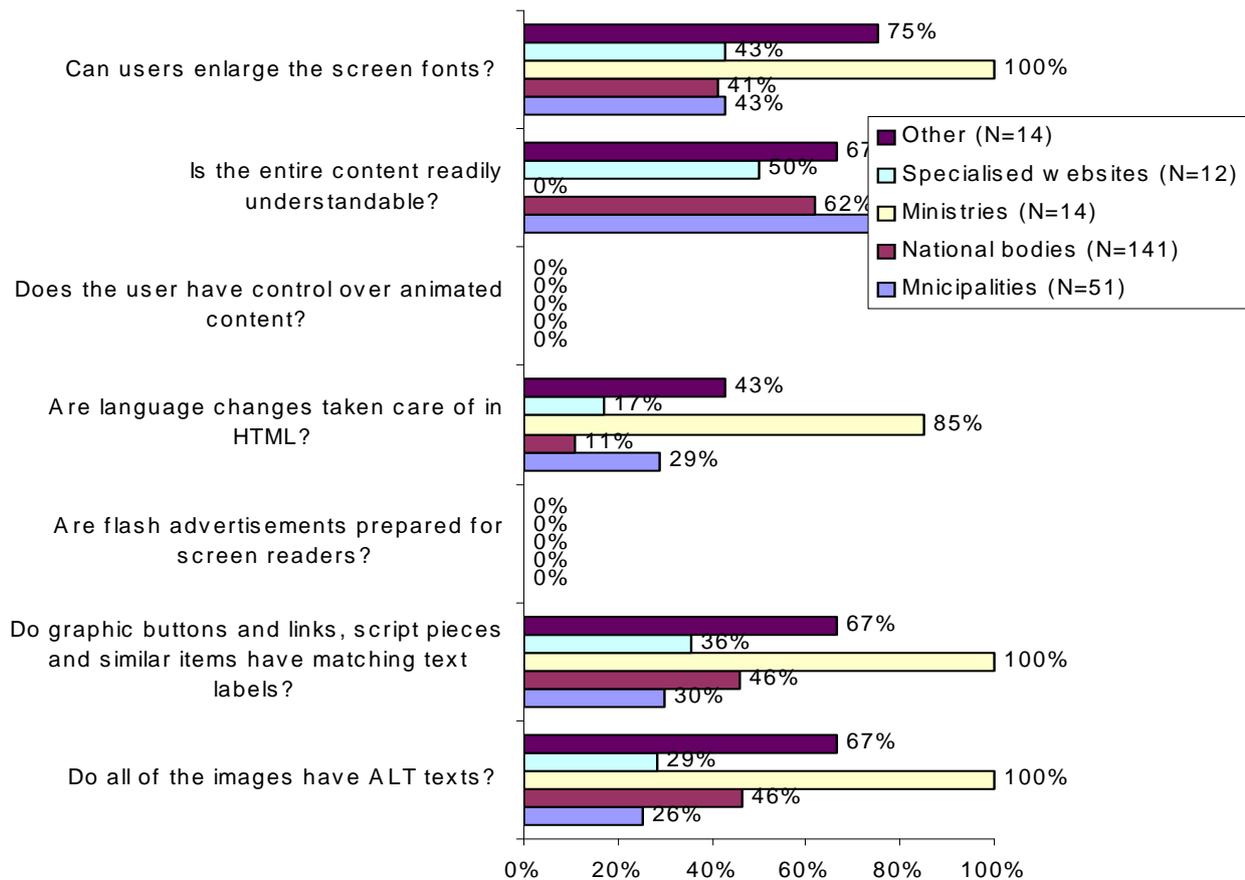
The ministry websites outclassed other websites in most instances, whether in regard to such items as font-sizing capabilities, language changes in HTML texts, graphics for buttons, links, etc., and also ALT texts. In most instances these websites earned top scores, even though in some cases language labels were lacking. Local government websites lagged somewhat behind the ministry sites, except when it came to clarity of content, where local governments performed rather well. There the ministries were at fault, with a percentage of only 0%. Where complex words and terms occur, some sort of dictionary or definitions of terminology and jargon need to be available.

Helstu niðurstöður

Only four websites had animated content, and the user could not even control it. As these were all national body websites, this item was irrelevant for other websites.

National bodies and specialised websites also performed quite poorly in respect of identifying language changes in HTML text, as only 17% of national bodies and 11% of specialised websites had this item in order.

Thirty-six sites, mostly national body websites, presented Flash movies, but no instance at all was correctly labelled.

Specialised websites and national body websites exhibit the worst performance on accessibility, even if some high-quality websites do occur in these categories. As for labelling ALT texts correctly, the outcome is quite serious, since only 29% of the specialised websites and 26% of local government websites achieved this, and it is particularly important for blind users.

Main conclusions

Figure 23. Checklists – Accessibility, by type of public body
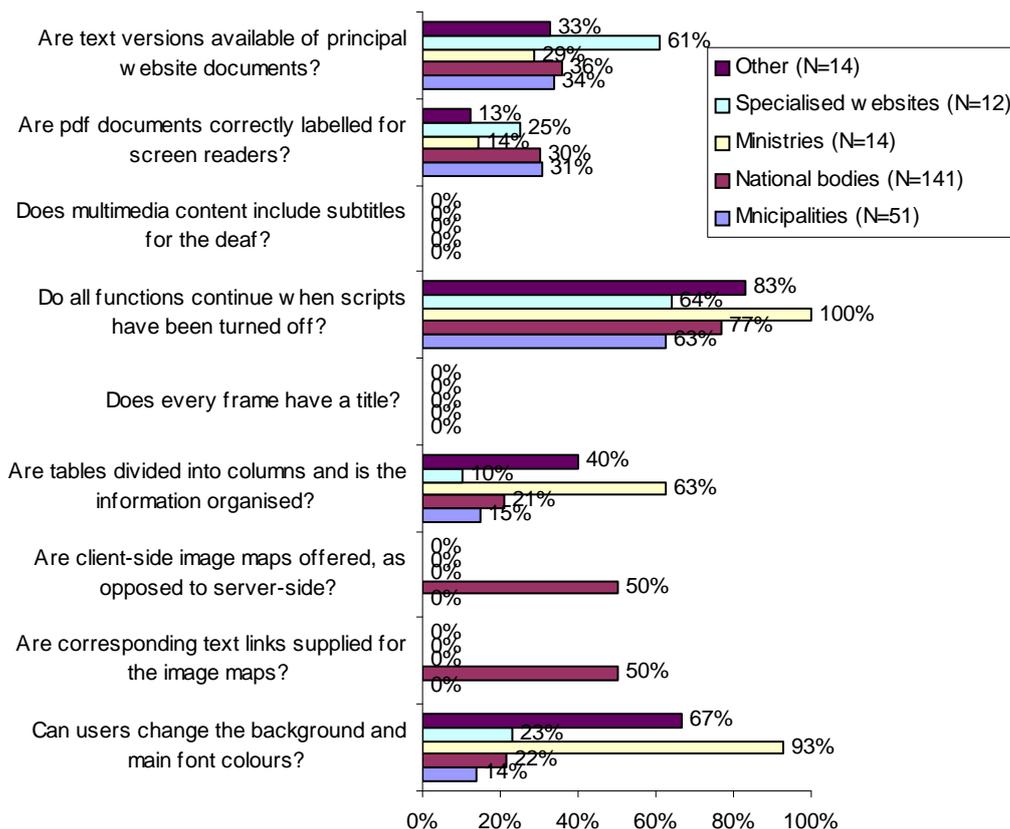
The ministries have clearly accomplished major steps in improving the online availability of information, because accessibility had improved in nearly every instance, except for the handling of pdf documents, which is however currently being dealt with. Specialised websites performed best regarding pdf documents.

Seven national body websites offered multimedia content, though it was not appropriately labelled for deaf users. In one instance, however, it was properly labelled (on the website of Reyjanesbær municipality). This question did not apply in any other instances.

Every one of the ministry websites worked with JavaScript turned off, whereas this held true for only 63% of local government websites and 64% of specialised websites.

Main conclusions

Only 10 websites used frames, without any site labelling them accurately. Most of these websites were national body websites; this labelling issue did not apply to any other websites.

Among ministry websites using tables, over half labelled these properly, or 63%. Table labelling was faulty on websites in other categories, particularly specialised sites, where only 10% contained proper table identification. Local governments were only slightly ahead, with 15% of their tables correctly labelled.

In two cases of national body websites, image maps were used, though they were correctly labelled in only one of these instances.

It was worthy of note that a much larger number of websites than before offered the possibility of configuring fonts, e.g. the background colours and types. Almost all of the ministries (93%) offered this possibility, with local governments ranking at the bottom regarding this service (14%). Moreover, only 22% of national body websites and 23% of specialised websites offered this facility, even though it is crucial for dyslectics and the visually impaired, not to mention the benefit for older users of being able to enlarge font size.

Main conclusions

Table 2. Checklisti: Content, usability and accessibility (N=262)					
Content		**Usability**		**Accessibility**	
University of Iceland	100%	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs	87%	Icelandic Library for the Blind	100%
Directorate of Labour	100%	Ministry of Finance	87%	Eyjafjardarsveit municipality	100%
City of Reykjavik	94%	State Treasury	87%	The Land Registry of Iceland	100%
Skagafjörður municipality	94%	Prime Minister´s Office	83%	Government Construction Contracting Agency	100%
		Ministry of Agriculture	83%	The Data Protection Authority	100%
		Icelandic National Audit Office	83%	Regional Office for the Affairs of the Disabled in Reykjavík	100%
				State Treasury	100%
				The Icelandic Meteorological Office	100%

The figure above shows bodies which were given full credit regarding content, usability and accessibility.

New to the list of those receiving top marks on the content checklist is the Directorate of Labour as well as Skagafjörður municipality. The results of the University of Iceland had improved such that the University website now completely satisfied every item addressed by the checklist.

The Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs received the highest mark on the usability checklist, and the Ministry of Finance, State Treasury, Icelandic National Audit Office and Prime Minister's Office now joined in the list of highest scoring bodies regarding usability.

Eight bodies completely fulfilled the accessibility requirements. Eyjafjörður municipality and the Icelandic Library for the Blind remained on the list from 2005, while others were newcomers.

Main conclusions

Table 3. *Checklist: Content, usability og accessibility.*					
National bodies (N=141)					
Content		**Usability**		**Accessibility**	
University of Iceland	100%	Icelandic National Audit Office	83%	Icelandic Library for the Blind	100%
Directorate of Labour	100%	Soil Conservation Service of Iceland	78%	Land Registry of Iceland	100%
The Iceland Fire Authority	92%	Icelandic Medicines Control Agency	78%	Government Construction Contracting Agency	100%
Social Insurance Administration	92%	Internal Revenue Directorate	78%	Regional Office for the Affairs of the Disabled in Reykjavík	100%
				Data Protection Authority	100%
				Icelandic Meteorological Office	100%

Listed here are the national body websites that received the highest score from the three checklists that graded content, usability and accessibility.

The Icelandic Fire Authority and the Social Insurance Administration were added as bodies with the highest grade for content, while the University of Iceland and the Social Insurance Administration retained their 2005 rank.

The bodies receiving the highest grade on the usability checklist were the Soil Conservation Service in Iceland, which also appeared on this list in 2005, and several new additions: the Icelandic National Audit Office, Icelandic Medicines Control and Internal Revenue Directorate.

In the accessibility checklist, six bodies received the highest grade. Whereas the Icelandic Library for the Blind continued from the 2005 list, the other bodies constitute new additions.

Main conclusions

Table 4. Checklist: content, usability og accessibility. Municipalities (N=51)					
Content		**Usability**		**Accessibility**	
City of Reykjavík	94%	City of Reykjavík	78%	Eyjafjörður municipality	100%
Akranes municipality	88%	Akureyri municipality	74%	Seltjarnarnes municipality	91%
Garðabær municipality	88%	Borgarbyggð municipality	74%	Akureyri municipality	73%
Dalvík municipality	81%	Dalabyggð municipality	74%	Húnavatnshreppur municipality	67%
Grundarfjarðarbær municipality	81%	Garðabær municipality	74%	Reykjanesbær municipality	64%
Ísafjarðarbær municipality	81%	Ísafjarðarbær municipality	74%		
Kópavogsbær municipality	81%	Kópavogsbær municipality	74%		
Reykjanes municipality	81%	Langanesbyggð municipality	74%		
		Reykjanesbær municipality	74%		
		Skútustaðahreppur municipality	74%		
		Vestmannaeyjabær municipality	74%		

The figure shows the municipalities that received the highest grades on these checklists.

The content list contains the newly introduced municipalities of Dalvík, Grundarfjarðarbær, Ísafjarðarbær and Kópavogsbær, whereas the City of Reykjavík, Akranes municipality, Garðabær municipality and Reykjanes municipality were already on the list in 2005.

The highest grade in the usability category was awarded to the City of Reykjavík, although ten municipalities came in just behind. The new list members were Akureyri municipality, Borgarbyggð municipality, Ísafjarðarbyggð municipality, Kópavogsbær municipality, Langanesbyggð municipality, Reykjanesbær municipality and Skútustaðahreppur municipality. The other list members were repeats from 2005.

The highest grades on the accessibility checklist were granted to Eyjafjarðarsveit municipality, with Seltjarnarnes municipality in close second place, followed by the municipalities of Akureyri, Húnavatnshreppur, and Reykjanesbær.

Main conclusions

Table 5. *Checklist: content, usability og accessibility.* Specialised websites (N=12)					
Content		**Usability**		**Accessibility**	
ISAVIA	69%	State Treasury	87%	State Treasury	100%
National Register of Persons	54%	The passport service, at www.vegabref.is	78%	The Iceland Symphony Orchestra	88%
Iceland Symphony Orchestra	54%	National Registry	78%	www.Island.is	80%

Table 6. Checklist : *Content, usability og accessibility* Ministries (N=14)					
Content		**Usability**		**Accessibility**	
Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	92%	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs	87%	Ministry of Social Affairs	90%
Ministry of Social Affairs	85%	Ministry of Finance	87%	The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	90%
Ministry of Finance	85%	Prime Minister's Office	83%	Ministry of Industry Energy and Tourism	78%
		The Ministry of Agriculture	83%	Ministry of Business Affairs	78%

The tables show which specialised websites and which ministries were awarded the highest grades given for these three checklists.

Main conclusions – A summing up

Online public service had become much more extensive than in 2005.

Facilitation – Services in this category rose by 1%, now reaching 79%.

Self-service – Services in this category had been 7% but have now reached 40%.

Case handling – Services in this category had been 3% and were now up to 19%.

It is necessary to work towards increased e-democracy by means of public websites, augmenting the functions which contribute to e-democracy.

E-democracy – Functions supporting e-democracy were evidenced by 11% of public websites.

The checklist results indicate that access for the disabled had increased by 19% since 2005 and that website usability had also improved to some extent.

Content – Public websites showed no development; having obtained a score of 60% in 2005, they now scored 61%.

Usability – Public websites had improved, with a current score of 59%, compared to 53% in 2005.

Accessibility – Public websites had improved significantly; in fact, the principal change between years related to accessibility, with the 2005 percentage of 21% climbing to 41%, which represents a rise of 20% and must be regarded as a substantial, positive result.

Significant provision of electronic forms

Municipalities, national bodies, ministries and specialised websites had converted the bulk of their forms into electronic format, with 70-98% of such forms now accessible via the web. The interactivity of the forms, however, left much to be desired.
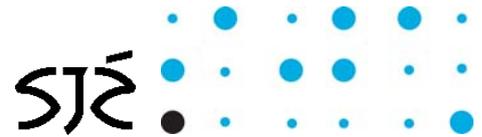
Main conclusions – A summing up

Increased automated back-office processing

Automated back-office processing existed on the websites of 31% of the national bodies, having increased by 5% since 2005. The respondents' assessment of the need for internal electronic back-office processing had risen by 11% since 2005.

Little pre-entering of data

Public bodies rarely met user needs in regard to the pre-entering of data on forms and blanks. Only 11% pre-entered data, along with 10% which asserted they did so in part.

Automated user enrolment

Of public bodies, 5% said they granted user rights automatically, while 7% declared they offered this service in part.

Relationship between public bodies having full-time equivalent positions for website affairs and offering services in the category of electronic case handling (entirely electronic services)

In the cases of more than one full-time employee being in charge of web-related matters, the proportion of those offering services in the category of case handling ranged from 33 to 43%.

The corresponding proportion in the case of bodies where less than one full-time equivalent position was devoted to web-related matters varied from 12 to 21%, or significantly less.