

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES - PROPOSALS IN THE AREA OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR ISSUING BUILDING PERMITS

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Abstract: *This article presents a strategic model for the digital and organizational transformation of the Urban Planning Directorate of the Chania Region, aimed at optimizing the process of issuing building permits at the regional level. The study analyzes the specific challenges facing the administrative structures in the prefecture and proposes the implementation of innovative tools such as the “Electronic Information Service” and the large-scale digitalization of the regional archive since 1923. The author’s solutions include the establishment of strict time standards for control (21-day period), the publicity of administrative schedules and enhanced cooperation between the Regional Directorate and the institution of the Prefect. The designed reform aims to transform the service into a modern e-structure that eliminates subjective factors and improves the investment climate throughout the region through professionalism, accountability and technological innovation.*

Keywords: *E-Government, Regional Administration, Building Permits, Digitization of Archives, Public Transparency*

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Introduction

In the era of global digitalization, the effective functioning of public administration is becoming a fundamental pillar for the stability of civil society and economic prosperity (Веселинова, 2017, стр. 1-17). Urban planning and territorial management are critical areas in which the interaction between the state and the private sector requires the highest levels of precision, transparency and technological security. (Чиприянов, М, 2026, 43-58) However, traditional working models often face the challenges of bureaucratic burden (Веселинова, 2018, стр. 48-51), administrative delays and the lack of uniform standards in the interpretation of the regulatory framework. (Чиприянов, М., 2026, 341-351) This study focuses on the need for a radical reorganization of urban planning services, examining the subject of administrative processes in the Urban Planning Directorate of Chania. Its subject is modern organizational

changes and the implementation of innovative digital tools in the activity of issuing building permits. The aim of the development is to propose a comprehensive restructuring model that minimizes the need for the physical presence of citizens and planners in institutions, ensuring reliable remote communication and predictability of deadlines. The applied methodology is based on a systematic analysis of workflows, design of software solutions for databases and online schedules, as well as borrowing good practices from leading administrative structures in the country. Among the expected results are the full implementation of the "Electronic Information Service" and the large-scale digitization of the archive with building permits since 1923. It is planned to introduce a mandatory 21-day period for initial verification of files, which, combined with full publicity of the decisions of the architectural commissions, will eliminate subjective factors and unify official interpretations. Ultimately, the implementation of these proposals aims not only at operational efficiency, but also at restoring trust in public authorities through integrity and transparency.

1. Full adoption of e-Government systems Electronic Information Office of the Directorate of Urban Planning of Chania

We have already addressed this and the horizontal proposals for the service, but there is more here. The basic philosophy of this tool is twofold. First, we want a mechanism that will provide reliable answers to engineers' questions without requiring their physical presence in urban planning. This will have several advantages. First, the Directorate will be motivated to answer questions directly, and second, it will be able to respond even better to the demands of electronic urban planning and management. For this dimension of the Electronic Information Office, we have made sure that the user can attach the corresponding file next to the question, if the question he wants to ask concerns a topographic or other graphic. On the other hand, however, we would like to create a database of the most frequent questions and answers. In this way, a "collection" of questions and answers will be created by areas of the service that each new user can refer to and search before asking their next question. In this way, the experience in Urban Planning will grow and be recorded at the same time, users will get into the logic before submitting a question to see that the FAQ's learn new things and all together will have managed to avoid repeating the same questions. The division by department allows the collection to be well organized and vertically integrated according to the responsibilities of each department (Meiyanti et al., 2018).

- "Building Permit Database since 1923" Project

Another "tool" of electronic management, which will be another area at the service of the citizen, the beneficiary of Urban Planning. The current situation - in the entirety of Urban Planning - involved a very grim reality for the citizen who, for some reason, wanted a copy and did not know his permit number or made a mistake in storing it. One would have to open the building permit books, find the specific permit sheet like "fleas in a haystack" and then locate the appropriate file in the archives and reproduce from the original that plans, permits or studies were needed. It is now proposed to record building permits from 1923 onwards.

This project could initially be a simple database containing a series of numerical and informative fields (serial number, date, permit number, permit description, building site, project engineer(s)), while in a second edition it will also include attached drawings such as the topographic plan with area extract and the permit sheet. It goes without saying that the two forms of the project have completely different requirements, equipment and final deliverables.

- Electronic Dates with a Fixed Duration

My first experience with this matter was a few isolated instances where each engineer-controller at some point went into the public area and hung up a handwritten list of appointments in every closet he could find, only to have it possibly dropped or even lost. Sometimes it would be brought to his house by a rogue private engineer. If he was a "computer" he would photograph it with his cell phone! If there were changes, there was usually no indication that it had been updated. Now, it is suggested that an Excel file be uploaded electronically that contains the dates given and that each engineer can read, print, or save to their personal area or office (Свраков, А., Монева, И., & Грозева, Н., 2013). This file contains the names of the examiner and the examined, the subject of the exam and, of course, the start and end time of the appointment, which is set according to the level of difficulty (houses one hour, hotels up to 5 hours). It is published every Friday in the online services of the website, concerns the following week and, of course, includes the employees who are on vacation or generally absent (Грозева, Н., 2019). Following the same logic, each change or modification is updated with a new, corrected post. It is understandable that the productivity of each controller is placed "in the community", at the discretion of each. Respect and transparency at its best (Georgi & Dimitriou, 2010).

- Publication of the decisions of the Planning and Architectural Control Committee

It is certain that one of the reasons that lead to corruption is the delay or more so the possibility to negotiate with the subject to be dealt with before the decision is finalized. The Urban Planning and Architectural Control Committee has long occupied us in the past as part of the Study Section. Here, however, we will look at it from the point of view of the Building Permits Department, since it is a very important preliminary step in the issuance of a building permit. More specifically, before the Korean government controls a pending building permit, the proposed views must be reviewed by the committee to assess whether and to what extent they are aesthetically, structurally, and morphologically harmonious with the area's surroundings and architecture, and whether they are generally compatible with the area's geomorphology.

This stage is extremely critical to the progress of the building permit process, as the committee's instructions can significantly affect the functional dimensions of the building to be approved, thus altering the studies and design. As a result, many engineers, and consequently builders, do not proceed with the design unless the views are approved by the Committee. They often accuse the committee of making the building functionally worse by its decisions. The tendency of engineers, especially architects, to evade the instructions of the Committee, as well as the importance of its decisions, have led us to propose that the Committee's decisions be posted on the Internet and on the electronic services of the website. Since the Committee's decisions are specific - approve as submitted, approve as amended, reject, defer - it is super easy and quick to post a template file in Excel that contains the names of the owners in the rows and the various decisions in the columns. It also contains, in modular, different sheets of the Excel book, the previous decisions of the committee, so that, on the one hand, its productivity is visible and, on the other hand, the "history" of an approval or rejection can be easily established through its various meetings.

2. Public Hours - Control Hours

The control hours will follow the philosophy deposited in the general horizontal urban planning proposals. Application control of this schedule will be performed by the Department Head in conjunction with the Service Director. Work beyond building permit control, completed protocols, minor permits, land uses, other responses to citizen questions, will be completed during this time, while only routine follow-up inspections will occur during open hours. The visible advantage of seamless inspection and avoidance of interruptions is obvious,

but it should be combined with quality service to the public. Based on the above, a generally accepted number of building permit inspections per employee per day is set at three (3), unless it is a larger permit, such as for hotels, where the number may be less.

3. Five Days Leave

- We decide to "promote" this permit because it characterizes the dynamics of the service and also does justice to the engineer who does his job well and submits complete studies from the beginning. The staff of the department should make an appropriate proposal to the fellow engineers who take care of the processing, so that in the Urban Planning Department of Chania permit of this type is advertised and takes its proper place.
- Definition of the characteristics of the five days leave. The existing legislation has precisely defined the characteristics of the above permits. However, if a grantee attempts to use the above in the wrong way by trying to gain control time without being entitled to it, his/her authorization will be reviewed in the order of priority defined by his/her protocol number.

4. Providing Incentives - Determination of Acceptable Time Interval of 1st Control

No system can be implemented if current conditions degenerate in relation to its productive implementation. This happens even now, as everyday life is crushed under the workload, every time planning is attempted. This happens proportionally and every other time we have an overabundance of deposited building permits due to extraordinary circumstances or laws. However, it is not possible to consider as a service the situation where there is a nearly four-digit number of unreviewed permits waiting to be issued, and a vague guess that the review will take place in the next 4-6 months cannot be considered a service. This crisis needs to be mitigated. For this reason, we are proposing the authorization of paid overtime for Building Permit Department staff so that they have an additional incentive for the current and similar types of crises. The commitment of control will extend to the initial inspection of the building permits in question.

- Based on the above conditions, we agree to define the period of three (3) weeks - 21 days - as the generally accepted period for the initial inspection of building permits. At the same time, we agree that under the responsibility of the Department Head, the City Planning Department and the political leadership, if the above time period is exceeded,

criteria for overtime and its payment will be established so that the time of the first inspection will be "brought back" to the above acceptable limits.

- Finally, and also collectively, we agree that such exceptional situations - crises that could threaten the proper operation of the Department in the future - e.g., semi-open areas - must be addressed under the responsibility of the political and administrative leadership, but primarily preventively and not repressively, as is the case now.

5. Unprocessed citizen query cases

This is a problem that affects the past, present and future of the service. There are already a very large number of questions that have been asked and are simply open logs. No one has provided a written response and the reason in most cases is lack of life time. The tools of Electronic Government, and not only, have been defined in the previous ones. Review hours, frequently asked questions and answers, a website, all these could help to close these cases, and in the least bureaucratic way. To a very large extent, it will also depend on the possible release of the head of the department, but certainly a solution must be found immediately for the existing questions - inquiries or those raised in the past. We propose to set a current target for the processing and completion of the respective protocols, but also to make a commitment to respond in a period of, for example, (15) days, without reducing the essence and scope of research for quality answers, as it is observed in other services.

6. Different Interpretations of Employees- Legal Advisors - Different Interpretations of Urban Planning Ordinances

The phenomenon of official bilingualism must disappear because it affects the reputation of public administration in general (Berardi, 2013). The staff of the Urban Planning office and the department should work together to deal with urban planning issues, and whenever possible, the legal advisors should be brought in to gradually update themselves on Urban Planning. Staff participation in special seminars and the establishment of a weekly meeting of the director and department head with department staff to discuss problem solving and shared information should play an important role in addressing the phenomenon.

7. Defining the operating framework of the Building Permit Issuance Department

- At this point, there is a "history" that we will accept, which consists of a work prepared by the Department, communicated with the document with protocol number

7670/4.8.2004 - Regulation of Control and Issuance of Building Permits, which was accepted. In this study, in collaboration with the Directorate and the Head of Department, we will modify it slightly, where necessary, to make it compatible with the proposed application guide.

- This specific guideline is governed by Law 3242/2004 "Regulations on the Organization and Operation of the Government, Administrative Procedure and Local Authorities", P.D. of 8.7.1993 "Manner of Issuing Building Permits and Control of Constructed Buildings", the Circular of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs numbered 38/28.7.1993 "Manner of Issuing Building Permits", K.Y.A. 53245/10.01.2002 "Conditions and Procedures for Issuing Building Permits" and of course the relevant recommendations of the Directorate.

- 1) **Submission of an application for a building permit.** The application for the issuance of a building permit must necessarily be accompanied by the studies and supporting documents provided for in Article 3 of the Second Relevant Presidential Decree of 8.7.1993 "Manner of Issuing Building Permits and Control of Constructed Buildings". The application must also contain the necessary "up-to-date" contact information of the building owner (e.g., home address, telephone numbers, etc.) in order to be able to contact him if necessary. Under these conditions, the application is recorded by the Service and a receipt is issued at the same time. The record number is the element that establishes the priority order in the next phase of study control.
- 2) **Building Permit Application Fee.** The billing of the applications - studies for control is done cyclically to the authorized employees present, based on the order of the protocol number received by the applications. If during the cyclic billing of design control, it occurs that the control officer and the design engineer are the same - regardless of whether it is a different applicant - with a previous billing and within a one-month period, then the billing of design control is made to the next employee in line. One of the processes that should be computerized from the beginning is electronic urban planning (Abbott, 2013).

Compliance with all of the above is the responsibility of management or the department head, but it is imperative that the charges take into account the amount of work in the license file, the knowledge of the employee, and the current workload in general, as well as the service.

- 3) **Compliance with Priority and 1st Review Schedule.** The Review Officer is required to comply with the priority sequence established by the log number of the application and to conduct the first review of the file, a maximum of three (3) weeks or, in (21) calendar days.

At the same time, each Friday, on the bulletin board of the department, each control employee will announce the control program for the next three (3) weeks for each day in order of priority. It is understood that this program will include permits issued during the same week. In this manner, the Engineer will know the exact day of his permit inspection at the end of the week in which welding was done.

- 4) **Accurate timing of appointments and keeping them.** This is one of the sticking points of restructuring, but at the same time it is one of the points that requires an effective solution to the current overload conditions that have led to an "overload" of services. Unless and until the current issue of unchecked permits is resolved, it will not be possible to schedule an exact date with the engineers. Not only is this necessary, and we agree that it is his inalienable right, but at the same time it cannot enable the achievement of all the following goals - proposals that follow.

Accurate placement and initiation of appointments between auditors and audited engineers is critical, and therefore the department head should monitor their observance as closely as possible, as this will go a long way toward restoring the department's credibility. Postponements exceeding one-half hour should be brought to the attention of the respective department head, while in almost no case should there be a postponement of the inspection day, except in cases of force majeure. In all other cases, delays during the day should be "compensated" during business hours or possibly offset by assigning fewer than (3) appointments the next day to make up for any discrepancies and restore the program to its programmed form.

In cases of urgency and when the inspection schedule must be changed, Engineering Studies should be notified at least three (3) days prior to the scheduled date. For this reason, the service should also have their cell phones with them.

- 5) **Presence of the Engineer Study during at least the 1st building permit review.** During the first study review, the authorized drawing engineer has the right to be present, which is recommended by the Service. However, if the engineer is not present, the authorized inspector reserves the right, at his or her discretion, not to conduct a

permit review unless a member of the engineer's staff with the appropriate technical knowledge is present to assist with the study. Subsequent appointments or re-inspections may be scheduled, depending on the severity of deficiencies, with research staff notified by the inspector immediately upon completion of the 1st permit audit.

- 6) Control of Architectures - Statics.** All the above-mentioned points of the methodology for issuing building permits refer to the control of the architectural and structural studies of the permit, as well as their harmonization with the General Building Code. As long as the conditions of completeness and correctness of the data of the studies are guaranteed in the above-mentioned architectural and static control, the building permit file should be forwarded on the same day by the Building Permits Department to the next stages of control, namely that of electromechanical and fiscal data.
- 7) Presence of Obstructive Observations During Inspection.** If there are any observations that prevent the next inspection, they must be noted on the control sheet, the process will be stopped and the file will not be forwarded. If deemed necessary, the authorized employee may send the permit control sheet to the project owner within a period of five (5) days to note the observations in question. The specific form shall mention that the eventual submission of the requested documents may entail the need to submit new documents or permits resulting therefrom. The same mailing of the inspection form may be made to the Engineer as long as he does not appear for the inspection himself.
- 8) Review of Building Permits.** Re-inspection of building permits shall be based on the established priority order of record during public hours in consultation with the Engineer and the authorized employee.
- 9) Expiration of nine (9) month period.** The submitted files and the studies contained therein shall be kept in the Urban Planning Department and returned to the developer as long as the identified deficiencies are not corrected and the review comments are not corrected after the expiration of the nine (9) month period pursuant to Article (5), paragraph (8) of the Second Relevant Presidential Decree of July 8, 1993 on the "Method of Issuance of Building Permits and Inspection of Constructed Buildings".

8. Supporting the Department for Issuing Building Permits by Staffing the Surveying Department

The Building Permit Division agrees with the staffing proposals of the Division of Studies - Topography and at the same time proposes that the responsibility for reviewing the appropriateness and buildability of lots and fields prior to or during the issuance of a building permit be assumed solely by that Division.

With the new surveyors proposed in the respective proposals and the operation of the G.I.S. office, the Survey Department will be able to effectively contribute to the gradual relief of the Building Permit Department from a number of duties associated with said office, such as:

- Concessions for shared use of streets, etc.
- Modification of building lines
- Land use
- Remedial actions

9. Participation of Department Managers in Internal and External Committees

Since the Urban Planning Department serves the public, its employees are not allowed to participate in the off-duty committees operating in the Prefecture, except in cases where it is required by law and upon approval of the body in charge of the committee at the Urban Planning Department.

10. Knowledge of the other Services of the country. Visits to other Urban Development Authorities

We propose that there be periodic cooperation between the Director of the Urban Planning Department and the Prefect, so that there are visits by executives to other Urban Planning Departments in the country, distinguished either by their size (e.g., Agia Paraskevi) or by the quality of their services (e.g., Kefalonia), so that there is a "copying and adoption" of the good practices applied there, as well as a necessary exchange of views to optimize the services offered.

Conclusion

The conducted research proves that the modernization of the building permit issuing department is a complex organizational transformation that goes beyond the framework of simple technological renewal. The transition to full-fledged electronic management is emerging as the only sustainable mechanism for ensuring transparency and restoring public trust. The proposed restructuring model relies on minimizing the subjective factor through process automation and introducing strict accountability. At the center of this research are the specific author's proposals for reform, which form the new operational framework of the service. The first key solution is the implementation of an "Electronic Information Service" with a two-way connection, which allows designers to receive reliable answers remotely and attach graphic materials to their inquiries. In parallel, the creation of a digital database of building permits since 1923 is of fundamental importance, which will end the practice of manual searching in archive books and provide immediate access to critical information. Operational efficiency is ensured by introducing a fixed 21-day period for initial review and publishing electronic meeting schedules that precisely define the duration and subject matter of each review. Equally important is the proposed full transparency of architectural commission decisions, which, through online publication, become available to the community in real time, eliminating the possibility of hidden agreements. The roadmap for implementing these changes envisages a phased implementation, starting with technological preparation in the first three months. This stage includes the launch of online query platforms and digitalization of archival data. In the subsequent period of up to six months, the focus should be on administrative reorganization, including unifying the interpretations of the regulatory framework through joint work with legal consultants and introducing financial incentives for staff in the form of paid overtime when dealing with crisis loads. In the long term, the model envisages optimizing resources by transferring specific technical inspections to the topography department and stimulating quality design by establishing the "five-day permits" mechanism for complete and proper files. Future work on the project requires a constant exchange of experience with other leading administrations to ensure that the implemented practices remain relevant and effective. The ultimate goal of this restructuring is to transform the administration into a predictable and reliable partner, operating in conditions of complete transparency and professional integrity.

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