

Improving Clarity of Decisions to Reduce Information Overload in e-Government

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- Communicating decisions to citizens
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Motivation I

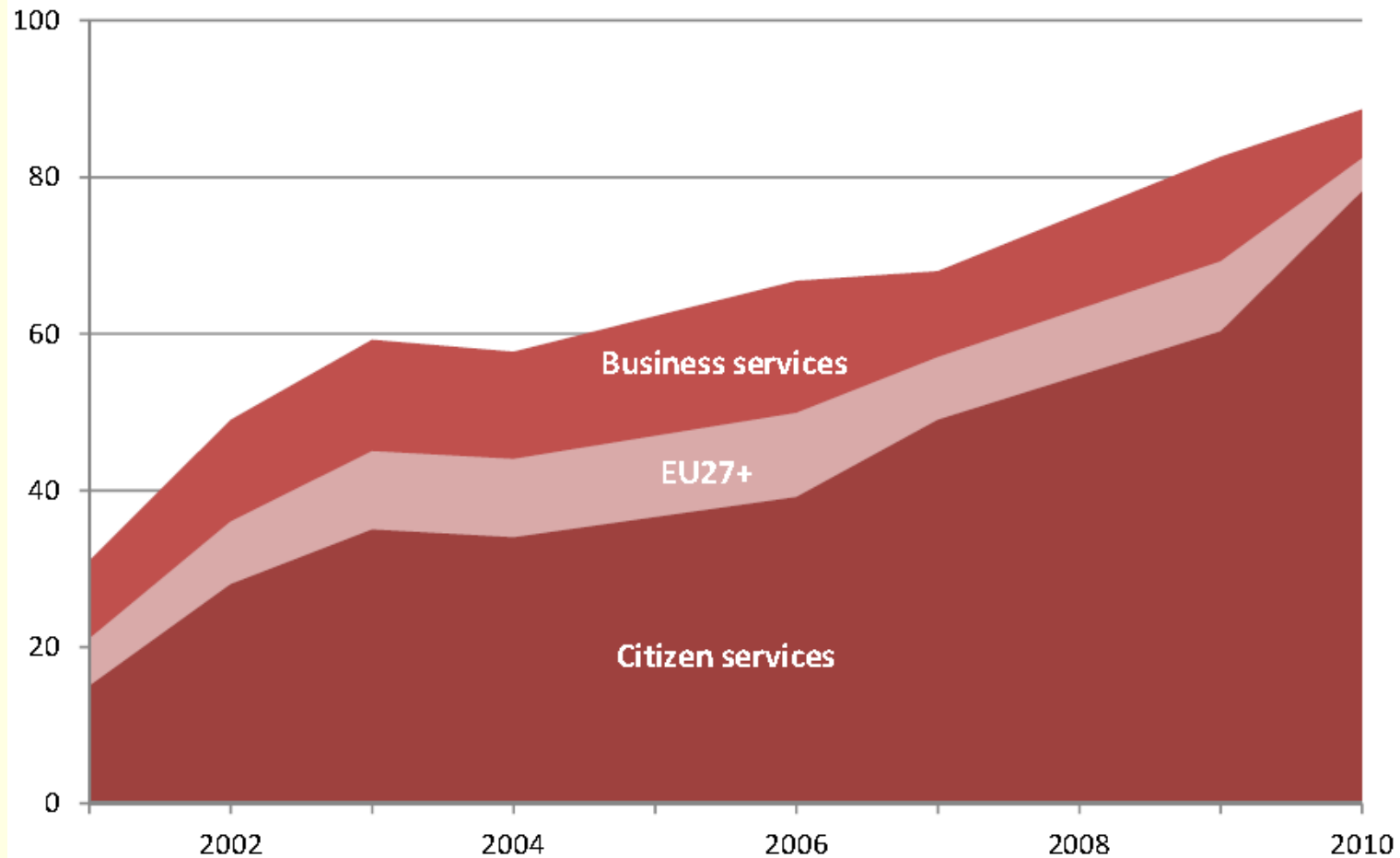
- Steady improvement of availability and sophistication of user services
- Actual figures for 2009 → 2010 in EU
 - Availability: 69% → 82%
 - Sophistication: 83% → 90%
- EU policy: no citizen left behind in 2010
- Participation figures for 2009 in EU
 - Citizens: 28%
 - Companies: 68%
- Goal: understand and engage citizens

Source: Capgemini et al. (2010): Digitizing Public Services in Europe: Putting ambition into action

Motivation II

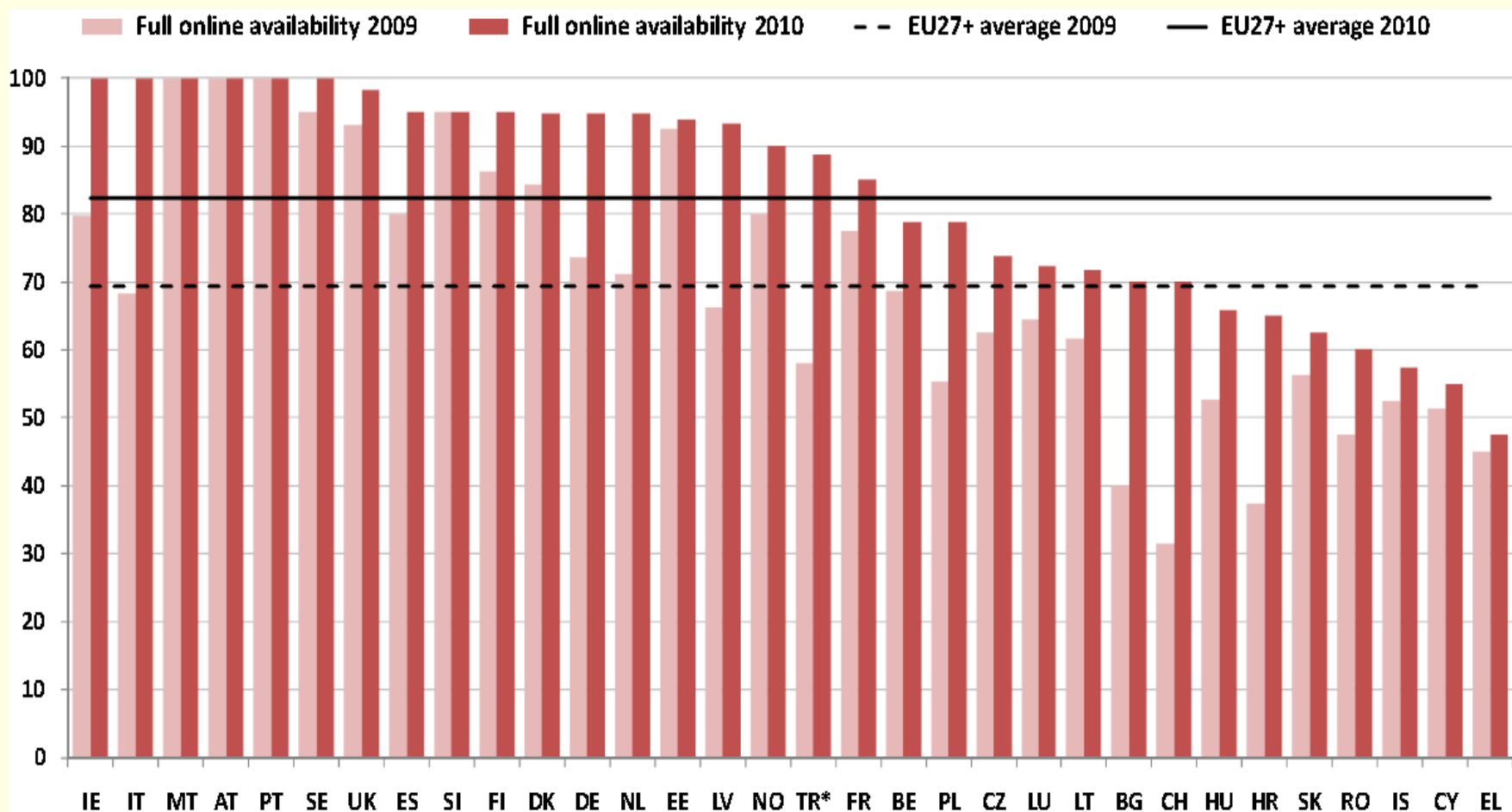
- Apathy vs. Intentional exclusion
 - Obstacles and barriers: actively discourage engagement
 - Common belief: people just don't care
 - Selfish
 - Lazy
 - Not smart
- } Politics is a spectator sport
- Voluntary, collective, imperfect action

Availability of e-Gov services I



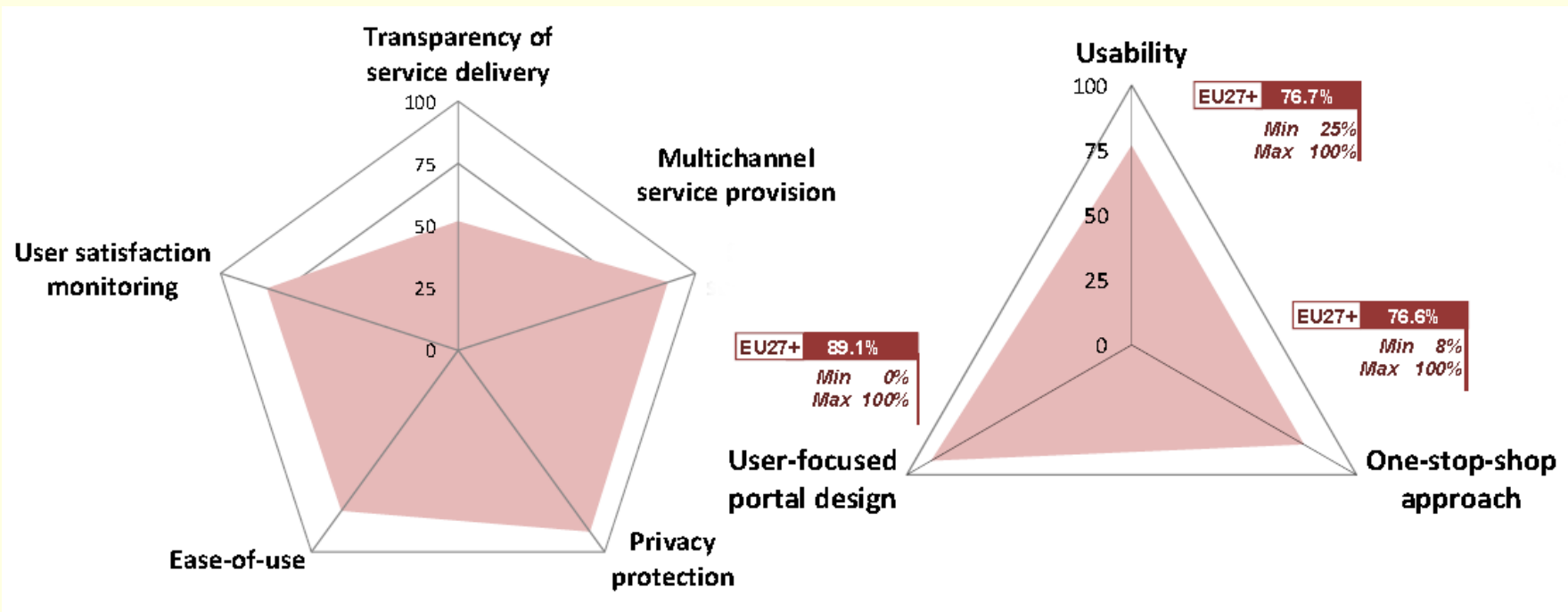
Source: Capgemini et al. (2010): Digitizing Public Services in Europe: Putting ambition into action

Availability of e-Gov services II



Source: Capgemini et al. (2010): Digitizing Public Services in Europe: Putting ambition into action

User experience



Source: Capgemini et al. (2010): Digitizing Public Services in Europe: Putting ambition into action

Introduction

- Vast amount of legal documents
 - Difficult to read and understand
 - Require substantial amount of resources
 - Can cause information overload
- Clarity of the documents
 - Important for better comprehension
 - Improves effectiveness of the underlying process
 - Lowers the costs
 - Improves citizens' satisfaction with the service
- Case study: housing subventions for young families

Introduction

- The Housing fund of the Republic of Slovenia
 - Founded in 1991
 - Offer loans under favourable terms to citizens
 - Encourage savings in housing
 - Build and sell apartments
 - **Offer housing subventions to young families**
- Important Slovenian public institution
 - Considerable media attention
- Financial figures:
 - 430 M€ assets
 - 125 M€ in long term loans to citizens

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Subventions for young families

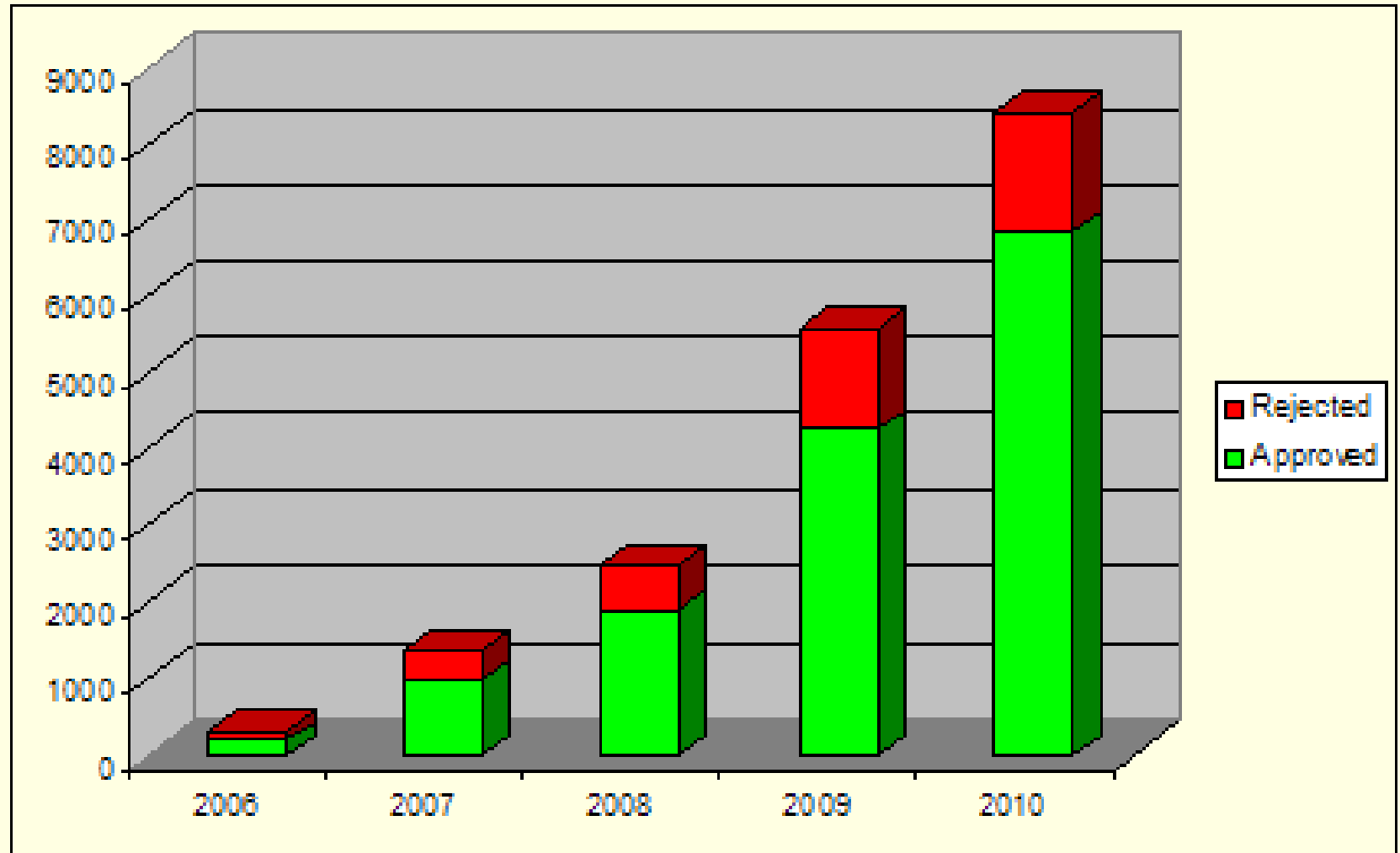
- Six calls: 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, (2011 active)
- Purpose: to help young families solve their housing problem
- Scope: buy, build, rent
- Target population:
 - Young families, and
 - First-time buyer, and
 - Salary criterion
- Novelty in the housing real estate field
 - Inherent uncertainty

Subventions - timeline

Year Call	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	...
2006	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
2007		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
2008			1.200 €	1.200 €	1.200 €	1.200 €	600 €	600 €	600 €	600 €	
2009				█	█	█	█	█	█	█	
2010					█	█	█	█	█	█	
2011						█	█	█	█	█	
2012							█	█	█	█	
2013								█	█	█	
2014									█	█	
2015										█	

...

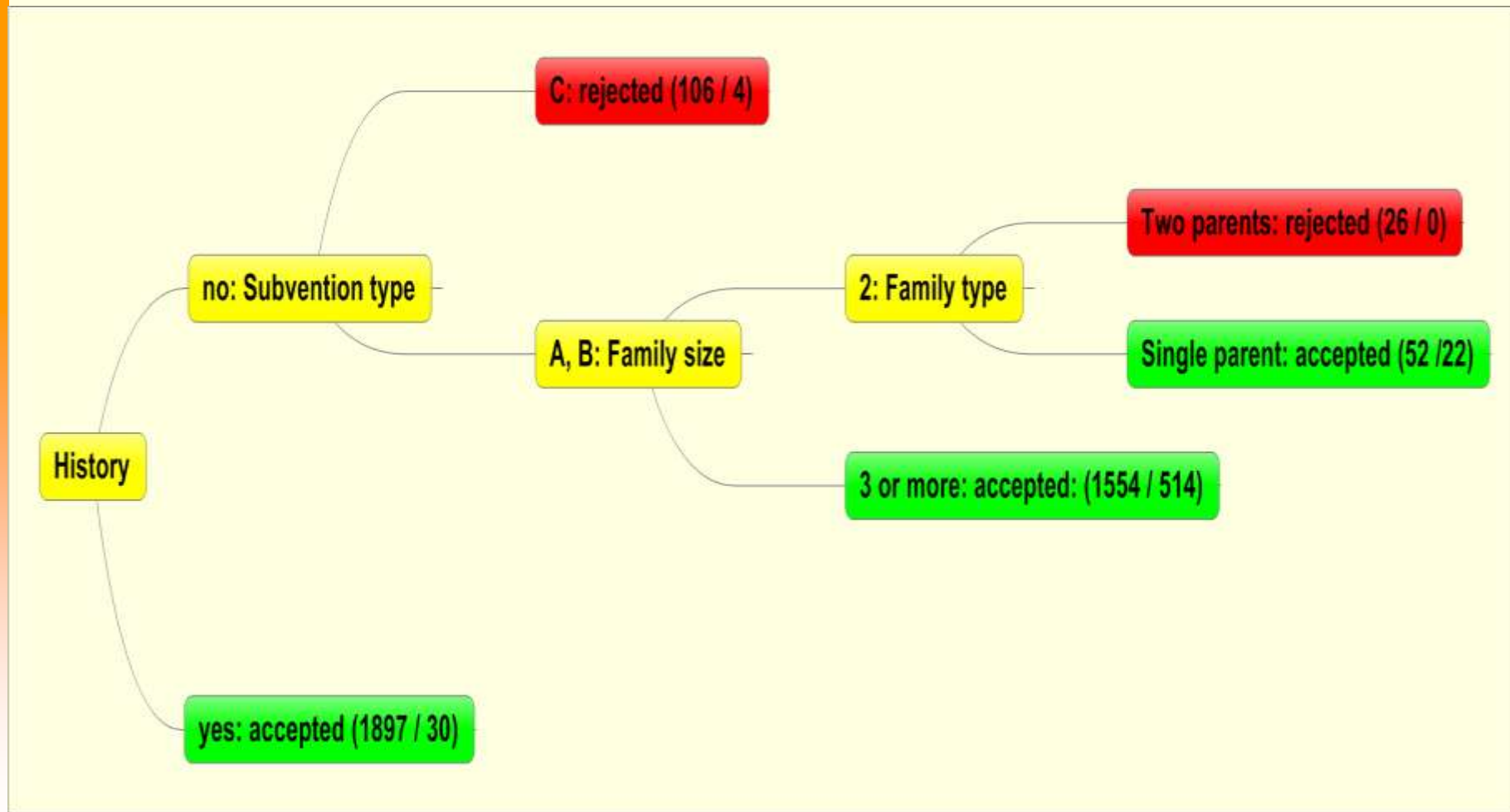
Applications for Housing Subventions



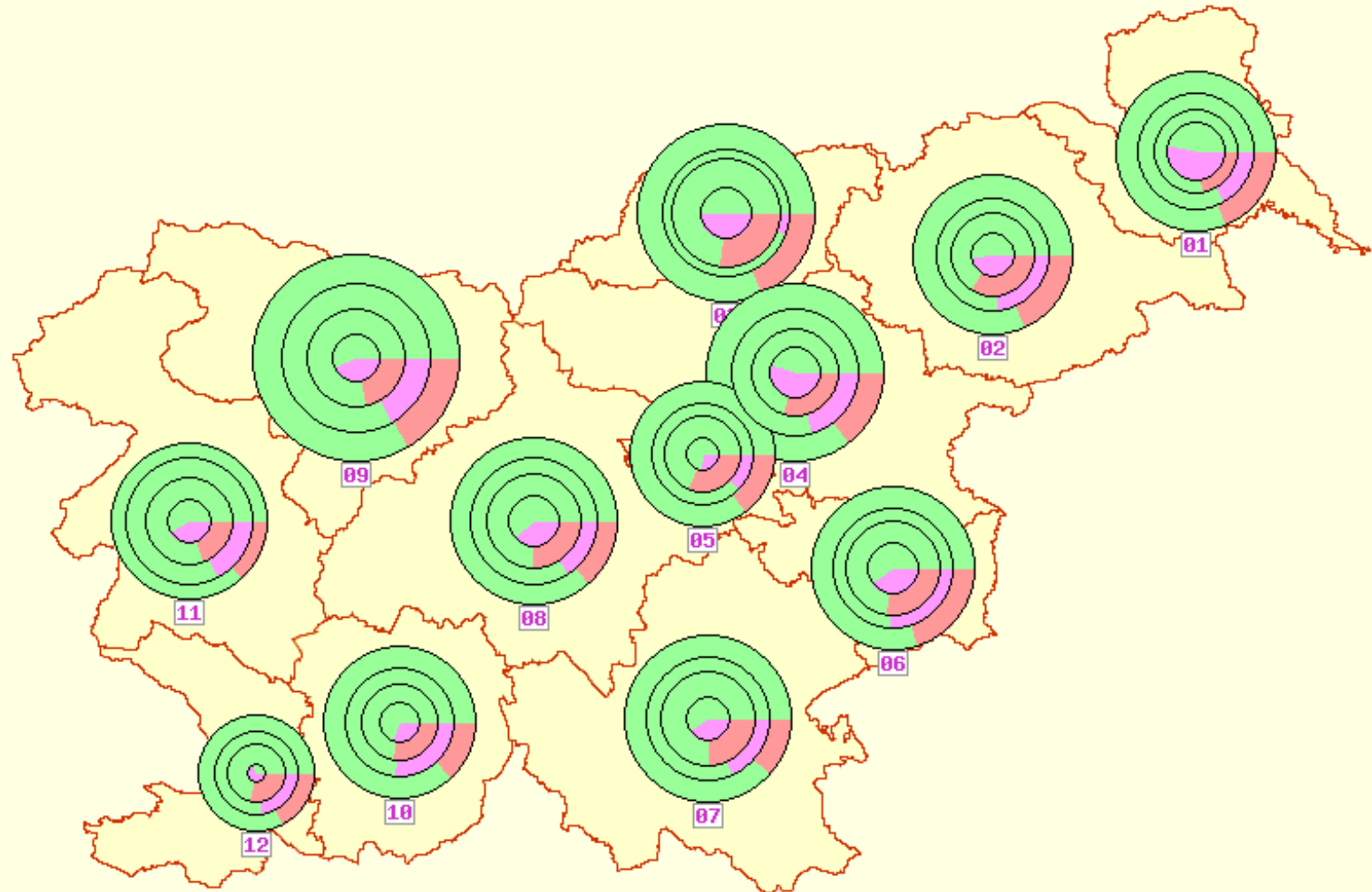
Resolutions from past calls

- Implications to the provisions of the call
 - Relaxed salary criterion ✓
 - Extended eligible purposes for subventions ✓
 - Increased public awareness about new possibilities ✓
- Results
 - Improved communication with public media
 - The call covers wider population
 - More balanced response to new calls

Predicting rejection rate



Relative proportion of applicants



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Communicating decisions

The application submitted on <dd.mm.yyyy> by <Name> <Surname> to the public tender for granting housing subventions to young families for solving their first housing problem **is rejected**.

There are no procedural costs.

Subventions for solving first housing problem of young families can be granted to citizens of the Republic of Slovenia, and other members of the European Union with the resident permit in the Republic of Slovenia, that comply with the following conditions:

1. They hold a status of young family;
2. They either have (a) an agreement to purchase a residence unit or (b) already issued building permit for construction of an individual house; and
3. The total income per family member does not exceed half the average salary in Slovenia in the past year.

Explanation of the rejection cause.

Explanation of the rejected cause

(a)

In the procedure it has been established that there is no basis for granting the subvention, because the application does not fulfill the legal conditions of the public tender.

(b)

Throughout the procedure it was established that the income per family member exceeds half of the average salary in Slovenia in the past year.

The application does not meet the condition 26e of the underlying legal act and is inconsistent with the requirements of the public tender. Therefore, it is rejected.

Explanation of the rejected cause

(c)

Throughout the procedure it was established that the income per family member exceeds half of the average salary in Slovenia in the past year. The family consists of the following members:

Parent, <ID number>, income in the year <yyyy> is <X1> EUR

Parent, <ID number>, income in the year <yyyy> is <X2> EUR

Child, <ID number>, income in the year <yyyy> is <X3> EUR

Child, <ID number>, income in the year <yyyy> is <X4> EUR

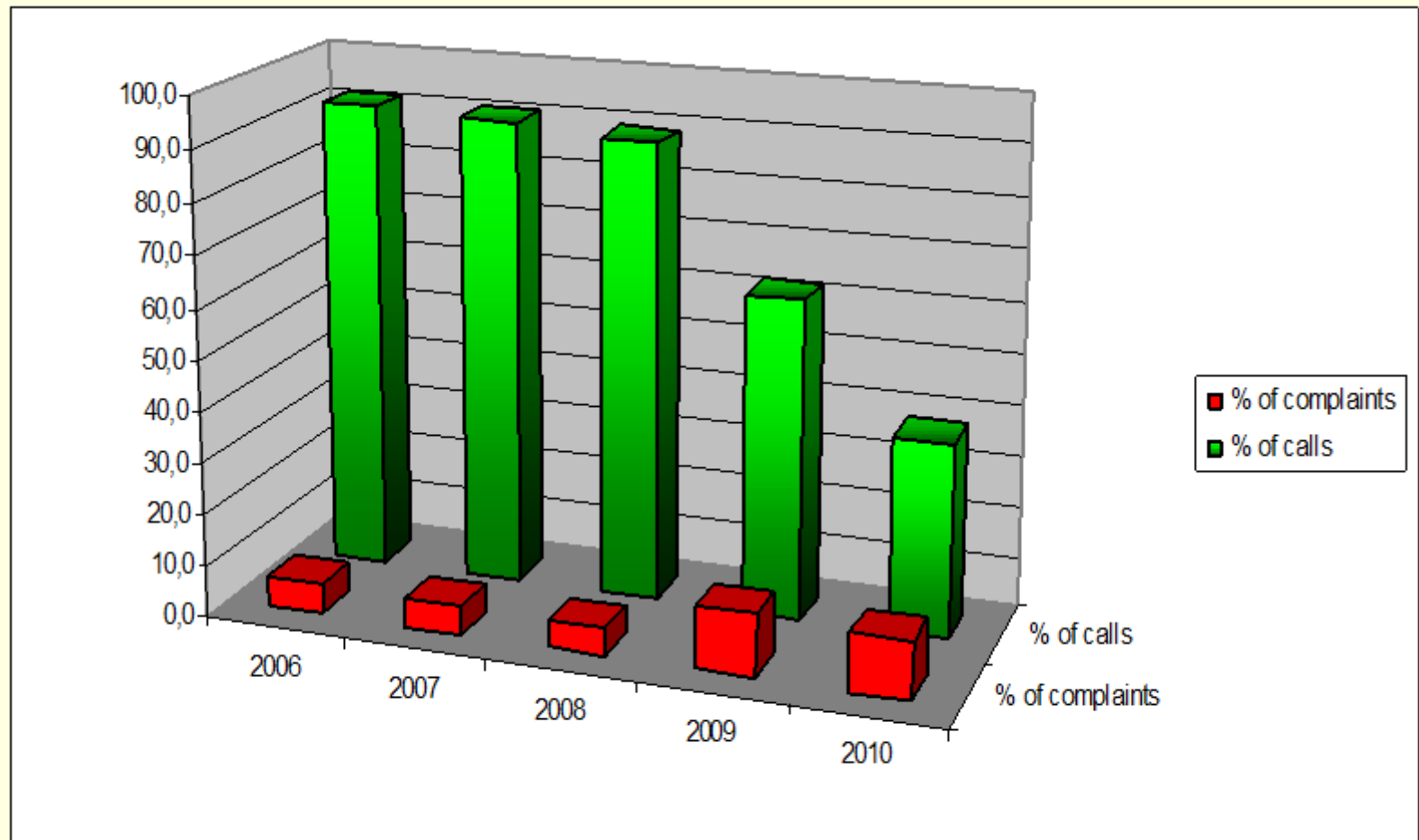
From the application data and other documentation it was concluded that the family income for the year <yyyy> is too high, since it is <X> EUR, which exceeds the income criteria for a family of four members, which amounts to <Y> EUR.

As a result, the application does not meet the condition of 26e of the underlying legal act and is inconsistent with the requirements of the public tender. Therefore, it is rejected.

Results

Year of the call	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
No. of applications	322	1.361	2.478	5.421	8.966
No. of approved applications	177	988	2.024	4.258	6.817
No. of rejected applications	145	373	454	1.163	2.149
No. of complaints	9	20	24	143	240
% of complaints to rejected	6,2%	5,4%	5,3%	12,3%	11,2%
No. of telephone calls	133	339	405	723	817
% of tel. calls to rejected	91,7%	90,9%	89,2%	62,2%	38,0%

Results



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Implementation and experience

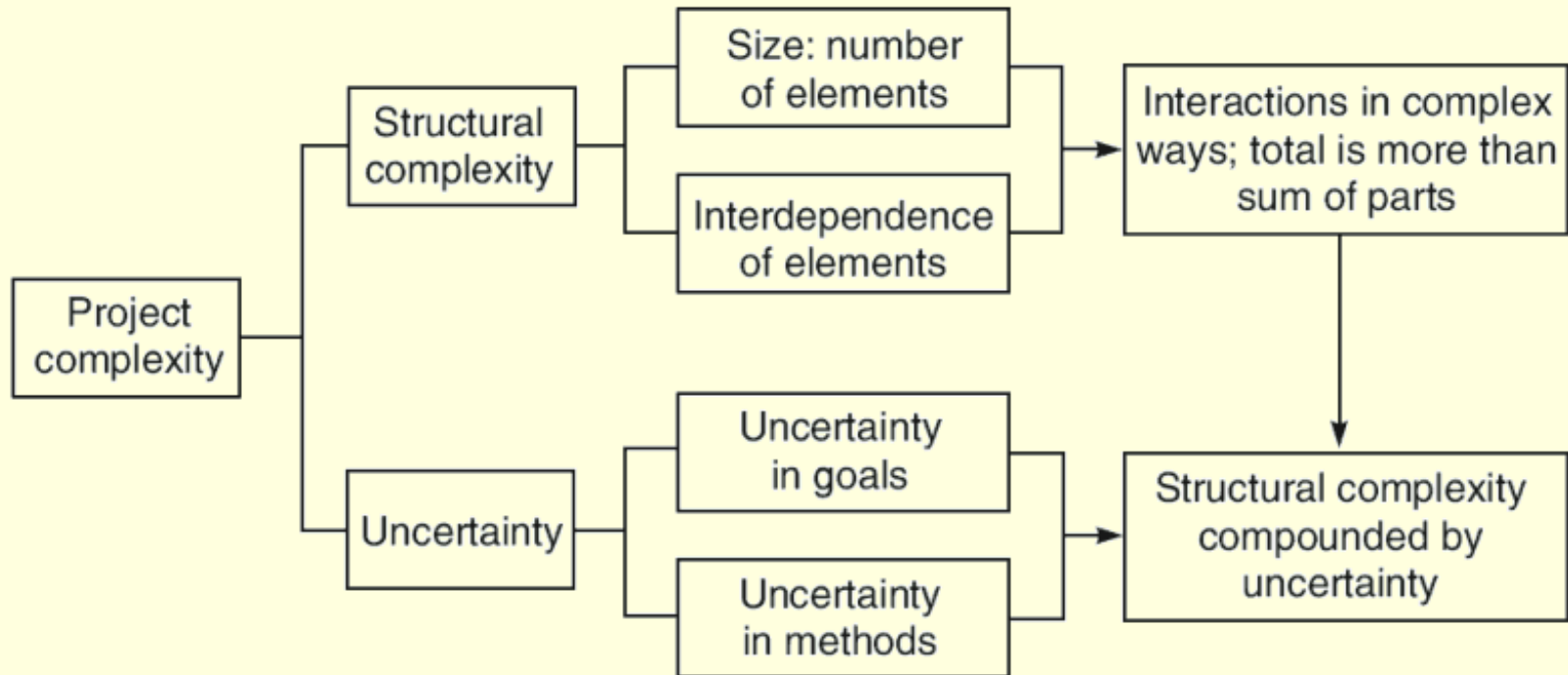
- Citizens as active resource
 - Understanding communicated information
 - Influencing behavior change
- The key: personalized information
 - Speed limit sign with a display of actual speed
- Four questions:
 - Who is the document intended for?
 - What is the purpose of the document?
 - What are the benefits or the detriments for the recipient?
 - What are the choices that the recipient might take?

Technical issues

- Complexity
 - Structural complexity
 - Uncertainty
- Explanation of decisions:
 - Helps the Fund's officers to cope with delicate decisions under severe time pressure



Project complexity



Source: Modelling Complex Projects, by Terry Williams

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Conclusion

- Improving clarity of decision documents
 - Improving citizens' understanding in G2C applications
 - Evaluation by measuring the citizens' calls for additional clarification
 - Even simple modifications contribute to the result
- Case study: granting housing subventions
 - Regularly used by the Housing Fund of the Republic of Slovenia
 - Five calls: 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010
- The importance of asking the right questions
 - Setting the right target
 - Interpretation of the obtained results

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