

# Building Blocks for the Next eGovernment Era: Exploratory Study Based on Dubai and UAE's Ministry of Happiness Communication in 2020

Diamantino Ribeiro, António Pedro Costa, Jorge Remondes

**Abstract**—Dubai and the UAE governments have been investing in technology and digital communication for a long time. These governments are pioneers in introducing innovative strategies, policies and projects. They are also recognized worldwide for defining and implementing long term public programs. In terms of eGovernment Dubai and the UAE rank among the world's most advanced. Both governments have surprised the world a few years ago by creating a Happiness Ministry. This paper focuses on UAE's government digital strategies and its approach to the next era. The main goal of this exploratory study is to understand the new era of eGovernment and transfer of the happiness and wellness programs. Data were collected from the *corpus latente* and analysis was anchored in qualitative methodology using content analysis and observation as analysis techniques. The study allowed to highlight that the 2020 government reshuffle has a strong focus on digital reorganisation and digital sustainability, one of the newest trends in sustainability. Regarding happiness and wellbeing portfolio, we were able to observe that there has been a major change within the government organisation: The Ministry of Happiness was extinct and the Ministry of Community Development will manage the so-called 'Happiness Portfolio'. Additionally, our observation allowed to note the government dual approach to governance: one through digital transformation, thus enhancing the digital sustainability process and, the second one through government development.

**Keywords**—Ministry of Happiness, eGovernment, communication, digital sustainability.

## I. INTRODUCTION

WHILE the majority of the worldwide governments struggle to manage their Gross National Product, Dubai and the UAE manage big projects and events such as the Museum of the World and Expo 2020 (now Expo 2021) and plan ahead implementing long term programs like the Centennial 2071 which purpose to prepare the nation for future generations. The Federation's government is recognized for innovative initiatives in several public areas including the introduction of the latest technologies or the funding of challenging technologic and scientific projects such as the 'Hyperloop' or the 'Emirates Mars Mission.' The government has been developing several strategies in order to keep its economic sustainability beyond oil & gas income. Pursuing

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sustainability, innovation and the goal to become the happiest nation on Earth, the government has created surprising Ministries like the Ministry of Possibilities, the Ministry of Community Development and the Ministry of Happiness.

Since 2016, we have been developing a longitudinal study on happiness, positivity and wellbeing as government policies with a special focus on the Ministry of Happiness communication. Each year we retrieve the news published online in English language about the Ministry of Happiness policies, initiatives and other related subjects. In 2020, we retrieved more than 100 newspaper articles from the internet. Two main subjects caught our attention: 1) the transition for a new era of eGovernment; 2) the transfer of the National Happiness and Wellbeing Program to another Ministry. During the study, we could learn that another innovative Ministry was created: The Ministry of Development and Future.

In this paper we analyse the communication of the Ministry of Happiness in 2020 within the framework of the digital transformation and eGovernment strategies. It is an exploratory study using content analysis and observation qualitative techniques. This exploratory study aims at understanding the UAE's government reshuffle amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and, above all, to understand the new phase of the so-called Happiness Portfolio.

In our opinion this study is an important contribution to the work that we have been developing throughout the years since it reveals another ambitious transformation decision of the UAE's government., thus confirming its pioneering spirit.

Finally, it is unavoidable to mention the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak early in 2020. Many of the retrieved news obviously focus on the dramatic situation that the entire world is facing. The keynote from the perspective of this study (and from the news headlines) is that - in spite of this unprecedented crisis - the government worked in several fronts not losing sight of its of short-, medium- and long-term programs.

## II. EGOVERNMENT

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) increased so much that its intensive use has led to the designation of "Digital Era" or "Fourth Industrial Revolution". "Technology and technologic devices are now integrated in uncountable individual and collective areas. The main purpose of this intense use is to make everyday procedures easier and more efficient" [1].

eGovernment "is the use of information and communication

technologies (ICTs) to improve the activities of public sector organisations” [2]. According to Heeks, eGovernment definition is not limited to “internet-enabled” tools, it includes Information and Communication Technologies applied to all sectors - “all public sector activities are included” [3]. The Organisation of American States defines Electronic government (or e-Government) as “the application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to government functions and procedures with the purpose of increasing efficiency, transparency and citizen participation” [2].

Heeks [3] refers three main areas of e-government:

1. Improving government processes: eAdministration
2. Connecting citizens: eCitizens and eServices
3. Building external interactions: eSociety

The author emphasizes that these areas are a response to negative aspects of classic government, such as: enormous costs, inefficiency and ineffectiveness (e-administration); self-use and non-compliant (e-citizens and e-services); and centralization (e-society) [3].

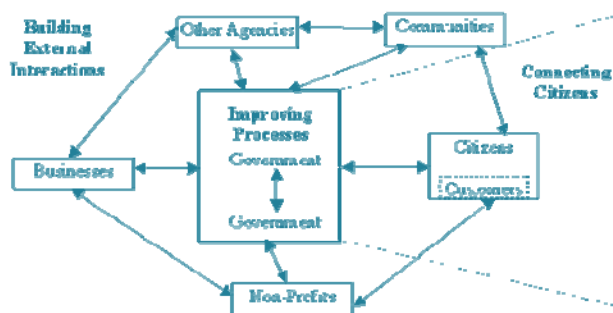


Fig. 1 Main domains of eGovernment (adapted) [4], [5]

To better understand the role of ICT, use in government “main domains” or areas, it is important to go beyond the definition and list some of the more important services or activities to be impacted.

We consider Heeks’ [3] checklist a good reference, so we transcript his scheme regarding the details of the main domains of eGovernment:

#### A. Improving Government Processes: eAdministration

eGovernment initiatives within this domain deal particularly with improving the internal workings of the public sector. They include:

- Cutting process costs: improving the input/output ratio by cutting financial costs and/or time costs.
- Managing process performance: planning, monitoring and controlling the performance of process resources (human, financial and other).
- Making strategic connections in government: connecting arms, agencies, levels and data stores of government to strengthen capacity to investigate, develop and implement the strategy and policy that guides government processes.
- Creating empowerment: transferring power, authority and resources for processes from their existing locus to new locations.

#### B. Connecting Citizens: eCitizens and eServices

Such initiatives deal particularly with the relationship between government and citizens: either as voters/stakeholders from whom the public sector should derive its legitimacy, or as customers who consume public services. These initiatives may well incorporate the process improvements identified in Section I. However, they also include a broader remit:

- Talking to citizens: providing citizens with details of public sector activities. This mainly relates to certain types of accountability: making public servants more accountable for their decisions and actions.
- Listening to citizens: increasing the input of citizens into public sector decisions and actions. This could be flagged as either democratization or participation.
- Improving public services: improving the services delivered to members of the public along dimensions such as quality, convenience and cost.

#### C. Building External Interactions: eSociety

Such initiatives deal particularly with the relationship between public agencies and other institutions - other public agencies, private sector companies, non-profit and community organisations. As with citizen connections, these initiatives may well incorporate the process improvements identified in Section I. However, they also include a broader remit:

- Working better with business: improving the interaction between government and business. This includes digitizing regulation of, procurement from, and services to, business to improve quality, convenience and cost.
- Developing communities: building the social and economic capacities and capital of local communities.
- Building partnerships: creating organisational groupings to achieve economic and social objectives. The public sector is almost always one of the partners, though occasionally it acts only as a facilitator for others [3], [5].

The creation and implementation of eGovernment has direct and indirect effects. Some of the direct effects [6] are:

- “cost effectiveness in government and public operations,
- significant savings in areas such as public procurement,
- tax collection and customs operations, with better and continuous contacts with citizens, especially those living in remote or less densely populated areas” [6].

Some of the indirect effects are also important, and include:

- greater transparency and accountability in public decisions,
- powerful ways to fight corruption,
- the ability to stimulate the emergence of local e-cultures, and
- the strengthening of democracy” [6].

For the purpose of our study, we will consider IEEE’s e-Government definition: eGovernment is “the ‘brand label’ for a multidisciplinary domain, related to the use of ICT in the context of public policy (e-Governance, Open Government, Smart Governance, etc.), operations in public organisations (transformation, management, interoperability, security), citizen engagement (e-Participation, transparency, e-

Democracy) or government services (including using social media). Numerous disciplines contribute to this intersection of areas such as computer science, information systems, information science, management, sociology or political sciences, among others” [7].

Big public funding has been invested and necessary tasks forces have been working “to develop, implement and promote the use of e-government” [6]. Nevertheless, many countries struggle to find the necessary resources to fund eGovernment transition. One important aspect is that they can benefit from the success of pioneering countries. This is an important aspect because several countries can learn and develop their eGovernment plans based on the experience of the most successful examples, adjusted according to their social and economic conditions [6]. According to Hasnain, huge amounts are invested every year to digitally transform governmental activities or services such as: “financial management, customs, and tax systems” [8]. In the author’s opinion there are only a few success cases and it is important to investigate about the impact of those investments “on government efficiency and accountability to deliver services” [8]. Even so, digital connectivity is “central to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” [9], [10]. In our perspective, eGovernment development around the world has an important role in the framework of the 2030 Agenda.

If correctly applied, both funding and technology can definitely contribute to change lives while improving government performance. The following case is illustrative of this vision: “India’s digital identification scheme (Aadhar) has given over 950 million Indians a verifiable identity, enabling millions of poor people to receive government subsidies that were previously being diverted to others or for which they had to pay bribes, also saving the government billions of dollars”

[8], [11], [12]. It is clear that world governments are implementing eGovernment at very different paces and with completely different financial resources.

Advanced economies, in public and private sectors, are already implementing the latest technologies and digital management and strategic trends such as digital sustainability. Digital sustainability refers to the contribution of “digitalisation” (or I4.0 – Fourth Industrial Revolution) to the “global sustainability goals” [13]. Digitalisation goes much further than traditional ICTs such as teleworking; it comprehends “new business models based on services rather than products, as these require ICT systems” [13]. In a technology for good perspective, the new purpose of an organisation is to provide sustainable solutions that also contribute to the society [13].

### III. MINISTRY OF HAPPINESS NEWS IN 2020

Dubai and UAE Ministry of Happiness was created in February 2016. Her Excellency Ood bint Khalfan Al Roumi was then appointed as Minister of State for Happiness [14]. Back in 2014, Dubai had launched the ‘Happiness Meter’ with the purpose to digitally assess happiness levels among citizens and visitors – Dubai was the first city in the world to introduce this technology [15], [16]. According to Dubai’s Ruler and Vice-President of the UAE, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, the aim of the government is to “work on building the skills of its people, aside from providing services ... a government focused on putting the happiness of citizens at the forefront of its priorities” [17].

TABLE I  
 NEWS HEADLINES 2020 – JANUARY-MARCH

#	Date	Title	Source
1	14/01	Opinion: How we can attract and retain talent within the UAE’s construction market	ME Construction News
2	18/01	DubaiGovernmentExcellenceProgram	DGEP
3	19/01	Sheikh Hamdan reviews Dubai Customer Happiness Index survey	Kaleej Times
4	19/01	Dubai reveals top and lowest ranked government entities for customer happiness	Gulf Business
5	24/01	Dubai presents perfect backdrop for industry to focus on technology	Gulf Today
6	02/02	How Finland and the UAE are pursuing happiness	EME Outlook
7	04/02	Dubai ruler went looking for a teacher whose 'positive vibes' went viral	Step Feed
8	01/03	Mexico is keen to follow UAE leadership’s happiness agenda: Minister	WAM
9	03/03	UAE-based e-commerce websites told to register with government	Kaleej Times
10	04/03	Winners of the UAE Hackathon “data for happiness and wellbeing” announced in a “digital ceremony”	TRA
11	19/03	2020 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HAPPINESS: GIVING RISE TO HAPPY PEOPLE AT WORK	Summer Town
12	21/03	UAE ranks first regionally in World Happiness Report 2020 for the sixth consecutive year.	MOFAIC
13	22/03	UAE ranks first regionally in World Happiness Report 2020	Abu Dhabi World
14	25/03	Providing effective government services under all circumstances a priority of UAE’s leadership: Mohammad Al Gergawi	WAM
15	26/03	UAE uses blockchain, digital identity to battle Covid-19	Ledger Insights
16	29/03	Abu Dhabi's leading position in World Happiness Report global testament to emirate's pioneering status: Department of Economic Development	Emirates 24/7
17	30/03	MoFAIC announces temporary closure of customer happiness centres	WAM

Throughout the years the Ministry of Happiness has created several programs, one of the most important being the National Happiness and Positivity Program (later renamed as

National Happiness and Wellbeing Program) [18]; it has established partnerships with private groups, implemented a great number of events in collaboration with other ministries

and public institutions, organized international summits, etc. all to “build a happy and positive society” [18].

To add a new chapter on our longitudinal study [19]-[23] about the Ministry of Happiness communication, we retrieved the news published in English language in 2020. We collected 111 news and divided them news in 4 tables corresponding to the four trimesters.

In the first trimester we highlight the articles about the UAE’s ranking in the World Happiness Report (WHR) 2020

(see Table I, #12 & # 13) - the Federation ranked first in the region for the sixth consecutive year, according the media and the WHR [24]. Not surprisingly, the 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester news focus is on the COVID-19 outbreak. Nevertheless, happiness related subjects are still mentioned in the headlines. It is also important to mention the frequent reference to technology in different contexts (see #21, #26 & #32 in Table II). Also, the news already indicates an upcoming reshuffle in UAE’s government (see #25 in Table II).

TABLE II  
NEWS HEADLINES 2020 – APRIL-JUNE

#	Date	Title	Source
18	1/abr	MOCCA adopts new business continuity arrangements	WAM
19	5/abr	COVID-19: UAE launches online campaign for mental support	Gulf Today
20	12/abr	Happiness and Positivity Council discusses COVID-19 containment efforts	WAM
21	16/abr	UAE’s ‘Happiness and Positivity Council’ debuts new high-tech police helmet for coronavirus combat	The Washington Post
22	1/mai	National Programme for Happiness and Wellbeing Launches "Be Well" Campaign	WAM
23	1/mai	Smart City Prince: A Prince with a Mission, a Vision	CFI.co
24	2/mai	UAE to provide free sim cards, coronavirus safety box to workers	Kaleej Times
25	13/mai	UAE ministries may be merged post-coronavirus, says Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid	The National News
26	17/mai	The UAE PASS will soon become the only digital identity for all residents of Dubai	Gulf Business
27	19/mai	Mental health hotline launched in UAE amid Covid-19 challenges	Arabian Business
28	21/mai	THE UAE LAUNCHES A FREE MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINE	Grazia Middle East
29	28/mai	Ministry of Infrastructure Development inaugurates ‘Etihad Road Bridge Project’ in Ajman	WAM
30	17/jun	Cooperation between entities participating in ‘Unified Family Counselling Portal’ a key factor in UAE’s leadership in community services: Sheikha Fatima	WAM
31	18/jun	After Nabeel Rajab, Time for UAE to Free Ahmed Mansoor/Prominent Human Rights Defender Remains Behind Bars	Human Rights Watch
32	24/jun	Saif bin Zayed witnesses virtual graduation of new cohort of MOI Customer Happiness Diploma	WAM
33	29/jun	Giving, charity, and helping others are values deeply embedded in Emirati society: Ohood Al Roumi	WAM
34	30/jun	The first meeting of the happiness of transportation	FTA.GOV

The new structure of the government has the spotlight of the news headlines of the 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester. The quantity as well as the diversity of sources indicates media’s attention to the subject. In spite of that, there is still place for several headlines about happiness initiatives or programs (e.g., #58, #59 or #65) in Table III.

Interestingly, the pandemic appears in the news headlines but not in a recurrent way both in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> trimesters (important to note that pandemic or COVID-19 was not research keywords). In the 4<sup>th</sup> trimester the news headlines drive the readers to technology, cyber security or future subjects, international cooperation and challenges, etc. Happiness, positivity and wellbeing are transversal to the globality of the news (see Table IV).

In our point of view, it is important to emphasize the cadence and quantity of news about the National Happiness and Wellbeing Program and other themes that are in one way or another linked to the Ministry of Happiness. This allows us to infer that the government has established an efficient communication plan not only regarding the most usual policies but also about these not so common government subjects.

#### IV. BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE NEXT EGOVERNMENT ERA

The news about UAE’s government reshuffle definitely caught our attention. It had already caught media’s attention as demonstrated by the quantity of news published about it. In

our case, the interest was above all to learn about the potential new role of the Ministry of Happiness within the new organisation of the government and the main goal of a reshuffle during the most dramatic period that the humanity as a whole is facing in 100 years – the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first interesting fact that we observed by analysing the article released by the Emirates News Agency (WAM) about the new government structure was that the main goal of the reshuffle was precisely to prepare for the “post Covid’19 period” [25] and “as part of preparations for the next 50 years” [26]. The new structure was prepared with the support of 100 government officials and several experts including researchers [25]. The reshuffle was proposed by HH Sheik Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. The government main decision “involves closing 50 percent of government service centres and turning them into digital platforms within two years, merging 50 percent of federal authorities with other authorities or ministries, and appointing new ministers of state and CEOs of specialist sectors” [25].

According to the statement of the Vice-President of the UAE: “the objective is to create a government with faster decision-making capacities that is capable of keeping pace with the latest developments, making the most of opportunities, and addressing this new era of our history, and a flexible government that aims to continue the nation’s achievements noting that the post-COVID-19 world requires more flexible and proactive governments that are capable of

adapting, in addition to the need to ensure readiness, reassess national priorities, develop a comprehensive proactive approach that foresees the features of this era, and innovate solutions to address future challenges” [25].

TABLE III  
NEWS HEADLINES 2020 – JULY-SEPTEMBER

#	Date	Title	Source
35	1/jul	Al Owais: Relationship between the government and FNC hits new milestone	WAM
36	5/jul	Abdullah bin Zayed calls for attracting more volunteers from different backgrounds, cultures and nationalities to reflect the UAE's diverse community	WAM
37	5/jul	Sheikh Mohammed announces new ministries, merges departments to unveil an agile, nimble government	Kaleej Times
38	5/jul	Sheikh Mohammed announces new ministries, merges departments to unveil an agile, nimble government	Kaleej Times
39	5/jul	UAE restructures government, seeking more agility as it deals with coronavirus impact	Reuters
40	5/jul	UAE merges ministries in ambitious government restructuring	Financial Times
41	5/jul	Sheikh Mohammed announces new UAE government structure	Gulf News
42	5/jul	UAE restructures government, seeking more agility as it deals with coronavirus impact	The Straits Times
43	5/jul	UAE restructures government, seeking more agility as it deals with coronavirus impact	Money US News
44	5/jul	UAE restructures government, seeking more agility as it deals with coronavirus impact	Focus Malaysia
45	5/jul	UAE restructures government, seeking more agility as it deals with coronavirus impact	This is Money
46	5/jul	UAE restructures government, seeking more agility as it deals with coronavirus impact	Yemen Media
47	5/jul	UAE restructures government, seeking more agility as it deals with coronavirus impact	British Asia News
48	5/jul	UAE restructures government, seeking more agility as it deals with coronavirus impact	The Reference Paris
49	6/jul	UAE Cabinet reshuffle appoints new ministers and merges departments	The National UAE
50	6/jul	UAE Cabinet revamp seeks to 'turbo-charge' economic growth	Kaleej Times
51	6/jul	MoHAP approves 'Air Doctor' card	Gulf Today
52	6/jul	UAE announces broad government restructuring towards greater efficiency	The Arab Weekly
53	6/jul	Sheikh Khalifa approves new UAE government structure	Kaleej Times
54	6/jul	UAE Restructures Government, Merges Half of Federal Agencies	Bloomberg Quint
55	7/jul	Amazon has launched its Amazon Home Services, a new marketplace for on-demand professional services	Gulf Business
56	9/jul	The UAE shows a mixture of head, hand and heart in public policy	The National News
57	12/jul	Faces to watch: Game-Changers in the regional tech industry	Gulf Business
58	20/jul	These are the happiest Dubai government employees	Kaleej Times
59	24/jul	Meaning of “employee happiness” within the context of complex organisations? An explanatory review on the UAE labour force	Emerald Insight
60	28/jul	Saif bin Zayed rolls out Bin Wraiqa Emergency Service	WAM
61	31/jul	Sheikh Mohammed announces Arab Government Excellence Award winners	Kaleej Times
62	12/ago	Can a Revamped Government Steer the UAE Through the Pandemic?	World Politics Review
63	13/ago	MBR Establishment for SME Development ranked as happiest workplace	Kaleej Times
64	16/ago	Ministry of Community Development promotes data e-link to social security services	WAM
65	20/ago	GCSE results 2020: UAE schools 'happy' amid grading chaos	Kaleej Times
66	26/ago	UAE to welcome over 1 million students back to school with best safety standards: Sheikh Mohammed	Kaleej Times
67	26/ago	Hessa Bhumaid Chairs Second Happiness and Wellbeing Council Meeting	MoCD
68	30/ago	Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure drafts unified quality of life indexes	WAM
69	30/ago	Chanakya Thoughts: Think like a leader	The Free Press Journal
70	30/ago	Making government future-ready is a priority, says Sheikh Mohammed	Kaleej Times
71	31/ago	Emirati Women's Day 'is for the whole year': UAE women and men prepare for the next 50 years	Salaam Gateway
72	9/set	Conference on post-COVID-19 challenges facing realty sector in KSA, UAE concludes	Saudi Gazette
73	27/set	UAE launches new online service for atestation of personal and commercial documents	Gulf Business
74	28/set	UAE #1 in 121 indicators in pandemic year: Sheikh Mohammed	Kaleej Times
75	29/set	The new lower prices aimed to delight customers and improve the quality of life.	Kaleej Times
76	29/set	Sheikh Mohammed invites citizens, expats to help shape UAE's next 50 years	Kaleej Times
77	30/set	Six UAE higher education institutions lose licences	Kaleej Times

The keywords used in the description on the new ministries' assignments are: digital, technology, innovation, cybersecurity artificial intelligence and digital economy [25]. So, we can infer that the ultimate objective is to establish a best-in-class digital transformation strategy, as declared by UAE's Vice President: “the goal is to have one digital window for the government and a comprehensive and complete digital transformation. Recent changes have proven that digital government is an indispensable strategic option and economic

security for business continuity in any circumstances” [25].

As usual, UAE's government leaders establish a clear timeline and mission: “the new government has one year to achieve its new priorities. Continuous changes will be the headline of the new phase until we achieve the best governance model for the new era; and until we achieve a government that fulfils the ambitions of the Emirati people” [25].

As far as the Ministry of Happiness, it was very interesting

to find out that the so called ‘Quality of Life and Happiness Portfolio’ was transferred to the Ministry of Community Development (MOCD) - a Ministry also created in 2016.

Several accesses have been made to the MOCD webpage; so far, the organisational chart [27] does not include any reference to that Portfolio.

TABLE IV  
NEWS HEADLINES 2020 – OCTOBER-DECEMBER

#	Date	Title	Source
78	8/out	UN commends UAE digital initiative to contain COVID-19	WAM
79	9/out	Ministry of Community Development promotes mental health with sustainable development initiatives	WAM
80	13/out	TRA holds virtual forum for future projects in UAE Hackathon 2020	Kaleej Times
81	13/out	E-platform in UAE to involve teachers, parents in policymaking	Kaleej Times
82	18/out	MOI LAUNCHES THE SIXTH CUSTOMER HAPPINESS DIPLOMA	UAE Ministry of Interior
83	19/out	Oil to AI: The new resource	Kaleej Times
84	22/out	PICO Ventures co-founder brings Jerusalem, and its youth, to UAE	The Jerusalem Post
85	23/out	Things Israel can learn from UAE: Appoint a happiness minister	The Jerusalem Post
86	24/out	Initiatives to find UAE talents get minister's nod	Kaleej Times
87	26/out	UAE keen to enhance coordination and communication with GCC countries: Obaid Al Tayer	WAM
88	31/out	UAE always blessed with joy and achievements, says Sheikh Mohammed	Gulf Today
89	2/nov	Directing financial resources to achieve the highest quality of life for citizens and residents, says Hamdan bin Rashid	WAM
90	2/nov	Almarai wins Best Employee Health Initiative Award	Saudi Gazette
91	10/nov	India needs UAE-style Ministry of Happiness, says author Vikram Seth	Arabian Business
92	12/nov	Dubai Student Wellbeing Census	Dubai Knowledge
93	13/nov	UAE Ministry of Education launches 4th National Bullying Prevention Week	Kaleej Times
94	15/nov	Frontline Heroes Office signs agreement with National Programme for Happiness to launch mental health support line for frontline professionals	WAM
95	16/nov	Saif bin Zayed launches ‘Positive Customer’ application	WAM
96	19/nov	Food waste and loss remain a challenge: UAE minister	Kaleej Times
97	20/nov	Sheikh Hamdan leads the way as cyclists get freedom of Dubai	Arab News
98	23/nov	Dubai fitness challenge 2020 creates citywide unity through strategic partner support (mediaoffice.ae)	Media Office Government of Dubai
99	23/nov	Dubai fitness challenge 2020 creates citywide unity through strategic partner support	Media Office
100	25/nov	Sheikh Mohammed announces Arab Government Excellence Award winners	Kaleej Times
101	1/dez	National Day 2020: UAE weathers challenges of 2020, says Sheikh Mohammed	Kaleej Times
102	1/dez	UAE National Day 2020: Etisalat, du offer 49GB free mobile data	Kaleej Times
103	2/dez	National Day 2020: UAE weathers challenges of 2020, says Sheikh Mohammed	Kaleej Times
104	2/dez	49th UAE National Day 2020 is a day of happiness throughout the United Arab Emirates	Diplomacy and Commerce News
105	7/dez	The UAE as per World Happiness Report	U.AE
106	7/dez	Exclusive: Israel expects 100,000 tourists from UAE by 2021, says minister	Kaleej Times
107	16/dez	UAE MoHAP organises '6th Virtual Regional Conference on Best Practices'	WAM
108	22/dez	Ministry of Community Development Organizes First Virtual Wellbeing Forum for Best Government Practices - Participated by (10) Government Entities	MoCD
109	23/dez	Significant attention given to logistical efforts to organise land, maritime, railway transportation, says Energy official	WAM
110	28/dez	New smart initiative launched for cyber safety in UAE schools	Kaleej Times

The other interesting observation was that the former Minister of Happiness was appointed to lead the Ministry of State for Government Development and the Future (MFGDF). Although there is not yet a webpage for this Ministry, in our perspective it is obvious that the UAE once again is innovating in terms of government structure design as well as in ministries designation and mission.

According to reports and to news headline nr. 71 of Table III, “government development is given a great attention and tops the government’s list” and by creating this new Ministry “UAE becomes a regional and international model in government development” [26]. As declared by HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum “the UAE has become a regional and international model in government development. It is ranked among the world’s top 10 most trusted

government, and is also among top 10 nations in smart services index and preparedness for the future” [26].

Back in August, the Minister submitted her preliminary plans to the President and Vice-President. According to the Vice-President he also reviewed a “future mechanism to be applied, that would simplify procedures and ease public access to best government services” [26]. It also aims to “add more value services to customers, and to deliver it by using all of the ministry’s resources” [26].

The Minister’s plan “priority is to increase customer satisfaction rates, streamline government structures, simplify procedures and ease everyone’s access to the best services. Government is an authority to serve people, and its success benchmark is its ability to meet people’s demands” [26].



Fig. 2 Organisational Chart [27]

Another essential observation for this study is the importance given this Ministry. Again, according to the Vice-President “the dossier of government development and preparation for the future is given a great attention and tops the government’s list of priorities for the next phase” [26].

#### V. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

While a great part of the world is fighting the pandemic, UAE seems to have the situation under control and will have the financial resources to rapidly vaccinate the eligible citizens and residents. Therefore, the Federation is in a unique position to plan ahead. Nevertheless, the most interesting fact is that Federation’s leaders started planning for the post COVID-19 just amidst the first wave of the pandemic and months before the vaccines were approved.

With the new government structure UAE’s government intends to reinforce their core strategies while implementing a best-in-class eGovernment model, that they believe can set the target for other governments to follow.

The government’s decision to restructure in order to achieve a higher level of digital efficiency demonstrates courage and ambition due to the extension of the change.

The new UAE’s strategy is aligned with the most recent trends in the digitalisation era such as digital sustainability where the contribution of digitalisation (or I4.0 – Fourth Industrial Revolution) to the “global sustainability goals” [13]. For the government, “continuous changes will be the headline of the new phase until we achieve the best governance model for the new era; and until we achieve a government that fulfils the ambitions of the Emirati people” [25]. So, it is legitimate

to conclude that the Government of the United Arab Emirates has started to build the next eGovernment era.

In terms of government communication, it is possible to infer that the government intensively uses media and social media to communicate its policies, decisions and initiatives.

One of the most relevant aspects of this study, from the perspective of our longitudinal study, is the extinction of the Ministry of Happiness. To become the happiest nation on earth has been a mission and the message countlessly repeated, national and internationally. Thus, it will be important to follow the evolution of the subject within the new government structure.

The other relevant aspect is the creation of the Ministry for Government Development and Future. Further to this Ministry’s mission is the goal that the “UAE becomes a regional and international model in government development” [25].

Finally, we could observe that the government defined a dual governance approach: 1. an ambitious digital transformation, programme within public administration to enhance the digital sustainability process and, 2. focus on government performance and long-term development.

For future studies we have a double challenge: first is to follow the new digital strategy of UAE’s government, its role for digital sustainability and to identify the main features of the new eGovernment era. Second is to keep track of the ‘Happiness Portfolio’ since for a long time the vision of local leaders has been to implement happiness as a way of life and to become the happiest nation on Earth. With the extinction of the Ministry of Happiness it is important to understand how the new cabinet will address and communicate happiness policies.

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