Chapter 15
E–Turkey:
Turkey's Way to the Information Society

İbrahim Arpacı*
Middle East Technical University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on e-Turkey. In other word, this chapter is about electronic government (e-government) activities, developments and improvements in Turkey. The success and challenges of e-government are analyzed in a national context. The purpose of the study is to analyze ongoing e-government projects held in Turkey and identify stakeholders, drivers, and challenges of the e-government projects. This study is a qualitative research. During data collection, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with top and middle level managers within public organizations. Moreover, the study involved information and data from the literature and the Turkish governmental organizations. Results of the study indicate that there are many successful e-government projects carried out by the interaction of stakeholders. In spite of some challenges, Turkey is advancing rapidly on the way to the information society.

INTRODUCTION

Turkey's Facts

Turkey's implementation of e-government is shaped by many factors including its size, centralized governance structure, e-government goals,

Gross Domestic Product (GDP), population, etc. Turkey is very large country with a land area twice size of Germany and a population of 71.9 million in 2009. By 2015, Turkey's population will have increased to 82.6 million, overtaking Germany as the most populous country in Western Europe. Turkey has the highest birth rate in Western Europe at 20.1 births per 1,000 inhabitants and as a result the youngest population with a median

age of 27.1 years in 2006 (Euromonitor, 2010). All these factors influence the development of e-government in Turkey both negatively and positively. Table 1 illustrates some statistics about Turkey belonging to 2010.

E-Government Development Process in Turkey

E-government has developed in distinct phases in Turkey. During 70s and 80s, the focus was mainly on automating back-office functions such as processing of the census and taxes. During 90s, there was a drive to define the Information Society and the knowledge-base economy. In 2000-2002, main implementation phase began in e-government. Today, almost all public services are offered over the e-government gateway such as collection of taxes, social security payments, and passport services. In addition, many successful e-government projects are implemented such as e-justice, e-health, and e-procurement.

Successes of e-government efforts are closely related with the e-readiness of a country. Turkey is a candidate country for being regional e-readiness leader in the Middle East having 43rd e-readiness rank in the world (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2010). Connectivity and technology infrastructure,

Table 1. Turkey's facts

Population (Millions)	71,5
Population Growth (Annual %)	1,312
Life Expectancy at Birth (Years)	72,2
GDP (US$ Billions)	729,051
Inflation, Consumer Prices (Annual %)	8,59
Unemployment (% of Total Labor Force)	11,3
Number of Internet Users (% of Population)	41,6
Number of Internet Subscribers (% of Population)	10,7
Household Possession of Personal Computers (% of Population)	43,2
Mobile Telephone Subscriptions (% of Population)	90,5

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (2010)

business environment, consumer and business adoption, legal and policy environment are main criteria in this ranking. Taking into context these criteria and other factors, it can be said that young and dynamic population demographics, legal and policy environment that is transforming as per European Union (EU) legislations and developed stable business environment are strength sides of Turkey. However, low e-literacy level, insufficient and expensive connectivity and technology infrastructure are weaknesses of Turkey.

Turkey's national e-government vision is outlined in its most recent Information Society Strategy (2006-2010). According to this strategy, Turkey's ongoing transformation into an information society is to be pursued around seven fundamental strategic priorities: social transformation, ICT adoption by businesses, citizen-focused service transformation, modernization in public administration, a globally competitive it sector, competitive, widespread and affordable telecommunications infrastructure and services, improvement of research & development and innovation.

During the implementation process of the strategy, the initial years (2006-2007) spent for preparation to transformation. In the second phase (2007-2008), essential and comprehensive e-government projects for the transformation into information society were implemented. In the final phase (2009-2010), major e-government projects were completed, and some expected benefits have been obtained. Total cost of the strategy implementation was 10.5 billion US$ whilst expected benefits of the strategy for future 30 years were annual average 0.6% employment growth, 1.4% productivity growth, and 2% gross national product (GNP) growth.

Major E-Government Projects in Turkey

Today, several e-government projects that are undertaken by the ministries in order to provide online services to citizens, businesses and gov-

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