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## Advantages and Challenges of E-Government in Turkey

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**Abstract** –Turkey is considered as one of important Islamic country that tried to apply e-government. Turkey has made a considerable progress in a very short time, where during one year (from 2006 to 2007) it moved from rank 27th to rank 9th among 198 countries worldwide, challenging its political and economical situation. In this paper, I will explain Turkish experience in E-government and its successful effort, showing the advantages, and the challenges it faces to convert to an e-government.

**Keywords:** e-government, Challenges, advantages.

### I. Introduction

The increasing of people demands lately, and the development of technology and communication revolution have forced modern government to think about new methods to provide its service to the citizens, the term of E-government has been used in the beginning of the twenty first century or we can say in the beginning of 2000, governments started thinking about more and more functionalism in their duties towards the public. So, the use of technology in governmental activities has adopted to answer the increased demands of people. The waves of e-government are rising through public organizations and public administration across the world. More and more governments are using information and communication technology especially Internet and web-based network, to provide services between government agencies and citizens, businesses, employees and other nongovernmental agencies.

The new challenges have made the e-government as efficient tool towards development and government ability to reach its citizens needs. In many countries, there are lack of transparency, accountability and the good governance, especially in poor countries, when the corruption and the abuse of public resource are easily predicted, e-government consider as a real solution to prevent

these problems, and if it implements in professional ways, it will achieve several advantages for public. The e-government started with building management information system for planning and monitoring.

In this paper, we are going to explain Turkish experience in E-government, advantages, challenges, and its successful effort to reduce the problems in various sectors.

### II. What is an E- government?

The term of e-government has been defined in different ways according to the experts' in public administration affairs. It mainly focuses on the use of technologies in the governmental sectors. For more understanding about e-government, I should provide different definition to reach comprehensive image of e-government.

(Zhiyuan Fang, 2002) defines E-government as a way for governments to use the most innovative information and communication technologies, particularly web-based Internet applications, to provide citizens and businesses with more convenient access to government information and services, to improve the quality of the services and to provide greater opportunities to participate in democratic institutions and processes. E-government presents a tremendous impetus to

move forward in the 21st century with higher quality, cost-effective, government services and a better relationship between citizens and government).

Fang has focus on use of internet, and how it will change the way of communication between government and other sectors such as business, organization and non-organization.

(Bhatnagar, 2005) used another definition in his book on e-government, he mentioned that e-government is the process of reforms in the way government work, shares information and deliver services to external and internal client, especially e-government, harnesses information technologies to transform relations with citizens, business and other arm of government.

This definition of e-government has focus on several features, some on the impact other on the way of e-government functioning, but there is no final agreement on specific definition of e-government.

(Scholl, 2003) has put another definition of e-government: Electronic Government is any process that the citizenry, in pursuit of its governance, conducts over a computer-mediated network. Hans has focus on the underline technology of computer in governmental affairs. So, it is more logistic than theoretical definition of e-government.

We have many types of e-government, to understand the e-government; we should concentrate on both definitions and types of that government.

According to (Apak, 2005) There are three types of e-government:

- Government to citizens: provide the momentum to put public service online.
- Government to business: Model drives e-transaction initiatives such as e-procurement and the development of electronic marketplace for government purchases, and carry put government procurement for exchange of information and commodities.
- Government to Government: Provide the cooperation and communication of government department online there will be a mega database of government, which has a high impact on efficiency

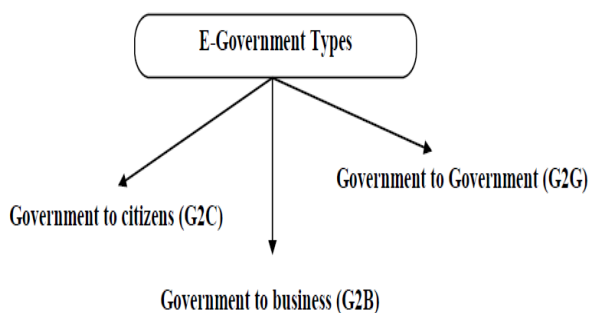
### III. Applying of E-government in Turkey

As a matter of fact, each country has applied several measures to improve the governmental activities in term of providing service. Turkey is considered as one of important state that tired to apply e-government in order to reduce its problem, especially corruption and lack of transparency, and because of its ambitions to become part of European Union, Turkey has made good efforts towards development in public affairs sector.

"The emphasis on information society policies in Turkey started in the 1990s to create a knowledge-based economy that would be based on higher-value-added production. First initiatives of e-government, such as the Internet tax project of the Ministry of Finance and the central population management system date back to 1998. However, economic and political instability prevented the governments from developing long-term projects. Between the interval from 1997 - 2002, there were three governments in the country. Two of them were coalition governments, while one was a minority government which could stay in power only for a few months. In the meantime, the country was going through a severe economic crisis in 2000-2001" (Çayhan, 2008).

Turkish project of E-Government started with several obstacles which prevent it to progress, and achieve the goals in functioning ways. It showed above that the history of turkey's project started in 1990 this period of time has common period of E-government in other parts of the world, but the most important things in e-government are political and economic stability, the unfortunate of Turkish project were both instability in term of internal, an external politically, and also the economic crisis which affected the ambitions of e-government project.

#### 2.1 Types of e-government:



(Diagram- 1) types of e-governments

After 2002, the new government has realized that reform needs many achievements in different sector, and because of the Urgent Action Plan which had offered by the new government, and attend to solve Turkish crisis in short time, and tried to show that they have capability to make difference.

The “e-Transformation Turkey Project” was developed in 2003 as the main component of the Urgent Action Plan, and required a thorough modernization of the public sector. In other words, economic and social necessities in Turkey led the government to make a serious effort to transform into an information society (Çayhan, 2008).

The Urgent Action Plan included many sectors; it has tried to find solutions for many crises in Turkey, so the need of information society was the most important aim towards e-government in Turkey.

In (OECD, 2004) it mentioned that the objects and principles of e-transformation Turkey project has explained in a Prime Minister’s Circular dated February 27, 2003 (Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry, 2003; translation provided in OECD, 2004, p.5):

- Policies, laws, and regulations regarding ICT will be re-examined and changed if necessary, with respect to the EU acquires; e-Europe + Action Plan, initiated for the candidate countries, will be adapted to Turkey.
- Mechanisms that facilitate participation of citizens to decision-making process in the public domain via usage of ICT will be developed.
- Transparency and accountability for public management will be enhanced.
- Through increased usage of ICT, good governance principles will be put in place in government services.
- Widespread usage of ICT will be enhanced.
- Public IT projects will be coordinated, monitored, evaluated and consolidated if necessary
- In order to avoid duplicating or overlapping investments.
- Private sector will be guided according to the above-mentioned principles.

Turkey provided many efforts in term of e-transformation in order to reach the EU style of public administration, so when the government of turkey started its project regarding to e-government, it put as a top priority towards information society, the European studies have shown the Turkish ambitions in that sector, and

statistic explained how turkey made progress in technology and information society.

The “Global e-Government 2007” report puts forward that Turkey ranks 9<sup>th</sup> out of 198 countries - compared to ranking 27<sup>th</sup> in 2006 (West, 2007). The first 10 in order are: South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, the US, Great Britain, Canada, Portugal, Australia, Turkey and Germany. When compared to the results of 2006, Turkey has made a considerable leap and left most of the EU countries behind, by moving from 27<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> rank. Undoubtedly (OECD, 2007), the e-Europe and i2010 initiatives of the EU have helped a lot to accelerate e-government implementations in Turkey, while in World e-Government Ranking report that Turkey takes the 5<sup>th</sup> place in e-government Promotional Activities which considered also a big step for Turkey during a short interval (The 2010 Waseda).

The progress of Turkish experience in E-government has given turkey a good level among other countries. The rank of using technology in Turkey has increased in many aspects, especially in E-government, and the information society.

The “2007 OECD E-Government Studies Turkey” summarizes the Turkish experience as follows (OECD, 2007): “Turkey is making strong progress in implementing e-government. Turkey has achieved quick wins in the e-government arena by prioritizing projects that make government more efficient, effective, transparent and accountable. Turkey has focused on:

- Bringing online high-volume/high-value transactions – such as e-procurement, making social security and health payments, and collecting customs, tax and social security payments - instead of trying to create as many e-services as possible.
- Establishing e-government infrastructure, such as building ICT networks for tax offices, Ministry of Finance accounting offices, the national judiciary system, and the national police system.

Through these ambitions turkey finally could improve its governmental agencies and it try to improve more through developing its capacity and ability in that fields.

#### iv. Advantages of E-government in Turkey

E-government has adopted by many countries because of its positive impact on governmental service, government has become more efficiency through using technology and information society. The use of E-government usually achieve transparency, efficiency and make government more confident to provide its service,

and make citizens more comfortable with the methods which use by government.

Turkey has suffered from corruption and misusing of public source, it started its efforts to make an end for that corruption through using various measures; among those measure was E-government. There are many services provide to citizens through e-government in Turkey. The following services has mentioned in (*IDABC e-Government Factsheets*, 2006).

1. Income Tax Declaration.
2. Job Searches by labor offices.
3. Social Security Contributions.
4. Personal Documents.
5. Car Registration.
6. Application for Building Permission.
7. Declaration to the Police.
8. Public Libraries.
9. Certificates (birth, marriage) Request and Delivery.
10. Enrolment in Higher Education.
11. Announcement of moving (change of address).
12. Health-related services (e.g. appointments for hospitals).

Most important advantages are;

1. **Transparency:** The most important issue which provided by E-government is the transparency and the information which are provided by public. Turkey has increased the service through e-government in good level. The system of e-government has increased the level of transparency, and the citizens' rights to reach the information and governmental data; "recently there has been a change in this attitude. Law on the Right to Access to Information defines principles and procedures that citizens can use their right of access to information. This law is in affect beginning from 24/4/2004. With the new act, Information and documents about all administrative acts and actions with some exceptions like national security, state secrets, personal information, legal and administrative prosecutions will be disseminated to citizens upon request" (Canan, 2005).
2. **Efficiency:** Another advantage for e-government in turkey is the efficiency and the achievement of save money and time in governmental activities, this provide advantages in economic fields and other area such as the functioning in civil services.
3. **Improving communication:** The third advantage of e-government is the improvement of communications between

government and citizens, government and business. There is a successful example with ministry of finance in Turkey which helped business to get access to governmental decision regarding to tax and other financial issues. Gurcuoglu says: "Ministry of Finance – Revenue Administration has led the way in the transformation process to e-government. One example of this is its implementation of a system to allow businesses to file their tax returns, check balances and access regulations via the Internet. Powered by multiple Sybase Adaptive Server Enterprise (ASE) databases and supported by a Sybase IQ-powered tax compliance data warehouse, the system has been very successful. To ensure its continuous availability as well as the safety and integrity of the terabytes of data it maintains, the Ministry of Finance developed and deployed business continuity and disaster recovery systems powered by Sybase Mirror Activator and Sybase Adaptive Server Enterprise".

4. Moving away from a heavily paper based system to an electronic system would reduces the need for man power. Thus, this would allow the process to be handled by lesser employees and therefore to reduce operations cost.
5. Improvement of economy through providing data and information which help to open the market regarding to business, and help citizen to reach the information about market.

Nowadays Turkey has increased its use of e-government. "In Turkey, many of the government agencies have currently carried out their services on the Internet. Especially, due to improved relationships with the European Union, e-government concept has been adopted by government agencies in more systematic and specified standards. There are wide variety of online operations including payments (bill, tax, etc.), bank transactions, customer services, job and school applications, insurance services, and library services. While there were only about 30 municipalities had a web site up until 1999, currently most of them have web sites. According to Aktepe et al. (2002), 109 out of 158 main government agencies have active web sites in which 4 of them provide only information, 24 of them provide electronic documents, and 81 of them provide intercommunication".

## v. Challenges of E-government in Turkey

Each program has its own challenges, sometimes government applies many programs, and evaluate the feedback of each to predict the result and the negative and positive impact. Many scholars believe that e-government has its challenges and disadvantages in term of the person contact with person, because internet become the main factors in distributing goods and services, so the system of e-government lose the person to person reactions. This is important for a lot of people.

The real challenges to E-government system in Turkey:

1. Security problems: The main aim of e-government in Turkey was the computerized citizens' services, and provide databases online, but, people need to use their identity card in term to get access to the provided services online, in many case it caused a security problem when somebody misuse that services to reach some interests, such as: using other people information to achieve benefits out of that.

There are some security problems and privacy violence that occur from the automation systems in Turkey. Some e-Governmental systems are not prepared securely. A person can obtain personal information of a person without his/her permission with using Internet. Therefore, new technological protection privacy tools such as Biometric media should be integrated into e-Governmental automation systems (Cihan and Asaf, 2009).

2. Lack of legal roles. There were other disadvantages with Turkish e-government system showed in lack of legal system to organize the cyber world, and to control the abuse of internet information which provided by government. Cihan and Asaf say: "There are not enough laws and regulations that can administrate these. There is a new draft law called "e-Government and Knowledge Society" that was submitted to the public aspects on the Internet in August 2009".
3. Digital divide: Another challenge which face the e-government in turkey is the digital divide between different classes in Turkish society, some people may use the new technology in prefect ways without any obstacles, especially in rich cities. But another class of people could not use the new technology of e-government, because they do not have experience with basic technology, so the e-government needs

people who had basic experience in using computers and communications. "Digital divide, between these aspects is created. Economic and social differentiation between the communities or nations, which are outside or back of the information age, and those, which benefit from informatics revolution completely and started information economy, is defined as digital divide" (Sankur, 2002).

4. Economic challenge: The use of technology in current world needs the economic stability for individuals which help them to be in contact with huge change in communications. The gap between individuals in turkey in high level, the big cities have more resources and economic opportunities to provide technological facilitates for their population and the people in that cities have daily access to internet and e-government agencies to run their cases. "There are regional income differences and irregular revenue distribution in Turkey. While annual average income is under \$1,000 in some cities, it is higher than \$10,000 in other cities (Anonymous, 2005a). As a result, information and communication technologies cannot be distributed equally nationwide" (Şişman , Sesli and Alkış, 2009).
5. The gap between policy and practices: In many countries there is a gap between policy and practices, this happen especially with new program and policy which is implement for the first time. In turkey as other countries, it has the same challenge. "In many areas there is a gap between policy and practice, which is a natural reflection of the current phase of the many European countries which have only recently put their policies in place. Thus, the next phase must focus on implementing the policies and strategies already there, as well as upgrading these in light of on-going developments. For example, the roll-out of Inclusive e-government solutions is still in its very early stages in most countries, and in the Efficiency and Effectiveness objective many countries still do not have e-Government measurement frameworks in place". (Action Plane, 2009. p.9)

## VI. Conclusion

Turkey has successfully provide its governmental activities through using e-government program, it developed its capacity in term of using new technological communication, e-government leads to more efficient, transparent and service-oriented public administrations, and turkey has achieved a quiet sufficient level of transparency and efficiency, at the same time it had its own challenges to its program, turkey has ambitions to become a member of EU, and it needs to improve both domestic services and increasing the level of transparency to reach a good level of good governance, and to prove that turkey like other EU member could achieve its responsibilities regarding to EU roles and obligations.

There is a reform movement going on in Turkey, and it has multi-dimensions, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government has put in their consideration the improvement of government activities to provide good service for Turkish citizens. Turkey government is trying to become a regional power, and it would not happen without solving domestics' problem such as corruption and another crisis. So, e-government is one of the important systems which will help turkey to reach its goals internally and externally.

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