IMPLEMENTING E-GOVERNMENT IN TURKEY: A COMPARISON OF ONLINE PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN TURKEY AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Behire Esra Çayhan
Department of International Relations
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences
Akdeniz University,
Antalya, Turkey
becayhan@akdeniz.edu.tr

ABSTRACT
The European Union’s Lisbon strategy aspires “to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” by 2010. Among the efforts to reach this aim, e-government applications across the member states of the Union have proved to be quite effective in providing electronic access to basic public services in a secure and efficient environment. Turkey’s endeavours to transform itself into an information society in general, and to implement e-government in the country in particular, have been closely related to the European experience. In fact, the recent e-government benchmark report of the Union has included Turkey. In this paper, we assess e-government implementation in Turkey by comparing online public service delivery in Turkey and the European Union. The comparison is based on the information available in the 2007 report on electronic public services in the European Union and Turkey.

Keywords: e-government; European Union; Turkey; online public service delivery

1. INTRODUCTION
To ensure that the digital economy brings benefits to all European citizens, at Lisbon in March 2000, the European Council set the European Union (EU) a new strategic goal to be reached by 2010: “to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (Presidency Conclusions, 2000). Two subsequent Action Plans were put into practice in order to achieve this goal, as part of what was called the “e-Europe” initiative: e-Europe 2002 Action Plan (COM, 2000), approved by the European Council at the Feira summit in June 2000, and, e-Europe 2005 Action Plan, endorsed by the European Council in Seville in June 2002 (COM, 2002).

The e-Europe 2002 Action Plan aimed to reach the targets set by the Lisbon European Council by providing a cheaper, faster, secure Internet; investing in people and skills, and; stimulating the use of the Internet, including electronic access to public services. The e-Europe 2005 Action Plan was based on two groups of actions that reinforce each other: broadband infrastructure and security matters, and; effective access, usage and availability of the Internet. Accordingly, services, applications and content, covering both online public

1 Details of these actions were as follows:
1. A cheaper, faster, secure Internet: a) Cheaper and faster Internet access; b) Faster Internet for researchers and students; c) Secure networks and smart cards.
2. Investing in people and skills: a) European youth into the digital age; b) Working in the knowledge-based economy; c) Participation for all in the knowledge-based economy.
3. Stimulating the use of the Internet: a) Accelerating e-commerce; b) Government online: electronic access to public services; c) Health online; d) European digital content for global networks; e) Intelligent transport systems (COM, 2000).
services and e-business were to be stimulated. Major priorities were, enhancement of e-government, e-learning, e-health and e-business.

In June 2005, the i2010 “A European Information Society for growth and employment” (COM, 2005) was launched by the European Commission to build on the e-Europe initiative that would come to an end in 2005. As a key element of the renewed Lisbon strategy, the i2010 provides the strategic framework of policy guidelines to boost growth and offer more and better-quality jobs: creating a Single European Information Space; strengthening innovation and investment in information and communication technologies (ICT) research, and; achieving an inclusive European information and media society.

The i2010 e-Government Action Plan (COM, 2006) is an integral part of the i2010 strategy for growth and jobs in the European Union. It has been built on the previous e-Europe 2002 and e-Europe 2005 Action Plans, both of which paid considerable attention to e-government applications that were supposed to provide citizens and businesses electronic access to basic public services in a secure, effective and efficient environment. The e-Government Action Plan has been designed to modernize public services and make them more efficient, so as to provide better quality and more secure services to the general population. The concept of effective and user-centric service delivery is a keystone in transforming into an inclusive European information society.

For the last 7 years the EU Member States have achieved considerable progress in terms of providing high quality online public services to their citizens and businesses. These developments are also important for the countries seeking membership to the Union. At the Goteborg European Council in June 2001, the then 13 Candidate Countries (Turkey, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Romania) launched the e-Europe+ Action Plan (COM, 2001), which mirrored that of e-Europe. Later on all of these Candidate Countries entered the EU in 2004 and 2007, except for Turkey whose accession negotiations are likely to take a long time.

Participation in the e-Europe+ initiative led to the integration of several endeavours to transform Turkey into an information society. Hence the “e-Transformation Turkey Project” (Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry, 2003) was launched in 2003, which aimed to revise the legal framework and policies of ICT in Turkey according to EU standards, with a view to provide faster and better quality public services to Turkish citizens and businesses. Technical details were explained in two action plans: “e-Transformation Turkey Project Short Term Action Plan 2003-2004” (State Planning Organization, 2003) and “e-Transformation Turkey Project 2005 Action Plan” (State Planning Organization, 2005).

In parallel to the i2010 initiative of the EU, Turkey’s information society strategy for the 2006-2010 period, and related activities and projects that are to be implemented have been put forward in “Information Society Strategy 2006-2010” (State Planning Organization, 2006a), and its annexed “Action Plan 2006-2010” (State Planning Organization, 2006b). Modernization in public administration organization and functioning; effective, fast, easy-to-access and efficient public service delivery to citizens and businesses; reducing the digital divide; increasing employment and productivity; ensuring effective and widespread use of ICT by businesses to create a higher value added, are among the targets of Turkey’s Information Society Strategy. Effective implementation of this strategy is expected to facilitate Turkey’s accession to the EU, and to provide advantages for Turkey in terms of reaching the goals set forth in the Lisbon Strategy. This paper will assess the position of Turkey in terms of supplying online public services. The comparison between Turkey and the

ii Candidate countries as of 2008 are: Turkey, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of (FYR) Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia.
EU will be based on the information available in the 2007 reports on benchmarking the supply of electronic public services.

2. E-GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTATION IN TURKEY

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 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.

After the 2002 elections a newly emerging political party was able to win the majority of seats in the Parliament. Thus, a single-party government which was expected to bring economic and political stability to Turkey came to power with a promise to undertake reforms. An Urgent Action Plan was put into effect to improve economic and social welfare in the country. Long-standing problems of the agricultural, industrial and financial sectors, and social security matters had to be solved. 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.

The objectives and principles of the “e-transformation Turkey Project” were 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 acquis; 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.

These principles show that Turkey joined the e-Europe+ initiative with a view to speed up efforts to transform into an information society. Goals and priorities of the EU were embraced by the government. Separate information society projects that had been carried out in a decentralized and uncoordinated way were gathered under the umbrella of the State Planning Organization to increase economic value added and social welfare. “Along with other coordination activities, e-Government lies at the core of these efforts. Bearing in mind that the recent public administration reform studies are at the top of the Government’s agenda, e-Government has been emphasized more than before in the last couple of years” (OECD, 2004, p.2).

In accordance with the needs of an information society, a redefinition of government’s organization and working practices had to be made, and a reform of decision-making
processes on both national and local levels were to be undertaken. The political will to modernize the public sector in Turkey was evaluated within the broader framework of future EU membership. The result was a strong intention to implement e-government in Turkey at EU standards with the expectation that, public sector reform, private sector competitiveness and quality of life of Turkish citizens would all be enhanced.

The delayed but now-rapid development of e-government in Turkey owes a lot to the EU impetus. According to “The 2007 e-readiness rankings” of the world’s largest economies, Turkey is 42nd among 69 countries - compared to the 45th place in 2006 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007)iii. The “Global e-Government 2007” report puts forward that Turkey ranks 9th out of 198 countries - compared to ranking 27th in 2006 (West, 2007)iv. 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 27th to 9th rank. Undoubtedly, the e-Europe and i2010 initiatives of the EU have helped a lot to accelerate e-government implementations in Turkey. The “2007 OECD E-Government Studies Turkey” summarizes the Turkish experience as follows (OECD, 2007)v:

“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.

iii “The Economist Intelligence Unit has published an annual e-readiness ranking of the world’s largest economies since 2000. The ranking model evaluates the technological, economic, political and social assets of 69 countries -including this year’s newest addition, Malta- and their cumulative impact on their respective information economies. E-readiness is the ‘state of play’ of a country’s information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and the ability of its consumers, businesses and governments to use ICT to their benefit” (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007, p.1).

iv “The data for ... analysis consist of an assessment of 1,687 national government websites for the 198 nations around the world... A range of sites within each country are analyzed to get a full sense of what is available in particular nations. Among the sites analyzed are those of executive offices (such as a president, prime minister, ruler, party leader, or royalty), legislative offices (such as Congress, Parliament, or People's Assemblies), judicial offices (such as major national courts), Cabinet offices, and major agencies serving crucial functions of government, such as health, human services, taxation, education, interior, economic development, administration, natural resources, foreign affairs, foreign investment, transportation, military, tourism, and business regulation. Websites for subnational units, obscure boards and commissions, local government, regional units, and municipal offices are not included in this study. Websites are evaluated for the presence of various features dealing with information availability, service delivery, and public access. The analysis was undertaken during June and July, 2007 at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island” (West, 2007, p.3).

v “This report is one in a series of country reviews undertaken by the OECD to analyse the successes and challenges of e-government in a national context, and to make proposals for action that can help countries improve their e-government efforts. By placing e-government in the context of national public management reform and good governance initiatives, these reviews help countries identify how e-government can best support overall government objectives and performance. With financing from Turkey’s government, the OECD E-Government Project has conducted this country study of e-government to assess how Turkey’s e-government strategies and solutions contribute, and could contribute in the future, to good governance objectives in the information age. The report was completed in September 2006. It draws on a survey of Turkish central and local government organisations administered in July 2005, extensive review of information about public management and e-government in Turkey, and a series of interviews with Turkish officials and other commentators held in October and November 2005” (OECD, 2007, p.9).
The establishment of citizen and legal person identification (ID) projects has also been an important enabler for e-government development, as these provide every person and firm with a unique ID number that can be used to share ID information with authorized public agencies”.

According to Information Society Strategy 2006-2010, Turkey’s process of transformation into an information society is to be pursued around the following 7 fundamental strategic priorities (State Planning Organization, 2006a, pp.19-20):

1. **Social Transformation:** *ICT Opportunity for all*
2. **ICT Adoption by Businesses:** *Competitive advantage to businesses through ICT*
3. **Citizen-focused Service Transformation:** *Delivery of public services at high standards*
4. **Modernization in Public Administration:** *Public administration reform supported by ICT*
5. **A Globally Competitive IT Sector:** *IT sector active as an international player*
6. **Competitive, Widespread and Affordable Telecommunications Infrastructure and Services:** *The opportunity of high quality and affordable broadband access to all segments of the society*
7. **Improvement of R&D and Innovation:** *New products and services in conformity with the demands of global markets.*

Items 3 and 4 in the above mentioned priorities concern the transformation of the public sector within an effective e-government model to deliver online public services at high standards. “With the help of ICT, public services will be moved to electronic channels, prioritizing services of high usage and high return. Business processes will be reengineered in line with user needs, and hence effectiveness in service delivery will be ensured... An effective e-government model having organizational and process structures in conformity with the country’s conditions and prioritizing efficiency and citizen satisfaction will be developed via ICT” (State Planning Organization, 2006a, p.20).

This transformation of the Turkish public sector brings it in line with the EU experience of bringing “effective and user centric service delivery in an inclusive and competitive European society” (Capgemini, 2007a, p.8). In the following section, a comparison of Turkey and the EU in terms of availability of online public services will be made.

### 3. A Comparison of Turkey and the EU Based on Online Public Service Delivery

In order to analyze progress in the field of e-government, annual EU benchmark reports that tackle online availability of public services have been published since 2001. Initially 15 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom), Norway and Iceland were covered. Switzerland joined from the second measurement. Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Romania were included, following their accession to the EU. Finally, in 2007, Turkey has been surveyed for the first time. For the sake of simplicity, all these 31 countries are referred to as “EU 27+” in the 7th report.

These benchmark reports enable significant comparisons of performance between and within participating countries, by assessing the existence and sophistication level of 20 selected e-services (Presidency Conclusions, 2001). 12 of these services are for citizens: income taxes; job search services; social security benefits; personal documents; car...
registration; application for building permission; declaration to the police; public libraries; birth and marriage certificates; enrolment in higher education; announcement of moving; health related services. The remaining 8 services are for businesses: social contribution for employees; corporate tax; VAT; registration of a new company; submission of data to statistical offices; customs declaration; environment-related permits; public procurement.

Apart from being clustered by target groups as citizens and businesses, e-services have also been clustered by activity as follows:

**Income generating**: income taxes, social contribution for employees, VAT, corporate tax, customs declaration.

**Registration**: car registration, birth and marriage certificates, announcement of moving, registration of a new company, submission of data to statistical offices.

**Returns**: job search services, social security benefits, declaration to the police, public libraries, health related services, public procurement.

**Permits and licenses**: personal documents, application for building permission, enrolment in higher education, environment-related permits.

Each service is assigned a score that shows the sophistication level. In 2007, a fifth-stage was added to the previously four-staged model.

**Table 1**: Sophistication model for e-services (Sources: Capgemini 2007a, p.11; Capgemini 2006, p.84).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 0 (No web site)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 (Information: no possibility of downloading forms)</td>
<td>0-19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 (One-way interaction: downloadable forms)</td>
<td>20%-39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3 (Two-way interaction: electronic forms)</td>
<td>40%-59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4 (Transaction: full electronic case handling, no other formal procedure for applicant via “paperwork”.)</td>
<td>60%-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5 (Personalization: pro-active, automated; introduced in 2007)</td>
<td>80%-100%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The 7th annual measurement of the progress of online public service delivery in 27+ countries across Europe, which was conducted in 2007, indicates 76% sophistication level. Among 31 countries, Turkey ranks 20th, with a sophistication level of 69%. Full online availability in Europe is 58%. Turkey’s level of full online availability is 55%, which is 18th in rank. Therefore Turkey does not rank far from the European average (Capgemini, 2007a, pp. 14-16). Since this is the first measurement for Turkey, it is not possible to compare these initial scores with previous performance and comment on the level of progress within the country\(^\text{vii}\).

\(^{\text{vii}}\) Sophistication and full online availability are pure supply side indicators. In 2007, as a complement to them, a new indicator, called “user centricity” was piloted. Web survey methods for such a complex topic as user centricity have their limitations. This pilot with experimental character of indicators is to be further elaborated in order to have an enhanced measuring framework in the future (Capgemini, 2007a, pp. 23-28). This paper takes
Table 2: EU 27+ and Turkey (Sources: General level: Capgemini 2007a, pp. 14-16; Target groups: Capgemini 2007a, pp. 19-22; 16-19; Clusters: Capgemini 2007b, compiled from pp.20-36; Individual services: Capgemini 2007b, pp. 24-36.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General level</th>
<th>EU 27+</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophistication (general)</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full online availability (general)</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Target groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizens (sophistication)</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses (sophistication)</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens (full online availability)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses (full online availability)</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clusters</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income-generating</td>
<td>94.2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returns</td>
<td>74.8%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permits and licenses</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
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<tr>
<th>Individual services</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Income taxes</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Job search services</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Social security benefits</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Personal documents</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Car registration</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Application for building permission</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Declaration to the police</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Public libraries</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Birth and marriage certificates</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Enrollment in higher education</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Announcement of moving</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Health related services</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Social contribution for employees</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Corporate tax</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. VAT</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Registration of a new company</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Submission of data to statistical offices</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Customs declaration</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Environment-related permits</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Public procurement</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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into consideration only the supply side indicators. Turkey ranks 23rd in user centricity country ranking. For further information, see, Capgemini, 2007b, pp. 37-41.
When target groups are considered, sophistication levels of services towards businesses and citizens indicate a situation in favour of businesses. For EU 27+ sophistication level of services for citizens is 70%, compared to 84% for businesses (Capgemini, 2007a, pp. 19-22). Likewise, full online availability for citizens is at 50%, compared to 70% for businesses. Regarding services towards businesses, Turkey has surpassed the EU+ average by scoring 86% for sophistication and 75% for full online availability. However, with a sophistication of 57% and full online availability of 42% for services towards citizens, Turkey considerably lags behind the EU averages, which are already quite low compared to services for businesses (Capgemini 2007b, pp.16-19). In most EU Member States, there is a significant need to improve services for citizens. “The sheer number and heterogeneity of citizen services presents countries with serious challenges to deliver high levels of performance” (Capgemini 2007a, p. 20).

Among the four service clusters, income-generating services score highest in general, due to the fact that governments pay close attention to develop the services in this cluster. The EU average is 94.2%, while Turkey has scored 100%. For returns and registration clusters, the EU average sits above 70%. However, permits and licenses cluster lags behind, with 55.5%. Returns cluster for Turkey is 76.5%, which is close to the EU average. Notwithstanding, 45.4% for registration and 47.2% for permits and licenses put Turkey on a considerably low level, with respect to the EU averages (Capgemini, 2007b, pp. 20-23).

These findings indicate that, similar to most EU Member States, the Turkish government has prioritized services that deliver funds to the government and has favoured businesses while neglecting citizens. Although the general trend in Turkey is not different from the EU, there is a need to explain the basic problems about ICT usage in Turkey.

According to the results of ICT Usage Survey on Households and Individuals, carried out in April 2008 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2008), 24.5% of households have Internet access in Turkey and 35.8% of individuals of 16-74 age group use the Internet. In the EU, as of 2007, 56% of households have Internet connection (Eurostat, 2007) and 51% of individuals of 16-74 age group use the Internet, while 93% of all enterprises are connected to the Internet. Regarding the enterprises, there is no recent data in Turkey. 2005 figures indicate that 80.4% of all enterprises in Turkey have Internet access (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2005). This must have increased almost up to the EU level in the last few years.

What is striking about Turkey is the low household Internet connection level and relatively small number of individuals using the Internet. It seems the government has chosen to give priority to develop online services for businesses instead of those for citizens, with the assumption that Turkish citizens, in general, are not likely to make use of electronic public services. When individual services are taken into consideration, with the exception of “registration of a new company” and “environment-related permits”, all services towards businesses have scored 100%. With respect to services towards citizens, when individual service scores are tackled separately, “car registration”, “birth and marriage certificates”, “announcement of moving” and, “application for building permission” lag behind the EU averages. All these services are meant to make life easier for Turkish citizens. In practice, ironically, the service that mostly benefits the government, i.e. “income taxes”, has scored 100%, while “health related services” have scored only 11%. As it has been underlined above, most governments favour income generating services to increase their revenues. The Turkish government has acted accordingly, and within both target groups, services that bring funds to the government have witnessed a fast growth.
4. CONCLUSION

The 2007 benchmark survey which examined over 14,000 web sites offering 20 basic public services in the 27 EU Member States plus Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Turkey has shown that Turkey has a place close to the EU average in terms of online sophistication and full availability online. As a candidate for accession to the EU, Turkey is committed towards achieving greater policy coherence with the EU. In terms of providing online public services, Turkey has staged considerable progress along European standards. The Turkish government has been willing to deliver sophisticated online services. But, like in many other European countries, priority has been given to developing income generating services, and; as for target groups, businesses have been favoured rather than citizens.

Throughout Europe, there is a challenge to increase the trust of citizens in public services. The existing gap between the commercial and public online worlds should be closed. Similarly, besides enabling services which deliver funds to governments, services that efficiently fulfill the needs of citizens must be promoted. This is a key element on the road to “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world”.

E-government leads to more efficient, transparent and service-oriented public administrations. Indeed, “e-government is a driver of not only more sophisticated service channels for the most sophisticated technological users (a critically important group often spurring innovation and service improvement), but also a platform for expanded participative capacities for the citizenry as a whole, improvements in the relevance and transparency of public policy decisions and a vehicle for building trust in government” (United Nations, 2008, p.167).

Governments are able to promote Internet use in general and online public services in particular on both supply and demand sides. In Turkey, regarding the supply side, the government has made a significant effort to reach the EU standards. The progress achieved in providing the 20 selected e-services has no doubt affected the demand side by encouraging businesses and citizens to become Internet users. But in terms of e-government, there is more to be done on the demand side, if Turkey wants to turn into an information society without any more delay.

Since household Internet use is still limited in Turkey, schools, libraries and other public buildings should be funded to provide computer and Internet access for citizens. Another way to increase Internet access is to create awareness among the Turkish people that computers are not absolutely necessary to make use of Internet. Turks are very fond of using cellular phones and may be encouraged to make use of online public services given the comfort of these small devices. But, it should be noted that Turkey has a population of 70 million, and 30% of Turkish people live in rural areas with low income and no access to ICT. There are also the elderly who are not at all inclined to use electronic means of interaction with public authorities. These remind us that the government should develop policies to deal with the issue of the digital divide.

As long as large segments of the society do not have access to ICT, a multi-channel service delivery should be continued. At the same time, ICT skills of citizens have to be developed. Besides ensuring that students become computer literate at the level of primary education, adult training must be provided through well-organized programs all around the country. In other words, if e-government is to be implemented successfully in Turkey, it is not sufficient to supply high quality online public services. The government has to do its best to encourage the Turkish people to make use of such facilities as well, by providing the necessary technical means and increasing digital literacy throughout the country among all age groups.
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Europe 2002 Action Plan: Approval of the list of supplementary benchmarking indicators”.


