Chapter XXII
An Overview of Local E–Government Adoption and Implementation in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents an analysis of local e-government adoption and implementation in Turkey. To this end, academic articles, various laws, and parts of the newly-adopted Turkish Information Society Strategic Plan that pertains to local e-government, reports of local e-government implementation are reviewed. The chapter also examines the integration of local e-government applications in a portal and the efforts to link this portal to a Web-based performance management system for local governments. Overall, it can be said that there is a lack of consistency with regard to local e-government mandates and implementation. The chapter concludes with the evaluation of the current state of and future research areas about local e-government in Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

Local electronic government can be defined as the provision of local government information and services via information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Ho, 2002: 434; UN and ASPA, 2002: 1). Recent studies have shown that size, professional government (i.e. council-manager form of governments), organizational/budget resources, socio-economic profile, favorable loca-tion (being in the developed regions of a country) of local government units, senior management support/e-government champions, and having separate IT departments are positively related to local e-government sophistication (Reddick, 2004: 81-82; Streib & Willoughby, 2005: 83-90; West, 2005:2; Wohlers, 2007: 18). The main priority areas for local e-government are defined in The Digital Local Agenda Manifesto (EISCO, 2007: 2) as to use ICTs for increasing participation

in local government affairs, to enhance digital literacy and overcome digital divide, to enable full access of citizens to affordable, open communication networks, to develop secure digital infrastructures and to provide ICT-based services in local governments.

This chapter presents the historical development, current status and future potential of local e-government in Turkey. The subject of local e-government is still an understudied subset of the general e-government studies in Turkey. A recent study by Sadioglu and Yildiz (2007) examined 4327 articles which were published by 14 major Turkish social science journals in a period of 15 years (1992[1]-2006) in search of articles about e-government. The search yielded 80 articles about the e-government topic. Out of these 80 articles, only 13 (16%) were written about the local level e-government.

The objectives of this chapter are to review the local literature, national and international scientific reports and legal developments extensively and to take stock of the developments in the local e-government area in Turkey. In doing so, the analysis in this chapter uses the e-government development stages framework developed in a United Nations and the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) joint report, published in 2002, as shown in Table 1. This typology is similar to the Layne and Lee's (2001) categorization of e-government development in four steps as cataloguing, transaction, integration within functional areas and horizontal integration stages. The typology in Table 1 is preferred to that of Layne and Lee since the Schelin typology below presents a richer model. It may be argued that:

Both the Layne and Lee (2001) and the ASPA-UN (2002) models, as well as the Schelin (2003) typology are oversimplifications. Stages of e-government development do not necessarily follow each other neatly in a chronological or linear order. Moreover, such models may not be applicable to e-government development in developing coun-

tries, as those countries have a chance to learn from the e-government successes and failures of developed countries. Thus, developing countries have a much faster learning curve; they can perform the requirements of all the stages almost simultaneously. (Yildiz, 2004: 14-15)

Still, a neat categorization of (local) e-government development provides a good starting point for analysis. Development of local e-government in Turkey reflects almost of all stages presented in Table 1, except stage 5, depending upon the size and resources of the local government unit in question, as presented below.

BACKGROUND

This section presents the background of local e-government practices in Turkey. To this end, first, the overall extent and the nature of ICT use in Turkey are presented. Then, specific ICT uses in Turkish local government are described. Finally, the legal developments that are related to local e-government are summarized.

At this point, some general background information on Turkey need to be provided: Turkey hosts a population of 70.5 million people (as of December 2007) on an area of 814.578 square kilometers. The country has a unitary government system, with three kinds of local governments, as explained below.

ICT Use in Turkey

Turkey is a developing country, with still relatively low levels of Internet and computer use penetration rates. A recent survey by the Turkey Statistics Agency (TUIK, 2007) shows that only 18.94% of the households have some kind of Internet connection at home. The percentage of individuals who have access to computers and the Internet are respectively 29.46% and 26.6%. Availability of various ICT equipments in Turkish households

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