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A COMPARISON OF E-GOVERNMENT PROGRESS IN TURKEY AND ALBANIA

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ABSTRACT

The end of 20th century and the beginning of 21st century have been the most exciting times. The rise of network technologies all over the world has affected the way how the people communicate and also the way how the companies and organizations do business. It is logical to think that also the governments should create possibilities for businesses and their citizens to use these new emerging technologies. The implementation of these technologies in the public sector is now a need for each government in the world. All the activities of public sector related to the usage of technology can be defined as e-government. In this paper, we assess e-government implementation progress by comparing online public service delivery in Turkey and Albania. The comparison is based on the information available in different resources published until the end of 2009.

Keywords: E-government, public sector, progress, Albania, Turkey

A COMPARISON OF E-GOVERNMENT PROGRESS IN TURKEY AND ALBANIA

Nowadays, e-government is discussed in most of the developing countries and there are many different definitions and understandings of e-government. (Song, 2004)

"Electronic government comprises the use of introducing Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) to deliver public services to citizens and business. It entails the transformation of public services to citizens using new organizational processes and new technologies. The aim of E-Government is to make government services more accessible, more "customer – focused", more relevant to citizens and more responsive to their needs (Gunter, 2006).

Shortly we can say that e-government is like a virtual government or imitation of traditional government that makes citizens comfortable and satisfied with easy accessing to all documentations and processes of state from anywhere that they can use ICT services.

The Government of Albania is in the midst of a transformation on a scale never seen before. Albania is committed to joining European Union (EU) and therefore has undertaken all the necessary reforms required to be in compliance with the European standards. The EU signed Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with Albania in June 2006, and its trade-related provisions took effect at the end of that year under an interim agreement which is ratified by all the 27 countries today. Albania sent out the official request to be member of EU in May 2009. NATO Allies signed accession protocols with Albania on 9 July 2008, and in April 2009, Albania became a full member of the Alliance.

The European development model is closely interrelated with the economic development of an information society. This transformation involves engaging the citizenry more fully while at the same time becoming more cost effective and efficient with the resources it currently has and consumes. The Government of Albania has identified ICT as an enabler for the social and economic development of the country. For over a decade, the Government of Albania has gradually been introducing ICTs and new technologies tools in the day-to-day work of Central Ministries and Government agencies. Such activities involved the active support of the donor community in the country.

The European Union for which Turkey is a candidate country expecting to become a full member put forward in its "Lisbon Strategy" in March 2000 the task to become the most competitive and dynamic information-based economy by 2010. Turkey became a party to the eEurope initiation when it was extended to eEurope+. Turkey thus started E-Turkey Enterprise project between 2001-2002, and the project was renamed as E-Transformation Turkey Project in 2003. The State Planning Organization of Turkey is directing the implementation of the project.

E-Transformation Turkey Project aims for the alignment ICT policies, adaptation of the EU acquis and the eEurope+, and developing information technology mechanisms through which citizens can participate in the decission making processes. To this end, it was decided to increase the use of ICTs, to effect coordination between government organisations and to prepare the grounds for private sector.

As a result of the work done in the context of E-Transformation Turkey plan, the number of web sites with gov.tr domain rose from 1647 in 2003 to 6775 in 2007. Similarly, the number

of other public web sites rose to 1138 in 2003 to 11.725 in 2007. The objective of the e-government strategy of Turkey is to finalize the infrastructure and operationalize the main E-government portal through which all public services could be accessed by 2010. (Tosun, 2009)

IMPLEMENTATION OF E-GOVERNMENT

Implementation of e-government services is one of the most important targets of many countries for the period of last 25 years which has parallelism with very fast developing in ICT and internet technologies. Although there are a lot of countries trying to establish all of the services of e-government, not all of them can be evaluated as successful, and high percentage of citizens in these countries doesn't have enough information about e-government and the benefits of e-government services.

"Since the advent of a word wide revolution in information and communication technologies many governments in the world have become aware of the potential of using the information and communication technologies particularly internet as a tool in enhancing their services and increasing their efficiency in terms of accessing information and transaction services. These electronic services often referred to as e-Government. However, not all e-Government initiative is success. More than 60 percent of all e-Government initiatives either fail or fall short of expected outcomes" (Gartner, 2007).

In his paper (Heeks, 2008) has analyzed more than 40 e-Government-for-development projects in developing transitional countries and estimates that 35 percent of these were total failures, while 50 percent partially failed, and only 15 percent were successes. These figures indicate that the failure rate is even higher in developing countries."

Before discussing about establishing e-government services and their implementation effectively, there are some important elements that should be enough and suitable in every country that is planning to have e-government facilities. Some of them are the usage of Information and communication technologies such as;

- main telephone lines
- mobile subscribers
- computer
- internet
- government websites
- network digitalization
- wireless

The population of the countries, the citizen's knowledge in ICT area, laws about ICT and government investments for information and communication technology are also very important to be successful in e-government progress.

In the next parts of this article we will see some statistical data of Albania and Turkey about the important elements that are mentioned above and a short comparison of establishing and implementing progress of e-government in these countries.

SOME STATISTICAL DATA OF ALBANIA AND TURKEY

In this part we present some statistical data about the development of ICT in Albania and Turkey, and the Legal Framework Progress in both countries.

Table 1: ICT Statistics

INDICATOR	ALBANIA	TURKEY
Population	3.6 million[1]	72 million[2]
Mobile Subscribers	*94 %*	89%
Broadband Subscribers	*2.6 %[3]*	7.8%
Computer Usage	37%	40.1%
Internet Usage	750,000 users, 20.6%[4]	38.1%
Number of Government Websites	178[5]	8500
Government ICT Investments per year	1.8 million $[6]	590 million $[7]

From this table we may say that Turkey is much more developed in the ICT area, as it has more investments from government in ICT. But from the other perspective, it is normal that Turkey has more investments as it is much more bigger than Albania. Also from the data we see that total number of Governmental websites in Turkey is very big comparing to Albania. Even from the internet users, Albania is very low comparing to Turkey, even though the difference in percentage of computer usage is quite small.

But from the other part we may say that over the past decade, Albania's economy has enjoyed real GDP growth, counting the EU as its main trading partner. Despite the global economic turmoil of 2008 Albania's economic growth was in line with initial forecasts of 6% while inflation remained within the 2-4% target band of the Bank of Albania. Albania was one of only two countries in Europe that recorded economic growth in the first quarter of 2009, growing by 0.4%.

Albania's Internet market offers much growth potential due to current low penetration levels. Internet access is available through a variety of means including dial-up, leased line, microwave radio, ADSL, Wi-Fi and fiber. Broadband take up is rising in response to increased availability and drastic tariff reductions implemented during late 2008 and early 2009. Public Internet access is also accessible through Internet cafes. Recognizing the potential of applying ICT to improve both social and economic development, Albania has taken steps to develop a knowledge-based society, principally by improving IT literacy.

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[1] http://www.internetworldstats.com/europa2.htm,
[2] http://www.internetworldstats.com/europa2.htm,
[3] http://www.budde.com.au/Research/Albania-Telecoms-Mobile-Broadband.html
[4] http://www.internetworldstats.com/europa2.htm
[5] http://www.domainworldwide.com
[6] National Agency of Information Society (NAIS)
[7] TurkStat , SPO , BTK , Turksat

Albania's mobile market has undergone rapid growth due to competition, initially with the entrance of Vodafone and later through the entrance of Eagle Mobile. The majority of mobile users utilize prepaid services, with its inherent affordability and flexibility popularizing mobile ownership. With the mobile voice market maturing, new subscriber additions will become increasingly harder to attain hence mobile network operators are slowly turning their attention to increasing average revenue per user levels. Initiatives include encouraging prepaid users to take up postpaid offers and encouraging take up of mobile data services, with GPRS, EDGE-based mobile data services available.[8]

Table 2: Internet Usage and Population Statistics through years in Albania[9]

YEAR	Users	Population	% Pop.
2000	2,500	3,083,300	*0.1 %*
2002	30,000	3,084,586	*1.0 %*
2006	75,000	3,087,159	*2.4 %*
2007	471,200	3,087,159	*15.3 %[10]*
2008	580,000	3,619,778	16.0 %
2009	750,000	3,639,453	20.6 %[11]

Table 3: Internet Usage and Population Statistics through years in Turkey[12]:

YEAR	Population	Int users	% Pop.
2000	67.803.927	1.785.000	3%
2002	69.875.000	6.050.000	9%
2007	70.586.256	16.007.000	22%
2008	71.517.100	17.916.000	25%
2009	72.561.312	27.575.000	38%

Table 4 shows the progress that both countries have in the Legal framework for E-Government. Turkey seems that has completed the Legal Framework, but Albania hasn't done so much in the legal framework on e-commerce and electronic documents, which are actually in process.

Table 4: Legal Framework Progress For E-Government (eSEE, 2009)

INDICATOR	ALBANIA	TURKEY
Legal Framework on e-signature	DONE	DONE
Legal framework on e-commerce	IN PROCESS	DONE
Law on electronic documents	IN PROCESS	DONE
Law on cybercrime	DONE	DONE
Law on telecoms	DONE	DONE
Law on personal data protection	DONE	DONE

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[8] http://www.budde.com.au/Research/Albania-Telecoms-Mobile-Broadband.html
[9] http://www.internetworldstats.com/euro/al.htm
[10] International Telecommunication Union Statistics
[11] Statistics from the Association for Consumer, Market and Sales Research (Gesellschaft für Konsum-, Markt- und Absatzforschung, or GfK)
[12] http://www.tuik.gov.tr

COMPARISON OF E-GOVERNMENT PROGRESS IN ALBANIA AND TURKEY

After giving some statistical data on ICT and Legal framework on both countries, now we may show the progress in specific areas of e-government (Public Services).

Table 5: Development of Areas of e-Government in Albania and Turkey[13]

Areas of E-Government	Albania	Turkey
Tax Payment System	In implementation Process	Completed
Enviroment and construction permits	In Planning	In Planning
Healthcare and pension	In Planning	In Planning
Business Registration	Completed	In Implementation Process
Company Income Registration	In Implementation Process	Completed
VAT	In Implementation Process	Completed
Customs declaration	Completed	Completed
Public Procurement	Completed	Completed
State Statistical System	No activity taken	In Implementation Process
Job Search	In Implementation Process	Completed
Social Benefits	No activity taken	In Implementation Process
Personal Documents (IDs)	In Implementation Process	In Implementation Process
Car Registration	Completed	In Implementation Process
Public Libraries	In Planning	In Implementation Process
Certificates	In Planning	In Planning
Admission to higher Education	No activity taken	In Implementation Process
Residence Registration	In Planning	Completed
Treasury and Programmatic budgeting	Completed	Completed
Support Systems for implementation of EU funds	In Planning	In Implementation Process
Integrated control of borders	Completed	Completed

In addition to the details in the table above, let's see some other area of e-government implementation in Albania and Turkey:

In Albania:

Public services and efficiency of their distribution have a major effect on economic and social development of a country. Unlike the situation presented in the strategy for Information Technology 2003, today all ministries have their web sites and databases where electronic presented legal acts and regulations, updates on ministry activities, strategic documents, reports different, etc. are published electronically. Work has been conducted GOVNET government network with the support of UNDP and European Commission. Thanks to this project, ministries and departments of the Government of Albania and two public service organizations (in total 18 institutions) are connected through a fiber optic network with high speed. Coming soon is expected to start proceedings for the second phase of this project aimed at reducing costs and

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[13] (eSEE, 2009)for Albania and (Cayhan, 2008) for Turkey

improving the network. In this way will be made possible functioning of many government applications.

One of the most important initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy is the reform of business registration procedures. This reform, is a significant step in the general government program to improve the business climate in Albania. This is a simple process, the faster and less cost for registering new businesses and registration which is tax administration, social insurance, health insurance and the Labor Inspectorate.

The new law on public procurement provides electronic procurement. E-Procurement supports the automation of tendering activities of different Ministries of the Government and Contractor authorities. This system enables transactions between public institutions and the Albanian national community and international business. Preparation and administration system provides safe, effective and transparent all tender documents and so avoid the delivery of paper documents by providing security throughout the process and avoid corruption and elements. Economic operators may use the services offered by this page to locate procurement competitions and to participate fully in electronic form.

Directorate General of Taxation has begun offering for business declaration and payment on-line and also for larger taxpayers. The goal of tax administration is that all payments be made with the statement on-line administrative avoiding burocracy and reducing time.

E-Customs - AYCUDA is a modern system of data processing system during clearance. This process has led to rapid clearance of cargo, has improved control over income and provides accurate and updated information for the trade of goods

Project implementation started in August 2002 with two main objectives: the establishment of the Albanian version of the program and putting into operation of the program in Tirana and Durres customs. Advantages of the system remain in the automatic processing customs declarations from the moment of registration to the moment of payment, performance unique customs procedures in all branches, the branches connecting customs center, electronic close of transit, processing a large number of data and producing extensive statistical reports. Until today the system has been extended at the Directorate General of Customs and customs of the country focal points enabling that 92% of transactions be processed through the system.

E-Education - In Albania there are 465 000 primary school students and 65 000 students of secondary education. There are about 2 900 primary schools and about 522 secondary schools. The implementation plan for the development of information technology in schools, include currently 379 operational computer cabinets. The situation as 1 computer for 45 student, in 2010 aims to be achieved in 1 computer per 25 students.

E-Justice - In this respect are taken some measures for installation of a software structure in intranet and internet for the Ministry of Justice as Bailiff computerization of judicial service, creating a digitized network internal Intranet for all executive system, installing a computer network for the operation of the prison administration

E-Health - In this sector has begun work to establish a management information system for health statistical package from the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Institute of

Insurance. Also with the support of the World Bank have been provided some projects as the creation of an integrated system of national health information

E-Culture - In this field it is aimed to become fund registration and establishment of national museums, cultural assets vice Academy of Sciences, the network connecting branches with a central database of cultural heritage in the National Center of inventory of cultural assets, the creation of a integrated network of cultural tourism guide.

E-Cabinet - It is a new form of electronic communication that allows government-government to draft laws and decisions issued and to be sent later to council of ministers. In this form is made possible online electronic signing after approval of the Draft by the Secretary General and Minister.

E-Questionary - As a result of the adoption requirements in EU, each ministry should meet the required questions. For this, is built an electronic portal that allows throwing the answers from each ministry, communicating with each other and then sending for approval in the council of ministers (AISEG, 2009)

In Turkey:

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 (Cayhan, 2008)

*E-Education***:** The government established a web based database system to control and manage all public schools that gives very easy and effective communication opportunity between school administrators, students and parents directly using private student ID numbers through internet.

E-Health: For the implementation proccess in e-health Turkey made great reforms and people may solve their healt problems in all public or private hospitals and pharmacies using only their social security or personal ID number through online database system of government .

E-Banking: Almost all transactions are available using internet banking and government also can control theese transactions from National Central Bank.

CONCLUSION

As we mentioned, it is not difficult to see that Turkey has made more progress in E-Government than Albania did.

Turkey is described as one of the fastest developing countries in terms of its e-government performances according to a recent report published in 2007 analysing 1687 e-government web

sites in 198 countries. The report placed Turkey in the same league as South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Portugal, Australia and Germany (Darrel, 2007)

On the other hand, according to a E-State Progress Report published by the European Union Commission, Turkey is at the initial stages of public service provision over the internet according to a criteria measuring the process from the supply of e-government services to their final procurement (Tosun, 2009).

Why is Albania some few steps behind Turkey in processing E-Government?

a. For the first time, Albania signed the National Strategy Information Technology approved in April 2003 later than Turkey's first step (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) (Cayhan, 2008).

This strategy had 14 goals and had defined some priority measures to make possible the development of ICT in Albania. These goals included objectives as follows:

- Electronic Governance
- Electronic Business
- Electronic Health
- Electronic education

b. Then, Albania has confirmed its commitment towards creating an information society through the signing in 2007 together with other countries of Eastern Europe. This constituted a challenge for Albania, considering the state of information technology sector at that time (the second step of Turkey wasn't so much different from the first step and was in more advanced topics of implemening e-government - Between 1997-2002, there were three governments in the country).

Some of the tasks to be carried out as a result of this signing were:

- Development of an internal network for public administration including a governance network GOVNET
- Support and coordination of the project for the digitalization of legal acts, archives, libraries.
- Promotion and support of information technology for public schools including computerization and Internet access.
- Encouraging and supporting the development of electronic business.
- Encouraging and supporting the use of online services, Internet and computer by citizens.
- Cooperation of other national institutions and international , civil society and private sector through Electronics

c. From the first step until now implementation of e-government has not moved with huge steps because of:

- Low number of Internet users

- Low number PCs at home
- High prices for mobile phone
- High price for access to Internet
- Low level of awareness for the use and benefits of information technology at home

d. Even if we can think that it is a considerable increase in use of electronics, in fact there is a growing iterest in developed cities of Albania and the development of technology is limited by geographical location and economic situation. Cities that are geographically located away from the developed cities, have small development of information technology.

e. Situation in 2010 is as below:

- Service Internet is offered on mobile phone.
- The price of Internet service has declined considerably due to the increase of ISP and as a result of increased competition.
- Service Internet is qualitative because ISP has significantly improved technology.
- E-governance, E-business, E-health and E-education have been developed.

Finally, we can say that even in slow steps, Albania is progressing and in the future will make faster and qualitative improvements, while Turkey will progress as faster as did until now. Those as result of technology improvements and higher investment in Information Technology field.

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