Chapter XV

YerelNet
(Local Network):
A Web Portal and
Web-Enabled
Communication Platform
for Turkish
Local Governments

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Executive Summary

This chapter presents the case study of YerelNet (Local Network, in Turkish), which is a Web portal and a Web-enabled communication platform for local governments in Turkey. The project was initiated for gathering reliable, complete, and updated data about Turkish local governments. The chapter first describes the background of the case, the Turkish administrative system, briefly. Then, it presents the nature and important actors of, as well as the strategic decisions made within the project, together with problems experienced and solutions found by the project staff. The chapter ends with the critical evaluation of the case as an interesting application e-government in a developing nation, with small IT budgets and particular cultural challenges.


Background

Country Background

In order to understand the case under study, it is essential to examine the context in which the case occurs, which is, the social, political, and administrative systems of the Republic of Turkey. Turkey stands at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. On a land slightly larger than the State of Texas (814,578 square kilometers), it hosts a population of 71.3 million people (United Nations Development Report, 2005).

Turkey is a unitary state, governed by a unicameral parliamentary democratic system. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk founded the Republic of Turkey on October 29, 1923. Its capital is the City of Ankara. Turkish citizens exercise their sovereignty directly by the elections, and indirectly by means of the legislature, executive, and judiciary. The principle of “separation of powers” prevails among these three organs.

The administrative system of Turkey was modeled after France. It is highly centralized. The country is divided into 81 provinces. These provinces are administered by a group of civil servants appointed by the center. The highest ranking of these appointed civil servants is the provincial governor. In addition to the central/national government, that is, the ministries in Ankara, there are almost 40,000 local government units throughout the country. About 35,000 units are villages, 3,225 units are municipalities, about 1,000 of them are local government associations, and finally there are 81 provincial local governments.

Legislative power is vested in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The Assembly is composed of 550 members of parliament who are elected directly by the citizens every five years. Elections are held under the general direction and supervision of the judiciary, according to the principles of free, equal, secret, direct, universal suffrage, and public counting of the votes.

Executive power and function is exercised and carried out by the President of the Republic and the Council of Ministers. The President is the head of the state. He supervises the proper and harmonious functioning of the state organs. The Turkish Grand National Assembly elects the President for a term of seven years among its members or among citizens, who are eligible to be deputies.

The Council of Ministers consists of the Prime Minister and the ministers. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President among the members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The ministers are appointed by the President among the members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly or among those eligible for election as deputies. The Prime Minister and the ministers assume the duty upon a vote of confidence taken from the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Judicial power is used by means of the independent courts. The principles of state of law, independence of the courts and judges, and the guarantee of judges’ rights are taken as the basis of using this power. The Constitution has divided the organs of judiciary as legal, administrative, and special. The legal and administrative judiciary are of two tiers.

The host organization of the project under investigation, TODAIE, or with its abbreviation in the English language, PAITME (Public Administration Institute for Turkey and the Middle East) was established in 1952, with an agreement signed between the Turkish Government.