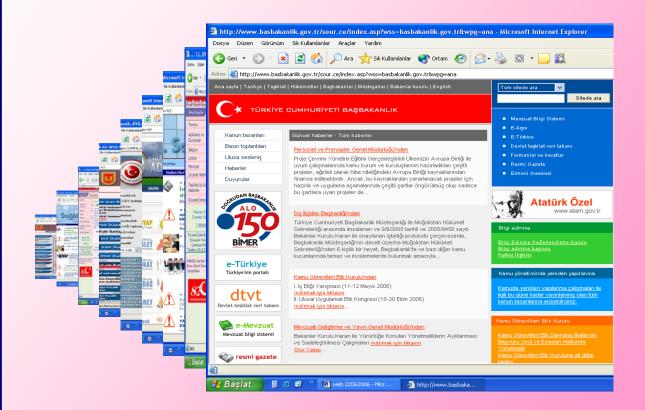# Turkish Court of Accounts

Performance Audit Report

THE PUBLIC WEB-SITES

DURING A PERIOD OF TRANSMISSION TO

e-GOVERNMENT

Summarized Version

June 2006

This report was prepared in accordance with the Additional Article 10 annexed to TCA Law No:832 with the Law No: 4149 and it is deemed appropriate to be submitted to the Turkish Grand National Assembly upon the decree No: 5166/1 dated 24.07.2006 of the General Assembly of the Turkish Court of Accounts.

Audit Team:
Levent KARABEYLİ   (Principal Auditor; Audit Director)
Arife COŞKUN   (Principal Auditor; Audit Manager)
Melda SONUVAR   (Principal Auditor)
Ali ÖZEK   (Principal Auditor)
Nükrettin PARLAK   (Principal Auditor)

Technical Advisor:
Hayati YAŞAR   (Senior Auditor)

Evaluation of the Survey and Test Studies of the Web-Sites of the Public Institutions:
Mehmet ÇIVGIN   (Auditor)
Sinan ÖZSOY   (Auditor)
Mehmet KÖKSEL   (Auditor)

THE PUBLIC WEB-SITES
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INTRODUCTION

- In the last twenty years, the developments in the information and communication technologies and the reflections of them to the social life have significantly changed organization, the mode of life and all the social areas; principally education, health, agriculture and industry. In 2000s, several countries particularly the regional bodies such as the EU have adopted the transition from industrial community to information society as an objective and prepared action plans with a view to realizing this objective. These developments have also changed the approach to public management and the opportunities brought by the information and communication technologies are started to be used by the public institutions in providing their services as well.

- In the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), data processing centers and web sites have been established in several public institutions in our country and information is started to be stored in an electronic form in parallel with the developments in the whole world. In compliance with the objectives specified by the EU in the course of transforming to an information society; the e-Transformation of Turkey Project (eDTr) was initiated in 2003 and within the framework of this project, it is stipulated that several public services are to be provided in an electronic environment. Within this scope, the web sites of the public institutions, as the windows ensuring direct communication between the society and the state, have gained importance.

- With the impetus created by the eDTr Project and the Law on Right of Information put into effect in 2004; the number of the web sites owned by the public institutions and organizations is rapidly increased and has reached to 8115 as of January. In the way to information society, this increase in the number of the web sites is significant; however weaknesses have occurred since the web sites are constructed under the initiative of the administrators at an institutional level without seeking any coherence to the standards. Whereas compatibility with the standards is highly important in terms of many aspects such as accessibility, easy usage, easy navigation, rapid download of the web site, cost and time saving, easy maintenance and update of the web site.

AUDIT ISSUE AND EXAMINATION

- *Audit Issue:* In the performance audit study titled "*the public web-sites during a period of transmission to e-government*"; the adequacy of the public web sites which is an indicator of the institutional capacity to deliver e-Government services established within the framework of the activities in eDTr Project was examined on the basis of the following question:

  - ✓ *Are the public web sites (portal) structured so as to ensure that the public services in an electronic environment are delivered in a better way?*

- *Audit Objectives:* The objective of the audit is to ensure that the measures are taken in order to establish a mechanism which shall;

  - ✓ Decrease the red tape in the public institutions and strengthen the capacity of delivery of electronic services (e-Services) in a fast, high quality and secure manner,

  - ✓ Determine and update the standards on public web sites and monitor their implementation,

  - ✓ Evaluate at certain intervals whether the service having the features such as appropriate content and design and easy usage and functionality and, which takes into account the needs and preferences of the public, is delivered or not on public web sites.

  - ✓ Ensure that the corrective measures are taken on due time,

  - ✓ Give technical support to the institutions.

- *Audit Methodology:* In the audit carried out by the Performance Audit Group;

  - ✓ The task on "the preparation of the guideline for public web sites" within the context of the eDTr Project and the activities regarding these were examined on site at The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBİTAK)/Marmara Research Center-Information Technology Institute which was identified as the responsible agency. What should be the minimum features of the content and design of the public web sites and the progress made in this field in our country was evaluated together with the experts from TÜBİTAK.

  - ✓ Literatures were reviewed especially the academic studies concerning the Web standards and the possibility of their implementation in our country and expert opinion in this field and the opinions of the academicians were taken. At the same time; the international developments in this field were followed and the studies conducted by the SAIs of other countries were utilized.

  - ✓ Within the scope of the audit, a survey study composed of totally 74 questions was conducted at 37 public institutions which include the implementing ministries,

social security institutions and some of the undersecretariats, general directorates and boards which have intensive works on e-Government on September, 2005. In the survey, some of the issues were assessed such as whether the institutions simplified their internal procedures regarding the services to be delivered in electronic environment, whether they took the preferences and needs of public into account and whether they constructed their web sites so as to deliver fast, secure and high quality services as preparatory to transforming to e-Government or not.

✓ On the other hand, a test study covering the web sites of 32 public institutions was conducted. The web sites were selected among the institutions which were subject to survey previously, had function in the eDTr Project and the ones which were awarded in various competitions. In the test study, the web sites were assessed in accordance with the 35 assessment criteria the main titles of which are design, navigation, content and accessibility.

- The audit findings in this report are mainly based on the results of the survey conducted in the relevant institutions on September 2005 and the results of the test study on the public web sites on November 2005. The significant changes made in 2006 are tried to be reflected in the report as far as possible.

- Documents, papers, notes taken during the interviews and working papers regarding the studies are kept at the Presidency of TCA. The opinions of the State Planning Organization (SPO) and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBİTAK) on the draft report were received and evaluated.

- In the report prepared based on the Additional Article 10 of the TCA Law No: 832; the audit findings, results and recommendations are stated.

AUDIT FINDINGS, RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Establishment of Standards for the Web Sites and Follow-up: "***Preparation of a guideline for public institutions web sites***"** is inserted in the action plans of the eDTr Project by taking the importance of the topic into account in order to ensure the compatibility of the public web sites with the international standards. The duty to realize this objective was first given to State Planning Organization between the years 2003-2004 which is in charge of the coordination, follow-up, evaluation and guidance of the whole project and then to the Scientific and Technological Research council of Turkey (TUBİTAK) in 2005. However, within the three year implementation period of the project, this duty of preparing web site guidelines which is of great importance for the public web sites to deliver service in the most efficacious manner in terms of design, navigation, content and accessibility has not yet been finalized as of June 2006 despite the fact that the draft study prepared by TUBİTAK was submitted to State Planning Organization in March, 2006. In the draft strategic plan communicated to High Planning

Board by the Executive Committee of the eDTr Project; regarding the public web sites, the duty of providing service in "Standardization and hosting of Public Web Sites" is given to the responsibility of Satellite Communication and Cable TV Operation INC. (TÜRKSAT) which is affiliated to the Ministry of Transportation. On the other hand; within the scope of eDTr Project, a mechanism which shall control the conformity of the public web sites to the standards specified in these guidelines is also stipulated among the regulations that are to be made in this field.

- **Information and Services Delivered and the Usage of the Web Sites:** e-Government, which briefly means to provide public services in the electronic environment, has a progress of five levels starting from a basic web sites in which the fundamental information is given and ending with the join-up e-governance through which the citizens are able to reach all the processes of the services by being online. The web sites of the public institutions in our country are predominantly first level web sites providing information and document and/or second level web sites through which electronic publishing is performed. Delivering services at that level on the web sites is insufficient for the e-government which aims to offer interactive and joined-up public services. However, increasing the variety and quality of the services provided is the main tool to prevent the cost and time losses caused due to the fact that the mentioned services are given by the officers working with traditional methods and thus the bureaucratic procedures are still going on. Moreover, the rate of use of the public web sites by the citizens in 2005 is decreased nearly by %50 when compared with the previous years. This situation indicates the necessity to review the public web sites according to the needs and preferences of the citizens. The electronic service delivery should be developed by giving priority to the services that the citizens shall need in their daily life and which are easy to use and highly effective.

- **Restructuring of the Business Processes:** The most important benefit item expected in the service delivery via the public web sites is the decrease in the red tape. For this, the job descriptions and terms of references should be renewed; the business processes of the institutions regarding the services should be simplified and changed in accordance with the electronic environment. Even the review and simplification of the limited number of the services provided by the central public institutions has proved to be insufficient. If the services are transferred to the electronic environment without simplifying the business processes; the decrease in the red tape and bureaucracy, the main benefit item expected from e-government, can not be realized. The business processes should be reviewed and simplified and the services should be redesigned in a delivery manner on the web sites so as to decrease the number of the procedures, ensure more service production with fewer personnel at shorter periods of time. *In order to avoid the repeated investments and duplications in the work; the activities of public service reforms and the studies in the field of electronic service provision should be assessed together.*

- **Updating the Web Sites and Measuring the Frequency of Visitors:** Nowadays, the up-to-date information is important as much as the easy and rapid access to information. More than half of the central public institutions have been updating their web sites with an uncertain schedule and when necessary. In the cases where the citizens make some transactions by using the information given on the web sites that are not updated; this may lead to undesirable problems and decrease the demand of the citizens to the services of e-government. Apart from this, the measurement of the frequency of the visitors is generally not performed, which is a very important instrument to collect data about the rate of demand of the citizens to the public web sites, the types of the electronic services that are commonly used by the citizens and how to give such services.

- The increased demand by the citizens to the information and services delivered through information technology which is constructed with costly and risky investments is the only way for the return of these investments to our country's economy. *During the construction and updating of the web site; the demands and expectations of the users should be taken and their complaints should be taken into account by examining the statistics of visitors and considering the citizen-oriented service delivery approach. Besides, the possible user's profile, of each and every public web sites should be determined in terms of criteria such as their education, gender, reasons to use the service, rate of income etc. and the features of content, design, usability and accessibility should be adapted to the web site in accordance with this profile.*

- **Security:** Security is one of the factors that mostly affect the demand to the services provided in electronic environment. Especially in the third or in the advanced levels, in the electronic services which includes the usage of the personal data and payments; the matter of security is highly important. Although an insufficiency in this matter shall have adverse affects on all the e-government services and has the risk to decrease the demand; the number of the institutions which has an information security policy document approved by the high administration of the institution and made a risk analysis study comprising a data processing infrastructure is very few. Most of the institutions do not have a SSL Security Certificate. This situation indicates that an awareness regarding the importance of the security of information has not yet been created and an information security policy can not be established. *Establishment of information security policy by each and every public institutions and ensuring them to take measures that will eradicate the deficits on security of the web sites should be achieved.*

- **Design, Navigation, Content and Accessibility:** The web sites of the public institutions are an indicator of whether the services of e-government are appropriate for the benefit of the citizens and of the ability and experience of the institutions to provide services in the e-environment. Rapid, interactive, practical and accessible provision of the services on the public web sites depends on the construction of the web sites in accordance with the standards in terms of their design, navigation, content and

accessibility. The most deficient area of the public web sites is the content in terms of service delivery, meeting the expectations of the users and functionality. However in the areas of design and navigation which are important in terms of practicality and surfing and based on the technical skills; relatively better results are taken. The biggest deficiency about accessibility is that the web sites are not usable for the blind. These deficiencies found out on the public web sites are mostly due to the fact that the minimum standards for the public web sites have not yet been established and an implementation-control mechanism regarding these standards is not formed. *The conformity of the public web sites to the standards of design, navigation and accessibility and especially content should be maintained in order to ensure the public web sites to provide rapid, interactive, secure, appropriate and practical services with all kinds of browsers.*

- **Delivery of Services:** In the internet web sites, delivery of rapid, secure, practical services in line with the standards shall bring about benefits such that the state would become more transparent and provide services rapidly, continuously and effectively; the citizens would participate to the government at all levels and their lives would become easier; the exchange of information among the institutions would be achieved and thus duplications in terms of work and data would be prevented. Realization of the projects in the field of information technology requires both a comprehensive planning process and high costs. For this reason, the benefits that are to be obtained thorough the implementation of the project should be maximized not just institutionally but as a whole so as to comprise all the public institutions. *Thus, in order to conform the public web sites with the standards, to prevent the technological dependency and make saving in the procurement of technologies; a structure should be built which shall determine the measures that should be taken, update the standards, provide technical support to the institutions and finally contribute to the quality of the services.*

TCA's Performance Audit Reports:

- The Road Maintenance and Betterment Activities of the General Directorate of Highways. (Pilot Project)

- Acquisition, Storage, Display, Recording and Inventory of Collection Objects of Turkish National Museum. (Pilot Project)

- The Activities in the Aftermath of Earthquake in Marmara Region in 1999.

- How well is İstanbul Getting Prepared for the Earthquake?

- Preventing and Dealing with Pollution from Ships.

- The Management of Medicine& Medical Equipment in the Hospitals.

- Preserving the Historical Monuments and Objects under the Responsibility of General Directory of Foundations.

- The Activities for Protecting National Forests.

- The Planning and Control of the Coastal Utilization.

- The Activities Carried Out within the Framework of e-Transformation Turkey Project.

- The Public Web-sites During a Period of Transmission to e-Government.

Performance Audit Projects Underway in 2006:

- Management of Hospital-acquired Infection

- The Traffic Safety Activities on the Highway**.**