

Electronic Visa Application System



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Organisation: Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Country: Turkey

Level of government: Central government

Sector: General public services

Type: Digital, Public Service

Launched in: 2013

Overall development time: 8 months

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

Our innovation, the e-Visa, is an official document permitting entry into and travel within Turkey. It is an alternative to visas issued at Turkish missions and at the ports of entry. Applicants obtain their visas electronically after entering required information and making payments by a credit or debit card (Mastercard or Visa). The Electronic Visa Application System, solves the four major problems encountered in our previous visa practices. Firstly, foreigners who wish to visit Turkey do not have to line up at the airports in Turkey for a visa anymore. Secondly, visiting Turkish missions for a visa has become unnecessary for the majority of the visitors. Thirdly, Turkish missions are largely relieved of visa applications and they can spare more time for other activities and services. Lastly, foreigners who do not have a Turkish mission in the city or country where they reside are now able to get a Turkish visa over the Electronic Visa Application System.

Why the innovation was developed

Slightly over 10 million foreigners had to line up in front of visa counters at the airports in Turkey to secure their entrance into the country. People including elderly, pregnant women, kids and the disabled were obliged to spend up to couple of hours in rush times standing in visa lines after long and exhausting travel. People who had (or preferred) to receive their visas before their travels, had to spend considerable time and energy on a visa application at the Turkish missions. Some Turkish missions were so consumed by visa applications that they did not have enough time for the other services. Foreigners who were not eligible for a visa on arrival and who did not have any Turkish mission in the vicinity were deprived of the opportunity to travel to Turkey.

Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Improve effectiveness, Improve efficiency, Improve service quality, Improve user satisfaction

- To prevent foreigners (who wish to visit Turkey) lining up at the airports in Turkey for visa.
 - To make the visits to Turkish missions for a visa application unnecessary (for the majority of the visitors).
 - To relieve Turkish missions from visa applications so they are able to spare more time for other activities and services.
 - To enable foreigners - who do not have a Turkish mission in the city or country where they live - to get a Turkish visa over the Electronic Visa Application System.
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Main beneficiaries

Businesses, General population, Government bodies, Government staff, Other

- The number of people lining up in front of visa counters at our airports dropped significantly and soon there will be no lines at all (due to the success of the e-Visa system, the practice of visa on arrival will be abandoned in the near future).
- The number of people visiting our missions for a visa application decreased.
- The number of people visiting Turkey from the countries where we do not have missions increased.
- Considerable amount of time saved both on the side of the visitors and Turkish officers.

Results

Efficiency

- Approximately USD 70 million has been collected in visa fees, which is directly transferred to the Treasury.
 - The number of passport control officers employed at the border gates has been reduced. The process including acceptance of sticker/stamp-type-of visas, allocation of visa fees, the transfer of allocated visa fees to the Treasury has been abolished.
 - Furthermore, time and energy spent by the personnel at our missions abroad for visa application processes has decreased.
 - We have saved money on paper used for visa application procedures.
 - Applicants experience the easiness of an application for a visa while they are in their offices or homes and save time.
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Effectiveness

- We have experienced a notable increase in the number of e-Visas issued. We have issued 4 684 081 e-Visas so far. To exemplify the increase in the number of e-Visas issued, let us state the figures regarding e-Visas issued for Iraqi citizens. In April 2013, 259 e-Visas have been issued for Iraqi citizens. In July 2014, 104 402 e-Visas have been granted to Iraqi citizens.
 - The number of people lining up in front of visa counters at our airports dropped significantly and soon there will be no lines at all (due to the success of the e-Visa system, the practice of visa on arrival will be abandoned in the near future).
 - The number of people visiting Turkey from the countries where we do not have missions increased.
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Service quality

Accessibility:

- We could reach out to thousands of people who do not have a Turkish mission in their vicinity.
- The e-Visa Application System is available for 24/7 hours.
- An e-Visa application can be created wherever the secure and uninterrupted internet connection exists.

Responsiveness:

- The application has been monitored over the admin panel, which instantly displays the number of e-Visas issued, the amount of money collected, the number of visitors of the web site, information regarding the applicants, as well as all several statistics that can be produced by using the available information. The questions and suggestions of the applicants are also replied over the admin panel. All feedback received from the users has been used to improve the system.
- The personnel of e-Visa Support Desk and Call Center assist applicants with the questions or requests for 24/7 hours.

Reliability:

- The e-Visa Application System has been serving smoothly since its establishment.
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User satisfaction

- Up to now nearly 3 931 000 foreigners used the system to receive their e-Visas and they seem to be quite satisfied with it (please have a look at the comments posted on <https://www.evisa.gov.tr/en/comments/>).
 - Applicants' satisfaction with the system can be observed by visiting the following link <http://test.evisa.gov.tr/en/comments/>.
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Evaluation

The application has been monitored over the admin panel, which instantly displays the number of e-Visas issued, the amount of money collected, the number of visitors of the web site, information regarding the applicants, as well as several statistics that can be produced by using the available information.

The questions and suggestions of the applicants are replied to over the e-Visa Support Desk module. All feedback received from the users has been used to improve the system.

<https://www.evisa.gov.tr/en/comments>

Development

Design

The idea was proposed and masterminded by HE Naci Koru, Ambassador and Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkey. He laid down the main architecture of the application and has supervised all processes related to it.

Design time: 4 months

Testing

We didn't follow any test methodology over the project. Scrum based Agile Methodology is being followed on development procedures not for testing.

At the development stage, unit tests and functional tests were made by the developer, and usability tests were made by the ux designer and the developer. After the development stage, user acceptance tests were made by other project staff who didn't participate in the development stage.

Testing time: 1 month

Implementation

Tools used:

- Visual Studio 2013VB.NET.
- .NET Framework 4.5.1.
- MS SQL Server 2012.
- HTML5, CSS 3.

Resources used:

- The whole project including the software, design, etc. of the e-Visa Application System has been created by the personnel of the Turkish Foreign Ministry. No extra money has been spent for the establishment of the e-Visa Application System.
- Analysis, coding, design and tests were all conducted by 'The e-Visa work group' which was constituted within the body of the 'General Directorate for Information Technologies'. The e-Visa work group is composed of three administrative officers and two technical staff (one software developer and one designer).
- The system is maintained and 24/7 written and verbal assistance is given to the applicants by the Ministry personnel.
- In parallel with the increasing demand of the e-Visa system, 6 personnel of a private company have been employed for giving written assistance to the applicants. They have been answering the written questions/comments of the applicants as the e-Visa Support Desk. Besides, 37 personnel of a private company have been answering the applicants' questions verbally as the personnel of the Call Centre.
- Information about the system can be received from the web page at <https://www.evisa.gov.tr/en/>.

Implementation time: 4 months

Diffusion

- Information exchange between the e-Visa system and related organisations provided through web services.

Diffusion time: 1 month

Challenges and solutions

- The main obstacles were faced during the early days of the system. It took a while for the airport authorities to get used to the application. In the first weeks of the application some visitors had a hard time to convince the airport authorities they had valid visas. To overcome this, we stayed in constant touch with respective authorities to ensure a smooth transition.
- Another obstacle was to entertain all requests sent by the users. Local practices that bound us did not make much sense for the users in some cases. For example, some users did not want to enter their parents' names in the related fields, as some of them claimed that they did not have this information. We had a difficult time explaining this situation to our customs authorities. We finally succeeded and information about parents became optional to fill out.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- The initiative engaged hundreds and thousands of people from all over the world. We did our best to come up with something that can be used by a wide range of people with no difficulty. It was quite encouraging to observe that we mostly received positive feedback from the users. We read each and every line written to us, replied immediately and improved the system accordingly. By doing so, we managed to keep the number of messages at a certain level, even though the number of e-Visas issued skyrocketed.
- We learned to understand and serve people from different countries. It was and still is an amazing experience to know that what we created makes their lives easier. We give the most precious present to these people: time.
- The visa application process, which is one of the most important stages of a foreign travel has turned into the easiest part of a travel to Turkey.

Conditions for success

- Human resources: 3 administrative officers, 2 technical staff have been involved in the development of the system. Besides, 50 personnel in total (3 administrative officers, 2 technical staff, 8 e-Visa support desk personnel, 37 Call Center personnel) are still involved in the application of the e-Visa system.
- Technical infrastructure.

Other information

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