ALBANIA DIGITAL AGENDA OBSERVATORY 2022

Country Report and Roadmap for Digital Agenda advancement in Albania
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ADISA</td>
<td>Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services (Albania)</td>
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<td>CSDA</td>
<td>Cross-cutting Strategy for the Digital Agenda</td>
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<td>CSIS</td>
<td>Cross-cutting Strategy of Information Society</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations</td>
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<td>DA</td>
<td>Digital Agenda</td>
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<td>DAO</td>
<td>Digital Agenda Observatory</td>
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<td>DCM</td>
<td>Decision of Council of Ministers</td>
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<td>DMFE</td>
<td>Directives of Ministry of Finances and Economy</td>
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<td>ERPAC</td>
<td>E-Register on Public Announcements and Consultations</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>GDPR</td>
<td>General Data Protection Regulation</td>
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<td>GDT</td>
<td>General Directorate of Taxation</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<td>ICTU</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology Units</td>
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<td>MEI</td>
<td>Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure</td>
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<td>MESY</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth</td>
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<td>MFE</td>
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<td>MHSP</td>
<td>Ministry of Health and Social Protection</td>
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<td>NAECCS</td>
<td>The National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security</td>
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<td>NAIS</td>
<td>National Agency for Information Society</td>
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<td>NBC</td>
<td>National Business Center</td>
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<td>OGP</td>
<td>Open Government Partnership</td>
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<td>OIDPC</td>
<td>Office of Information and Data Protection Commissioner</td>
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<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe</td>
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<td>PM</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
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<td>RIA</td>
<td>Regulatory Impact Assessment</td>
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<td>SACS</td>
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August, 2022
Preface

The last two years have given us a deeper understanding why digitization is necessary to be a part of our daily duties. Digital processes/services are proven to be faster and save time, as well as assist in a more efficient work, be that individual or collective. Digitalization became a must for many (public) services during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it also brought more awareness for the lack of e-services in the country level. As the need for digitalization becomes more evident, supporting mechanisms towards this process are noted as well. Enhancing digital skills and understanding is also an important part of the digitization process as a whole.

The Digital Agenda (DA) is an extensive term referring to the development of the information society. In order to exemplify the current issues relating to the DA in the countries of the Western Balkans, as well as to place focus on the engagement of the civil society in this process, the project Increasing Civic Engagement in the Digital Agenda – ICEDA is currently being implemented. The ICEDA project is co-financed by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the Metamorphosis Foundation (North Macedonia) as a leading partner, then by the e-Governance Academy (Estonia), Partners for Democratic Change Serbia – (Serbia), NGO 35mm (Montenegro), Open Data Kosovo (Kosovo) and by Lëvizja Mjaft! (Albania).

In line with the topics within the DA, the activities and studies of the ICEDA project are focused on the implementation of: e-government, raising public awareness, digital literacy and e-participation. Within this framework, in the period March – May 2022, research consistent with the previous studies (conducted in 2020, and 2021) was conducted. The aim of the research is to provide a comprehensive overview depicting the progress made regarding the implementation of the DA in the country during the past few years, and incorporate the efforts made in terms of the ICEDA project.
Research Methodology

The research methodology of the Digital Agenda Observatory (DAO 2022) follows the methodology of the previous editions of the DAO country reports and the Roadmap for Digital Agenda advancement in the Republic of Albania. In this year’s edition the methodology not only builds on what has been identified previously, but also focuses further on the topics that the local CSOs have contributed most during the period of 2021-2022 regarding the implementation of the Digital Agenda in the country. The research is conducted based on the key indicators as identified in the assessment questionnaire developed by the e-Governance Academy (eGA) as the project partner from Estonia. These indicators should enable a regional comparison between the selected countries from the Western Balkans, which will contribute to a positive competition and will be a motive for further implementation of the DA in the region.

The research consists of the desk research (review of conducted research; existing policy documents; national strategies; programs of the Government and central institutions of the Republic of Albania; publicly available reports and other relevant sources), then semi-structured interviews with persons directly involved and affected by the digitization process, as well as the testing of three electronic services (e-services).

Based on these research steps, the report has been compiled in order to provide a general overview of the implementation of the Digital Agenda (DA) in the Republic of Albania, and as a result a roadmap with further recommendations has been prepared. Another significant part of the report consists of the insights given by the local CSOs that are a part of the ICEDA network, which played a role in the implementation of the DA in the country. The report and the roadmap as such should be seen as a basis for further research, and also serve as a fresh reference regarding the creation of strategic documents that aim to enhance the digital transformation in the Republic of Albania.

This document also the list of annex: 1. List of Interviewed Stakeholders
1. Preconditions for the implementation of the e-Governance

1.1 Internet penetration

According to the annual reports of the Institute of Statistic of the Republic of Albania (INSTAT) the total population in our country decreased by 1.3%\(^1\). On the 1st January 2022, the total population results 2,793,592 inhabitants compared to 2,829,741 on the 1st of January 2021. While there is no official provided data of the share of the population in urban and rural areas in Albania.

Referring to INSTAT report\(^2\), 79.3% of the total population (16 – 74 years old) has access to internet, while 91.7% of this percentage has daily access of internet connectivity. 98.7% (decrease of 0.1 percent point compared to the previous year) of the citizens are using mobiles/smart phone to have access into internet, 22.8% (decrease of 1.6 percent point compared to the previous year) are using lap tops, 8.8% (increase of 1.6 percent point compared to the previous year) are using tablets as well. According to this report, the age group 16 – 24 years old has 96.7% usage of internet, showing a high level of internet connectivity of youth.

According the World Bank data, the individuals using the Internet in proportion to the population in Albania scores 72.24 points. This ranking represents the lowest performance in the region of the Western Balkan, where Kosovo score the highest level by 89 points, North Macedonia 81, Serbia and Montenegro 78\(^3\). The most recent data refers to the measurement of the year 2020. Compared to the previous performs, where the score was 68.55, Albania is performing higher levels, but still this ranking in regional level is not satisfying yet, in the terms of digitalization process.

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\(^1\) Albanian Population / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/BX0PRFP
\(^2\) Usage of Information Technology and Communication in the family, 2021 / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/YX0ShDM
\(^3\) Individuals using the internet [% of population] / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/sXpGaco
1. Preconditions for the implementation of the e-Governance

Table 1: The individuals using the internet (% of population)

In parallel to the above-mentioned reports, there are other important data to be presented, published by the Data Reportal in the report Digital 2021: Albania⁴. According to this report, the total population of the Republic of Albania is 2.88 million inhabitants in January 2021; 62.5% of the population lives in urban centers, while 37.5% lives in rural areas. The performance of internet penetration presented by this report is 69.6%. This report emphasizes that there are 2 million users have mobile connections in our country (69.6% of the total population), while 3.77 million citizens have access to internet via mobile phones, which represent 131.2% of the total population. 55.6% are active social media users. While there is a decrease of population and the percentage of mobile connections compared to the previous year’s data, there is a significant increase of active social media users by 14.3%. The share of internet traffic based on the usage of the device is as following⁵: 80.3% mobile phones, 18.9% lap tops/desktop, 0.7% tablets, 0.04% other. According to the report of INSTAT, referring to the same reporting period (2020), the share of internet traffic by device is as following: 98.8% mobile phones, 24.4% lap tops, 7.2% tablets, 3% others⁶.

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⁴ Digital 2021: Albania / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/2X0Hbd2
⁵ The most recent data for internet traffic by device is in 2020.
⁶ Usage of Information Technology and Communication in the family, 2020 / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/fXOJCew
1. Preconditions for the implementation of the e-Governance

Also, there is a most recent data in July 2022 on the usage of internet provided by Internet World Stats\(^7\). In a total population 2,872,758 inhabitants, 2,191,467 are internet users (76.3\%), which represents an increase of 1.1 percent point compared to the previous reporting on Albania of the Internet World Stats, while it represents a decrease of performance based on the published data from INSTAT on the report of 2021.

On 1st of July 2021, the regional agreement among Western Balkan countries on free roaming came into enforce\(^8\). According to this agreement, this charging model for mobile network subscribers using the roaming service is applicable for all users who have a prepaid or postpaid card, offers of operators, active packages of their mobile connections, as well residual service units or not. Based on the annual report for 2021 of the Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (EPCA) in the Republic of Albania, this regional initiative has increased the internet connectivity using roaming, while staying in the Western Balkans countries. During the third quarter of 2021, used roaming internet has reached a volume of 103,000 GB internet (11 times higher than in 2019, 14 times higher than in 2020, referring to the same quarter)\(^9\).

Table 2: The volume of used internet in roaming in Western Balkans

\(^7\) Internet Stats and Facebook Usage in Europe 2022 Mid-Year Statistics July 2022 / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/kX0KFrZ

\(^8\) The agreement was first launched in Sofia, Bulgaria, in the EU-Western Balkans Summit, on 17th of May 2018. Sofia Declaration: Launch a Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans, including a roadmap to facilitate lowering the cost of roaming / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/dX0XW8f

\(^9\) Annual Report 2021 – AKEP / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/8X0Ci6L
1. Preconditions for the implementation of the e-Governance

1.2 Users of e-government services

As noted in the previous reports, the responsible institution for the implementation of DA in the Republic of Albania and the maintenance of e-Albania\(^{10}\) is the National Agency of Information Society (NAIS). During 2020 – 2022, the implementation of the DA has been based on the legal act DCM no. 1081, date 24.12.2020 “For approval of the action plan of the cross-cutting strategy ‘Digital Agenda in Albania’, 2020 – 2022”\(^{11}\).

Referring to the most recent published data from NAIS\(^{12}\), in July 2022 there are 2,679,806 progressive total of the registered accounts in the portal, while 2,545,311 is the progressive total of unique users. All the accessed data on the usage of the portal e-Albania, that are published, show the numbers applications, users, e-services and registered accounts referring to the monthly performance of July 2022. There is no annual report for the performance of the portal during 2021 published either in e-Albania portal, neither in NAIS official website. Below is the data for the usage of the e-services in July 2022:

- 1,320,133 applications for e-services, 2,854,677 usage of electronic services, 14,462,917 visits in the portal, 20,121,552 transactions in the governmental platform.
- 397,644 unique users, 27,619 new unique users, 2,545,311 the progressive total of unique users, 319,387 mobile app users.
- 1,225 electronic services in the platform, 4 the level of electronic services, 535,755 generated documents with electronic signature.

According to this published document, the most used services are as following:

- Electronic signed documents: family certificate, personal certificate, confirmation for the active status of vehicles.
- Applied services: application for the electronic certificate for the fiscalisation process, fines for the annual technical inspection of vehicles, application of the form for the first issuance or renewal of the passport,
- Documents that can be accessed only through payment fees: payment of the annual tax on used vehicles / luxury vehicles, health and social contributions, application for international driving license.

\(^{10}\) e-Albania / access the link here: https://e-albania.al/


\(^{12}\) Statistics July 2022 / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/BX28ZZ1
1. Preconditions for the implementation of the e-Governance

According to the publication in the platform\textsuperscript{15}, the most evaluated electronic services from the users are as following:

1. Application for driving license equipment for watercraft – 9.2 points, 317 evaluations

2. Driver’s points – 9.1 points, 8633 evaluations

3. Vaccination certificate Covid-19 – 9.1 points, 9247 evaluations

4. State graduation – 9.1, 9889 evaluations

5. Request for vaccination Covid-19 – 9.1, 8573 evaluations

6. Family certificate – 9 points, 203618 evaluations

7. Personal certificate – 9 points, 113576 evaluations

8. Certification on the amount of economic aid benefit – 9 points, 864 evaluations

9. My vehicles – 9 points, 12386 evaluations

10. Undrawn family pension measures – 8.9 points, 577 evaluations

Only one service out of ten most evaluated is provided by the platform through payment fees, application for driving license equipment for watercraft, which means that the procedure of access requires time. All the other services generate documents that can be accessed in real time, right after the application of the user.

\textsuperscript{15} The most evaluated services / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/FX9ryno
1. Preconditions for the implementation of the e-Governance

It is noted that even though the mechanism for the evaluation of electronic services enables the opportunity to give written feedback on the personal experience of accessing these services, the users of the platform do not have access to these comments, since the platform does not make the comments visible to the large public.

Since the 1st of May 2022 all the public services (95% public services that can be access electronically) in the Republic of Albania can be applied/accessed only through e-Albania portal. This means that all the physical public counters and offices of the Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services Albania (ADISA) are no longer available for the citizens to apply for a public service or the receive an official personal document. As a result of this governmental decision it is expected that the number of registered users and the number of received electronic services from e-Albania platform is about to get increased.

Nevertheless, this process is going to face problematics in its implementation, since there is no national official data on the digital literacy of the Albanian population. Also, the most recent and biggest issues on the digitalization process was experienced on 24th of July 2022, where the national governmental portal had to be provisionally shut down, in order to prevent data leakage and loss of personal and business documents. Due to this event, a lot of citizens had to access their official documents through the traditional method, by applying in the public counters of the institutions, for approximately three weeks\(^\text{14}\).

\(^{14}\) Declaration on the cyber attack of the e-Albania portal (NAIS) / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/uX9aWmB
2. Political will and strategy

Since 2015, by launching the developed platform e-Albania, the Albanian government has presented the political will into the digitalization process. As it is noted in the previous Digital Agenda Observatory reports (DAO) the number of public services provided electronically through the governmental portal has been progressive. Currently, there are 95% of public services enabled online, while the other 5% are documents that need to be accessed hard copy (i.e. ID card, passport etc.). It is important to emphasize that the need for digitalization has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic; since April 2020 the number of users in the e-Albania platform has been significantly and inevitably increased, due to the fact that daily operativity of the Albanian citizens (such as permission to leave the houses, request for vaccination, accession of official personal documents etc.) was only enabled through online applications.

In parallel to the development of the governmental portal, the establishment of support centers of ADISA was a necessity for the process of digitalization in our country. ADISA aimed the transformation of the provision of public services in Albania, focused on the approach towards the citizen and the improvement of administrative services for the citizens and businesses. In addition, it aimed to provide public services through the establishment and administration of reception counters for citizens (front office) as well as integrated public service centers with one stop (one-stop-shop), for services performed by institutions and agencies of the central government and/or local government units, according to the legislation in force or relevant agreements. While there were 25 ADISA offices in the territory of the Republic of Albania, where the last one has been launched in 17th of November 2021, the closure of the reception counters has been announced by the government only six months later. There is no report of assessment in which this governmental decision has been made. However, the NAIS proclaims that this decision has contributed in increasing the usage services of e-Albania by 2.4 times.

15 ADISA mission / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/4X909rv
16 Access the link here: https://cutt.ly/eX99mJh
17 Access the link here: https://cutt.ly/hX93vci
2. Political will and strategy

Aiming to progress into the process of digitalization, the Albanian government has announced for public consultation\(^{18}\) and adopted the new cross-cutting strategy on Digital Agenda 2022 – 2026 (CCSDA)\(^{19}\). The CCSDA 2022 – 2026 is approved two years after the implementation period of the previous strategy 2015 – 2020; however, it is important to mention that the Covid-19 situation had an impact in all the operational and decision-making spheres. Hence, NAIS adapted the Action Plan 2020 – 2022 for the continuation of the implementation of the planned activities for the digitalization process in Albania, while the agenda 2022 – 2026 was being drafted. This new agenda aims to enhance investments in the focal areas of the advanced informatics and data processing, artificial intelligence (AI), cyber security, digital advanced skills as well that need to be developed. This agenda has the potential to enable the connection of businesses, public administration and citizens with the latest technologies and resources and will help to be globally competitive and strategically autonomous, developing and leading the society towards Digital Transformation.

As mentioned in the CCSDA 2022 – 2026, the main principles where the Albanian government is going to be focused during the implementation of this strategy are as following:

\(^{18}\) Draft cross-cutting Strategy on the Digital Agenda in Albania 2021+ / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/6X93AUz
\(^{19}\) Cross-cutting Strategy on the Digital Agenda in Albania 2022 – 2026 / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/9X93H7C
2. Political will and strategy

- Government and innovation: creation of opportunities to establish innovation environments for the designation of technologic platforms that enhance an increased business ecosystem and start-ups.
- Government and governance: specific safety certification frameworks to be proposed, their development or the implementation of risk management bases.
- Government and data processing: data management with integrity.
- Government and approach to risk: evaluation, management and lower risk level in offering cloud services, enhancing their use by the non-governmental sector as well.
- Government and standards: based on global standards to increase the quality, adaption, security and elasticity of governmental technologies used for the provision of e-services.
- Government and transparency: transparency-oriented processes and trust-worthy for developing compliance requirements and for evaluating the use of services and technologies.

Goal 1. Digital Government: Enabling digital policies, intelligent processes and advanced solutions on secure platforms
Goal 3. Digital citizens: Citizens and privacy, data and services transparency to citizens.
Goal 4. Digital education and digital skills: learning and teaching transformation. Since this new agenda has been approved in 1st of June 2022, there is still no data for the evaluation of its implementation. Data privacy, cybersecurity and digital literacy are still the main priorities for the Albanian government.
3. Coordination for implementing e-Governance

The most important and significant institution for the implementation of the Digital Agenda in the Republic of Albania is NAIS. Regarding the legal frame of the digitalization process in our country and the adaption of the national strategies for this regulation is responsibility of the Council of Ministers, since an agency does not have the authority to propose and adapt a legal act, under the Albanian legislation. NAIS is responsible for the implementation of the strategy, coordinating programs, promoting investments, promoting new technologies and maintaining the national governmental portal for the provision of electronic services, e-Albania.

According to the CCSDA 2022 – 2026, NAIS, all the line ministries and other relevant public institutions are responsible for the implementation of the action plan of this strategy. Furthermore, the other public institutions that are crucial for the implementation of DA in Albania are: National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security (NASCCS), EPCA, General Directorate of Taxation (GDT), State Ministry of Entrepreneurship, INSTAT, General Directorate of Customs (GDC), State Police, the General Directorate of Prisons, The Agricultural and Rural Development Agency, the National Authority of Food, the Management Agency Water Resources, the National Business Center, the Public Health Institution, the National Agency for Medicines and Medical Devices, the Social Insurance Institute, the General Directorate of Civil Status.

Referring to the institutional cooperation for the implementation of DA in Albania, the participants from civil society sector\textsuperscript{20} in the focus group organized within the framework of this report in May 2022 were expressed that there is a lack of collaboration among public institutions, even though it is foreseen in the action plan. Also, the institutions do not report on their activities and annual work.

\textsuperscript{20} Participants from Institute for Democracy and Mediation, Young Professionals Network, Epoka e Re, European Youth Association, Orbis Center.
3. Coordination for implementing e-Governance

Another institution that is becoming crucial in the digitalization process is the Municipality of Tirana, which is planning to design an institutional strategy for digitalization and innovation. Municipality of Tirana has already developed platforms such as Open Data\textsuperscript{21} (since 2017 providing data on public activities and public services offered by the municipality), eKioska\textsuperscript{22} (electronic units available in each administrative office of the Municipality of Tirana, that provide access to the municipality’s services), Digital Tirana\textsuperscript{23} (a platform that brings together a range of private and public sector elements to support startups, entrepreneurs, ecosystem actors as well as provide comprehensive information on digital nomads). Also, the municipality is supporting the initiative of UNICEF Albania, in close collaboration with Albanian Sustainable Development Organization to transform four of Tirana’s libraries (“Hamit Beqja”, “Musine Kokalari”, “Misto Treska” and “Aleksandër Moisiu”) into technological hubs for children, young people and the community in general. The incubators will be a vessel to enhance children’s and young people’s digital literacy, safety and contribute to also narrow the inter-generational gap between their parents and themselves. In the future, the municipality is planning to also design programs in high schools for the integration of tech programs in their curricula.

Another issue noted during the discussions of the focus group was the plan of three different institutions planning tech programs for youth (high schools in Albania) – NASCCS, State Minister for Youth and Children and the Municipality of Tirana – aiming to increase the digital literacy and the online security for this group age. The conclusion of the discussion was that all these three institutions were foreseeing to collaborate only with the Ministry of Education and Sport, due to the lack of information of the other institutions’ plans and due to lack of institutional communication.

\textsuperscript{21} Access the link here: https://opendata.tirana.al/
\textsuperscript{22} Access the link here: https://ekioska.tirana.al/
\textsuperscript{23} Access the link here: https://digitaltirana.al/en/
\textsuperscript{24} Access the link here: https://cutt.ly/eX3aqqK
4. Legal framework

As it is noted in the two previous DAO reports, since 2005, the Albanian governments have continually adapted legal acts and regulations within the frame of digitalization. Legal acts on electronic signature, electronic communications, electronic trades and documents, on the establishment of relevant institutions, on the operation of information storage systems, postal services, cyber security etc. have been approved to complete the legal framework in order to make progress into the digitalization process and accelerate the digital transformation.

The most important document for the implementation of the DA in the Republic of Albania is the CCSDA. The first adapted strategy was the Cross-Cutting Strategy of Information Society 2008 – 2013\(^{25}\), the second strategy was Digital Agenda of Albania 2015 – 2020\(^{26}\) and the third one adapted during the period this report is observing is Cross-Cutting strategy on Digital Agenda 2022 – 2026\(^{27}\).

The list of the legal acts adapted during 2021 – 2022 in terms of digitalization is as below:

1. The Decisions of Council of Ministers (DCM) adapted for the closure of reception counters, on 29th of April 2022\(^{28}\):

   DCM for a change in DCM no. 928, date 29.12.2014 “For the criteria, procedures and documentation for the social pension”,

   DCM for a change in DCM no. 53, date 29.01.2004, “For procedures and measure of special financial treatment of retired flying pilots”

   DCM for a change in decision no. 78, dated 28.1.2015, “For the implementation of law no. 150/2014, dated 6.11.2014, "on pensions of employees who have worked in mines, underground"”, amended

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\(^{26}\) Digital Agenda of Albania 2015 – 2020 / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/VX3dp85

\(^{27}\) Cross-Cutting strategy on Digital Agenda 2022 – 2026 / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/9X93H7C

\(^{28}\) DCM on 29th of April 2022 / access the link here: https://cutt.ly/vX3fhjn
4. Legal framework

DCM for a change in decision no. 644, dated 16.6.2010, “For determining the procedure and measure of the special financial treatment of pilots and flying technicians of the helicopter medical transport unit, in pension”

DCM for a change in decision no. 651, dated 14.9.2016, ”For the implementation of law no. 10139, dated 15.5.2009, ”on supplementary state pensions of employees of universities, high schools, study centers albanology, academy of sciences and all other public research institutions in the republic of Albania, which have scientific titles”, amended

DCM for a change in the decision no. 793, dated 24.9.2010, ”For the implementation of law no. 10142, dated 15.5.2009, ”on the supplemental social insurance of the military of the armed forces, of the employees of the police of the , of the guard of the republic, of the state information service, of the prison police, of the fire protection police and of the rescue of the employees of the internal control service in the republic of Albania”, amended

DCM for some changes and additions to decision no. 17, dated 15.1.2020, ”on procedures, criteria and rules for the implementation of employment promotion programs through employment, job training and professional practices”, amended

DCM for some changes and additions to decision no. 453, dated 3.7.2019, ”on the measure of loan interest subsidies and the procedure of its granting for families, who benefit from low-cost housing, with easy loans from the state"

DCM for a change in decision no. 477, dated 25.7.2012, ”on the procedures and measure of special financial treatment of helicopter pilots and technicians flying helicopters, in pension, in the general directorate of the state police and the guard of republic"
4. Legal framework

DCM for some changes in decision no. 721, dated 11.11.2019, “for determining the documentation, the annual amount of the transfer from the state budget and the financing procedures of the social insurance fund for the supplemental financial treatment of employees who have worked in underground mines, of employees of the oil and gas industry and of employees who have worked in metallurgy”

DCM for some changes in decision no. 535, dated 8.7.2020, of the council of ministers, “on the procedures, criteria and rules for the implementation of the public works program in the community”

DCM for some changes in decision no. 837, dated 28.10.2020, ”on the procedures, criteria and rules for the provision of employment services”

DCM for some changes in decision no. 1243, dated 11.12.2009, “for the determination of the documents to be submitted by the citizens and the procedures to be carried out by the civil status offices in the municipalities/municipal units/municipalities and institutions state, special, for changing residence/address of citizens”

DCM for determination of the rules, procedures and criteria for the provision of the expert certificate in the field of forests and pastures

DCM for procedures for providing on-line services by service institutions and for the methodology of monitoring and controlling the administrative activity of their provision

2. DCM No. 252, dated 29.4.2022 “On the procedures for the provision of online services by service providers and on the methodology of monitoring and controlling the administrative activity of their provision”

29 Access the link here: https://cutt.ly/kX3gy7K
4. Legal framework

3. DCM No. 267, dated 12.5.2021 "On the Creation of the State Database "Register of Innovative Service Providers and Automated Collective Investment Enterprises"[30]

4. DCM No. 458, dated 30.7.2021 "On the Approval of the Licensing Regulation for Entities that Exercise Their Activity as Providers of Innovative Services, the Method of Evaluating the Special Criteria for Automated Enterprises of Collective Investments DT, as well as the Certification of the Innovative Technology Agreement"[31]

5. DCM No. 708, dated 24.11.2021 "On the approval of the regulation "On the licensing of entities that exercise activity as a DLT exchange"[32]

6. DCM No. 709, dated 24.11.2021 "On the approval of the regulation for the licensing of entities that exercise the activity as custodians of third-party portfolios"[33]

7. Regulation for the Implementation of the Fair Use Policy and Sustainability Assessment Methodology of the Removal of Retail Roaming Charges [RLAH] with the Western Balkans[34]

8. Regulation on content and manner of documentation of measures of cyber security[35]

[33] Access the link here: https://cutt.ly/DX3gx50
[34] Access the link here: https://cutt.ly/dX3gKxT
5. Status of e-Services

There are approximately 200 public institutions that provide their electronic services in e-Albania platform. Currently there are 1200 public services offered online, or approximately 95%. The Albanian Government has invested in the development of the electronic services, digitalization of archives, increasing the number of connected systems into the interoperability governmental platform, data exchange, increase the number of e-services in the platform, infrastructure, development of specific platforms to exchange legal documents, electronic stamp and signature etc. e-Albania platform serves as a centralized gateway through which, any interested individual can receive via the Internet, electronic services provided by public institutions in Albania. This platform is connected with the interoperability governmental platform, which is the basic architecture on which interaction with the electronic systems of public institutions is enabled, as a necessary step for simplifying the services that the Albanian government offers to the citizens, businesses and public administration, reducing the number of documents required of the citizen or business for obtaining public services. Interoperability platform is connected through governmental net GovNet with currently 55 electronic systems of public administration. It has to be highlighted that e-Albania platform serves as a window that shows the required data from the user, a window that communicates with other institutions servers; it does not register any data in its database.

Regarding the privacy of data exchange, the process is based on the following law:

1. The Constitutions of the Republic of Albania,
2. Law no. 9887, date 10.03.2008 “On data protection”,
3. Law no. 9918, date 19.05.2008 “On Electronic and Postal Communications”.

It is important to emphasize that regardless the laws in force for data protection and the certified security of the systems, the digitalization process is followed with several incidents of data leakage.
5. Status of e-Services

5.1 Testing of electronic services of e-Albania platform.
As in the previous DAO report (2021), in this observatory are going to be described four e-services, based on the experience of the users. The tested services are Application for international driving license, Application for electronic signature, Registration in the first grade – elementary school, Application for electronic certification.

5.1.1. Application for international driving license
This service is provided by the Regional Director of Road Transport Services to all the citizens who already have an active national driving license. The validity of the international driving license is always issued within the limits of the validity of the national driving license possessed, and with a validity period of no more than three years⁴¹.

The procedure for the application is as following:
- Identification into e-Albania portal through the citizen’s identification number
- The service “Application for international driving license” is selected by the user
- By clicking the button “Use”, the applicant submits the electronic form choosing the regional directorate where the document is going to be withdrawn.

⁴¹ Access the link here: https://cutt.ly/7X3MkCL
5. Status of e-Services

- After receiving confirmation for the submission of the form, the applicant has to pay the fee for the service through Credins Bank, with a debit or credit card.

- The applicant is going to be notified at “My messages” on the status of the application/procedure.
5. Status of e-Services

- The applicant submits personal document photography at the regional directorate’s counter and receives the international driving license.
- The applicant can receive the required document since the following day after the application until 30 days after the submission of the application.

Necessary documents for this application:
- ID card / passport of the applicant
- Copy of the national driving license
- Personal document photography 4x5 cm
- Payment mandate of the fee (500 Albanian Lek)

The entire application process is very simple and e-friendly; the explanation of the each application step is helpful and easy to understand from every user, regardless their level of digital literacy.

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</table>
5. Status of e-Services

5.1.2 Application for electronic signature
The second electronic service that has been tested during this reporting period is the application for the electronic signature for private sector. This service is foreseen under the e-fiscalisation process, that started its implementation in January 2021. Electronic signature has to be used from the legal representatives of business units or non-governmental organizations (NGO) to sign the documents produced from their side. However, the documents signed electronically from businesses and NGOs are still not eligible for the second level bank in the Republic of Albania; these documents are accepted only by the public institutions.

According to the application steps procedure that is provided by e-Albania platform, the apply for this service, the user has to log in through his/her personal account or through the business account in e-Albania. It is noted that the service actually is not offered for a business account; it has to be applied by the administrator’s personal account.
5. Status of e-Services

- So, the first step for the user is to be identified through the credential of the personal account in e-Albania.
- The service “Application for electronic signature for the employees and tax paying entities” is selected by the user

This service is tested using the mobile app of e-Albania.

- The user has to create a new application for the e-signature, taking into the consideration the validity period of the existing electronic signature (365 days).
5. Status of e-Services

- The applicant has to choose all the tax paying entities that he/she is entitled to legally present. This electronic signature is going to be used and eligible for all the entities.
- The final step of the application is the payment of the service fee, 4800 Albanian Lek. The payment has to be done in any second level bank in Albania, or via a debit/credit card through the platform. If the user applies the online payment, the e-signature will be received in less than 24 hours.
- The testing of this service from the user failed. It has been tried for three days in a row, but it was unsuccessful to finish the application. The last try on this service was on 22nd of July 2022; on 24th of July 2022, NAIS announced the shut down on e-Albania platform due to a cyber-attack.
# 5. Status of e-Services

![Image of Albanian e-service portal](image)

## Accessibility

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## User-friendliness

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5. Status of e-Services

5.1.3 Application for electronic certificate
The third service is the application for the electronic certificate for the process of e-fiscalisation in the Republic of Albania. This process was launched in January 2021, when business unit in our country had to adapt their infrastructure in order to declare their purchases and sales online, in real time.

The service is available in the platform only for business entities and the user can apply after the identification through the Value-Added Tax Number. The procedure is quite the same as e-signature: user click on “Use” button, and the platform will show an application form. After submitting the form, the user does the payment fee for this service and the certificate will be generated via email.

There are two payment methods for this service: (i) uploading the payment mandate of any second level banks in Albania, (ii) online, via debit/credit card.
The innovation for this service for this monitoring period is the legal period to get access to the certificate after the application. Each application that has applied the online payment, the electronic certificate for e-fiscalisation process gets received in less than an hour. While the application that uploads the payment mandate into the platform, requires at least two weeks to have access.

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5. Status of e-Services

5.1.4. Registration in the first grade – elementary school
The forth application is registration in the first grade – elementary school. This application does not require any fees. If there is the parent that does the registration for the child, no additional documents are required. While if there is a third party doing the procedure, then they have to submit the custody document. Also, if the child is going to be registered at a school that is not in the same administrative unit as the parents' living address, then a document of justification has to be provided.

Testing this service resulted unsuccessful at the time. The user tried to apply for this registration, but it could not be submitted. The applicant addressed this issue to the Ministry of Education and Sports. After appealing this concern, the ministry responded that the service had not been properly set up; the system was accepting application only for children of 6 years old, while if the child was 7 years old, the algorithm did not recognize the application. Under the Albanian law, the registration age for the first grade is 6 years old, so if the system recognizes that a child is 7 years old, it means for the platform that the registration has already been made.

This was the concern of many parents during June – July 2022, but after raising the concern by the citizens, the algorithm is modified according to all the specifics.
## 5. Status of e-Services

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6. Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is one of the aspects of digital agenda that is difficult to find data for the Albanian population. One of the institutions that could have provided data on the performance of digital literacy in our country was ADISA, through the annual reports, based on the assistance offered towards the needs of the citizens. Since the 1st of May 2022, ADISA’s counters are no longer available for the citizens; the assistance for the citizens is offered online, via call centers. Also, there can not be found an annual report from this institution or any other report from the government on the literacy of the Albanian population in using digital tools. Hence, it is not clear on what basis the decision for the closure of the physical counters has been made. Furthermore, according to INSTAT, 51.1% of the age group 65-74 years old have declared that have never used internet; since this age group deals with pension procedures and other identification documents that need to be applied via e-Albania portal, the lack of an action plan on providing assistance and service to this category becomes a concern.

Referring to the interview held with the representatives of NAIS, it is noted that the government does not have a percentage of digital literacy for our population. The decision for the closure of the counter is foreseen as a mechanism to push the citizens in using online services, “by force”. Also, during the interview, the representatives mentioned that even though the scope of work of ADISA was to facilitate the process of digitalization through aiding the citizens based on their needs and request, this institution has almost failed in fulfilling this mission; this meant more workload for NAIS, as stated by the participants.
6. Digital Literacy

In terms of digital literacy, the new CCSDA 2022 – 2026, through the goal 1 on Digital Government: Enabling digital policies, intelligent processes and advanced solutions on secure platforms, aims to increase the digital education and literacy of the public servants in the Republic of Albania, as well as the transformation of teaching and learning methods in order to increase the digital literacy in the country.

The main pillars are:

- Creation of a digital culture of learning
- Teaching and learning process
- Safe buildings and internet connection
- Scientific research in the higher education institutions.

Also, one of the telecommunication operators in Albania, Vodafone AL, is financing the STEM program (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) aiming to give to the youngsters the opportunity to explore, interoperate and get inspired from by the exponential technologies. Hence, youngsters aged 12-16 years old will have the opportunity to strengthen their capacities in digital literacy. The four main categories are: exploring STEM program, learning and transforming STEM into a simple game, developing based on the gained skills, using STEM as a tool to solve problems and create new solutions/ideas. The program was launched by the end of year 2021.
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^42 Access link here: https://cutt.ly/tX8i6eT
7. Cyber-security

The more digitalized a society gets, the more exposed to the cyber-attacks it is. And this works for private sector, as well. The biggest cyber-attack, since the start of digitalization process in Albania, was faced on the third week of July 2022. According to the response of an operating second level bank in the Republic of Albania, its administration has emphasized to all the employees to not take into the consideration any electronic public document released during 16-24th of July 2022. Even though the NAIS announced the shut down of e-Albania portal on 24th of July, there is a high possibility that the first attack could have been a week before the decision. This cyber-attack is considered a sophisticated and synchronized attack. But there is no official declaration on when the first attack of the system happened. While the investigations for this case is still on progress, NAIS has officially declared that no data are being missed as a result of this attack.

In the overall performance, Albania has performed positively in the last year in terms of cybercrime. According to the developed tool of e-Governance Academy, National Cyber Security Index, Albania has scored 48.05 points of this index, ranked in the 68th position, compared to the 72nd of the previous year’s performance. Also, according to this index, the results of Albania in digital development (48.74) are higher (0.69) than the performance of cyber security performance.

43 Access the link here: https://cutt.ly/yX8vG76
44 Access the link here: https://ncsi.ega.ee/compare/
7. Cyber-security

During the discussions, NASCCS representative noted that in the action plan of the National Strategy for the Cyber Security are included institutions such as Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Health, State Police (within the frame of Ministry of Interior), Directorate of Secure Classified Information. Focusing on the Cyber Unit of the State Police (Unit C), the participants highlighted that only the unit of the Directorate of Tirana is functional. Citizens that have been exposed to cyber-crimes in other cities of Albania, have to appeal to the Unit C of Tirana Directorate of Police. The same results are presented in the report of Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), “Mapping Cybersecurity and Human Rights Opportunities and Challenges in Albania”, representative of which shared some of the main findings of the report during the discussion session. The main concern raised by the participant of IDM in the meeting is the confusion caused in national level for the reporting of cyber-crimes; there are three online platforms that have developed the mechanism of appealing for cyber-crimes such as the portal of the Agency for the Protection of Children, reporting through NASCCS official website and The Child Rights Centre Albania as well. To concluded the discussion, the representative of IDM expressed that a perception of lack of capacities and coordination is being noted in terms of cyber-security in our country

8. Data protection

On 22nd of December 2021, Albania experienced another data leakage. This was the second event, following the data breach that happened in April 2021, with a database of personal data and political preferences of approximately 1 million citizens in Albania. The second database contained personal data of 637,000 citizens of Tirana, including salary information for each of them.

As a result of the investigation made for this case, this database has been downloaded from the employees of the administration of GDT in October 2021 and disseminated (sold for approximately 200 EUR) to a third party (company). The database was accessible for everyone via a link that was disseminated through WhatsApp.
8. Data protection

MJAFT! staff compiled a letter of appealing towards the Office of the Commissioner for Freedom of Information and Data Protection, for the malpractice of the public institutions’ employees in violating the private data of the citizens. The response from this office highlighted its engagement in investigating the case and publishing the results of the investigation on their official website. Also, the office had an official declaration stating that an administrative act has been sent to the EPCA and Audiovisual Media Authority on the dissemination of the database through online platforms, in order for these institutions to act on preventing the spread of this database.

Referring to the Annual Report 2021 of the Office of the Commissioner for Freedom of Information and Data Protection, there are held 39 hearing sessions. As a result, 42 recommendations, 1 order and 12 decisions (31 administrative sanctions) have been published from the office. There is no further information on these produced acts in the report.

Also, in the report can be found the results of the investigation for the personal data breach happened in April 2021. The main findings of the office are:

- There is still an insufficient level of knowledge and a clear lack of will to fulfill and respect the provisions of the legislation for the protection of personal data from the public controllers.
- Controllers during the processing of personal data do not foresee in concrete way the whole procedure.
- Lack of attention and efforts towards adapting technical-organizational measures.
- Continuous attempts to guarantee the security of data processing need to be undertaken.
- Unrestricted access in data.
- Difficulties in managing ICT resources, as well as lack of strategies, plans.
- Deficiencies in addressing the elements, obligations and guarantees of sanctioned in the legislation in terms of contractual relations with third parties.
- Lack of systematic implementation of the laws in force.

45 Access the link here: https://cutt.ly/CXBloN9
9. e-Participation and e-Democracy

The most important document foreseen to be announced for public consultation during 2021 was the National Cross-Cutting Strategy on the Digital Agenda. Even though the strategy was planned to be approved during the 2021, it was only published for consultations on 26th of October 2021 on the platform www.konsultimipublik.gov.al.

The document was open to comments only for two weeks and was posted under the ownership of the Council of Ministers, which made it really difficult for the organizations that are dealing with DA in Albania to find the document and provide feedback. Also, the institution responsible for the implementation of DA in Albania, NAIS, said that there is not in their disposal a database of NGOs that work in the field of digitalization.

In the meetings held among MJAFT and NAIS, their representatives expressed that the consultation period was too short, due to the willingness of the government to approve the document within 2021. However, the document is approved in the 1st of June 2022.
9. e-Participation and e-Democracy

Currently, the draft-strategy is published under the ownership of NAIS in the platform of e-consultations. Representatives of NAIS stated that this change was made by the department of law of the institution, due to the fact that NAIS is the institution that designed the strategy but was approved by the Council of Ministers. Even though the representatives of NAIS said that the draft can be found under both ownerships of NAIS and Council of Ministers, the draft can be currently found only under the ownership of NAIS.

When asked on the consultations held with interest groups from civil society sector, NAIS representatives stated that no offline consultations are done with these stakeholders. The consultation process is done with private companies and IT specialists from public institutions.

Even though public consultations, using the developed platforms, are considered in the strategy as important to be used by public institutions while decision-making processes in order to increase inclusiveness and transparency, it failed to properly hold public inclusive consultations for the designation of this strategy.
9. e-Participation and e-Democracy


- The law no. 146/2014 “On Public Consultations” is still in the same legal terms, which makes its implementation difficult. Most of the CSOs’ representatives or media partners are not aware of the institution that is responsible for the maintenance of this law, in order to provide their comments on the necessity of the amendment of the law.

- Creation of a national report on Digital Literacy level in the Republic of Albania.

- Workshop and training sessions to increase the capacities of public servants in data protection.

- Increasing the level of public awareness on cyber security through online and offline campaigns.

- Increased cooperation with relevant CSOs to implement joint projects in promoting the awareness toward cyber-attacks.

- Based on the National Cyber Security Index report, the NAECCS should adapt the documents scored negatively in the national report of the country, in order to increase the performance of Albania in the field of cyber security.
Annex 1. List of interviewed stakeholders

- National Agency of Information Society
- National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security
- Institute for Democracy and Mediation
- Epoka e Re
- European Youth Association
- Orbis Center
- Young Professionals Network
- Second level bank
- Sonil Frasheri – Journalist, Euronews Albania
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Country Report and Roadmap for Digital Agenda advancement in Albania