ICEDA
Increasing Civic Engagement in the Digital Agenda

ALBANIA
DIGITAL AGENDA
OBSERVATORY

Country Report and Roadmap 2020

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Albania
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Country Report and Roadmap 2020

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Preface

Only with a clear and understandable approach to all citizens, without exception, can there be a sustainable digitalization in all spheres as an effective mechanism for significantly improving the lifestyle of the population. When we talk about digitalization in all spheres, we refer to the advancement and bigger efficiency of the institutions, organizations and other entities. Being witnesses of the pandemic crisis, we can note that this is a more than needed step for a better functioning of the society, and we can see how this unfortunate circumstance has accelerated the spread of knowledge about benefits from the digitalization. However, we must be aware that the swift digitalization has also brought up a lot of issues, where we gave devices to citizens are not taught how to use them properly, which is why we are faced with hate speech, fake news and misinformation, cyber bullying, cybercrime, etc.

As we have not come across any comprehensive research of this kind, in this report we have tried to provide a baseline for the state of e-Governance development and digital literacy in the Republic of Albania, in order to provide a starting point for further measuring of the advancement in these areas in correlation to the Digital Agenda and to provide further recommendations for improvement.

The Digital Agenda is an initiative developed by the European Union, which has also been extended and adopted for 6 countries in the Western Balkan. It aims to ensure that citizens of the region can fully reap the benefits of the digital transformation. The commitment to the Digital Agenda will ensure that citizens have the skills to match the demands of the new economy and will help modernize public administrations, strengthen cyber security, increase connectivity, and improve the business climate.

This research is part of the Digital Agenda Observatory and is implemented in 5 Western Balkan countries as part of the project **Increasing Civic Engagement in the Digital Agenda** – **ICEDA** co-funded by the European Union and implemented by Metamorphosis Foundation (North Macedonia) as the leading partner, e-Governance Academy (Estonia), CRTA – Center for Research, Transparency, and Accountability (Serbia), NGO 35mm (Montenegro), Open Data Kosovo (Kosovo) and Lëvizja Mjaft (Albania). The issues addressed by the reports are specifically related to the chapters relevant to the Digital Agenda in particular Chapter 10 – Information Society and Media from the EU's 'acquis', with a goal to reinvigorate the issues of the Western Balkans Digital Agenda on the EU agenda.

Research methodology

The quantitative data extracted and analyzed derives from the desktop study and information requests to the relevant information holders, including the collection of the secondary data by reviewing the strategy and policy documents, concept papers and international project reports. Descriptive data analysis method was used to answer the research questions i.e. the indicators of the current efforts of the Digital Agenda (DA) implementation by the government, civil society and media, and it is summarized in Chapter 1.

To understand the attitude, motivation and experience of stakeholders related to the Digital Agenda issues, qualitative research methods by collecting the primary data using interviews, online survey and semi-structured focus group discussion with different stakeholders (institutionalized and non-institutionalized civil society representatives (CSOs and civic activists), representatives of state authorities, journalists and representatives of media) were conducted about their views of the state of DA and needs for improvement. The results of these research projects are presented in all the chapters of the report.

In Albania, through our activities we received 27 responses on our online survey (16 from representatives of state authorities, 2 from the media and 9 from the civil society representatives), we conducted 9 interviews with 3 media representatives of state authorities, 3 media representatives and 3 civil society representatives, and organized a focus group with 3 state authority representative and 3 civil society representative.
The research methodology was designed by the e-Governance Academy (eGA). eGA is a non-profit think tank and consultancy organization from Estonia that creates and transfers knowledge and best practices and empowers central and local government decision in the area of digital transformation: e-governance, e-democracy and national cyber security.
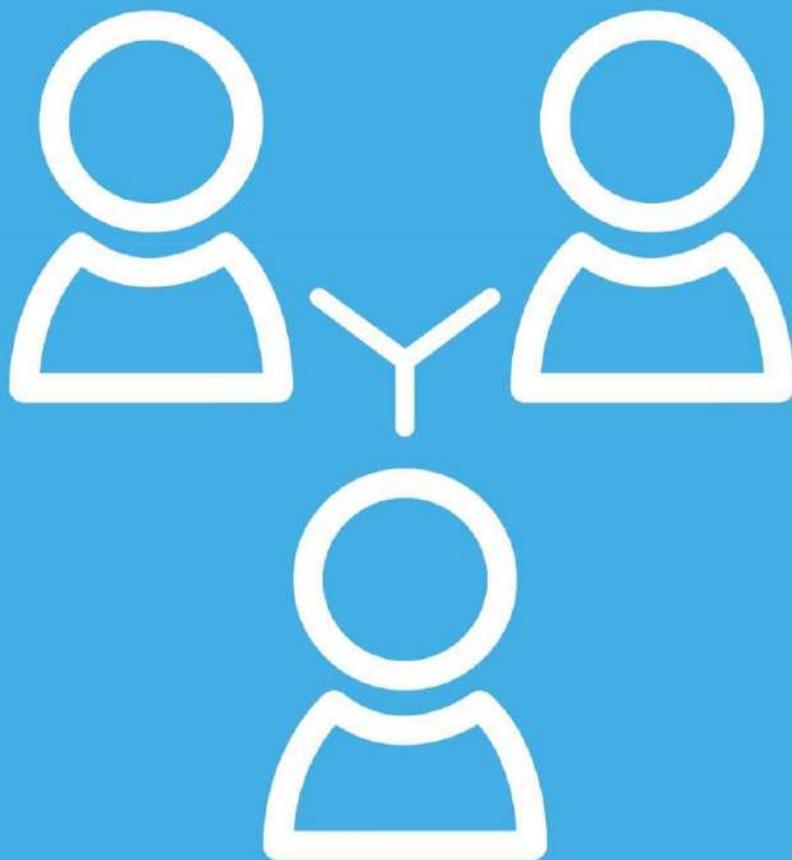
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CURRENT STATE
IN ALBANIA

Current state in Albania

Digital Agenda is a term still to be coined in Albania, a small country in the **W**estern Balkans, coming from one of the harshest dictatorships of Eastern Europe. Until very recently the very notion of public information was a struggle not only for the government officials, but also from the citizens prospective. The first significant dive that the government had into the notions of public transparency, open data and finally Digital Agenda, was when Albania became part of the O**G**P platform[1] in September 2011.

The O**G**P gave the opportunity to the N**G**Os sector to regularly request more detailed information to the public institutions. Later in 2014 a new FOI act was adopted, which is perceived as a revolution in terms of public transparency, as it made it mandatory for the public institutions to reply within 10 working days to all requests for Freedom of Information from citizens, N**G**Os, and other third parties.

During the same year, another law came into force; this one was regulated by law for the first time, the Public Consultation law. Unfortunately, this law has not been as effective as the FOI act; it lacks enforcement and is not well regulated enough with sanctions for the institutions that chose to not abide to the law. The government has even created a single website for all the draft laws to be consulted online from citizens, organizations and other thirds parties, but unfortunately this law has fell under the tokenism ground.

It is important to mention, that the struggle for a wider and more effective Digital Agenda, is not focused only towards the public institutions but equally to the citizens, which remain skeptical towards the use of e-services. This is mostly related to culture but also to digital literacy. The new generation is of course more prompt to adapt to the use of e-services and the use of internet in general. Considering the fact that basically everything started in 2011, we have to accept that the pace of adaptation has been quite impressive.

And finally, in 2014 we had the first medium term Strategy for the Digital Agenda 2014-2020[2], which is an inclusive document that came as a necessity to cope with the challenges of the new world. Challenges related to e-services, cyber security, business innovation, the use of ICT tools.

1.1 Internet penetration

In this section of the report we briefly describe the level of development of information and communication technologies (ICT) in Albania, the level of the country's e-readiness to fully

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1   http://ogp.gov.al/en

2   https://akshi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Digital_Agenda_Strategy_2015_-_2020.pdf

implement and successfully conduct e-governance activities, and we attempt to map main bilateral and multilateral cooperation initiatives related to the Digital Agenda.

Table 1 – Basic information

	Number/percentage/ description	Source of information	Comments
Name of the country	Albania		
Population	2,845,955	Instat, 2020	
Internet penetration	73.5% 68.6%	Internet World Stat; Instat (2019)	Two sets of data
Number of Mobile connections	4.12 mil / 143% of the population	http://www.mobileconnectivityindex.com/#year=2018&zoneIsocode=ALB	Data for 2020
Share of web traffic by device: Mobile phone Laptops and desktops Tablets	75.7% 23.7% 0.6%	https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-albania	Data for 2019
Number of services on national governance platform (e-Albania)	1570 services, whereas 591 e-services	National Agency for Information Society (2018)	No data for 2019
Users of e-Albania	726,280 users (693,275 citizens and 33,005 enterprises)	National Agency for Information Society (2018)	No data for 2019
Country e-readiness rankings			
International structures/institutions supporting the development of DA	The European Digital Strategy	EC	
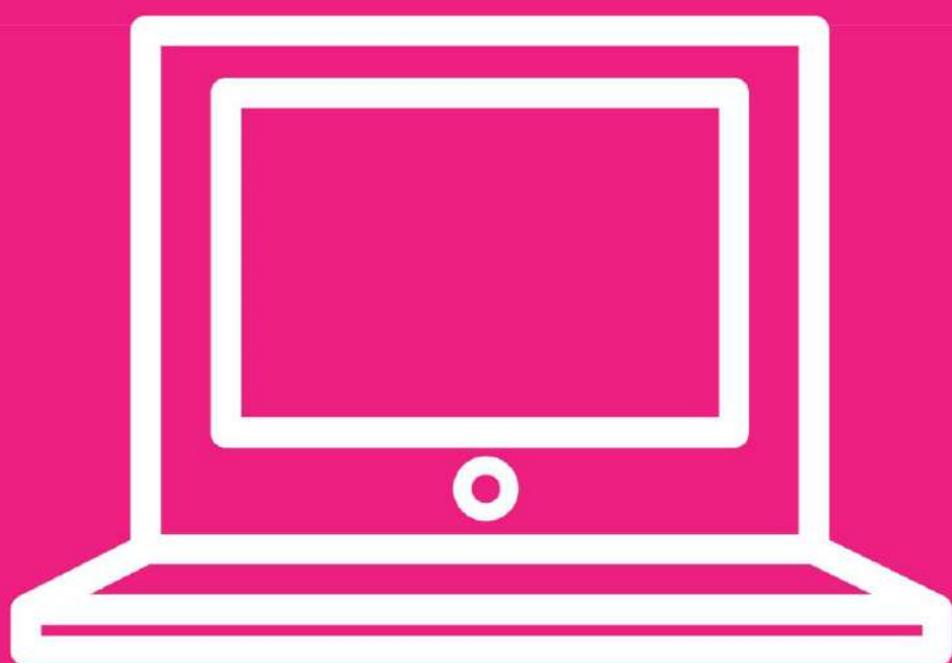
2
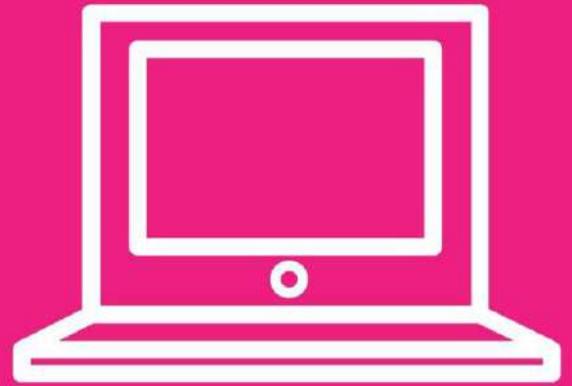
Strategic, legal and administrative developments regarding e-Government

2.1 Strategic development

a) In 2013 was approved the Cross-Cutting Strategy on Digital Agenda of Albania 2014-2020[3], which aimed to achieve three main objectives:

i.   to increase and promote electronic public services for the citizens and the public administration;

ii.   to increase the usage of information and communication technologies in education in order to create industry specific skilled labor; and

iii.   to improve the national broadband infrastructure.

In order to create a base structure for the e-governance, the National Agency for Information Society was created (hereafter NAIS), which is responsible for the management and the coordination of the platform e-Albania.

b) Crosscutting Strategy on Public Administration Reform 2015-2020[4] aimed to:

i.   Build a sustainable and capable administration to face the challenges of country's development;

ii.   Innovative governance.

The legislation on the Digital Agenda of Albania was based on the EU Directives. Between the timeframe of 2008-2014 a series of laws were drafted and approved which aimed to regulate the environment of business communication, create and maintain infrastructure for electronic communication for the public administration and e-governance, build broadband infrastructure, and offer e-services for the enterprises and citizens. These laws are listed as below, and can be found here:

-      Crosscutting Strategy for Development and Integration in the Republic of Albania (2015-2020)[5] ;

-      Law no. 9887, date 10.3.2010 "On the security of personal data", changed with the law no. 48/2012 and law no. 120/2014[6] ;

-      Law no 9918, date 19.05.2008 "On the electronic communication in the Republic of Albania", changed with the Law no. 102/2012 in accordance with the developments of the EU acquis7 ;

-      Law no. 9880, date 25.2.2008 "On the electronic signature"8 ;

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3   https://akshi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Strategjia_Axhenda_Dixhitale_e_Shqiperise_2015-2020.pdf

4   http://dap.gov.al/publikime/dokumenta-strategjik/64-strategjia-ndersektoriale-e-reformes-ne-administraten-publike-2015-2020 http://dap.gov.al/publikime/dokumenta-strategjik/278-strategjia-kombetare-per-zhvillim-dhe-integrim https://www.idp.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Ligj_Nr.9887_dat%C3%AB_10.3.2008_i_ndryshuar.pdf https://www.parlament.al/Files/ProjektLigje/20200121101908ligj%20nr%20%2092%20dt%20%2018%2012%202019.pdf

- Law no. 10273, date 29.04.2010 "On the electronic document"[9] ;
- Law no. 10128, date 11.5.2009 "On electronic trade", changed with the law no. 135/2013[10] ;
- Law no.10325, date 23.9.2010 "On the database of the state"[11] ;
- Law no. 9380, date 28.4.2005 "On the author's copy right and other rights related"[12] ;
- Law no. 72, date 28.6.2012 "On the organization and functioning of the national infrastructure of Geospatial Information in the Republic of Albania"[13] ;
- Law no. 146/2014 "On Public Announcement and Consultancy"[14] ;
- Law no 119/2014 "On the right of information"[15] ;
- DCM no. 673, date 22.11.2017, changed 2019;
- DCM no. 495, date 13.9.2017 "On the approval of the regulation of access on electronic public services";
- DCM no. 496, on some amendments on DCM no 332 "On defining the form, elements, maintenances of fundamental documents, hold and issued from the Marital Status";
- DCM no. 673, date 22.11.2017 "On the reorganization of the National Agency for Information Society";
- DCM no. 15/12.1.2018;
- Law no. 107-2018, "On an addition to the Law no. 9918, date 19.05.2008, On the electronic communication in the Republic of Albania, changed"[16] ;
- DCM no. 303, date 31.03.2011 "On the development of Information and Communication Technology units in the line ministries and other institutions";
- DCM no. 357, date 24.4.2013 for the approval of the regulation "On the management of electronic documents in the Republic of Albania";
- DCM no. 778, date 7.11.2012 "On the approval of the general, minimal personnel ICTu standards for the Organizational Structuring of the ICT units";
- DCM no. 914, date 29.12.2014 "On the approval of the regulation on public procurement, changed with DCM no 402, date 13.05.2015,with DCM no 1046, date 23.12.2015, DCM no. 823, date 23.11.2016 and DCM no. 893, date 21.12.2016;
- Directives no. 2, date 2.9.2013 "On the standardization of drafting the terms of reference for the ICT projects in the public administration";

http://www.pp.gov.al/web/ligj_nenshkrimi_elektronik_41.pdf

0   https://akshi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ligj_nr_10273_per_dokumentin_elektronik.pdf

1https://www.idp.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/
ligji_10128_per_tregtine_elektronike_i_ndryshuar.pdf

3   https://www.kqk.gov.al/sites/default/files/publikime/ligji_nr.10_325_date_23.09.2010.pdf
https://3 kultura.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Ligj_nr._35_dt._31.3.2016.pdf

14   https://www.infrastruktura.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/183907828-LIGJ-Nr-72-2012-
PER-ORGANIZIMIN-DHE-FUNKSIONIMIN-E-INFRASTRUKTURES-KOMBETARE-
TE-INFORMACIONIT-GJEOHAPESINOR-NE-REPUBLIKEN-E-SHQIPERISE.pdf

15   https://www.idp.al/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/
ligj_nr_146_per_njoftim_konsultim_publik_dt_30_10_2014_19918_1-2.pdf

16   https://www.idp.al/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/160-2014-DI-1.pdf
http://parlament.al/Files/ProjektLigje/20181228102119ligj%20nr.%20107,%20dt.%2020.12.2018.pdf

- DCM no. 227, date 29.3.2017 "On the approval of National plan on frequencies";
- DCM no. 322, date 5.5.2010 "On the approval of the document on electronic communication policies in the Republic of Albania";
- PM Directives no. 119, date 2.6.2010 "On building the cross-cutting working group on coordination and development of the national broadband backbone";
- Law no. 46-2015 "On postal services in the Republic of Albania"[17] ;
- PM Directive no. 202, date 16.12.2005 "Strength of transparency through increase of internet usage and improvement of current internet web pages";
- DCM no. 961, date 24.11.2010 "On defining the regulatory coordinating authority of the state database";
- DCM no 945, date 2.11.2012 "On the approval of the regulation "Administration of the state database system";
- DCM no 734, date 2.11.2012 "On the creation of a unique system for registration, authentication, and identification of the users in the issued services";
- DCM no 710, date 21.8.2013 "On the creation and functioning of the information systems, work continuity and agreements of service levels", changed;

2.1.1. Administrative capacities

The National Strategy was approved by the Council of Ministers under the responsibility of the Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration. However, with the change of the government structure, now it is under the competencies of the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure.

Department of Development and Good Governance, at the Prime Minister's Office:

- Ministry of Finance and Economy guarantees the consolidation of the budget chapter. As part of the technical working group, the general budget directorate, the macroeconomic and fiscal policy directorates are involved in the process.

- Ministry of Justice / Thematic Group on Anticorruption guarantees the analysis of the legislative implications of the Reform as well as the necessary proposals in the regulatory framework in support of the Action Plan.

- National Agency for Information Society / Thematic Group for E-Gov guarantees the linkage of the National Plan for European Integration (PKIE). In the process, as part of the technical working group, the departments in their function are closely involved: IPA programming issues, as well as the directorates on sectional issues and EU integration.

17   http://infrastruktura.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Ligji_nr._46_dt._7.5.2015.pdf

3

E-Services and Digital literacy of Citizens

E-Services and Digital literacy of Citizens

The unique portal e-Albania[18] offers a total of 591 electronic services. According to NAIS, in 2018 there was a total of 726,280 registered users[19]. The Agency lacks information on the number of users in 2019, but according to a presentation from the National Coordinator Against Corruption there were 302, 068 users registered in the previous year. This would sum up to a total number of 1,028,348 users. 97% of the users are citizens (87% within Albania and 13% Albanians living abroad), whereas 3% of them are private businesses. Every citizen or enterprise has access to the portal. Individuals log in through their Personal ID number and a private password, while businesses and other entities use their NUIS number and the private password. Private businesses or public administration officials can apply also for the service of electronic signature, which is confirmed firstly from NAIS. This facilitates of course bureaucratic matters.

The most used services from the citizens, also mentioned by the interviewed representatives of media, CSOs and public institutions, are: access to family certificates; certificate on individual contributions; health card; personal certificate; application for construction permit (e-permit); certificate for unregistered individuals; certificate for marital act; etc.

The most used services from the private business are: application for construction permit (e-permit); confirmation on the active status of the vehicle; certification for payment clearance; certification for contribution clearance from the subject; electricity bill; etc. The most encountered issues are: password reset; assistance for registration; assistance for passport application and ID card; etc.

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18   https://e-albania.al/Default.aspx

19   https://akshi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/raport-vjetor-AKSHI-2018.pdf

In parallel with e-Albania, the most used portal providing electronic services to Albanian business is e-filing[20], the online platform of tax declaration in our country, within the frame work of National Center of Business. Each business can be identified through its NUIS number and a password. This platform facilitates the process of Value Added Tax declaration, monthly contributions of the employees, tax deducted at source, sales and purchase books, as well as submission of annual financial reports. This platform represents one of the most necessary and useful platforms in Albania. According to Mrs. Albana Laknori, representative of Chamber of Commerce and Industry Tirana, the development of this portal has reduced the costs, it is time efficient, as well as makes it easier to access public documents in different formats; the biggest advantage of this center is that a business in our country, according to taxation laws, can be active within 24 hours. "When you facilitate the environment of business operation, you make your life easier." is Mrs. Laknori expressed.

The cooperation among public institutions, which are cross-linked to provide electronic services to the citizens, is still weak. This is the perception of most of the interviewed representatives of NGOs and media regarding the progress of Digital Agenda is Albania. Other mentioned issues refer to bureaucracy within the institutions, information processing, providing feedback based on the experiences – the submission of the request and the provision of the information are digitalized, while the whole process in between, within the offices, continues to be proceeded in the same old ways.

Despite of the public institutions' performance on the implementation of DA, quite all of the interviewed from media, NGOS and public institutions' representatives perceive that the Albanian citizens are still not enough aware of these services usage. Lack of awareness on personal data protection, in spite of being rapidly exposed to these online platforms is one of the main issues raised by media and NGOs representatives. While in the regards of the level of e-governance in our country, most of the challenges perceived as barriers are rooted in the digital infrastructure and digital skills which prevent citizens from benefitting from these services.

Every month there are approximately 400,000 uses of the e-services[21]. In 2018 an estimated of 3 million usages, whereas the highest demand was in Family Certificate (1,349,671 times used).

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20   https://efiling.tatime.gov.al/cats_public/Account/LogOn

21   https://akshi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/raport-vjetor-AKSHI-2018.pdf

From the most used 20 e-services, 12 of them are only offered online through e-Albania. This is an incentive of the government aiming to promote the electronic platforms. Under the Strategy of DA of Albania 2014-2020, the Ministry of Education states[22]:

"Strategy for the development of pre-university education 2014 - 2020 Under objective b: Inclusive education, the strategy provides for improving the digitalization of the learning process. This measure includes several activities for the period up to 2020 such as improving school infrastructure with regard to the use of digital technology; providing access to high speed internet for schools and access to technical assistance; and improving infrastructure to ensure communication between schools and regional education units etc. It also includes other measures for improvements in curricula in order to create high content digital materials in the Albanian language, raising awareness with regards to protecting students from the dangers of the Internet etc."

However, it seems that the digitalization process of education is not being implemented, as it should: Digital skills are not included in a teacher competence framework yet, and there are no specific learning outcomes related to digital skills[23]. On the other hand, there is also lack of statistical data or academic research on digital skills in Albania.

What is noted from the interviewed stakeholders is the mindset of Albanian citizens to use electronic services. Even though this form of getting public services reduces corruption practices and makes the whole process more efficient, the citizens still prefer to get these services by having a hard copy document.

One of the main issues raised in the focus group meeting is related to the fact that there are a lot of youngsters that develop software in our country, but the problem is faced when it comes to the absorption of this software and the tools developed by the large population. Mrs. Mariana Shehi, representative of Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, stated that it is more difficult to adapt the system in elementary school than it is when you work with higher levels of education. Due to covid-19, the ministry developed an e-learning system in a short time. The difficulties where faced in elementary school, when the educators would have to explain to the parents how to use the system, while most of the parents that live in rural area, do not have the right digital literacy to adapt to innovative practices of learning and assist their children while using it.

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22 https://arsimi.gov.al/strategjia-e-zhvillimit-te-arsimit-parauniversitar-2014-2020/

23 https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d7834ad0-ddac-11e9-9c4e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-105790537

4

Transparency and access to public sector information

Transparency and access to public sector information

The access to public institutions is regulated by the law no. 119/2014, date 18.9.2014 on the Freedom of Information, aiming to enhance integration, transparency and accountability of public authorities.

Based on the article no. 3 of this law, each citizen in the Republic of Albania has the right to access public information, without being obligated to provide motivation of the request. This information should be provided by the public authority within 10 days, otherwise the information requires processing of data which needs more days to be disseminated by the institution; in this case, the public authority informs the interested party for the period of time needed to provide the necessary required information.

Each institution should draft and adapt the Program of Transparency. According to this program, the institution should define the categories of the information published on the website without an official request. The request made by the citizens and the responses provided by the institutions should be record in a public register published on the website of the institution; this document must be updated each three months. To provide the required information, the public institutions must entitle a responsible person, named Coordinator of FOI.

The questionnaires sent out to the public institutions in Albania on the implementation of DA in our country were filled in by only 8.5% of the coordinators, respecting the maximum 10 working days to submit their responses. This is an unsatisfactory result, in comparison to the situation measured in 2018. Based on the Openness Index[24], the Albanian public authorities reached 40.51% of their indicators fulfilled, referring to the 2018 measurements. Also, the access to information performed 43.06%. When it comes to the publication of the documents in open data format, the Republic of Albania has a lot to be done. In spite of some initiatives in governmental levels, the publication of official documents in these formats is 24.87%. One of the best practices to be noted is the portal of Municipality of Tirana, Open Data Tirana. The portal is presented in April 2017 and it aims to serve as a database of public affairs and services provided by the Municipality of Tirana, to increase the transparency towards citizens, as well as efficient management of time and money of

24 https://opennessindex.actionsee.org/

taxpayers. Open Data Tirana[25] also contains illustrating videos how to navigate into the portal [26] and how to use the data[27]. Based on the discussion in the focus group meeting, the municipality's representative stated that by the end of the year, the number of indicators published on this portal is going to be increased and provide more data regarding the public services of this municipality.

During the online focus group, the representative of the Office of the Commissioner of the Right of Information and Data Protection, Mrs. Besa Veliaj stated that one of the biggest concerns of the FOI act implementation is that there are not many appeals from citizens, comparing to the CSOs or businesses; they are not aware of this law, their right to practice it, as well as the institutional procedure they can pursue when the information required is not provided by the institutions. Mrs. Velaj also mentioned the "IDP ANKESA"[28] app that can be easily found in play store. Through this app each citizen can compile an electronic appeal when their right to public information has been refused and pursue the progress of its appeal. Mrs. Velaj said that even though the Commissioner Office has promoted this app during its meetings, the program has still a low number of users.

25 https://opendata.tirana.al/
26 https://youtu.be/eqyiY4EJwSg
27   https://youtu.be/J2eR337kzx0
28 https://www.idp.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Politika_e_privatesise-IDP_Ankesa.pdf

5

Citizens Participation

Citizens Participation

Citizen participation is regulated by the law No.146/2014 of Public Consultation[29] adopted in 2014. The law stipulates that all ministries of the line, executive agencies and local municipalities shall publish their draft laws for public consultations. Consultations shall be held online and via round tables with various stakeholders, experts, media organizations and NGOs. According to the law a minimum period of 2 weeks is mandatory for consultations. Nevertheless, the law is considered as non-fully functional, as there are no significant sanctions for the public institutions which do not fulfill the obligations regulated by the law.

Albania has a unique portal for public consultation[30] where all the draft laws should be presented and promoted for public consultations. Moreover, as a second security check, after the consultations are closed and send to the Albanian Parliament, before sending it to the General Assembly the draft laws need to go through parliamentary commissions. Parliamentary commissions on their behalf can hold public hearing with experts, stakeholders and NGOs. The Albanian Parliament has designed a manual for public consultations[31] that can be found online.

Despite the establishment of konsultimepublike.gov.al, NGOs' representatives confirm that the comments and suggestions made online on the draft laws are not published on the platform, which makes the whole process of consultation inefficient.

In regards to petitions, they are only allowed to be deposited in person; so far Albania hasn't adopted any online measures for online petitions.

Based on the results of the interviews and questionnaires, approximately 70% of the institutions state that no organizations of civil society were involved in the process of strategies' drafting. While on the other hand, 11.8% of the responders of the questionnaire say that the NGOs should not be part of the process, without explaining their statement.

29   https://mb.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Ligji_per_Njoftimin_dhe_Konsultimin_Publik-1.pdf
30   https://www.konsultimipublik.gov.al/
31   https://www.parlament.al/Files/Informacione/manuali_i_azhornuar_21298_1.pdf

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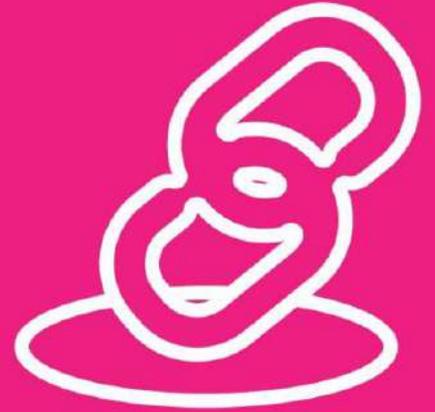
Data Privacy

Data Privacy

Data Privacy is regulated by the law no. 9887, date 10.03.2008 "On Personal Data Protection". The law falls under the responsibilities of the Office of the Commissioner on the Right of Information and Data Protection[32]. This law aims the rightful personal data processing through automatic tools, as well as based on an archiving system, by respecting and guaranteeing human rights.

According to data protection law, public authorities, as well as NGOs or other units that process private data in their daily activity, are obliged to establish an internal regulation on data protection. Data processing includes collection of data, using them, archiving as well as data destruction. Also, each institution that deals with private data must develop a tool to get the approval of citizens to process their data, as well as to inform them how their data is going to be archived or destroyed. Each citizen can get a confirmation if its data is being processed, upon an official request. If the citizens notice that their data are being processed not according to the articles of the law, they rightfully can request the correction of the procedure or the destruction of their personal data, or as well complain to the Commissioner of Data Protection.

Until recently, e-Albania's website, the biggest e-government service provider in Albania, was listed as a non-secure website by Google Chrome, Opera and Mozilla Firefox – indicating the web designers had initially failed to secure a SSL certificate for the website. Nevertheless, this minor issue has been fixed, leaving no (technical) ground for privacy concerns.

One of the main findings of the interviews was the approach of Albanian citizens in providing their personal data in online platforms; they are more concerned about the website's efficiency than their privacy policy. The less tech-savvy population tends to be more skeptical to use its services. For instance, the government's most recent decision to allow citizens to retrieve their property's certificate online – thus banishing long queues of citizens at the Immovable Property Registration Office – was met with skepticism and discontent by the citizens, who turned to social media to complain about the fact that most likely, they would be unable to get their certificates at all, due to their lack of skills to access the website.

Lack of Internet access, lack of computer skills and a deeply rooted disbelief in the efficiency of the Albanian public administration have shaped the citizen's skeptical attitude towards e-governance.

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32   https://www.idp.al/

7
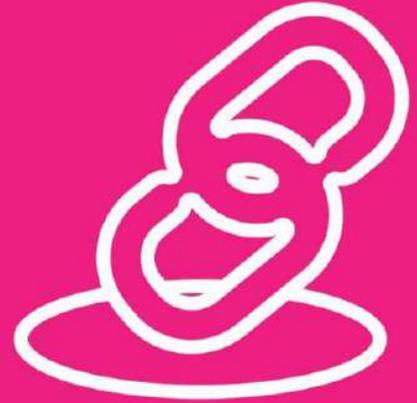
Cyber Security

Cyber Security

Cyber security is a thematic supervised and monitored from the Ministry of Defense. Within this ministry there is a special department dedicated to cyber security for both monitoring and developing strategies. Nevertheless, the large perception is that after Albania was accepted to the NATO organization, the section of Cyber Security has been under the umbrella of the organizations.

The Ministry of Defense develops a regularly a 2-year Strategy on Cyber Security[33]. The National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security (AKCESK) published a report[34] assessing the state of maturity of Albania's cyber security. The report relies on the Cyber security Capacity Maturity Model for Nations (CMM) methodology, developed by the Global Cyber Security Capacity Centre (GCSCC)[35] of the University of Oxford. The CMM methodology was deployed by GCSCC researchers, in partnership with the World Bank and the Global Cyber security Center for Development[36], part of Korea's Internet & Security Agency (KISA). The Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure facilitated the work of this partnership in Albania. The CMM aims to enable governments to benchmark cyber security capacity across five dimensions: cyber security policy and strategy; cyber culture and society; cyber security education, training and skills; legal and regulatory frameworks; and standards, organizations and technologies.

Albania is ranked 68th on the National Cyber Security Index with a 42% score. According to the opinion of one of the interviewed on the importance of cyber security issue: "It is sufficient to mention the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal to understand to what extent cyber security is important for citizens. The 2018 data breach which exposed the manipulative side of the social media giant, should have been a warning bell for the governments of the Western Balkans. During the Presidential election campaign in the US, Cambridge Analytica was contracted by President Donald Trump. The firm, which provided political consulting, harvested data from 87 million Facebook user profiles through a loophole found in Facebook's API.

Although Facebook claims that it never authorized selling of data collected with this method, Cambridge Analytica disregarded their responsibility in this aspect and sold the data. In many European countries, this raised concern over data management and brought up the debate of how much can users trust Facebook with their personal information. In Albania, this issue gained little attention, indicating the public's indifferent attitude towards a potential "Big Brother" scenario.

Although this episode emphasized once more the need for the EU to toughen regulation on social media monopoly, Facebook's uncontested position in the market provides it with a dominant position, thus limiting the area of intervention of European policymakers in persuading Zuckerberg to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

33 https://www.mod.gov.al/index.php/politikat-e-sigurise-2/strategji-te-mm/838-strategjia-per-mbrojtjen-kibernetike-cyber-defence

34   https://cesk.gov.al/publicAnglisht_html/Publikime/2019/
AlbaniaCMMReport.pdfNational_Cyber_Security_Strategy_and_Action_Plan_2016-2019_per_publikim_1202.pd 35 https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/cyber-security

36   https://www.kisa.or.kr/eng/mainactivities/internationalCooperation_01.jsp

Logically, it would be the company's responsibility to ensure that Facebook's Community Guidelines are tailor-made for every country, reflecting the country's policies. In the practical sense, this would require a legal desk officer for each country within Facebook's Headquarters to monitor the data protection and security guidelines of the representative country and provide instructions to the technical department on how to customize the features of Facebook users that access the website from an IP address from that country. As this seems unlikely to happen due to the immense costs on the California-based company, during Mark Zuckerberg's hearing in the European Parliament, the European lawmakers refrained from asking Zuckerberg to establish rules of conduct on its own "but clearly to regulate what is allowed and what is not."

Accordingly, the same principle should be followed with fake news and the sorting of it. Any line that must be drawn between valuable information and information that must be censored, should take into consideration the standards applied in making this selection, to ensure that there are no faulty criteria restricting the freedom of opinion and expression, which in turn, would leave Facebook users feeling manipulated."

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International Cooperation and Digital Maturity

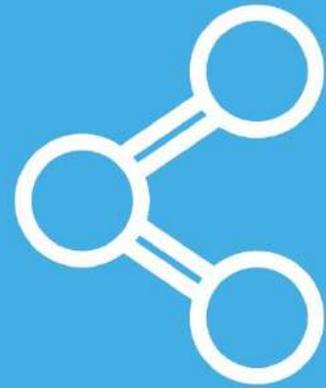## International Cooperation and Digital Maturity

Albania is member of Open Government Partnership (OGP) since September 2011[37]. Under the membership, Albania is currently implementing the fourth action plan 2018-2020[38], related to fiscal transparency, public services, access to information, public administration, and anti-corruption. All of the interviewed representatives state that even though they are too familiar with action plans of OGP in Albania, their activities in the last two years have not been in interaction neither with public institutions, nor with NGOs.

The municipality of Tirana (capital) is the only public institution which is drafting policies for improving the digital skills of the young generation. One of the main donors is the Albanian-American Investment Fund which together with the Municipality is developing one of the biggest digital centers for training youth up to 13 years. Another initiative of the Municipality is "Tirana Smart City", which aim is to provide free Wi-Fi in all the public areas of the city, currently the system works only in 3 designated areas.

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37   http://ogp.gov.al/en/faqe/cfare-eshte
38   https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/albania-action-plan-2018-2020/

Roadmap for Digital Agenda advancement in Albania

Strategic, legal and administrative developments

- The Albanian government must draft the next Digital Agenda strategy (as the current strategy was compiled for 2015 – 2020); the public consultations for this strategy must be promptly launched, including different stakeholders as CSOs, businesses and media representatives.
- The promotion of Digital Agenda must be increased; the citizens, as well as Institutions' representatives must be aware of the importance of this agenda, also the e-services provided by their government.
- Revision of the law no. 146/2014 "On Public Consultations" in the terms of large public inclusiveness.
- Konsultimepublike.gov.al must be an active portal by frequently publishing draft laws and receiving feedback from relevant stakeholders/citizens.
- The institutional cooperation in providing public e-services must be increased.
- Improvement of online platforms mentioned in this paper, in terms of being more user-friendly and transparent.

Digital literacy

- Inclusion of Albanian CSOs through roundtable discussions on the upcoming national digital strategy would be crucial in designing and implementing an effective strategy. Several CSOs are already contributing to the strategy with ICT programs, mainly funded by the EU Commission. These CSOs are able to provide the govt. with valuable input and expertise on the area. In order to raise awareness about e-governance in Albania, it would be beneficial to engage CSOs that have a track-record on advocacy and implementation of projects related to democratization, good governance and anti-corruption through grant-awarding schemes that help sustain these organizations and urge them to raise awareness on the topic;
- Simplifying the e-Albania interface to make it more user-friendly;
- Eliminate bureaucratic procedures from Online applications (i.e. being required to mail documents instead of providing scanned copies online);
- Establishing Info Points on all governmental institutions to provide the citizens with assistance for a smooth transition from in-person to Online applications;
- Re-designing e-Albania not only as a service provider, but also as a transparent and reliable information tool that improves citizens' accessibility to information.
- Informative campaign on the digital services addressed specifically to different target groups based on age and demographic distribution.
- Renovation of the strategy of digital strategy delivery in schools.
- Intercommunication and interaction among Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, and ADISA, regarding the e-learning strategy, to offer consulting service in all the municipalities of the Republic of Albania.

Cyber Security

-        Reinforcing safeguarding policies to ensure secure personal data protection for all entrepreneurs/news outlets on Facebook who choose to promote their goods/services, making use of Facebook's data. The approach of all Albanian-based companies/news outlets towards personal data protection should be governed and guided by the Albanian legislation: The Law on the Protection of Personal Data based on articles 78 and 83 point 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania (Law on Protection of Personal Data, No. 9887 dated 10.03.2008)

-        Awareness campaign on cyber security, for citizens to be careful on where and how they provide their personal data in online platforms.

MJAFT! Movement is an Albanian non-profit organization operating all over Albania. MJAFT is a voice for Albanian youth and a force for change. Mjaft's role ranges from catalyst, *mobilizer* and innovator to several public advocacy campaigns.

Mission

A well-governed Albania with informed citizens and strong communities that actively contribute to the benefit of democratic consolidation.

http://www.mjaft.org/

Project partners:

Metamorphosis Foundation (North Macedonia) – https://metamorphosis.org.mk/en/
e-Governance Academy (Estonia) – https://ega.ee/
CRTA-Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (Serbia) – https://crta.rs/en/
NGO 35mm (Montenegro) – http://www.nvo35mm.org/en/
Open Data Kosovo (Kosovo) – https://opendatakosovo.org/

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