1. Project Data

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Prepared by: Jorge Garcia-Garcia
Reviewed by: Paul Holden
ICR Review Coordinator: Jennifer L. Keller
Group: IEGEC (Unit 1)

2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

The project appraisal document (PAD) states that “The objective of the project is to improve the efficiency of delivery and access to selected administrative services in Albania” (PAD, p. 6). The Loan Agreement of the project states that “The objective of the Project is to improve the efficiency of delivery and access to Selected Administrative Services in the Borrower's territory” (Loan Agreement, p. 5).
For the purpose of this evaluation the objectives of the project are to increase efficiency in delivering administrative services and increase access of the poor and vulnerable to selected administrative services.

PDO 1: Increased efficiency in delivering administrative services

PDO 2: Increased access of the poor and vulnerable to selected administrative services.

b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?
No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?
No

d. Components

Component 1: Enhancing the back-end systems. The component supported enhancing the backend systems (original, not defined; actual, not reported in ICR). The component supported the enhancement of the information technology (IT) systems and the reengineering of business processes (PAD, p. 31).

Component 2: Enhancing citizen interface with service delivery. The component supported enhancing the interface with citizens in the delivery of services (original cost not defined in PAD; actual, not reported in ICR). The component supported (a) the physical interface with citizens (e.g., reforming front offices in existing agencies, developing and managing sector specific One Stop Shops); (b) improving online delivery of services (e.g., business licensing and registration); (c) providing information on key services (e.g., providing information and actively promoting its availability); (d) implementing beneficiary feedback (e.g., feedback on hospital services property registration, improving capacity to analyze incoming data); and (e) providing assisted access to internet services (e.g., setting up points of contact such as internet cafés and community centers).

Component 3: Building capacity to deliver. The component supported building capacity to deliver services (original cost not defined in PAD; actual cost, not reported in ICR). The component supports (a) improving strategic planning (e.g., detail costing, sequencing, design choices of reform plan); (b) improving performance management (e.g., quality of data reported and performance indicators) (c) improving capacity of key reform drivers (e.g., Minister of State for Innovation, Agency for Delivery of Integrated Services in Albania [ADISA], Delivery Unit in Prime Minister’s Office to monitor progress); and (d) communicating with stakeholders (e.g., advertising benefits of citizens facilitation centers).

Each component was supported by three parts of the loan: a project preparation facility (PPF, US$2 million); a technical assistance part (TA, US$9 million); and a results–based financing part (RBF, US$25 million). Disbursing the results-based financing part was contingent on achieving agreed targets of five disbursed-linked indicators (DLI) associated with the three components. This structure of the project explains why there are no costs reported for each component. The indicators were:

Component 1 – Back-end systems.

- DLI#1 - Development of online services with level 3 automation.
• DLI#2 – Re-engineering of administrative processes to reduce the time to citizens of obtaining approval.

Component 2 – Front office interface

• DLI#3 - Improved citizen interface for service provision.
• DLI#4 - improved provision of information on government services on multiple platforms (DLI#4).

Component 3 – Capacity to deliver

• DLI#5 - Policy Reform Document outlining strategic plan for the reform and PDO baseline survey.

DLI#5 had to be met before the World Bank to disburse any of the US$25 million of results-based funds.

e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates

The project was approved on August 25, 2015, became effective on March 22, 2016, and closed on December 31, 2020, as planned.

The original project cost was US$32 million equivalent (EUR 29.3 million). Actual project cost was US$32.19 million because of changes in the EUR-$US exchange rate. The project consisted of a PPF worth US$2 million, a results-based financing part worth US$25 million, and a TA part worth US$5 million. The PPF and TA parts were executed following the World Bank procurement guidelines and were disbursed against eligible expenditures upon submission of Interim Financial Reports (IFRs). The RBF part was disbursed against Eligible Expenditure Programs (EEPs) upon achieving the disbursed-linked indicators.

The project was restructured in September 28 of 2018 to reallocate funds for EUR 1.894 million from the PPF portion to the TA part

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

The World Bank’s Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD, 2015) identified the delivery of basic public services as a constraint to growth, inclusion and asset accumulation. Corruption and fragmented institutional arrangements contributed substantially to the low quality of service delivery, its inefficiency and the poor access of the poor, Roma people, rural residents and women to these services. Better quality and quantity of services would help raise productivity overall and in the public sector in particular.

Although Albania had advanced in addressing these issues, corruption was particularly pronounced, especially in health, police, customs, and property registration services. While about 20 percent of citizens paid a bribe for getting a public service, these levels were reported to be high in health care (over 70
percent to doctors and 45 percent to nurses); bribes to police were 14 percent and to property registration officers, 7 percent. Many people solved problems of service delivery using private intermediaries, but bribes and “facilitation” payments eased access to their providers and to getting the service. This practice was more common when users had to deal face-to-face with providers. There was evidence that reforms in business processes and e-governance had improved business services, but little effort had been made to improve administrative services. The country also had other reasons to improve the quality of its institutions and combat corruption; they related to the country’s desire of becoming a full member of the European Union for which it had to carry out several reforms, and to show its desire and commitment to fight corruption. Fighting corruption was the country’s most important challenge to gain accession to the Union. To this end, the European Union was assisting Albania to strengthen its democratic institutions and improve its public administration through its Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA II) for the period 2014-2020. The World Bank Group (WBG) coordinated its support with the European Union and other development partners.

After an initial assessment of constraints and opportunities, the Government of Albania codified its priorities in the draft National Strategy for Development and Integration for 2014-2020. The government set as an overarching national goal progress towards EU integration. The Strategy outlined its vision for a European Albania through sustained economic growth and moving from greater wealth to enhanced well-being. To attain these goals the Strategy defined four pillars: (a) Growth Through Fiscal Stability and Increased Competitiveness; (b) Sustainable Growth through Effective use of Resources; (c) Investing in People and Social Cohesion; and (d) Good Governance, Democracy and Rule of Law. The Good Governance pillar had six sub-pillars of which the project supported that on effective governance, in particular public administration and the transparency and fight against corruption. The project was aligned with and supported the government's priorities.

The WBG’s Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for the period 2015-2018 had three focus areas that addressed the issues that the SCD identified and the priorities of the Government’s National Strategy for Development and Integration. The CPF’s Focus Area 3 (Strengthening public sector management and service delivery) addressed aspects of governance, transparency and accountability which had been identified by the SCD. The project contributed most to the CPF objective of increased efficiency of public service delivery. The project also contributed to the government’s program of Innovation against Corruption which started in June 2014, and which responded to its electoral mandate of reducing corruption and improving the delivery of public services to its constituents. The government sought to innovate in providing these services to reduce their cost and delivery time.

Rating
Substantial

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)
PDO 1. Increased efficiency in delivering administrative services.

Rationale

Outcome indicators

Three results were associated with PDO1. All of them referred to reducing the number of days—from submission to delivery—that it takes to get each of the three administrative services. The baseline and target values in the Project Appraisal Document were revised after completing the baseline survey in May 2016 and after revising some parts of the results framework in March 2017. The indicators reported below refer to the time it takes to deliver services in 9 focal institutions; the baseline and target values correspond to those reported in Table 3 of the ICR.

- Obtain motor vehicle registration. Baseline: 5.3 days in 2016, target: 4 days in FY2019-20. The time to obtain the service fell to 30 minutes in 2020; exceeding its target value. Achieved.
- Process old age pension application. Baseline: 53 days in 2016; target: 40 days in FY2019-20. The time to obtain this service fell to 29 days in 2020; exceeding its target value. Achieved.
- Obtain health insurance card. Baseline: 5.5 hours; target: 4 hours. The time to obtain the insurance card fell to less than 10 minutes in 2020, as the process is now automated and fully on-line. Achieved.

Time to deliver services also fell in 70 of the services the project supported, with an average reduction of 37 percent (ICR, par. 22). The reasons behind these improvements were regulatory reforms that reduced the number of documents demanded by the authorities, the lower number of steps in the back-office workflow to process the service, the online application and the electronic exchange of information between different government databases.

Intermediate results indicators

Achieving the above outcomes was possible because the intermediate results that supported achieving them were delivered. The intermediate results were:

- Development of online services (DLI#1). This corresponded to the disbursement-linked indicator #1, which consisted of increasing the number of new services with level 3 automation fully achieved. Baseline: 0; target, 75. The actual result was 75 services with automation fully achieved; 11 of them achieved level 4 automation, higher than level 3. Achieved.
- Priority services with business processes reengineered (DL#2). This corresponded to the disbursement-linked indicator #2, which consisted of increasing the number of priority services whose business processes were reengineered. Baseline: 0 services; target: 100. The actual result was 100 services. Achieved.
- Number of agencies with new or enhanced backend IT systems to improve service delivery. This indicator was not part of the DLI group. Baseline: 0; target, 8. The actual number was 7, and the target was almost achieved. Achieved.

The project fully achieved this objective and its outcome indicators exceeded their targets by a substantial margin. The project also met or exceeded the targets for two of its intermediate results indicators and mostly achieved its target for the third one. Efficacy is High.
OBJECTIVE 2

Objective
PDO 2. Increased access of the poor and vulnerable

Rationale
Outcome indicator

One result was associated with PDO2. The result is broken in three categories:

- **Percentage of the poor who stated that receiving services from institutions contacted was “easy” or “very easy”.** Baseline: 50 percent; target: 70 percent. The actual value was 69 percent. **Achieved.**
- **Percentage of Roma who stated that receiving services from institutions contacted was “easy” or “very easy”.** Baseline: 52 percent; target: 72 percent. The actual value was 65 percent. **Substantially Achieved.**
- **Percentage of females who stated that receiving services from institutions contacted was “easy” or “very easy”.** Baseline: 50 percent; target: 71 percent. The actual value was 71 percent. **Achieved.**

The PAD defines as **poor** the persons living below the poverty line, and as **vulnerable** the persons at the bottom 40 percent, women, older citizens, and ethnic minorities such as the Roma (PAD, par. 22 and Annex 2, Box A2-1).

Intermediate results indicators

The above results were supported by several activities that sought to improve citizens’ interaction with public institutions and make services more citizen centric. The results associated with these activities were achieved in most instances, as shown below. The intermediate results were:

- **Citizen Service Centers (CSC) Established with Improved Customer Service (DLI#3).** The indicator was the number of services with improved front office interface. Baseline: 0; target 130. The actual number was 140, exceeding the target. In total, 20 citizen service centers were established (instead of one), and they provided about 750 services for about 20 central institutions and 70 local government services. **Achieved.**
- **Information on Services Provided (DLI#4).** The indicator was the number of services with information available on multiple platforms. Baseline: 0; target 130 services. The actual result was 132 services. **Achieved.**
- **Online Service Delivery Improved.** Two results were expected:
  - Number of registered users accessing e-government services (as percentage of adult population). Baseline: 2.25 percent; target: 3.6 percent. The actual value was 13.7 percent, exceeding the target. **Achieved.**
  - The amount of data prefilled in public services' online forms (Percentage). Baseline: 58.4 percent; target: 71 percent. The actual result was 63 percent. **Partially Achieved.**
• **Number of institutions with proactive citizen feedback mechanism implemented.** Baseline: 1; target 8. The actual number was 4. **Partially Achieved.**

• **Improved capacity to deliver both PDO1 and PDO2.** Two results were expected:
  - Institutional prerequisites of Citizen Centric Service Delivery Program –Yes/No– (DLI#5). Baseline: No; target: Yes. The prerequisites were present by 2020. **Achieved.**
  - Number of institutions with key performance indicators reported and quarterly performance reports circulated. Baseline: 0; target: 8. The actual number was 7 by 2020; the result was substantially achieved. **Substantially Achieved.**

The project achieved this objective and its outcome indicators were achieved or mostly achieved, in some cases exceeding their targets. The targets were achieved for five intermediate results indicators and partially achieved for two. **Efficacy is Substantial.**

The project achieved Objective 2 and efficacy is **Substantial.**

**Rating**

**Substantial**

**OVERALL EFFICACY**

**Rationale**

Since efficacy is high for objective 1 and substantial for objective 2 overall efficacy is substantial.

**Overall Efficacy Rating**

**Substantial**

**5. Efficiency**

The Project Appraisal Document pointed out potential financial and economic benefits and costs of the project. Among the financial benefits, it noted the savings from lower administrative costs of providing the service, an increase in government revenue as the demand for the services increases caused by a fall in the cost of getting the service. Among the financial costs, the PAD notes those associated with the creation, maintenance and periodical upgrade of the Citizen Service Centers. The economic analysis of the project centers on the direct benefits and costs associated with the changes in citizens’ economic welfare. The main benefits identified by the PAD are the reduction in compliance costs for citizens (e.g., getting documents to register property) and the reduction in time and travel costs for citizens, a third of which visited government agencies only to get information; the cost of getting that information can fall sharply if citizens have electronic access to it on government websites. The PAD notes that the cost savings could be significant for registering property, one of
the most affected by bribery. Citizens also benefit from paying fewer fees to intermediaries and other agents for supporting documentation. The government saves staff time that can be allocated to other government activities.

Limitations on data availability at the time of project closing prevented replicating the above calculations. Instead of calculating the benefits from citizens’ time savings, the ICR estimates the benefits accruing to the government from improvements in business processes associated with 46 services where delivery time fell by 90 percent. The net present value of these estimated benefits was US$52 million and US$246 million for 5 and 10 years of project life.

The net benefits estimated in the ICR are likely to underestimate the benefits of the project. First, the results presented in the section on efficacy suggest that the gains are likely to be larger than the ones estimated in the PAD because the actual time saved exceeded by far the target values on which the ex-ante net present value of the project was estimated. Second, over the project’s life real per capita income rose by about 15 percent (it includes 2020), meaning that the benefits of time saved are underestimated. Third, people who now have access to health services are likely to have better health than they would have otherwise, which is likely to be reflected in better performance at work, fewer working days lost to sickness, and a longer life expectancy. Fourth, the ICR assumes that the benefits accrue to the government only in 2020, the fifth year of project implementation.

The above reasons suggest that the efficiency of the project was substantial.

**Efficiency Rating**

Substantial

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### a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

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* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

### 6. Outcome

The program shows positive results in reducing the time it takes to get government services and in increasing the access of the poor and vulnerable to these services.

On time to get government services, there was a generalized average reduction of 37 percent in 70 of the services the project supported. Noteworthy reductions happened in getting a motor vehicle registration (95
percent) and a health insurance card (99 percent); also notable is the 45 percent reduction in the number of days it takes to process an old age pension application.

On access to services, about 70 percent of the poor, 65 percent of Roma people and 71 percent of females consider that it was easy or very easy receiving services from the agencies they contacted.

Over the five years of project life, the government reduced its operating costs through improvements in business processes in 46 services where delivery time fell by 90 percent. The cost reductions are estimated at US$52 million in terms of net present value.

The project had some minor shortcomings, mainly in the intermediate indicators for access of the poor and vulnerable to government services. The targets were not achieved in the number of institutions with proactive citizen feedback mechanism implemented and the amount of data prefilled in online forms.

a. Outcome Rating
   Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

The risk to development outcome is modest, in part because citizens are benefiting from and therefore can be expected to be supportive of the reforms carried out. The gains from the reforms are substantial and citizens are likely to expect politicians and government administrators to, at least, maintain what they have now. Keeping a service of better quality requires maintaining a balance between the government’s desire to use online methods to deliver services and using the Citizen Service Centers to deliver the services physically. While the online delivery may become more important over time, there are groups that will still need physical contact with government agencies, making it unlikely that the government will eliminate physical delivery; therefore, it is unlikely that they will disappear in the short and medium term.

In summary, the risk to development outcome is modest.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry
   The Bank did good preparatory work to understand the constraints on and circumstances in which the reform was going to take place. It also helped that the Bank had gained knowledge of Albania with two earlier projects that used the Disbursed Link Indicator approach to structure the operation and the actions that would have to be carried out. This approach permitted the Bank to make a strong case for using a results-based instrument, focusing on a few but high-quality results indicators, and on the need for technical assistance to support the project.
The project had a clear results framework and a good monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to ensure that the actions agreed to were carried out.

Quality-at-Entry Rating
Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision
The quality of supervision was good. The inputs and processes were adequate to supervise the project. The country manager and staff supported the project throughout its life. Four task-co-team leaders managed the project with one staying for its duration, providing continuity. The team supervised the project twice a year, except in 2017 when the Bank authorized missions after the government elected that year took over. During COVID-19 the missions were carried out virtually. The supervision of fiduciary and environmental and social aspects was also satisfactory.

The Bank team also paid attention to the project’s development impact. In most instances it resolved the threats to the project’s results, but it faced problems when the new administration 1) weakened the institutional arrangements put in place for implementing the project and 2) decided to accelerate the transition towards “online only” service applications from the dual approach of on-stop shops and e-services the project supported. Overall, these changes affected the inter-institutional collaboration during project implementation, but they did not prevent the Bank from supervising the project; the Bank acted wisely by prioritizing implementation aspects and project results rather than triggering legal remedies to the new implementation practices as the expected impact of litigation on results was uncertain.

The results achieved validated the Bank’s decision of avoiding the legal route to solving problems. The route taken did not threaten the project’s achievements.

Quality of Supervision Rating
Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating
Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design
The project had a good M&E design. Its theory of change and the objectives were clear and well specified. The indicators covered all outcomes of the PDO statement and measured well the results expected. The intermediate results indicators captured adequately the contribution of the operation’s activities and the outputs that could deliver the expected outcomes. The indicators were specific, measurable, achievable,
relevant, and time bound. The PAD defined baseline and target values and noted that the results framework should be revised and all baselines established once a baseline survey was completed as part of the global disbursed-linked-indicators, a necessary condition for disbursing the US$25 million funds corresponding to the results-based-financing of the project. Linking the disbursement of the US$25 to having baseline and target values for the results indicator ensured that the information would be available and on time. Last, the PAD presented a detailed map of the institutional structure that would be in charge of project administration.

b. M&E Implementation

The input, output, outcome, and impact evidence anticipated in the design of the project was collected and analyzed in a sound manner. The baseline data were collected and the indicators of the results framework were reported on the ICR and the Implementation Status Reports. Some results indicators were revised during implementation in response to the information gathered in the baseline surveys and to change in the definition of one indicator, to make it precise. The data collected are reliable and of good quality. It is unclear if the authorities are committed to continuing to gather the information after project closing.

No information was collected to replicate the economic analysis of the PAD on the expected benefit of the project. The ICR notes that this calculation could not be made because of limitations on data availability.

c. M&E Utilization

The data collected during implementation provided information about achievement of outcomes besides outputs and intermediate indicators. They were not used to inform important policy decisions by the Borrower and it is unclear if they were used to implement decisions and reforms and sustain the results achieved beyond the project’s closing date. Albania has strong institutional capacity to carry out reforms; missing this opportunity to enhance the project’s benefits was unfortunate.

M&E Quality Rating
Substantial

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

The project did not trigger OP4.01 when the Board approved it, but the World Bank helped the authorities to prepare a Checklist Environmental Management Plan (EMP) to mitigate some problems of dust, noise and waste management in Tirana arising from the renovation of existing buildings where the Citizen Service Centers would operate. The environmental and social risks were rated low from project appraisal to project completion.
b. Fiduciary Compliance

*Financial Management.* Financial management, flow of funds and disbursement arrangements for the project were adequate and complied with Bank requirements, for both the TA part, the PPF and the results-based-financing part. RBF part, throughout the project term. Experienced and qualified experts supported the financial management function which complied with financial reporting principles and disbursement requirements. The ratings for financial management were affected by delays in the audits and their quality but these issues were resolved at project closing.

*Procurement.* Procurement risk was substantial because of the weak capacity of the project implementation unit and delays in launching some procurements.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

The ICR does not report on them.

d. Other

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11. Ratings

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<th>IEG</th>
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12. Lessons

The ICR offers the following lessons with which IEG agrees:

- The experience with the project demonstrates that a clear vision and purpose must underpin the digitalization efforts of a government which seeks to deliver better services to the country’s citizens.
- For reforms to succeed, selecting the correct delivery model is fundamental. For Albania, the creation of high-quality physical access points, alongside efforts for the service to be more citizen-centric (via feedback and service standards), created a new culture, which raised citizens’ expectations and increased the demand for more complex institutional service delivery reforms. Building CSCs produced quick gains and visible changes, creating the
space for more ambitious institutional reforms. The customer-orientation of the CSCs and their professionalism changed the service delivery culture in the country.

- Selecting appropriate results indicators must constitute a central point of project design, since the information and communications technology inputs (ICT) alone are insufficient to ensure that the project delivers services and benefits citizens.
- Sustained and informative dialogue with the client regarding the instrument is critical to ensure that there is strong alignment between the incentives it provides and the incentives of the relevant implementing agencies.

The results of the project illustrate the continued relevance and importance of physical channels of service delivery, especially for the vulnerable groups. In other instances, further financing and investment should be encouraged to support scaling up e-service ambitions to ensure more resilient, citizen centric and transparent service delivery. To strike the “right” balance, it is important to take into account the local context, the characteristics of service users and the characteristics of the services provided.

### 13. Assessment Recommended?

Yes

Please Explain

The project was extremely successful and can provide good examples of what is required to help improve the quality of government service to its citizens.

### 14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR provides good information to assess the achievements of the project and its shortcomings, mostly minor ones. Its rating of results is fair. The information is relevant, credible and verifiable. The quality of its analysis is good, The report summarizes the salient points well and links evidence to findings. Its structure and organization is consistent with the guidelines for ICR preparation. The ICR, at 60 pages, could have been a bit shorter avoiding some repetition, such as that on section II which already embedded in the discussion on the outcome (Section II).

#### a. Quality of ICR Rating

Substantial