Document Management System
Protocol and Archives

Full report on the pilot project for the administrative unit of Rrashbull
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................................... 3
Introduction /Purpose ....................................................................................................................... 4
Legal Basis .......................................................................................................................................... 6
Pilot Project Team ............................................................................................................................... 8
Initial State of Archives in the Administrative Unit of Rrashbull ................................. 9

PILOT PROJECT PERFORMANCE

Operational Part ................................................................................................................................. 10
System Architecture ......................................................................................................................... 13
Procedural Aspects ............................................................................................................................ 15
Conclusions ......................................................................................................................................... 18

Supporting Materials

Annex 1- User Manual for DMS
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The State Local Archives in Durrës, especially Mrs. Anida Ylli, Director of Local State Archives in Durres;

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The Minister of State for Local Government, Mr. Bledar Çuçi, encouraged this initiative with full confidence in its success, and we thank him for his support, which was important to the success of the working group.
Introduction/Purpose

The STAR project together with the KPMG Company for a period of 3 months (November 2004 - February 2015) launched a pilot project for the administrative and financial consolidation of the two new municipalities into which are merged other units (communes) upon the new territorial division according to the Law No. 115/2014. The selected municipalities were those of Pogradec and Ura-Vajgurore. In the final control report on this pilot project, it resulted that archives were one of the major problems in the context of the merger of units. At first, it was evidenced the state of archives in every unit, which resulted problematic. Secondly, access to documents after their transfer to the premises of the new municipality was identified as a concern for the inhabitants in every municipality.

The current state of archives appeared problematic for several reasons:

1. Documents are not arranged in a system; they are unprocessed, and not inventoried according to law.
2. The current units have problems with the timely delivery of documents at the respective local state archives.
3. The staff responsible for the archives is not specialized for the work they must perform.
4. Facilities where documents are stored are deficient and not standardized.

The second problem presented as a concern was access to documents after their physical departure from the building of the administrative unit, and the access time while they remain in an unsystematized state, as it takes weeks after the request to find a document.

Based on these findings, STAR developed a pilot project to address the resolution of these issues according to the best practices within the legal framework for the management of archives. The purpose of the project was:

1. Technical-scientific processing of some of the documents in the unit of Rrashbull and inventorying of them pursuant to the legal framework in order to identify a set rate of processing for 18 working days.
2. Digitization of documents and registers of protocol and archives by means of an electronic platform.
3. Access to electronic documents at the administrative unit after archives were transferred to the new municipality.
4. Facilitating the job of the protocol and archival clerks during the execution of their tasks of delivering, using, and inventorying documents.
5. Monitoring of the activities of employees in relation to the management of secretarial and archival documents.
6. Training of the archival clerk on the best inventory practice and that of the working group on DMS system.

The former commune or the current administrative unit of Rrashbull was selected because of its size and the extensive activity reflected in a large archival fonds with a wider range of issues.
Legal Basis

The operational part of the pilot project is based on the legal framework on archives including:

Law No. 9154, date 06.11.2003 “ON ARCHIVES”

Technical-professional and methodological norms of the Archival Service in the Republic of Albania.

Deontological Code of Archivists

The specific legal basis for the implementation of DMS, i.e. the digitization of archives, is as follows:

Based on the Law No. 9154, Chapter V, Article 36, documents that are stored in enumerated form have administrative and juridical value only if they are compiled and preserved according to the approved standards.

According to the Article 38, the transformation of the document of matter base (such as paper, parchment) in enumerated form is made by preserving the original oneness.

Article 31 of the document “Technical-professional and methodological norms of the Archival Service in the Republic of Albania” wherein is stated:

To facilitate the use of archival documents, the secretarial – archival office and the state or non-state entity archives may develop, as appropriate, various information tools, such as card index for key documents, systematic card index, information, or guidance to fonds etc., which, if conditions are met, can be enumerated.

Registers according to law

Register of Correspondence – tracks the entries of documents that are added to the system.

This electronic register is compiled in accordance with the Article 19 and the Model No. 1, of the document “Technical-professional and methodological norms of the Archival Service in the Republic of Albania”.

File Inventory – serves to inventory the file in archives
This electronic register is compiled in accordance with the Article 30, and the Model No. 8, of the document “Technical-professional and methodological norms of the Archival Service in the Republic of Albania”.

**General File Inventory** – serves to inventory all files in archives

This electronic register is compiled in accordance with the Article 30, and the Model No. 7, of the document “Technical-professional and methodological norms of the Archival Service in the Republic of Albania”.

**Register of Use** – serves to report use of documents, copies of which are given for use

This register is compiled in accordance with the Article 40, and the Model No. 15, of the document “Technical-professional and methodological norms of the Archival Service in the Republic of Albania”.
Pilot project Team

Minister of State for Local Government

General Directorate of Archives

Local State Archives of Durrës

Administrative Unit of Rrashbull

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The initial state of archives in the administrative unit of Rrashbull

The initial state of archives in the administrative unit of Rrashbull was problematic and complex. The archives were found neglected for years; the legal obligation for the delivery of processed documents to Local State Archives of Durres was not fulfilled. The archivist was new on the job and not trained to do the work. To access documents of the years 2005-2014 that were still at the unit, a long time was required due to the size of the fonds and numerous non-inventoried documents. The register of protocol was kept by an employee who performed both the function of the secretary to the chief and that of the protocol clerk. The coordination of work between protocol clerk and archivist was problematic due to the new recruitment of the latter and the human errors with dates and numbers committed by the former. Documents since the formation of Rrashbull Commune were not systematized and inventoried and the archives held documents that had to be delivered to the Social Insurance Office.

Figure 1. View from the archival room before the start of inventory process
PILOT PROJECT PERFORMANCE

Operational Part

Once the Minister of State for Local Government, Mr. Çuçî, and the Director General of the Archives, Mr. Ndoj, agreed on a pilot project for digitizing the archives of the administrative unit of Rrashbull, a working group was set up having a composition and functions as follows:

1. Marenglen Biba (Responsible for the development of DMS and the Pilot Project of digital archives)
2. Erald Cafka (Developer of the application)
3. Lorena Liçi (Responsible for the operational part of the project, legal expert in archival matters)
4. Ilirjan Nastas (Coordinator of the STAR project, Durrës Region)
5. Leonard Durmishi (Archival specialist)
6. Lorenc Agalliu (Archival specialist)
7. Vjollca Buceza (Archival clerk)
8. Ajeta Matoshi (Secretarial and protocol clerk)

The first meeting of the working group was held on May 19, 2015 in the office of the Director of Local State Archives of Durres, Mr. Ylli. After being acquainted with the program of the pilot project, he initiated the first meeting with the former chief of Rrashbull Commune, Mr. Hysen Gashi, who welcomed the working group and offered his support for the initiative. After becoming acquainted with the archives facilities in the premises of the commune, the working group started its work on May 20 by making a preliminary arrangement of documents. It was agreed that the object of the pilot project would be the documents of the year 2005 due to the large amount of practices during this year and the fact that 2005 was the first year that would complement the register of use for the period 2005-2015. Since the law ‘On Archives’ stipulates that the documents must be delivered to the Local State Archives of Durres until the year 2004, the scientific and technical work of processing and inventorying began on May 21, 2015.

At first, the archival clerk along with two specialists of the Local State Archives of Durres identified and separated all the documents of the year 2005. As Mrs. Liçi, responsible for the operational part and the archival specialists were made aware of the difficulties the archival clerk was having in her daily work, they designed a two-day training program on the legal framework and the best practices of archiving. On the first day, training was focused on the operational part. On the second day, it turned its focus on the instructions for using the Document Management System.
The operational part of the training brought to her attention the specific provisions that regulate the work of the archivist including:

1. The Law No. 9154, date 06.11.2003 “ON ARCHIVES ”
2. The technical-professional and methodological norms of the Archival Service in the Republic of Albania
3. Deontological Code of Archivists

In addition, during the training archival specialists implemented in practice the scientific and technical processing of several files containing documents of the year 2005 by addressing all the questions and concerns of the archival clerk in relation to the best practice for conducting a documents inventory.

After the training, the archival clerk and the two specialists of the Local State Archives of Durres began to process according to the technical and scientific norms the documents of the year 2005 based on the register of correspondence of the same year. At the conclusion of the scientific and technical processing, an inventory of files for this year was compiled. Of those, 58 files were separated for permanent preservation (National Historical Preservation) and 46 files for temporary storage; in total 30 linear cm processed for the year 2005.

Further, the year 2004 was dealt with and all the documents of this year were processed. The documents were divided into 50 files for National Historical Preservation and 48 files for temporary preservation; in total 26 linear cm processed for the year 2004.

In addition, during the pilot project period (21 May-15 June) documents of the years 1997-2003 were systematized, separated and designated by years and structure into files, and now they are being processed in a scientific and technical way; in total 240 files for these 7 years.
So in total there were fully processed under technical and scientific norms 56 linear cm documents for 18 working days, which means about 3.1 linear cm scientific and technical processing a day. This rate has exceeded the daily rates practiced by an archivist (General Directorate of Archives), that is 2.5 linear cm of documents processing. It must be noted that the documents of the years 1997-2003 has been systematized and they are currently on the point of being processed. Therefore, the operational part of the pilot project has come up with the finding that the daily rate of 2.5 linear cm scientific processing of documents can be reviewed so that a more dynamic process of inventory and delivery of documents to the Local State Archives can be ensured.
Figure 3. STAR team working together with the archival clerk
System Architecture

The main purpose of using a digital system for the management of documents is to facilitate the work of protocol and archive clerks in the new administrative units, because in this way they will be in a position to have electronic copies of archival documents even when the archives stored in paper is transferred to the greater municipality. The capability of the system to manage the digitized documentation of archives is the result of a combination of two independent platforms into a single one, with the aim of integrating all the procedural steps followed by the archival clerks pursuant to the relevant legal base. The composing units of the system are:

- **Alfresco** – the leading platform in the category of programs *Document Management Systems (DMS)* and *Enterprise Content Management (ECM)* for the management of documents of public/private enterprises. [https://www.alfresco.com/products](https://www.alfresco.com/products)

- **DMS** – web platform developed by STAR that expands the capabilities of Alfresco platform by adding functionalities that enable the digital implementation of the *Register of Correspondence, Register of Use* and *Inventory* process.

The way in which combination of the composing platforms of the digital system is achieved is explained in the following figure:

![Figure 4 – Architecture of the document management system](image-url)
The dependence between platforms is such that, in order to access DMS system, the identification data in Alfresco must be applied, and then, depending on the outcome of verification, entry to DMS is made possible or not.

The fact mentioned in the preceding paragraph can be easily verified by referring to the Figure 1. We can notice that it is the Alfresco platform administrator who creates the group of users that can access the system and it is still the administrator who makes the distribution of users according to the relevant electronic fonds.

Digital units called sites will represent the electronic fonds in the system. Each site may include several users and each of these users will identify one of the administrative units in which the created users work as their employees. In short, all the enumerated copies of the archival documents stored in a paper form will be organized by these units in a common space called Document Library where the structuring of data as per files will be made. Each file can be accessed by users that are part of the site and have the right to use its content (depending on the position they have, archivist, or protocol secretary).

Once the users gain access to Alfresco system, they automatically have the right to use DMS system for carrying out tasks such as registering (accompanied by the process of enumeration of archival documents), using and inventorying. The result for each of the above actions will be reflected in the system through reports generated from panels - Register of Correspondence, Register of Use, and Inventory - as well as in the contents of the files where the enumerated documentation will be stored.

![Figure 5 – Views of the main panels of DMS](image)

It is important to mention that the combination of the two platforms described above allows a quick and secure access to enumerated data of archival material reducing service time and increasing the productivity of employees in the relevant administrative units.
Document management system is designed in such a way that it complies with all the procedural steps of the work carried out in the offices of archives and protocol in the relevant administrative units under the guidelines specified in the document 'Technical-professional and methodological norms of the Archival Service in the Republic of Albania' - a fact that was confirmed to its best during the implementation of the pilot project for the digitization of archives in the Commune of Rrashbull.

During the implementation of the pilot project, the system was put at the service of both employees, the archival clerk, Mrs. Buçeza, and the protocol secretary, Mrs. Matoshi. The main tasks set in advance were the digitization of documentation for the year 2015 by Mrs. Matoshi and the digital inventory of the documentation for the same year by Mrs. Buçeza.

Regarding the pilot project stage in the protocol office, the procedures of protocol and entry of data into the register of correspondence were conducted in parallel. After the completion of the first step, the implementation of standard procedures in paper, the second step followed, that is the entry of the electronic copy of the document in the enumerated fonds. The latter was a reflection of the first step on the digital system.

Referring to the Figure 6, we notice that the standard action of entering a document in the system was originally associated with access to platform by Mrs. Matoshi (user) through

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**Figure 6 – Procedural steps**
credentials put at her service by the STAR team (administrator), which was managing the system during the implementation of the pilot project. Mrs. Matoshi had access to the system as a user of the contributor category (level of access), with the ability to populate the site designated as Commune of Rrashbull (fonds). It should be noted that documents in the digital fonds are organized by files in which the fields for every registered document are filled according to the Model 1 of the Register of Correspondence, as specified in the document ‘Technical-professional and methodological norms of the Archival Service in the Republic of Albania’.

Figure 7. Training and working session with archival clerk

In the archive office, Mrs. Buçeza followed the same steps described in the preceding paragraph. She entered a document of the year 2005 in the system in such a way that she could make the appropriate inventory. Once a sufficient sample was provided for
carrying out the process of digital inventory, Mrs. Buçeza began the procedures of the archives inventory for the year 2005 and an inventory of the relevant files by filling the specific fields put at her disposal by the platform under the Model 7 and Model 8, as stipulated in the document ‘Technical-professional and methodological norms of the Archival Service in the Republic of Albania’ (and under the Model 15 for the use of the enumerated material, based on the same legal document). At this stage, the archivist once again followed the procedures in paper along with those in the digital system.

Figure 8. View from the DMS system, the digitized Register of Correspondence

During this stage of the pilot project, in the digital management system of documents were entered:

- Documentation of the year 2005 -> 15 uploaded FILES (in total: ~ 280 pages)
- Documentation of the year 2015 -> 20 uploaded DOCUMENTS (in total: ~ 70 pages)

In the beginning, Mrs. Matoshi and Ms. Buçeza had difficulty in using the system in terms of their orientation to move within applications and in finding the relevant functionalities that correspond to the tasks that they carry out in paper. However, with time and continuous practice, difficulties were passed successfully and they adapted very well to the interface and functionalities of the platform.
Conclusions

The pilot project ended on 15 June 2015. Findings and conclusions that resulted from this project are:

1. The need for appointing a special employee dedicated to the function of archivist, in contrast to the practices found where an employee with several functions also performs the duties of an archivist. Therefore, the task of the protocol should be separated from that of the archives.

2. Due to incomplete engagement in the archivist function, the employees in this position were frequently changed, so the archival clerk was trained on the best practice of the technical and scientific processing and inventorying under the legal framework and on the use of the digital program for DMS (Document Management System).

3. The need for providing a technological infrastructure (a central unit with the necessary capacity for installing DMS, UPS, Scanner & Printer) to implement the digitization of archives. *This infrastructure was made possible by STAR.*

4. The practiced rate of 2.5 linear cm in the scientific processing of the amassed documents is below the required level for the large quantities of documentation that were found in an unsystematized state in the unit of Rashbull. The rate of scientific and technical processing of documents for a two-year period in the case of Mrs. Buceza was 3.1 linear cm per day.

5. The system will enable access to documents at the administrative units even after the physical transfer of archival fonds to the new municipality.

6. The functional tasks of the archivist and protocol clerk to use and inventory the documents are facilitated by the digital registers of documents in DMS. The possible margin of error is lower due to the concentration and entry of information about the document in several areas in the program. Time to access documents to be used is shorter.

7. By means of DMS, the administrator can easily monitor the archives and protocol work and this avoids negligence and delays that were observed before the start of the pilot project.