



REPUBLIKA E SHQIPËRISË  
KËSHILLI I MINISTRAVE  
MINISTRI PËR ÇËSHTJET VENDORE

## Implementation Progress Report

May - August 2014

### Support to Territorial and Administrative Reform (STAR)



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Cooperation Office Albania  
Zyra e Bashkëpunimit Zviceran në Shqipëri



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## 1. Executive Summary

The advancement of the territorial and administrative reform entered an intensive phase during May-July, with the start of functioning of the ad-hoc Parliamentary Commission and the approaching of the deadline for submitting the technical proposal to the Parliament by end July.

In late April, in order to enable the functionality of the ad-hoc Parliamentary Commission impaired from the prolonged opposition boycott, amendments were made to the composition of the Commission to create a working quorum.

Immediately after, the Commission reviewed and approved the proposed criteria for the territorial re-organization and tasked the Minister of Local Issues to present the options of the new administrative map based on those criteria by 16 May. In the meantime, the ad-hoc Parliamentary Commission organised eight public hearings with representatives of Local Government Units, their associations, civil society, international organisations and other independent institutions. In total, 75 people have taken part in those public hearings.

On 19 May, the Commission reviewed five presented options and agreed to consider the ones with 39 and 47 LGUS. The selected variants were then subjected to broad public consultations in order to collect inputs from various stakeholders' categories and therefore determine the final version to be submitted to the Parliament for approval.

The currently concrete variants triggered lively debates and discussions at the political, technical and institutional levels as well as among the public. To coordinate discussions and inputs from different levels, MLI in parallel with its institutional responsibilities in communication with each LGU, opted for a formal consultation with civil society and private sector communities, which resulted in the organization of 37 + 6 meetings across the country. In addition, a national survey of a sample of 16,000 citizens was undertaken to collect independent views and levels of acceptance on the two proposed options.

These efforts were accompanied by an extended awareness campaign in televised and written media. A media monitoring system was put in place to gauge the dynamics of a variety of additional stakeholders' responses to the reform.

The opposition continued to boycott the reform processes, formulating its position through the organization of three consecutive conferences in late June - early July, which were formally hosted by the Association of the Albanian Communes and that of Municipalities. These three conferences put the emphasis on the necessity of prioritizing the decentralization reform over the territorial one and concluded that the process of the territorial and administrative reform was flawed and not fully participatory. Nevertheless, the Government, as the reform leader, kept the invitation for dialogue open until the last moment and declared itself ready to discuss and reach consensus on alternative options with the opposition should the latter wish so.

The Law on territorial and administrative reform was approved by the Parliament on 31<sup>st</sup> of July, thus marking the conclusion of activities of the first phase and commencement of preparations for the implementation. As a result of two months discussions and negotiations at the technical and political

levels, the final Albania's administrative division structure agreed upon is composed of 61 LGUs, which resulted from a split of several proposed new LGUs (in the variant of 47) into smaller units.

The Law was submitted to the President of the Republic for being decreed on 7 August; it was returned for further adjustment to the Parliament, with the main arguments being that the reform process has been designed without taking into consideration the opinion of citizens regarding the reform and the proposed division. In full discordance with the Presidential opinion, the Parliament majority rejected those arguments and approved the Law in its first fall session by 88 votes.

## **2. STAR support activities during the reporting period**

STAR project continued to provide substantial support to the process throughout the period, in accordance with its purpose and objectives. The main directions of support during the reporting period, fully corresponding to the developments and requirements include:

- (i) Supporting and provision of capacities to the MLI for managing the reform process
- (ii) Facilitation of public consultations and consensus building
- (iii) Developing the outline of the transition phase (the post-map implementation approach)

### (i) Supporting and provision of capacities to the MLI for managing the reform process

In each Albanian region/qark, STAR regional coordinators continued to work closely with Regional Working Groups (RWG) to accomplish all the tasks related to the reform. In April 2014, two regional coordinators were appointed to other public functions and therefore their STAR contracts were terminated. The MLI requested the initiation of recruitment procedures for two new regional coordinators, which was finalised by end May.

As noted earlier, the MLI sought the validation of reform criteria by the ad-hoc Parliamentary Commission prior to develop the different administrative options. During this period, STAR experts' work focussed mainly in covering different aspects of local government functions, development of background technical assessments and analysis and the elaboration of scenarios/proposals for territorial consolidation in the form of a single report to be submitted to the legislative bodies for review and approval.

The experts' efforts concluded in the preparation of a report which consisted of two volumes; the one depicting the socio-economic situation of the LGU in Albania and the need of implementing a territorial and administrative reform, followed by the second part that provides information and maps of the new territorial divisions of the country.

In order to enable an exchange of best practice and therefore enhance the capacities of Albanian partners at national level (in addition to other capacity building activities and enrolment of national and international expertise in advisory group), a study tour to Ireland took place during June -July 2014.

A service contract was established with the Irish East Border Region to assist with the organization of the study tour content, arrangements as well as the logistical part. Eighteen representatives from the ad-hoc

Parliamentary Commission and other related central institutions participated in the study tour, benefiting directly from Irish LGU practitioners on a similar recent territorial reform implemented in Ireland (a more detailed report on the Study Tour is attached as Annex 1).

#### (ii) Facilitation of public consultations and consensus building

Public awareness regarding TAR continued to be one of the core activities supported by STAR. Numerous workshops, seminars, public consultations, talk shows, technical and public debates were organised, aiming at rising awareness of the public at large about the reform, its challenges and benefits.

The official dedicated webpage on TAR [www.reformaterritoriale.al](http://www.reformaterritoriale.al) including a functional Facebook account link <https://www.facebook.com/reformaterritoriale> has been constantly active by providing and sharing information on the reform process in real time. Until 31 August 2014, the webpage was visited by 57,805 people with an average of 150 visits per day. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter have also been very active and followed by 2,471 visitors. Furthermore, about 6000 leaflets on the reform were produced and distributed at local level.

STAR also facilitated the formal consultation with the civil society and private sector communities through the engagement of four NGOs: Partners Albania, Urban Research Institute, Institute for Public-Private Partnerships and Konfindustria. The consultations included 42 extended meetings organized across the country. Over 1785 people from civil society, local businesses, local and regional government and institutions participated and contributed to the debate on the proposed territorial and administrative reform options. The respective consultation reports can be downloaded from <http://www.reformaterritoriale.al/udherrefyes/dokumente>

In addition, a national survey commissioned to IDRA gathered the opinion of a sample of 16.000 people about the necessity of the reform and the preferred option between these with 39 and 47 LGUs from a local perspective. Near the conclusion of the survey, with the emergence of the final option of 61 LGUs, IDRA conducted telephone interviews with a reduced sample about this option. IDRA's full report can be downloaded from <http://reforma.idra.al/#harta>

#### (iii) Developing the outline of the transition phase (the post-map implementation approach)

As the reform was progressing according to plans, enriched during the implementation with some additional activities to enhance the public consultations aspects and was approaching the first objective of proposing the territorial division options, there was an increasing need to review the whole STAR project and detail the next phase of practical implementation of the reform in each local government unit. For this reason, the STAR project underwent a substantial revision in May and that was presented to the June 2014 STAR Steering Committee.

The revised STAR project provides sufficient details pertaining to the transition phase and proposes a roadmap for LGUs to immediately engage in the implementation of the reform. As per the revised document, the transition phase would require a detailed assessment and knowledge of the current LGUs' situation in terms of human, physical and institutional assets, liabilities, relationships with third parties, etc. and the development of a phased action plan to transfer those responsibilities to the new

larger LGUs, with due considerations on the human resources (loss of public jobs, redundancy, re-orientation), financial resources (costs of relocation, physical adaptation, etc.) and legal aspects (contracts, liabilities, management of local public enterprises, etc).

This action plan will also have to address the necessary minimal structures and functions of the new LGUs, which will extend their jurisdiction to a combined urban-rural space and thus requiring a stronger set of specializations and management.

The STAR substantial revision implied also revisiting the overall project cost estimate to reflect the actual expenditures (which were generally contained within the original estimates) as well as make a more detailed forecasts of the transition / implementation costs. While the overall budgetary gap is, as of now, estimated to be around 2.2 MUS\$, the Italian Government declared its commitment to join the STAR multi-donor pooled fund and pledged since June a contribution of 800.000 Euros (approx. 1.1 MUS\$), thus reducing the gap to only 1.1. MUS\$

With regard to the future activities and measures, as the government prepares to embark on the implementation phase, despite the overall roadmap, provided in the revised STAR document, there is a need to make this roadmap operational through the identification of the appropriate contributing government institutions, their complementarities and coordination mechanisms as well as articulate in operational terms the type and sequence of actions to be undertaken.

The document itself calls for paying special attention to the fact that the merger aspect “will involve some complex issues and demands meticulous and careful planning to ensure that service delivery standards are maintained during the process, [and] that the transition is carried out without major disruptions in social, financial, and operational terms, and that the involved and impacted employees are treated in a fair and equitable manner”.

It also notes that “mergers will not be achieved without incurring some significant and contingent costs which need to be identified as part of the planning stage. It is important to identify and quantify these costs as soon and as accurately as possible throughout the planning stage in order to avoid the development of situations that counter the purpose and goal and the reform. The merger is also expected to produce cost savings in a number of areas and steps should be taken to identify and expedite such cost saving measures as soon as possible. Therefore, effective planning and communication is essential if the merger is to be actually implemented as intended with the minimum delays and disruption that would create unforeseen problems in the establishment and operations of the new LGUs”.

The above would have to be the guiding principles in shaping the next phase and would require an intensive and coordinated institutional as well as technical effort to succeed.

### 3. Activities carried out during the reporting period

Level	Activities		Activities completed in the reporting period
<b>Output 1</b>	<b>MLI's technical and institutional capacity developed to implement and monitor consolidation reforms.</b>		
<b>Activities</b>			
1.2.	Recruitment of national experts for the Experts Group.	▼	<b>Completed</b> 4 experts, Sabina Ymeri, Etleva Cico, Edlira Jorgoni and Manuela Mece, were hired in July to work on the consolidation of various expert reports into a single one. The report was part of the documentation submitted by the MLI to the Parliament.
1.3.	Recruitment of 2 regional coordinators	▼	<b>Completed</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Albert Kasi – RC Gjirokastra (accepted a long term position as Director of Cultural Monuments Department, thus substituted through a recruitment process by Gentiana Saraci)</li> <li>2. Etjona Hoxha – RC Vlore (appointed as Vlora Prefect, thus a substituted through a recruitment process by Migena Balla)</li> </ol>
1.5.	Recruitment of additional required consultants	▼	<b>Completed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One cameraman contracted for the period 16 April – 10 May 2014               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>Deliverable:</u> Filming of consultation meetings; production of short video spots; preparation of final video documentary, editing of footage</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.6	GIS mapping of administrative boundaries	▼	<b>Completed</b> IMB company is contracted; GIS spatial data are created, provided technical assistance to the working group at the Ministry for Local Issues or (Parliamentary Commission for the Administrative Territorial Reform) during the proposal of different versions of the new administrative divisions, create strategic scenarios of territory intervention based on predefined priorities, etc. 150 sets of hard copies of maps are produced for all the members of the parliament.
<b>Output 2</b>	<b>Public consultations and consensus building facilitated</b>		
<b>Activities</b>			
<b>Public Consultation Activities</b>			
2.1	Engagement of a national Public Awareness		Delta Publicity is contracted to cover a good part of the public awareness campaign i.e. TV spots and broadcasting. MC Monitoring is

Level	Activities		Activities completed in the reporting period
	Company		another company that dealt with monitoring of written media and report writing and distribution of summaries of reform related articles.
	Develop a media / PR plan and implement it in preparing for and during the public consultations period	▼	<b>Ongoing</b> The Media PR Plan design was completed in January – February 2014.  Implementation of the plan is ongoing
	Designing, producing and printing leaflets/brochures/FAQs about reform (12,000 copies for distribution in 12 qarks)	▼	<b>Completed</b> 6000 leaflets designed, produced and distributed.  2,000 folders, notebooks and pens designed and produced with MLI logo  2000 plastic bracelets with territorial reform logo were produced and distributed
	Designing and printing handbook for voluntary mergers (500 copies for distribution to current LGU mayors and their councils)		Cancelled as activity
	Producing at least two TV and two radio Spots  Buying media time on national and local TVs and Radios to broadcast spots regularly over two months while public consultations	▼	<b>Completed</b> A TV spot is produced and aired, on prime time, 200 times in total  A radio spot was aired 60 times on radio stations such as Top Albania Radio, Radio Tirana and Club FM. TV and Radio spots were aired during May - June 2014.
2.2	Social media engagement		
	Supplying Facebook and a Twitter account with information about TAR.	▼	<b>Completed</b> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/reformaterritoriale">https://www.facebook.com/reformaterritoriale</a> <a href="http://www.reformaterritoriale.al/">http://www.reformaterritoriale.al/</a>
	Producing of a video and Realization of video footage from events/ public consultations	▼	<b>Completed</b> <a href="http://www.reformaterritoriale.al/news-information/videos/74-live">http://www.reformaterritoriale.al/news-information/videos/74-live</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUr3_4CNVvAavxSiCTEdtEQ%20">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUr3_4CNVvAavxSiCTEdtEQ%20</a>



Level	Activities		Activities completed in the reporting period
	Summary of the main highlights of consultations posted regularly on social media, etc.	▼	<b>Completed</b> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/reformaterritoriale">https://www.facebook.com/reformaterritoriale</a> <a href="http://www.reformaterritoriale.al/">http://www.reformaterritoriale.al/</a>
<b>Consensus building activities</b>			
2.5	Organization of Public Events to ensure the participation of civil society in support of the Territorial and Administrative Reform	▼	<b>Completed</b> A competitive procurement process was organized and 4 (four) NGOs were contracted to support the Ministry with the organization of discussions and consultations with civil society and business community with regards to the territorial and administrative reform. 37 + 5 consultations were organized all over the country.
2.6	Citizens Voice Territorial Reform survey	▼	<b>Completed</b> IDRA was contracted to design an appropriate methodology for a national survey that would measure the public awareness on the reform, the acceptance levels of the reform outcomes as well as indicated expectations of 16.000 citizens regarding the reform; the survey was conducted during June-July. A summary report and findings were presented in July and the full report in August.
<b>Study tour</b>			
2.9	Study tour for policy makers and experts	▼	<b>Completed</b> 18 representatives from the Parliament, the central government and institutions, participated in a study tour to Ireland that took place during late June – early July 2014. The participants gained a better insight and knowledge of Irish experience in dealing with territorial and administrative reform issues at central and local level; learned about Irish established structures and process design.
<b>Output 3</b>	<b>Timely logistical inputs at all stages of the process secured</b>		Ongoing
<b>Output 4</b>	<b>Support to transition/organisation for the actual amalgamations</b>		

Level	Activities		Activities completed in the reporting period
4.1 – 4.7.	Outline for the amalgamation, development of blueprints, implementation	▼	The initial roadmap and the outline of the transition phase are reflected in the STAR substantive revision project document, finalized in May 2014.

#### 4. Challenges encountered during the reporting period

The STAR project ran smoothly and responded timely to all exigencies and requirements for support from the government counterpart. In terms of project implementation, the stated short and mid-term objectives have been fairly achieved.

A near future challenge for the project consists in developing a more detailed action plan for making the amalgamation happen and provide the required support to the consolidation of local administrations as per the new administrative map.

The project substantial revision carried out in May and presented to the June Steering Committee was a major step in this direction and a result of research, collection of best similar practices and collective work of local experts. Nevertheless, the described roadmap needs further operationalization to deliver a truly working template/blueprint, which requires additional institutional and expert efforts for finalizing in the shortest delays the amalgamation model, identifying the relevant government agencies, their roles and the accurate capacity gaps that STAR should fulfill.

The major challenge for the reform, lying outside STAR implementation, though having a considerable influence on the reform process, remains the lack of political consensus and collaboration from the opposition, which is currently threatening the process with an initiative to seeking the Constitutional Court opinion on the new Administrative and Territorial Law. Depending on the Constitutional Court opinion and the time it will take for the Court to declare such an outcome, the process would need to comply with the recommendations and evolve with a different pace to meet its objectives within more stringent deadlines.

## 5. Project expenditures

EXPENSES as of 31st Aug 2014	TOTAL BUDGET (USD)	Expenses+Commitments 2014 (USD)	BALANCE (USD)	COMMENTS
<b>1. Human Resources</b>				
<b>Experts Group</b>				
International Expert	87,310	87,310	-	Contract with SKLI
National Experts	158,794	132,140	26,654	16 Experts contracted
<b>Technical Secretariat</b>				
Chief Regional Coordinator	29,640	29,000	640	12 month contract
National Reform Advisor	19,200	18,800	400	12 month contract
National Project Specialist	18,000	17,630	370	12 month contract
Public Information Consultant	15,600	13,935	1,665	11 month contract
Driver	12,500	12,500	-	13 month contract
<b>Regional Coordinators</b>	119,380	73,710	45,670	13 RC contracted
<b>Other Consultants</b>				
Training Consultants to RCs and RCCs	-	-	-	
<b>Project management staff (UNDP)</b>				
Project Coordinator	29,958	29,600	358	16 month contract
Admin/Assistant	18,400	18,400	-	16 month contract
<b>Subtotal Human Resources</b>	<b>508,782</b>	<b>433,025</b>	<b>75,757</b>	
<b>2. Per-diems / Travel</b>				
Expert Group per diem	2,000	-	2,000	
Regional Coordinators	2,800	2,285	515	
Participation in national workshops/events	25,220	6,815	18,405	
Training Consultants to RCs and RCCs	-	-	-	
Participation to Media Training in Tirana	-	-	-	
Study tour to Ireland	57,139	57,139	(0)	
<b>Subtotal Per-diems / Travel</b>	<b>87,159</b>	<b>66,239</b>	<b>20,920</b>	
<b>3. Equipment</b>				
Desktops	10,000	7,903	2,097	7 desktops purchased
Laptops	12,000	10,183	1,817	17 laptops purchased+ cases
Printers	4,000	3,560	440	1 multifunctional printer
Projectors	2,402	2,402	-	6 projectors purchased
Cameras for RC	3,384	3,384	-	12 cameras for RC
Camera TS	2,004	2,004	-	1 camera +1 camcorder for TS
Server	2,565	2,565	-	1 server
UPS	800	736	64	5 UPS for PC +1 UPS for Server
Portable HDD	700	527	173	6 portable HDD
Flash USB	500	390	110	20 flash USB
Digital Voice recorder	295	238	57	4 digital voice recorders

EXPENSES as of 31st Aug 2014	TOTAL BUDGET (USD)	Expenses+Commitments 2014 (USD)	BALANCE (USD)	COMMENTS
Office furniture	5,000	5,000	-	10 office chairs; MLI new furniture
Unforeseen expenses	5,000	5,000	-	MLI new office furniture
<b>Subtotal Equipment</b>	<b>48,650</b>	<b>43,892</b>	<b>4,758</b>	
<b>4. Transport Cost</b>				
International Travel	9,000	-	9,000	
Local transport RCs	3,500	2,970	530	
Local transport media journalists	300	-	300	
<b>Subtotal Transport Costs</b>	<b>12,800</b>	<b>2,970</b>	<b>9,830</b>	
<b>5. Maintenance and Operational Costs</b>				
TS Vehicle maintenance	8,000	3,190	4,810	
TS Vehicle fuel	12,000	6,355	5,645	
TS- Office supplies	5,100	3,300	1,800	
Project Office (UNDP) - Office supplies	2,000	800	1,200	
TS - Communication costs	8,000	5,646	2,354	
Project Office (UNDP) - Communication costs	1,700	270	1,430	
Processing costs (advert., bank charges, contracting) (UNDP)	39,100	12,500	26,600	
<b>Subtotal Maintenance and Operational Costs</b>	<b>75,900</b>	<b>32,061</b>	<b>43,839</b>	
<b>6. PR and Public Awareness</b>				
<u>PR Contract</u>				
TV spots production	113,535	113,535	-	Public awareness campaign contract with Delta Shpk after amendment amounts to \$113,535
TV spot broadcast				
Radio Spot production				
Radio Spot broadcast				
Newspaper spot				
Leaflets/brochures	6,000	2,773	3,227	
Guidelines, manuals	1,500	-	1,500	
Posters	4,000	3,110	890	
Social media	8,990	8,990	-	Vacancy announcements; 6 month subscription to local newspapers; MC Monitoring contracts
TAR awareness campaign wristbands	3,265	3,265	-	
Printing legislative package (incl. new TAR maps)	17,080	17,080	-	
Editing and translation costs	10,000	6,320	3,680	
Organization of Public Events from 3 NGO	88,285	88,285	-	IPPP \$ 34,720 URI \$ 29,440 Partners Albania \$ 24,125
Business Association	13,180	13,180	-	Contract with Alb-Konfindustria
Citizens Voice Territorial Reform Survey	122,940	122,940	-	Contract with IDRA Shpk
<b>Subtotal PR and printing costs</b>	<b>388,775</b>	<b>379,478</b>	<b>9,297</b>	

EXPENSES as of 31st Aug 2014	TOTAL BUDGET (USD)	Expenses+Commitments 2014 (USD)	BALANCE (USD)	COMMENTS
<b>7. Workshops/Meetings rental costs</b>				
National workshops/events	22,000	14,530	7,470	
Town hall meetings at local level	43,500	23,304	20,196	
RC training in Tirana	4,000	1,897	2,103	
Media training Tirana	1,000	863	137	
<b>Subtotal Workshops/Meetings rental costs</b>	<b>70,500</b>	<b>40,594</b>	<b>29,906</b>	
<b>8. Transitional support costs</b>				
GIS mapping of administrative borders	58,010	58,010	-	Contract with IMB
Legal/technical support and measures for new LGUs	106,188	-	106,188	
<b>Subtotal Other costs</b>	<b>164,198</b>	<b>58,010</b>	<b>106,188</b>	
<b>9. Subtotal direct costs (1-8)</b>	<b>1,356,764</b>	<b>1,056,269</b>	<b>300,495</b>	
<b>10. Administrative/Management Costs (up to 8%)</b>	<b>90,073</b>	<b>66,033</b>	<b>24,040</b>	
<b>11. Total costs (9+10)</b>	<b>1,446,837</b>	<b>1,122,302</b>	<b>324,535</b>	Expenses as of 31.08.2014 <b>\$916,374</b>

## **Annex I - Reports**

- ✓ Experts' Report on Analysis of the LG situation in Albania (cover page)
- ✓ Experts' Report on Functional Zones (cover page)
- ✓ Consultation Meetings' Report of PA (cover page)
- ✓ Consultation Meetings' Report of IP3 (cover page)
- ✓ Consultation Meetings' Report of URI (cover page)
- ✓ Consultation Meetings' Report of KONFINDUSTRIA (cover page)
- ✓ Citizen's Voice Territorial Reform Survey Report of IDRA (cover page)
- ✓ Report on the Study Tour to Ireland



# **ADMINISTRATIVE AND**

# **TERRITORIAL REFORM**

**ANALYSIS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SITUATION IN ALBANIA**

**(EXECUTIVE SUMMARY)**

**GENERAL REPORT**

**TO THE COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND TERRITORIAL REFORM**

April 2014



# **TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATIVE**

## **REFORM**

**FUNCTIONAL ZONES**

**(EXECUTIVE SUMMARY)**

**GENERAL REPORT**

**TO THE COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND TERRITORIAL REFORM**

JULY 2014



**“Organization of public events to ensure the participation of civil society in support of the Territorial and Administrative Reform”**

**“CONSULTATION MEETINGS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ON  
THE TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM”  
ACTIVITY**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**JULY 2014**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **PROJECT**

**“Organization of public events to ensure the participation of civil society in support of the Territorial and Administrative Reform”**

### **ACTIVITY**

#### **Consultation meetings**

July 2014



Urban Research Institute

## REPORT

**"Organization of Public Events to ensure the participation of civil society in support of the Territorial and Administrative Reform"**

Financed by UNDP Albania



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[www.uri.org.al](http://www.uri.org.al)

**15 July, 2014**

**Report on**

**Organization of Public Events**

**to ensure participation of businesses**

**in support of the Territorial and Administrative Reform**

**July 2014**



# “Citizen’s Voice Territorial reform Survey”

Territorial Administrative Reform in Albania

*Carried out by the **Government of Albania**  
Implemented by **IDRA Shpk**  
Supported by **STAR Project***

**Support to Territorial and Administrative Reform  
Study visit of Members of Ad-hoc Parliamentary Commission  
and other Albanian Government Institutions to Ireland**

**Study Tour Report**

(30<sup>th</sup> June – 4<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

## Executive summary

As part of the ongoing Territorial and Administrative Reform in Albania and in response to the increased interest of the established Ad-hoc Parliamentary Commission and other governmental institutions to learn from other countries' similar and best experiences, STAR project supported a Study Tour to Ireland for several members of the Parliamentary Commission as well as other Albanian central level policy makers.

The study tour was held between 30th June and 4th July 2014 and focused on providing delegates with a detailed introduction to the tools, systems, good practices, achievements and challenges for Local Government Reform in Ireland. The tour included presentations from governmental institutions that are closely involved in Local Government reform in Ireland, including Kilkenny, Limerick, Tipperary Local Government institutions in the South, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and Irish Water at central level, and County Louth representatives on the border with North Ireland. The tour also provided an opportunity for delegates to exchange information about their own national reforms and experiences.

Eighteen delegates attended the study tour; and the delegation was made up of members of the ad-hoc parliamentary commission, and senior officials from other related to the reform ministries, such as Prime Ministry Office, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure.

Throughout the event, delegates commended the robustness of Irish Local Government Reform and indicated that there was much to learn from the Irish experience. Delegates were particularly impressed with the detailed planning of the amalgamation and implementation processes by engaging local government officials, experts, and community representatives. Other areas that were of significant interest to delegates included: the dialogue established between different political parties for the Local Government reform, different approaches used at central and local level throughout the design and implementation phases, the support provided by the central government to the local ones and the principles used to standardise the reform process all over the country.

In concluding the Study Tour, the delegates were more able to discuss about how policy and practice in Albania might be reviewed or developed, taking into consideration the principles, tools and methods used in Republic of Ireland as far as local government reform is concerned. The visits have also informed some next steps for the Minister of Local Issues and Members of the Parliament and in particular have provided the foundations for networking and future collaboration with the Irish partners.

## Aims and objectives of the Study Tour

The main aim of the study tour was to upgrade knowledge and get a better insight of Irish experience in dealing with territorial and administrative reform issues at central and local level; established structures; process design, dealing with resistance and ways of mitigation. More specifically the objectives of the study tour were to:

- Provide participants with a detailed introduction to Irish strategy and approaches, tools and systems to designing and implementing the local Government reform in Ireland;
- Showcase good practice, achievements and challenges in the area of LG Reform;

- Provide first-hand insights into the work of LG Reform in Ireland, through visits to different counties, and input from local government authorities and managers; and
- Provide participants with opportunities to network with leading Irish governmental institutions and experts in the field of LG reform.

### Preparation and format

Preliminary work was undertaken to gather information about the needs and expectations of the delegates that were likely to be attending the study tour. This revealed that knowledge, understanding and practical experience of Local Government Reform principles, criteria, and established structures and systems would be variable and that, for some delegates at least, there was likely to be a particular interest in some specific areas namely, process followed from design to implementation phase, the kind of support provided from central to local government, the structures established to enable successful implementation, and reform affects to water and economic development.

An outline programme was prepared focusing on three interconnecting themes:

1. Overview of National Reform process from inception to implementation,
2. Structures involved, their role and responsibilities, the reform and its impact on local authorities with a special focus on water and local economic development, and
3. The learning environment from East Border Region as far as established dialogue model is concerned.

Key experts (from governmental institutions with responsibility for different aspects of the Local Government Reform) were identified to deliver presentations. Dedicated time was built in to the programme for delegates to review and reflect on different themes and issues, ask questions and clarify points of detail, exchange ideas and other information about good practice, and explore opportunities for networking and collaboration.

### Tuesday, 1st July 2014

Michael O'Brian, president of Association of County and City councils welcomed delegates to the study tour, and introduced other members of the Kilkenny County Council. He also provided a context for the study tour and explained how the objectives of the tour had been designed to support and aligns with the Territorial and Administrative Reform in Albania and different interests of the group members.

Mr. Joe Crockett (Chief Executive of Kilkenny County Council) provided an overview of national reform process and the way the reform has impacted Local Authorities. He focused during his presentation on the Kilkenny County Council experience. He mentioned that as far as structural aspect of the reform from 34 counties they were reduced into 31. Merging has happened in Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford. At sub-county level 80 town councils were dissolved and new municipal districts of county councils were established. Out of 10 regional bodies only 3 had remained. Comprehensive territorial configuration of each county into municipal districts was based generally around principal towns. Districts were composed of local electoral areas as recommended by the Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee in its report of May 2013.



In most cases the electoral area and the district were identical, but some districts contained more than one electoral area, for example, those involving “metropolitan” areas and certain counties where circumstances may warrant combination of electoral areas to form a municipal district. He also highlighted that parallel to territorial reform and reorganization of structures, new functions regarding economic development, community/local development and enterprise support were transferred to local level.

Then, Mr. Sean Keating (Director and change manager of Tipperary County Council) and Pat Dowling (Deputy Chief Executive of Limerick City and County Council) outlined the reform process in relation to their respective regions.

Tipperary and Limerick were two of only three counties in Ireland subject to amalgamation and both saw their city councils merged with the surrounding county councils. In both cases working groups were established to explore how best to restructure local government within the respective county boundaries and the recommendation to amalgamate city and council followed reviews, studies and wide public consultations. They highlighted that a number of enabling structures were put in place to manage the transition and to ensure proper consultation. In addition a group was established to deal with staff re-organization, a detailed Communication Plan was drawn up in the early stages of implementation, and a register of risks was compiled and an on-line risk monitoring and reporting tool was designed and supervised by the merger team. They both mentioned that cooperation of the elected members in the merger process has been critical to success. One of the remaining challenges indicated by the presenters had to do with truly unifying the staff and elected members to operate as one entity. They concluded by highlighting that although the decision for merging was very top down, they had decided not to fight the change, but to lead and deliver it.

Martin Prendiville (Head of Finance in Kilkenny County Council) gave a presentation on economic development function and the integration of County Enterprise Boards into the Local Authorities as local enterprise offices. He emphasized that the aim of this re-structuring was to ensure a more coordinated and cohesive development of micro enterprise in Ireland and to contribute to economic growth and job creation.

The last presentation of the first day was provided by Thomas Byrne (Former Director of South – East Regional Authority) and focused on the reform of regional government level. He highlighted that as part of the reform 10 existing regional structures were replaced with 3 new regional assemblies in revised larger territorial units. During his presentation he also focused on the role and functions of the revised regions as well as the need for regions, although regions did not have a strong history in Ireland and appeared more as influence of European Commission.

### **Wednesday, 2nd July 2014**

First half of the day was spent in the Environment, Community and Local Government Department (DECLG).

Mr. Denis Conlan (Principal Officer in DECLG) did an overall description of the reform process in Ireland from inception to implementation, outlining the structures involved, their role and responsibilities. During his presentation he focused on the support provided by the central level (DECLG in this case) to local level in terms of the preparations for reorganization, namely design and distribution of a guidance framework, menu preparation of the matters to address (e.g. staffing, service delivery, buildings, business process review, ICT potential, systems integration), advice on

approaches (e.g. workforce planning, transition planning, coordination structures, risk management, communications, reporting). He also highlighted some of the overall outcomes of the reform at national level:

- More rational structures
- Fewer councilors – from 1627 to 950 – but more equitable representation
- Stronger governance
- New functions – reversing decline
- Stronger funding- more self reliant
- Greater efficiency, less administration, cost reduction, better use of resources,

Mr. Stephan Dineen (Communication Officer, Water Sector Reform Programme) did a very structured presentation of the water reform programme in Ireland, focusing on the need and benefit of the reform, reform components, challenges of the reform, and engagement with Local Government. He highlighted that water reform was one of the largest reform programmes happening in Ireland since independence (1922). It evolved transfer of water services responsibilities from local government to national water utility, the introduction of domestic water charges and the domestic metering programme.

Second half of the day was spent meeting with the head of EU Committee and other members of the EU committee, discussing about territorial and administrative reform of local government in both countries as one of the EU directives, as well as unconditioned support of Ireland to the EU membership process of Albania.

#### Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014

The Delegation travels up North to City of Dundalk, in Louth County Council.

Cathaoilleach, Cllr Oliver Tully welcomed the delegation. Then representatives from both sides of the border gave an overview of their reform process, focusing on the undertaken steps, the established structures and especially the transferring powers to local level. Different from the experience in the South, the local governments that are part of the East Border Region had cooperated a lot among each other although positioned on both sides the border. Instead of turning the back to each other, they had decided to sit face to face and work together for the benefit and welfare of their constituencies. They had established a well received and known model of dialogue, which was of special interest to the delegation.

For the second part of the day a tour of Carlingford Town was planned and an opportunity was created for the members of the group to experience very traditional Irish food and music.

Key observations and learning points

Based on feedback received, the majority of delegates appeared to benefit from their attendance on the study tour. Almost all delegates indicated that the study tour was high quality and that it had met their expectations.

Throughout the event delegates commented on the well designed, extended in time, and professionally implemented Local Government reform and that was much to learn from the Irish experience generally. A number of the delegates indicated that they would be interested in adopting

some of the methods and tools in Albania, albeit perhaps with some adaptation to meet local needs and policy contexts.

Delegates were impressed with the Ireland's success in building a common understanding of all the political spectrum and community in large about the importance of undertaking a Local Government Reform in the country. Although the process did appear somehow as top-down, all the delegates were able to sense the ownership of the process with all the Local Government representatives they met during the study tour.

The "Putting People First" principle that underpins the entire reform process, along with the tools and methods to ensure community participation were of significant interest to the delegates. The visit to Kilkenny, and Dundalk and the presentations given by different local government representatives were particularly helpful in learning how these LGU have been able to involve as much people as possible in the process and the appropriate mechanisms to achieving high participation.

Of special importance for the delegates was the time dedicated to design and implementation of the Local Government Reform in Ireland. Preparations did started in March 2011 when the reform became a key priority for the Irish Government, and only in January 2014 it was signed by the President, by becoming fully effective in June 2014. Being aware of the challenges (the existing LG structures had more than 100 years of consolidation), changing the statuesque was foreseen to be difficult and time consuming, therefore it required careful considerations, detailed planning, and extended consensus. In addition a lot of support from central government in terms of guideline and action plan preparation, and technical advice is provided.

"The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today". This is how one of the presenters concluded his speech highlighting that the reform process had not been easy. They had faced a lot of difficulties and uncertainties and were aware of not solving everything. But they had learned from their mistakes and what is more important they had cooperated and communicated a lot with each other. These had been the two driving forces to success strongly recommended to the delegation.

### **Study Tour to Ireland (30 Jun – 4 Jul 2014) – List of Participants**

<b>Name Surname</b>	<b>Institution</b>
Mr. Bledar Çuçi	Minister of State for Local Issues
Mrs. Eridana Cano	Director of the Cabinet, Minister of State for Local Issues
Mr. Enea Hoti	Advisor to the Minister of State for Local Issues
Mr. Artur Kurti	Team Leader Regional Coordination/STAR Project
Mrs. Falma Bulbul	Director of Communication, Prime Minister Office
Mr. Artur Metani	Director of Legal, Programme Monitoring and Anti-Corruption Department, Prime Minister Office
Mrs. Blerina Gjylameti	Parliament Member, Territorial Reform Ad-Hoc Commission
Mr. Musa Ulqini	Parliament Member, Territorial Reform Ad-Hoc Commission
Mr. Namik Kopliku	Parliament Member, Territorial Reform Ad-Hoc Commission
Mr. Spartak Braho	Parliament Member, Territorial Reform Ad-Hoc Commission
Mr. Andrea Marto	Parliament Member, Territorial Reform Ad-Hoc Commission
Mr. Armando Subashi	Parliament Member, Territorial Reform Ad-Hoc Commission
Mrs. Mimoza Tasi	Parliament Member, Territorial Reform Ad-Hoc Commission
Mrs. Kledia Haska	Advisor, Territorial Reform Ad-Hoc Commission
Mr. Perparim Spahiu	Parliament member
Mr. Arian Korpa	General Director of Standards and Monitoring, Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure
Mr. Fran Brahimi	Director of Budget, Ministry of Finance
Mrs. Anila Shehu	UNDP/Support to Territorial and Administrative Reform (STAR) project manager

## **Annex II - Photos from the reporting period activities**

Photos from consultation meetings in Burrel, Korce, Bajram Curri, Has, Durrës, Krujë, Vlorë and Sarandë















MLI presentation of five options of the new administrative division to the ad-hoc Parliamentary Commission



Steering committee meeting, June 2014



Meeting with regional coordinators and hired NGOs





During the study tour to Ireland

