

UNDP Albania support to Governance and the Rule of Law

Portfolio Brief



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Governance and Rule of Law Context

The National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) is the overarching development planning instrument. The NSDI 2015-2020 draft is still undergoing final revisions with the aim of being approved by the government's Strategic Planning Committee in late 2015 or early 2016. The overall objective of the NSDI is EU integration through pursuit of national reforms in the following key priority areas: (1) Innovative Good Governance, (2) Access to Clean Water, (3) Energy, (4) Foreign Direct Investments, (5) Land and property, and (6) Structural Reform of the tax system.

Albania's progress towards EU integration is measured against results in five identified key priorities: public administration, judicial reform, fight against corruption, organized crime, and protection of human rights. In 2015, the Government approved a comprehensive strategy on **Public Administration Reform**. The implementation remains a challenge, including results in ensuring the sustainability of a professional and depoliticized public administration at both central and local levels. In resource terms, the EU is building up a budget support scheme which will be triggered by achievement of milestones in the implementation. As part of the modernization of public administration, the government is committed to transform service provision, make it citizen-oriented, increase then number of e-services thus making them more integrated and accessible. A World Bank TA grant followed by a substantial loan is going to support innovation and service re-engineering for central government service provision.

Albania's **judicial system** is quoted by the latest EU Progress Report as being "at an early stage of preparation", being in a critical need for a radical reform to strengthen its independence, accountability and administration of justice. A new **Anticorruption Strategy 2015-2020** was adopted in March 2015, while corruption still remains pervasive and needs to be addressed at many levels. Citizen feedback

schemes on a few public services are being piloted while the National Anticorruption Coordinator has established since February 2015 a central government anticorruption portal inviting citizens to denounce corruption cases in several sectors. Although these initiatives are initial steps in the right direction, there is not yet a critical mass for pretending results and change.

Albania held **local elections** in June 2015, in a quite different context from the past, conforming to a **radical territorial and administrative reform (TAR)**, legislated in 2014. The TAR remains to date the flagship reform of the current Government and led to a drastic reduction of the total **number of local government units (LGUs)** from **373** to **61**. Until before local elections of June 2015, the first level of 373 local governments in Albania was in many cases inefficient and economically unsustainable (EU progress report 2012). Fifty-five percent of communes (rural) and 15% of municipalities (urban) comprised less than 5, 000 inhabitants. 230 LGUs used to spend 60% of the budget on their own salaries. About 80 smallest LGUs did not provide any public services to their communities, while most LGUs lacked capacities to offer quality services. The main rationale for the TAR was about tackling the inefficiencies and enabling the integration and economies of scale. However, the TAR represents only a first step of a comprehensive package of reforms and changes to strengthen local administration and its capacities through revisiting the country's Decentralization Strategy (approved in July 2015), delegating additional competencies and assigning more responsibilities to the LGUs (a new Organic Law on Local Governance to be approved in December 2015) and the formulation of a Law on Local Finances, providing the framework for broader local fiscal space and budget predictability (to be developed in 2016).

UNDP's Interventions

NSDI Governance Indicators - Since mid-2014, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and UNDP entered into a partnership to pilot development and recommendation of good governance performance measures and indicators into the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI 2015-2020) so as to enable national monitoring as well as informing the post-2015 agenda.



5 GENDER EQUALITY



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



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UNDP OUTCOME STATEMENT

Outcome 1: State and civil society organizations perform effectively and with accountability for consolidated democracy in line with international norms and standards

Output 1.1: Constitutional and independent mechanisms are reinforced to identify and report human rights violations and enable evidence based policy making and response.

Output 1.2: National public administration has greater capacity to improve access to information, address corruption, and engage CSOs and the media in efforts to strengthen monitoring of reform efforts.groups.

Output 1.3: Local public administrations (LPAs) are able to deliver equitable, quality services and strengthen influence of citizens in decision-making.

Public Administration Reform / Public Services Reform - In anticipation to a World Bank support to public service reform, UNDP in partnership with the Italian Government, under a donor pooled fund, UNDP Albania provides management, coordination and preparatory support to the Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration in dealing with the different aspects of the reform. Besides ensuring local expertise and enhancing operational capacities of key public service institutions, the UNDP assistance is instrumental in the development of a long term national policy document on service delivery is being completed by end 2015. The need for extending management support to the Ministry and promoting innovations in service provision remains a requirement for 2016, for which the Ministry is appealing to donors to contribute further to the pooled fund.

Support to Anticorruption efforts - As the Government launched in February 2015 the anticorruption online portal inviting citizens to actively join efforts in the fight against corruption, UNDP supported the functionality of the operational room for the portal, inclusive of temporary engagement of portal operators. In addition, UNDP has initiated a modest assistance to enhance the relevance of the portal to attract more citizen interaction, through making the site friendlier and data rich through tweaking the portal software in use. This exercise will be completed by early 2016.

Support to local elections - UNDP, drawing on its long-term democratization work in Albania, launched the "Strengthening Electoral Processes in Albania" program. The program was designed to improve competencies of election officials and strengthen processes and systems employed to administer

elections. In doing so, UNDP helped improve levels of transparency and trust in the 2015 local elections, which helped bring the recent process of territorial-administrative reform closer to completion and integration into Albania's system of governance.

Support to local governance - Territorial reform and consolidation of the new local governance system - The major UNDP involvement in local governance is its partnership with the Government of Albania in management support for the implementation of the territorial and administrative reform since its outset in late 2013. The assistance consists in the management of a donor pooled fund which is operated by UNDP under the leadership of the Minister of Local Issues.

During 2013-2014, support encompassed advice in the development of the reform roadmap, provision of required expertise for the various assessments and options developed, ensuring the necessary public awareness and supporting public consultations as well as preparing the reform legal framework.

Since late 2014 the support has focused on preparing LGUs to amalgamate and carry out the necessary due diligence of their offices and resources and actually, in a post-local elections period supporting the actual due diligence across the country and advising on amalgamation steps. In addition, pilots on e-services are being developed and will be integral part of a second phase of support along the same pooled donor scheme, which will focus on local services reorganization and improvement, transparency and performance measurement and a national benchmarking of LGUs.



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Support to military hotspots clearance - UNDP has been playing a leading role in the establishment and implementation of a Mine Action programme in Albania for a decade, building along national capacities for mine and UXO clearance. With the completion of the Mine Action programme.

In 2009, this national capacity was gradually converted to support coordination and monitoring of hotspots clearance across the country. The unit, under the name of AMMCO, partners with the Ministry of Defense and provides support in prioritization of hotspots, social impact assessments, task development and quality assurance on clearance activities carried out by various clearance operators in conformity with international and national standards. To date, out of 19 military hotspots representing 2.1 million square meters of contamination and risk, certified clearance activities have reduced the hazard areas to 10 hotspots totaling 1.52 million square meters.

The Center of Excellence at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - UNDP has promoted in late 2014 the establishment of a Center of Excellence in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responding to a government priority to enhance the Ministry's analytical perspectives on Albania's foreign policy with a focus on regional policy and in promoting partnerships and expert views.

During 2015, the Center has engaged expertise on various topics and events of interest to foreign policy developments, created website "Albania Council of Human Rights," which provides information on Albania's commitments and obligations to human rights instruments, built a network of experts, research institutes, international organizations with which the Centre cooperates, developed a first internship program for young professionals interested in pursuing diplomatic career, etc.

Given the successful experience of 2015, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is seeking ways to mobilize resources for extending the Center's functionality and diversification of activities in 2016 and beyond, including possibilities of pooled funding management arrangement under UNDP.

Across project and activities, women engagement and consultations, sex disaggregated data and advocacy for gendered policy making are sought at the extent possible. Public services delivery approaches are being developed and will be reviewed for

gender sensitiveness. Anticorruption data gathered through the portal are disaggregated by gender at this stage. The analysis of social impact of floods will take into consideration gender and its perspectives. 26 local operational and development plans under implementation in the framework of STAR project are being developed with special gender considerations in all the stages, from data collection to stakeholder meetings, prioritization and agreeing on the plans. Nevertheless, further efforts could be made and analytical conclusions drawn from UNDP's work and therefore there is room for improvement.

Budget 2015 - 2019	USD 3.37 mil; USD 7 mil pipeline
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Programme Associate	Xhesi Mane
Programme Managers	Anila Shehu, Estevan Ikonomi, Arben Braha, Rudina Mullahi,
Project Team	Altjon Paloka, Elton Haxhi, Marenglen Biba, Spartak Sokoli, Fabjola Zeqiri, Juliana Babalia, Mirela Kastrati
List of Key Projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support to Territorial and Administrative Reform – STAR 2. ART Gold – Articulation des Reseaux Territoriaux for Government and Local Development 3. Innovation for Service Delivery in Albania – ISDA 4. Coordination and Monitoring of Hotspots Clearance in Albania – AMMCO 5. NSDI Governance Indicators 6. Election Programme 7. Center of Excellence at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 8. Anticorruption and Rule of Law - ACROL

