



REPUBLIKA E SHQIPËRIE

**THE OPEN GOVERNMENT
PARTNERSHIP
SECOND OPEN GOVERNMENT
NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR
ALBANIA 2014-2016**

Open
Government
Partnership



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INTRODUCTION

Shortly after the official launching of the Open Government Partnership, the Albanian Government rallied behind the values promoted by this multilateral initiative. OGP is one of the most important instruments to promote governmental transparency globally, to increase civic participation in public life and to use new technologies in order to enhance administrative efficiency and fight corruption.

With increasing demands from the public for more transparent and accountable government, the Government of the Republic of Albania has made continued efforts to provide a better and open communication with the citizens and with the civil society.

During the constitution of the new government on September 2013, the new Prime minister, Mr. Edi Rama, emphasized the importance to “create a fair society” by declaring open and transparent government as one of the key national agenda. In this perspective various policies to achieve the open government are being developed.

With a goal to improve public services, increase public integrity and effectively manage public resources, the Albanian government presents this national plan with the purpose to enhance transparency, citizen participation and accountability of government. Moreover, we are making ceaseless efforts toward realizing an open government and ultimately, an advanced nation. This draft action plan is the result of thorough consultation process with local and regional NGO.

OPEN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO DATE

Albania’s first OGP Action Plan for 2011-2013 was mainly focused in increasing quality and efficiency in the management of public resources services, by implementing measures in the area of fiscal transparency, access to information, use of information technology (IT) and citizens’ participation in the process of public policies’ development.

The Albanian government's commitments addressed primarily three out of five OGP Grand Challenges: Increasing Public Integrity, Improving Public Services, and Managing Public Resources More Effectively. There were a total of 30 (thirty) commitments undertaken by the Albanian government for the 2012 – 2013 term. IRM progress report 2012/2013 for Albania indicated that the Government had implemented 16 out of 30 commitments.

The work for the preparation of the Second National Action Plan started in January 2014 with the creation of a working group composed by the vice ministers of each Ministry and by the Directors of the most important public institutions and agencies in Albania.

In collaboration with civil society a first Conference was organized in March during which the draft commitments of each ministry were distributed to working groups composed by representatives of civil society and representatives of the State that were directly involved with the proposed commitments.

After the Conference the Coalition of Civil Society for The Open Government Partnership was created and presented 25 recommendations in regard to the improvement of the second Albanian Action Plan.

The time line of the activities, the draft action plan, the 25 recommendations and each commitment was published for public consultation on the MIPA website.

After the public consultation phase, the Minister of State for Innovation and Public Administration organized a second meeting with civil society where the comments and suggestions arrived from public society during the consultation phase were consulted, discussed and integrated in the draft action plan.

The Action Plan herein presented is the result of a close collaboration with members of civil society and foresees commitments that will involve them also during the implementation phase of each commitment.

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN INITIATIVES

These new Open Government commitments include the expansion of original commitments as well as the launch of new initiatives. The Administration will work together with the public and civil society organizations to implement each of these commitments over the next two years.

1. Open Government to Increase Public Integrity

1.1 Standardization of processes on complaints related to corruption- Minister of State for Local Issues

The Minister of State for Local Issues, in the role of the National Coordinator for Anti-Corruption, will undertake the standardization of the process related to complaints addressing corruption. Currently, although many ministries have been given green lines or forms to denounce corruption, there is no standardized procedure, which ensures transparency in the review of the complaint and concrete deadlines to ensure a good service. Some of the indicators and milestones set for this commitment are the drafting of relevant guidelines for addressing corruption complaints, integrating them in each ministry transparency plan rules, publish them online.

Given the specifics and difficulty of the fight and investigation of corruption, this system, through the standardization of processes, can increase confidence in the administration and increase the number of informants. Ministries will have to officially publish relevant standards and inform the public on the progress of specific issues, thus raising the level of accountability of the public administration. This commitment will help improve the transparency regarding the complaint procedures in fact until now there is no clear information on how a citizen can actually address a complaint in corruption cases. The publication of this “standards” will not only create uniformity in the way the complaint will be address but will also serve in raising the efficiency of the public administration while handling corruption complaints.

1.2 Electronic Registry of authorizations, permits and agreements issued by the Ministry of Energy and Industry

The Ministry of Energy and Industry, in the framework of increasing transparency and accountability, has undertaken the Electronic Registry initiative, aiming to establish and publish in its web page an Electronic Registry of authorizations, permits and agreements given in the relevant fields and their updated status.

Currently there is a lack of information not only on the procedures for obtaining an authorization or permit, but also citizens, interested groups, civil society have no information on the number of permits and authorization given in the energy and industry sector. In order to address this problem and acquire full transparency on the status of the actors operating in these field, the Ministry has initiated a process of identifying the current status, which will also allow an easier monitoring process.

This registry system will help improving MEI's transparency and accountability, but will also allow citizens to access information through the Electronic Registry.

1.3 Implementation of public expenses module in "open data" format – MSIPA and NAIS

The National Agency for Information Society in the context of the global initiative "Partnership for Open Governance", will undertake as commitment the implementation of a module that will allow in an open data format, online access to information on budgetary data of the Ministries. This module will be accessed from the government portal e-Albania and the official websites of the respective institutions.

This module will provision information in real time of budgetary expenses of the Council of Ministers and Line Ministries in order to guaranty complete and transparent information of the expenses. The indicators such as the functionality of the module, the number of visitors of the web pages or downloaded information will be used to verify the implementation of this commitment.

The module of public expenses which will be presented graphically will provide full information in the official web page of the Council of Ministers meanwhile in the official web page of each Ministry will be given information for the respective Ministry.

1.4 Promoting OGP values among local authorities- MSIPA, Minister of Local Affairs and the OGPCCSO

The Minister of State for Innovation and Public Administration in cooperation with the Minister for Local Affairs and the open government partnership coalition of civil society organization will undertake together the commitment to promote and engage local authorities in the OGP values.

This commitment was proposed by civil society organizations with the aim to introduce and promote the core value of OGP also in the governance of local authorities. The aim is to reinforce the participatory mechanism and built open governance also in the local level. Some of the actions that will be undertaken are promoting activities, legal modifications to promote transparency and other OGP values.

2. OPEN GOVERNMENT TO MANAGE PUBLIC RESOURCES MORE EFFECTIVELY

2.1 Establishing the database of government data for economic assistance - Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth

The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, in close collaboration with the State Social Service, in the framework of the reform for poverty alleviation, increase of transparency, service quality and effective use of budgetary funds and exclusion of abusive cases in the economic assistance scheme, has undertaken the initiative to establish the National Electronic Registry of beneficiaries of Economic Assistance.

The administration of benefits is hindered by inadequate capacity, lack of information system, supervision and controls. Albania currently has no national electronic registry of economic

assistance seekers and the administration of receiving welfare benefits takes place locally with paper documentation. This consequently leads to (a) inefficiency in the application and granting of benefits (higher transaction costs), (b) weaknesses in supervision and control of fraud and error, and (c) monitoring and evaluation of ineffective social policy.

The implementation of the new system will help improving the effectiveness of State Social Service by identifying families in need, will improve the evaluation of beneficiaries from applicant families and will exclude abusive cases in the Economic Assistance Scheme.

2.2 Electronic Portal on water resources administration and management- Ministry of Environment.

The interested parties applying for a license or authorization for the use of water resources face a complicated and long procedure of application. The lack of a national inventory of permits for the use of water resources is also a disadvantage that causes conflicts between the institutional stakeholders and the interested parties. The Ministry of Environment, through the Directorate of Policies for Water Resources, will undertake the creation of an integrated water management system that will improve the cooperation of public and private actors through the use of new technologies for license applications and control.

This system will help increase the transparency on the use of water resources in Albania. This commitment seeks to improve governance of natural resources for a better water management by reducing the cases of corruption, strengthening the public awareness on water management. The creation of an online register of water resources users will positively affect transparency and public access to information.

2.3 Single Window- General Directorate of Customs

In order to facilitate and accelerate the procedures for trade in the custom system, the General Directorate of Customs will centralize the administration of requests and procedures through a single window. The utilization of a single window will reduce the time of administrative

practices, will reduce the cost and inevitably increase the transparency level. The interface between private sector and the General Directorate of Customs it will be a web portal interface.

The institutional cooperation and coordination of actions will be in real time. The single window will raise the transparency level of transactions between the administration and the private sector.

3. OPEN GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SERVICES

3.1 Electronic Access to Protected Areas- Ministry of Environment.

Electronic access to a registry of protected areas increases the participation and the inclusiveness of the public opinion and interested stakeholders for activities related to protected areas, hunting areas and national legislative initiatives in the field of nature conservation and biodiversity. The access to the portal will allow consultation of legal documents related to environment protection, a database of new Protected Areas (PA) or extension of existing PA, information on Hunting Areas and associated GIS digital maps. The creation of this portal will strongly contribute in the increase of transparency and public participation; in fact the portal will allow interactive exchange of opinions on draft laws, regulations, and strategies in the field of protected areas.

3.2 National Geoportal- MSIPA and ASIG

The Ministry for Innovation and Public Administration, in collaboration of the Albanian Authority for geospatial information will undertake the creation of a National Electronic Geoportal, which, for the first time, will provide citizens and institutions, transparent and accurate geospatial information. Through the National Geoportal mapping citizens and interested parties can access to topographic maps, orthophotos, boundary maps, indicative maps of immobile property, and maps of the property value.

Some of the steps that will measure the implementation of this commitment are, the interagency coordination in order to enable existing data collection, preparation of the terms of reference for software and hardware infrastructure needed for the realization of this commitment, preparation of the data model for the existing geospatial information, preliminary geo-portal website will make available the existing information, preparation of new geospatial information.

Information on land property and value, positioning and boundary maps and data are information that currently is very difficult for citizens to collect. Also the level of corruption in this field has been very high for long time. Through the implementation of this commitment will contribute in facilitating the access to geospatial maps and data in a unique portal.

3.3 E-Albania- MSIPA and NAIS

E-Albania portal serves as a single contact point for government services, helping to improve the overall accessibility of information to the public. Interoperability Platform on which this portal is based can be extended for other essential governmental services. Until now, information for 170 services offered by the public administration has been published. Services as access to personal data, business data, and online declaration of personal income will soon be added as e-services offered by the portal. E- Albania will be in enriched with various other public e-services.

The aim of this commitment is to pass from first level services (informative services) to level 3 and 4, which means public services that are offered entirely online. It is expected that during 2015, 10 new services will be offered entirely online and other 10 will be added in 2016.

3.4 E-document- General Directorate of Customs

Forms and documents to be completed for different procedures in the customs system are not only complicated but also numerous. In the aim to facilitate the access to the customs system we shall introduce the e-document. Not only will we facilitate the use of different forms and documents, but we will also contribute in the establishment of a paperless environment.

The provision of public services in electronic way through e-documents and e-forms will facilitate the procedures for citizens and business, by reducing the costs and time employed for this services, it will also improve the degree of access to information for citizens thus making the procedures more transparent. E-documents will:

- 1 Improve public access by making selected documents, transparency and valid information for citizens available online.

- 2 Streamline citizen services by allowing licensees to submit electronic documents with their online applications.
- 3 Increase efficiency by eliminating filing, retrieving and re-filing of paper documents, and reducing time spent searching for misplaced paperwork.
- 4 Reduce the cost and clutter associated with manual, paper-based processes, and the printing and archiving of paper records.
- 5 Allow the public to submit electronic documents with online complaint forms

4. OPEN GOVERNMENT TO CREATE SAFER COMMUNITIES

2.14.1 Law on whistleblowers protection - Minister of State for Local Issues

Currently, the trust of the public towards the public administration is low, while the risk that an informant will have when denouncing cases of corruption is very high. In Albania, there is no clear framework which ensures cooperation with informants and protects whistleblowers. This law, together with the awareness campaign that will follow, will ensure that informants that will entrust the enforcement agencies with information regarding corruption in sectors where they work or are involved, will be protected. This law will not only enhance transparency and reporting of cases of corruption, but also the credibility of the administration.

A draft law currently exists and is under consultation. The law is in line with the National Strategy on the Fight Against Corruption 2014-2017 which provides for both preventative and awareness-raising objectives. Furthermore, the adoption of the law is also part of the Roadmap Priority Nr. 3 commitment for the fight against corruption in the context of Albania's integration in the EU.

There will be abroad consultation with government agencies and donors, while there are also planned consultation meetings for the civil society and business sector. Following these

consultations, the draft will be edited to reflect comments, and after further internal and external consultations, the law is expected to be finalized in fall and adopted before the end of the year.

4.2 *The Police Service Offices*

The Albanian Government in the aim to ensure and facilitate the access to Police Service, will establish “one stop shop” point in each police district with the purpose to: create a unified reception desk for all services delivered, simplify the procedures and limit the number of documents to be submitted.

The one stop shop will also improve and make more efficient the cooperation Police-Community thus helping in the creation of a safer community and raise public participation.

Currently the police district stations are closed areas where the citizens have very little access or not access at all. This commitment aims to open up police services to citizens by offering them not only access but also a transparent service, on time, avoiding bureaucracy and corruption.

Service delivery to citizens through these offices will increase the citizen’s trust to the police, and will affect in the prevention of the corruption phenomena among the police organization.

Restoring the communication with the public, through the provision of the administrative and procedural services, aims to be achieved through the electronic registration of their needs and their requests, and forwarding them, together with relevant documentation to the office of reviewing and resolving the problem within the time, as scheduled.

The Police Service Offices will be set up and operate in all of police structures, from the General Directorate of Police to the police directorates and commissariats in the districts, which will have open premises for the public and will operate non-stop 24 hours, reception-shaped, for Administrative and Procedural Service.

The number of police service offices that will be open, the number of services that will be available for citizens, the number of citizens served will used as indicators to verify the implementation of this commitment.