



Statistics Norway  
Division for Development  
Cooperation

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Documents

**Evaluation of the Project  
«Modernisation of the Civil  
Registration System in  
Albania»**

Selected Documents on the  
Modernisation of the Civil  
Registration System in Albania  
Vol. III

## Preface

Statistics Norway proposed in 2000 that a technical assistance project be launched in Albania. The overarching objective of the project was to assist the Government of Albania with a modernization of the Albanian civil registration system. One specific aim was to have Statistics Norway experts working with relevant central and selected local authorities in Albania with the view to developing an embryo of a modern nationwide civil registration system. The other specific aim was to draw lessons from the experience to be acquired while developing the kernel of the modern system with the view to using the lessons during a nationwide modernization of the system at some future date.

A traditional registration system has existed in Albania since the inter-war period. Following the change of government in 1991 and the onset of democratisation, the system fell into disrepair. Among other things, the reasons for this included massive population movements, a decline in the authority and effectiveness of the civil administration, and occasional political turbulences during the 1990s. The quality of the civil registration data declined so much that the information became almost useless for a variety of purposes, including the preparation of voters' lists for national and local elections and for the tracking of vital events and population change at the national and local levels. This state of affairs called for remedial measures, which prompted action on part of the Governments of Albania and Norway.

The Norwegian technical assistance project entitled, "Modernisation of the Civil Registration System in Albania" was launched further to a decision of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to fund the project. The Project's implementation has lasted now for 5 years and is likely to continue for another year or longer. Earlier this year the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested that a team consisting of two experts conduct an independent evaluation of the Project. Statistics Norway approached the authors of this report with the offer to conduct the evaluation. They accepted the offer and carried out the evaluation between 17 and 28 October 2005, first during a two-day visit to Oslo and subsequently during a 10-day stay in Tirana.

This report contains the findings and recommendations of the evaluation team. The report has been prepared in line with the Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) drafted by the relevant Norwegian authorities. In addition to evaluating the Norwegian Project the report addresses a draft proposal of the Government of Albania on the modernization of the civil status service. The Government, which came to office following the July 2005 parliamentary elections, circulated this brand new proposal at the time of the visit of the evaluation team to Tirana.

The report is based on ample documentation that Statistics Norway made available to the team as well as on the face-to-face discussions that the team had with the past and current participants in the project in Oslo and Tirana. These individuals along with the other persons that the team talked to in Tirana are listed at the back of the report (Appendix 2). While drafting the report, the team found it useful to consult a list of activities undertaken as part of the implementation of the Project (Appendix 3).

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## List of Acronyms

CS	Civil Status (Civil Registration)
CSO	Civil Status Office
CSR	Civil Status Register
CSS	Civil Status Service
GDCS	General Directorate of Civil Status
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics of Albania
ISSH	Social Insurance Institute
LAN	Local Area Network
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway
MLGD	Ministry of Local Government and Decentralisation of Albania
MI	Ministry of Interior of Albania
NOK	Norwegian Kroner
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SN	Statistics Norway
ToR	Terms of Reference

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## **Executive Summary**

The objective of the mission was to evaluate the Norwegian technical assistance project entitled: “Modernisation of the Civil Registration System in Albania”. The Project started in 2001 after an agreement between Statistics Norway and the Government of Albania was reached. It is expected that the Project will last at least one more year.

The Albanian civil registration system is based on registers kept in handwritten books. It is imperative that this old fashioned registration system must be modernised in order to serve the modern Albanian society without any unnecessary bureaucratic impediments to its citizens. The modernisation of the system will help solve very important problems with censuses, electoral lists, ID-cards, certificates, official statistics etc.

Five local Civil Status Offices (CSOs) have been selected as pilot offices. The Project, in collaboration with the General Directorate of Civil Status (GDCS) of the Government of Albania, has supported these offices, first of all, with technical assistance. GDCS was established by the Government in the course of the project implementation. The main objectives of the Project have been to computerize the pilot offices, establish a computerized central database at GDCS and acquire experience required during the nationwide modernization of the system.

The evaluation team has in this report listed a number of obstacles and constraints that the Project had faced. Also, a number of dysfunctions of the Albanian civil registration system have been identified. The difficulties have not been entirely due to internal problems in Albania but also to specific administrative problems (in connection with funding) in Norway and to the fact that no Norwegian Project Manager was present in Tirana between June 2003 and September 2004.

The lack of high quality Civil Status (CS) data required to prepare the lists of voters placed heavy burden on the Civil Status Offices during election periods, preventing the staff from participating in the Project implementation for longer periods of time. A very important problem is the electricity supply problem. Very often electricity is cut, sometimes for hours, which is of course fatal for a modern computerized administrative system.

The evaluation team has ascertained that the Project Managers and the Project Coordinator have achieved very important results. The Project has played an important role in the establishment of the GDCS in Albania. The Project has played a decisive role in equipping the pilot offices with hardware and software and providing the necessary training of the civil status registration officials working at the offices. A very important step forward was the establishment of the central database at the GDCS.

The evaluation team has identified the remaining work to be carried out before the Project could be considered completed. One very important item is the updating of the CSO computerised data and the updating of the central database. The updating has not been done mainly due to the fact that the work at the CSOs with the voters’ list has not left the staff with sufficient time. Unfortunately, the updating has not resumed after the most recent parliamentary elections held in July 2005. The lack of specific instructions from GDCS to the CSOs is responsible for this.

During the evaluation mission to Tirana a very important development took place. The Albanian Ministry of Interior (MI) presented a draft proposal on the modernisation of the civil status service. The proposal is very ambitious, covering every aspect of the modernisation, including the data collection, the establishment of the central database, the installation of an on-line IT infrastructure for data exchange between CSOs and GDCS, the creation of the final National Register and the issuance of ID cards. Another ambitious project is the implementation of the Address System. These proposals were very much appreciated by the representatives of the Donor Community in Albania, although the stipulated deadline for the completion of the modernisation (August 2006) was considered highly unrealistic.

After having assessed the implementation of the Project so far, the evaluation team concluded that the Project is sustainable and that it needs to be finalised. This is especially important now that the Albanian Government seems to be determined to establish a nationwide modern registration system. The experience gathered through the implementation of the Project can greatly facilitate the establishment of the system. The Project, therefore, ought to be finalised and, in the process, create conditions for the development of the nationwide modern system.

We also suggest that Statistics Norway provides energetic support to the project office in Tirana in order to make sure that the Project can work closely and productively with GDCS during the coming very important period.

# 1. Introduction

This report is the result of a mission to Norway and Albania with the purpose to evaluate the Assistance Project of Statistics Norway (SN), previously called Pilot Project. In this report, in order to simplify exposition, we shall refer to the Pilot Project and Assistance Project as the Project. The aim of the Project is the modernisation of the civil registration system in Albania. Until recently, the Project has been carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralisation (MLGD) of Albania. After a new Government came to office following the July 2005 parliamentary elections, the Project is being carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior (MI) of Albania.

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation of the Project, entitled "Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of the Project 'Modernisation of the Civil Registration System in Albania'" is shown in Appendix 1.

The Civil Status Service (CSS) in Albania is old-fashioned with the fundamental registers kept as hand written books at over 400 local registration offices. This is an impediment for the creation of a modern administration with as few bureaucratic procedures as possible. Furthermore the system makes it impossible to produce reliable voters' lists, which have been repeatedly criticised in recent years before, during and/or after elections.

From March 2002 SN has been cooperating with the MLGD and other ministries in order to develop and test a system for a local population registration with a central office. The cooperation took place within the context of the Project which is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The final objective of the initiative is an improved, administratively sound, computerised civil registration system for all of Albania.

The specific objective of the Project is to develop a computerised system and test this system on a limited number of local registries in order to gain experience before starting a large-scale, nationwide modernisation.

The main perspective of the evaluation is to provide guidance for MFA to decide on how to complete the pilot phase, whether Norway should contribute to the main phase and if so recommended, how Norway might contribute towards the final objective of full-scale modernisation of the population registration system in Albania

During the evaluation mission in Tirana, the Ministry of Interior (MI) presented a new draft proposal for the Modernization of Civil Status Service, the content of which relates directly to the Project. The Terms of Reference (ToR) did not refer to this draft proposal, as the authors of the ToR did not have knowledge of the draft. Nevertheless, this report provides information on the draft proposal and makes recommendations in connection with it.

## **2 The Civil Status Registration System in Albania**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Albania has for many years kept local population registers, called Civil Registers. These registers are kept in communes and municipalities, which are administrative units in the rural and urban areas, respectively. The registers are the backbone of the entire system of identifying families and persons present in the local community and are among other things the basis for issuing several kinds of certificates.

Each register consists of books with a separate page for each family, where the members are listed together with the civil events, i.e. births, deaths, marriages, divorces and migration.

These old paper-based registers are still of great importance to the society, as they provide the only documentation on the resident local population and the demographic events in the population. But it is also true that they have to be modernized in order to serve a modern society without any unnecessary bureaucratic impediments. The procedure used today in order to issue certificates creates long queues of people in the local offices and is a great waste of time for the citizens. Another very important fact – political as well as practical – is that a modernization can solve the local civil status office employee's problems with electoral lists, social security benefits, health care, education and ID Cards.

### **2.2 The Books**

The civil status information is stored in four civil status registers, the so-called *books*.

There are four books:

1. The Family Book (the Fundamental Register)
2. The Birth Register
3. The Marriage Register
4. The Death Register

All entries in the books are hand-written, which are, of course, today extremely old-fashioned and cumbersome to use.

The Fundamental Register is divided into a left page and a right page. The two pages combined provide information about a single family, the definition of which is close to the concept of the household in the Nordic countries. Information on each family member appears in a single row.



On the left page is the following information:

*Code for book of the Fundamental Register*  
*Number of the row in page of the book*  
*First name*  
*Family name*  
*Father's name*  
*Mother's name*  
*Gender code*  
*Family relation code*  
*Date of birth*  
*Date of birth in spelling*  
*Code for city of birth*  
*Code for district of birth*  
*Citizenship*  
*Code for matrimonial status*  
*Maiden family name (in case of married woman)*

On the right page is the following information:

*Changes in the population: Deaths, marriages, divorces, movements*

The remaining three books, also called Acts, contain details on the specific demographic events: births, deaths and marriages.

All changes are made by hand writing in the family book. When a person dies or migrates, his/her data are deleted (crossed out). However, the original data can still be observed.

### **2.3 The Civil Status Office (CSO)**

There is at least one Civil Status Office (CSO) in each commune (rural) and municipality (urban), which is responsible for updating the Civil Status Register (CSR) and issuing certificates to the citizens applying for them.

Apart from this work the CSOs have other duties based on the CSR. Among them is the updating of the voters' lists for national parliamentary elections and for local government elections, which is by far the most important work from a political point of view. As mentioned elsewhere in this report the highly demanding and time consuming work pertaining to the preparation of the voters' lists has been the main preoccupation of the CSOs staff during specific time periods in recent years.

Other services provided by the CSOs include the preparation and delivery of data on special forms. The data are given upon request to the Social Insurance Institute (ISSH), the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) and the military authorities.

## **2.4 The General Directorate of Civil Status**

The establishment of GDCS is described in more detail in Section 4.1.b below. The Directorate is organized in two departments.

The Department for Methods and Inspection is responsible for the drafting of the acts related to the legislation on the Civil Status Service, methods of work, regulations and manuals. It also supervises the adherence to the relevant legislation, regulations and other documents by the Civil Status (CS) officials in communes, municipalities and prefectures. Also, it performs the same function with respect to the Albanian consulates abroad in order to ensure a better service for Albanian citizens abroad.

The Department of National Register is responsible for the establishment and administration of the National Register.

Once the civil registration system in Albania is modernized, the local CSOs will be routinely transferring CS data to GDCS, thereby enabling the updating of the National Register. However, the local CSO will continue to be the only institution that has legal competence to make changes in the civil status register. The National Register or database will serve as a clearinghouse for transferring records between local offices when people move and for detecting errors. It will also be a depository of all the CS data and, as such, it will be a source of the various types of statistics.

In connection with data errors detected by GDCS, the Directorate would request the relevant local office(s) to look into the problem and make the necessary changes according to the law. Thus, if it is discovered, for example, by comparison with other sources, that a certain family is not registered where it is living, the local office would inform the family and/or the office in the municipality/commune where the family is registered to request a transfer of the data pertaining to it.

## **2.5 The Certificates**

The most apparent problem with regard to the manual registration system is the procedures established for the issuance of certificates. As there is no official ID Card in Albania, certificates are needed for many purposes. This is particularly true of the birth certificate, which is widely used as a basis for enrolling a child into school, applying for a passport, etc. A specific problem is that a certificate is valid only for a period of three months. This is the case even for a birth certificate. The short life of these certificates means that for many citizens they need to be reissued over and over again. As a result, the total number of certificates issued per year amounts to around 8 million, a number considerably larger than the 3+ million people living in Albania.

Certificates are handwritten by a clerk after he or she has looked up the necessary information in one or more of the books. After a stamp is put on the certificate, it is signed. The newly designed special certificate form, which includes a hologram, is not suitable for modern printers. As a result, these forms are not being used in the CSOs that have been computerised as part of the implementation of the Project.

## **2.6 Other Shortcomings**

The Civil Status Service is currently facing great difficulties. The huge democratic and demographic changes that have happened in Albania during the last decade have neither been correctly nor satisfactorily reflected by this service.

One major problem pertains to the registration of movements of people, no matter whether these are movements across community/municipality borders within Albania or movements out of the country. For example, in the case of moves within the country, the citizens' civil status documents are often not transferred from one CSO to another CSO as a person or the entire family moves from one commune or municipality to another. This happens because the citizens do not report changes or because the CSOs and/or the post service do not function properly. Taking into consideration the dimension of the population movements during the last decade, the problems with the transfer of civil status documents cause large inaccuracies, which grossly misrepresent the real situation. In view of this, the creation and/or updating of voters' lists on the basis of the CS data before elections have repeatedly faced difficulties. Resolving the problems required time-consuming and expensive door-to-door visits to identify eligible voters.

Albania has no register of addresses. Reasons for this are many, including the fact that even in cities, including Tirana, recently constructed modern buildings have not been assigned proper addresses, i.e. street names and numbers. Attempts to make a register of addresses in connection with the mid-2005 parliamentary elections were based on satellite images. This register has limitations and cannot be a foundation for a modern civil registration system in Albania. The lack of addresses makes it very difficult to correctly locate persons according to the geography.

### **3. The Project's Objectives, Planned Outputs and Activities**

Statistics Norway proposed to the Government of Albania in March 2001 a long-term project for the modernisation of the country's civil registration system. According to this proposal the project was to consist of three phases: 1. a planning phase, 2. a pilot phase and 3. a nationwide modernisation phase. SN proposed to provide assistance to the Government in connection with the implementation of the first two phases. It also indicated that the implementation of the third phase would, in addition to SN, require involvement of the international donor community.

Following the completion of the planning phase, a pilot phase was initiated by launching a Pilot Project, which later became known as the Assistance Project. (As indicated earlier, in this report we refer to the Pilot Project and the Assistance Project as the Project.) The June 2003 application to NORAD for funding of the second part of the pilot phase identified a variety of objectives, outputs and activities of the Project. The lists of the objectives, outputs and activities included in this application are more complete than those in other project documents made available to us. We shall, therefore, draw on those lists, supplementing them with information from other documents as well as with information collected from the participants in the Project during our visits to Oslo and Tirana.

The overarching, long-term aim of the three-phase undertaking identified in the NORAD application was a well-functioning modern national population register. Such a register was to contribute to the stabilisation and further development of democracy and good governance in Albania. In particular, a modern register was perceived as a basis for:

- The preparation of accurate voters' lists, which would ensure the citizens' right to vote and would enable fair elections,
- The issuance of ID Cards,
- The provision of reliable information about the Albanian population for administrative purposes,
- The development of easy, regulated access for authorities to civil status information, reducing, in the process, the need for the repeated issuance of certificates to the public,
- The preparation of timely and correct official statistics, and
- The improvement of general living conditions of the population.

#### **3.1 Objectives**

The following immediate objectives of the Project included:

- Development of a legal framework for a modern civil registration system,
- Preparation of regulations and administrative instructions relating to the new legislation,
- Establishment of GDCS, including capacity building within this office,
- Improved registration of vital events (births, deaths and marriages) and of changes pertaining to the persons appearing in the registers (change of residence, change of name etc.) in pilot local offices,

- Creation of a national database, i.e. the central register at GDCS consisting of the data from the pilot offices,
- Continuous updating of the central database using new data from the pilot offices,
- Continuous checking and cleaning of the data at the central database and the pilot offices,
- Substantially improved service to the public, including the improved issuance of certificates, and
- Printing of reports on completed registrations (births, deaths etc.).

### **3.2 Planned Outputs**

The delivery of the following outputs was envisaged:

- A legal framework for a modern civil registration system,
- Regulations and administrative instructions in line with the legal framework,
- The GDCS established and equipped with computers, servers, a local area network and other necessary hardware and software,
- Pilot district and local offices equipped with computers, printers and related equipment,
- Trained GDCS and pilot local office staff,
- Computerised register data at the pilot local offices,
- A national database at the GDCS, i.e. a prototype database containing pilot-phase data, and
- Updated quality registration data available in the central database and at the pilot offices.

### **3.3 Activities**

The above outputs were to be delivered by undertaking the following activities:

- Providing advice on the population registration system and on related legal, practical and technical issues,
- Training of officers at the GDCS and the pilot offices,
- Development and testing of computer applications and routines,
- Procurement and working arrangements with service providers regarding installation and testing of software for data entry, data updating, data checking and for networking,
- Computerisation of registers, i.e. the books at the pilot offices,
- Testing of different methods of transferring information from local offices to the selected district office and to the GDCS,
- Development, testing and improvement of procedures and software required for an efficient extraction of new computerised data from the pilot offices and for updating the central database,

- Checking and cleaning of the data obtained from the pilot offices in order to gain experience required at the stage of nationwide computerisation of local office registers.
- Study/training visits, and
- Consultancies.

## **4. Project's Achievements and Remaining Work**

When the evaluation team visited Tirana the implementation of the Project was continuing. Relying on the reports written by the two resident Project Managers and the local Project Coordinator and the information obtained during the meetings we had with the Managers and the Coordinator as well as with the various Albanian officials, we established that a great deal of work on the Project has been accomplished. We also identified the work that remains to be carried out. In what follows we will focus on the delivery of outputs identified above.

### **4.1 Achievements**

The work completed so far is described next.

#### **4.1.a Legal Framework and Accompanying Regulations and Instructions**

Early in the project implementation, the partners in the Project from the two countries collaborated on the development of legislation required for the development of the modern civil status registration system. This collaboration has contributed to the passing of the following four laws:

- Law No. 8950 on the Civil Status (dated 10 October 2002),
- Law No. 8951 on the Identity Number of Citizens (dated 10 October 2002),
- Law No. 8952 on the ID Cards (dated 10 October), and
- Law No. 9270 on the Address System in Albania (dated 29 July 2004).

The view of the evaluation team is that the achievements in this particular area are very important, as they paved the way for further work on the Project. They also provide a basis – which, however, needs further development – for the modernisation of the civil registration system in Albania.

The collaboration between SN and MLGD on some of these laws was rather limited and on others it was close to non-existent. We came to the conclusion that MLGD did not make a proper use of the SN expertise and the SN readiness to assist with the drafting of the different laws. We learned, for example, that SN had not been informed by its Albanian counterpart about the draft Laws on the ID Number and the ID Cards until shortly before they were approved by the Government in July 2002 and sent to the Parliament. Additionally, SN was not asked to comment on the drafts. Nevertheless, SN commented in writing on the draft Law on the ID Number. In connection with the draft Law on the Civil Status, SN forwarded to MLGD four extensive written comments, however, it appears that these made only a limited impact.

Further to the passing of these laws, various regulations and instructions relating to the legislation were prepared by the Albanian side. SN offered assistance with this work, but was not invited to contribute to it.

In sum, opportunities have been missed for a close cooperation between the two partners, which could probably help explain why, for example, the Law on the Address System has been described to the evaluation team by a few representatives of the Tirana-based

intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations as being devoid of many essential specifics.

#### **4.1.b Establishment of GDCS, Including Capacity Building within the Organization**

GDCS was established in June-July 2002 as part of the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization (MLGD), employing one director (as of July 2002) and two employees. (This office, which initially had a status of a MLGD department and was called the Directorate of Civil Service, was upgraded to GDCS in May-June 2003.) The creation of GDCS was an important milestone in the implementation of the Project, as for the first time there was an office at the national level, which could guide and coordinate the work of the district and local CSOs. Moreover, GDCS provides a centre for the nationwide civil registration system where the central database or the National Register can be maintained after the nationwide modernisation of the system. Without such an office the system could not be modernised and centralised. Following the July 2005 parliamentary elections and the formation of a new government in October 2005, GDCS was transferred to the Ministry of Interior; as a result MI became a counterpart of SN.

GDCS, which is headed by a General Director, consists of the Department for Methods and Inspection and the Department of National Register. These two departments, which are headed by Directors, are further subdivided into smaller units. The three directors constitute the top management of GDCS. The employees of the first of the two departments are lawyers; those of the second department are IT specialists. At the time of the visit of the evaluation team to Tirana there were 13 positions at GDCS, all of them being professional-level positions. We were informed that there were no administrative and secretarial support positions at GDCS. From this we concluded that the use of the professional resources at GDCS is less than satisfactory, as the professionals must be spending part of their time dealing with administrative and secretarial tasks.

All the positions in the two departments – 5 in the Department of Methods and Inspection and 7 in the Department of National Register – have been occupied. However, the position of the General Director has been vacant since November 2004. GDCS has had its own premises since January 2004. However, these are not sufficiently spacious. As a result, the offices of the Project Manager and the Project Coordinator could not be moved to the GDCS premises, as originally envisaged.

The Project has made a major contribution to the capacity building at GDCS. It has procured IT hardware and other equipment for the office, including 21 desktop computers, three laptop computers, one server machine, and three printers together with a facsimile machine, a video projector, a screen projector and a photocopy machine. As regards software, Oracle (Standard Edition) and PL/SQL software was purchased and installed on the GDCS computers along with the Oracle-platform application called “Inhabreg”, which was developed by an Albanian IT company, Intech+. This application has been used to create a central database containing the computerised data from the pilot local offices.

In addition, GDCS IT staff received training on two occasions. First, the IT staff was trained in the use of the Oracle database software in Tirana in March 2005. Subsequently, 5 IT specialists received additional Oracle training and SQL training while on a study tour to Norway in April 2005.



GDCS was equipped with a local area network (LAN), which was paid for by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The new LAN made it possible for the Project to provide access for the GDCS computers to Internet.

Last but not the least, plans were drawn for the creation of a permanent training centre at GDCS and IT equipment for this was acquired in July 2005. The centre will provide training for both GDCS staff and for over 600 district and local civil service registration officers employed across the country.

In spite of all this progress, the involvement of the GDCS IT staff in the implementation of the Project at the central level has been limited. This issue is addressed below in Section 5 below.

#### **4.1.c Pilot District and Local Offices Capacity Building**

One of the key aims of the Project was to strengthen several pilot local offices and a pilot district office through the delivery of requisite hardware, software and other equipment and the necessary training of the civil status registration officials working at those offices. Capacity building at the district and local offices was a precondition for pursuing other project objectives, such as the computerisation and updating of the civil status registration data at the local offices. We shall presently consider achievements concerning the capacity building at these offices.

Before doing so it is necessary to discuss the district and local offices that the Project includes among its pilot offices. Since the inception of the Project the number of pilot offices has changed. Initially, the number was relatively small and the Project only sought to deal with 5 local offices. Later, as ambitions of the Project grew, the number of local offices was increased and one district office (Kavaja) was added to local offices included in the pilot. Thus, in the application to NORAD we read that the Project would cover 8 local offices in Tirana, 5 local offices elsewhere and the Kavaja district office. We also read that the remaining three local offices in Tirana would be dealt with in a similar manner by a project implemented by the Municipality of Padua (Italy) with the help of EU funds. Clearly, the expectations at the time of the filing of the application to NORAD were high and the plans were ambitious. This is by no means a critique of the parties that prepared the application, which in our view rightly sought to maximise returns to investment in the Project. At the time the evaluation team visited Tirana the Project was dealing with 5 pilot offices and was collaborating with three other local offices. Of the 5 pilot offices four were in Tirana or nearby. Of the three other offices two were in Tirana. In what follows we will refer only to the 5 pilot offices and occasionally to the other three local offices.

The pilot offices were equipped during the spring of 2003 with hardware, software and related equipment required for the computerisation of the registration data and their updating. (Note that contrary to the earlier plans the Kavaja district office was not included in the modernisation during the Project implementation. According to the Project Manager who served in Tirana at the time, a senior GDCS official blocked the modernisation of this office.) Smaller offices received a single desktop computer, while larger offices were given two or more such computers. The principle applied was one desktop computer per CSO official. The offices were also equipped with laser printers and with dry batteries, inverters and external CD readers/writers. The batteries and inverters are used during electricity cuts, which are an almost daily occurrence across the country. It should be noted that the time periods during

which electricity is not available are sometimes so long that batteries cannot be recharged, rendering the computers less useful than would otherwise be the case. When the electricity is available, the voltage is sometimes so low that the batteries could not be properly recharged; this can result in the damage to the equipment. The desktops are equipped with Intech+ software for data entry. The officials working at the pilot offices received training in July 2003 in the use of the hardware and software.

The evaluation team had an opportunity to visit two of the pilot offices, i.e. the offices in Prezë and Tirana No. 7. The impressions from the two offices were different. The Prezë office serves a relatively small commune and is run by a dedicated official. This official performs her duties diligently, including the updating of the computerised registration data. The updating performed at this office is only partial, however, as there is a problem with the data entry program developed by Intech+ regarding the splitting and formation of families. When we visited it for the first time, the office of Tirana No. 7 had many customers waiting to be issued certificates, officials were busy serving the public and, we were told, the officials were not updating the computerised data. The computers in this office had not been used for about two months, as part of the equipment related to the electricity supply was out of order. It was after this visit that we learned that the officials in local offices like Tirana No. 7 office were not motivated to regularly update the computerised data; see more on this issue in Section 5. During the second visit to this office, the mayor and one of the officials indicated that a continuous updating of data files in the future would be out of the question, unless printed certificates could be issued to the public.

#### **4.1.d Computerisation of the Data at the Local Offices**

The data from the left-hand pages of the Fundamental Registers in the 5 pilot offices were entered into the computers between September 2003 and March 2004. No information available on the right-hand pages was computerised. The data entry was carried out by professional data entry operators hired for this purpose. Initially all the data available in the fundamental registers were entered. Subsequent to this, the updating of the data was to be performed by the civil service registration officials at the pilot offices. As these did not materialise, at least not fully, the operators were hired once again to enter the data that accumulated in the meantime. After they completed their work, the officials at the pilot offices were supposed to undertake regular updating. The updating was not carried out systematically.

The evaluation team requested the Director of the Department of National Register, GDCS, and the Project Coordinator to assess the progress with the updating of the registration data at the pilot offices further to the second round of data entry by the professional operators. They were asked to use a scale from 1 to 5 in order to provide estimates about the extent to which the data were updated at those offices, with 1 representing “no updating” and 5 denoting “complete updating”. They assigned 4 to one of the five pilot offices (Prezë), 2 to three other offices and 1 to the remaining office (Klos).

In the Tirana No. 7 office, in addition to the data from the Fundamental Registers, information from the books of births, marriages and deaths were computerised. The computerisation concerned the data collected at this office during 2003 and the first quarter of 2004. The purpose of the computerisation of this information was to permit crosschecking by computer of the data available in the fundamental register and the information entered into the three books. To our knowledge, this checking has not been carried out so far.

It is important to note that the evaluation team was informed of the lack of arrangements at the local offices for backing-up of the computerised data. The computers have drives capable of recording information on CDs, however, the officials have not been trained to make CD backups of the data. As indicated below, since the data files have been transferred from the local offices to GDCS using CDs, for all practical purposes one may say that there exist backups of the information entered into the local data files prior to the transfers.

#### **4.1.e The Central Database at GDCS**

In the fall of 2004 the Project embarked on a creation of a central database. Data files produced at the 5 pilot offices along with the data files generated at the three other local offices were copied to CDs and handed to GDCS. By November 2004, the project staff, i.e. the Project Manager and the Project Coordinator, unassisted by GDCS staff transferred the data from the pilot offices. GDCS staff, accompanied by the Project staff transferred the data from the three non-pilot offices. This exercise was rather resource demanding, requiring visits to the local offices where delays caused by electricity cuts were experienced. In addition, the Oracle-platform Intech+ data export procedure was judged by the Project Manager and the Project Coordinator to be too complex for GDCS staff, let alone for local office staff to use. In their report, the Project Manager and the Project Coordinator concluded – and we think rightly so – that the mode of data transfer from local offices to GDCS that relies on CDs is the only viable method for Albania.

Further to the transfer of the data to GDCS the project staff requested Intech+ to develop a functionality that can be used by the local office and GDCS staff for the exchange of data updates between the local offices and GDCS. The functionality was developed during January-February 2005.

The data from four out of 5 pilot offices and the three non-pilot offices were entered into the central database at GDCS. The computerization of the data from the Klos pilot office was never completed and, as a result, the data from this office, although transferred to GDCS in early June 2005 were not entered into the central database. Close to 230,000 records from the 7 local data files were moved to the central database.

The procedure for loading the local files into the central data base was developed by Intech+. The procedure involved a lot of manual work on part of the person who loaded the data. In the course of data loading a number of duplicates have been discovered. These have been extracted into a separate file and the file was handed over to GDCS for corrections. In early July 2005 the project and GDCS staff agreed that GDCS staff would begin the cleaning of the data in the central database with the view to removing duplicates and other errors. By the time the evaluation team visited Tirana the cleaning had not begun. One of the reasons for this is that the Project Manager left Tirana in July 2005 after completing his work. (A new Project Manager arrived in Tirana on 19 October 2005). In addition, the most experienced GDCS IT specialist left GDCS in August 2005 to pursue graduate studies abroad. His replacement joined GDCS during the visit of the evaluation team to Tirana.

It should be noted that the central database, like the local office data files, does not include the data updates that were entered into the three books and the Fundamental Registers in the 7 offices after the computerization of the data at these offices was completed.

## **4.2 Remaining Work**

As the above review of the work completed suggests, there are activities that need to be carried out before the Project could be considered completed.

### **4.2.a Pilot Local Offices Capacity Building**

In the opinion of the evaluation team the following needs to be done before the capacity building at the pilot offices could be pronounced complete:

- Improve the Intech+ data entry software, have it installed at the local offices, and train the officials at these offices in the use of the software,
- GDCS should acquire the ownership of all the software that Intech+ developed for the Project,
- Develop instructions for the simultaneous updating of the computerised data and the Fundamental Registers and train the officials in the use of the instructions. (Note that GDCS considers it essential to have the updating of the Fundamental Registers carried out for a few years along with the updating of the data files. In the view of GDCS the parallel updating will provide insurance against accidental loss of fundamental register data.),
- Install the Intech+ functionality for the exchange of data updates at the pilot offices and train the officers in the use of this software,
- Train the officials in the procedure for the transfer of the data updates from the pilot offices to GDCS,
- Instruct the officials to perform daily updating of the data files, and
- If necessary, equip the pilot offices with dot-matrix printers in order to enable them to issue printed certificates using official certificate forms. (These forms have a hologram, which, we were told, makes it impossible for printers other than dot-matrix printers to print information on the forms.).

### **4.2.b Computerisation of the Data at the Local Offices**

The evaluation team is of the opinion that the following needs to be carried out before the Project could be considered completed:

- Carry out a one-time updating of the data files at the pilot offices by computerising the data compiled by the offices since the time when the computerisation was brought to an end,
- Put in place arrangements at the pilot offices ensuring daily updating of the data files once the one-time updating is completed,
- After the one-time updating of the files is completed and the daily updating begins, instruct the officers at the pilot offices to begin issuing printed certificates in place of handwritten certificates. If the regulations require it, have the certificates issued by printing relevant information on the forms with the hologram referred to above using dot-matrix printers, and
- If feasible, carry the one-time updating followed by daily updating of the data at the three non-pilot offices and arrange for those offices to issue printed certificates.

#### **4.2.c The Central Database at GDCS**

The evaluation team is of the view that the following needs to be done before the Project could be completed:

- Develop and test on-line and CD-based procedures for exchanges of data updates between GDCS and the pilot offices,
- Update the database with the information gathered after the computerisation ended at the pilot offices other than the Klos office. Also, add the Klos data to the database,
- If feasible, update the database with the information from the three non-pilot offices,
- Study the information in the database for duplicates and other errors, focusing among others things on duplicates appearing in the parts of the database originating from different local offices,
- Develop and apply a procedure for establishing which of the duplicates is a correct one: the application of the procedure will require close cooperation with the local offices,
- Clean the database by removing duplicates and other errors,
- In order to clean the database as thoroughly as possible engage the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) and possibly other institutions in the data analysis and the detection of errors, and
- Document in detail the experience pertaining to data entry and updating at the local offices, the transfer of information from those offices to GDCS, and the cleaning of the data both at the local offices and GDCS.

## **5. Obstacles and Constraints**

During its visits to Oslo and Tirana the evaluation team learned about a variety of obstacles and constraints that the implementation of the Project had to face. In the opinion of the evaluation team the obstacles and constraints contributed to delays experienced with the project implementation.

### **5.1 Discontinuities on the Norwegian and Albanian sides**

Early in the implementation – in 2002 – the responsibility for a continued funding of the Project was transferred from MFA to the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). Subsequently, the responsibility was moved back from NORAD to MFA. The transfers of responsibility were occasioned by major reorganisations of NORAD and MFA, involving time-consuming decisions on the allocation of tasks and personnel between the two institutions. To a large measure, these transfers caused a delay of approximately one year in the approval of additional funds for the Project. The approval was announced to the Albanian authorities in May 2004. Associated with this delay was a 14-month gap between the time when the first Project Manager completed his assignment in Tirana and the date when the second Project Manager assumed his duties there. During the 14-month period the Project was managed by the Project Coordinator, who was supported by SN staff from Oslo. In her opinion the project implementation did not suffer as a result of the fact that the Project was not headed by a Project Manager during the 14-month period. The evidence made available to the evaluation team did not permit it to pass a judgment on whether or not the delayed approval of the additional funds and the fact that the Project was not headed by a Project Manager during the 14-month period adversely affected the project implementation.

In 2004 the Albanian Government decided on a nationwide modernisation of the country's civil registration system. The government issued an international tender and several national and international companies competed, submitting their bids by the 23 August 2004 deadline. Note that this was contrary to the agreements that the Norwegian and Albanian sides reached early in the project implementation to launch a nationwide modernisation only after the completion of the pilot phase. In November 2004 the tender was annulled “due to irregularities”, however, no information about the irregularities was made available to the Norwegian side. The evaluation team did not obtain this information either. As the modernisation plans called for the modernisation of the entire country, including the capital, there are strong reasons to believe that the Albanian side lost interest in the original plan contained in the application to NORAD to have all the local offices in Tirana modernised as part of the implementation of the Project. Another likely contributing factor was the fact that the Municipality of Padua did not succeed in getting funds from the EU for its part of the plan for Tirana. It appears that following the annulment of the tender and the fund-raising failure of the Municipality of Padua it was not possible to revert to the original plan. We can, therefore, conclude that the premature modernisation plan, the annulment of the tender and the withdrawal of Padua all helped reduce the number of local offices that the Project could deal with and that this led to delays.

## **5.2 Dysfunctions of the Albanian Civil Registration System**

The evaluation team acquired information on the civil registration system that point out to certain dysfunctions of the system. The information is as follows:

1. The salaries of the civil status registration officials at the district and local offices are paid from the central government budget,
2. These officials report to GDCS, which except for working hours, are overseen by the heads of the districts and the mayors of the municipalities and communes,
3. The heads and the mayors appoint and dismiss district and local civil status registration officials, in principle in cooperation with GDCS. The appointment may be made only after a candidate for a position passes a test instituted by GDCS, as a rule after undergoing training. We were told that the requirements to undergo training and pass a test are quite recent. These requirements, among other things, help GDCS exercise a measure of control over the heads and majors with regard to the hiring and firing and civil status officials.
4. The right of a head or mayor to dismiss an official has in the past resulted in abuses, especially after local elections when some newly elected heads and mayors dismissed civil registration officials. This caused tensions between GDCS on the one hand and the respective district and municipal/commune administrations on the other and also resulted in the loss of skills that the dismissed officials possessed,
5. On one occasion a mayor has hindered the transfer of data from a pilot local office under his responsibility to GDCS,
6. The conditions of employment of the civil status registration officials are poorer than those of other employees at the district and municipal/commune administrations, leading to the lack of motivation among the officials. These officials do not have the status of civil servants and they earn considerably less than other employees of the district and municipal/commune administrations,
7. As a consequence, there are informal arrangements that make it possible for the officials to earn extra income from the issuance of certificates,
8. This makes the work on the preparation of certificates more attractive to the officials in the pilot offices than, say, the work on the updating of the computerised registrar information.

In view of the above the evaluation team is of the opinion that improvements in the relationship between GDCS and the district and municipal/commune administrations are necessary. Also, it is of the view that the status of the civil service registration officials ought to be improved, as much of the future modernisation and maintenance of the civil registration system will depend on the performance of these officials.

## **5.3 Demands Placed on the Albanian Civil Registration System**

Elections in Albania continue to be highly politicised. One of the reasons is the lack of high-quality information required to prepare accurate voters' list. As the civil status registration system is the best source of information on which to base the lists, this system has been repeatedly drawn over the recent years into the pre-election work on the lists. OSCE along with Tirana-based non-governmental organisations has repeatedly helped the Government prepare as accurate lists as possible. Moreover, OSCE has put pressure on the Government to make its human and financial resources available for work on the lists. Consequently, in the months leading to the July 2005 parliamentary elections, GDCS together with the district and

local offices has been busy with the work. As a result, during the pre-election months the GDCS staff had little time to devote to the implementation of the Project.

In addition, after coming to office following the July 2005 elections the new Government, like its predecessor in 2004, has been busy developing plans for a nationwide modernisation of the civil registration system. The plans are a Government's response to the pledges made by the current Prime Minister during the election campaign to rapidly modernise the system and to have the voters' lists for the next local elections based on accurate civil status registration data. The pledges also indicated that new ID Cards will be issued by the next elections. As the elections are to take place at the end of 2006 or the beginning 2007, GDCS has been recently busy drafting and redrafting a modernisation plan. This is an additional reason for the very limited availability of the GDCS staff to work on the Project. This is contrary to the provision made in the documents signed by the Norwegian and Albanian sides, which stipulates that GDCS will make available to the Project sufficient staff for a successful implementation of the Project.

In view of this, the evaluation team is of the opinion that the Ministry of Interior, the GDCS parent ministry, need to strengthen the GDCS staff, professional as well as administrative, so that the implementation of the Project can regain momentum.

#### **5.4 Electricity Supply Problem**

This problem has plagued the country for a long time and will not be resolved any time soon. The implementation of the Project will continue to be adversely affected by it. However, this problem can be kept in check provided that GDCS and the mayors in charge of the pilot offices pay greater attention to it. If and when the computerisation of the pilot offices' data is resumed, in the opinion of the evaluation team, it will be essential to take urgent steps whenever problems with batteries, inverters and related equipment occur. The equipment ought to be replaced or repaired without delay. This will help avoid delays with the one-time data entry and continued data updating referred to above.



## **6. Sustainability of the Project**

The evaluation team examined strengths and weaknesses of the Project at the current stage of its implementation. Based on the results of the examination, which are summarised below, the team concluded that on balance the prospects for continuation and for the ultimate successful conclusion of the Project are good. In brief, the Project is sustainable indeed.

### **6.1 Strengths**

The following are the strengths of the Project. The legal and regulatory base of the future modernisation of the civil status registration system in Albania has been largely built. The institutional arrangements of the registration system have been greatly developed by the establishment and strengthening of GDCS. The GDCS staff that the evaluation team had an opportunity to meet is highly motivated and hard working. These achievements have contributed to a great degree to the credibility of the Project. SN has made major contributions to the Project and remains fully committed to its successful completion. The presence of SN through its office in Tirana is of critical importance for the project implementation. The two Project Managers along with the Project Coordinator have actively pursued the project implementation. The Coordinator, who is a dedicated and highly skilled professional with a thorough understanding of local conditions, opportunities and constraints, is a major asset for the Project. The arrival of the third Project Manager at Tirana bodes well for the implementation of the final phase of the Project. In addition, the fact that the pilot offices have been properly equipped, their staff trained and that large amounts of the pilot office data have been computerised, is a guarantee for a successful completion of the Project.

### **6.2 Weaknesses**

Due to the various commitments discussed above, the GDCS staff made a limited contribution to the project implementation in the course of this year. There is a risk that this state of affairs may continue, especially if the Government of Albania pursues the objective of the modernisation of the civil status registration system within the coming 12 months. The fact that ministries rely on GDCS for delivery of outputs of high political importance, such as the voters' lists and the modernisation plans at the expense of the project implementation casts a shadow on the commitment of the Government of Albania to see the Project through. In addition, there are weaknesses of lesser importance which can hinder further implementation of the Project and its successful completion. These include the following: remaining problems with Intech+ software, in particular with the data entry software; the lack of clear decisions on part of GDCS regarding the continuation of data computerisation at the pilot offices; and apparent limited commitment of the mayors and civil status registration officials in the pilot municipalities and communes.

## 7. Outstanding Issues

The evaluation team has learned about a number of outstanding issues of great importance for the success of the establishment of a modern civil registration system in Albania. From our viewpoint the most important issues concern with:

1. ID numbers
2. ID Cards
3. The Address System
4. The Voters' list
5. The Census
6. Relations to INSTAT

### 7.1 ID Numbers

The model for modernizing the Albanian civil registration system, i.e. the Albanian Civil Status Register (CSR), is the central population register typical of the Nordic countries. The leading principle underlying the Nordic population registers is that every person with an address in the country has assigned to him or her a unique identity number, the so-called Personal Identification Number (or Person Number).

The number can be designed with or without personal information. In the Nordic countries the date of birth and gender are part of the number, but this is not in any way necessary. The number could be anonymous in the sense that no personal information can be extracted directly from it. However, it must of course be unique, which means that no two persons can share the same number.

Law No. 8951 on the Identity Number of Citizens (dated 10 October 2002) stipulates that the Identity Number in Albania will consist of 10 digits, as follows:

- |     |                                      |
|-----|--------------------------------------|
| 1-2 | Year of birth                        |
| 3-4 | Month of birth and sex               |
| 5-6 | Date of birth                        |
| 7-9 | Periodic number within the same date |
| 10  | Check digit                          |

The Identity Number serves, according to article 3 of the law:

1. For the National Register of Civil Status
2. For the Identity Document (the ID Card)
3. As Social Security Number
4. For the National Register of Voters
5. For Taxation
6. For Driver Licence
7. For other bodies such as justice, defence, education, etc.

The evaluation team is of the opinion that a successful introduction of an identity number is of the utmost importance for the functioning of a modern civil status register. Also, it has vast

implications for effectiveness of the administration (public as well as private) and the statistical service.

In order to assign an identity number the civil status register has to be modernized along the lines envisaged by GDCS and in line with the SN Project. Ideally, when all the data from the books are computerised and when the (daily) updating of the records is in place, the issuing of new numbers will be a daily routine. The advantages for the public of the use of the identity number are that CS data can be accessed in a few seconds and certificates could be issued much more effectively, in much less time than today.

This is the vision and however unrealistic it might seem today that Albania can move from civil registers based on hand written books to a fully computerised civil registration system, it is very important to have the general (theoretical) framework in mind all the time. There will always be room for improvements of the system. Even in the Nordic countries where the system has been operating for more than 30 years there is a continued effort to correct mistake and to improve the system.

The identity number is supposed to be unique and follow a person during his/her entire life, but the experience shows that in a number of cases every year, the number has to be changed. Therefore it is important to keep track of all alterations in a special file.

## **7.2 The Identity Card**

Closely connected with the Law on the Identity Number of Citizens is the Law No. 8952 on the ID Cards, also dated 10 October 2002 This law stipulates that the Identity Card will be issued to every Albanian citizen above 16 years of age. As indicated in the Albanian draft proposal on the Modernization of Civil Status Service circulated during the time of the visit of the evaluation team to Tirana (see more about the proposal below), the establishment of a National Register and the introduction of an Identity Number are indispensable prerequisites for the starting of the issuance of Identity Cards.

It is envisaged that the Identity Card will hold information on the Identity Number as well as other elements, such as a photograph and even (a) fingerprint(s). It will require a substantial investment, inter alia, in equipment required to produce the Cards in order to implement the plan. Therefore, this plan should be seen more as a vision for the future rather than as an immediately feasible solution.

The Identity Card with some basic information included in it will be of great help in order to facilitate the citizen's contact with the civil administration. The card is, however, not a precondition for the introduction of a modern civil registration system. Rather, it is a natural and valuable consequence of the system.

## **7.3. Implementing an Adequate Address System**

Assigning an address to every individual person in the Albanian Civil Status Register is an important part of a well functioning civil registration system, but it is also one of the greatest challenges. It requires first of all a complete map of Albania, showing its entire territory along with squares, streets, etc. Each dwelling structure must be assigned a street name and a number, which would be a basis for a unique code (as for the Identity Number).

The interest of the Government in establishing an adequate address system is most of all of based on the (partly political) problems related to the earlier voter's lists. If the election districts geographically coincided with communes and municipalities, the problem would not be so serious, as the Fundamental Registers could be used to draw up voters' lists. However, as the voting districts may be only part of a commune or municipality, or could even cross the boundaries of communes, it is mandatory to have a system of addresses.

In order to establish voter's lists for the July 2005 parliamentary election, the maps showing individual buildings, consecutively numbered from one on in each map, were used together with door to door visits. The aim was to identify people living in each of the buildings shown on the maps. According to our information, maps for some 70 per cent of Albania were produced using satellite photographs by means of geographic vectorisation. For the remaining parts of the country (mostly mountains and rural areas) maps were drawn by mayor's offices. We were presented with maps based on the satellite images during our visit to the OSCE office. It was evident to us that such maps would not be sufficient for establishing an address system adequate for the modernisation of the Civil Status Register. The satellite photographs do not show all buildings.

During the visit to Tirana a proposal for an Address System Project was presented to the evaluation team and to the representatives of the International Donor Community in Albania. The proposal is based on the approach used to establish voters' lists for the 2005 parliamentary election described above. It envisages the use of updated satellite photographs and their geographic vectorisation. According to the proposal the local government units would assign addresses to all dwellings, which is not the case today, and also assign an accurate address to every citizen.

The time table for the implementation of this project is December 2005 - June 2006. We are convinced that the implementation of a project of this magnitude needs much more time and that it should be preceded by careful planning.

#### **7.4. Voters' Lists**

As discussed in this report, accurate lists of voters are of utmost importance to the Albanian society. Such lists ensure that a person, who has the right to vote, is assigned to a specific voting district and can vote in that district. Accurate lists can spare election result from being criticized and called into question.

It is evident that a modern Civil Status Register based on a unique and accurate address system will be a solution to the problems with the voters' list encountered in the past. It will do away with one of those problems referred to above, which is the use of almost all resources in the CSOs for quite a long period of time prior to each election. This ad hoc work, essential for the preparation of elections, hinders efforts at modernising the civil registration system.

## **7.5. Census**

The next population census for Albania is planned for 2011. Hopefully, a fully modernised civil registration system with a unique Identity Number will be established in due time before the census. This will give Albania a chance to establish a key between census results, on the one hand, and all other possible sources of information in the Albanian society, including the civil registration system, on the other. The civil administration will benefit from such an improvement. Moreover, the statistical system of Albania, which, in large measure, is under the responsibility of the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), will be able to produce new kinds of statistics.

## **7.6 Relations with INSTAT**

INSTAT is responsible for official statistics in Albania, among which the demographic statistics are one of the most important, as well as closely linked to the civil registration system. Furthermore, INSTAT is responsible for the population census, including the one planned for 2011. The statisticians at INSTAT are experts in data collection, data cleaning and in understanding and describing the underlying metadata. The General Director of INSTAT expressed a profound interest of INSTAT in drawing benefits from the synergy between the census and the Civil Status Register.

Before arriving in Tirana, we expected that INSTAT would have been a prominent participant in the modernization of the Albanian civil registration system. INSTAT was consulted and it provided advice during the planning stages of the Project. However, once MLGD became a partner of SN in the Project, INSTAT's contributions to the Project for all practical purposes ceased. On one occasion INSTAT was invited to conduct an analysis of the quality of birth statistics collected by the Civil Status Register for a few local areas. The information we obtained suggested that the results of the analysis had not been used in order to attempt an improvement of birth registration.

In the opinion of the evaluation team the independence of INSTAT is a precondition for a continued improvement of official statistics in Albania. In this respect INSTAT is not different from the national statistical institutes in other European countries, the credibility of which rests, *inter alia*, on their independence from politics. A strong and independent INSTAT, in our opinion, will be an asset to the future modernisation of the civil registration system in Albania. Moreover, we think that MI needs to establish a working group with the participation of all parties which can provide valuable inputs to the modernisation project and that INSTAT is one of the most obvious members of such a group.

## **8. Draft Proposal on Modernization of Civil Status Service**

During the visit of the evaluation team to Tirana MI circulated different versions of a brand new draft proposal on the Modernization of Civil Status Service. The following short description of the key elements of the draft proposal is based on the OSCE translation of the latest version of the document.

The draft proposal describes the plans for a full modernization of the Civil Status Service, the scope of which is the “[e]stablishment and functioning of the National Register of Civil Status, including the implementation of the traditional and numerical address system, with the production of the Identity Card as final output”.

The main objectives of the plan are as follows:

1. Preparation of the software for data entry and training,
2. Definitions of standards for the civil status acts and the legal improvements in compliance with the projects’ standards,
3. Establishment of a database,
4. Installation of IT infrastructure in GDCS and Civil Status Offices. Establishment of a communication system linking GDCS and CSOs,
5. Preparation of final software for the Civil Registration Service use, and
6. Creation of the National Register, implementation of the Address System and the beginning of the ID Card production.

The project’s supervisory system during the data entry and the address system application foresees a monitoring structure for the CSOs and for activities to be performed by local government units. The draft envisages the monitoring structure consisting of 36 regional observers and two national coordinators.

The project will computerise all CSO data in communes and municipalities with over 3,000 inhabitants. It is not clear from the draft what will happen to the data from the local government units having less than 3,000 inhabitants. Needless to say, a nationwide civil service register must include all inhabitants.

The draft states that the basic software (which is based on MS Access) will be upgraded. One cannot but fear that this means that the software developed by Intech+ in the context of the implementation of the Project is being given up, with the consequence that the experience gained using this software will be lost.

There are a few references to the Address System Project in the draft. As mentioned above in Section 7.4, this project in itself is a huge task.

The future computer/communication system is described in the draft as an on-line system. In view of the conditions that the evaluation team observed in the pilot offices it visited and the daily problems with the power supply across the country, it is hard to imagine that such a sophisticated system could become operational in the foreseeable future.

Looking at the draft proposal from a more technical point of view it is fair to state that all aspects of the establishment of a National Register are taken into account. However, the draft estimates that the time period from the begging of the data entry to a fully operational

National Register will be just a little longer than half a year; the draft stipulates that the work will be finished in August 2006. No doubt, this is - from any practical and theoretical point of view - highly unrealistic. Implementing the plan described in the draft proposal over this short time period will only create frustration and waste of resources.

It is not clear from the draft proposal as to how or whether the experience gained by the Project will be used in the course of the establishment of the nationwide modern civil registration system. In the opinion of the evaluation team, not to use, *inter alia*, the already created central database and the experience with the cleaning of data (duplicates etc.) will amount to a great waste of resources.

## 9. Recommendations

The evaluation team is of the opinion that the original plans for a three-phase undertaking aimed at modernising the civil registration system in Albania remain valid. In particular, we are of the view that the completion of the pilot phase is an essential prerequisite for a launching of a full-fledged nationwide modernisation of the registration system. As we are aware of the fact that the nationwide modernisation is an urgent priority of the Government of Albania, we acknowledge the fact that the modernisation phase may need to overlap with the pilot phase, i.e. that the modernisation may need to begin before the pilot is fully completed. However, we wish to make it clear that in our opinion it is absolutely essential that lessons that will ultimately emanate from the pilot phase are used in the course of the modernisation.

With this in mind we wish to make the following recommendations to the parties involved in the implementation of the Project and to parties that may participate in the future nationwide modernisation of the civil registration system.

### 9.1 Recommendations Regarding the Project

After having assessed the implementation of the Project so far, we concluded that the Project ought to be finalised as soon as possible by undertaking and completing the work that we identified above in Section, 4.b. Remaining work. This is our key recommendation to SN and the Ministry of Interior of Albania. In connection with this broad recommendation, we wish to make a few specific suggestions that transcend the remaining work that we identified above:

- Ensure energetic support to the SN office in Tirana by SN staff in Oslo, if necessary by providing proactive leadership for the project implementation as part of this support,
- Reinvigorate the commitment of the Government of Albania to the Project by empowering GDSC to increase its involvement in the project implementation to the level commensurate with the speedy completion of the last phase of the Project;
- Ensure full involvement of the pilot offices in the completion of the Project, *inter alia*, by making it easier for these offices to fulfil their project obligations through rapid modernisation of those offices,
- As part of the completion of the Project fully document lessons drawn from the Project and, in the process, ensure easy accessibility of the lessons for participants in the future nationwide modernisation.

### 9.2 Recommendations Regarding the Nationwide Modernisation

We found highly encouraging the high-level political commitment of the Government of Albania to the nationwide modernisation of the civil registration system of the country. We consider this commitment an essential prerequisite for a successful modernisation of the system. In our view, the Governments of Norway and Albania should seize this opportunity and work closely together in tandem with other Governments and intergovernmental organisations and institutions to put in place, as soon as possible, plans for the nationwide modernisation. This is our key recommendation to MFA and MI. In connection with this general recommendation, we wish to make the following specific recommendations:



- As the nationwide modernisation is a highly complex and demanding undertaking, it will be essential to make a realistic and detailed modernisation plan and ensure funding, national and international, for its implementation,
- In view of the importance of lessons to be drawn from the Project, those lessons ought to be thoroughly studied, disseminated and used as part of the modernisation effort,
- In view of the fact that the Project is the only project undertaken in recent years in Albania that will leave a lasting mark after being completed, the Government of Norway may wish to become a lead player in a possible future effort of the international community to assist the Government of Albania with the modernisation of the registration system,
- In view of the fact that a future modernised civil registration system of Albania will be patterned on the Nordic central population registers, it will be highly advisable to ensure participation of other Nordic countries in the modernisation.

# **Appendix 1: Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of the Project 'Modernisation of the Civil Registration System in Albania'**

## **Subject**

Two experts for an evaluation of Statistics Norway's pilot project with the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralisation (MLGD) in Albania regarding assistance on the modernisation of the civil registration system in Albania.

## **Background**

There is a strong need to modernize the civil status (CS) registration system in Albania, as the registers include a large number of systematic and non-systematic errors, do not correctly reflect the population, and are difficult to use due to old-fashioned methods of entering and storing the data. From mid 2002 to mid 2003 and again from mid 2004, Statistics Norway (SN) has been cooperating with the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralisation (MLGD) and other ministries in order to develop and test a system for a local population registration with a central office.

The pilot project is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

## **The Project**

The final objective of the initiative is an improved administrative and computerised civil registration system for all of Albania.

The specific objective of the pilot project is to develop a computerised system and test this system on a limited number of local registries in order to gain experience before starting a large-scale, nationwide modernisation.

SN is providing assistance to MLGD to attain these objectives. There are two main modalities of the assistance:

- a) Transfer of knowledge. Technical assistance is provided on issues such as legislation, rules and standards for civil registration, methods for statistical and other use of the registers, to promote development of a legal framework and a modernised system.
- b) Investment in computer hardware and software and other necessary equipment, to establish and build up a central register unit for co-ordination of the local civil registers and provide equipment and computer training for a number of local offices selected for the pilot project.

## **Reasons for the evaluation**

In the initial project proposal three phases were outlined: A planning phase, followed by a pilot phase, and finally a full modernization of all civil status registers of Albania. The last phase was, however, considered to be too extensive for Norway to fund alone and it was suggested that funding of this phase could be sought among international donors after the pilot phase had been implemented, reviewed and evaluated. The Norwegian Ministry of

Foreign Affairs (MFA) granted 4 million NOK to cover the initial activities in 2001. SN assisted the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralisation (MLGD) to apply for continued funding of the pilot phase in May 2003, and MFA gave an additional grant of 5.5 million NOK in May 2004, to be administered by SN. The second part of the pilot project has now been under implementation for one year, and based upon the current funding it will go until August 2006.

At a mid-term meeting between MFA and SN in May 2005 MFA requested that an independent evaluation of the whole pilot project should be conducted during the second half of 2005. The evaluation will be funded by MFA but organized by SN. The findings and recommendations from this evaluation will be an important component in the decision basis for MFA when a continuation and scope of future support from Norway in this field is to be decided upon.

### **Scope and focus**

The main perspective of the evaluation will be to provide guidance for MFA to decide on how to complete the pilot phase, whether Norway should contribute to the main phase and if so recommended, how Norway might contribute towards the final objective of full-scale modernisation of the population register system in Albania.

### **Tasks**

The expert team shall emphasize the following issues

1. *Efficiency*: Review the Status and Progress of the project compared to the objectives, purposes and planned output, with focus on the input of resources in relation to the achieved results.
2. *Effectiveness*: Evaluate to what extent the project has achieved or is likely to achieve its objectives, looking into co-operational and organisational aspects of the project and the various modes of transfer of technological, professional and organisational qualifications.
3. *Sustainability*: Give an assessment of the likelihood that the benefits generated from the investments in software and hardware in local pilot offices and the central civil status office will continue beyond the pilot project or whether further contributions will be necessary to maintain the results achieved.

### **Evaluation team**

The team shall consist of two experts with extensive experience in demography/population statistics and/or civil registration. At least one of the experts should be familiar with population registration in one or more of the Nordic countries. At least one of the experts should be experienced in establishment/management of computerised registers.

### **Preparations required**

SN and MLGD shall submit all available necessary written documentation to the expert team.

**Duration**

The team shall visit the institutions directly involved in the project: GDCS and MLGD and also one or more local offices in Albania, and SN in Norway. The team should also consult other relevant institutions and agencies, among these the Election Commission, INSTAT, OSCE, the European Commission, and the Norwegian Embassy in Albania.

The mission is envisaged to take 2 weeks, comprising visits to Albania and Norway.

**Expected output: A mission report**

Main output: An evaluation report with recommendations. A final draft of the mission report should be submitted to MFA no later than three weeks from the last day of mission.

The scope of the report should be 20 - 30 pages.

**Suggested Timing**

October 2005

## **Appendix 2: Institutions and Persons the Evaluation Team Visited and Met with during its Visits to Oslo and Tirana**

### **Oslo, Norway 17-18 October 2005**

#### **Statistics Norway**

Mr. Helge Brunborg, Senior Research Fellow

Mr. Børge Strand, Project Manager in Tirana, September 2004-August 2005

Mr. Halvard Skiri, Project Manager in Tirana, October 2001-June 2003

Mr. Johan-Kristian Tønder, Assistant Director General

Ms. Anne Abelsæth, Project Manager in Tirana, October 2005-present

### **Tirana, Albania 19-28 October 2005**

#### **Ministry of Interior**

Mr. Sokol Olldashi, Minister of Interior

#### **Norwegian Embassy**

Mr. Ole Johan Bjørnøy, Chargé d'Affaires

#### **General Directorate of Civil Status**

Mr. Genc Radovicka, Director of National Register

Mr. Sajmir Laçeç, Chief of the Sector of the Data base Maintenance

Mr. Devid Pecani, Chief of the IT Sector

#### **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

Mr. Elmar Svekis, Democratization Department

Mrs. Pascale Roussy

#### **Institute of Statistics**

Ms. Milva Ekonomi, General Director

#### **Donors Meetings at the OSCE office (21 and 27 October 2005)**

1. Mr. Pavel Vacek, Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania
2. Mr. Alex.J. Finnen, Deputy Head of the OSCE Presence
3. Mr. Oerd Bylykbashi, Democratization Department, OSCE Presence
4. Mr. Elmars Svekis, Democratization Department, OSCE Presence
5. Mr. Dickson Bailey, International Foundation for Election Systems
6. Ms. Anna Ricciardi, Democratic Stabilization Section, EU
7. Mr. Dan Redford, National Democratic Institute
8. Ms. Kari Risnes, Intern, Royal Norwegian Embassy

#### **Civil Status Office of Administrative Unit No. 7 in Tirana**

Mr. Pandi Sara, Mayor

#### **Civil Status Office of Prezë**

Mr. Ramazan Garipi, Mayor

Mrs. Sulltana Qehajaj, CSO Employee

#### **Project Office in Tirana**

Mrs. Mirela Talka, Project Coordinator

### Appendix 3: Main Activities of the Project

July 1999	Need for modernization of the civil registration system in Albania recognised by SN expert visiting Tirana in connection with the 2001 Census
January 2000	First visit of a team of SN experts to Tirana to consider the civil registration system
8 November 2000	Project proposal sent by Norwegian Embassy in Tirana to Albanian Government
March 2001	Three SN experts discussed draft law on civil status with Ministry of Justice. Working group on legislation established
21 March 2001	Project proposal presented to Albanian authorities
May – June 2001	Two SN experts in Tirana for two weeks to prepare for a long-term mission
June 2001	MFA granted four million NOK for the project implementation in 2001
June 2001	First Project Manager recruited
September 2001	Study visit to Norway by two members of Central Election Commission
September 2001	First Project Manager visited Tirana for a week
24 October 2001	First Project Manager arrived in Tirana.
14 November 2001	Part-time local Project Coordinator recruited
Oct. 2001 - Jan. 2002	Project staff worked out of Norwegian Embassy
January 2001	Project office rented. Furniture and equipment donated to the Project office by Norwegian Peoples Aid
14 January 2002	Local Project Coordinator converted from part to full-time
February 2002	Work on draft law on civil status under way
January - March 2002	Assistance for establishment of GDCS provided
May 2002	Project document revised again and presented to MFA
July 2002	GDCS established. Director of the Department of the National Register and two employees appointed
August 2002	Responsibility for Project funding transferred from MFA to NORAD
September 2002	SN IT experts visited Tirana for one week to consider IT matters
10 October 2002	Parliament approved Law on the Civil Status, Law on the Identity Number of Citizens, and Law on ID Cards
November 2002	One-week SN planning mission to Tirana. Project proposal redrafted in order to comply with NORAD standards
October - Dec. 2002	GDCS assisted with drafting of Agreement and plans for GDCS structure, staff and equipment. Collaboration with representatives of Municipality of Padua, Italy
January 2003	Protocol (agreement) between MLGD and SN signed
February 2003	First study visit to Norway by GDCS staff and other staff
March - May 2003	Technical specifications prepared and hardware for pilot offices procured
June 2003	Hardware and other equipment donated to Prezë CSO
July 2003	Hardware and other equipment donated to CSOs of Kamëz, Bathore and Tirana No.7
April-June 2003	Hardware and other equipment donated to Klos CSO
13 June 2003	Application for funding sent to NORAD
13 June 2003	First Project Manager completed tour of duty and left Tirana
June 2003 - Sept. 2004	Local Project Coordinator managed SN office in Tirana in absence of a Project Manager

July 2003	Training of CSO employees in Prezë, Tirana No. 7, Kamëz, Bathore and Klos
July 2003	Director of the Department of Methods and Inspection at GDCS appointed
Sept. 2003 - March 2004	Data entry for five pilot offices carried out. Problems with hardware and software encountered due to poor electricity infrastructure
January 2004	GDCS moved to new premises, consisting of two offices within MLGD
February 2004	Project donated furniture to GDCS
March - April 2004	Three IT specialists appointed at GDCS
March - June 2004	GDCS prepared tender documents and, in connection with this, received assistance from Project
June 2004	One-week SN mission to Tirana, involving meetings with MLGD Minister and others
June 2004	Director of the Department of the National Register at GDCS resigned
July 2004	General Director of GDCS appointed
August 2004	International tender on computerization of CS system concluded, but subsequently annulled due to irregularities
September 2004	Second Project Manager arrived in Tirana
Autumn 2004	Data collection from five pilot offices and a few other offices concluded (230 000 records)
November 2004	General Director and Director of the Department of Methods and Inspection at GDCS resigned
January 2005	Director of Department of Methods and Inspection at GDCS appointed
Jan.- Feb. 2005	Functionalities for data exchange between GDCS and CSOs developed
February 2005	New protocol between SN and MLGD signed
March 2005	Training of GDCS IT specialists in Oracle database by Intech+ carried out
April 2005	Director of Department of National Register at GDCS appointed
April 2005	Training of GDCS IT specialists at SN in Norway carried out
May 2005	Internet connection at GDCS installed (needed to communicate with Albanian Embassies abroad)
May - June 2005	Server and requisite workstations for GDCS procured. Oracle and PL/SQL licensed software for GDCS procured and installed. Necessary equipment for training room at GDCS procured
July 2005	Second Project Manager completed tour of duty and left Tirana
September 2005	Study visit of GDCS staff to SN in Oslo and Kongsvinger
October 2005	Third Project Manager arrived in Tirana Evaluation Team visited Oslo and Tirana Plan to modernise CSOs in all of Albania presented by GDCS to donor community

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