**Republic of Albania**

**National Agency of Information Society**

**Improving Equitable Access to High Standard Public Services through GovTech Program**

**Terms of Reference**

**For**

 **a** **Firm for technical assistance related to Open Data**

February 2024

1. **BACKGROUND**

**Over the past 15 years the Government of Albania (GoA) has committed to significant reforms to modernize its** public sector through a GovTech approach, combining the adoption of digital technologies with public sector reforms implemented a whole-of-government approach. The aim of these reforms has been to increase the effectiveness of the public administration, and to provide more inclusive access to high quality public services for all Albanians. To this end, in 2007 the National Agency for Information Society (Agjencia Kombëtare e Shoqërisë së Informacionit – AKSHI) was established to lead the digitalization agenda. In 2012 AKSHI launched the e-Albania digital service portal, which currently enables online applications to around 1232 services (95 percent of all central government provided administrative services). As of 2023, e-Albania has around 3 million registered users (individuals and businesses).

**Albania’s notable progress with GovTech reforms has been recognized internationally**. The 2022 edition of the WB GovTech Maturity Index (GTMI) categorizes Albania within Group A (the most advanced of four groups), reflecting a positive evolution when compared with the previous edition where the country was positioned in Group B. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) highlights Albania as a positive model for e-governance in the Western Balkans.

**Despite the GoA’s progress with the digital transformation, challenges remain, in particular from a user perspective**. These relate to the need to upgrade existing systems, apply frontier technologies, improve the quality and delivery time of services, and ensure equitable access to digital services to all Albanians, including too vulnerable groups such as the poor, rural communities, the disabled and those with limited digital skills.

**In order to make the full transition to a user-centric mode of digital service delivery, and fully harnessed the newest technologies for a tangible impact on user experience in service delivery, the GoA continues to demonstrate a high level of political commitment to the Digital Transformation agenda.** This is underpinned by a clearly articulated medium-term vision consisting of the GoA’s government’s 2030 political vision (2021), the National Strategy for Development and Integration (2022-2030), and the Albania Digital Agenda Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2026.

**Given the World Bank’s (WB) longstanding support to the GoA in service delivery and digitalization, the GoA has requested further Bank support of the implementation of its digital transformation agenda.** The GoA and WB launched a new Program for Results (PforR), which became effective in July 2023. The Program is called “Improving Equitable Access to High Standard Public Services through GovTech” and its development objective is to increase the equitable access to and quality of selected digital services in Albania. The operation seeks to strengthen national systems to accelerate the transition to a fully user-centric mode of digital service delivery, to enable the Government of Albania (GoA) to harness new digital innovations for tangible impact and to move Albania into the advanced rankings of GovTech.

**The Program supports the GoA in achieving selected objectives under its digital transformation agenda in three Results Areas (RAs):**

1. **Enhancing E-Service Quality and User Experience**

1.1. Re-Engineering of E-Albania Portal based on Accessibility and User Experience (UX)

1.2. Ensuring High Standard, Personalized, and Pro-Active Event-based E-Service Re-organization

1.3. Upgrading the E-Services Backbone: E-Albania and Government Gateway ICT Infrastructure and Business Continuity

1. **Improving Digital Skills and Digital Inclusion**

2.1. Improving Digital and Foundational Skills

2.2. Enhancing Customer Service and Accessibility

1. **Strengthening Priority GovTech Enablers**.

3.1. Strengthening GovTech Whole-of-Government: Data Governance.

3.2: Strengthening Whole-of-Government GovTech Institutional Enablers

**Under Results Area 3.1 of the above-mentioned Program, among other data governance reforms, the GoA committed to improving data transparency and analytics** by: (i) creating a “Data Lake” to store a large amount of data in their native format for data analytics, while respecting data protection requirements; (ii) conducting an Open Data Readiness Assessment (ODRA); (iii) upgrading the front-end interface of the Open Data (OD) portal based on UX and the back-end of the OD portal to enable additional functionalities for maximum data analytics; (iv) publishing priority data-sets in OD format in five priority public institutions; and, (v) increasing OD usage and analytics through outreach and capacity building to state and non-state actors.

**More specifically, under the PforR, AKSHI committed to the following**: Public institutions will publish datasets in accordance with OD standards. Based on the ODRA to be completed in Year 1 of Program implementation, five institutions will be selected for the dataset inventory and publishing. These are likely to be institutions with large unexploited datasets and high level of spending on public services, most likely including the institutions leading the creation of the level 4 LEs: Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Finance and Economy, and the Ministry of Interior. ***These are also likely to be institutions that are more “ready” to publish their data, including their level of bureaucratic and political will to make the data available, so the Program results are achieved****.* The inventory model will include different sections describing the attributes of each dataset, for example, data sources, responsible agencies, periodicity, collection and updating procedures, and classification of data (personal, or publishable). The data inventories must be updated annually. They will constitute a catalog of public datasets that will enable agencies to organize and prioritize their publication and progressively make them available to citizens and the general public (the published data will be a subset of the datasets that will have been referenced in the inventory). The datasets identified through the inventory will be published by the five institutions according to the standards outlined in the current National Open Data Standards.

**These OD objectives are in line with the GoA’s commitments under the Open Government Partnership**, as outlined in the Open Government Partnership National Action Plan for 2023-2025 (Commitment 6: “Adding automatic data to the Open Data Portal and access to Open Data Readiness”). Albania joined the Open Government Partnership in 2011, and it considers Open Data a crucial element in its strategy to modernize and digitize the public administration and foster the emergence of a digital economy. Open Data presents the government with a real opportunity to: (i) improve data exchanges and interoperability, (ii) reduce duplication of data collection and management, (iii) improve public services and online services, and (iv) strengthen innovation and development of new business products and services. Today, the GoA’s Open Data Portal provides access to several datasets held by various government departments and agencies. In 2011, the AKSHI designed and published the Technical Standards of Publishing Data in the Open Data Format. At the same time, the GoA has also advanced in drawing up a legislative framework for Open Data. In 2022 the Parliament passed a right to access to information law (33/2022 - ON OPEN DATA AND INFORMATION REUSE OF PUBLIC SECTOR). The law aims to determine the legal basis for the use of open data and the right to re-use for commercial/non-commercial purposes, documents held by public sector bodies or public enterprises, with the aim of promoting innovation in products and services. This law aims to transpose Directive (EU) 2019/1024 of the European Parliament of June 20, 2019 "On open data and the re-use of public sector information". The law stipulates also that practical rules to facilitate the search of open data search have to be approved by decision of the Council of Ministers. In this regard, the current Technical Standards of Publishing Data in the Open Data Format will have to be revised, to ensure that standards remain relevant and effective in a dynamic and changing environment.

1. **OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT**

These Terms of Reference (ToR) are for a Consultant Firm (henceforth, the Consultant).

The objective of the consultancy is to support the AKSHI and the GoA in meeting its OD commitments under the Open Government Partnership and the Program for Results currently under implementation with the WB.

1. **SCOPE OF WORK AND MAIN TASKS**

The Consultant’s role will be to undertake the following tasks:

1. **Produce an Open Data Readiness Assessment (ODRA) report**. This will include an open data program action plan to be implemented by ministries (Intermediate Results Indicator for Year 1 of the PforR implementation); This will be done with the ODRA tool developed by the WB available at: data.worldbank.org/ogd. The ODRA framework enables an action-oriented assessment of the readiness of a government - or even an individual agency - to evaluate, design and implement an open data initiative. The ODRA should include a list of actionable recommendations which can also be prioritized, and the recommendations must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely). The ODRA should include actionable recommendations that would enable Albania to improve the international OD rankings.
2. **Produce an Inventory of datasets of all line ministries able to support the publishing of data on the Open Data Portal**. This will also include clear recommendations, based on agreed criteria, for 5 priority institutions to publish datasets on the Open Data Portal (Disbursement-Linked Indicator 6 and Intermediate Results Indicator for Year 2 of the PforR implementation);
3. **Provide guidance to priority institutions on the selection of the appropriate and relevant standard licenses for their open datasets,** as defined by the sub legal acts of Law 33/2022. This will facilitate informed decision-making in selecting the most relevant standard licenses and serve as a valuable resource, empowering institutions to navigate the complex landscape of open data licensing effectively.
4. **Offer expert guidance and recommendations on the effective publication of the identified data on data.europa.eu**, a central point of access to European open data from international, European Union, national, regional, local and geodata portals. This includes advising on data formats, metadata standards, and best practices for ensuring data quality, accessibility, and discoverability as per the EU standards. This will support institutions towards the showcase of their data on a prominent European platform, contributing to the overarching goal of fostering transparency, collaboration, and accessibility within the European data ecosystem.
5. **Produce a Technical note related to the 5 priority institutions.** This willoutline the digital readiness status, data protection status and interoperability status for each listed dataset for the 5 priority institutions recommended to publish datasets on the Open Data Portal, which will also suggest reforms and actions to address the identified issues (Disbursement-Linked Indicator 6 of the PforR implementation, related to interoperability and data protection);
6. **Produce a Strategy and Methodology for OD Reuse and Impact**.Propose an action-oriented strategy to encourage the usage/analytics of OD in Albania and propose a methodology to monitor the level of reuse and to measure the impact of open data in Albania. This will include, also, some recommendations for the improved usage and upgrade of the OD portal, being undertaken in another procurement.
7. **Propose Activities for Publishing Meta-Data**. Propose a list of ongoing activities or mechanisms to encourage or assist data publishers in publishing high-quality metadata. By implementing these ongoing activities and mechanisms, organizations and data providers can foster a culture of quality metadata creation, which ultimately enhances the discoverability, usability, and trustworthiness of their data assets.
8. **METHODLOGY**

The methodology for undertaking the assignment will include but not be limited to the following:

**Familiarize with the open data ecosystem in Albania**

The Consultant will acquire knowledge of the open data ecosystem (using ODRA method) in Albania, including relevant legislation, policies, and activities at the national level, and key stakeholders in the public sector, private sector, and civil society.

**Agree on the assessment logistics**

The Consultant will hold meetings with stakeholders to agree on the scope of the assessment (number of sectors/ministries to be covered) and logistics, including a target list of interviewees mapped to each dimension of the assessment, and collection of documents needed.

**Desk review**

During the preparatory work before the interviews, the Consultant will review: (i) all relevant documents and data source that are publicly available, that can be collected in Albania from all relevant stakeholders and that are submitted by AKSHI and the Bank team and (ii) the characteristics of the key datasets published and/or provided by AKSHI.

**Conduct interviews**

The Consultant will conduct field interviews by applying the ODRA tool to evaluate the readiness of Albania based on eight dimensions considered essential for sustaining an open data initiative. In assessing each area, the Consultant will take account of the relevant factual evidence as well as the responses to the primary and supplementary questions and apply their knowledge of open data. At the end of this phase the Consultant will deliver to AKSHI an initial brief of emerging findings.

**Follow-up information collection**

The Consultant will make follow-up requests for documents, based on information provided during the interview phase.

**Produce the final report**

The Consultant will draft the final report, which will contain deliverable 2-6, as outlined below. The recommendations and actions proposed will reflect the Consultant’s expertise in OD and will be based on global best practices, while also incorporating the needs and experiences of Albania to date. The ODRA report and action plan will adhere to the format and conventions employed in previous ODRAs published [here.](https://opendatatoolkit.worldbank.org/en/data/opendatatoolkit/odra) The report will require review and approval by AKSHI before being considered final.

1. **DELIVERABLES**

The Consultant will be responsible for the following key deliverables:

1. **Detailed Inception Report.** The consultant will produce an inception report, to be validated and agreed with the AKSHI, that outlines – in more detail – how the assignment will be successfully fulfilled. This includes, but is not limited to a more detailed methodology, a summary of the criteria for selecting the 5 priority institutions, the list of the assessment logistics, including a target list of interviewees mapped to each dimension of the assessment, and collection of documents needed.
2. **ODRA Report**. The ODRA Report will be delivered in English. It will include the results of the diagnosis and a proposed set of actions, in the short, medium and long term, that can form the basis of an open data action plan for Albania. Findings from the EU’s Open Data Maturity index for Albania, which will be provided by the AKSHI, shall be taken into consideration. The final report and action plan will adhere to the format and conventions employed in previous ODRAs. It will describe the following items: (i) status of readiness; (ii) description of each of the dimensions involving Open Data issues in the methodology; (iii) background information on relevant open data trends; (iv) key preliminary findings, opportunities and obstacles identified during the research process; (v) potential benefits of adopting an open data initiative; (vi) recommendations on where and how the use of open data could be implemented taking into account its impact, risk, cost, easiness, stakeholders to involve; and (vii) an open data program action plan proposing how to implement/improve an open data initiative. The report will require review and approval by the AKSHI and World Bank before being considered final. The ODRA should include a list of actionable recommendations which can also be prioritized, and the recommendations must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely). The ODRA should include actionable recommendations that would enable Albania to improve the international OD rankings.
3. **Inventory of Datasets**. Inventory listing of datasets of all line ministries able to support the publishing of data on the Open Data Portal with a recommendation for 5 priority institutions to publish datasets on the Open Data Portal (Disbursement-Linked Indicator 6 of the PforR implementation).
4. **Guidance to priority institutions on the selection of the appropriate and relevant standard licenses for their open datasets.** Summarized in a short note/PPT.
5. **Offer expert guidance and recommendations on the effective publication of the identified data on data.europa.eu.** Summarized in a short note/PPT.
6. **Technical Note.** Technical note outlining the digital readiness status, data protection status and interoperability status for each listed dataset for the 5 priority institutions recommended to publish datasets on the Open Data Portal, monitoring methodology and list of ongoing activities or mechanisms to encourage or assist data publishers in publishing high-quality metadata. This will also suggest reforms and actions to address the identified issues (Disbursement-Linked Indicator 6 of the PforR implementation, related to interoperability and data protection).
7. **Produce a Strategy and Methodology for OD Reuse and Impact**.Propose an action-oriented strategy to encourage the usage/analytics of OD in Albania and propose a methodology to monitor the level of reuse and to measure the impact of open data in Albania. This includes proposals for making sure the OD portal has the required and needed functionalities; and,
8. **Propose Activities for Publishing Meta-Data**. Propose a list of ongoing activities or mechanisms to encourage or assist data publishers in publishing high-quality metadata. By implementing these ongoing activities and mechanisms, organizations and data providers can foster a culture of quality metadata creation, which ultimately enhances the discoverability, usability, and trustworthiness of their data assets.

All the deliverables will be delivered both in Albanian and English language; translation costs will be covered by the consultant.

1. **REPORTING**

The Consultant will report to AKSHI and will closely coordinate its activities with the Program’s Coordination Unit (CU) in AKSHI. All report drafts and deliverables will be reviewed by the AKSHI, World Bank and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the findings are acceptable, and the deliverables revised accordingly. AKSHI will facilitate the meeting appointments with the target list of interviewees and the collection of documents needed. The consultant will conduct field missions to ensure the successful completion of the assignment (a minimum of 3 missions is anticipated). This will include technical missions to conduct ODRA interviews and assessments and present the final version of the ODRA report. The consultant is expected to contribute a short report summarizing key activities and results at the end of each mission. The consultant is expected to summarize the provided expert advice (tasks 3 & 4 in the above “Scope of Work”) in written form at the end of the assignment.

1. **TERMS**

The total duration of this assignment is estimated at 17 weeks. Contingent upon signature of the contract, the deliverables should be submitted according to the below timeline. This will be more detailed in the proposal and inception report:

| **Timeline** | **Deliverables** |
| --- | --- |
| **+ 2 weeks** | * Inception report including coordination mission and initial desk research in order to prepare for the field visit/technical mission. Inception report finalized based on feedback from AKSHI.
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| **+6 weeks** | * Field visits
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| **+8 weeks**  | * First version of the ODRA report deliverable.
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| **+10 weeks** | * Technical mission to present the penultimate ODRA report, and to adopt comments/feedback from AKSHI and relevant stakeholders.
 |
| **+ 13 weeks** | * Dataset inventory listing and recommendation for 5 priority institutions.
* Provision of technical advice (tasks 3 and 4, also ongoing throughout assignment).
 |
| **+15 weeks** | First drafts* Technical Note.
* Produce a Strategy and Methodology for OD Reuse and Impact
* Propose Activities for Publishing Meta-Data.
 |
| **+ 17 weeks**  | Final drafts all deliverables, including summary of technical advice provided under tasks 3 and 4 of the scope of work). |

The expected level of effort for this assignment is 220 man-days spread during the consultancy period. The International Consultancy firm shall arrange for this assignment a project team comprised of at least 2 (two) international qualified staff and one locally qualified staff.

The consultant’s international experts are not required to be located all the time in Albania, though it is expected that the consultants will visit the country as necessary, but not less than 3 (three) times with at least 50 working days each spent in the country during the consultancy period. The timing and frequency of visits will be agreed beforehand with the CU and AKSHI.

1. **QUALIFICATIONS**

The International Consultancy firm/Consortium retained for the project shall have the following expertise and experience:

* Specific experience of no less than 10 years in providing consultancy services in the fields of e-governance, GovTech, informative systems, e-services, re-engineering of public services, etc;
* Proven experience of, at least, 2 similar projects in the last 5 years;
* Proven experience on open government data; familiarity with OD ecosystems, the international open data community, and realization of ODRA in developing countries;
* Previous Experience working in an international environment. Experience in in the Western Balkans would be considered an advantage.

The Consultancy firm will assign three consultants to this work. It is anticipated that this would be two international experts alongside one local Albania expert. The consultants will have the following qualifications – names and qualifications (CVs) of the consultants must be attached in the proposal:

* At least master’s degree in economics, public administration, business management, engineering, ICT and related fields
* At least ten years of professional experience in public policy, IT, Web technologies and open standards, engineering economics, business administration or related discipline preferably with knowledge of Open Data issues and its impact on government policy, economic growth, and citizen engagement.
* Demonstrated expertise in Data Governance, including data inventories, interoperability, data protection, methodology for OD Reuse and Impact and quality metadata creation.
* Knowledge and understanding of open data frameworks, including the ODRA and similar tools.
* Excellent oral and written communication skills in English.
* Oral and written communication skills in Albanian (at least one of the consultants);
* Knowledge of Albania or the Balkans, and Open Data issues in Albania or the Balkans (at least one of the consultants).

# EVALUATION CRITERIA

# Overall years of experience - 30 points

* Number of similar experiences conducted in the last 5 years - 60 points
* Availability of staff to perform the assignment- 10 points.

# IMPLEMENTATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Consultant will work in close collaboration and under the supervision of AKSHI and the Program Coordination Unit (CU). For administrative matters the consultant will communicate as necessary with the CU, responsible for carrying out the fiduciary aspects of the project implementation (Procurement, Contract and Financial Management). AKSHI will provide the consultant with facilities, office space, and communication means, as necessary for the performance of the consultancy assignment. Meetings are expected to be held also in other external premises.

1. **CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA OWNERSHIP**

All the data and information collected or received for the purposes of this study will be kept strictly confidential and will be used exclusively to execute the terms of reference. All the intellectual property rights stemming from the execution of the terms of reference belong to the AKSHI. The content of the written materials that are obtained and utilized during this task will not be shown to third parties without the written consent of the World Bank.

1. **SELECTION**

The service will be selected under the provisions of the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers “Procurement in Investment Project Financing Goods, Works, Non-Consulting and Consulting Services (July 2016, Revised August 2017, November 2020), based on the method of Consultant Qualifications Based Selection Method (CQ) Lump - Sum Contract. The Bank requires that firms or individuals involved in Bank IPF procurement shall not have conflict of interest.