***Final Evaluation of the project
Serbia at Your Fingertips – Digital Transformation for Development (DTD Project)***

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# List of abbreviations

CA Contribution Analysis

DTD Serbia at Your Fingertips – Digital Transformation for Development

e-ZUP Government Service Bus (serb. eZakon o opstem upravnom postupku)

EC European Commission

EGDI e-Government Development Index

eLPA Centralized System for Local Tax Administrations

EPART e-Participation Index

EQ Evaluation Questions

EU European Union

FCDO Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

FE Final Evaluation

GDS UK Government Digital Service

GGF Good Governance Fund

GoS Government of Serbia

HRBA Human Rights-Based approach

ICT Information and Communication Technology

ITE Office for IT and eGovernment

LTI Local Transparency Index.

M&E Monitoring and Evaluation

NALED National Alliance for Local Economic Development

NAPA National Academy for Public Administration

NOC/SOC ITE’s Network/Security Operation Centre

PAR Public Administration Reform

PM Project Manager

RF Results Framework

SCM Standard Cost Model

SDG Sustainable Development Goals

SI Sub-indicators (SI)

SIGMA Support for Improvement in Governance and Management

SMEs Small and Medium Enterprises

ToR Terms of Reference

UN United Nations

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

WGI World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators

# Executive summary

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Serbia contracted an independent expert to conduct an independent final evaluation of its “Serbia at Your Fingertips – Digital Transformation for Development” (hereinafter DTD or Project). This five-year activity started in October 2017 and will end in March 2022. The DTD Project is organized around five outcomes: first three outcomes, related to the system of digital governance, have been funded by the Good Governance Fund (GGF) of the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The evaluation covers the three GGF-supported outcomes and the period of implementation, from the initiation (in 2017) to the completion of GGF support in March 2021. *Still, the DTD project will continue until March 2022 and project activities will not finish with the closure of the GGF component.*

The evaluation independently assessed the effectiveness of project activities implemented to date, determined whether the project has achieved planned results, identified gaps in performance against targets, and provided recommendations (including how to close these gaps in the remaining period of the project). The evaluation conducted primary and secondary research, collecting qualitative and quantitative data to address the evaluation questions (EQs) in the Terms of Reference and the Inception Report between November and December 2020. The primary research included 27 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), reaching a total of 38 persons (18 women and 20 men). The research centred on the EQs, the findings are summarized below:

**FINDINGS**

*EQ1: Has the DTD project aligned its intervention with the national strategic priorities for the reform of public administration and e-governance in Serbia?*

Yes, DTD fully aligns with governance priorities related to transparent and accountable public administration and the establishment of e-governance and has remained relevant for the country’s strategic priorities during its implementation thus far. The Program of the Government of Serbia (28 October 2020) together with the E-Government Development Programme 2020−2022 re-confirmed the national commitment to continue with digitalization.

DTD design was consistent, based on a participatory and inclusive programming approach, and the problem identification process used a bottom-up process involving partner institutions.

*EQ2: Has the DTD project considered and addressed gender issues and the “no-one is left behind” principle?*

Yes, DTD considered the “no-one is left behind” principle and SDGs when designed, contributing to SDG targets (especially under the SDG16). The main achievements have been the creation of a more accessible eGovernment portal, accommodating the needs of people with disabilities and assisting with a foundational infrastructure for the digitalization of public services. The Project designed and implemented tools to enable “text to speech license” and offer opportunities to modify size and colours of letters/text.

The FE finds that DTD Project has been effective in ensuring gender equality and participation, being less focused on gender transformation.

*EQ3: Has the implementation of the DTD been efficient concerning adherence to the work plans (timely implementation), flexibility and responsiveness?*

Yes, DTD has been implemented efficiently and has demonstrated flexibility when met with operational challenges. Management mechanisms, including implementation modalities, organizational structure, and the role of each partner under the DTD Project have been conducive to the achievement of planned results.

The DTD project team has established a clear system of work planning; besides, its monitoring system has been sound, serving as the main reference in the results-oriented reporting practice. The DTD project established a Project Board as a steering and advisory body that facilitated and ensured regular communication and exchange of information on strategic priorities with the partners, facilitating national ownership of the achievements reached through the project.

*EQ4: Have the capacities of the ITE improved, especially to support the coordination and implementation of the government’s e-strategy/agenda?*

Yes, the ITE has improved its capacities, especially to support the coordination and implementation of the government’s e-strategy/ agenda.

The DTD’s assistance to the ITE has been “needs-based and timely implemented as one of the best practices in institutional development starting from the initial stage of the ITE establishment”, resulting in ITE’s improved management practices and enhanced capacities for delivery of services, coordination and implementation of the government’s e-strategy/ agenda. For example, the e‑Government Support Centre was established to support and implement new digital procedures. The first phase of the Centre’s operations included assistance to new digital services (e.g. electronic administrative procedures- eZUP, e‑inspections, e-registration of new-borns- eBaby and a centralized system for local tax administrations- eLPA). The stakeholders recognized the important role of the ITE’s Support Centre during the COVID-19 pandemic, as a one stop shop for all citizens.

DTD provided targeted assistance during the preparation of the Program for e-Government Development 2020-2022 that outlined the government’s commitment to an efficient and user-oriented digital government.

*EQ5: Has the DTD Project been effective in supporting the establishment of ICT platforms for the provision of user-focused, accessible, and inclusive e-services?*

Yes, the Project has been effective in supporting the establishment of ICT platforms for the provision of user-focused, accessible, and inclusive e-services. The Project has been effective in contributing to the development of the Government Network and Government Cloud and supported the establishment of a new Data Centre/ disaster recovery facility of the Government of Serbia. It also contributed to the establishment of the key registries, interoperability mechanisms, a reliable Government Service Bus and new integrated e‑services. The DTD, in close cooperation with the ITE, defined the new e-government enterprise architecture, including the main enterprise architecture components (e.g. Meta registry, Business Process Management platform, Document Management System, e-Archiving solution). The partners stated that the new platform provides ITE with the capability to rapidly develop and provide new e-services in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

*EQ6 Has the DTD contributed to an enabling environment including mechanisms for continued improvement of e-services?*

Yes, the *DTD has been working to ensure an enabling environment including mechanisms for continued improvement of e-services.* The partners stated that the DTD Project has contributed to defining elements for a quality system. The assistance from DTD Project has contributed to redesigning the official e-Government web portal, broadening access opportunities, featuring mobile responsive design, enhancing accessibility features for the visually and hearing-impaired and improving communication with citizens. The tested technical and functional features have been codified and standardized in the form of recommendations for designing government sites. The partners stated that the Project contributed to a new, user-focused service design and delivery paradigm. The Project has developed the methodology for measuring user satisfaction with e-government services, their quality, efficiency and take-up (gender responsive) along with the initial baseline user satisfaction survey for selected ten services and the roadmap for introducing systemic and continuous user satisfaction feedback.

*EQ7: Has the DTD project contributed to sustainable sector polices and capacities of institutions within the e-governance system?*

Yes, the Project contributed to sustainable sector policies and capacities of institutions within the e-governance system. Programming opportunities and political commitments were effectively identified and targeted through engagement with government partners and beneficiaries. This engagement continued through participatory DTD implementation, contributing to an enhanced sense of ownership. These results, together with the Prime Minister’s strong commitment to digital transformation (e-governance and e-services), set the ground for the sustainability of results. The Project was instrumental in supporting e-governance policy processes in Serbia, assisting to identify priorities and formulate main policy documents (e-governance related strategies). However, the need remains to enhance policy coordination and implementation (including monitoring and reporting on progress).

CONCLUSIONS

The DTD Project is fully aligned with the main national development priorities, namely the public administration reform and e-governance frameworks, including the establishment of quality services. The DTD Project is highly successful in delivering the planned results, even overachieving in some areas of intervention. This success is even more apparent when set against a complex and challenging environment and sensitive topics that the Project was addressing, such as changes in the service delivery paradigm and institutional reform through digitalization. A solid basis to continue support and further strengthen e-governance in the country has been established. The initial baseline user satisfaction survey has been conducted along with the roadmap for securing systemic and continuous user satisfaction feedback as the backbone of quality systems to ensure provision of user-focused, accessible, and inclusive e-services.

The Project has been designed to address the “leave no-one behind” principle and implemented activities for digital inclusion of vulnerable groups. Gender-equality has been considered through gender participation and parity; however, gender transformation has been less evident. The Project has been highly effective in addressing the negative effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, also considering the needs of those who are most vulnerable.

The DTD Project has been effectively developing national capacities for digitalization during the entire period of its implementation. These capacity development efforts, together with effective partnerships and active involvement, have contributed to a stronger sense of ownership among the national stakeholders. The Government of Serbia remained committed to digitalization and has allocated resources for the continuation of activities and further expansion of the Project’s results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1: The evaluation recommends continued assistance, focusing on the needs of the ITE and other e-governance institutions, being responsive to the priorities for the establishment of a quality e-government system (e-governance) in Serbia.

R2: Work to create "demand" for participation, and create broader interest and willingness to take part in the delivery of services (and in the decision-making processes more broadly) and design activities for strengthening the capacities of civil servants to involve citizens in all phases of service creation and delivery.

R3: The evaluation recommends strengthening the links between digitalization and SDGs. The need remains to enhance gender mainstreaming in all activities, work on developing training courses for women's digital skills and implementing campaigns for e-Services that target women.

R4: UNDP should define an integrated intervention logic and appropriate qualitative and quantitative (gender sensitive and sex-disaggregated) indicators that would enable an adequate measurement of progress under outcomes and capturing the contribution to the e-government agenda in Serbia.

R5: Propose and adopt a systemic approach for capacity development, following comprehensive needs assessments of the main stakeholders and partners.

# Background

The overall objective of the “Serbia at Your Fingertips – Digital Transformation for Development”[[1]](#endnote-1) (hereinafter DTD or Project) has been to prepare and support the Serbian public administration and economy for digital transformation, enabling the Government of Serbia to provide more transparent and accountable digital services that meet the expectations of citizens and the needs of the economy.

The DTD Project is organized around five outcomes, planned to be achieved through fifteen outputs (Annex 3). The first three outcomes, related to the system of digital governance, have been funded by the Good Governance Fund (GGF) of the United Kingdom Government’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)[[2]](#endnote-2). Outcome 4 addresses digital society and economy, while Outcome 5 extends to infrastructure and other capital investments. These two outcomes (4 and 5) have been financed by the Government of Serbia. The final evaluation focused on the first three outcomes.

UNDP Serbia has been implementing the DTD Project, while the key operational partner was the Office for Information Technology and eGovernment (ITE).

Close cooperation has been maintained with the established top-level councils– Coordination Council for e Government and Prime Minister’s Council for Creative Industries and remained active during the Project’s implementation.

# Evaluation objective, purpose, and scope

The Terms of Reference (ToR) defined the evaluation’s objective as “to assess if and how DTD Project outputs/outcomes were achieved, the efficiency with which outputs/outcomes were achieved, relevance for the national strategic framework and UNDP Country Programme outcome and sustainability of the results, and to provide recommendations for future engagement.”[[3]](#endnote-3)

The purpose of this final evaluation (FE) was to provide information about the results of the DTD Project implementation, and provide information to stakeholders on future programming options as a basis for a continuation of efforts in this area of intervention.

The scope of the final evaluation covered the first three outcomes (GGF supported) and the period of the DTD Project implementation, from the initial phase in 2017 to the completion of GGF support in March 2021.

## Reconstructed intervention logic

The FE performed the evaluability analysis[[4]](#endnote-4), measuring the extent to which the DTD Project, its implementation framework and achieved results could be analysed and assessed in a reliable and credible manner[[5]](#endnote-5).

Within the framework set by the Terms of Reference, the FE analysed the original DTD project intervention logic and the availability of relevant data to carry out this evaluation, identified demand for technical adjustments, and proposed reconstruction of the DTD intervention logic. The ultimate purpose was to capture as precisely as possible the DTD areas of intervention and present (causal) links between different components of the intervention logic.

The reconstructed intervention logic preserved the same elements: impact (overall goal), outcomes, and outputs (Annex 3).

# Evaluation methodology

The FE followed a theory-based and utilization-focused methodology[[6]](#endnote-6) and reflected the essentials of the contribution analysis (CA)[[7]](#endnote-7) intending to establish credible causal claims about interventions within the programme, their results and created changes[[8]](#endnote-8).***.*** The CA has been chosen as a viable approach, considering that the DTD outcomes[[9]](#endnote-9) (defined as "intended changes in development conditions in Serbia") have been set at the level that required joint work of many partners, credible attribution to the DTD Project may be challenging or in some cases impossible to establish[[10]](#endnote-10).

The desk review of literature and key informant interviews served to collect critical information and capture different perspectives about the DTD project and its implementation. The evaluation triangulated collected data to validate findings and identify points of convergence and divergence.

## Data collection methods

The evaluation applied a mixed-method approach to enable the gathering of qualitative and quantitative information through a well-balanced combination of desk research and interviews with key informants, at various levels of analysis. The evaluation used desk research to analyse secondary information that was received or collected. In-person and teleconference interviews during the field phase served to collect primary data and validate findings and conclusions from the desk phase. The primary data collection process was organized between 09 and 22 December 2020 and included consultations with 38 stakeholders (18 women and 20 men).

The FE used the interview guide approach, combined with informal conversational interviews.[[11]](#endnote-11) This approach enabled the collection of more systematic and comprehensive data (compared to that in informal conversational interviews), while the tone of the discussion remained somewhat conversational and relaxed.

## Data analysis

The scope, complexity, and the period covered by the evaluation required an analytical approach deriving from UNDP evaluation practices[[12]](#endnote-12), OECD DAC evaluation guidelines[[13]](#endnote-13) and international experience. The evaluation analysed primary and secondary data through the causality model, identifying challenges or obstacles that affected progress under the outcomes. The FE benefited from triangulation of the collected information and other evidence at different stages of the process.

Online Interviews with the key informants, together with discussions with the DTD project team and UNDP representatives, served to validate findings and substantiate conclusions and recommendations.

### Limitations

Together with DTD/ UNDP, the FE made efforts to minimize potential limitations that emerged during the evaluation process. The evaluation team had access to a large amount of information, organized adequately by the UNDP/ DTD staff. The FE included a primary data collection phase designed to complement the document review and collect in-depth information about the status of DTD outcomes, including different factors and challenges that impacted the Project. The final sample of key stakeholders for interviews has been agreed with the UNDP/ DTD team, with the involvement and importance of the stakeholders in the DTD preparation and implementation beingn the main determining criteria.

As discussed in more detail in this report, some of the intervention logic elements required fine-tuning and adjustments to capture the DTD's focus more precisely. The FE revised the intervention logic, while maintaining the same scope and preserving its areas of intervention.

DTD produced critical and strategic results under outcomes, presented through its reports and other analytical documents. The assessment of effectiveness and performance of the DTD relied on the indicators provided in the results matrix, along with the data sources suggested for verification of progress. In most cases, the indicators were relevant, especially at the level of outputs, adequately informing the analysis of progress. Still, some indicators could not adequately capture the DTD's contribution to changes and progress in the respective areas and data sources for some indicators were not available during the DTD's implementation period. Therefore, the FE has proposed additional quantitative and qualitative indicators (not planned under the approved DTD results framework) relevant to the DTD's intervention areas. The evaluation used primary data collected through key informants’ interviews (KIIs) to complement information under indicators and specific DTD's areas. In some cases, the FE relied more on the KII's as the main references. Still, the FE used different informants (representatives from the public sector, development organizations, technical experts) to validate the collected information and strengthen the evidence base. In some other cases, the data sources were not available or could not be used to compare the current status and performance with baseline data. Other requirements from the ToR have been considered during the assessment of the effectiveness of the project.

The FE has not considered consultations with the end-users/ beneficiaries. However, in the first quarter of 2021, the DTD developed the methodology to collect citizens' perceptions and opinions. The technical prerequisites are in place, and the ITE (with support from the Project) will carry out regular assessments. The DTD project will end in May 2022, and the final evaluation will analyse this information.

Sustainability and impact are ex-post measures; thus, measuring these dimensions requires a time-period between two to five years after completing the Project. The FE mitigation approach was to anticipate or forecast sustainability and impact. The intention was to measure the extent to which the DTD's positive results are likely to continue after the end of the implementation cycle and if the longer-term influence on the development changes will be lasting in nature.

### Ethical considerations

Generally, the FE maintained an awareness of the OECD DAC ethical considerations for development evaluations[[14]](#endnote-14) and United Nations Ethical Guidelines[[15]](#endnote-15). The evaluation followed ethical considerations in selecting interviewees, interacting with them, and respecting their personal and institutional rights. The FE sought informed verbal consent from stakeholders before asking any questions related to the DTD evaluation. To obtain consent, the FE briefly explained the reasons and objectives of the evaluation and the scope of the questions asked during the interview. Stakeholders had the right to refuse or to withdraw at any time. The FE also ensured respondent privacy and confidentiality. Comments provided during discussions were aggregated to render impossible the identification of specific stakeholders. Moreover, UNDP procedures foresee the publication of the Evaluation Report without annexes, thus the list of interviewed people will not be public.

The FE was fully independent, unaware of any conflicts of interest for this work. During the evaluation process, the FE followed the principles of impartiality, credibility, and accountability.

# Presentation of findings

The final evaluation has presented the following findings under seven evaluation questions, citing the sources for each of these findings.

## EQ1: Has the DTD project aligned its intervention with the national strategic priorities for the reform of public administration and e-governance in Serbia?

* The primary and secondary sources indicate that the DTD Project fully aligns with governance priorities related to public administration reform, and particularly efforts for the establishment of e-governance.

The DTD project has been addressing the priorities of the Government of Serbia, spelled out in the Prime Minister's inaugural speech[[16]](#endnote-16), stating that “Serbia could achieve the vision of modern, efficient, cheap public administration by digitalizing the public administration and providing electronic services that the citizens and businesses will use.”[[17]](#endnote-17) The Project is supporting the efforts to “increase satisfaction with public services and reduce the administrative burden, and enhance the efficiency of public administration through the use of ICT solutions”[[18]](#endnote-18) as spelled out in the Electronic Government Development Strategy 2015-2018 and its Action Plan[[19]](#endnote-19). The Project was especially relevant to strengthen the institutional and legal framework for providing coordinated management of e-government development, and further advance electronic registers connected with other information systems of public authorities[[20]](#endnote-20).

Also, the Project was well-aligned with the objective of the National Public Administration Reform Strategy (PAR Strategy 2015-2020), to further enhance public administration operations and create high-quality services for citizens and businesses, thus contributing to economic stability and an improved living standard for citizens. The main reference has been the PAR Strategy objective to “improve organizational and functional sub-systems of PA”[[21]](#endnote-21) and to ensure more transparency and accountable digital services that meet the expectations of citizens and the needs of the economy.[[22]](#endnote-22)

The DTD Project was relevant for the implementation of the EU accession priorities concerning public administration reform, also contributing to the fight against corruption. It reflected the mitigation measures recommended through the European Commission (EC) Screening Report[[23]](#endnote-23), focusing on the needs to i) strengthen the cooperation between the stakeholders in charge of implementing e-governance measures; ii) strengthen the institutional system, their mandates (including on a legal basis) to ensure that the staffing level matches the tasks under the e-governance framework; iii) improve the exchange of information and institutional inter-operability.[[24]](#endnote-24)

* The findings confirm that DTD Project remained well-aligned with governance related strategic priorities during its implementation thus far.

The analysis of the changes on the demand side[[25]](#endnote-25) shows that DTD’s intervention logic remained relevant throughout its implementation. The key governance-related strategic and policy documents, such as the Program of the Government of Serbia (28 October 2020) re-confirmed the commitment to “continue with digitalization, as the most powerful tool for transformation of Serbia’s economy and society.”[[26]](#endnote-26)

The E-Government Development Programme of the Republic of Serbia 2020−2022, through its objective that “digital transformation of Serbia’s public administration should enable progress in all areas of the public administration operations, ensuring efficient, transparent, consistent, economical and responsible exercise of public authority”, [[27]](#endnote-27) reconfirms the relevance of the Project.

The 2020 Serbia Progress Report issued by the EC recognized the country’s achievements concerning e-governance, that are actually results from the core DTD areas of intervention. The importance of the strengthened ITE to ensure more effective cooperation for the implementation of horizontal tasks has also been emphasized. Progress was also made with the adoption of the law on e-government and with a continued introduction and development of e-services, including at the National eGovernment Portal. At the same time, the report highlighted that “public administration reform and modernization of services remain challenges for the country,” together with insufficient transparency and accountability of public institutions.[[28]](#endnote-28) There are issues to ensure full harmonization of the legal framework - for example, harmonization of the law on information security with the Directive on network and information systems is pending[[29]](#endnote-29).

* The partners stated that the DTD addressed their needs and priorities for the establishment of user-focused, accessible and inclusive e-services

The DTD design was consistent, based on a “participatory and inclusive programming approach.”[[30]](#endnote-30) The partners stated that the “Project identified problems using a bottom-up process of collaboration, involving representatives from the main partners’ institutions.[[31]](#endnote-31) This approach (identification of needs and challenges) enabled the Project to “provide the demanded technical assistance taking into consideration unique characteristics of participating institutions”[[32]](#endnote-32). The partners stated that the “DTD helped to develop their capacities and deliver assigned services for the satisfaction of citizens and their needs.”[[33]](#endnote-33) The DTD Project fine-tuned its assistance to the needs of the ITE “to implement its mandate (assigned under the high-level council’s agendas)” also contributing to an enabling environment for “digital transformation of Serbia’s economy”[[34]](#endnote-34)

## EQ2: Has the DTD project considered and addressed gender issues and the “no-one is left behind” principle?

Digitalization could bring new development opportunities. Still, digital patterns often entrench economic, gender and social divides. The inequality in access to technology affects the professional and personal development of women because they may not have the same opportunities or resources that are available to men. Therefore, actions, policies and strategies must place people at their centre to outweigh the risks of digital, social and economic exclusion, concentration of power and wealth, and social instability. The evaluation analysed if the DTD project considered and addressed gender issues and contributed to Serbia’s efforts to ensure that “no-one in left behind.”

* The DTD project considered the SDG framework and SDG targets during the design stage. The partners recognized that the Project has been contributing to SDG targets, also providing examples of consideration of the “leave no one behind” principle.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [[35]](#endnote-35) sets out 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 indicators to monitor economic, social and environmental progress up to 2030[[36]](#endnote-36). Digital technologies could contribute to the fulfilment of most Sustainable Development Goals because they are a critical cross-sectoral and cross-cutting issue in addition to being an underlying infrastructure or technology for specific development sectors. In general, the most relevant indicators for digital transformation are: 9.c.1 Proportion of the population covered by a mobile network, by technology[[37]](#endnote-37); 17.6.2 Fixed internet broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, by speed[[38]](#endnote-38), and 17.8.1 Proportion of individuals using the internet[[39]](#endnote-39).

The FE finds that the DTD, through its underlying objective that "advancing public administration reform and strengthening e‑governance inherently links with building strong governance institutions", is contributing to SDG16. The partners stated that this goal, and associated indicators and targets, were analysed during the design stage[[40]](#endnote-40). The reference has been the target 16.6. Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. The Project strived to "improve and modernize the functioning of the ITE and other (public) institutions”[[41]](#endnote-41); the partners stated that “reformed institutions are preconditions for the successful achievement of development goals and achievement of SDGs.”[[42]](#endnote-42) However, the lack of records and data on core indicators created difficulties to validate progress and ascertain the DTD’s contribution precisely. [[43]](#endnote-43)

The DTD Project contribution to more transparent and accountable public institutions[[44]](#endnote-44) indicates that the relevant SDG target is 16.5. Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms. The partners have been generally positive about DTD contribution to overall anti-corruption efforts[[45]](#endnote-45); however, the lack of official data under relevant SDG indicators[[46]](#endnote-46) prevented a formal validation of this contribution. Still, the partners mentioned an analogy with results at the local level, namely, the Local Transparency Index[[47]](#endnote-47) shows that municipalities with more advanced e-local governance practices and services score higher on all transparency-related sub-indicators.

* There are examples that the Project has followed the “no-one is left behind” principle, and considered gender equality

The DTD team stated that the “Project has considered the principle “no-one is left behind” from its design to implementation”[[48]](#endnote-48). The FE collected and analysed examples demonstrating that the DTD contributed to a more accessible eGovernment portal, especially “accommodating the needs of people with disabilities and assisting with a foundational infrastructure for disability-sensitive digitalized public services”[[49]](#endnote-49). The main references have been that the Project contributed to the development of tools that enabled the “text to speech licence”, and offered opportunities to modify size and colours of letters/ text.[[50]](#endnote-50) During the implementation and testing period, ITE organized consultations with an organization for visually impaired persons to obtain their feedback, which was incorporated in the design of the eGovernment Portal and eservices[[51]](#endnote-51). Simultaneously, the partners recognized the priority for “digital inclusion”, stating that successful digitalization need to be implemented in parallel with initiatives to enhance digital literacy of all citizens (especially marginalized and vulnerable groups)[[52]](#endnote-52).

Following the principle that “no-one if left behind”, the Project supported the development and use of non-digital tools (that were in place alongside these digital platforms) to engage people who are not digitally literate. For example, a call centre has been established to provide services to non-digitally literate and ensure smooth access to services. Also, for the immunization process of the most vulnerable categories, including the Roma population, field support has been organized to support them with the application process and raise awareness on the importance of vaccination[[53]](#endnote-53). Thus, this goes one step further in providing support to the persons who cannot call the Support centre.

Most stakeholders perceived UNDP as steadily promoting gender equality in Serbia through activities at the national and local levels.*[[54]](#endnote-54)*DTD’s efforts in the area of gender mainstreaming were primarily at the level of gender participation, attempts to include an equal number of women in training programs. Considering that digitalization may exacerbate the digital divide along gender lines[[55]](#endnote-55), the evaluation finds that the DTD has given less attention to gender equality and gender mainstreaming. The DTD results framework is void of gender sensitive indicators to measure gender transformation, lasting changes in the power and choices of women over their own lives, while tackling the root causes of inequality. For example, the opportunity existed to identify perception, understanding, and challenges to the achievement of gender equality in the broader e-government framework- through post-training evaluation questionnaires or through surveys on the links between e-governments and gender equality.[[56]](#endnote-56) As far as gender participation is concerned, ITE staff is composed of 60% of women. Moreover, two out of four (50%) assistant directors are women. Regarding capacity building, in 2020, 844 civil servants were trained in eGovernment related topics, with women comprising 66% of trainees in eGovernment related topics. For example, for the training for the e-Inspector information system, 763 civil servants were trained to use the system, 56% of which were female. The training in Business process management (BPM) gathered an audience where women comprised 80% of the participants. Moreover, women comprised the majority of participants of capacity building programs and study visits to Luxemburg and London.

Interviewed partners from the national institutions expressed limited insight and knowledge of gender-sensitive practices and were unaware of the links between gender equality and digitalization[[57]](#endnote-57), highlighting the importance of the technical support that the DTD provided (over gender issues). Partners stated that DTD addressed gender; however, they could not justify or explain these conclusions beyond evidence of equal participation in training programs that the Project organized.

## EQ3: Has the implementation of the DTD been efficient concerning adherence to the work plans (timely implementation), flexibility and responsiveness?

* The evidence suggest that the DTD Project has been implemented efficiently demonstrating flexibility when met with operational challenges.

Management mechanisms, including implementation modalities, organizational structure, and the role of each partner under the DTD Project have been conducive to the achievement of planned results.[[58]](#endnote-58) Also, timely implementation of activities and availability of financial and human resources have contributed to overall efficiency. The partners appreciate the DTD and UNDP as an implementing partner for “its level of flexibility, swift decision making and limited bureaucracy.”[[59]](#endnote-59) They have emphasized good relations with the DTD project team and UNDP representatives, stating “they (UNDP/ DTD) have dealt with requests fast, effectively strengthening partnerships.”[[60]](#endnote-60).

These implementation capacities (technical abilities of the DTD project team and operational capabilities) and strong partnership served among other factors, as the basis for the decision of the Government of Serbia to fund additional activities under the DTD framework and expand the scope of this initiative.

* The DTD project team provided evidences that the established management system to complete the project on time, within the approved budget and standard of quality[[61]](#endnote-61)

The DTD work planning included results-oriented annual work plans, providing a sound basis for scheduling of activities, resource allocation, budget control, and attainment of objectives. The FE finds that work planning has been participatory, through joint work with the ITE office and management and other stakeholders. The works plans defined the relationship, roles and responsibilities during the implementation. Adding to these findings, the partners stated that the DTD work plans additionally helped to coordinate activities, especially effectively serving as tool for coordinating efforts related to capacity development and training[[62]](#endnote-62).

The proactive role of the DTD project team and UNDP in responding to changes, challenges and emerging priorities in the areas of intervention has been the main factor that contributed to DTD’s flexible and agile response during project implementation[[63]](#endnote-63). The Project has established and maintained an active dialogue with the main stakeholders under its outcomes. Knowledgeable and experienced staff from the DTD project team, according to the partners,[[64]](#endnote-64) contributed to this process, ensuring well-targeted and flexible assistance. Effective decision making based on the needs of beneficiaries has been one of the main tools contributing to responsiveness and flexibility during the implementation. For example, modifications of the training programs have occurred as a response to the requests of participants to address some of the priority topics under the e-governance framework[[65]](#endnote-65). Also, mentoring support has been on an on-demand basis, adjusted to the needs of individuals from the partners’ organizations. Another example of the DTD’s flexibility is the modification of the training program to online delivery during the COVID19 pandemic. Following health protection measures, the DTD project prepared online programs for all training subjects planned during the COVID-19 period. The NAPA provided information on the participants’ feedback on trainings delivered online and 82.76% responded that the form of the training fully matched their expectations. Also, 82% in 2020 and 91% in 2019 passed the test; both in 2019 and 2020, women were more successful in passing the exam (83% vs. 81% in 2020, and 93% vs. 88% in 2019) (not all trainings included a final test)[[66]](#endnote-66).

* **The DTD project team planned financial and human resources for implementation of activities timely, following work plans**

At the operational level, the DTD project established a project team with the DTD Project Manager (PM) as the head. The PM’s main responsibility has been efficient planning and delivery of the DTD results, including to ensure the (“satisfactory”) quality of deliverables, within the approved work plans and the budget. The PM has been in charge of monitoring and reporting. The UNDP senior staff, primarily the Portfolio manager for Competitiveness & Digital Governance (PM-CGD), have been substantively involved in project implementation, additionally contributing to technical quality and effectiveness[[67]](#endnote-67).

The DTD project established a Project Board[[68]](#endnote-68) as a steering and advisory body that facilitated and ensured regular communication and exchange of information on strategic priorities with the partners.[[69]](#endnote-69) Extensive dialogue and consultations with the ITE and GGF/ FCDO served to exchange views and identify priority interventions. Maintaining regular communication and having functional dialogue with the stakeholders has been successful, with the critical role of the PM together with the PM-CD and the Digital Advisor. The partners stated that the existence of a “high-level steering mechanism has been beneficial from the aspects of institutional and sectorial priority setting while also serving to facilitate commitment and ownership over the results.”[[70]](#endnote-70)

The UNDP office in Belgrade assisted the DTD project in all operational aspects, including support to financial management and payments, procurement of goods and services, management of human resources, and organizations of logistics and transportations. Charges to the DTD project have been prorated on the basis of the actual amount of time that UNDP staff provided support to the Project. The FE finds that this approach has been cost-efficient, and the use of resources has been optimized.

The beneficiaries and partners expressed a positive opinion concerning cooperation with the DTD project, planning and delivery of activities and the quality of deliverables.

* The DTD’s monitoring system has been established, and the Team stated they have been using monitoring data as the main reference in the reporting of results

The FE finds that the dual focus of the M&E system to assess progress towards the outputs and outcomes and monitor implementation of work plans (including sequencing of activities), achievement of outputs and assessing progress towards outcomes, has contributed to the DTD’s efficiency. The Results Framework (RF) has been established as the main reference for monitoring.

The FE finds that the adopted indicators and the overall RF served to facilitate the tracking of performance under all project outcomes and enable reporting on results. The RF provided baselines established during the inception phase of the project (deriving from the analytical work of the Project team) and end-of-the project and annual targets, under each of the indicators. The analysis of the DTD reports and information collected from the DTD team confirmed that data and the accompanying sources of verification for all indicators have been adequate and available.

The FE finds that the DTD project ensured transparency and impartiality even in the cases when their deliverables have been used as sources of verification. Data-bias has been prevented either by using external expertise (for example external experts carried out the training evaluation and prepared reports) or by designing data collection tools ensuring that deliverables could be used as valid data-sources for verification of progress.

The DTD project team has been preparing regular annual and quarterly reports. The reports followed the most common practice to incorporate and present both financial and content-related information, being supplemented by required attachments.

The annual reports provided a more substantive review of the status of outputs and outcomes, using indicators to measure the extent of achievement of targets. It also provided an overview of expended resources, problems encountered, and conclusions if the project is expected to be completed on time and within budget.

* **The DTD Team and UNDP have been working on a risk management system since the start of the Project; however, the FE finds that focus has been on low-probability risks, while high impact risks have not been analysed.**

The DTD project document (approved proposal) included a brief analysis of the situation under each of the outcomes, including a review of key challenges and possible risks. A detailed analysis of risks has been presented in the Annex 3 Offline Risk Log.

These assumptions have set the basis for the identification of risks[[71]](#endnote-71), however, the formulation of assumptions has been weak and generic, and these issues have also been reflected in the formulated risks.

In practice, risks should be established at the level of outputs (or outcomes), analysing their likelihood to threaten the achievement of the respective outputs or progress/ sustainability under outcomes. This approach could have been instrumental in avoiding the repetition of generic risks. For example, political instability (e.g. extraordinary elections, government reshuffle) presents a possible risk. However, the likelihood of this risk remains low and all the analyses have demonstrated the dominance of the ruling party in Serbia. At the same time, some of the high-impact risks have not been analysed. At the level of the overall goal (impact), for example, there is an evident worsening of accountability and declining performance on other governance indicators that could affect the efforts of this initiative, but the Project did not reflect on this.

Other management mechanisms established within the implementation framework of the DTD project, such as work-planning, indicator tracking, and Project Board reviews have also served as a timely indication of occurrences that could affect the project. This approach, in combination with the flexibility built into the work plans, has been effective to ensure adjustments of plans and activities, hence, avoiding or minimizing negative implications of risks.

## EQ4: Have the capacities of the ITE improved, especially to support coordination and implementation of the government’s e-strategy/ agenda?

Good governance and functional institutions are foundational drivers of Serbia’s socio-economic development, including resilience to shocks, and an ability to address inclusion and sustainability challenges[[72]](#endnote-72). In this context, the country is steadily working to ensure a more efficient and citizens-oriented public administration, focusing on policy and infrastructure improvements, enhancing digital access and the overall transparency of the system. To implement these mechanisms, raising accountability and transparency of institutions and awareness of communities about the overall importance of digital services and tools is critical[[73]](#endnote-73). In practical terms, accountability is focused on the demand side of good governance, strengthening citizens' voices to demand greater responsibility and responsiveness directly from public officials and institutions (as service providers). Thus, public service quality is becoming increasingly important for the general public and consequently for policymakers. The priority is reducing the time consumption and administrative procedures, cutting red tape, ease of monitoring the process of meeting requirements and offering direct communication with public administration representatives.

The focus of the DTD has been on the organizational development of the main institutions within the e-governance system and strengthening policy-making processes, considering operational and functional links between policies and institutions. In addition, the Project strived to enable targeted institutions to fulfil their commitments and obligations by promoting constructive interaction among the governance actors and citizens. The principles of transparency and accountability, as the pillars of good governance, have been mainstreamed in all these activities[[74]](#endnote-74).

* The partners stated that DTD project has been delivering support, contributing to “their abilities to deliver quality services to people and the economy”[[75]](#endnote-75)

The recent EU Progress Report[[76]](#endnote-76) on Serbia recognized the government’s priority for creating a more user-oriented administration, while also highlighting the progress in developing e-services. Some of the DTD deliverables have been highlighted as contributing factors, including the new e-Government Programme, reconstructed e-Government portal, and enhanced abilities of the ITE for “strong coordination and leadership in the area of e-governance”[[77]](#endnote-77).

The impact level indicators to measure government institutions’ service delivery capacities and competences showed a positive trend. The E-Government Development of the United Nations Member States[[78]](#endnote-78) and its two indicators, the e-Government Development Index (EGDI)[[79]](#endnote-79) and the e-Participation Index (EPART)[[80]](#endnote-80), have been proposed as the main references, showing an undisrupted positive trend over the period between 2014-2020. The partners stated that the results of the DTD project, especially those related to the redesign of the e-Government portal improved access and provision of online services and to the efforts in development of human capacities (especially on the supply side, more details are provided under the analysis of outcomes) directly contributed to these figures and continued improvement between 2018 and 2020[[81]](#endnote-81).

***Figure 1: eGovernment Development for Serbia- EGDI and EPART (2014-2020)***


Source: author’s analysis based on EGDI and EPART

The stakeholders recognized a positive correlation between the achievement of the DTD (highlighting also the contribution of other UNDP and GGF initiatives[[82]](#endnote-82)) and progress under the EPART index. The examples were related to the Project’s assistance in advancing information services via the e-government portal, e-Uprava[[83]](#endnote-83). The new eGovernment Portal included authentication levels aligned with EU regulation on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions (eIDAS). To ensure the full implementation of the eIDEAS provisions, the ITE deleted unconfirmed user accounts on the eGovernment Portal, providing a six-month timeframe for all users to confirm their identity with an identification document. These measures reduced the numbers from almost one million formally registered to around three hundred and three thousand users. Nevertheless, the verified users are real and active consumers of e-services. It is important to highlight that ITE has launched a national campaign to promote the eID, including the two-factor authentication (2FA), the eGovernment Portal and e-services countrywide. It is now possible to get 2FA at 360 locations (counters of the local Post office and Local Tax Administration office) in 150 towns and municipalities[[84]](#endnote-84).

The partners also highlighted results related to the citizens’ contributions to and deliberation on public policies and services[[85]](#endnote-85). A relevant example has been the preparation of the e-Government Development Programme, following the adoption of the Law on the Planning System of the Republic of Serbia[[86]](#endnote-86). The online availability of the draft Program, together with online consultations, facilitated public participation, offering opportunities to the citizens to comment and provide inputs to this framework document for e-governance in Serbia. The report on public debates indicates that the submitted remarks and suggestions mainly referred to specific activities under the responsibility of specific and listed institutions; it also includes comments to specify indicators, to clarify the terminology and harmonize terms, harmonize with other relevant regulations, reformulate used words and expressions, etc[[87]](#endnote-87).

This pivotal experience with the preparation of the Program, according to the new legal provisions and rules, including online consultations, set the model that was followed during the preparation of the draft Public Administration Reform Strategy 2021-2025 and its Action Plan[[88]](#endnote-88).

The e-Government benchmark, as a yearly monitoring instrument of the European Commission on use of digital technologies in the public sector, and its two indicators (User Centricity and Online availability) shows a positive trend for the Republic of Serbia. The partners stated that the DTD project has contributed to “more on-line services”, by improving the main e-government website (e-Uprava - from information only to full services) and ensuring that other public websites are mobile friendly[[89]](#endnote-89). The DTD’s contribution to the results on the e-Benchmark has been the “e-Government Support Centre as the main support to scaling up and growth of e-services.”[[90]](#endnote-90)

The Local Transparency Index[[91]](#endnote-91).(LTI), which measures different transparency-related dimensions including website functions, access and quality of information, and availability of e-services, shows a positive trend. The national average LTI for 2020 is 46 out of 100, an improvement of 6 points compared to the LTI average score of 40 for 2019. Although the DTD project did not work directly with municipalities on improvement of transparency at the local level, the partners identified “contribution strings” as the DTD has provided models for improvement of web-services for beneficiaries[[92]](#endnote-92) (that were replicated at the local level).

Despite clear progress on specific e-governance indicators and recognized advancement of the e-government agenda in Serbia, the progress is less apparent at the level of governance indicators[[93]](#endnote-93).

* The stakeholders recognized that the DTD has been working to strengthen ITE’s capacities to support coordination and implementation of the government’s e-strategy/ agenda[[94]](#endnote-94)

The DTD’s *Outcome 1: The ITE's capacities increased to support coordination and implementation of the government's digital agenda* describes accurately the "intended changes in development conditions resulting from the joint work of the DTD, and key stakeholders", being well-integrated in the DTD intervention logic and chain of results. Considering that the Project did not introduce a specific approach to measure ITE’s institutional and individual capacity development, the FE reviewed its status using indicators and targets, and analysing progress under its outputs.

The partners stated that the DTD assistance to the ITE has been “needs-based and timely implemented as one of the best practices in institutional development starting from the initial stage of the ITE lifetime”[[95]](#endnote-95). The Project has been effective in contributing to development of ITE’s technical capacities[[96]](#endnote-96) through the delivery of tailor-made training programs. The example is advanced Linux and Python training for ITE staff[[97]](#endnote-97), (GDS). Besides, the Project was active in designing other training programs[[98]](#endnote-98), such as general IT skills, Business process management (BPM), Implementation of guidelines for government websites, Open data visualization, Electronic documents, eGovernment in the service of citizens, IT security, and the e-Inspector system[[99]](#endnote-99). The Project has been using the new Learning Management Platform at the National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA) for skills related to eGovernment[[100]](#endnote-100), setting the basis for their continued and sustainable delivery. The NAPA’s qualification and quality framework does not envisage a final test for all training programmes. For those trainings with final tests, in 2019, out of 385 participants, 91% passed a final exam (93% women), and in 2020 out of 324 participants, 82% passed a final exam (83% women). The results for those trainings not delivered through NAPA that include final testing have also been positive; for example, training in Business process management (BPM) was attended by 20% of male and 80% of female participants, 65% of which obtained 80 points or above out of 100, while 25% failed to reach the threshold[[101]](#endnote-101).

All these capacity development efforts and the DTD’s technical assistance resulted in ITE’s improved management practices[[102]](#endnote-102) and enhanced capacities for service delivery. An example of an improved management practice is the support to the establishment of the Project Preparation and Implementation Department, to manage and coordinate international development assistance; while an example for participatory planning is DTD’s assistance with annual planning retreats that served to strengthen inter-institutional links[[103]](#endnote-103).

The partners[[104]](#endnote-104) highlighted DTD’s critical role to the establishment and functioning of the e‑Government Support Centre. This Centre is, according to the partners, the main institution for the provision of quality technical assistance and implementing new digital procedures.[[105]](#endnote-105)” This centralized platform for support to e-government could further strengthen the position of ITE for scaling up the e-government system.[[106]](#endnote-106) The first phase of the Centre’s operations included assistance to implementing four digital services (e.g. electronic administrative procedures- eZUP, e‑inspections, e-registration of new-borns – eBaby, and a centralized system for local tax administrations- eLPA)[[107]](#endnote-107). These efforts continued with the implementation of additional services (e.g. e-Inspections, e-Tourist, e-Primary School enrolment, e-Preschool enrolment, and e-Baby Phase II). The stakeholders recognized the “important role of the ITE’s Support Centre during the COVID-19 pandemic, as a one stop shop for all citizens[[108]](#endnote-108). Also, with support from the DTD, the ITE has successfully implemented assigned tasks under the PAR strategy[[109]](#endnote-109). The latest progress report on implementation of the Action Plan for the PAR Strategy during the period 2018- 2020[[110]](#endnote-110), stated that “ITE has delivered all (100%) of tasks assigned under the PAR Action Plan for 2018-2020”. This report highlighted ITE’s main results under the digitalization framework: reformulated e-Government (e-Uprava) web-portal, support to the establishment and functioning of the Data centre, assistance with the establishment of e-support centre (e-ZUP) and e-inspection[[111]](#endnote-111).

To enhance the strategic and policy capacities of the ITE, the DTD provided targeted assistance during preparation of the Program for e-Government Development 2020-2022[[112]](#endnote-112). This framework document “outlined the government’s commitment to an efficient and user-oriented digital government prioritizing the development of the digital government infrastructure and interoperability mechanisms, improvement of e-services and legal framework and enhancing open data opportunities[[113]](#endnote-113). The FE finds that engagement of “a well-known local public-private association, the National Alliance for Local Economic Development[[114]](#endnote-114) (NALED), and a team of experienced experts[[115]](#endnote-115)” has been effective to address the need to “prepare and adopt a strategic framework for e-government[[116]](#endnote-116)”. However, the FE could not verify that this “externally driven” approach resulted in development of policy capacities within the ITE (although policy making is not a core task of the ITE[[117]](#endnote-117)).

The DTD delivered initial assistance to enhance the monitoring role of the ITE. The new ITE role in the future is to support all public institutions to design their own services using a design thinking approach and a co-creation process. The core building blocks have been put in place by ITE and their role is ready to move from capacity replacement to capacity support. The FE finds the need to further advance and fine-tune monitoring tools, protocol and procedures and continue with capacity development support for the ITE. The Project enabled ITE’s exposure to international practices and horizontal knowledge sharing. The partners recognized that “interaction with the UK Government Digital Service has been critical for institutional development, and a formal cooperation memorandum has been signed defining a framework for future exchange of knowledge, best practices and tools[[118]](#endnote-118).

## EQ5: Has the DTD Project been effective in supporting the establishment of ICT platforms for the provision of user-focused, accessible, and inclusive e-services?

* The partners recognized that the DTD Project has been effectively supporting the establishment of ICT platforms for the provision of user-focused, accessible, and inclusive e-services

Outcome 2 from the approved project document, *Established ICT platforms for the provision of user-focused, accessible, and inclusive e-services* reflects the efforts of the Project and remains well-integrated in the intervention logic and chain of results. The FE was using indicators, accessibility of public services and the Standard Cost Model for administrative burdens for businesses, together with the primary data to answer the EQ5.

The SIGMA monitoring report[[119]](#endnote-119) analysed the status of public services in Serbia, demonstrating that the country has recorded progress under three indicators, while the indicator *I1. Citizen-oriented service delivery* remained unchanged[[120]](#endnote-120). However, this SIGMA report covered the period from July 2017 until March 2019; thus, some of the main deliverables (achieved through the contribution of DTD project) were not available and analysed during the reporting period.

***Table 2 The WJP Open Government Index for Serbia, 2015-2020***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Indicators  | **2017**[[121]](#endnote-121) | **2019**[[122]](#endnote-122) |
| **I1. Citizen-oriented service delivery** | 3 | 3 |
| *I2. Fairness and efficiency of administrative procedures* | *3* | *4* |
| *I3. Existence of enablers for public service delivery* | *1* | *3* |
| **I4. Accessibility of public services** | 1 | 2 |

The SIGMA monitoring report also acknowledged that “the creation of the e-Government and IT Office in 2017 has improved the management of the digital government reform.[[123]](#endnote-123)

The report under Indicator I1 (Citizen-oriented service delivery measures if national policies[[124]](#endnote-124)) reflected on progress in policy implementation and achieved results for citizen-oriented services, recognizing the Government’s commitment to public service delivery, especially by advancing e-government and digital solutions. It stated that a “strategic framework for service delivery had been broadly in place.”[[125]](#endnote-125) As indicated in the previous paragraphs, the e-Government Development Programme or the plan for simplifying administrative procedures were not completed, preventing the 2019 SIGMA report to include these deliverables.

This report, under Indicator 4[[126]](#endnote-126) (Accessibility to public services), confirmed progress and recognized that “accessibility to digital services has continued to improve” through the efforts to create one-stop shops and facilitate transformation of new services. Despite some accessibility-related weaknesses, the report stated that “content and presentation of information on government websites is quite good.” However, the SIGMA report did not analyse the progress that the new, more user-friendly and technically advanced e-Government Portal has provided, as it was under re-construction and development.

The second outcome indicator, Standard Cost Model (SCM) is based on a quantitative methodology that determines the administrative burdens imposed on businesses and measures all-legislation influence on businesses or eventually different level-effects (single low or a specific area). This model could serve to measure the simplification of administrative procedures and effects of a new legislative proposal. This indicator could capture progress under outcome 2, including the DTD’s contribution to ensure the availability “of information to all economic entities about the implementation of a specific administrative procedure or the fulfilment of a legally prescribed obligation through the improved e-Uprava web-portal”[[127]](#endnote-127). Practically, DTD assisted in connecting the database of the Register of all administrative procedures with e-Uprava, while also advising on the “optimization and digitalization of most frequent and most expensive procedures”[[128]](#endnote-128).

The FE finds that both indicators could be relevant to measure different aspects of user-focused, accessible, and inclusive e-services; however, these indicators partially capture the actual DTD contribution to the achieved progress. Therefore, the FE benefited from the analysis of primary data and assessment of progress under outputs that complemented initial findings.

* The FE finds that the DTD project assisted to develop the Government Network and Government Cloud

The partners[[129]](#endnote-129) recognized DTD’s support for the establishment of a new Data Centre/disaster recovery facility[[130]](#endnote-130) of the Government of Serbia: it included a needs assessment and development of a roadmap for the Data Centre/disaster recovery facility and preparation of the facility's technical documentation and construction plans[[131]](#endnote-131). The stakeholders recognized the Project's substantial assistance in defining possible options for the facility's operational management (Study on a business model and roadmap for operational establishment and Study on option on facility management), including an organizational structure with job positions and responsibilities[[132]](#endnote-132). Complementary to this, the Project supported the preparation of plans to migrate government applications into the new facility[[133]](#endnote-133).

Furthermore, the ITE stated that the Project assisted in defining a “comprehensive cloud readiness assessment methodology, including guidelines to perform a transition of individual government IT systems and applications into the cloud, based on unique properties and organizational requirements imposed on every single application.”[[134]](#endnote-134) The analysis (carried out by the Project) provided each organization with information on critical applications and IT services that need to be moved into the cloud, including “suitable deployment models to proceed with the migration.”[[135]](#endnote-135)

These results have been verified by the partners; they have recognized support from the Project stating that they were confident[[136]](#endnote-136) about the defined factors for the cloud readiness assessment[[137]](#endnote-137) and the methodology criteria[[138]](#endnote-138) for moving specific workloads into the cloud.

The Project has adopted a holistic approach to developing ITE's ICT infrastructure capacities and services[[139]](#endnote-139). This exercise started with assessing the current business processes and management of ICT resources[[140]](#endnote-140) and continued preparing a plan for improvements, including a proposal for internal organization of relevant departments at the ITE[[141]](#endnote-141). The document proposed to establish ITE’s Network/Security Operation Centre (NOC/SOC), including its operating procedures, Information Security Act, and related policies[[142]](#endnote-142). Also, the targeted number of fifty public institutions hosting their applications/systems in the Government Cloud facilities has been achieved and exceeded[[143]](#endnote-143), confirming enhanced ITE’s capacities to operate government ICT infrastructures.[[144]](#endnote-144)

* The ITE stated that the DTD project has contributed to the establishment of the key registries, interoperability mechanisms, a reliable Government Service Bus and new integrated e‑services

The ITE recognized support from the Project for the improvement of the foundational infrastructure for digitalization of public services[[145]](#endnote-145), such as improvements of the central eGovernment Portal, public key and timestamping infrastructure, ePayment system, Government Service Bus, etc. The Project assisted in putting in place the digital government stack[[146]](#endnote-146) that included physical and virtual infrastructure, key registries and databases, portals, integrated and other IT services.

To ensure quality support to an increased number of state institutions, the ITE initiated adjustments of business processes related to IT service management and information security. In this context, the Project assisted with the preparation of the Information Security Act and the related rulebooks and procedures, together with on-the-job assistance to implement improved business processes[[147]](#endnote-147).

* The Project assisted with development and implementation of high-level architecture of the key registries and interoperability platforms for e-government

The Project, in close cooperation with the ITE, defined the new e-government enterprise architecture, including the main enterprise architecture components[[148]](#endnote-148) (e.g. Meta registry, Business Process Management platform, Document Management System, e-Archiving solution). The partners expect that “the new platform will provide ITE with the capability to rapidly develop and provide new e-services in an efficient and cost-effective manner.”[[149]](#endnote-149)

The Project continued support to the ITE to develop and deploy some of the new services, some examples being eEnrollment, eSchools, eKindergarten and driving licences and certificate of non-criminal records home-delivered[[150]](#endnote-150).

* DTD has been supporting the ITE to develop the technical requirements and legal framework for Business Process Management and Document Management system

The Project ensured technical assistance, including functional and technical requirements for further development of the eGovernment platform, analysis and the proposal for legislation changes needed for the simplifications of the selected services and their digitalization using the e-Government system.

## EQ6 Has the DTD contributed to an enabling environment including mechanisms for continued improvement of e-services?

* The Project contributed to an enabling environment for continued improvement of e-services, assisting with the methodology, baseline assessment and roadmap for setting mechanisms for regular feedback. The mechanism for monitoring the delivery of e-services has been established.

The analysis of *Outcome 3[[151]](#endnote-151) Enabling environment created including mechanisms for continued improvement of e-services* showed that Serbia has recorded progress on the indicator User centricity (under the eGovernment service score), as the top benchmark on the extent of availability of online services, their mobile-availability and support. All sub-indicators under User centricity confirmed a positive trend.[[152]](#endnote-152)

**Table 3: User centricity sub-indicators- 2017 and 2019**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Components | **2017** | **2019** |
| Online availability | 62.6 | 67 |
| Usability | 78.6 | 84 |
| Mobile Friendliness | 47.0 | 60 |

Progress for more effective data collection, monitoring and evaluation systems for e-services has not been fully achieved: the authorities in Serbia are still working to put in place tools to collect information for monitoring and evaluation of e-services.[[153]](#endnote-153) In this context, the partners recognized DTD's efforts and technical support to further advance the monitoring framework, tools and protocols, expecting to complete the quality assurance system in the second quarter of 2020 (and after the completion of GGF assistance).[[154]](#endnote-154) These efforts included DTD’s work on the methodology for measuring user satisfaction with e-government services, their quality, efficiency and take-up (gender responsive) as a part of data analytics within the ITE’s system.

Serbia’s population is progressing with usage of e-services. Official figures indicate that in 2020, almost four million of Serbia’s inhabitants[[155]](#endnote-155) were using internet every or nearly every day compared to 3.81 mil in 2019[[156]](#endnote-156), while a total of 37% of the internet population in 2020 were using e-government services[[157]](#endnote-157) The findings from the baseline survey show that the average users of the eGovernment Portal are citizens with a university degree, high digital literacy and living in urban areas. Men and women equally utilise the eGovernment Portal, while there is a divide in utilisation of certain services[[158]](#endnote-158). To respond to this increased interest and demand for e-services, the DTD Project has contributed to redesigning the official e-Government web portal. Primary efforts were focused on broadening access opportunities, featuring mobile responsive design, enhancing accessibility features for the visually and hearing-impaired and improving communication with citizens (ensuring the tracking of and responsiveness to citizen inquiries)[[159]](#endnote-159). The technical and functional features tested during the eGovernment portal's design have been codified and standardized as recommendations for designing government sites and applications.[[160]](#endnote-160)

However, the re-designed e-government web-portal requested a re-registration for each user, making it impossible to compare figures on the number of registered users (the e-government portal, e-Uprava, reported a total of 2.223.227 unique users, while with 2FA this number was lower - more than 330000 users in March 2021).

The partners recognized that the lack of "a citizens-focused and coherent plan for strategic communication about e-Government" has been a particular challenge to enhance the benefits from e-services. They have been positive about "the initial assistance in designing an e-government communication strategy". Still, these efforts remained at the project results level, as "the campaign included the communication of key achievements on social media and through a series of articles in the printed and online editions of popular newspapers". The partners recognized the "need for more substantive and strategic communication on e-services and e-government opportunities." They also recognized the Project's contribution to "modify the paradigm, shifting from an institution-centred to the user-focused service design and delivery[[161]](#endnote-161)."

## EQ7: Has the DTD project contributed to sustainable sector polices and capacities of institutions within e-governance system?

The DTD project has been steadily contributing to sector policies and enhancing capacities of institutions involved in the e-governance system in Serbia. Recognizing these achievements and especially the swift and effective response from the Project during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Serbia has decided to provide additional funding[[162]](#endnote-162) to build on DTD results and expand activities related to digitalization.

* The partners recognized that DTD implementation has been participatory and inclusive, confirming a strong sense of ownership of processes and results

The Prime Minister’s strong political will and commitment to digital transformation (e-governance and e-services) was critical to the Project's successful delivery of the planned outputs and progress towards the outcomes. The long-lasting partnerships between UNDP and the national institutions (e.g. the GoS and the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, the Public Policy Secretariat) have additionally strengthened that sense of ownership. The national partners have been satisfied with their involvement in the conceptualization and implementation of activities[[163]](#endnote-163), stating that the partnership with UNDP has been based on "mutual trust and respect, as drivers for progress"[[164]](#endnote-164).

On the operational level, the Project's role in establishing and maintaining a working relationship and continuous communication with the ITE has been instrumental in delivering results. These working relations (between the ITE and the DTD Project Team) helped to build trust and commitment, mitigating risks and solving problems as they arose. Furthermore, UNDP’s “substantive insight and adequate developmental response to the needs and challenges in the e-governance area” have been highlighted[[165]](#endnote-165).

The DTD Project has accurately identified areas of intervention; while the “project’s experience including models that have been developed and tested, effectively produced visible and concrete results.”[[166]](#endnote-166) The interviewed partners recognized that the “DTD project has confirmed its value in answering the needs of the ITE and other main institutions within the e-governance system in Serbia”. Similarly, the FE finds limited awareness of the overall DTD support - partners were familiar mainly with activities explicitly related to their scope of work[[167]](#endnote-167). This situation has been slightly different among the senior-level representatives of the partners' organisations, showing a more profound overview of the DTD scope and UNDP's portfolio.

* DTD Project has been steadily addressing the capacity needs to enhance the quality of e-services; however, sustainability of these developed capacities is conditioned by the likelihood that these capacities will remain available and will continue to be demanded upon the completion of this initiative.

During the implementation of the DTD project, building the capacities and removing obstacles affecting the lives of citizens (as end-beneficiaries) have been at the centre of its focus[[168]](#endnote-168). Particular attention has been on the capacities in core areas of eGovernment. The Project introduced a "twinning-like" approach, ensuring that a competent UK institution and its expertise was available for the Serbian partners. This horizontal knowledge-sharing, according to the partners, had a notable system-building effects.[[169]](#endnote-169)

The Project has been effective in designing tailor-made and, in some areas, innovative capacity development assistance, benefiting from the new Learning Management Platform at the National Academy for Public Administration[[170]](#endnote-170). For example, to support citizen-oriented service design and delivery, the Project assisted the preparation of a training that is an introduction to design thinking. This countrywide e-learning course is available via NAPA’s e-learning platform.[[171]](#endnote-171): this e-learning course has five tests at the end of each module and one final test. According to the partners, the training program was comprehensive, while the DTD’s capacity development approach was balanced, focusing on strategic priorities and mandates of partners organisations (in the broader context of eGovernment). The partners positively evaluated trainers who designed and conducted capacity development programmes under the project outcomes. They stated that “the trainings were delivered by eager, qualified and adequate experts who effectively tailored the courses according to their needs.”[[172]](#endnote-172) Not all training programs included testing. For the trainings with final tests, the results are available in the Annex 5). From the partners’ perspective, “the use of EU experiences including lessons learned and best practices was a strong contribution to the capacity development process”[[173]](#endnote-173).

The FE finds positive evidence of capacity development under all outcomes, involving affiliates from different partner institutions in charge of the delivery of services. The partners highly marked the Project for their high-quality expertise, experience and enthusiasm: bringing competent (national) technical support additionally contributed to the greater effectiveness of the assistance and progress under outcomes, also advancing capacities within the country in the specific e-governance/service delivery as the main areas of intervention. Some of the subjects included topics such as trainings on IT skills, Implementation of guidelines for government websites, eGovernment in the service of citizens, IT security, Open data and data visualization. Also, as a part of the interoperability platform for exchanging data with relevant government institutions, the new eGovernment platform was established and facilitated the training for the e-Inspector system. The program covered Agricultural Inspection, Phytosanitary Inspection, Border Phytosanitary Inspection, Veterinary Inspection and Border Veterinary Inspection. Still, the need to put in place a system for public employees from these units and the executive branch to improve their capacities for data collection and analysis remains. These capacities should facilitate future evidence-based policy and decision making in sectors of concern[[174]](#endnote-174).

The partners expect that the end beneficiaries will demand services and capacities that have been established and improved through the DTD project[[175]](#endnote-175). Furthermore, the partners perceive that the “COVID-19 pandemic could have a catalytic impact on e-governance and e-services”, continuing the trend and demand for online services (from online administrative services to online education).

* **The Project implemented technical support aiming at organizational development of partners, however, the partners recognized the need to continue this support and ensure the sustainability of these efforts.**

The evaluation analysed evidence of the DTD contribution to the organisational development and reinforcement of capacities of national institutions. Results presented under previous questions indicated an improved performance of the ITE and other partner institutions in Serbia[[176]](#endnote-176). The participants in the interviews confirmed the relevance of the DTD project, prioritizing capacity development, inter-institutional cooperation/interoperability and development of IT infrastructure, including its stability and the overall security, to the improvement of delivery of services.The partners, including the ITE, reported that all of the activities were implemented in coordination with and following the feedback they provided to the DTD project team. For instance, stakeholders prepared a list of priority needs and issues to be covered in the training for employees on implementation of some of the e-solutions/services. The DTD project team then ensured that the training programmes were adapted and designed in accordance with the stakeholder needs, which guaranteed that highly relevant topics were covered through the programmes. To ensure the sustainability of these results, the stakeholders proposed to “further fine-tune and focus support to address the root causes of challengesregarding the quality of public services and their interoperability”, equally prioritizing operational issues such as “efficient coordination and project management.”[[177]](#endnote-177)

Stakeholders prioritized the need to enhance the capacities on the demand side. A number of instruments and methodologies have been mentioned related to service delivery contexts, such as citizens’ committees, user forums, media advocacy. New modes of communication and information campaigns, such as IT tools, social marketing and social networks, use of radio and television have shown the potential for getting basic messages across to citizens on behaviour, practices and entitlements.

* DTD Project has been working to enhance policy processes in Serbia, assisting to identify priorities and define appropriate measures, achieving progress in some areas. Still, the capacity gaps remain, particularly related to policy coordination, monitoring and reporting on progress

The national partners stated that the DTD project provided "valuable inputs and technical support to bring policy decisions forward and initiate the policy development process”[[178]](#endnote-178), through technical support and logistic assistance for the preparation of the e-Government Development Programme 2020-2022 (the Programme).

The partners recognized the preparation of this Programme as a challenging output to achieve. The Law on the Planning System (adopted in 2018)[[179]](#endnote-179) set the framework for "medium-term planning, including types and contents of planning documents", emphasizing the importance of all stakeholders participating. The preparation of the Programme has been pivotal because this was the first time that a strategic/policy document was prepared following this new Law. The changes in the policy planning system brought challenges in terms of ensuring participation and adequate representation in the meetings. Still, the Project, in cooperation with the national partners, ensured extensive participation and citizens' involvement during the eGovernment Development Programme preparation.

An analysis of the eGovernment status in Serbia was prepared as an initial step, based on broad consultations with decision-makers, businesses, and citizens and participation continued in the following stages of implementation. The DTD facilitated focus groups with citizens[[180]](#endnote-180); the focus groups were conducted with the IT and the business sectors, while accountants participated in in-depth interviews. The Project designed a survey to capture decision-makers’ opinions and perceptions. The findings from these focus groups, interviews, and opinions surveys have been reflected in the follow-up situation analysis that served to prepare the eGovernment Programme and design activities for the Action Plan[[181]](#endnote-181).

Furthermore, the partners stated that the Action Plan and its Specific goal 3[[182]](#endnote-182), is citizens-oriented, aiming to increase customer service satisfaction. The results are profound in part because of the deep insights gained from the consultative process. New legislation has brought about more citizen engagement regarding policy planning and implementation, confirming the benefits of this approach and recommending that this practice continue[[183]](#endnote-183).

The DTD Project assisted with the Action Plan's preparation, elaborating the Programme to "the highest level of detail" (Article 18). The Plan provided "measures and activities for achieving the Programme's general and special goals" while also indicating required resources, deadlines, and responsibilities (Article 19). The Plan included performance indicators as a central part of the monitoring system[[184]](#endnote-184).The partners recognized "high interest and commitment of the ITE and the Prime Minister's Office", stating that some of the partners remained less involved, delaying required inputs. The DTD Project Team, in close cooperation with the National Alliance for Local Economic Development (NALED), managed to overcome these challenges and ensure an active engagement of the stakeholders by adopting a diplomatic, needs-sensitive approach, in addition to frequent and open communication (in-person, at events, etc)[[185]](#endnote-185).

Still, the Programme’s implementation, specially to ensure adequate public funds, could be challenging[[186]](#endnote-186). The FE finds that the monitoring framework and indicators under the Action Plan have been weak, insufficiently pro-poor focused or gender sensitive. Also, insufficient inter-institutional cooperation among the service providers (and more general within the e-government sector) together with limited capacities within these institutions, according to the stakeholders, could affect the implementation of the Programme’s priorities.

* **The FE finds that the effects of the COVID19 pandemic (especially on the socio-economic situation in Serbia) could be the main external factor to affect the sustainability of results.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need for greater use of digital technologies. The increase in the available e-services has been a direct response to the crisis in the short-term. The Government of Serbia has been navigating these challenges, to advance the e-governance approach and enhance digital communication channels. E-platforms that have been established served as useful tools for citizens. However, some of the benefits from these e-platforms have been underutilized. Possible examples could be the limited engagement of vulnerable groups online or insufficient opportunities for digital initiatives that enable a discussion of policy ideas for critical social and economic challenges.

However, the COVID19 pandemic could have an adverse impact on the socio-economic situation in Serbia, enhancing poverty and affecting the functioning of SMEs and large enterprises, pushing a high number of citizens towards unemployment. These immediate socio-economic challenges could refocus priorities and public funds towards immediate post-crisis response, delaying the implementation of some the e-governance priorities.

The partners recognized that the achieved results and digital transformation “should serve to address socio-economic repercussions and strengthen existing services in a longer perspective.”[[187]](#endnote-187) The partners noted that sharing technologies, expertise, and tools, could support governments in restarting the economy and rebuilding the social fabric. Still, there is a need for joint in-country efforts and international development assistance/cooperation to mitigate the effects of the crisis. Practically, the partners recognized the necessity of collaboration between local and national authorities with private sector companies, international organizations, and other stakeholders. The government should use the achieved results and accelerate the implementation of innovative digital technologies in the long-term. Investments in these technologies can tremendously support the future resilience of the health economy and public services delivery.

# Lessons learned

The following lessons have been generated during the implementation of the DTD in Serbia:

* Flexibility and responsiveness have been the underlying strengths of the DTD project team during the entire period of implementation. DTD's flexibility allowed for changes in some of the pre-established parameters (plans, activities, inputs). The Project's responsiveness enabled timely and appropriate reactions to the partners' demands. Therefore, flexibility and responsiveness should be tools to ensure progress under outcomes; otherwise, a high degree of flexibility and responsiveness could push implementation towards ad-hoc reactions based on partners' requests.
* The DTD Project has effectively tested innovative approaches to delivering training programs, benefiting from online and web-based opportunities. UNDP/ DTD Project, in partnership with the National Academy for Public Administration, proved that combining traditional development interventions with a tailored use of new technologies could contribute to more significant learning outcomes (details- Annex 4 and 5).
* Institutional development requires a well-planned approach to the achievement of organizational strategic objectives. Still, the pressure to deliver (on the Government's agenda) could "push" strategic objectives aside, while immediate needs and day-to-day activities prevail and almost every option seems to be a priority. However, learning lessons from institutional development failures suggest that "many priorities means there are no realistically defined priorities". The organization usually uses different indicators and targets, showing its success, but these benchmarks could frequently be at the operational level (not capturing organizational strategic intent). Therefore, organizational development (of the ITE) needs to follow a strategic-driven approach that would include adopting rules and policies to stimulate the achievement of strategic objectives.
* The problem analysis articulated through a theory of change should be the base for a well-defined intervention logic. The critical lesson is that results-based management principles should be used to formulate a chain of results. The problem analysis articulated through a theory of change should serve as the basis to define the intervention logic and well-established chain of results. This "chain of results" would facilitate the definition of realistic targets and associated indicators that can be measured and easily monitored. If appropriate, these indicators would enable precise identification of the contribution to broader development changes.
* The provisions from different laws could serve to support public service delivery. However, there are no explicit legal obligations that define and guide public services in Serbia. The existing framework does not have a citizen-centric focus. In its absence, public authorities could use an "internal lens" to design, implement, and monitor service provision – rather than putting citizens' participation, demands, and needs at their core. Therefore, planning and delivering public services reflecting users' experience can strengthen the impact of digital transformation on human development outcomes. The DTD project has been highly instrumental in creating a culture of “citizen-oriented delivery of services”.
* Digitalization could be a powerful boost to development processes and socio-economic progress when it addresses social inclusion priorities and adopts a pro-poor and gender-sensitive approach. Digitalized services should prevent the creation or broadening of a digital gap, ensuring that services are available to all citizens through various channels, so that those who are not digitally literate can have an opportunity to use and benefit from each service. Reducing the digital divide would require the digitalization of back office services for the administration in order to be as efficient as possible in providing services, while also working with the citizens, especially from vulnerable groups, to enhance their digital skills.
* As part of the EU accession process, Serbia has developed the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2021–2030 (PAR Strategy) and the Action Plan 2021-2025. This experience confirms that successful public administration reform represents a substantial precondition for functional public services and economic growth. Therefore, effective coordination and cooperation during the implementation of the PAR Strategy and the Programme for Development of e-Government is critical and the digitalization process needs to be mainstreamed throughout all PAR-related activities.

# Conclusions

The final evaluation has summarized the following overall remarks on the DTD project:

* The DTD Project is highly successful in delivering planned results, even overachieving in some areas of intervention. This success is even more apparent when set against a complex and challenging environment and sensitive topics that the Project was addressing, such as changes in the service delivery paradigm and institutional reform through digitalization.
* The DTD has been highly effective in addressing the negative effects and limitations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, by providing substantive support to the Government of Serbia and other stakeholders in defining and implementing needs-based digital solutions.
* The overall DTD intervention and objectives are fully in line with the national development priorities and EU accession process for the Republic of Serbia.

The following paragraphs provide the conclusions for each of the evaluation questions

**EQ1: Has the DTD project aligned its intervention with the national strategic priorities for the reform of public administration and e-governance in Serbia?**

Conclusion 1. DTD aligned its intervention with national strategic priorities to establish quality services delivered by competent and transparent institutions (as defined in public administration reform and e-governance frameworks)

DTD remained relevant during the entire period of implementation thus far (2018-2021) and has aligned itself with the needs of the country. The responsiveness of the DTD to the changing environment in Serbia and the needs of the Government of Serbia, the ITE and other partners has been and remained a critical factor for its continued relevance.

The DTD’s scope is well-defined and the already tested services should continue. At the same time, some possible areas for DTD’s involvement emerged as an opportunity to complement the already planned and implemented actions. Still, the DTD intervention logic had some inconsistences especially considering the logical strings within the chain of results. The DTD indicators have been generally useful to measure progress, especially at the output level, but there is a need for specific value for money indicators.

**EQ2: Has the DTD project considered and addressed gender issues and the “no-one is left behind” principle?**

Conclusion 2. DTD has considered the SDGs during its design stage, also contributing to some of the SDG targets. However, relatively less attention has been given to gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

The DTD project considered the SDGs during its design stage and a certain degree of contribution to SDG targets has been ensured. The Project has considered the “no-one is left behind” principle while contributing to a more accessible eGovernment portal, especially accommodating the needs of people with disabilities and assisting ITE with a foundational infrastructure for the digitalization of public services that suits the needs of this diverse vulnerable group. Some of the main results have been the “text to speech license” and embedded opportunities to modify size and colours of letters/text.

The DTD has given less attention to gender equality and gender mainstreaming. The Results Framework, and its benchmarks, i.e. indicators and targets, have not been gender sensitive, while the use and availability of sex-disaggregated indicators has been limited.

**EQ3: Has the implementation of the DTD project been efficient concerning adherence to the work plans (timely implementation), flexibility and responsiveness?**

Conclusion 3. DTD has been implemented efficiently, in line with the work plans, and demonstrated flexibility in responding to the stakeholders’ needs. The DTD project team and UNDP management and technical assistance contributed to an effective project implementation and achievement of results.

UNDP/ DTD established a clear system of work planning, to complete the Project on time, within the approved budget and standard of quality. The monitoring system has been solid, but improvements are required especially with adopting indicators to appropriately measure progress and capture core elements of the initiative.

DTD/ UNDP has been a flexible and reliable partner, holding themselves accountable for the achievement of results. These elements, together with the strong partnership and technical capacities of the DTD staff, have been critical factors that contributed to its effectiveness and flexible and responsive implementation.

The partners have been involved during the design, planning and implementation, while the existence of a Project Board, as a steering mechanism, has been instrumental in providing strategic guidance and coordinating development interventions in the area of e-governance. The Project Board has been an effective forum for greater involvement of high-level national partners to genuinely drive development efforts, ensuring strong national leadership in the process of building an e-government in Serbia.

**EQ4: Have the capacities of the ITE improved, especially to support coordination and implementation of the government’s e-strategy/ agenda)?**

**Conclusion 4. DTD has been effective in delivering results and meeting targets, creating a solid basis to continue support and further strengthen e-governance in the country.**

DTD has achieved concrete and visible results during this period of implementation, results related to enhancing the management and technical capacities of the ITE being especially relevant. The DTD has strengthened the capacities of the ITE in critical areas of work, especially their capacity to contribute to, coordinate, and implement the government’s e-strategy.

DTD’s results have contributed to sectoral policies through the preparation and adoption of the Programme for Development of E-Government 2020-2022, and the policy cycle model confirmed that positive results from DTD have been especially evident in the designing of policy tools. This experience has also been important during the preparation of the Artificial Intelligence Strategy.

Despite DTD’s efforts and achieved results together with progress under the e-governance framework, the governance indicators (such as the World Bank World Wise Governance Indicators, Transparency Perception Index, and Rule of Law Project) showed a decline of government transparency and accountability at the national level.

**EQ5: Has the DTD Project been effective in supporting the establishment of ICT platforms for the provision of user-focused, accessible, and inclusive e-services?**

**Conclusion 5: DTD Project has been effective in supporting the establishment of ICT platforms for provision of user-focused, accessible, and inclusive e-services.**

The Project contributed to the development of the Government Network and Government Cloud. DTD has also contributed to the establishment of new integrated e‑services.

The Project assisted with developing and implementing a high-level architecture of the key registries and interoperability platforms for e-government. These inputs have been critical for new services, such as eEnrollment, eSchools, eKindergarten, home-delivered driving licences, and non-criminal record certificates.

DTD has been supporting the ITE in developing the technical requirements and legal framework for Business Process Management and the Document Management system.

The Project ensured technical assistance, including functional and technical requirements for further development of the eGovernment platform, analysis and the proposal for legislation changes needed for the simplifications of selected services and their digitalization using the e-Government system.

**EQ6 Has the DTD contributed to an enabling environment including mechanisms for continued improvement of e-services?**

**Conclusion 6: DTD Project has contributed to defining some of the quality system elements, including a framework for establishing baselines and a mechanism for monitoring the delivery of e-services.**

Assistance from the DTD Project has been instrumental in redesigning the official e-Government web portal, broadening access opportunities, featuring mobile responsive design, enhancing accessibility features for the visually and hearing-impaired and improving communication with citizens by ensuring the tracking of and responsiveness to citizen inquiries. DTD provided "the initial assistance in designing an e-government communication strategy". Still, these efforts remained at the level of project results. The need for more substantive and strategic communication on e-services and e-government opportunities remains.

The Project contributed to modifying the existing paradigm, shifting from institution-centred to the user-focused service design and delivery. Still, there is a need to enhance data analytics and management capacities of the ITE for measuring quality, efficiency, and take-up of e-governments services.

**EQ7: Has the DTD project contributed to sustainable sector polices and capacities of institutions within e-governance system?**

**Conclusion 7. DTD has been effective in responding to national capacity development needs in the areas of intervention.**

DTD has been steadily addressing capacity challenges and demands for improved functioning of all partners under its components. The actual sustainability of these results is conditioned by the likelihood that these capacities will remain available and will continue to be requested upon the completion of DTD. Still, the continuation of the DTD Project and the decision of the Government of Serbia to provide additional resources the DTD Project and continuation of digitalization in Serbia are strong evidence supporting the sustainability prospects.

The sense of national ownership over the achievements under DTD is due to effective partnerships and involvement of the national stakeholders in its design and implementation. The participatory approach for the design and implementation of DTD has contributed to an enhanced sense of ownership, setting the ground for the sustainability of results. The sustainability of DTD’s achievements would, however, require additional attention and further efforts. Several external factors present risks for the sustainability of DTD interventions, such as the continued lack of overarching reform framework, deteriorating role of governance institutions, especially oversight and independent bodies, and the possible economic decline largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.[[188]](#endnote-188)

# Recommendations

The analysis of primary and secondary data helped to identify concerns and challenges during the DTD project implementation while exploring possible responses to these problems. The final evaluation has formulated the following main recommendations:

**R1: The evaluation recommends continuing assistance, focusing it on the priorities for the establishment of the e-government system (e-governance) in Serbia. UNDP/ DTD should remain flexible and responsive to the needs and priorities from the e-governance (good governance) framework.**

Technical assistance and support to the ITE and other stakeholders available through the Project should continue, in line with organizational needs and the strategic priorities (as defined in the Programme for Development of e-Government and PAR strategy).

The FE recommends ensuring longer-term support to ITE and its institutional development. This support will be critical, considering ITE's redefined role as it shifted from being the driver of digital transformation and performing tasks on behalf of other institutions within the e-governance system, to becoming the primary technical assistance provider. The new ITE assignment envisaged its support to strengthen all e-governance system institutions' capacities to design their own services using technical components (building blocks), methodologies, and the design thinking approach in creating these electronic services. These changes bring a new digitalization paradigm, as the role of ITE transforms from working on behalf of other institutions to strengthening capacities and training other institutions, as well as guiding them through the process.

The evaluation recommends identifying specific areas where UNDP’s support is most needed through a detailed assessment of challenges, needs and priorities (equally focusing on the main institutions and the overall e-government system). Citizens-centred and gender-sensitive approach, and the “no-one left behind principle” (SDG targets) should be at the centre of this analysis. In this context, it will be important to identify specific challenges that digitalization poses on vulnerable groups and suggest measures to reach those that are “left behind”[[189]](#endnote-189).

**R2: Work to create "demand" for participation, and create broader interest and willingness to take part in the delivery of services (and in the decision-making processes more broadly) and design activities for strengthening the capacities of civil servants to involve citizens in all phases of service creation and delivery.**

The FE recommends working more actively on the demand-side, as the inclusion of the demand side requires much more attention to the capacity needs of individuals, groups and organisations involved in each aspect of service delivery. Possible areas of intervention may include support to civil society organisations, e.g. citizen's groups, NGOs, and consumer organisations for implementing grassroots actions to identify quality requirements and malpractice in delivery of services, improving information flows and carrying out public education. The FE recommends designing a comprehensive digital literacy training for citizens, businesses, and the public administration.

The FE recommends working on the development of monitoring service delivery using demand-sensitive indicators on quality, accountability, and outcomes.[[190]](#endnote-190)

**R3: The evaluation recommends strengthening the links between digitalization and SDGs. The need remains to enhance gender mainstreaming in all activities.**

The evaluation recommends supporting full digital inclusion and digital equality for women and traditionally marginalised groups and promoting action on dismantling the barriers women and marginalised groups face and that prevent digital inclusion and digital equality. Gender analysis is a critical first step to ascertain how responsive government services are to the needs and priorities of men and women in different social and economic strata[[191]](#endnote-191).

The FE recommends putting more attention on developing training courses for women's digital skills and implementing campaigns for e-services that target women. The DTD should continue cooperating with the World Bank’s EDGE project and strengthening synergies for gender-sensitive approaches.

The need remains to look at the national policy framework, the E-Government Development Programme from the “SDG-focused, pro-poor and gender sensitive perspective”, while at the same time carrying out research on how digitalization affects women and marginalized groups.

**R4: UNDP should define an integrated intervention logic and appropriate qualitative and quantitative (gender sensitive and sex-disaggregated) indicators that would enable adequate measurements of progress under outcomes and capturing contributions to the e-government agenda in Serbia.**

The evaluation recommends initiating this process with the preparation of a well-established intervention logic and a soundly developed and integrated results chain, based on a comprehensive “Theory of change” or other credible problem analysis tool. The validity of these initiatives could be enhanced if, for higher-level results (e.g. overall objective or impact-level objective), stated objectives from the national strategic documents are used (to the extent possible).

The evaluation recommends providing a well-balanced combination of qualitative and quantitative indicators, capturing changes and results attributable to UNDP’s intervention (and that of the DTD Project). The FE recommends including value for many indicators. The evaluation also recommends adopting a set of measures and activities, together with appropriate sex-disaggregated indicators for digital inclusion. The need remains to include gender-sensitive indicators with a focus on “gender transformation”.

**R5: Propose and adopt a systemic approach to capacity development, following comprehensive needs assessments of the main stakeholders and partners.**

Work on a sound e-governance system would require strengthening the capacities of public employees within different institutions and structures. It is recommended that the Project works in close partnership with the ITE, the MPALSG and the National Academy for Public Administration, and other stakeholders to design and implement needs-based capacity development support, including testing and accreditation. All training courses provided through the National Academy for Public Administration are accredited as this is a mandatory condition. The training programme containing all training courses for a specific year is adopted by the Government of Serbia.

The evaluation recommends that the Project (in close collaboration with the National Academy for Public Administration) develops a sound, hands-on approach to measure capacity development across all priority areas of e-government, linking them with changes and reform needs.

1. Additional information on the DTD Project can be accessed at https://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/DTD Projects/digital-transformation.html [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Terms of Reference for the DTD Project Evaluator (Final DTD Project evaluation) of the DTD Project Serbia at Your Fingertips – Digital Transformation for Development, November 2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Rick Dr. Davis “Planning Evaluability Assessments, A Synthesis of the Literature with Recommendations, Report of a study commissioned by the Department for International Development (DFID)”, Working Paper 40, October 2013- this document served as the basis for evaluability assessment. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. This is the OECD DAC definition; also, this definition has been adopted by Including IFAD, UNODC, OECD, SIDA, ILO, FCDO, NORAD and NDC. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. More details on methodology have been provided in the approved Inception report [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Line Dybdal, Steffen Bohni Nielsen, Sebastian Lemire (Ramboll Management Consulting and Aarhus, Denmark): “Contribution Analysis Applied: Reflections on Scope and Methodology”, The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation Vol. 25 No. 2 Pages 29–57 ISSN 0834-1516 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. John Mayne: „Contribution analysis: Coming of age?” from Evaluation, 2012, Sage Publication, DOI: 10.1177/1356389012451663.
Also, where a paucity of data necessitates a quick assessment of a contribution, this should be carried out using appropriate evaluation methodologies that identify contributions at the outcome level and ascertain the plausibility of causal relationships between activities and outcomes. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Outcomes are medium-term development results created through the delivery of outputs and the contributions of various partners and non-partners. They normally relate to changes in institutional performance or behavior among individuals or groups. Ref also to “Outcome-level evaluation- a companion guide to the handbook on planning monitoring and evaluating for development results for programme units and evaluators”, UNDP, ‘Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results’, p.56. 2011 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. The Terms of Reference also recognized this challenge for the final evaluation. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. To avoid possible drawback, such as stuck to the outlined topics and prevented to raise some critical issues, the FE was using the informal conversational interview to ask questions emerging from the immediate context. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. UNDP EVALUATION GUIDELINES, UNDP Jan 2019.<http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/> [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation- UNEGFN/CoC , 2008. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Keynote address by Serbian Prime Minister Designate Ana Brnabić, National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, 28 June 2017, https://www.media.srbija.gov.rs/medeng/documents/keynote-address-pm-ana-brnabic280617.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. The inaugural note of the Prime Minister could be considered as a policy platform of the Government of Serbia [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. The Strategy for development of e-government in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2015–2018, "Official Gazette of RS", No. 107 of December 23, 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. The Strategy for development of e-government in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2015–2018. year and the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the period 2015-2016. Years; "Official Gazette of RS", No. 107 of December 23, 2015.

http://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2015/107/1/reg

The general goals lead to increased transparency and accountability of public administration bodies, strengthening the participation of citizens in democratic decision-making with respect for gender equality, protection of personal data and a high level of data security within the system. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Specific objective relevant to the DTD Project are: i) Establishing an Institutional and Completing the Legal Framework to Ensure Coordinated Management of e-Government Development; ii) Establishment of Interoperability Between Information Systems of State Administration Bodies, Autonomous Province Bodies and Local Self-Government Units; iii) Establishment of Basic Electronic Registers Connected with Other State Information Systems; iv) Establishment of new Electronic Services on the National e-Uprava Portal and Other Portals; v) Training of Employees in the State Administration and vi) establishment of Open Administration [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Public Administration Reform Strategy in the Republic of Serbia; ("Official Gazette of RS", no. 9 of 30 January 2014, 42 of 23 April 2014 – correction, 54 od July 13 2018) [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. On operational level, the DTD’s intervention supported implementation of the PAR Action Plan 2018-2020, focusing on strengthening ITE capacities to effectively coordinate and implement government’s digital strategy, improve provision of user-focused, accessible and inclusive e services and support growth of the IT, innovative and creative industries, among others. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. <https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/skrining/screening_report_chapter_10.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. More details are available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/serbia_report_2020.pdf> and <https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/skrining/eksplanatorni/10_agenda.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. The FE assessed if DTD external developments required response was made to adjust and fine-tune the intervention as set out in the Project’s intervention logic and its logical framework. The evaluation has focused on whether the overall objective and outcomes, as the main references under the intervention logic, remained valid and achievable or whether there was a case for revision to take account of changes in the external environment, demand, or speed of delivery. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Program of the Government of the Republic Of Serbia of the candidate for Prime Minister Ana Brnabić, National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia 28th October 2020, https://www.media.srbija.gov.rs/medeng/documents/brnabic\_keynote\_address281020.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. E-Government Development Programme of the Republic of Serbia 2020−2022 and Action Plan for its implementation [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. European Commission- Serbia 2020 Report, more at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/serbia\_report\_2020.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid, European Commission, Serbia, 2020 Report [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. KII notes KII\_01, KII\_05, KII\_06 [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. KII\_01 KII notes, national partners [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. KII\_01 [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. KII\_12, KII\_015 KII\_016 [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. According to the Prime Minister, Ms. Brnabic “Serbia has a strong digital society and that rapid digital transformation is changing its economy fast.The ICT sector contributes with 5.3 percent to the country’s GDP, showing steady growth year after year. At the same time, the export of ICT is the largest in the region and is growing by at least 20 percent a year”, the Prime Minister specified.

She stated that Serbian company "Nordeus" is one of the world's leading manufacturers and publishers of mobile games, while "SevenBridges" is one of the leading companies for genetic research and is rated as one of the 50 smartest companies in the world. In addition, top international technology companies have established research and development centres here. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. <http://sdg.indikatori.rs/media/1539/icons8-microsoft-excel-48> [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. In 2017, 2G-99.76; 3G-98.67 and 4G-94.4; in 2018 2G-99.77; 3G-98.67 and 4G-96.70 and in 2019 2G-99.16; 3G-98.88 and 4G-96.86- more details available at <http://sdg.indikatori.rs/en-us/area/industry-inovation-and-infrastructure/?subarea=SDGUN090801&indicator=090801IND01> [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. 2018: 22.29 and 2017- 21.15 more details from <http://sdg.indikatori.rs/en-us/area/partnershipes-for-the-goals/?subarea=SDGUN170602&indicator=170602IND08> [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. The proportion of internet users by year and gender

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Total | M | F |
| 2018 | 73.4 | 76.8 | 70.1 |
| 2019 | 77.4 | 81.2 | 73.7 |
| 2020 | 78.4 | 81.8 | 76 |

http://sdg.indikatori.rs/media/1539/icons8-microsoft-excel [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. KII\_05 and KII\_15 [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. KII\_15 and KII\_16 [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. KII\_01, KII\_13 and desk review of the materials from the formulation stage [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. <http://sdg.indikatori.rs/en-us/area/peace-justice-and-strong-institucions/?subarea=SDGUN160601&indicator=160601IND01-> The most important Indicators related to the DTD’s areas of intervention have been 16.6.1 Primary government expenditures as a proportion of the original approved budget, by sector- % General public administration services (recording 94 in 2017, 96.1 in 2018 and 97 in 2019). However, the authorities have not reported progress against the indicator 16.6.2 Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Introduction and development of e-governance and shifting to more digitalized public administration contributes to reduced opportunities for corruption and bribery in all forms- more at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247531048_E-Government_and_Anti-Corruption_Empirical_Analysis_of_International_Data-> [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. KII\_01, KII\_07, KII\_14 [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. For example, Indicator 16.5.1 Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. https://transparentnost.org.rs/index.php/sr/istraivanja-o-korupciji/LTI [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. KII\_015, KII\_016 [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. KII\_016, KII\_019 [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. KII\_01 [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Information from the ITE shows that since the Google Analytics tool has been introduced in December 2020, this has been counted and will continue to be counted. It is important to highlighted that before there was no technical possibility to track this data. From 1 December 2020 to 31 March 2021, text to speech has been used 247.919 times by 166.315 unique users. During this period, total of 2.223.227 unique users visited eGovernment Portal 5.434.845 times. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Although this has not been part of the DTD project- more details at KII\_01, KII\_15 [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. KII\_01, KII\_04 [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. The reference could be a flagship UNDP Integrated Response to Violence against Women and Girls in Serbia, implemented thorugh two interlinked phases [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. Gender, Equality and Corruption: What are the Linkages?, Policy Brief 01/2014, Transparency international https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/2014\_Policybrief1\_GenderEqualityCorruption\_EN.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. The analysis of the Results and Resources Framework and the reports. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. KII notes- national partners [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. KIIs notes UNDP project team and KII notes- national stakeholders. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. KIIs notes – KII\_01, KII\_06, KII\_07 [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. KIIs notes [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. KII notes DTD project team [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. KII notes with the national stakeholders [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. KII notes- national stakeholders KII\_01, KII\_04, KII\_07 [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. KII notes [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. KII notes- KII\_14 [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. National Academy for Public Administration reports on training delivery. The NAPA stated that there are no differences on positive perception and testing results for on-line and in-person trainings. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. KII\_001, KII\_07 [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. The Project Board included gender parity, with 50% of women [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. Ref to Approved DTD Project document [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. KII notes KII\_01 [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. : if assumption cannot hold true, it becomes a risk and this should be the approach to follow- ref to Project Cycle Management [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. World Bank “Serbia’s New Growth Agenda”, (World bank- Synthesis report, December 2019) https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/serbia/publication/serbia-new-growth-agenda-background-papers [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. Joseph Tham: “Critical Factors for Creating a Successful Digital Public Administration”, SSRN Electronic Journal, January 2018 [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. KII\_016 and other key informants’ interviews [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. The changes under the indicators at the overall objective validated through Project and other reports and interviews with the main stakeholders served to establish “contribution claim.” Ref to Barbara Befani, Gavin Stedman “Process Tracing and Bayesian Updating for impact evaluation”, First Published June 24, 2016 Research Article- op.cit: https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389016654584 [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/serbia_report_2020.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. Ibidem, EU Progress Report on Serbia [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. The methodological framework has remained consistent during the period 2015-20, while its components have been updated to reflect new trends in e-government and included telecommunications and human capital. In 2018, the questionnaire to assess the government portals, OSQ was expanded to include the main principles of the SDGs and Leaving No One Behind, with a particular focus on Goal 16, namely accountability, effectiveness, inclusiveness, openness and trustworthiness. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. The EGDI is a composite measure of three important dimensions of e-government, namely: provision of online services, telecommunication connectivity and human capacity- more available at: https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/About/Overview/-E-Government-Development-Index [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. E-Participation Index (EPART) measures e-information sharing, e-consultation and e-decision making- https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/About/Overview/-E-Government-Development-Index [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. KII notes- KII\_01 and KII\_007 [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. Kii notes- KII\_01 and KII\_007, also KII\_018 [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. <https://euprava.gov.rs/sve-vesti> [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. The final Project report will provide details regarding the time spent on the Portal and other quantitative data; Google analytics will help obtain these data. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. KII notes- national partners [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. Zakon o planskom sistemu Republike Srbije, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 30/2018 [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Governments: Report on public debate for preparation of the e-Government Development Programme, 2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. KII notes KII\_05- more details are available in other parts of this report [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. KII\_01 and also Project Annual Reports for 2019 and 2018 [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. KII notes- KII\_09- the stakeholders mentioned four services, electronic administrative procedures – eZUP, e-inspections, e-registration of new-borns – eBaby, and the new centralized system for local tax administrations – eLPA. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. The Local Transparency Index for 2020 was conducted in the first quarter of 2020, based on research conducted on 145 local self-governments (cities and municipalities) and 25 city municipalities throughout Serbia [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. KII notes KII\_01 and KII\_007 [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. World Bank- Snapshot [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. The Law on Ministries assigned digital strategy-related coordination and implementation role to the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Governments Zakon o ministarstvima (“Sl. glasnik RS“, br. 128/2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. KII\_01 [↑](#endnote-ref-95)
96. KII\_01, KII\_007 [↑](#endnote-ref-96)
97. According to the reports, this portal became the first IT system operated and fully controlled by ITE, without support from external vendors [↑](#endnote-ref-97)
98. KII\_01, KII\_06 [↑](#endnote-ref-98)
99. With support from the project, the e-Platform was developed in 2018 and then scaled to include 5 more inspections: Agricultural Inspection, Phytosanitary Inspection, Border Phytosanitary Inspection, Veterinary Inspection and Border Veterinary Inspection. This system, according to the stakeholders reports, has been set up as a part of the interoperability platform (enterprise architecture) to exchange data with relevant government institutions (e.g., Serbian Business Agency). [↑](#endnote-ref-99)
100. KII\_010 (Academy) [↑](#endnote-ref-100)
101. <https://www.napa.gov.rs/extfile/sr/2658/NAPA%20Evaluacija%202020__.pdf> and also <https://www.napa.gov.rs/tekst/487/izvestaji-i-evaluacija.php> [↑](#endnote-ref-101)
102. Main reference KII\_01 and also KII\_015 and KII\_011 [↑](#endnote-ref-102)
103. KII\_01, and also the 2019 Project Progress report also provided that the ITE staff perceived these retreats and team building opportunity as effective to ensure "better understanding between colleagues”, “understanding of the importance for constant alignment”, and “teamwork as high priority to achieve the vision of eGovernment". [↑](#endnote-ref-103)
104. KII\_01, [↑](#endnote-ref-104)
105. The DTD Project recommended to integrated the Centre within the ITE. Also, it was recommended for the ITE to sign Memorandums of Understanding to define the scope of support offered by ITE through the e-Government Support Centre and address other related topics (e.g. contacts for formal communication, service level parameters etc.). [↑](#endnote-ref-105)
106. KII\_01, KII\_007, KII\_018 [↑](#endnote-ref-106)
107. ITE annual reports and DTD Project report- annual report for 2019 and annual report for 2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-107)
108. The documents from the partners stated that “during the COVID-19 state of emergency in Serbia 2020, the Support Centre was providing assistance to the people in need, continuing to provide support for Volunteers registration, after the Be Volunteer platform was established. The ITE reported that in the first six months of 2020, the Support Centre received 18,171 cases and resolved an impressive amount of these, reaching a resolution rate of 99%. [↑](#endnote-ref-108)
109. The Action Plan for Implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategies in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2018-2020. Specifically, under the Measure 1.4. Establishing strong coordination mechanisms that will enable harmonious development and functioning of e-government, as well as completing the legal framework and procedures for e-government development, the ITE was responsible for Activity 2 An electronic exchange mechanism has been established for data from official records between its bodies (via eZUP system or through web services established on service bus authority, data update is performed through the Meta-register) and Activity 5 Established Central Register of Citizens (drafting software solution and data migration); the Measure 4.2. Reform of inspection supervision and providing better protection of public interest, with reduction of administrative costs of inspection supervision and increase of legal security of subjects under the inspection supervision including three actions and the Measure 7.1. Improving the conditions for the participation of the interested public in the work of public administration with an increase of available information on the work of public administration and public finances and the Action 7 Development and adoption of the Regulation on the content of the web presentation and publication of electronic services – more details available at http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/AP-RJU-narativni-deo-2018-2020.pdf?script=lat [↑](#endnote-ref-109)
110. Page 3 of the Report- http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/1\_PAR\_report\_fin.pdf?script=lat [↑](#endnote-ref-110)
111. Page 2- http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/1\_PAR\_report\_fin.pdf?script=lat [↑](#endnote-ref-111)
112. On June 4th, 2020, the Government of Serbia adopted the Program for development of eGovernment and Action plan for 2020-2022. [↑](#endnote-ref-112)
113. http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/Izvestaj-o-izradi-Programa-razvoja-elektronske-uprave-za-period-od-2019.-do-2022.-godine.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-113)
114. KII\_012 [↑](#endnote-ref-114)
115. Ref to DTD Project Report, 2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-115)
116. EU Progress Report 2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-116)
117. <https://www.ite.gov.rs/tekst/149/kancelarija-za-it-i-eupravu.php> [↑](#endnote-ref-117)
118. KII\_01, KII\_007, KII\_016 [↑](#endnote-ref-118)
119. http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2019-Serbia.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-119)
120. Page 36, Sigma report, 2019 [↑](#endnote-ref-120)
121. http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2017-Serbia.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-121)
122. http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2019-Serbia.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-122)
123. The SIGMA report highlighted that The challenges have been that bulk of services remained complicated to use, calling for restructuring. [↑](#endnote-ref-123)
124. Indicator I1 Citizen-oriented service delivery measures if national policies consider citizen-oriented services’ delivery under their objectives. [↑](#endnote-ref-124)
125. http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2019-Serbia.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-125)
126. Indicator 4, Accessibility to public services, measures if the policy framework contributed to easier access to services by analyzing clients’ perceptions of accessibility, while also testing accessibility of government’s websites. [↑](#endnote-ref-126)
127. KII\_01, KII\_06 [↑](#endnote-ref-127)
128. KII\_06 [↑](#endnote-ref-128)
129. KK\_01, KII\_02 [↑](#endnote-ref-129)
130. The Data Centre as capital investment project of strategic importance for Serbia, has been officially opened on December 18, 2020 in Kragujevac. The Government stated that “the goal of building the secondary State Data Center is to improve the electronic business system, use the most modern ICT capacities in providing services to users, reduce the risk of data loss that is of great importance for RS and develop and support efforts to develop digital transformation in Serbia”

<https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/drustvo/4190273/drzavni-data-centar-kragujevac-otvoren.html> . [↑](#endnote-ref-130)
131. DTD Project progress report, 01 january-30 June 2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-131)
132. KII\_01, KII\_09 [↑](#endnote-ref-132)
133. KII\_09 [↑](#endnote-ref-133)
134. KII\_01, KII\_06, KII\_07 [↑](#endnote-ref-134)
135. The Report on Cloud Readiness Assessment- DTD Project database of documents. [↑](#endnote-ref-135)
136. KII\_01 and KII\_14 [↑](#endnote-ref-136)
137. The main factors for cloud readiness included regulatory requirements, organizational readiness, market availability and technology lifecycle [↑](#endnote-ref-137)
138. The DTD report defined the following main criteria: increasing efficiency, improving agility, conducting innovation as a basis for further development, improving integration with other services, meeting security standards, etc [↑](#endnote-ref-138)
139. KII\_01 and also author’s analysis of the project deliverables and reports [↑](#endnote-ref-139)
140. The analysis has identified some of the critical challenges and issues such as gaps in redundancy configurations; problems with equipment, lack of qualified staff, spotty procedures, very low level of work automation, and lack of a central Network/Security Operations Centre for continues monitoring of the network and services. Ref to Analysis of the ITC infrastructure, also provided in the DTD Annual Project Report for 2018 and 2019 [↑](#endnote-ref-140)
141. Ibidem, The analysis [↑](#endnote-ref-141)
142. Ref to DTD Annual Project Report 2019 [↑](#endnote-ref-142)
143. KII\_01, KII\_011 [↑](#endnote-ref-143)
144. KII\_01, KII\_015, KII\_06 and DTD Project Report 01 January- 30 June 2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-144)
145. KII\_01, KII\_04, KII\_05 [↑](#endnote-ref-145)
146. Under the physical infrastructure it included Government Network and data centers; virtual infrastructure included Government Cloud, with Infrastructure as a Service , Platform as a Service and Software as a Services; key registries and databases included the Meta register, interoperability standards and Government Service Bus for data exchange between institutions; portals and integrated services that included the central government e-services portal, sector portals and standalone apps. It also included various other IT services provided by ITE to other government entities (e.g. Internet access for government institutions, email for civil servants, hosting of government web sites etc.). [↑](#endnote-ref-146)
147. The analysis of the DTD Project reports and other deliverables [↑](#endnote-ref-147)
148. KII\_01, KII\_15 and KII\_16. Also, DTD Project Reports- annual report for 2018, 2019 and semi-annual report for 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-148)
149. KII notes- national partners; DTD Annual Progress Reports for 2018, 2019 and six-monthly report for 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-149)
150. Service eKindergarten is available in in 17 municipalities and 135 pre-schools. Over 55,000 children have been enrolled into pre-school using this service, and it saved the parents from bringing 165,000 documents in paper form. Requests have been raised using this eService, with 89% of all requests coming from women. [↑](#endnote-ref-150)
151. The FE proposed following indicators, i) eGovernment service score: User centricity sub-indicators; ii) The degree of effectiveness of the data collection, monitoring and evaluation systems for e-services and iii) The extent of enhanced usage of e-services among the population in Serbia served as the initial source to assess the accomplishment of reformulated Outcome 3. To complement and verify initial findings, the FE used primary and secondary data to analyzed achievements of outputs (under this outcome). [↑](#endnote-ref-151)
152. More details on this indicator and the actual contribution of DTD project are available under the analysis of the status of overall objective/ impact. [↑](#endnote-ref-152)
153. Google analytics system has been introduced as of last quarter 2020, as tool to collect and analyze different information related to web-site usage. [↑](#endnote-ref-153)
154. KII\_01 and KII\_015 [↑](#endnote-ref-154)
155. https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/oblasti/upotreba-ikt/upotreba-ikt-pojedinci/ [↑](#endnote-ref-155)
156. Figures from 2019 showed increase of 2200,000 compared to 2018; ref to https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2019/Pdf/G201916014.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-156)
157. In 2019 it was 37.5% and 37.3% in 2018- however, real figures indicate continues growth. More details available at : .<https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/oblasti/upotreba-ikt/upotreba-ikt-pojedinci/>; <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2018/Pdf/G201816013.pdf> and https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2019/Pdf/G201916014.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-157)
158. Results of the baseline survey. Also, some critical information are available from the National Statistical Office. [↑](#endnote-ref-158)
159. Reports on the redesign and changes in the e-Uprava portal. [↑](#endnote-ref-159)
160. KII\_01, KII\_07 and also ITE annual reports on activities [↑](#endnote-ref-160)
161. The Recommendation 3 addressed this issue [↑](#endnote-ref-161)
162. The funding from the Government of Serbia reached more than 8 million dollars. [↑](#endnote-ref-162)
163. KII notes- national partners; KII\_01, KII\_07 [↑](#endnote-ref-163)
164. KII notes, national partners [↑](#endnote-ref-164)
165. KII notes- national partners [↑](#endnote-ref-165)
166. KII notes KII\_16, KII\_15, KII\_07 [↑](#endnote-ref-166)
167. Ref to KII notes with the national partners, under different outcomes. [↑](#endnote-ref-167)
168. KII\_015 and KII\_016 [↑](#endnote-ref-168)
169. KII notes KII\_01 [↑](#endnote-ref-169)
170. KII\_010 and KII\_01 [↑](#endnote-ref-170)
171. Serbia at Your Fingertips – Digital Transformation for Development- Quarterly Progress Report, July - September 2020, released date: October 15, 2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-171)
172. KII notes- national partners and DTD Project progress reports [↑](#endnote-ref-172)
173. KII notes [↑](#endnote-ref-173)
174. Results from tests are provided in the Annex 5 to this report. [↑](#endnote-ref-174)
175. KII notes- national partners [↑](#endnote-ref-175)
176. More details are provided under the EQ4, EQ5 and EQ6, whereby the results of the Project have been presented. [↑](#endnote-ref-176)
177. KII notes- partners [↑](#endnote-ref-177)
178. KII notes [↑](#endnote-ref-178)
179. Zakon o planskom sistemu Republike Srbije, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 30/2018, https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-planskom-sistemu-republike-srbije.html [↑](#endnote-ref-179)
180. According to the NALED’s records, two focus groups were organized with a total of 11 participants (6 women) [↑](#endnote-ref-180)
181. KII notes, national partners, KII\_01, KII\_012 [↑](#endnote-ref-181)
182. Specific Goal 3: Increasing the availability of e-government to citizens and the economy through the improvement of customer services, its measures and activities [↑](#endnote-ref-182)
183. KII\_06 [↑](#endnote-ref-183)
184. However, the indicators in the Programme are missing gender sensitivity [↑](#endnote-ref-184)
185. KII\_012 [↑](#endnote-ref-185)
186. KII\_07 [↑](#endnote-ref-186)
187. KII\_014 [↑](#endnote-ref-187)
188. <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/serbia_report_2020.pdf>. Also, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/serbia/nations-transit/2020> [↑](#endnote-ref-188)
189. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/CDP_BP44_June_2018.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-189)
190. For example, using the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) as a composite index could be used to digital performance and tracks the evolution of the country across five main dimensions: Connectivity, Human Capital, Use of Internet, Integration of Digital Technology, Digital Public Services more at <https://digital-agenda-data.eu/datasets/desi/visualizations> [↑](#endnote-ref-190)
191. Nadia Hijab and Raúl Zambrano “Gender Responsive E-governance: Exploring the Transformative Potential”, prepared in 2007 under commission by UNDP, UNDP- Primers in Gender and Governance, 2008 [↑](#endnote-ref-191)