



***Evaluation of the Project  
“E-services and digital infrastructure  
as COVID-19 response  
measure”***

**Final evaluation report**

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Project information			
<b>Project Title</b>	<b>E-services and digital infrastructure as COVID-19 response measure</b>		
<b>Quantum ID</b>	00125126		
<b>Corporate outcome and output</b>	UNSDCF 2023-2027 Outcome 4/CPD Outcome 3 - All people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from improved social cohesion, increased realization of human rights and rule of law and accountable, gender-responsive institutions		
	CPD 2023-2027 Output 3.2. Capacities for merit based and people-centered governance system at national/local level and judiciary strengthened to deliver services in an effective, efficient and inclusive manner		
<b>Project objectives</b>	<p>General objective: to accelerate the digital transformation of public administration in Montenegro as COVID-19 response measure, by enabling effective digital service provision that meets the needs of citizens and businesses.</p> <p>The specific objectives are:</p> <p>SO1: Enhance digitalization of the public administration through the development of platforms and complex e-services</p> <p>SO2: Establish an efficient and sustainable integrated system of simplified electronic procedures for citizens and businesses</p> <p>SO3: Improve data protection and digital inclusion of public institutions</p>		
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## **Disclaimer**

This Evaluation report, which presents the key findings of the evaluative assessment of the Project "**E-services and digital infrastructure as COVID-19 response measure**", was prepared by independent consultant Ms Zehra Kacapor-Dzihic. The views expressed in the report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Government of Montenegro, or any other affiliated institutions.

The information provided in this report is intended solely to evaluate the Project. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information presented, the authors make no representations or warranties of any kind regarding the completeness, accuracy, reliability, suitability, or availability with respect to the report or the information, products, services, or related graphics contained in the report for any purpose.

The recommendations provided in this report are based on the analysed data available during the evaluation and discussions with the stakeholders. They intend to guide future actions.

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# Abbreviations

3Cs	Coherence, communication and complementarity
CSO	Civil Society organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EC	European Commission
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
GSB	Government Service Bus
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IR	Inception Report
KI	Key informants
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
Moi	Ministry of the Interior
MONSTAT	Statistical Office of Montenegro
MPA	Ministry of Public Administration
MPADSM	Ministry of Public Administration, Digital Society and Media (from the previous Government structure)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSDD	National Strategy for Sustainable Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAR	Public Administration Reform
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SES	Social and Environmental Safeguards
SISEDE	Single Information System for Electronic Data Exchange
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

# Executive Summary

This report presents the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation of the project "*E-services and Digital Infrastructure as a COVID-19 Response Measure*," implemented by UNDP with financial support from the European Union over the period between 2021-2024.

## Context

Montenegro has made notable progress over the last decade in digital transformation and public administration reform, while navigating political volatility and socioeconomic challenges. With an economy reliant on sectors like tourism, energy, and services, the country faces a high unemployment rate and income disparities that influence access to technology and digital services. Despite these challenges, Montenegro has demonstrated commitment to EU integration, advancing its alignment with EU policies and institutional frameworks, including the adoption of key digital legislation such as the Law on Electronic Administration. Digital transformation efforts, guided by strategies like the Digital Transformation Strategy 2022-2026 and the Public Administration Reform Strategy, have focused on enhancing e-services, boosting digital literacy, and addressing inefficiencies in traditional public services. The Ministry of Public Administration and the Coordination Body for Digital Transformation have played central roles in fostering collaboration across sectors, but institutional stability and transparency remained delicate over the reference period. Over the reference period, cybersecurity has emerged as a critical concern, highlighted by a major cyber-attack in 2022 that exposed vulnerabilities in public administration infrastructure. The Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2026 provides a roadmap for strengthening defences, but its integration with broader reform efforts has been limited.

Digital transformation initiatives have boosted the proliferation of e-services and interoperability of systems, streamlining access to essential services. Surveys indicate growing e-service adoption and improved satisfaction, though challenges in awareness and digital skills remain, particularly among vulnerable groups. However, gaps persist in municipal-level digitization, integration of systems into a unified portal, and addressing the digital divide.

## About the project

The project aimed to modernize Montenegro's public administration and improve service delivery through digital transformation. With a budget of USD 2.264 million, the project focused on enhancing institutional capacity, developing digital platforms and e-services, raising public awareness, and conducting research to inform its implementation. Key achievements included the creation of over 40 e-services, the operationalization of the E-Governments Portal, and capacity-building initiatives such as training public officials and establishing a network of ICT practitioners. These efforts were complemented by public awareness campaigns to promote e-services and targeted research activities, including legal and institutional assessments, user experience studies, and digital readiness evaluations for local municipalities.

Despite delays caused by political changes and challenges like the 2022 cyber-attack, the project adapted by reallocating resources to emerging priorities while maintaining a focus on measurable results. Collaboration with Montenegro's Ministry of Public Administration and other government entities ensured alignment with national digital strategies. The project also provided critical IT support and software solutions, including the E-government portal, Open Data portal, e-services, etc. and prepared groundwork for advanced e-governance systems. Its integrated approach addressed immediate COVID-19 response needs while laying the foundation for sustained digital transformation in Montenegro's public administration.

## Evaluation methodology and approach

The evaluation aimed to assess the project's outputs, outcomes, and alignment with its objectives as outlined in the Project Document. The evaluation focused on key criteria, including relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, gender equality, and human rights, in accordance with UNDP Evaluation Principles and OECD/DAC standards. This assessment also served a dual purpose of accountability and learning, providing insights to guide future programming in public administration reform and digital transformation.

The evaluation employed a theory-based, mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, such as document review, stakeholder interviews, and performance data analysis. This methodology allowed for a comprehensive examination of project implementation, including its integration of gender and rights-based approaches and its contribution to long-term development objectives. The process was guided by an evaluation matrix to ensure systematic data collection and analysis, with an emphasis on triangulating sources to enhance the credibility of results. Despite limitations such as timing and data availability, the evaluation framework provided actionable insights to inform decision-making and future strategies.

## **Key findings**

### **Relevance and coherence**

The project was aligned with Montenegro's national priorities, addressing critical needs in digital transformation, public administration reform, and EU integration. It aligned with international frameworks, including the UNDP Strategic Plan, SDGs, and the EU's digitalization agenda for the Western Balkans. Designed as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project targeted gaps in service delivery, transparency, and cybersecurity while responding to the increased demand for efficient, remote services.

The project had a clear and logical framework, connecting its objectives to Montenegro's broader digital transformation goals. Its intervention logic was practical, focusing on developing digital platforms, e-services, and capacity-building initiatives to modernise public administration. Adjustments to the design were required due to challenges such as government restructuring and shifting priorities, including the cancellation of the Government Service Bus (GSB). These changes allowed the project to adapt and achieve results under its e-services component, although foundational issues such as interoperability and systemic cybersecurity capacity remained partially unaddressed.

### **Effectiveness**

The project demonstrated effectiveness in delivering key outputs, including developing the e-government portal, open data platforms, and over 40 e-services, significantly exceeding its initial targets. Evidence generation activities, such as public opinion surveys and needs assessments, contributed to understanding the requirements of citizens, businesses, and local governments, shaping service delivery and institutional priorities. Capacity-building efforts enhanced institutional capabilities, with tailored training for public administration staff, establishment of the ICT practitioner network, Digital Academy and mentoring programmes resulting in concrete achievements like the expansion of the pipeline of projects in support to digital transformation. These initiatives addressed critical gaps in digital governance and built a foundation for Montenegro's continued digital transformation.

The project's partnership strategy and participatory management contributed positively to its objectives by fostering collaboration, capacity development, and stakeholder alignment. However, the project faced challenges, including political changes, fragmented coordination among institutions, and infrastructure deficiencies, which limited the realization of fully integrated and user-centric digital solutions. While the e-government portal and other platforms improved access to information, delays in developing interoperable systems such as GSB and electronic document management system (e-DMS) constrained their functionality. Limited integration of cybersecurity measures and uneven engagement from key stakeholders, particularly the Ministry of Interior, further impeded progress.

### **Efficiency**

The project faced significant efficiency challenges, particularly in its early stages, due to above mentioned challenges, which disrupted activities and diverted resources. Delays in resolving the GSB development process further stalled progress, affecting key initiatives like the e-government portal. Despite these obstacles, UNDP's adaptive management and efficient operational strategies enabled a surge in implementation during 2024, ensuring most deliverables would be completed within the project timeline. This acceleration, supported by UNDP's agile management, responsive vendors and timely EU engagement, helped address evolving priorities effectively. UNDP's robust M&E systems facilitated active tracking, adjustment, and resource reallocation,



ensuring that challenges were mitigated, and lessons learned were integrated into the project's final phase, contributing to a positive efficiency trajectory as the project neared completion.

### **Impact and sustainability**

The project made important contributions to Montenegro's digital transformation by establishing foundational platforms such as the e-government and Open Data portals and delivering over 40 digital services. These achievements improved access to public services and efficiency for both citizens and institutions. Capacity-building efforts strengthened institutional capabilities, enabling public administration to manage and expand digital services and access additional funding. Examples of success include online education enrolment, which reduced administrative burdens and increased accessibility for students and parents, and digitalized services in the Ministries of Culture and Media, which improved transparency and efficiency.

However, systemic barriers such as fragmented institutional responsibilities, inconsistent commitment across ministries, and delayed interoperability of critical systems like the GSB and e-DMS present outstanding challenges for full uptake. Citizens and businesses benefit from expanded e-services but there are continued challenges related to digital adoption, including technical gaps, low digital literacy, and concerns about cybersecurity.

### **Gender Equality and Human Rights**

The project incorporated gender and human rights considerations into its design and implementation, promoting gender equality through activities such as capacity-building that engaged both male and female public officials and addressing gender gaps in digital governance studies. Digital services like online enrolment in education provided tangible benefits, particularly for women with caregiving responsibilities. Although the absence of a targeted gender analysis in the planning phase limited gender-specific baselines, this was partially mitigated by collecting disaggregated data on service usage and citizen perceptions.

### **Conclusions**

**Relevance and coherence.** The project was highly relevant, addressing Montenegro's critical digital transformation needs while aligning with national strategies, EU objectives, and COVID-19 response demands. Its focus on building digital infrastructure, institutional capacity, and accessible public services supported immediate challenges and long-term goals for citizen-centric governance.

**Effectiveness.** The project achieved significant outputs, including over 40 e-services, foundational platforms like the e-government portal, and capacity-building for public officials. Despite this, fragmented coordination, limited interoperability of systems, and varying institutional commitment reduced the project's ability to deliver systemic improvements.

**Efficiency.** Adaptive management enabled recovery from early delays caused by political instability and shifting priorities. However, inconsistent coordination across ministries and late-stage acceleration strained resources and disrupted smooth implementation.

**Sustainability.** The project created a strong foundation through institutional capacity-building and initial government commitments to digital transformation. However, risks such as dependence on donor funding, fragmented institutional responsibilities, and delays in implementing key systems like GSB and e-DMS threaten long-term sustainability.

**Impact orientation.** Early impacts include improved accessibility and efficiency through digital services like education enrolment. However, systemic barriers, such as inconsistent government commitment and delayed system integration, limit broader transformative changes.

**Cross-cutting Issues.** The project integrated gender and human rights considerations into its design, with particular success of digital services in addressing barriers for vulnerable populations. However, the lack of a targeted gender analysis limited comprehensive impact measurement.

## Lessons Learned

Ownership and commitment are prerequisites for success.	Strong government ownership and proactive institutional commitment are critical for successful digital transformation, as seen in ministries with better engagement.
Centralized leadership is crucial for overarching reform efforts, such as the digital transformation.	Ensuring there is centralized leadership, potentially at the Prime Minister's level, can present a game-changer essential to address institutional fragmentation.
Flexibility and adaptability.	Flexibility in project design is crucial, especially in dynamic and politically volatile environments. Predefined frameworks must allow for adjustments to address emerging needs and institutional readiness.
Comprehensive digital design.	Holistic and user-focused digital solutions, integrated with foundational systems like GSB and e-DMS, are necessary for effective service delivery and broader transformation.
Tailored technical solutions.	Generic approaches to technical outputs can lead to inefficiencies. Tailored solutions aligned with local infrastructure, operational realities, and user needs ensure higher adoption rates and sustainability.
End-user engagement.	Actively involving citizens in the design of digital services enhances adoption and ensures that solutions are practical and user-friendly.

## Recommendations

1. Advocate for a high-level governance structure, such as one under the Prime Minister, to streamline digital transformation and enforce coordination across ministries.	<i>Responsibility:</i> UNDP, EU, and Government of Montenegro.
2. Design interventions targeting local self-governments (LSGs) based on digital readiness assessments, with dedicated resources and capacity-building to support their engagement in national efforts.	<i>Responsibility:</i> Government, EU, and UNDP.
3. Conduct comprehensive needs assessments to design targeted capacity-building initiatives, ensuring institutions have the skills to sustain and expand digital transformation.	<i>Responsibility:</i> UNDP, Government.
4. Align technical solutions with local infrastructure and operational capacities to reduce inefficiencies and ensure functionality.	<i>Responsibility:</i> UNDP, MPA, Donors.
5. Include end-users in the design and quality assurance processes of digital services to ensure usability and increase adoption rates.	<i>Responsibility:</i> UNDP, MPA, EU.
6. Conduct targeted analyses during project design to address barriers faced by marginalized groups, ensuring equitable access to digital services.	<i>Responsibility:</i> UNDP, MPA, EU.
7. Consider launching a pilot project showcasing AI applications in enhancing e-services in sectors like education or healthcare, demonstrating potential scalability and innovation.	<i>Responsibility:</i> UNDP, EU, MPA

# 1. Introduction

This report presents the key findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations of the Evaluation of the Project “*E-services and digital infrastructure as COVID-19 response measure*” (hereinafter: the Project) implemented by UNDP, with funding from European Union (EU). The purpose of the evaluation was to provide evidence and learning on the performance of the Project, as well as accountability to stakeholders (see Annex I: Terms of Reference (ToRs)). The temporal scope of the evaluation covered the entire period of project implementation between January 2021 until the end of the evaluation data collection phase (i.e. November 2024) whereby the final month of the project is covered by analysis of planned final events. The primary objective of the evaluation was to assess the project's outputs, outcomes, and impact against the goals set in the Project Document, as detailed in the Section 1.2 below. The primary users of the evaluation included the UNDP Country Office in Montenegro, which managed the implementation of the project; the EU Delegation (EUD), which provided funding and oversight; and the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA), which acted as a key partner, overseeing the Project and ensuring alignment with national policies. The Evaluator conducted virtual kick-off meeting and inception briefings with UNDP in October 2024, followed by a hybrid primary data collection in October-November 2024. The evaluation used a mix of methods, including documentary review and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) as detailed in Section 2 of this report.

The report is organised into several interconnected sections:

- The *Section 1* provides a contextual background of Montenegro's digital transformation efforts, detailing the strategic importance of the Project within this framework and clarifies the purpose, objectives, and scope of the final evaluation, evaluation criteria, including consideration of cross-cutting issues like human rights and gender equality, and presents the key evaluation questions alongside an evaluability analysis to ascertain the feasibility of the evaluation approach.
- *Section 2* describes the methodological design and approach employed in this evaluation, including the reconstruction of the Theory of Change, detailing data collection methods and instruments, the process of data analysis, and addressing ethical considerations. It also outlines the limitations to this evaluation.
- *Section 3* presents the key findings of the evaluation, structured around the key evaluation criteria and EQs, while the *Section 4* presents Conclusions, Lessons Learned, and Recommendations.
- Annexes to the report include the Terms of Reference, the Evaluation Matrix, Interview Guides, and additional supporting documentation such as lists of interviewed stakeholders and consulted documents, which provide comprehensive support to the evaluation findings.

## 1.1. CONTEXT

Montenegro with population of 633,158<sup>1</sup> is a coastal country located in Western Balkans, bordering five Western Balkans countries. The nation's economy is relatively modest, with a GDP of around \$7.4 billion (2023), and a per capita GDP of about \$12,017.<sup>2</sup> Key sectors driving the Montenegrin economy include tourism, energy, and services, with tourism being particularly significant, contributing a substantial portion to the GDP, due to the country's coastlines and historical landmarks.<sup>3</sup> The average earnings (gross) in Montenegro in 2024 are 1 080 Euro, while the average earnings without taxes and

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.monstat.org/uploads/files/popis%202021/pr.podaci/Preliminarni%20rezultati%20popisa%202025.01.2024.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/country/montenegro>

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Beath et.al. 2022. Montenegro Country Economic Memorandum: Towards a resilient growth strategy. Enabling a green and resilient tourism sector in Montenegro

contributions (net) are 861 Euro, which is an increase of 7.8%, compared to last year.<sup>4</sup> Montenegro has a relatively high unemployment rate, hovering around 15%<sup>5</sup>, while two-thirds of the total population are of working-age population (aged 15-64 years).<sup>6</sup> Most of the population resides in urban areas, with 67.6% living in cities as of in 2020.<sup>7</sup> The country applied for EU membership in 2008 and has opened the accession negotiations in 2012, progressing to 33 opened chapters in 2023 with three chapter being provisionally closed.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Montenegro became NATO's member in June 2017.<sup>9</sup> In the period 2020-2022, Montenegro experienced political volatility, marked by instability within the government and parliamentary challenges.<sup>10</sup> The August 2020 elections resulted in the first change of power in nearly 30 years, causing a deep political polarization in the post-election period. The government which took office in December 2020, was replaced by the new minority government elected by the Assembly in April 2022<sup>11</sup>.

Despite these challenges, Montenegro has maintained its strategic goal of EU integration, aligning its institutional and legislative frameworks with EU policies, including responses to global events like the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated already existing socioeconomic issues in Montenegro. The pandemic resulted in economic disruptions, emphasizing the need for resilient infrastructure, including digital services, where demands for efficient and effective e-services has grown among individual citizens as well business.<sup>12</sup> During this period, the EU provided significant support, aiding Montenegro's pandemic response, which also included support for digital transformation to enhance public service delivery, which was already rather ineffective and not user-friendly.<sup>13</sup>

Notably, the third cycle of assessment of awareness on digital services in public administration among Montenegrin citizens showed that 39.3% of citizens used e-services daily, several times per week, or several times per month, a rate similar to that of 2022.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the survey showed that 47.1% of respondents rated their internet skills as "intermediate," an increase from 39.9% in 2022; 17.2% assessed their skills as "advanced," down from 20.5% the previous year; and 4.9% reported no internet knowledge, a decrease from 9.4% in 2022, while the remaining 30.8% rated their skills at a basic level.<sup>15</sup> Approximately 39.3% of citizens use e-services at least monthly, and survey showed that e-service utilisation is higher among households with greater income levels, particularly in central regions. Although traditional public services remain more popular, there has been an increase in the adoption of e-services as survey results showed. Satisfaction with public e-services remains high, with about 75% of respondents expressing general satisfaction, while 52.2% feel familiar with available e-services, up from 45.4% in 2022.<sup>16</sup>

The survey showed that information on e-services is most commonly accessed via institutional websites, family and friends, or the eUprava portal. Awareness gaps persist, with 28.6% still unfamiliar with e-services. Satisfaction levels with various portals have improved significantly, and the eUprava portal received an average rating increase from 3.12 in 2022 to 3.47 in 2024<sup>17</sup> Trust in e-service security remains moderate, with 41.3% expressing confidence. The perception that in-person service

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.monstat.org/eng/novosti.php?id=4005>

<sup>5</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/country/montenegro>

<sup>6</sup> <http://monstat.org/eng/novosti.php?id=3504>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/528718/urbanization-in-montenegro/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/negotiations-status/montenegro\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/negotiations-status/montenegro_en)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_144647.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_144647.htm)

<sup>10</sup> EC Montenegro 2020 report, EC Montenegro 2021 report.

<sup>11</sup> <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2022/04/28/new-government-of-montenegro-elected-by-the-assembly/>

<sup>12</sup> EBRD, Digital maturity assessment Montenegro, 2022

<sup>13</sup> EC Montenegro 2021 report.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Public Administration. Digitalization of Public Administration: Assessment of Satisfaction with Existing and Identification of Needs for New E-Services. Citizens. 2024.

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Public Administration. Digitalization of Public Administration: Assessment of Satisfaction with Existing and Identification of Needs for New E-Services. Citizens. 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

is faster has declined, with 25.3% in 2024, down from 35.3% in 2022.<sup>18</sup> Overall, citizens see e-services as cost- and time-saving, with 51.2% supporting this view (down from 67.1% in 2022) and an increase in those valuing the flexibility e-services provide.<sup>19</sup>

While there are several key areas within digital transformation to be improved, digitisation of data, including information systems for improved data management is seen as a crucial step towards more efficient and effective provision of services. Montenegro made the important progress through the adoption of the Law on Electronic Government in 2020 which introduced the obligation to maintain a meta-registry to ensure electronic data exchange, however, that was only partially achieved with the gaps especially at the municipal levels where more than half of all municipalities continue traditional record-keeping, using physical books.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, **digitalization of services**, including the introduction of new services using information technologies, although marks several areas of progress, such as improvement of the e-services for businesses, still undergoes the necessary reforms.<sup>21</sup> A guiding document here is a Public Administration Reform Strategy, which, although predominately focused on services, such as birth certificates, enrolments in educational institutions, also addresses electronic fiscalisation system and the electronic public procurement system, marking the increase in electronic registers connected through Government Service Bus (GSB) in 2022, however, being less successful in digitalization of services on a single portal.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, especially the cyber-attack in 2022 against the digital infrastructure of public administration, making numerous institutional websites and mailboxes inaccessible, emphasized the importance of strengthening the capacities in cyber security, improving data protection and cooperation. While, already earlier adopted, Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2026 recognizes various challenges in this area, other key national reform strategies such as, the Public Administration Reform Strategy, fail to sufficiently account for the potential impact of cyber security threats on the objectives of the Strategy, while the Government remains non-transparent on the cyber security thematic.<sup>23</sup>

Overall, there has been a lot of shifting of the government institutions and ministries with each government shuffling over the reference period. However, the mandate of the Ministry of Public Administration remained rather stable over this period, leading on the public administration reform and digital transformation efforts in Montenegro. Additionally, there is Coordination Body for Digital transformation, which was established in line with the Digital Transformation Strategy 2022-2026, aiming to enhance digital capacity and provide effective oversight. The Coordination Body, which is chaired by the Minister of Public Administration, is tasked to serve as a platform for cooperation across government, business, academia, ICT, and civil sectors to accelerate Montenegro's digital advancement.<sup>24</sup>

Current legal framework governing digital transformation in Montenegro includes several digital strategies, action plans and legislations, with the Montenegro Digital Transformation Strategy 2022-2026 acting as a general framework, outlining essential conditions and initiatives for swift adaptation to complex digital landscape and the proactive growth of digital Montenegro. It applies to all parts of the society and is guided by two key objectives: enhancing digital capabilities and abilities and raising digital awareness in the society to boost competitiveness in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, Public Administration Reform Strategy 2022–2026, focuses on

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Weber, Policy Brief, From e-government to digital transformation: an overview of key challenges in Montenegro, 2023

<sup>21</sup> SIGMA, The principles of public administration Montenegro, 2021

<sup>22</sup> Weber, Policy Brief, From e-government to digital transformation: an overview of key challenges in Montenegro, 2023

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> <https://wapi.gov.me/download/22532198-cfa3-42aa-9c9d-94c2307421cb?version=1.0>

<sup>25</sup> Digital Public Administration Factsheet 2024 Montenegro, Supporting document, 2024

empowering public administration employees through the development of the necessary competencies and skills and standardisation of the civil service system in public administration; Smart Specialisation Strategy 2019-2024 with in particularly one strategic pillar being modernised and digitised Montenegro; Innovation Programme 2021–2024 aims to present all relevant innovation support programmes planned in the following period in one place, Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2026 addressing cyber security challenges and enhancing cybersecurity at the national level.<sup>26</sup> As for the legislative framework, the most important progress was the adoption of the Law on Electronic Administration and its entering into force in 2020, aiming to enhance eGovernment in Montenegro, and ensure alignment with international integration needs.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, **Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans** is an important regional initiative within the sector.<sup>28</sup>

## 1.2 SUBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

The project “E-services and Digital Infrastructure as a COVID-19 Response Measure” was designed to support Montenegro's response to the COVID-19 pandemic by modernizing public administration through digital transformation. Its approach also aligned and responded to the priorities and policy recommendations outlined in Montenegro's first Human Development Report on Digitalisation,<sup>29</sup> which emphasized the critical role of digital transformation in fostering inclusive governance, reducing inequalities, and strengthening the resilience of public service delivery systems. Funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP, the project aimed to enhance the efficiency, accessibility, and inclusiveness of government services for both citizens and businesses by leveraging digital technologies. The project's main objectives were to increase digitalization, simplify administrative procedures, and improve data protection within public institutions. The project employed a combination of technical assistance, procurement, capacity-building activities, and awareness campaigns to support Montenegro's digital transformation. Key areas of intervention are elaborated below.

### Capacity strengthening

The project offered support to the strengthening of institutional capacity within Montenegro's MPA through training and advisory support. Capacity-building initiatives targeted both central and local-level public administration officials, improving their technical skills in digital governance, e-services development, and cybersecurity. The project placed significant emphasis on building the technical and managerial capacities of public officials to sustain the digital transformation efforts. For instance, the project organized multiple training sessions and workshops for MPA staff and other public officials on the use and administration of digital platforms, data protection, and cybersecurity. The project also supported the creation of a network of ICT practitioners across public institutions, and the Digital Academy, which facilitated knowledge-sharing, coordination, and peer support in managing digital transformation processes. These efforts were further complemented by expertise provided to MPA under Project Implementation Unit (PIU), international study visits, which allowed MPA representatives to learn best practices from other countries, including Spain, Denmark and the United States, and other expert and advisory support.

### Facilitating the development of digital Platforms and e-services

The project supported platforms such as the *E-governments Portal* and various electronic services (e-services) to simplify interactions between citizens and businesses with the government. The project supported the development and launch of over 40 e-services, exceeding the initial target of five e-

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Weber, Policy Brief, From e-government to digital transformation: an overview of key challenges in Montenegro, 2023

<sup>29</sup> <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/2020nhdrmontenegro.pdf>

services. Currently, the Project also supports the finalisation of e-services for the Ministry of Culture and NGO registry, which will ultimately increase the number of such services. Additionally, the "E-governments" portal, a critical platform for facilitating citizen engagement with digital public services, was developed and made operational by the end of 2023. Several other digital services, including online enrolment for educational institutions and e-payment platforms, were launched, significantly improving the efficiency of public service delivery. A user satisfaction survey indicated that 86.5% of students enrolled online for the 2023/2024 academic year, reflecting high user uptake.

To support the digital transformation, the project involved the procurement of necessary IT hardware and software solutions. This included a) the procurement of 10,000 eID card readers and other essential hardware to enable citizens to access digital public services; b) custom software solutions to be developed for specific public institutions, such as the *e-NGO platform* for the registration and processing of non-governmental organizations, as well as systems for universities, cultural institutions, and local governments, c) preparing the TORs for procurement of services for the development and implementation of comprehensive e-governance systems such as *e-procurement*, *e-cadastre*, and *e-fines* systems; and d) other types of support to the government in this regard.

### **Public awareness raising**

Communication and public awareness raising was another area of support and included a strong communication and visibility component aimed at raising awareness among citizens and businesses about the availability and benefits of digital public services. Within this component, the project implemented comprehensive media campaigns, using television, radio, and social media platforms to inform citizens about e-services. Specific campaigns were targeted toward key digital services, such as online enrolment for schools and universities, and the use of digital IDs for accessing government services. Besides, public info days, workshops, and virtual meetings were organized to engage with citizens and businesses, educating them about digital tools and the benefits of using e-services.

In addition, the project included several important research and analytical activities to support Montenegro's digital transformation. These included a Legal and Institutional Assessment to evaluate the regulatory framework for digital services, Public Opinion Surveys to assess citizen and business awareness and satisfaction with e-services,<sup>30</sup> Analysis on GSB upgrade, Analysis of the new e-gov portal, and User Experience Research on the government portal to improve its functionality and accessibility. Additionally, an Assessment of E-service Development Priorities helped prioritize key public services for digitalization based on user demand and institutional capacity. A Digital Readiness Assessment for local municipalities is underway, aimed at assessing digital infrastructure, service delivery, and cybersecurity at the local level. Besides, research on AI readiness assessment was conducted. These efforts aimed to data-driven insights to guide the project's implementation and ensure alignment with public and institutional needs.

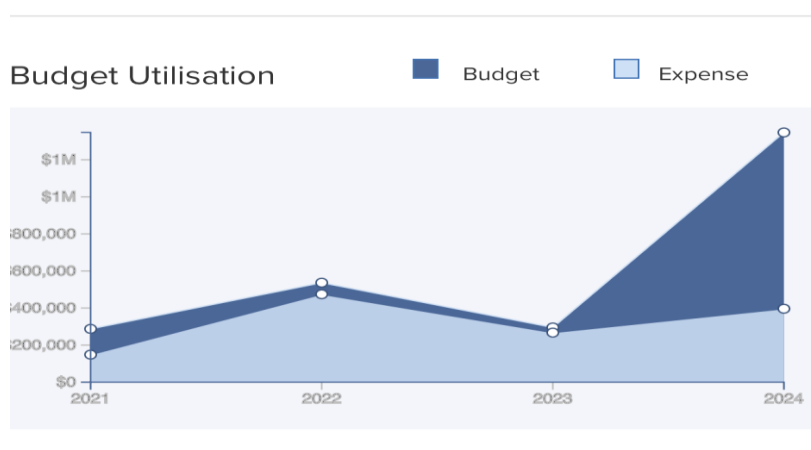
### **Financial overview**

The total project budget for the project was approximately 2.264 million USD (See Figure below). By the end of the reporting period, USD 1.35 million had been spent on various activities, while the remaining funds had been committed through contracts with vendors and service providers by mid-November 2024.

#### **Figure 1. Overview of budget utilisation**

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<sup>30</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/n6bashlxfdjgvm3u3q1lz/20220406\\_PPT\\_Digitalizacija-javne-uprave\\_short.pptx?rlkey=t11p48gk7x7uwrvj75w6rs361&e=1&dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/n6bashlxfdjgvm3u3q1lz/20220406_PPT_Digitalizacija-javne-uprave_short.pptx?rlkey=t11p48gk7x7uwrvj75w6rs361&e=1&dl=0)



Source: <https://open.undp.org/projects/00132790> as of 17 October 2024

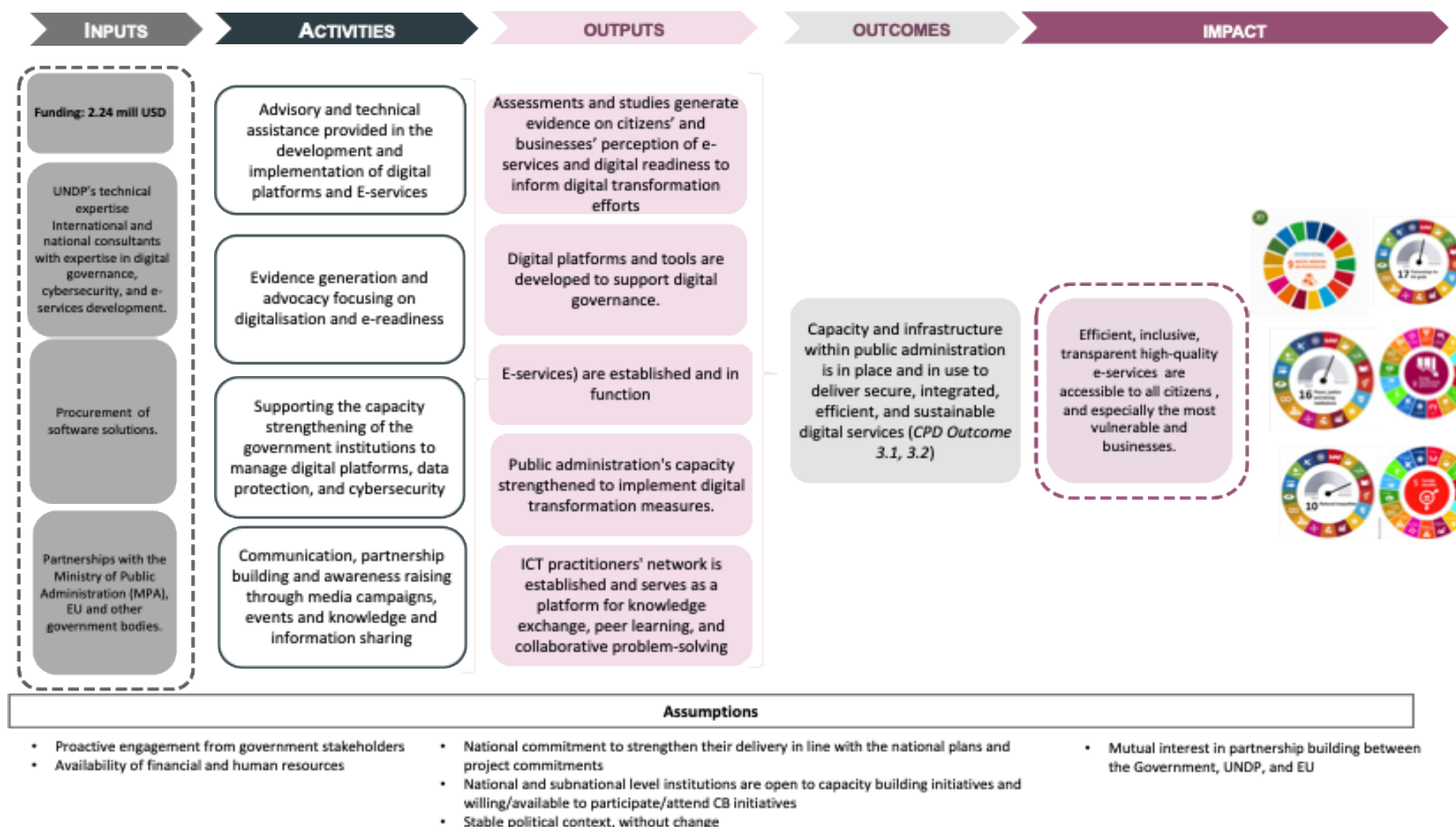
Due to delays and shifting priorities—stemming from political changes and external challenges such as the 2022 cyber-attack—two amendments were made to the project timeline. Significant portion of funding reaching close to 1 million EUR that was originally intended for specific digital platforms, such as the Government Service Bus (GSB), were reallocated to other priority activities, ensuring the project adapted to emerging needs while maintaining a focus on delivering high-quality, measurable results.

The project operated through a close collaboration between UNDP, the MPA, and other government entities. Regular technical working groups and project board meetings were held to coordinate activities, review progress, and adjust project priorities as needed. The collaborative approach ensured that project activities were aligned with national digital transformation strategies and responsive to changing government needs.

As this evaluation follows the theory-based evaluation approach, the Evaluator reconstructed the Intervention Logic (IL) for the Project and underlying assumptions, as a conceptual model of the causal chain from inputs to outputs, outcomes and impacts (chain of expected results) for the Project (Figure 2). The intervention logic builds on a detailed review of key reference project documents and kick-off meeting discussions. A final intervention logic will be included in the Final Report.



Figure 2. Intervention logic of the Project



Source: Evaluator, based on reconstruction of the project intervention

## 1.3 OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

As mentioned above, the primary objective of this evaluation was to assess the project's outputs, outcomes, and impact against the goals set in the Project Document. Within this framework, the evaluation aimed to review the relevance, feasibility, and progress of the project's indicators and targets, and their alignment with the country's context and providing insights into the effectiveness of the project in achieving its intended outcomes.

This evaluation served the dual purpose of accountability and learning, helping to shape future programming, especially within the domain of public administration reform and digital transformation. The findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations presented in this report were aimed to help align future interventions, and inform decision-making and upcoming programming, particularly in preparation for the decentralized thematic evaluation on digitalization, scheduled for 2025.

## 1.4 KEY CRITERIA AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS (EQS)

The scope of the evaluation focused on key areas such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact, gender equality, and human rights, in line with the UNDP Evaluation Principles and the OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria for Development Assistance. These criteria shaped the inquiry to ensure an independent, transparent, and evidence-based evaluation that adheres to international standards. Notably, under the Relevance/Coherence, an assessment was conducted of project's alignment with national development priorities and emerging needs, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the SDGs, including how effectively it addressed gender equality and the human rights-based approach.

The TOR provided a set of EQs that were confirmed in the inception phase, serving as a framework for this evaluation. The EQs were further elaborated through a set of indicators, data sources and data collection and analysis methods, to ensure that all evaluation objectives are achieved.

Under Effectiveness, assessment focused on the extent to which the project achieved its outputs and outcomes, contributing to national priorities and UNDP strategies. An analysis of factors driving or hindering success was conducted along with the assessment of partnership strategies and agile management practices of the project. In terms of Efficiency, the evaluation examined whether the project structure and resources were used strategically to achieve results.

The Sustainability dimension offered an assessment of potential risks that impacted the sustainability of the project's benefits, such as financial, social, or political risks, and explored the level of stakeholder ownership needed to sustain these benefits.

While it is difficult to assess impact particularly during ongoing project implementation, the impact inquiry focused on perspectives for the Project's contribution to long-term changes, particularly when it comes to project's contributions to improved access to public services and digital transformation of the public administration.

The evaluation assessed the Project's integration of human rights and Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) and related results as well. This was done by specific analysis of women's participation in project activities through qualitative methods such as key informant interviews, ensuring that women's voices were heard, and their experiences were documented. To the extent possible, Project indicators were tracked and disaggregated to monitor and evaluate the impact on different gender and right holder groups. The evaluation also assessed the project's gender effect by

examining changes in gender dynamics, women's access to services, as a result of the project. This assessment also included insights into unintended consequences to ensure that no negative gender impacts were overlooked.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 EVALUATION DESIGN AND APPROACH

The evaluation's mixed-methods and theory-based approach integrated primary and secondary data collection through various techniques, as detailed below. Use of mixed methods proved to be helpful as it facilitated a comprehensive assessment of project results, including unintended consequences, while at the same time allowing the evaluator to refine data collection methods to assure the utility of the data for analytical purposes. This approach also allowed for adjustments based on emerging findings, stakeholder feedback, and evolving context, ensuring that the evaluation remained responsive and comprehensive throughout its implementation.

The theory-based evaluation approach provided a comprehensive and structured framework, utilising the reconstructed ToC (Figure 2) as a roadmap to outline the intended sequence of events and causal pathways leading to the desired outcomes and the Project objective. The ToC analysis focused on the dynamics between assumptions, objectives, and expected results, assessing its validity, credibility, and realism. Specifically, evaluator examined whether the ToC was realistic and achievable, given the Project's context and operational constraints.

The clear articulation of pathways of change and underlying assumptions in the ToC enabled the evaluator to systematically evaluate the Project's performance. This included verifying whether planned activities were implemented as intended, whether they achieved the immediate outputs, and whether these outputs contributed to the expected outcomes. By comparing actual achievements with the ToC's stated objectives and assumptions, the evaluation assessed the plausibility of the causal linkages and the extent to which the Project's design and implementation aligned with the anticipated pathways of change.

The evaluation also applied diverse analytical methods, such as contribution and comparative analysis, to test and refine the ToC iteratively. This process examined the interplay between contextual factors and delivery mechanisms, providing insights into the Project's ability to adapt to challenges and leverage opportunities. Additionally, the assessment of assumptions embedded in the ToC helped determine their accuracy and relevance in supporting the achievement of outcomes and transformational changes. By grounding the evaluation in the ToC, the approach fostered a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that influenced the Project's progress and effectiveness in achieving its objectives.

### 2.2 STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

The evaluation included a comprehensive stakeholder mapping process to identify key individuals and institutions involved in the Project's formulation, decision-making, implementation, and monitoring. This mapping ensured that the evaluation captured diverse perspectives. The stakeholders were categorised as follows:

#### **Government Institutions:**

- MPA acted as the key partner of the project, providing guidance and oversight of the alignment of project activities with national digital transformation policies.
- Other public institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, Ministry of Culture and Media, Municipality of Zeta, etc. were mapped as beneficiaries of the key project activities, related to e-services and capacity strengthening
- IT Network was identified as key pool of IT experts working in the public sector and benefiting from project activities.

**UNDP** Country Office in Montenegro managed project implementation and facilitated coordination with other stakeholders to ensure timely delivery of outputs.

**EUD** provided financial support and strategic oversight, ensuring alignment with EU digital transformation priorities.

#### **Implementing Partners:**

- Vendors and consultants delivered technical and advisory services for the development of digital platforms, e-services, and cybersecurity measures.
- Subject matter experts contributed specialised knowledge to support the implementation of activities such as the establishment of the CIRT portal and capacity-building initiatives.

**ICT practitioners, civil society and end users** provided input on the practical application and accessibility of digital services, as well as feedback on their impact.

**Other Development Partners** engaged in knowledge-sharing and advocacy initiatives to promote digital inclusion and institutional resilience.

Out of this pool of stakeholders, 24 key informants (11 female, 13 male) were selected through a purposive sampling technique. The final list of interlocutors was developed in consultation with UNDP and is detailed in Annex 5.

## **2.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

To respond to the evaluation's summative and formative purpose, the evaluator focused on analysing lessons learned and assessing the project's effectiveness in achieving results at both output and outcome levels (summative). The formative component explored the adaptability and scalability of these results for potential future UNDP's digital transformation interventions.

The evaluator utilised a ToC-based methodology and a mixed-methods approach that integrated both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. Evaluation drew primarily on document reviews and key informant interviews (KIIs). Quantitative data was obtained from secondary official sources, such as government policy and programme related statistics or data, survey results and project-level indicator data to supplement the qualitative insights. Qualitative data was sourced from desk reviews and semi-structured interviews.<sup>31</sup> The evaluation matrix served as the foundational tool guiding this approach (see Annex 2).

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<sup>31</sup> A semi structured interview "revolves around a list of topics and questions with varying degrees of specification and a flexible order." It includes a guide with predetermined open-ended questions and probing follow-up questions to prompt a discussion. Source: World Bank Independent Evaluation Group. Evaluation of International Development Interventions: An Overview of Approaches and Methods.

## **Document Review**

The evaluation began with a comprehensive document review of national digital transformation policies, regulatory frameworks, and sector-specific reports. This review helped situate the project within broader digital transformation efforts and provided insights into contextual factors affecting its implementation. The evaluator also referenced national and sectoral reports to refine evaluation queries and ensure alignment with the project's goals.

**Project monitoring data** played a central role in verifying the project's progress and assessing effectiveness. Data from progress reports, financial statements, and performance metrics was systematically integrated and cross-referenced with primary sources, such as interviews with government officials, project managers, and implementing partners. Secondary sources, including national and sectoral reports and independent assessments, were used to validate findings and ensure accuracy.

## **Primary Data Collection and Stakeholder Engagement**

A purposive sampling technique was applied to select key informants based on their roles in project formulation, decision-making, implementation, and monitoring. The final list of interlocutors was developed in consultation with UNDP and served as the foundation for conducting KIIs. Following the 2020 United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical guidelines, human rights-based approach (HRBA) and a gender-sensitive methodology, the evaluator conducted semi-structured interviews with 24 (11F, 13M) representatives from national institutions, UNDP, and key implementing partners, including vendors and subject matter experts (See List of consulted institutions in Annex 5). Informed consent was obtained from stakeholders before data collection, with the purpose, objectives, and scope of the evaluation clearly explained. Stakeholders had the right to refuse participation or withdraw at any time without repercussions. Privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and sensitive information was protected to prevent any association with specific sources, safeguarding informants from potential reprisals. The evaluator followed interview guide developed in line with the Evaluation matrix. This approach facilitated structured data collection on core themes while allowing flexibility to explore emerging insights and project challenges. Interviewed stakeholders offered a comprehensive perspective on the project's achievements and highlighted areas for improvement.

The evaluation applied a gender-responsive and inclusive methodology to assess the Project's contributions to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) and disability inclusion. Aligned with the 2020 United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical guidelines, a human rights-based approach (HRBA) and a gender-sensitive lens were integrated throughout all phases of the evaluation to ensure diverse perspectives were captured and systematically analysed.

The methodology emphasised the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data to assess differences in digital service familiarity and usage between women and men. Public opinion polls conducted during the Project provided valuable insights into these variations, which informed findings on gender disparities in digital literacy and service accessibility. Women's participation in Project activities was also assessed through KIIs and documentation review. This included examining their involvement in capacity-building sessions, governance structures, and consultations, as well as their representation in public administration training.

The evaluation further examined the accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities by analysing whether the e-services developed by the Project were designed to be accessible. Stakeholder interviews provided qualitative insights into these challenges.

Operationalizing gender and disability considerations involved purposeful engagement with diverse stakeholders and adherence to ethical data collection practices, including obtaining informed consent and maintaining confidentiality. Evaluator invested efforts to ensure balanced gender representation among interviewees to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the Project's impact on women and men. The evaluation analysed findings iteratively, triangulating insights from KIIs, document reviews, and public opinion surveys to identify patterns related to gender equality, women's empowerment, and disability inclusion, with findings presented across the report and specifically in the section 3.6 of this report. These approaches informed evidence-based conclusions and recommendations for enhancing the inclusivity and accessibility of future initiatives.

Throughout the evaluation process, the evaluator maintained close communication with UNDP, ensuring alignment on objectives, sharing preliminary findings, and receiving feedback to refine the analysis. This collaborative approach supported an adaptive and responsive evaluation, ensuring the findings and recommendations were relevant, actionable, and reflective of UNDP's strategic goals.

## 2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

All original data, including interview records and notes, were securely stored until the evaluation was completed. The Evaluation Matrix served as the primary framework for data analysis, with assumptions and indicators guiding the synthesis of findings at the Evaluation Question (EQ) level. A variety of data analysis methods were applied. Descriptive, trend, and comparative analyses summarised key metrics such as resource allocation and the delivery of activities and outputs, while assessing efficiency and effectiveness. Thematic, narrative, and content analyses explored qualitative dimensions, capturing the social dynamics of interventions. The use of limited contribution analysis helped establish causal relationships and synthesise broader trends in assessing effectiveness, sustainability, and impact.

Data triangulation from document review, interviews, and quantitative metrics strengthened the credibility of the findings. The evaluator applied a cross-validation approach<sup>32</sup> to verify information from various sources and collection methods, ensuring the accuracy of findings. Multiple sources were examined to uphold the internal validity of the findings, and this triangulation confirmed and cross-checked major trends, establishing a pattern through the convergence of data. The diverse sources of evidence allowed a comprehensive understanding of the project's relevance, coherence, efficiency, and overall contributions (effectiveness, sustainability, and impact) to Montenegro's development priorities and needs. Observations derived from single sources were treated with caution.

An Exit Debrief was conducted at the conclusion of primary data collection to present initial observations and address any data gaps or factual corrections. Following the submission of the draft report, the evaluator presented and discussed the findings, conclusions, and recommendations with the project team. Feedback from this discussion was used to further enhance and substantiate the final report.

## 2.5 LIMITATIONS

The key limitation to the evaluation process linked to the timing of the assessment, which coincided with many project activities either being finalised or still underway. Also, the scope of the project, which encompassed a wide range of components from e-services to capacity-building and digital

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<sup>32</sup> Morras-Imas and Rist define triangulation of methods as "Collection of the same information using different methods in order to increase the accuracy of data", p. 300. Morra **Imas**, L. G., & **Rist**, R. C. (2009). *The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations*. Washington, D.C., World Bank.

platforms, posed challenges in assessing all aspects comprehensively within the given timeframe. This limited the ability to evaluate effectiveness and long-term outcomes and impacts. To address this, the evaluation relied heavily on qualitative methods such as stakeholder consultations and document review to assess emerging trends and the potential impact and sustainability of the project's contributions. Additionally, limited availability of comprehensive and disaggregated data, particularly regarding the impact of e-services on specific population groups, posed challenges. The evaluator mitigated this by triangulating information from multiple sources, including interviews, project documentation, and external reports, to ensure a balanced and robust analysis. Furthermore, reliance on stakeholder perceptions through interviews introduced potential subjectivity.

## 3. Key findings

This section of the report provides detailed analytical findings across the targeted OECD DAC Criteria that were derived from primary sources, including interviews with key informants, supported by an in-depth desk review of diverse documentation and data sources.

### 3.1 RELEVANCE/COHERENCE

To evaluate the relevance and coherence of the Project, the evaluator conducted a comparative review of the project's intervention logic and Montenegro's national priorities related to digital transformation, public administration reform, and the modernization of service delivery. The evaluator also reviewed the Project's consistency with international standards, as well as alignment of the project with UNDP's Strategic Plan, UNDP Country Programme Document, the UNSDCF, the SDGs, and the European Union's digitalisation agenda for the Western Balkans.

In addition, the evaluator also analysed and subsequently reconstructed the Project's theory of change for logical coherence, assessing whether the objectives were clear, realistic, and achievable given the available timeframe, resources, and institutional capacity. The Project's responsiveness to evolving needs, such as those arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and government changes, were also analysed to help understand the extent to which the Project was positioned to effectively deliver its intended outcomes.

#### **EQ 1. To what extent was the project in line with the national development priorities, the country programme's outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?**

*Finding 1. The project was highly relevant to Montenegro's national development priorities, the UNDP Country Programme's outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the SDGs. Its focus on e-services, capacity building, transparency and cybersecurity addressed critical gaps in public service delivery, aligning with Montenegro's strategic goals and international commitments. The project's design and implementation were informed by a thorough understanding of the country's needs, as evidenced by stakeholder consultations and document reviews. However, the challenges posed by dynamic political context and uneven engagement on the side of some national institutions affected the extent to which the project could support horizontal digitalisation efforts.*

Document review and stakeholder feedback indicate that the project was well-aligned with Montenegro's national development priorities, which have been framed by its strategic aim of EU integration, the modernisation of public administration, and enhancing governance transparency and efficiency. These priorities are reflected in national strategies such as the Public Administration Reform Strategy<sup>33</sup> and the Digital Transformation Strategy (2022–2026),<sup>34</sup> which emphasise the need to overhaul public services through digitalization. The Human Development Report on Digitalisation,<sup>35</sup> the first such report in Montenegro, also underscored the importance of advancing digital transformation as a critical pillar for sustainable development. The report highlighted both opportunities and challenges in the digitalization process, particularly in the labour market, education, and public service delivery, while offering a roadmap for navigating Montenegro's digital future. It

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.gov.me/en/documents/0aaa040b-0413-46b6-a8c7-5b2c10cdc9dc>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.gov.me/en/documents/59dcab9b-b0e8-48b7-830b-6e4eab690521>

<sup>35</sup> <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/2020nhdrmontenegro.pdf>



emphasised the need to create an inclusive, accountable, and service-oriented administration, priorities that remain central to Montenegro's reform agenda.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought these priorities into sharper focus by exposing critical weaknesses in Montenegro's public service delivery infrastructure. Traditional, in-person services became difficult to access due to lockdowns and social distancing measures, thereby increasing the demand for digital services that could offer remote, efficient, and safe alternatives. Building on the insights and recommendations of the Human Development Report, the project was designed to address these urgent needs while also advancing broader digital transformation goals. Evaluation findings suggest that the project not only responded effectively to the immediate public health concerns but also contributed to long-term governance reforms by improving the efficiency and accessibility of public services. Its alignment with both the pandemic-driven context and Montenegro's overarching development strategies highlights its relevance in driving forward the priorities identified in the Human Development Report.

Document review and stakeholder consultations further highlight the project's responsiveness to Montenegro's infrastructural and institutional gaps, particularly in light of the pandemic-induced surge in demand for e-services. According to the stakeholder feedback, the country's digital infrastructure was established but relied on outdated software and systems that were due for upgrades, which provided some impediments to the rapid transition to e-services or broader interoperability, as the existing infrastructure lacked the capacity to manage the increased volume and complexity of digital service delivery effectively. The project's investments in developing software solutions for public institutions were critical in addressing these gaps.

Stakeholders noted the relevance of the project's focus on capacity building, particularly the training provided to public officials in managing digital platforms, project management and addressing cybersecurity risks. The latter was especially significant in light of the 2022 cyber-attack on Montenegrin government systems, which underscored the vulnerability of digital infrastructure and institutional capacity to address such concerns. The project's cybersecurity interventions addressed, though to limited extent, the direct risks through the investment in CIRT and enhancement of existing systems is expected to contribute to the long-term resilience of Montenegro's governance systems, ensuring that digital services remain reliable and secure.

The project also responded to Montenegro's efforts to align with EU standards, particularly in e-governance. The project's focus on creating digital platforms such as the E-governments Portal and multiple e-services directly supported Montenegro's efforts to modernize public administration and meet EU benchmarks. The Project also offered technical support and training for public officials in alignment with Montenegro's long-term goal of achieving self-sufficiency in digital governance and accessing EU funding opportunities such as the Digital Europe Programme.

In terms of alignment with the SDGs, the project's contributions are evident across multiple goals, particularly SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions), SDG 5 (Gender), SDG 4 (Education); and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals). The development of digital platforms and e-services represents a significant advancement in infrastructure modernisation, fostering innovation in public service delivery and contributing to SDG 9. The emphasis on capacity building and institutional resilience directly supports SDG 16 by strengthening Montenegro's governance systems, improving transparency, and enhancing accountability. Additionally, the project's partnership-based approach, which involved collaboration between the Montenegrin government, UNDP, and the EU, aligns with SDG 17, highlighting the importance of multi-stakeholder efforts in achieving sustainable development. Investment in education from both the service delivery (i.e., education enrolment and other related services) and professional

development of public administration staff contribute to SDG 4. Ensuring more equitable, equal and efficient access also contributes to the SDG 5.

The project's alignment with the UNDP Strategic Plan (2022–2025)<sup>36</sup> was found in its focus on digital transformation, inclusion, and resilience. The Strategic Plan emphasises the role of digital solutions in fostering resilience against crises, a goal that is directly reflected in the project's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. By enabling the transition from in-person to digital services, the project aimed to enhance Montenegro's capacity to manage future disruptions while maintaining service delivery. Furthermore, the project's attention to marginalized populations resonates with the Strategic Plan's commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that the benefits of digital transformation extend to all segments of society.

## **EQ 2. To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to political, legal, economic, institutional, etc., changes in the country?**

*Finding 2. The project demonstrated substantial adaptability and responsiveness to the political, legal and institutional changes in Montenegro. Its ability to reallocate resources, expand service delivery, and provide targeted capacity-building reflected a strong commitment to addressing emerging needs. However, systemic challenges, including political changes which lead to fragmented institutional arrangements limited the project's effectiveness and sustainability.*

Evaluation findings point to strong adaptability of the project to political, legal, economic, and institutional changes in Montenegro. The project was implemented in a dynamic political context marked by instability, multiple government shifts and institutional restructuring, that affected changes in governmental priorities. The high rate of ministerial and staff changes, along with institutional reorganisations, led to significant delays in decision-making and disrupted project dynamic. For instance, the shift in some competencies of the MPA to other newly created ministries disrupted continuity, mainly due to multiple changes of key focal points for the project, which required continuous renegotiations of project priorities. Such shifts had a huge impact on project's dynamics as the changes caused stagnation of key activities, such as tendering procedures for GSB and e-government portals, delays of which further blocked other related interventions. The GSB was cancelled due to changed priorities of the Ministry following the cyber-attack and subsequent security and technical reasons. Eventual decision to cancel the GSB altogether helped to finally agree on the scope, which helped to accelerate project results, but diminished the project's potential to bring together the GSB and the e-portal into a holistic approach to interoperable compatible system, which would have boosted the e-service provision. The project's continued relevance in this context was supported by agile management and also support by EU in unblocking key processes by efficient approval of key decisions, which enabled the project to adapt the focus and boost implementation, eventually succeeding to deliver on all outputs that were agreed by the Steering Committee. The project's flexibility in reallocating resources and adapting to emerging needs, such as expanding the scope of e-services, was frequently cited as a strength. Stakeholders noted that the project exceeded its initial targets for digitalizing public services, moving from a planned five services to over 40, reflecting its capacity to leverage opportunities as they arose. However, this expansion was achieved at the expense of deeper institutional integration and strategic coherence. The fragmented approach to developing digital systems, combined with the lack of a decision to pursue the initially planned unified system including the GSB and e-government portal, increased the administrative burden on government staff and diluted the project's overall impact. One of the key factors affecting this related to coordination and ownership challenges. Limited collaboration among ministries on digitalisation

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<sup>36</sup> <https://strategicplan.undp.org>

issues and in particular minimal engagement by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in project activities, hindered the project's ability to achieve systemic change.

Stakeholder feedback also highlighted the critical role of external technical expertise provided by the project. The engagement of vendors and consultants, along with partnerships with institutions such as the Estonian Academy, contributed valuable insights and best practices. While relevant to the needs and capacity gaps, these inputs were not sufficiently utilised by government counterparts, often due to political and institutional changes, limiting their influence on improvement of strategic directions.

The cyberattack on Montenegro's digital infrastructure in 2022 further complicated the project's trajectory, underscoring the vulnerability of the country's systems and the urgent need for enhanced cybersecurity. In response, the project addressed some of these challenges through the development of the CIRT portal and cybersecurity capacity-building, which was acknowledged by stakeholders as a relevant and timely support.

### **EQ 3. Are the projects objectives and outputs clear, practical and feasible within its frame?**

*Finding 3. The project's objectives and outputs were clear and aligned with Montenegro's digital transformation needs, but their feasibility was constrained by challenges such as political instability and institutional fragmentation. These external factors necessitated significant adjustments to the project's intervention logic, enabling it to adapt and achieve substantial results despite the limitations.*

The review of project's Description of Action (DoA) and subsequent two amendments shows that project's objectives and outputs were initially clear, practical, and aligned with Montenegro's urgent need for digital transformation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The general objective—to accelerate the digital transformation of public administration by enabling effective digital service provision—remained both relevant and timely over the entire project implementation, given the currency of the need to support further digital transformation efforts. This review shows that the project was initially designed with a holistic intervention logic that connected its three specific objectives (SOs) to Montenegro's broader digital transformation goals. SO1 focused on enhancing digitalization through platforms, SO2 aimed at establishing an integrated system of simplified electronic procedures, e-services as well as awareness raising, and SO3 addressed data protection and digital inclusion. Together, these objectives were intended to create a cohesive framework to modernise public administration, improve service delivery, and enhance institutional resilience, particularly in the context of post-COVID recovery. The combined efforts/activities under these SOs initially aligned well to achieve the intended outcomes. For instance, the development of the e-government portal under SO1 was envisioned as a foundational tool for centralizing e-services, complemented by the planned upgrade of the GSB to enable system-wide interoperability. SO2 supported this infrastructure by focusing on the development of interoperable e-services and the capacity building of ICT practitioners. SO3 addressed critical vulnerabilities in cybersecurity, made increasingly relevant by the 2022 cyberattack, through interventions such as the development of the CIRT portal and alignment with EU directives.

However, the initial intervention logic was significantly affected due to the cancellation of the GSB, as its complementarity with the e-government portal was a key foundation for transformative results that project wanted to achieve. Most stakeholders raised concerns that the different approaches and specifications for the two systems will potentially create challenges for their complementarity, resulting in their incompatibility. This is a risk, in terms of weakened interoperability foundation necessary for the seamless integration of e-services, which the project could not control. The government took on the GSB tendering and implementation, which holds promise to ensure that the e-government portal and other digital services can achieve their intended functionality, but it remains to be ensured that the GSB upgrade aligns with the e-governments portal which is set up by the

project. Furthermore, while SO3's cybersecurity measures addressed immediate gaps, the project did not have resources or leverage to address a systemic lack of capacity and coordination within government institutions which is necessary to comprehensively improve cybersecurity resilience.

The amendments to the project reflected a pragmatic response to challenges that emerged over the implementation, reallocating resources from the GSB to more achievable outcomes, such as additional e-services, capacity building, and cybersecurity initiatives. While these adjustments enabled visible successes, they left some foundational issues unresolved, particularly regarding interoperability and cybersecurity integration.

To this end, stakeholder feedback emphasised that the project's objectives were ambitious in light of political context. The frequent changes in government, high turnover of staff, and shifting priorities created an environment where long-term planning and implementation were difficult. The project depended heavily on individual champions within ministries, and when these public servants changed roles or left, progress stalled. Additionally, the lack of a centralized authority to drive digital transformation and cybersecurity efforts hindered coordination and consistency across government institutions.

In terms of resources, the project faced constraints in both financial and human capital. The expansion of e-services required additional efforts, and while the project successfully mobilized vendors and consultants, the government's capacity to absorb and sustain these new services varies and is not fully explored in some cases.

## 3.2 EFFECTIVENESS

The effectiveness section provides a comprehensive analysis of the project's achievements, focusing on the assessment of the extent to which the project succeeded to deliver its outputs and contribute to outcomes. The assessment is grounded in the reconstructed intervention logic (Figure 2) and an in-depth review of the project's amended DoA, which served as a framework for assessing the project's effectiveness. The assessment of project's performance was complemented by an analysis of factors that influenced the extent to which intended results were achieved or fell short, offering insights into both enabling and constraining conditions. Analysis of the Project's partnership strategy and its role in advancing shared objectives, fostering capacity development, and ensuring alignment with stakeholders' priorities was also conducted. The section also examines how participatory approaches in project management and implementation contributed to progress towards the project's goals.

### **EQ 4. To what extent did the project contribute to the country programme outcomes and outputs?**

*Finding 4. The project demonstrated effectiveness in delivering key outputs, including advancing evidence generation, strengthening institutional capacities for digital governance, and achieving the development of the e-governments and open data portals, alongside the digitalization of over 40 e-services, surpassing initial targets. However, challenges such as political transitions, fragmented coordination, infrastructure deficiencies, and limitations in platform functionality highlight uneven progress toward achieving more integrated and user-centric digital solutions.*

#### **Evidence generation**

Evaluation evidence suggests that the Project's evidence generation activities contributed to better understanding of the needs and perceptions of citizens and businesses on e-services (demand side) and also the capacity gaps and needs of the service providers (supply side). Notable contributions were evidenced through three cycles of research to assess the needs and perceptions of citizens and

businesses on e-governance, i.e., Public Opinion Surveys to assess citizen and business awareness and satisfaction with e-services,<sup>37</sup> which were conducted over the reference period of the evaluation. According to the stakeholder feedback, the findings of these studies were used to inform the directions in which e-services would go and in general steering of the work on digital transformation. Besides, the project also supported several research and analytical activities, including a Legal and Institutional Assessment to evaluate the regulatory framework for digital services. Analysis on GSB upgrade, Analysis of the new e-governments portal, and User Experience Research on the government portal to improve its functionality and accessibility. Additionally, an Assessment of E-service Development Priorities helped prioritise key public services for digitalization based on user demand and institutional capacity.

In support to the ongoing efforts to better understand the digital readiness of local self-governments (LSGs), the Project offered support to UNOPS and ITU joint project “Digital Transformation of Local Self-Governments in Montenegro”<sup>38</sup> to conduct the **digital readiness assessment** at the local level. This research was underway at the time of this evaluation. The project also conducted a research study on needs of 14 municipalities for e-DMS (electronic document management system), which showed that out of 14, 6 municipalities did not have any kind of electronic case management or registry. This research actually set the issues of LSGs digital capacities on the agenda, which was appreciated by interviewed stakeholders. However, due to project's limited scope, there was no follow up, beyond assistance to one pilot municipality of Zeta. Interviews noted that many municipalities which lacked the technical infrastructure and financial resources, could not act on the assessment's findings. At the time of the finalisation of this evaluation, there were no targeted support interventions by government or other donors for local governments, with dedicated resources and capacity-building initiatives by the government or other development partners.

### **Institutional capacity strengthening**

Across all project components, the institutional capacity strengthening served as a cohesive component, bringing together the concrete services and systems with capacities to implement them. Most of the institutional capacity strengthening was focused on offering guidance and advisory to MPA on digitalisation, which was continuous activity of the project. Targeted trainings were also provided to the newly established Project Delivery Unit in the MPA as well as capacity strengthening of the Network of ICT practitioners Unit, as well as the implementation of the Digital Academy activities. The training package for the Delivery Unit was based on the training needs assessment (TNA), which helped identify the specific knowledge gaps within the Unit. According to stakeholder feedback, the tailored capacity-building programme was appreciated as it included a series of structured sessions on key aspects of project cycle management (PCM), focusing on EU funding mechanisms, proposal preparation, and financial structuring, alongside general skills for effective project implementation, as well as practical, hands-on work on concrete projects. Stakeholders appreciated the mentorship and guidance provided by experts in refining project proposals, ensuring that the skills learned were applied effectively. This mentorship was seen as instrumental in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. This process resulted in four developed projects as part of this exercise, two of which—focused on interoperability and a digital wallet application—were subsequently included in the Reform Agenda for Montenegro, which was considered a direct contribution of the project to tangible outcomes of the capacity-building efforts. These efforts were viewed as a crucial investment, particularly in light of Montenegro's aspirations for

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<sup>37</sup> [https://www.undp.org/montenegro/publications/satisfaction-survey-existing-e-services-and-identification-needs-new-ones-citizens-and-business-community-2022?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.undp.org/montenegro/publications/satisfaction-survey-existing-e-services-and-identification-needs-new-ones-citizens-and-business-community-2022?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>38</sup> [https://montenegro.un.org/en/280760-digital-transformation-local-self-governments-montenegro?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://montenegro.un.org/en/280760-digital-transformation-local-self-governments-montenegro?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

EU accession by 2028, and subsequent access to Structural funds which will require robust capacities to access and manage structural funds effectively.

The training of the **ICT network** was a part of the wider engagement with ICT experts in the public administration in peer exchange. Within this framework, a number of ICT network workshops were organised in collaboration with UNDP and MPA with a focus on advancing digital transformation across public administration. The workshops aimed to formalize an ICT practitioner network, foster collaboration, and address key challenges in implementing digital governance and interoperability frameworks. Sessions covered critical areas such as the development of e-services, the establishment of interoperability frameworks, and the improvement of data sharing processes. Participants explored challenges like insufficient data exchange, security concerns, resistance to electronic services, and regulatory barriers. The workshops also facilitated knowledge sharing through international best practices, particularly from Croatia, and highlighted practical strategies for overcoming barriers to digitalization. Stakeholder feedback on the training of the ICT network was predominantly positive, highlighting its relevance and utility in fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and skill development among ICT professionals across public administration institutions. The training sessions were viewed by interviewed stakeholders as an effective mechanism for addressing the siloed nature of ICT functions within different ministries and promoting a sense of community among ICT professionals. Stakeholders also appreciated the opportunity to exchange experiences, best practices, and practical solutions to common challenges in digital transformation, while the establishment of the ICT network was seen as a significant step in overcoming institutional fragmentation, which has historically hindered progress in digitalization. However, challenges were also identified by this evaluation. Stakeholders mentioned that participation in the network was inconsistent, with some key institutions, such as the Ministry of Interior, notably absent from the discussions. This was considered as a critical missed opportunity, given the critical role of MoIA in managing key datasets and infrastructure. This challenge limited the network's potential to address systemic issues that require collaboration across all relevant actors. Additionally, while the training sessions were well-received, stakeholders emphasized the need for ongoing engagement and capacity-building efforts to ensure that the momentum generated by the network is sustained.

### **Digital platforms and Tools**

Analysis of the first output under the reconstructed Intervention logic, i.e. "*Digital platforms and tools are developed to support digital governance*" showed that the design of a number of important software solutions was supported by the Project, but the implementation faced significant challenges due to delays, institutional fragmentation, and limitations in infrastructure readiness.

A key milestone was the development of the **e-government portal** in the last phase of the project, following initial delays due to a prolonged tendering process, as discussed above. According to stakeholder feedback, its current design promotes functionality and versatility, if it is connected appropriately to GSB. Not ensuring compatible systems may hinder its intended purpose as a comprehensive and user-centric platform, as in its current state, it functions largely as a catalogue of services rather than an interactive gateway for completing transactions or accessing services end-to-end. Government stakeholders raised expectation that this will disappear once the government finalises its GSB and e-DMS. However, some external stakeholders and subject matter experts raised concern that should GSB and e-DMS not ensure compatibility, this would affect e-government portal's ability to achieve its envisioned functionality of offering a truly integrated digital experience.

Another structural limitation is the lack of integration with other key systems, such as the e-DMS and the Certification Authority (CA) for electronic signatures. For example, the e-DMS is not expected to be functional until 2025, and the CA for electronic signatures remains fragmented, with inconsistent

implementation across ministries. These delays and technical gaps undermine the portal's ability to provide seamless, paperless services, forcing citizens to rely on analogue or institution-specific processes in many cases.

As it stands at the time of finalisation of the evaluation, it is a step forward in terms of consolidating information about government services in one location, it stops short of enabling users to fully utilise these services within the portal itself. Users are redirected to external platforms or required to physically visit government offices to complete service requests, particularly where payment systems or digital signatures are involved. Once its full functionality is established, the e-government portal has a potential to resolve the core inefficiencies and inconveniences that digital services are meant to solve.

The fragmented institutional landscape further complicates the situation. Ministries are responsible for their own e-services, and the stakeholders emphasised that MPA, which oversees the e-governments portal, lacks the authority to mandate participation or integration from other line ministries. Uneven levels of cooperation and interest from ministries were also raised by stakeholders, with some ministries resisting efforts to digitalize their services due to concerns over additional administrative burdens or loss of control. Ministries also appear hesitant to upload services to the portal, viewing the MPA's perceived lack of capacity as a potential risk to the success of their own initiatives. As a result, the portal risks becoming underutilised or incomplete, with only a subset of government services represented.

The e-portal also faces challenges related to user adoption and public perception. While it aims to improve accessibility and convenience, the portal will need to be promoted and citizens should be encouraged to transition from traditional in-person services to digital ones. However, these efforts will be beyond project's reach

The **Open Data Portal**, which was also supported by the Project, was perceived as an important contribution. The Ministry has had strong ownership of the portal, which facilitated timely decisions and alignment with the PAR and Digital Transformation Strategies. While there were challenges related to staff turnover and capacity limitations within the Ministry, the project's focus on training institutions to upload datasets is expected to mitigate these issues and contribute to the portal's sustainability. The Open Data Portal has the potential to play a transformative role in promoting transparency and enhancing the accessibility of government-held information, provided that momentum is maintained, and institutional coordination continues to improve.

The development of the **CIRT portal** was also found to be straightforward and relatively smooth, with stakeholders expressing satisfaction with its delivery. The portal, launched in 2023, includes both internal communication functions and a public-facing domain for sharing cybersecurity updates and information. However, its current use and impact appear limited, as the portal lacks advanced functionalities and has not been consistently updated, with the latest news published in mid-2024, per analysis of the website <https://cirt.gov.me>.

In response to the governments priority to promote the new electronic identity card (eID), the Project procured 10,000 **eID readers** with an expectation that these would be distributed to citizens, with a special emphasis on members of marginalized population, who have limited access to the public administration services.

The distribution of the first batch of eID readers was conducted via the online platform [upitnik.me](https://upitnik.me), accessible through QR codes provided to citizens when applying for new electronic IDs at the MoIA. Citizens received an email confirmation to present to MoIA officers to obtain the eID reader alongside

their eID. This approach was expected to ensure equitable distribution while demonstrating citizens' digital readiness and skills, such as QR code scanning and completing online questionnaires. The identified groups with specific requirements were identified to include persons with disabilities, who require accessible equipment to overcome barriers and enable inclusive public policies; older individuals and retirees, who often struggle with digital literacy and access; young entrepreneurs, who can act as digital technology promoters; women entrepreneurs, for whom access to readers supports economic empowerment and business efficiency; the RAE population, who benefit from improved access to services to reduce societal exclusion; single parents, for whom digital access can save time and simplify processes; and students living in dormitories, who rely on technology for their academic and personal needs.

To engage with these groups, the Project organised workshops, which included distribution of readers and dialogue on e-governance development. During the sessions, representatives of the MPA and MoIA informed on the benefits of eIDs and associated e-services. Citizens expressed a desire for streamlined electronic services to facilitate efficient communication with public administration, with particular emphasis on addressing the needs of vulnerable groups facing complex and redundant procedures.

Despite significant outreach efforts, public interest in eID readers fell short of expectations. To address this, the Project partnered with the MoI and the University of Montenegro to distribute 3,200 readers during university enrolment days for the 2023/24 academic year. The Capital City of Podgorica also participated, receiving 2,000 readers for public and employee use. Furthermore, UNDP collaborated with Emergency Medical Assistance to distribute 25 readers for optimizing information system usage. These initiatives aim to enhance eID adoption and promote widespread access to electronic services.

Evaluation findings reveal that the eID readers did not meet expectations and remain underused as of the time of finalisation of this report. One of the reasons for this was found to be in a discrepancy between the government's desire to have eID readers and a lack of digital services or ID possibilities to be accessed by such readers. This was corroborated by stakeholder feedback, which raised that the primary issue was the lack of alignment between the technical specifications of the e-readers and the practical realities of their use in Montenegro's context. The e-readers were intended to work in conjunction with the country's digital ID cards, enabling citizens to authenticate themselves and sign documents electronically. However, the digital ID cards themselves proved to be non-user-friendly and difficult to integrate into existing systems. This mismatch between the e-readers and the digital IDs created a significant barrier to their adoption and undermined the project's objectives. The evaluation found that a compounding problem was the slow response from the MoIA, which was responsible for distributing the e-readers and promoting their use. Despite the project's efforts to develop tutorials and educational materials to assist citizens in using the e-readers, and organise communication on their use, the delays and internal coordination issues as well as the delayed risk management led to a situation where the e-readers were procured and distributed without adequate assurances of their functionality or use, resulting in a negative outcome for the project. From a financial perspective, the investment in e-readers currently appears inefficient, as many devices remain unused and stored in MoIA branches. However, with the growing availability of digital services, these devices have a potential to play a more significant role in the future. For instance, the Anti-Corruption Agency recently requested several thousand e-readers for use in their services, highlighting the potential for these devices to contribute meaningfully to the digital ecosystem over time.

## **E-Services**

Evaluation findings reveal that the development of e-services exceeded initial targets and stands out as a major success of the project, despite infrastructural and organizational barriers. Originally, the



project aimed to have 3 e-services on Level 4 of maturity by the end of 2022, 5 e-services on Level 4 of maturity by the end of 2023, and 2 e-services on Level 5 of maturity by the end of 2023 (See Annex 4 with an overview of status of indicators). However, the adaptive approach taken by the implementing team allowed the digitalization of more than 40 services by the time of the finalisation of this evaluation (See the *full list of supported e-services in Annex 3*). This overachievement was largely driven by the freeing of funds following the discontinuation of planned investments into GSB which allowed for such expansion. Besides, strategic flexibility and the ability to bundle services within broader initiatives also contributed to this. For instance, during the development of the NGO registry, the project team identified opportunities to expand the scope to include registries for international organizations, political parties, and foundations. This resulted in the digitalization of 24 services under a single directorate, showcasing the project's ability to leverage synergies and maximize impact.

Similarly, the collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation resulted in a range of e-services for enrolment in the education system, which have been highly praised for their utility, accessibility and enhanced efficiency. Cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Media led to the digitalization of seven services related to Calls for Proposals (CfPs), covering all directorates within the Ministry. This initiative was cited by stakeholders as an illustrative example of how the development of one service helps offer an insight into how the system can be improved as a whole, leading to the scalability of the project's approach, to cover multiple services of the Ministry. Document review and stakeholder feedback also suggested that this cooperation helped enhance institutional understanding of how digitalization can improve transparency and efficiency.

The Project also supported the Parliament of Montenegro to develop a mobile application for iOS and Android platforms that can provide users (citizens) with access to information about the work of the Parliament of Montenegro (including access to current news, laws, sessions, MPs' profiles, and other relevant information via the API already implemented on the Parliament of Montenegro website – <http://www.skupstina.me>).

Stakeholder interviews corroborated the project's role in fostering a cultural shift within the institutions that have been supported, with growing interest in further digitalization. For example, based on the positive experience with the services supported by the project, the Ministry of Culture and Media expressed interest in digitalizing an additional 10 services and allocated its own budget for this purpose, though stakeholders noted that the Ministry lacked the capacity to implement such initiatives independently.

In response to the request of the Zeta municipality, the project also supported the development of a modern web portal, <https://zeta.me>, to facilitate easier communication with the citizens and businesses, while enhancing transparency and accountability of the local administration, and provide the opportunity for further development of e-services at the local level. While this was an isolated example, it was an important one to underpin the advocacy efforts of the project of the need to invest stronger at digitalisation at local level.

Overall, evaluation findings show that, while the project exceeded its targets in developing e-services, the process was largely reactive and lacked coherence due to factors that were beyond project's control (largely related to stagnation and lack of decision on GSB).

The project also faced persistent challenges in achieving the highest levels of e-service maturity. Main challenge with this classification comes from a lack of standardised/accepted rating and definition of what each level of maturity means in Montenegrin context. According to international standards, the level 5 maturity entails that a service includes full integration of digital signatures, electronic payments, and document management, i.e. that a user can start and finish the entire service online,

including payment. However, this full service is still not possible in Montenegro due to infrastructural gaps—particularly the absence of a fully operational e-DMS and fragmented CA and payment systems. The CA, which governs the use of digital signatures by public servants, is not yet integrated across all ministries involved in service processes, creating bottlenecks for fully digital workflows. Stakeholders also noted that while the digitalization of services demonstrated the feasibility and benefits of such reforms, many ministries and agencies still lack the technical expertise and institutional capacity to sustain and expand these efforts without external support.

**Project's contributions to the Outcome "Capacity and infrastructure within public administration is in place and in use to deliver secure, integrated, efficient, and sustainable digital services"**

*Finding 5. The project contributed to Montenegro's digital transformation by strengthening public administration capacities, developing foundational platforms, and delivering e-services that improved efficiency and accessibility. However, fragmented institutional coordination, limited platform functionality, and the absence of integrated systems have constrained broader, systematic digitalisation outcomes.*

The findings from document review and stakeholder consultations highlight that the project has made meaningful contributions to Montenegro's digital transformation, specifically by strengthening the capacity and infrastructure of public administration to deliver digital services that are more secure, integrated, efficient, and sustainable. However, as discussed above, these advancements have been uneven and encountered a mixed degree of success depending on the type of support or host institution. For instance, the establishment of digital infrastructure, such as the e-governments portal, the Open Data portal, and the CIRT portal, represents a significant foundation for further modernisation of digital governance. These platforms have laid a foundation for enhanced service delivery, data management, and transparency. However, their transformative potential remains constrained by limitations in functionality, interoperability and integration, ownership and adoption, as detailed in previous findings.

On the positive side, the development of specific e-services has demonstrated tangible benefits. Initiatives with the Ministry of Culture and Media, such as the digitalization of competitive funding processes, and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology's online enrolment services have delivered improved efficiency and accessibility for both citizens and institutions. In particular, the use of university enrolment and related services has peaked, with over 90% of students using them rather than offline ones. Stakeholders corroborated evidence of these gains, noting significant time and cost savings for the Ministries (and citizens), although quantitative evidence of these efficiencies could not be established by this evaluation.

Capacity-building efforts under the project, particularly in support to the establishment of the Project Delivery Unit within the MoPA and targeted training programmes, have addressed key knowledge gaps and improved this Unit's capacity to engage with digital transformation processes and access EU funding. The project also helped to establish the network of ICT experts within the public administration, whose interactions were facilitated by UNDP's convening role. The interest and engagement of ICT experts in the network has shown initial promise in fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing among IT staff across institutions, although its sustainability remains uncertain due to its reliance on external facilitation.

Persistent institutional fragmentation and political instability have emerged as significant barriers to achieving broader outcome-level results. Stakeholders noted that the Coordination Body for digitalization is in place, though such body cannot overcome the absence of a central operational authority—such as one that would be positioned within the Prime Minister's office—that could

effectively steer and enforce a unified digitalization agenda across ministries. The MPA possesses the appropriate mindset and capacity to drive reforms; however, its ability to require such changes from other ministries is constrained by its equal standing with other ministries, limiting its authority or empowerment to enforce reforms across the governmental structure. Thus far, adoption and integration of digital services in Montenegro is still institution level process and not a systematic whole-of-government approach, with some ministries reluctant to engage due to perceived administrative burdens or fears of losing autonomy.<sup>39</sup>

The lack of fully integrated systems, such as the e-DMS and a harmonized CA for digital signatures or online payments, further hinders the realization of secure and seamless digital services. These gaps are anticipated to remain until at least 2025, slowing the transition toward a fully digital and paperless public administration.

### **EQ 5. What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended project outputs and outcomes?**

Evaluation findings suggest that the achievement of intended project outputs and outcomes was shaped by a complex interplay of enabling and constraining factors. On the positive side, the project benefited from UNDP's strong strategic positioning and established partnerships with government institutions. This helped foster collaboration and consensus-building among diverse stakeholders, leading to eventual resolution of problems and successful delivery of initiatives such as the e-government portal and other digital tools. The integration of evidence-based planning, supported by cycles of research on user satisfaction, informed service development and kept the programme aligned with the needs of citizens and businesses.

The adaptability and flexibility of the project team further contributed to the programme's relevance and effectiveness. UNDP managed to efficiently reallocate funds and adjust activities, and also ensured that the tendering process is implemented efficiently. This led to multiple tenders and processes at the same time, which strained UNDP's human resources (both at programme and operational levels), but this was overcome by dedicated efforts.

Linked to these changes, a positive role of EUD was also praised as a driver of efficiency. EUD engaged very closely with the project and the Steering committee, facilitating discussions and final agreements, unblocking the project also by efficient approvals of adapted activities. Evaluation findings also suggest that the selection of quality experts and vendors working on critical deliverables was a driver of results.

However, the programme faced significant challenges that hindered its full potential. Political and institutional instability was a major impediment, with frequent changes in government disrupting decision-making and delaying implementation. Institutional fragmentation, particularly the division of responsibilities among newly formed ministries, further complicated coordination and created inefficiencies.

Resistance and uneven engagement among line ministries further exacerbated these issues. A lack of responsiveness by some line ministries, and notably the MoIA was highlighted by stakeholders as a particular bottleneck in terms of data sharing which is prerequisite for interoperability, hampered

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<sup>39</sup> See more in UNDP (2020); On the Verge of Digital Future for All: Human Development Report Montenegro 2020; <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/2020nhdrmontenegro.pdf>

progress across several initiatives. Cybersecurity issues, particularly the 2021/2022 cyberattack, also disrupted progress and redirected attention and resources away from planned activities.

The programme's wide-ranging scope, while ambitious, stretched resources and attention, adding a significant burden in particular in the last year of project implementation, as noted above.

### **Assessment of ToC assumptions**

The ToC (Figure 2) provided a clear framework linking inputs and activities to outputs, outcomes, and impact. It was underpinned by several key assumptions, including proactive engagement from government stakeholders, availability of financial and human resources, and a stable political context. While these assumptions were logical and supported the intervention's design, their validity was frequently tested during implementation and often challenged by contextual realities.

As also elaborated in other sections of this report, proactive engagement from some government stakeholders was evident; however, the lack of a centralised authority and inconsistent political will created significant coordination challenges. Although financial resources were appropriately allocated, limited human resource capacity within the government hindered the ability to fully absorb and sustain new systems and services. Frequent changes in government, high staff turnover, and shifting priorities further created an unstable political environment, which constrained long-term planning and implementation. The reliance on individual champions within ministries exacerbated vulnerabilities, as progress often stalled when these individuals changed roles or left their positions. Institutional weaknesses within the government also affected the overall effectiveness of the otherwise strong partnership between UNDP, the EU, and the Government of Montenegro.

The cancellation of the GSB, a critical component of the Project's intervention logic, significantly weakened its ability to achieve transformative results. The GSB was intended to enable interoperability and seamless integration of e-services, a key foundation for the Project's goals. Its cancellation introduced risks of incompatibility between the e-government portal and any future GSB systems, highlighting the influence of external factors beyond the Project's control on its outcomes and impact. These challenges underscored the importance of addressing systemic gaps in coordination, institutional capacity, and centralized oversight to ensure the sustainability and scalability of digital transformation efforts.

### **Analysis of risks and mitigation strategies**

The project document included a comprehensive risk analysis and outlined mitigation measures to address potential delays due to political turnover, shifting institutional priorities, resistance to digital transformation, and insufficient technical skills within public sector institutions. These risks were proactively managed during the project through targeted measures, such as securing high-level government commitments, consistent communication to maintain digital transformation as a priority, capacity-building programs for civil servants and ICT practitioners, and fostering dialogue with institutional stakeholders to promote acceptance of innovative digital solutions.

However, during implementation, additional risks materialised that were not explicitly anticipated in the initial risk analysis. These included the cancellation of the GSB, which disrupted interoperability plans, and broader challenges posed by frequent changes in government and high turnover of public officials, further affecting long-term planning and implementation. The project adapted to these emerging risks by reallocating resources to achievable outcomes, such as developing additional e-services, intensifying engagement with local stakeholders, and strengthening cybersecurity initiatives. While these adaptive measures demonstrated the project's flexibility, certain risks, such as ensuring

full interoperability and systemic cybersecurity resilience, remained partially unresolved. The project's approach highlights the importance of dynamic risk management to address both anticipated and emerging challenges effectively.

**EQ 6. To what extent has the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective? and EQ 7. To what extent are project management and implementation participatory and is this participation contributing towards achievement of the project objectives?**

*Finding 6. The project's partnership strategy and participatory management and implementation contributed positively to its objectives by fostering institutional engagement, knowledge-sharing, and capacity-building. However, the effectiveness of these processes was constrained by uneven participation across ministries and limited user engagement, which remain as areas for improvement.*

Evaluation findings suggest that the UNDP's partnership strategy has been appropriate, though its effectiveness was beyond control of the project, given the complex and multi-stakeholder context of the project. UNDP's exercised its convening power and long-standing relationships with government institutions, donors, and other key stakeholders to facilitate processes and partnerships, despite challenges, which helped in particular to steer often difficult discussions. This facilitated alignment on priorities, coordination of activities, and resource mobilization for critical components of the programme. For instance, UNDP's continued efforts to find solutions for GSB through bilateral meetings and Steering committee have proven useful to find alternatives that would still add value.

Stakeholders also noted that UNDP's ability to act as a neutral intermediary allowed it to bridge communication gaps and promote cooperation between often siloed government entities. However, neither UNDP nor MPA could overcome the resistance to digitalisation efforts and a lack of sustained commitment from some institutions, particularly the MoIA.

When it comes to participatory processes, the project management and implementation processes incorporated a reasonable level of participation, which contributed to the achievement of project objectives in several areas. UNDP facilitated participatory mechanisms such as frequent steering committee meetings and stakeholder consultations, enabling input from government institutions, donors, and technical experts. These forums provided opportunities to align activities with government priorities and to adapt plans based on evolving circumstances. Stakeholders noted that this participatory approach was especially effective during the reallocation of funds from the GSB initiative to support e-services and cybersecurity activities, reflecting UNDP's ability to respond to diverse stakeholder perspectives.

The participatory nature of the project was further reinforced through tailored capacity-building initiatives, which involved both project unit staff and broader institutional stakeholders. This approach fostered a sense of ownership and contributed to the development of concrete project outputs, such as project proposals for future EU funding. The establishment of the ICT network also exemplifies a participatory approach, as it created a platform for IT professionals from various institutions to exchange knowledge and collaborate on common challenges.

However, participation was uneven across institutions. While some ministries were actively engaged, others were less cooperative, for the reasons detailed across findings of this evaluation. Additionally, while the steering committees facilitated dialogue, some stakeholders felt that their recommendations were not always fully implemented, which limited the effectiveness of participatory processes in driving tangible outcomes.

The participation of end-users—citizens and businesses—was less evident in the project's implementation. While research studies informed the design of e-services, stakeholders noted that

more robust public engagement and awareness-raising efforts remains warranted to strengthen the adoption and usability of these services.

### 3.3 EFFICIENCY

#### **EQ 8. To what extent have the UNDP project implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective?**

*Finding 7. The project's efficiency was mixed, with early delays caused by political instability, institutional fragmentation, the 2022 cyberattack, and changes in project focus introduced by the MPA, which disrupted planned activities and diverted resources. Despite these setbacks, UNDP's adaptive management facilitated a late surge in implementation in 2024, ensuring that most deliverables will be completed by project closure, though this placed significant strain on operational teams and procurement processes.*

Evidence from document reviews and stakeholder interviews highlights the project's mixed efficiency, shaped by significant challenges throughout its implementation. The early phases of the project were marked by stagnation and delays, primarily due to multiple government changes that disrupted institutional continuity and led to high staff turnover within public administration. This instability was compounded by a major cyberattack on Montenegro's IT infrastructure in 2022, which diverted governmental focus and resources to immediate crisis management, but also affected digital domain, further delaying planned project activities.

As shown in Figure 1 in Section 1, budget utilisation reflects the project's trajectory, with periods of stagnation in 2022 followed by a sharp acceleration in 2024, following the resolution of the GSB issues. Analysis of the project's budget utilisation revealed key variances between planned and actual expenditures, particularly in programmatic activities and project management. Significant reallocations occurred due to the cancellation of the GSB, redirecting resources toward achievable outcomes such as additional e-services and cybersecurity initiatives. Expenditures on local consultants increased substantially to address gaps created by delays and shifting priorities, while international consultant costs were reduced due to a revised scope of activities. Travel costs saw notable increases, reflecting the need for intensified local engagement during critical phases. Similarly, adjustments in contractual services for companies supported alternative activities to meet project objectives. These variances highlight the project's adaptability in addressing emerging challenges and prioritising achievable results within the given constraints.

In terms of project's overall efficiency, evidence suggests that a lack of a decisive resolution on the GSB development process was a critical impediment, stalling several key project activities, including the development of the e-governments portal. These delays reflected the fragmented institutional landscape and limited coordination among line ministries and also with UNDP as implementing partner, which posed obstacles to integrated initiatives such as the interoperability framework and e-DMS system, both essential to achieving the project's objectives. Such problems were also cited relative to inefficiencies in the procurement and use of e-readers. Despite these challenges, UNDP demonstrated a commendable ability to adapt financial resources to emerging priorities, ensuring that the project's core objectives were addressed within the available timeframe. Internal staff turnover within the project also emerged as a challenge, though UNDP overcame this challenge by ensuring that the institutional memory was captured, particularly during critical phases of decision-making and implementation.

Despite these setbacks, once the GSB issue was resolved, the project saw a surge in activity. The efficiency driver in this regard was found to be the responsiveness and openness of EU to engage in discussions on alternatives and approve agreed solutions in timely and efficient manner. Evidence also suggests that UNDP's efficient operational procedures and adaptive management played a critical role

in accelerating implementation. However, this surge placed immense strain on UNDP programme and operations teams as stakeholders suggested, creating a risk to broader organizational capacity and efficiency. This pressure was mitigated to some extent by the selection of capable and responsive vendors who demonstrated a high level of commitment to delivering on tight timelines, which has materialised in most activities thus far, with a positive efficiency forecast until the project completion. Stakeholder feedback confirms that all deliverables were completed or will be finalized by the project's conclusion.

**EQ 9. To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by UNDP ensure effective and efficient project management? and**

**EQ 11. To what extent are lessons learned being documented by the project team on a continual basis and shared with appropriate parties who could learn from the project?**

*Finding 8. The M&E framework effectively supported adaptive project management by systematically tracking progress, identifying challenges, and enabling timely adjustments to activities and resource allocation, particularly during critical phases of the project. However, while it demonstrated strong utility as a management tool, the framework lacked mechanisms to capture and document lessons learned explicitly, limiting its potential to inform broader reflections and future programming.*

The results framework provided a solid foundation for tracking progress toward digital transformation, but the evaluation findings suggest that it could have been strengthened by integrating more nuanced and comprehensive indicators from the outset. This would have ensured a more robust assessment of inclusivity, gender equality, and accessibility, providing a clearer picture of the Project's overall impact.

The results framework of the Project set targets for critical outcomes, such as the number of e-services reaching Level 4 and Level 5 maturity and the development of platforms like the e-Citizens portal, but it did not provide sufficient insight into the inclusiveness or accessibility of these services, particularly for women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups.

Another notable limitation was the absence of gender-specific indicators. The framework included an indicator on citizen awareness of digital services, but gender-disaggregated data was incorporated only during implementation rather than at the planning stage. This reactive approach limited the ability to systematically track progress on GEWE. Additionally, the indicator for public awareness of digitalization (% of surveyed citizens aware of digital services) was useful but somewhat narrow in scope, focusing on general awareness without addressing satisfaction levels or the specific accessibility challenges faced by vulnerable groups. Similarly, the indicator for data protection and security provisions in public administration institutions did not account for broader considerations, such as institutional capacity or the sustainability of these measures.

In the area of disability inclusion, the results framework showed further gaps. Although the Project implemented commendable initiatives, such as distributing eID readers to persons with disabilities, these efforts were not reflected in the framework's indicators. Consequently, there was no systematic mechanism to measure the impact of these activities on digital inclusion for persons with disabilities, which left an important dimension of the Project's outcomes underexplored.

Analysis of the applied M&E systems and procedures, shows that these assisted project management, which was especially relevant given all the challenges that the project encountered over the implementation period. Review of project reports and indicator data shows that UNDP systematically tracked the progress, identification of challenges, and adaptation of project activities in response to changing circumstances. Regular reporting, frequent Steering Committee meetings, and action plans developed to address delays demonstrate that the M&E systems were actively used as a management

tool. M&E data allowed the project team to adjust activities and reallocate resources as needed, particularly during the critical final phase when project momentum surged.

The M&E system reflected a number of lessons learned on what works or is feasible or not in the project implementation. However, these were not explicitly presented in progress reports due to the fact that templates do not require such section.

### 3.4 SUSTAINABILITY

The assessment of the sustainability of the project's benefits was performed under three key domains: the enabling environment, institutional capacity, and individual level (access to services). Key findings of this assessment are presented below.

#### **EQ 10. To what extent will financial and economic resources be available to sustain the benefits achieved by the project?**

*Finding 9. The sustainability of the project's outcomes is supported by initial government commitment to digitalization, evidenced by budgetary allocations and institutional interest in expanding digital services, but this commitment remains uneven across ministries, limiting coordinated adoption and long-term viability. Persistent challenges, including fragmented responsibilities, reliance on donor funding, and delayed interoperability of critical systems such as the GSB and e-DMS, constrain the potential for achieving a fully integrated and sustainable digital transformation.*

When it comes to **enabling environment** for digitalisation, document review and stakeholder interviews reveal that the key driver of effectiveness and sustainability of digitalisation efforts is the sustained, albeit more declarative than operational commitment of the Government of Montenegro to digitalisation, as cited by some stakeholders. This evidenced by budgetary allocations for the maintenance of critical infrastructure, such as the GSB, and the expansion of e-services in select ministries. The Ministry of Culture and Media, for instance, has expressed interest in further digitalizing its services and has allocated resources to support this agenda. These initiatives reflect an understanding of the importance of digital transformation and an initial willingness to allocate financial and economic resources to sustain project outcomes in some institutions. However, as noted in previous sections, such commitment is not consistent across all line institutions, which presents a hindrance to operationalisation of digital transformation commitments and their further sustainability. Evaluation findings also reveal that the reliance on donor funding for much of the project has indicated a vulnerability to sustainability, as domestic resources remain insufficient to fully sustain or scale the initiatives. Instances such as the underutilization of eID readers reveal inefficiencies in leveraging investments, further highlighting the weakness in terms of resource alignment. Additionally, the decentralized approach to digital governance, with fragmented responsibilities across ministries, impedes coordinated decision-making and resource allocation, presenting a systemic risk to the enabling environment, as corroborated by stakeholder interviews.

Additionally, the capacity-building initiatives under the project have equipped government institutions, particularly the MPA's Project Delivery Unit, with tools and methodologies to access EU structural funds and other external financing mechanisms. This foundation provides an opportunity for Montenegro to attract additional resources, enhancing the enabling environment for sustained digitalization.

At the **institutional level**, the project has made strides in building capacity within the public administration. The support to the establishment of the MPA's Project Delivery Unit, as discussed above has been successful leading to better capacity to access external funding opportunities. Stakeholder interviews cited that the Unit's team and wider directorate are, at the time of the



evaluation, stable and committed which can help sustain the results. Evaluation findings also suggest that there is sufficient commitment and plans in place to sustain developed e-services and portals. However, stakeholders noted that the e-governments portal will not be sustainably utilised without government's investment in its expansion and interoperability. Key government stakeholders confirmed plans to interconnect the portal with GSB, which is a prerequisite. However, it remains to be seen if all ministries will connect and if the GSB will be sufficiently operational to promote the portal's envisaged use.

Institutional challenges that were mentioned across this report also have influence on sustainability of results. Not all ministries possess the same level of capacity, and there is uneven readiness to sustain or expand digital services. The MPA, tasked with overseeing the digitalisation efforts, lacks sufficient authority to enforce digitalization priorities across other ministries, leading to inconsistent levels of engagement and adoption. Additionally, delayed or incomplete systems, such as the e-DMS and CA further constrain sustainability potential. These systems are critical for achieving a fully digital and integrated public administration but are not yet operational, extending sustainability challenges beyond the project timeline. Institutional fragmentation and limited cooperation among ministries exacerbate these delays, complicating efforts to align resources and priorities.

At the **individual level**, the project aimed to enhance citizens' access to efficient, digital public services. Successes include the development of e-services such as online enrolment for universities and schools, which have demonstrated tangible benefits for citizens by saving time and reducing administrative burdens. These examples highlight how digital services can improve accessibility and efficiency, particularly for younger, digitally literate populations. However, barriers to broader individual access persist. The underutilization of eID readers, intended to facilitate secure digital identification, highlights both technical challenges and a lack of effective user outreach. While there has been an increase in the recognition of the value of e-services as evidence through subsequent opinion polls, there is remaining portion of Montenegrin society which does not trust e-services, due to many reasons including a lack of trust in cyber security, as also corroborated by interviewed stakeholders.

### 3.5 IMPACT

Capturing or forecasting impacts of a project which is still under implementation (even in their finalisation) is inherently hard, due to the fact that most of the outputs are still being delivered, so it is difficult to understand their transformative potential beyond output level. Taking that caveat into account, the evaluator analysed the potential impact of the Project by exploring the extent to which the Project has engendered changes that show prospects to catalyse from **improvements in digital infrastructure and e-services towards the overall performance and service delivery of institutions involved in public services**. This involved examining the Project's influence on the national landscape and ascertaining the transformative shifts that likely will not have materialised without the Project's support. The evaluator also assessed the extent to which the project has influenced of the overall digital transformation of the public administration sector, and what role has the project played in advancing the digitalization agenda in Montenegro.

**EQ 12. What long-term changes have resulted from the project's improvements in digital infrastructure and e-services on the overall performance and service delivery of institutions involved in public services? and**

**EQ 13. How has the project contributed to the overall digital transformation of the public administration sector, and what role has it played in advancing the digitalization agenda within the country?**

*Finding 10. While it is hard to measure impact at this moment of project's cycle, the project's potential largely lays in the delivery of foundational e-services and platforms that have a potential to reduce administrative burdens and enhance access and transparency. However, systemic barriers, such as fragmented governance and limited interoperability, have hindered the transformative changes necessary for a fully integrated digital public administration, leaving long-term impacts contingent on sustained institutional commitment and further strategic investment.*

As mentioned above, project experienced significant delays, leading to a compressed timeline for delivering outputs in its final months. While all outputs were completed by the project's closure, the late start and the subsequent rush to implement and finalize activities at the very end severely limit the ability to assess long-term transformative changes or forecast them. Hence, this assessment is mostly qualitative and reflects the views and perceptions of engaged stakeholders, who noted that an already shaping impact relates to the online education enrolment services which enabled more than 90% of students to enrol in university or apply/access university specific services online.<sup>40</sup> This is example of services that have significantly increased access for students and parents while streamlining institutional processes, showcase the added value of digital services resulting in more efficiencies at both the demand and supply sides. Besides, NGO and other registries have a potential to ensure higher transparency and easier access to NGOs which can be used inter alia, for purposes of supporting social or other services. Digital platforms for CfPs in the domain of culture have already shown savings in terms of budget spent on preparation of such calls, though the evaluation could not establish concrete figures. These digital services and platforms have a potential to reduce administrative burdens and improve user experience, demonstrating the potential of e-services to save time and resources for both institutions and end-users. According to the comparative analysis of Opinion polls conducted by the project, familiarity with electronic services has increased overall, with 52.2% of respondents stating they are mostly familiar, up from 45.4% in 2022. However, full familiarity declined slightly, from 7.7% in 2022 to 5.7% in the latest survey. Gender analysis reveals variations in familiarity levels.<sup>41</sup> Among women, 7.8% have never heard of electronic services, while 33.6% have heard of them but know nothing more. A majority (53.8%) are mostly familiar, and 4.7% are fully familiar. For men, 10.7% have never heard of electronic services, and 32.1% have heard of them but lack further knowledge. A slightly smaller proportion of men (50.5%) are mostly familiar compared to women, but a higher percentage (6.8%) report full familiarity.<sup>42</sup> These findings suggest progress in general awareness, though there are notable differences in familiarity levels between men and women.

The establishment of foundational digital infrastructure, such as the e-governments portal and Open Data portal, has been challenged by a lack of joint approach which would also include the GSB, presenting a shortcoming when it comes to the redefinition of how public institutions organise and present services. Nevertheless, there is a positive perception among stakeholders of the potential of both the e-government and Open Data portals to promote transparency, access to information, and streamline service delivery for citizens and businesses. The Open Data portal, for instance, has advanced the principle of open governance by making datasets publicly accessible, empowering civil society and the private sector to engage in data-driven initiatives and fostering accountability.

The project's investment in enhancing institutional capacities by equipping public administration staff with the skills and tools needed to manage and expand digital services holds significant catalytic potential. It enables public institutions to better access funding opportunities in the digital domain,

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<sup>40</sup> Project monitoring data

<sup>41</sup> Comparative data from subsequent opinion polls. See <https://www.undp.org/montenegro/publications/satisfaction-survey-existing-e-services-and-identification-needs-new-ones-citizens-and-business-community-2022>

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

such as those offered by EU funding programme **Digital Europe**,<sup>43</sup> which stakeholders identified as a valuable mechanism to support and advance further digital transformation efforts.

As cited by interviewed stakeholders, these potential gains depend on assumptions of stable government and institutional structures and recognition that the digitalisation can provide potential for enhanced efficiency and reduced burden on public administration staff, many of whom still operate under paper-based and manual approaches. Some good examples, such as those from the Ministry of Education and of Culture and Media offer good case studies of how cultural shift within public institutions, can promote digital solutions and their use.

However, the evaluation shows that the project also highlighted and, in some cases, exacerbated systemic challenges that limit the broader impact of digital infrastructure improvements. Fragmented institutional mandates, uneven cooperation among ministries, and the lack of an overarching governance structure for digitalization have slowed the pace of change. In that context, individual ministries have benefited from targeted e-service developments, but it remains to be seen how the upgraded GSB will enable interoperability and the realization of seamless, end-to-end digital service delivery.

Stakeholders also identified cultural and organizational barriers, including resistance to change and the reliance on traditional, paper-based processes in some institutions and by citizens as well. These challenges have limited the adoption and optimal use of digital infrastructure, requiring ongoing efforts to promote digital literacy and change management within the public administration.

Stakeholders cited that, looking ahead, the long-term sustainability and impact of these changes depend on the government's commitment to further digitalization, including maintaining and upgrading the digital infrastructure, fostering interoperability across systems, and addressing gaps in institutional coordination. While the project has laid a solid foundation, realizing its full transformative potential will require continued investment, strategic leadership, and a unified vision for digital governance.

### 3.6 GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**EQ 14. To what extent has the project included in the design and promoted during implementation positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women? Were there any unintended effects?**

*Finding 11. The project demonstrated efforts to mainstream gender and human rights by integrating a gender lens into its activities, such as capacity-building sessions that engaged both male and female public officials and studies that considered gender gaps in digital governance. The challenge of an absence of a targeted gender analysis during the planning phase was mitigated by collection of disaggregated data on perceptions of citizens and service usage.*

The project's integration of gender and human rights considerations was assessed to evaluate its design, implementation, and outcomes. Findings indicate that the project incorporated gender considerations into its DoA and applied a gender lens to various activities. For example, conferences facilitated by the project addressed the gender dimensions of digitalization, and the study *Digital Ecosystem - Assessing the Digital Governance Framework* examined gender gaps alongside legal, institutional, and IT frameworks.<sup>44</sup> Capacity-building initiatives further promoted gender equality by

<sup>43</sup> <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/digital-programme>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.undp.org/cnr/montenegro/publications/procjena-rodnog-jaza-u-oblasti-digitalnog-upravljanja-i-dizajniranju-razvoju-i-upravljanju-stem-proizvodima/uslugama-od>

involving male and female participants from public administration, providing women and men with opportunities to enhance skills in digital governance and project management.

Stakeholder feedback highlighted the potential of digital services supported by the project to reduce barriers that disproportionately affect women or other vulnerable groups, such as challenges in accessing administrative and government services. Specific services, such as online enrolment in educational institutions, were identified as having tangible benefits for both women and men. For instance, the introduction of online enrolment for kindergartens was cited as particularly beneficial for women, who are often the primary caregivers. According to stakeholders, this service enabled women to complete enrolment processes more efficiently, saving time and reducing the need for physical visits to government offices, which are often challenging due to caregiving responsibilities. Similarly, online enrolment for schools and universities provided broader accessibility for families and students, further streamlining administrative tasks and fostering inclusivity.

The project also took steps to engage with diverse citizen groups in the distribution of eID readers. These efforts targeted groups such as women entrepreneurs, single parents, retirees, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities like the RAE population. By improving access to technology, the initiative aimed to address the specific needs of these groups, such as time savings for single parents and accessibility improvements for persons with disabilities. However, due to the limited uptake of eIDs, which are necessary for utilizing e-readers effectively, the full potential of these devices was not realized. Many citizens did not adopt eIDs at the anticipated rate, despite outreach efforts, which hindered the broader use of e-readers.

Despite these efforts, the project lacked a targeted gender analysis in the initial planning phase, which limited the establishment of gender-oriented indicators and baselines. This was attributed to the rapid preparation of the DoA to address COVID-19-related challenges. As a result, only one indicator "*% of the surveyed citizens who are aware of the digitalization of the public service provision*" made it possible to engrain gender-disaggregated data collected to public opinion polls on digital service usage, which included specific questions to capture both women's and men's perspectives.

## **Social and Environmental Safeguards**

Assessment of the project planning documents shows that the the pre-screening and screening related to Social and Environmental Safeguards (SES) was conducted and no risks were identified during the project design. This was attributed to the project's primary focus on technical and digital transformation objectives, which were designed to address immediate governance and service delivery challenges.

# 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

## 4.1 CONCLUSIONS

### Conclusion 1. Relevance and coherence

The project was **highly relevant**, addressing Montenegro's critical priorities for digital transformation while aligning with national and EU integration objectives. Its initial rationale to respond to emerging needs from COVID-19 restrictions, remained relevant after the pandemic with raising demand to ensure accessibility through digital services. By focusing on building digital infrastructure, strengthening institutional capacities, and improving public service delivery, the project tackled immediate challenges while laying the foundation for a more accessible, efficient, and citizen-centric public administration.

### Conclusion 2. Effectiveness

The project's **effectiveness was mixed**, marked by initial delays and periods of stagnation related to the GSB that were **beyond control of the project**. E-services, which were geared by the project following eventual unblocking of the project marked a phase of accelerated implementation. The project ultimately achieved significant success in delivering outputs that directly supported Montenegro's digital transformation goals. Key achievements included the development of over 40 e-services, foundational digital platforms such as the e-government and Open Data, CIRT portals, and targeted capacity-building initiatives that equipped public officials with critical skills for managing and expanding digital services. These outputs marked tangible potential in enhancing the efficiency of public administration and improving accessibility for citizens, showcasing the potential of digitalization to streamline services and reduce administrative burdens.

In spite of the uneven functionality of key platforms, fragmented system integration, and varying levels of institutional capacity and readiness, the project managed to contribute to the overall digital transformation progress in the country. Inconsistent engagement and a lack of consistent digitalization agenda across government further constrained its ability to translate outputs into sustainable, systemic improvements, which was beyond project influence.

### Conclusion 3. Efficiency

The project was **relatively efficient**, eventually successfully completing deliverables in the revised DoA, following stagnation due to Government's hesitance to make a decision on GSB. The project also suffered from external challenges and delays caused by political instability, the 2022 cyberattack, and shifting priorities. However, frequent changes to the project's focus and results framework, even after key pillars were initially agreed upon, created inefficiencies and disrupted implementation. While adaptive management allowed the project to recover and deliver results, inefficiencies in coordination and reconciliation of government priorities and the need for late-stage acceleration highlight the importance of maintaining consistency in agreed approaches and results to ensure smoother coordination, minimise delays, and enhance operational efficiency.

### Conclusion 4. Sustainability

The project's **sustainability was mixed**. It has laid important groundwork for the sustainability of digital transformation in Montenegro, with promising developments in the enabling environment, institutional capacity, and individual access. Government budget commitments enhanced institutional

expertise, and successful e-services indicate progress. However, significant risks remain. Limited budgetary capacity, heavy reliance on donor funding, institutional fragmentation, and delayed implementation of critical systems (such as GSB, e-DMS) intimidates the long-term sustainability of benefits achieved.

#### Conclusion 5. Impact orientation

The emerging **impact potential** is reflected through examples of delivered e-services showcasing how such investments can streamline administrative processes, improve accessibility for citizens, and enhance governance efficiency. Supported institutions have shown commitment to sustaining and expanding digitalization efforts, highlighting the foundation laid by the project. However, progress remains constrained by continued reliance on donor funding and the fragmented commitment within public administration to advance a unified digital governance agenda. These challenges delay the operationalization of critical systems and significantly limit the project's contributions towards driving broader, transformative change across Montenegro's public administration.

#### Conclusion 6. Cross cutting issues

The project successfully integrated gender and human rights considerations into its design, fostering inclusivity through capacity-building and addressing barriers to digital services for women and other vulnerable groups. It demonstrated strong alignment with gender-sensitive approaches, evident in its efforts to engage diverse stakeholders and provide targeted digital services, such as online enrolment processes, which benefited women significantly. However, the absence of a targeted gender analysis during the design phase limited the establishment of gender-specific baselines and indicators, reducing the project's ability to systematically measure its impact on gender equity.

The SES screening was conducted, and no risks were identified. The project did not have any specific further assessments or analyses of social or environmental risks.

## 4.2 LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation process generated the following lessons learned, that could provide valuable insights for future initiatives in the realm of digital governance:

**Ownership and institutional commitment.** Implementation of this projects confirms the necessity to establish and maintain strong government ownership and commitment to digital transformation. Project experiences confirmed that e-services were better designed and even multiplied in cases where ministries demonstrated enthusiasm and took proactive steps to sustain and expand digital services. Institutional commitment is a prerequisite for success, especially when projects involve complex coordination across multiple stakeholders.

**Centralised coordination and leadership steered by the top government body.** The absence of a central authority with the mandate to oversee and enforce digitalization priorities hindered the project's coherence. The Ministry of Public Administration, despite its central role, remains one of the line ministries at the same level like the others, lacking the authority to mandate integration and participation across other ministries. This highlights the need for a central governance body, potentially at the Prime Minister's level, to streamline digital transformation efforts and address institutional fragmentation.

**Flexibility and adaptability in project design and agile project approaches:** The experience of this project confirms the critical importance of incorporating flexibility and adaptability into the design

and implementation of technical assistance initiatives, particularly in dynamic and politically volatile environments. In a context characterised by frequent governmental changes, ongoing institutional restructuring, and varying levels of understanding and buy-in regarding the value of digital services, rigid project frameworks can hinder responsiveness to emerging needs and shifting priorities. The evaluation highlighted that predefined, fixed lists of systems and services can become constraints in such fluid contexts, as they may fail to account for institutional readiness, evolving priorities, or newly identified opportunities. Conversely, the ability to recalibrate activities and redirect resources to areas of greatest potential impact help to enabled projects to deliver meaningful outcomes despite significant external challenges. This lesson emphasizes that adaptive project management is not only a practical necessity but also a strategic advantage in achieving sustainable progress in complex reform environments.

**Comprehensive and user-centric design of digital solutions:** The experience of this project highlights the critical importance of adopting a holistic and user-centric approach in the design of digital solutions. The limited functionality of key outputs, such as the e-governments portal, was directly linked to the absence of integration with foundational systems like the e-DMS framework and the GSB. These gaps undermined the portal’s potential to deliver seamless, end-to-end digital services and address user needs effectively. This lesson confirms that digital solutions must be planned and developed comprehensively, with a clear focus on user needs and a robust framework for system interoperability. Designing such solutions in isolation or without mechanisms to facilitate smooth interaction across platforms and services risks reducing their effectiveness and overall impact. By ensuring that integration and user accessibility are prioritized from the outset, digital solutions can achieve their intended goals of enhancing efficiency, accessibility, and user satisfaction, while also contributing to broader digital transformation objectives.

**Tailored approach to technical solutions:** The underutilisation of eID readers exemplifies the risks of implementing technical solutions without adequately aligning them with the local context. This challenge highlights the necessity of a tailored approach that thoroughly considers the utility in light of given infrastructure, user experience, existing infrastructure readiness, and system compatibility at every stage of design and implementation. A one-size-fits-all strategy for technical outputs can result in low adoption rates and inefficiencies, as seen with the eID readers, where a mismatch between the technology and the operational environment rendered the solution ineffective. By prioritising a context-aware approach, projects can ensure that technical solutions are not only functionally robust but also practical, accessible, and responsive to the specific needs and capacities of their intended users and operational environments.

### 4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Given that the project will not have a follow-up phase but UNDP, MPA, and the EU will continue supporting digitalization efforts, the following recommendations are drawn from key conclusions and lessons learned to inform the design and execution of other current and future digitalization projects in Montenegro and similar contexts. Consideration of these recommendations can strengthen effectiveness and sustainability and promote the long-term results of digital transformation initiatives.

no.	Recommendation	Responsibility
1.	Advocate for the establishment of centralised leadership for digital transformation in	Digitalization projects should advocate for a centralised governance structure, ideally at the Prime Minister’s Office or a similar high-level authority, to oversee and enforce digitalization priorities. This would mitigate institutional fragmentation,
		UNDP in cooperation with EU

	Montenegro	streamline coordination across ministries, and ensure alignment with national strategies and goals for digital transformation	
2.	Invest in LSGs' digital transformation	Based on the results of the Digital readiness assessment, targeted interventions in support of local governments' digitalisation efforts should be designed, with dedicated resources and capacity-building initiatives to ensure that the LSGs can engage and benefit from national digital transformation efforts.	Government, EU and UNDP
3.	Ensure that future projects provide for sufficient resources (financial, time, human) to design tailored capacity building initiatives	Capacity-building initiatives should be tailored-based on comprehensive needs assessment (and functional analysis) to address existing levels of institutional readiness for selected areas of digital transformation support. This will help to ensure that all stakeholders gain similar level of understanding and are equipped to design and implement digital transformation priorities.	UNDP
4.	Contextualize technical solutions to ensure their sustained utility	<p>Projects should adopt a tailored approach to technical solutions, ensuring alignment with local infrastructure, user readiness, and operational realities. This can be done by investing efforts to understand what can feasibly be achieved within the given context and consolidate support in areas where a project can add value.</p> <p>This deeper engagement ensures that solutions are aligned with the operational realities, and infrastructure readiness, reducing the risk of mismatches, enhancing adoption rates, and strengthening long-term sustainability.</p>	MPA, UNDP, donors
5.	Engage end-users in consideration of the design of digital services	Projects focusing on digital transformation should ensure sufficient resources to include end-users in quality assurance steps in the design of services or portals. This deeper engagement ensures that solutions are human-centered and fulfil user expectations, enhancing adoption rates.	UNDP, MPA, EU
6.	Walk the talk through integration of gender and human rights in the	Digitalization projects should systematically integrate gender and human rights considerations by conducting targeted analyses during the design phase to identify specific barriers faced by marginalized groups and	UNDP, MPA, EU



	digitalisation process	addressing them in the design of services and platforms. This will enable projects to address these barriers effectively, promote equitable access to digital services, and uphold the principle of leaving no one behind.	
7.	Design a pilot project to demonstrate AI applications in enhancing sector-specific e-services	Consider designing a pilot project to demonstrate the practical application of AI in enhancing e-services, with a focus on a specific sector (e.g., health, education, or social services). This initiative could serve as a proof of concept to showcase the benefits of AI and interoperability in public administration, while also providing a model for scaling AI solutions across public administration on central and local levels.	UNDP, MPA, EU

# Annexes

## Annex 1: Terms of reference

enclosed as a separate document.

## Annex 2: Evaluation matrix

The purpose of the evaluation matrix is to provide a clear analytical framework that helps to reduce subjectivity in the evaluative judgement identifying for question: i) Evaluation questions; ii) indicators; iii) data sources; and iv) data collection and analysis methods

Table 1. Evaluation matrix

EQs	Judgement Indicators	Sources of Information	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods
<b>Relevance/Coherence</b>				
EQ 1. To what extent was the project in line with the national development priorities, the country programme's outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Degree to which the objectives and results of the Project were aligned with national digital transformation priorities and frameworks</li> <li>Objectives and results of the project are responsive to observed critical bottlenecks in the data interoperability and service provision and accessibility– in terms of the enabling environment, supply and quality of services and demand factors.</li> <li>Perceptions of stakeholders on the relevance of measures included within the project with the needs of the public administration</li> </ul>	Project documentation National PAR and digitalisation strategies and legislation UNDP and other relevant studies, reports and other monitoring data regarding the digital transformation in Montenegro External sources Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners	Document review, KII interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>Thematic Analysis</li> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Comparative Analysis</li> <li>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</li> </ul>
EQ 2. To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to political, legal, economic, institutional, etc., changes in the country?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of adjustments or modifications made to project interventions in response to emerging and unforeseen needs and changes, as</li> </ul>	Project documentation and other monitoring data regarding the digital transformation in Montenegro	Document review, KII interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>Thematic Analysis</li> <li>Content Analysis</li> </ul>

	documented in project reports and meeting minutes.	External sources  Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparative Analysis</li> </ul> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>
EQ 3. Are the projects objectives and outputs clear, practical and feasible within its frame?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which the project's objectives and outputs are feasible given the available timeframe and resources.</li> </ul>	<p>Project documentation and other monitoring data regarding the digital transformation in Montenegro</p> <p>External sources Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners</p>	Document review, KII interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>Thematic Analysis</li> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Comparative Analysis</li> </ul> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>
<b>Effectiveness</b>				
EQ 4. To what extent did the project contribute to the country programme outcomes and outputs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which the project effectively contributed to achieving both the outputs and outcomes identified in the project ToC</li> <li>The extent to which the project effectively contributed to achieving the intended outcomes outlined in the country programme</li> </ul>	<p>Project documentation National PAR and digitalisation strategies and legislation UNDP and other relevant studies, reports and other monitoring data regarding the digital transformation in Montenegro</p> <p>External sources Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners</p>	Document review, KII interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>Thematic Analysis</li> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Comparative Analysis</li> <li>Contribution analysis</li> </ul> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>
EQ 5. What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended country programme outputs and outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of drivers and hindering factors affecting the delivery of results</li> </ul>	<p>Project documentation National PAR and digitalisation strategies and legislation UNDP and other relevant studies, reports and other monitoring data</p>	Document review, KII interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>Thematic Analysis</li> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Comparative Analysis</li> </ul>

		<p>regarding the digital transformation in Montenegro</p> <p>External sources</p> <p>Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution analysis</li> </ul> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>
EQ 6. To what extent has the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which the partnership strategy has effectively contributed to achieving its intended outputs and outcomes, such as shared objectives and strengthened capacities.</li> </ul>	<p>Project documentation</p> <p>National PAR and digitalisation strategies and legislation</p> <p>UNDP and other relevant studies, reports and other monitoring data regarding the digital transformation in Montenegro</p> <p>External sources</p> <p>Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners</p>	Document review, KII interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>• Thematic Analysis</li> <li>• Content Analysis</li> <li>• Comparative Analysis</li> </ul> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>
EQ 7. To what extent are project management and implementation participatory and is this participation contributing towards achievement of the project objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which relevant stakeholders, including beneficiaries and partners, were actively involved in the decision-making processes throughout project design and implementation.</li> </ul>	<p>Project document and annual reports; Monitoring data; progress reports, meeting minutes; performance review reports</p> <p>Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners</p>	Document review, KII interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>• Thematic Analysis</li> <li>• Content Analysis</li> <li>• Comparative Analysis</li> </ul> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>
<b>Efficiency</b>				
EQ 8. To what extent have the UNDP project implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which project activities and milestones have been completed according to the planned timeline.</li> </ul>	<p>Project document and annual reports; Monitoring data; progress reports, meeting minutes; performance review reports</p>	Document review Semi-structured interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>• Thematic Analysis</li> <li>• Content Analysis</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which the project budget has been effectively utilized without excessive deviation from planned expenditures.</li> <li>The extent to which the project made optimal use of available resources, including human, financial, and material, by employing best practices in project management.</li> </ul>	Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparative Analysis</li> </ul> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>
EQ 9. To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by UNDP ensure effective and efficient project management?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of the M&amp;E system's effectiveness, as demonstrated by the frequency and regularity of M reviews and updates</li> <li>Documented instances where approaches were adjusted based on M&amp;E findings</li> </ul>	<p>Project document and annual reports; Monitoring data; progress reports, meeting minutes; performance review reports</p> <p>Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>Thematic Analysis</li> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Comparative Analysis</li> </ul> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>
<b>Sustainability</b>				
EQ 10. To what extent will financial and economic resources be available to sustain the benefits achieved by the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which funding commitments from the government entities are secured to sustain project benefits.</li> <li>The extent to which financial responsibility for maintaining project outcomes has been incorporated into relevant national or local government budgets.</li> </ul>	<p>Project document and annual reports; Monitoring data; progress reports, meeting minutes; performance review reports</p> <p>National PAR and digitalisation strategies and legislation</p> <p>UNDP and other relevant studies, reports and other monitoring data regarding the digital transformation in Montenegro</p> <p>Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>Thematic Analysis</li> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Comparative Analysis</li> </ul> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>

		stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners		
EQ 11. To what extent are lessons learned being documented by the project team on a continual basis and shared with appropriate parties who could learn from the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which lessons learned are being documented consistently throughout the project lifecycle.</li> </ul>	<p>Project document and annual reports; Monitoring data; progress reports, meeting minutes; performance review reports</p> <p>Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>Thematic Analysis</li> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Comparative Analysis</li> </ul> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>
<b>Impact</b>				
EQ 12. How has the project contributed to the overall digital transformation of the public administration sector, and what role has it played in advancing the digitalization agenda within the country?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which digital tools and solutions developed by the project have been integrated into public administration services.</li> <li>The extent to which the project has influenced policy development, regulatory frameworks, or institutional readiness to support digital transformation in public administration.</li> <li>The extent to which the project has contributed to advancing the country's overall digitalization agenda, including alignment with national digital goals.</li> </ul>	<p>Project document and annual reports; Monitoring data; progress reports, meeting minutes; performance review reports</p> <p>National PAR and digitalisation strategies and legislation</p> <p>UNDP and other relevant studies, reports and other monitoring data regarding the digital transformation in Montenegro</p> <p>Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>Thematic Analysis</li> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Comparative Analysis</li> <li>Contribution analysis</li> </ul> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>
EQ 13. What long-term changes have resulted from the project's improvements in digital infrastructure and e-services on the overall performance and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which e-services introduced by the project have contributed to improvements in the efficiency of public service delivery.</li> </ul>	<p>Project document and annual reports; Monitoring data; progress reports, meeting minutes; performance review reports</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>Thematic Analysis</li> <li>Content Analysis</li> </ul>

<p>service delivery of institutions involved in public services?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which digital infrastructure and e-services have improved the overall user experience and accessibility of public services.</li> </ul>	<p>National PAR and digitalisation strategies and legislation UNDP and other relevant studies, reports and other monitoring data regarding the digital transformation in Montenegro Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparative Analysis</li> <li>Contribution analysis</li> </ul> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>
<p><b>Gender equality</b></p>				
<p>EQ 14. To what extent has the project included in the design and promoted during implementation positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women? Were there any unintended effects?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which gender equality and women's empowerment considerations were integrated into the initial project design.</li> <li>The extent to which the project contributed to measurable improvements in gender equality and the empowerment of women.</li> <li>Evidence of any unintended positive or negative effects on gender equality and women's empowerment as a result of project activities.</li> </ul>	<p>Project document and annual reports; Monitoring data; progress reports, meeting minutes; performance review reports National PAR and digitalisation strategies and legislation UNDP and other relevant studies, reports and other monitoring data regarding the digital transformation in Montenegro Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners</p>	<p>Document review Semi-structured interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>Thematic Analysis</li> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Comparative Analysis</li> <li>Contribution analysis</li> </ul> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>
<p><b>Human rights</b></p>				
<p>EQ 15. To what extent have poor and physically challenged, women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the work of UNDP in the country?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to the project contributed to enhanced accessibility of services to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including the poor, physically challenged, women, and others.</li> </ul>	<p>Project document and annual reports; Monitoring data; progress reports, meeting minutes; performance review reports National PAR and digitalisation strategies and legislation</p>	<p>Document review Semi-structured interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</li> <li>Thematic Analysis</li> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Comparative Analysis</li> <li>Contribution analysis</li> </ul>



		<p>UNDP and other relevant studies, reports and other monitoring data regarding the digital transformation in Montenegro</p> <p>Qualitative data collected through KIIs with UNDP, EU, Government stakeholders, NGOs, Development partners</p>		<p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types</p>
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# Annex 3. Overview of supported e-services

## List of completed electronic services (November 2024):

- online enrolment to the University of Montenegro
- online enrolment to private universities Mediterranean and Adriatic + web services for the University of Donja Gorica
- online enrolment to private kindergartens
- online application for student dormitories
- digital signing of contracts between students and the University of Montenegro
- online application for student scholarships and loans  
mobile app Safe Go CG

## List of electronic services in development (November 2024):

- online registration in the associations register
- online registration in the foundations register
- online registration in the foreign organizations register
- online registration in the political parties register
- online data update in the associations register
- online data update in the foundations register
- online data update in the foreign organizations register
- online data update in the political parties register
- online removal from the associations register
- online removal from the foundations register
- online removal from the foreign organizations register
- online removal from the political parties register
- online issuance of a decision rejecting an association's application
- online issuance of a decision rejecting a foundation's application
- online issuance of a decision rejecting a foreign organization's application
- online issuance of a decision rejecting a political party's application
- online issuance of a decision suspending proceedings for associations
- online issuance of a decision suspending proceedings for foundations
- online issuance of a decision suspending proceedings for foreign organizations
- online issuance of a decision suspending proceedings for political parties
- online issuance of a certificate of recorded information for associations
- online issuance of a certificate of recorded information for foundations
- online issuance of a certificate of recorded information for foreign organizations
- online issuance of a certificate of recorded information for political parties
- online application and processing for public calls/competitions for co-funding projects in cultural and artistic creation
- online application and processing for public calls/competitions for co-funding projects significant to the development of creative industries
- online application and processing for public competitions for funding program content in non-profit print media
- online application and processing for public competitions for the allocation of funds from the Fund for Promoting Media Pluralism and Diversity
- online application and processing for public competitions for the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage Program
- online application and processing for public competitions for the allocation of funds to finance projects and programs of non-governmental organizations

- online application and processing for public calls to select representatives of non-governmental organizations for working bodies of government agencies and to conduct public consultations in drafting laws and strategies
- mobile application for the Parliament of Montenegro

# Annex 4. Overview of status of indicators

	Results chain	Indicators	Baseline (incl. reference year)	Targets (incl. reference year)	Current Value November 2024	Sources and means of verification	Progress
Overall objective: Impact	OO: Accelerate the digital transformation of public administration in Montenegro as COVID-19 response measure, by enabling effective digital services provision that meets the needs of citizens and businesses.	OO 1.1 Indicator: Number of e-services on Level 5 of maturity	OO 1.1 Baseline: 1 e-service on Level 4 of maturity 0 e-service on Level 5 of maturity	OO 1.1 Target: 3 e-services on Level 4 of maturity by the end of 2022 0 e-services on Level 5 of maturity by the end of 2022 5 e-services on Level 4 of maturity by the end of 2023 2 e-services on Level 5 of maturity by the end of 2023	6 e-services on Level 4 of maturity Ongoing development of additional e-services for NGOs and Ministry of Culture, Parliament of Montenegro. This will produce 39 new e-services by December 2024.	E Citizens portal Public Administration Reform Strategy Annual Reports Digital Transformation Strategy Annual Report	Achieved
Specific objective(s): Outcome(s)	SO1: Enhance digitalization of the public administration through the development of platforms and complex e-services	SO1 Indicator: E Citizens portal developed	SO1 Baseline E Citizens portal does not exist	SO1 Target: E Citizens portal developed by the end of 2023 E Citizens portal developed and operational by the end of 2023	Inception phase finalised. Vendor is in the final phase of the development of e-governments portal. The portal will be in the production at the beginning of December 2024. Testing has been already conducted.	SO1 Targets Source and Means of Verification: E Citizens portal	Achieved
Specific objective(s): Outcome(s)	SO2: Establish an efficient and sustainable integrated system of	SO2 Indicator: % of the surveyed citizens who are aware of	SO2 Baseline1 31.5% of the surveyed citizens are	SO2 Target1: 33% of the surveyed citizens are aware of the digitalization of the public service	Familiarity with electronic services has increased overall, with 52.2% of respondents st	SO2 Targets Source and Means of Verification: <i>Assessment of the needs of citizens and</i>	Achieved

	simplified electronic procedures for citizens and businesses	the digitalization of the public service provision	aware of the digitalization of the public service provision <sup>45</sup>	<p>provision by the end of 2021</p> <p>35% of the surveyed citizens are aware of the digitalization of the public service provision by the end of 2022</p> <p>40% of the surveyed citizens are aware of the digitalization of the public service provision by the end of 2023</p>	<p>ating they are mostly familiar, up from 45.4% in 2022. However, full familiarity declined slightly, from 7.7% in 2022 to 5.7% in the latest survey. Gender analysis reveals variations in familiarity levels. Among women, 7.8% have never heard of electronic services, while 33.6% have heard of them but know nothing more. A majority (53.8%) are mostly familiar, and 4.7% are fully familiar. For men, 10.7% have never heard of electronic services, and 32.1% have heard of them but lack further knowledge. A slightly smaller proportion of men (50.5%) are mostly familiar compared to women, but a higher percentage (6.8%) report full familiarity.</p>	<i>businesses on e-governance</i>	
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<b>Specific objective(s): Outcome(s)</b>	SO3:  Improve data protection and digital inclusion of public institutions	SO3 Indicator:  Number of public administration institutions where data protection and security provisions are fully set up in	SO3 Baseline  0 public administration institutions with the data protection and security system fully set-up	SO3 Target:  5 public administration institutions with the data protection fully set-up by the end of 2023	N/A*	SO3 Targets Source and Means of Verification:  Public Administration Reform Strategy Annual Reports	Not achieved /N/A
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*\* This indicator has been challenging for reporting since the development of the GSB was taken over by the MPA. The original plan was to report on the number of institutions exchanging data through the GSB to enable more efficient e-service delivery. As currently framed, it could reflect the number of institutions that have developed functional e-services and have established data protection procedures to support those services. Final agreement on this approach still needs to be reached with the EU Delegation at the upcoming Project Board meeting. If agreed, seven institutions would be reported under this indicator.*

## Annex 5. List of consulted institutions

Names removed for confidentiality reasons.

**Table 2. List of consulted institutions**

Institution	Number of interviewed persons
EUD	1 M
UNDP	2F, 4M
Ministry of Public Administration	1M, 3F
Sektor Montenegro	1M
Digital Bee	1F, 1M
Consortium Belit -EIM-Trust IT	1F, 1M
InfoStream Company	2 M
CEED Consulting	1F
PCM expert	1F, 3M
PCM expert	
Consultant to support acceleration of digital governance in Montenegro	
Long term consultant	

# Annex 6. Interview guides

## Interview guide for UNDP

Question	Notes
<b>Alignment with national priorities and relevance (EQ 1)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well do you think the project's objectives and results align with national digital transformation priorities and frameworks?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you provide examples where the project directly addressed specific national priorities?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In your view, did the project design successfully address critical bottlenecks in data interoperability and service accessibility?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were there any observed challenges related to supply and quality of services?</li> </ul>	
<b>Responsiveness to contextual changes (EQ 2)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you provide specific examples of how the project adapted to changes in political, legal, economic, or institutional environments that affected the project? What modifications were made?</li> </ul>	
<b>Clarity and feasibility of objectives (EQ 3)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were the project's objectives and outputs practical and feasible within the available timeframe and resources? what was missing?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What challenges arose during the implementation that affected feasibility?</li> </ul>	
<b>Transformative change (EQ 4)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effectively did the project contribute to the achievement of project's output and outcomes?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effectively did the project contribute to achieving the country programme outcomes and outputs?</li> </ul>	
<b>Drivers and challenges affecting results (EQ 5)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What key factors contributed to or hindered the achievement of the intended outputs and outcomes?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How were these challenges mitigated during the project?</li> </ul>	
<b>Partnership strategy (EQ 6)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How appropriate and effective was the partnership strategy in achieving its intended outcomes?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you describe the role and contributions of key partners?</li> </ul>	
<b>Participatory project management (EQ 7)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent were stakeholders actively involved in project design and implementation?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did the involvement of stakeholders contribute to achieving the project objectives?</li> </ul>	
<b>Efficiency and cost-effectiveness (EQ 8)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were project activities and milestones completed according to the planned timeline? If not, what caused the delays?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How was the project budget managed? Were there any deviations, and how were they addressed?</li> </ul>	



Question	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did the project make optimal use of available resources, including financial, human, and material resources?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were best practices employed in project management?</li> </ul>	
<b>M&amp;E system effectiveness (EQ 9)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effective were the M&amp;E systems in ensuring efficient project management?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you share instances where adjustments were made based on M&amp;E findings?</li> </ul>	
<b>Sustainability of project benefits (EQ 10)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there any funding commitments from government entities to sustain the project benefits?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has financial responsibility for maintaining digital solutions and services developed with project support been incorporated into government budgets?</li> </ul>	
<b>Documentation and sharing of lessons learned (EQ 11)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How consistently were lessons learned documented throughout the project lifecycle?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were these lessons shared with appropriate parties? How?</li> </ul>	
<b>Contribution to digital transformation (EQ 12)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent did the project contribute to the digital transformation of the public administration sector?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How have the digital tools and solutions developed by the project been integrated?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How has the project influenced the national digitalization agenda and policy frameworks?</li> </ul>	
<b>Long-term changes in public service Delivery (EQ 13)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How have the e-services introduced by the project contributed to improvements in public service efficiency?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What long-term changes in accessibility and user experience can be observed?</li> </ul>	
<b>Promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment (EQ 14)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How were gender equality and women's empowerment considerations integrated into the project design?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What positive changes in gender equality have been observed as a result of the project?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were there any unintended positive or negative effects on gender equality?</li> </ul>	
<b>Benefits for marginalized and disadvantaged groups (EQ 16)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent has the project enhanced access to services for disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including the poor, physically challenged, and women?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were there specific measures put in place to ensure these groups were adequately reached?</li> </ul>	

## Interview guide for the EUD (donor), government

Question	Notes
<b>Alignment with national priorities and relevance (EQ 1)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well do the project's objectives align with national digital transformation priorities?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you provide examples of how the project addressed specific national priorities?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the project successfully address key issues in data interoperability and service accessibility?</li> </ul>	
<b>Responsiveness to contextual changes (EQ 2)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did the project adapt to changes in political, legal, economic, or institutional environments?</li> </ul>	
<b>Clarity and feasibility of objectives (EQ 3)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were the project's objectives practical and feasible given the available timeframe and resources?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What challenges affected feasibility during implementation?</li> </ul>	
<b>Transformative change (EQ 4)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effectively did the project achieve its intended outputs and outcomes?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did it contribute to country programme outcomes?</li> </ul>	
<b>Drivers and challenges affecting results (EQ 5)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What key factors contributed to or hindered the achievement of the intended outputs and outcomes?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How were these challenges mitigated during the project?</li> </ul>	
<b>Partnership strategy (EQ 6)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effective was the partnership strategy in achieving outcomes?</li> </ul>	
<b>Participatory project management (EQ 7)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent were stakeholders involved in the project?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did stakeholder involvement impact project outcomes?</li> </ul>	
<b>Efficiency and cost-effectiveness (EQ 8)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were project activities completed on schedule? If not, what caused delays?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How was the budget managed? Were there any deviations?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well were resources used? Were best practices followed?</li> </ul>	
<b>M&amp;E system effectiveness (EQ 9)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effective were the M&amp;E systems in ensuring efficient project management?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you share instances where adjustments were made based on M&amp;E findings?</li> </ul>	
<b>Sustainability of project benefits (EQ 10)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there any government commitments to sustain project benefits?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has financial responsibility for maintaining digital services been integrated into government budgets?</li> </ul>	
<b>Contribution to digital transformation (EQ 12)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent did the project contribute to the digital transformation of the public administration sector?</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How have the digital tools and solutions developed by the project been integrated?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has the project influenced the national digitalization agenda and policy frameworks?</li> </ul>	
<b>Long-term changes in public service Delivery (EQ 13)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How have the e-services introduced by the project contributed to improvements in public service efficiency?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What long-term changes in accessibility and user experience can be observed?</li> </ul>	
<b>Promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment (EQ 14)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How were gender considerations integrated into the project?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What changes in gender equality were observed?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were there any unintended effects (positive or negative)?</li> </ul>	
<b>Benefits for marginalized and disadvantaged groups (EQ 16)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has the project improved access to services for marginalized groups?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were there measures to ensure these groups were reached?</li> </ul>	

## Interview guide for other external partners (CSOs, development partners)

Question	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you perceive the project's contribution to advancing the reform goals in the public administration sector?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent has the project improved the overall digital infrastructure and service delivery related to the reform?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the project effectively addressed the critical bottlenecks in data sharing, interoperability, and overall efficiency during the reform process?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has the project facilitated your organization's role in monitoring and supporting the reform?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What aspects of the project's implementation have most helped in driving positive changes in the reform process?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well has the project adapted to any changes in political, legal, or institutional environments?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent has the project promoted collaboration among stakeholders, such as CSOs, government, and other partners, during the reform process?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has the project supported the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, including women and marginalized communities, in the reform?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have there been unintended positive or negative effects of the project on the reform, and how have these been managed?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In your opinion, what are the most significant long-term impacts of the project on the overall reform agenda, and are these impacts likely to be sustained?</li> </ul>	

# Annex 7. Bibliography

## Project related documents

- Description of Action and amendments
- Progress Reports
- Amendment documents
- LNOB portfolio questionnaire 2020-21, quarterly checks
- Steering committee meeting minutes

## Other sources

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# Annex 8 Code of Conduct

## EVALUATION CONSULTANT CODE OF CONDUCT AND AGREEMENT FORM

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### Evaluator:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluator must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluator are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluator should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluator must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluator should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study imitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

### Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form<sup>1</sup>

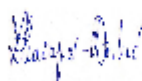
Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Name of Consultant: Zehra Kacapor-Dzihic

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): independent consultant

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed at Vienna, Austria, 20 October 2024



Signature: Zehra Kacapor-Dzihic,

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<sup>1</sup>[www.unevaluation.org/unegcodeofconduct](http://www.unevaluation.org/unegcodeofconduct)