

in-touch

Newsletter



Implementing civil service reform in Albania

Slava Gromlyuk, PAIDirector

On 7 November 2021 we held an event in Tirana bringing to a close a three-year project that provided support to the Government of Albania in implementing Civil Service Reform across the public administration.

Back in summer 2018 PAI, leading a consortium of four other organisations - École Nationale d'Administration, Expertise France, IBF International Consulting and IDRA - was awarded a contract to implement this EU-funded technical assistance project. It was an ambitious project that aimed to assist the Government of Albania in strengthening a professional, impartial, independent and merit-based civil service and wider public administration, including local government, and improving the accountability of policy makers and public service managers by enhancing oversight mechanisms, as well as citizens' access to information. We brought together a team of 36 international and national experts who have been sharing their knowledge and experience with our Government counterparts.



Ms Albana Koçiu, Director of the Department of Public Administration (DoPA) and Mr Stefano Cominelli, Policy Officer, Delegation of the European Union to Albania

We started our work in October 2018 and now, three years on, we can proudly say that we managed to deliver all project activities and outputs, both on time and within budget. During the course of the project we faced several challenges and enjoyed many successes.

We had to change our working methods to be able to continue with the work in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and supported our Albanian counterparts during the devastation brought about by a major earthquake in November 2019. We also made a few changes in the project team to better address the needs of our counterparts.

Despite these challenges we achieved our objectives, including developing a sound salary reform policy, drafting manuals on job evaluation and performance appraisal, training hundreds of civil servants on the provisions in the Civil Service Law and the Code of Administrative Procedures, reviewing jobs and processes in all line Ministries, improving functions and access to the online Civil Service Human Resources Management Information System, designing training curricula for civil servants on a range of topics for the Top Management Corps programme, developing and piloting a cost model for administrative procedures, developing indicators for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the reform programme, organising study visits to EU Member States and delivering training online.

All of these would not have been possible without the support and good co-operation we enjoyed with our Albanian counterparts in the Department of Public Administration, the Albanian School of Public Administration, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, line Ministries and local government authorities.



We are also grateful to our colleagues in the EU Delegation and the Central Finance and Contracts Unit in the Ministry of Finance who supported us along the way.

I have enjoyed my visits to Tirana and the warm welcome of the many people I met there, learning a great deal from them about the country and its fascinating history and culture.

I am sad that the project has now finished, but I very much hope that we will have many other opportunities to work together again.



Making better policy using evidence

Dr Philip Davies, PAI Associate Consultant

The COVID-19 pandemic has alerted policy makers and providers of public services worldwide to the need to make decisions based on the best available evidence of what works and what doesn't. It also requires careful monitoring and evaluation of progress (or lack of progress) towards achieving desired outcomes. This is sometimes referred to as 'following the science'.

In other contexts, it is called 'evidence-based policy making'. For many years PAI has been at the forefront of professional development in making better policy by using evidence effectively and efficiently.

In addition to running workshops in the UK and other countries, PAI recently held a webinar on *Making Better Policy: Using Evidence Effectively*. Together with a small team of policy advisers, I have recently been working for PAI on a British Embassy-funded project in Ankara to provide consultancy and training in monitoring and evaluation for the Government of Turkey and its executive agencies. I also provided consultancy advice for a similar programme recently delivered by PAI for the Government of Georgia.

So, what is 'evidence-based policy'? First, it requires clarification of what constitutes 'evidence'. For some decision makers it can mean anecdotes, personal or group experience, groupthink, data and opinions cited in print, broadcast or social media, or anything that provides confirmatory evidence for actions that have already been decided. By contrast, evidence-based policy draws upon the findings and analysis of data from well designed, executed and reported empirical scientific studies. Given that not all scientific evidence is well designed, executed and reported, evidence-based policy involves the critical appraisal of the quality of the available evidence and the separation of higher from lower quality studies.

Second, evidence-based policy recognises that evidence is not self-evident. It does not, and cannot, tell people what to do or what actions to take. Evidence requires interpretation based on decision makers' existing expertise, experience and judgement. Consequently, different lines of action can be proposed by different users of scientific evidence, and different scientists. Consultative methods such as the Delphi Method, Nominal Group Technique and Critical Incidence Analysis are often used to establish a consensus on what the available evidence does and does not imply. However, disagreement often persists on the interpretation and implications of the available evidence.

Third, evidence-based policy is no substitute for thinking-based policy. This requires careful reflection and analysis of how any proposed policy is supposed to work in terms of producing desired outcomes. This is often referred to as Theory of Change Analysis and requires a rigorous approach to identifying the nature of the problem-in-hand, the outcomes that are to be achieved, the activities and outputs (i.e., people, infrastructure, programmes and projects etc.) that have to be delivered, and the resources that will be required. Each of these constituent elements of a policy requires sound evidence of effectiveness based on high quality research, evaluation and economic appraisal. This, in turn, involves the empirical testing of the assumptions that decision makers take about how a proposed policy is expected to work. As Albert Einstein noted, "assumptions are made, and most assumptions are wrong".

Fourth, evidence-based policy involves a range of monitoring and evaluation methods. These include quantitative and qualitative methods to capture the statistical and experiential consequences of policies in experimental and naturally occurring settings. Decision makers do not need to be technical experts in these methods - that is the responsibility of professional analysts - but they do need an appreciation of them and sufficient understanding to use them appropriately and effectively. PAI is here to provide that understanding through its training and consultancy services.



Time to travel?

Denise Smart, PAI Business Development

As COVID-19 vaccination programmes are rolled out in many countries, including the UK, and we have all become familiar with health precautions such as social distancing, wearing of face coverings, etc., it is becoming a realistic proposition for public sector workers to attend training to interact face-to-face again with other learners. PAI's professional development workshops offer far more than just providing information and knowledge. They give you an ideal opportunity to explore key issues for your organisation and your own role within it with our facilitators and participants from around the world. For those unable to travel, you will still be able to join the London-based workshops remotely.

Face-to-face training, with its emphasis on human interaction, has some clear advantages: it allows you to raise queries in the moment and spend time with your peers in similar roles from other organisations.

We plan to continue the very successful free webinars that we have offered during the pandemic. Our webinars have covered topics such as Leading Yourself and Others through Challenging Times; Using Data to Improve Public Services; and Justice and the COVID-19 Crisis: Viral Threats to the Rule of Law. Over 2,500 people registered for topical webinars delivered by our experienced Workshop Directors and consultants. As with our workshops, real-life and current examples brought these events to life.

Our schedule of workshops for 2022 is available on our website. You can browse the workshops by month or by category. As my colleague, Professor Gavin Drewry, points out in his article in this newsletter, the design and delivery of many of these programmes is based on the Sustainable Development Goals and fall under the following categories: Leadership and Organisational Change; Policy and Strategy; Good Governance; Human Resource Management; Procurement and Public Finance; Information and Communications; Legal and Judicial Reform; and Project Management and Monitoring. You can view the programme outlines, as well as the day-to-day schedules, for each programme by clicking on the brochure links.

Everyone here at PAI hopes that we will be able to welcome you back to one of our face-to-face workshops in 2022.



From Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals – Where are we heading?

Professor Gavin Drewry, PAI Advisory Panel Member and Workshop Director

Let us for a moment cast our minds back to midnight on 31 December 1999 and the arrival of the new Millennium. In many places the event was celebrated, albeit in diverse ways and with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Many politicians around the world hopped onto a rolling bandwagon of optimism, promising the coming dawn of a golden future. But here we are, more than twenty years on, beset by a terrible pandemic and the looming menace of global warming, still waiting for that future, and wondering what on earth it might look like. Meanwhile, back in the 1990s, the United Nations had been polishing its crystal ball and pondering what the next Millennium held in store for our troubled planet.

An impressive succession of international conferences produced weighty reports addressing huge issues such as malnutrition, human rights, gender disparity and infant mortality. A World Summit on Social Development in 1995 produced the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development. This was the precursor to a succession of further UN and OECD initiatives, focusing on international aid and poverty reduction, culminating in the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000. From all this activity emerged eight Millennium Goals to be achieved by the year 2015 - setting the scene with its dauntingly ambitious first goal, the eradication of poverty and hunger. But of course, poverty and hunger are still with us. And those Goals, though admirably well-intended, were not an unmix success. They attracted a lot of critical comment on technical grounds (for example, how to define targets and measure success) and, more significantly, there seemed to be a widespread suspicion that this was a *de haut en bas* initiative by prosperous countries, which failed to take on board the views of the less prosperous countries at which the programme was principally directed.

In 2015, after a lot more talk and deliberation, there emerged a new set of goals and targets, re-badged as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) -17 of them - with an implementation target date of 2030. Five years into that timeframe, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs has produced a very long and detailed assessment of progress so far. The report, *National Institutional Arrangements for Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: A Five-Year Stocktaking is available online*. Drawing upon global data and focusing in particular on a sample of 24 countries from all regions, it finds that the drive to give effect to the SDGs has given rise to many positive institutional developments, though such progress has been uneven and fragmentary. The COVID-19 pandemic has seriously disrupted the whole enterprise and has directly impaired the ability of national governments and national institutions to steer and monitor the SDGs as a programme of action. A lot of good work has been done to develop bench-marking and target setting, but there is still plenty of room for improvement. The report notes and welcomes the emergence of some local initiatives and the stimulation of civil society engagement, but it also notes that in many countries the engagement of elected parliaments in overseeing SDG-related programmes has been disappointingly limited. Among its suggestions is that more needs to be done to encourage public servants to integrate the Goals into their day-to-day work.

So, as one might have anticipated, even before reading this report, there has been definite and welcome forward movement, but there is still a very, very long way to go. We, at PAI, have always taken the Goals, particularly SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, very seriously in the design and delivery of our projects and programmes and will continue to watch the unfolding of events over the coming years, with interest, concern - and hope, if not for a golden future, then certainly for a better one.

New justice sector reform project in Armenia

Slava Gromlyuk, PAIDirector

We are delighted to be awarded a contract by the European Commission to implement a two-year Justice Sector Reform project in Armenia. The project aims to strengthen the capacities of the Government and particularly the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Judicial Council, the Anti-Corruption Court, the Specialized Anti-Corruption Department at the Prosecutor General's Office and other key justice/anti-corruption institutions. The project will be providing advice and support on forward planning, strategic thinking, management, public finance management, monitoring and evaluation and strategic communication so as to facilitate implementation of the Judicial and Legal Reform Strategy and Anti-Corruption Strategy. The project team started their work on 18 October, meeting with Government of Armenia counterparts and colleagues in the EU Delegation in Yerevan. We are implementing this project in a consortium with Axiom under the leadership of Ecorys and are looking forward to working together.

Job evaluation, pay and grading for the Civil Service in Somaliland

Slava Gromlyuk, PAIDirector

Our second new project is in Somaliland. We have just begun work on a new technical assistance project to analyse the existing labour market, develop pay and grading policy reform, conduct a job evaluation exercise and prepare job descriptions for Somaliland civil servants. The project is financed by the World Bank and is implemented in a consortium with our Somaliland partner, SSG.



Project staff and the staff of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) (from left to right): Mohamed Jama, SSG Director, Abdi Aden, CSSP Manager, Ahmed Mohamed, M&E Specialist, CSSP, Abdikani Saleban Jama, Director of Legal Department, CSC, Malcom Bell, Team Leader, P&G Reform Expert, Khalid Jama Chairman, CSC Somaliland, Mohamed Omer, National Communication Key Specialist, P&G Reform Expert, Abdirahman Hassan Abdilahi, Director of Planning, CSC, Suleiman Maygaag, Director of Performance Management, CSC, Jane Nungari, International Communication Key Specialist, P&G Reform Expert, Farah Osman Jama, Director of Establishment, CSC