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SUMMARIES OF MONITORING REPORTS

SERVICE DELIVERY

The **Principles** of **Public** **Administration**

WESTERN BALKANS

February
2022

Summaries of Monitoring Reports

Western Balkans

The Principles of Public Administration

SERVICE DELIVERY

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*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

Introduction

The Principles of Public Administration and the EU integration path – measuring the fundamentals

*The Principles of Public Administration*¹ set out what good public governance entails in practice and outline the main requirements to be followed by administrations during the European Union (EU) integration process. Good public governance is key for achieving economic growth, competitiveness and a better quality of life. Democratic governance and the rule of law require capable, accountable and effective public administrations. In its 2014 and 2018 Enlargement Strategies, the European Commission (EC) highlighted public administration reform (PAR) as one of three “fundamentals first” areas of the EU enlargement process: “Addressing reforms in the area of rule of law, fundamental rights and good governance remains the most pressing issue for the Western Balkans. It is also the key benchmark against which the prospects of these countries will be judged by the EU”².

A regional series, with a long-term perspective

SIGMA monitoring reports³ assess the state of play and progress in improving the quality of national public administrations. Given the geostrategic importance of the Western Balkans to the EU, and the ongoing accession negotiations, Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) conducts regular monitoring of the region. In 2017, SIGMA established a baseline in all areas of public administration. In 2019, monitoring was conducted against selected Principles. The full scope is covered again in the 2021 reports, which compare performance against the 2017 baseline and regional averages. By analysing the long-term perspective, significant changes are identified.

The assessment period was from July 2017 to July 2021. The data collection period was February-May 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic was at its peak, so in-person meetings were replaced by virtual ones. National experts provided invaluable support during this period in securing the necessary data.

Thematic summaries to provide key insights and recommendations to decision makers and selected performance data at the regional level

This document is a compilation of all summaries for the service delivery area in the full SIGMA 2021 monitoring reports. It contains a regional summary with cross-administration analysis of the state of play and key trends since 2017, insights from key performance indicators that showed significant change at the regional level and reflections on the way forward for the region. The purpose is to provide a regional perspective for each of the thematic areas, in order to complement the more detailed monitoring reports developed for each administration.

SIGMA wishes to thank the Governments for their collaboration in providing the necessary administrative data and documentation, as well as for their active engagement during the two rounds of validation to improve the factual accuracy of all the information used. The collaboration with the Regional Cooperation Council on the Balkan Barometer has been excellent. We also thank the experts from EU member administrations who contributed to the report. Finally, the support of the EC is, as always, appreciated.

¹ OECD (2017), *The Principles of Public Administration*, OECD, Paris, <http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Principles-of-Public-Administration-2017-edition-ENG.pdf>.

² European Commission (2018), *A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans*, p. 4, [communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf) (europa.eu).

³ The monitoring reports are published on the SIGMA website: <http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/monitoring-reports.htm>.

Methodology

Overall approach – focus on implementation and outcomes, analysing a variety of primary data sources against precise criteria and benchmarks for an objective assessment

*The Methodological Framework for the Principles of Public Administration*⁴ contains a set of standard indicators that SIGMA applies consistently to measure the preconditions and enablers of successful reforms (good laws, policies and procedures, institutional structures, human resources) and the actual implementation of reforms and subsequent outcomes (how the administration performs in practice).

The overall approach recognises that no single measurement method can fully capture the complex issues related to organisational and behavioural change. SIGMA uses information from administrative data, surveys, statistics, interviews, etc., which is cross-checked and triangulated to arrive at a balanced assessment.

Data sources and validation

The main quantitative and qualitative methods applied in the framework are:

- Desk reviews of legislation, regulations and reports (the most recent are analysed if adopted before July 2021)
- Interviews (conducted virtually March-May 2021 with 100+ interviewees per administration, including civil society)
- Review of cases and samples of government documentation (the most recent are analysed)
- Observations of practice and on-site verification (conducted virtually March-May 2021 with national expert support)
- Analysis of administrative data from public registries and national statistics (the most recent when possible; otherwise, from 2020)
- Surveys of the population and businesses through the Balkan Barometer (conducted February-March 2021)⁵
- Surveys of 950 contracting authorities across the region (conducted February-April 2021).

Data was collected through SIGMA's tool for data collection, analysis and validation (PAR.IS). More than 10 000 documents were received regionally for analysis. In 2021, hundreds of government officials were provided direct access to SIGMA's detailed working sheets for calculation of numerical sub-indicator values and justifications for fulfilment of each of the criteria, in addition to fact-checking the draft monitoring reports. The monitoring reports show only the overall indicator values; the detailed criteria-level analysis will be accessible in 2022 through a public portal⁶.

Indicator values reflect the level of maturity and preparedness of administrations – from 0 to 5

The indicator values provide an indication of the administrative capacity and overall performance of national public administrations. This provides an indication of the capability to effectively implement the EU *acquis* and participate in the policy-making processes of the EU.

The point allocation is constructed so that an administration can only receive an overall value of 2 on the basis of the quality of its legislative and regulatory framework; a value of 3 cannot be achieved without showing that implementation of key processes is happening in practice; and in order to obtain a value of 4, the administration needs to show a consistent achievement of relevant outcomes. The value of 5 is

⁴ OECD (2019), *The Methodological Framework of the Principles of Public Administration*, OECD, Paris, <http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Methodological-Framework-for-the-Principles-of-Public-Administration-May-2019.pdf>.

⁵ Regional Cooperation Council, <https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer/home>.

⁶ OECD, Principles of Public Administration Data Portal [database], <https://par-portal.sigmaweb.org/>.

reserved for outstanding performance and full compliance with the Principles and the standards for good public governance.

In 2021, averages of the indicator values were also calculated for each of the six thematic areas of *the Principles of Public Administration*. This enables a comparison of overall trends across the whole administration over time and across the region

Understanding how the indicator values are calculated

Across the six thematic areas, the framework is composed of 48 Principles. Each Principle has one or two indicators. There are 52 indicators in total, with 340 sub-indicators and 1 000 individual criteria. Indicator values are presented at the top of the overview tables, on a scale from 0 (lowest) to 5 (highest). The indicator value is based on the total number of points received for the sub-indicators. The point conversion tables are accessible in the Methodological Framework.

If the required information to assess a sub-indicator is not available or is not provided by the administration, 0 points are awarded. All data requested is needed for a well-functioning public administration, and SIGMA does not estimate performance without adequate evidence.

The monitoring exercise of Bosnia and Herzegovina is being conducted in two phases. In 2021, the areas examined were: policy development and co-ordination, accountability and public financial management (PFM), except external audit. In 2022, SIGMA will study strategic framework of PAR, public service and human resource management (HRM), service delivery and external audit. Therefore, regional data comparisons are based on five or six Western Balkans administrations (WB5 or WB6).

Codes used in this report

ALB	Albania
BIH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
XKV	Kosovo
MNE	Montenegro
MKD	Republic of North Macedonia, (hereafter “North Macedonia”)
SRB	Serbia
WB5	Western Balkan administrations without Bosnia and Herzegovina
WB6	Western Balkan administrations including Bosnia and Herzegovina

Regional summary

State of play and regional trends

Service delivery is the area that has most substantially improved in the Western Balkan region⁷. The average of all indicator values increased from 2.5 in 2017 to 3.1 in 2021 (Figure 1).

There are positive trends on improving service delivery with a strong focus on digital services in Albania, with a composite average indicator value of 3.8 in 2021 compared to 3.3 in 2017; in Serbia, at 3.5 in 2021 and 2 in 2017; and to a lesser extent in North Macedonia, at 3.3 in 2021 and 2.8 in 2017. However, only slight progress was made in modernising public service delivery in Kosovo and Montenegro.

Figure 1. Substantial progress in the service delivery area

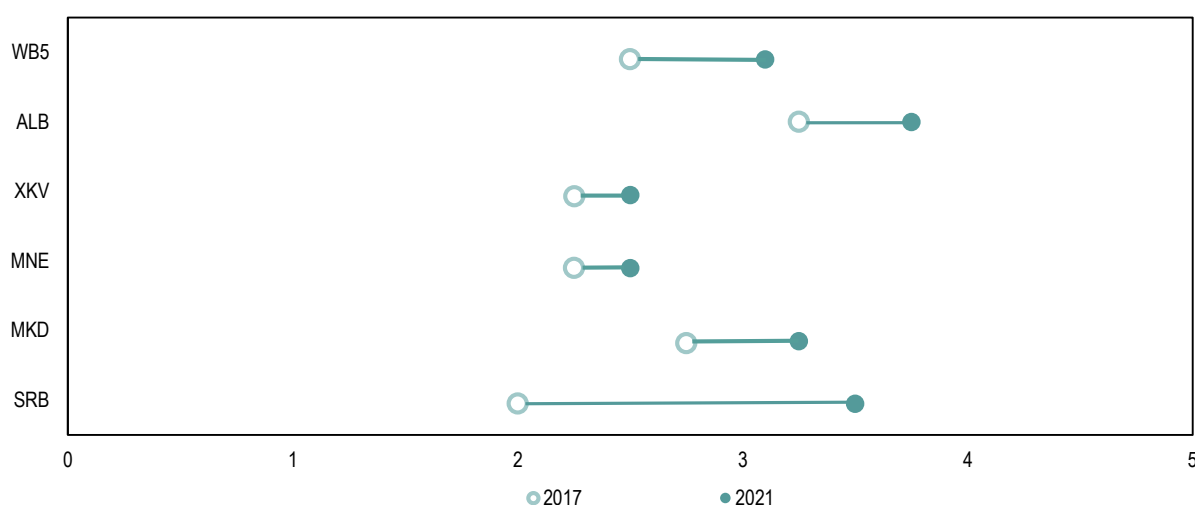
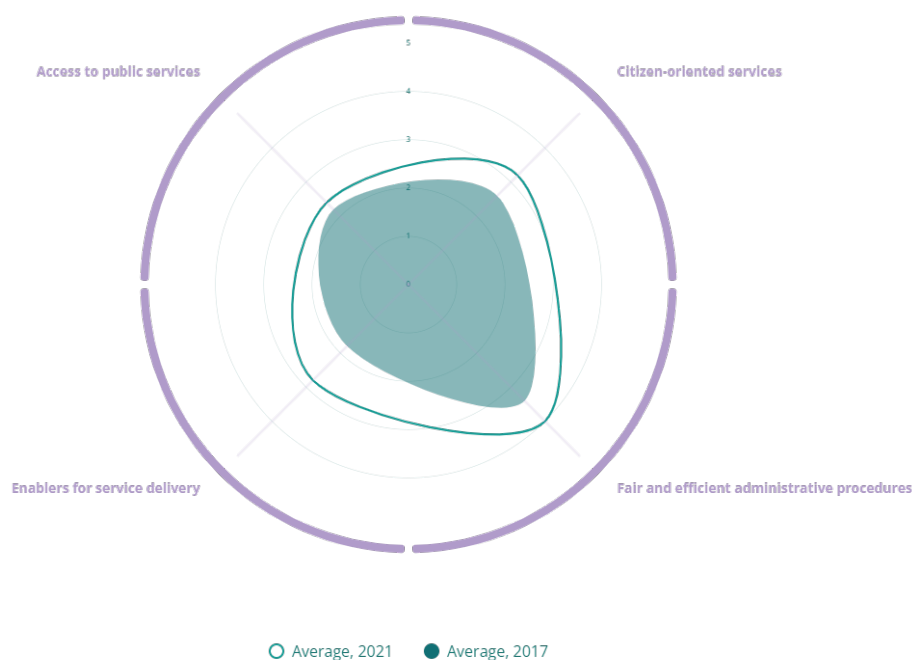


Figure 2 shows that the improving trend stems from progress in all dimensions. The value for ‘citizen-oriented services’ increased from 2.2 in 2017 to 3 in 2021. ‘Fair and efficient administrative procedures’ increased from 3.4 in 2017 to 4 in 2021. In 2017, the value for the ‘Enablers for service delivery’ was 1.6 and in 2021, 2.2. Finally, ‘Access to public service’ improved from 2 in 2017 to 2.4 in 2021. Digitalisation of public services has been a key priority in many Government agendas, and the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the sense of urgency. However, in absolute terms performance varies significantly across dimensions. “Fair and efficient administrative procedures” receives a high value on average, but “enablers” and “accessibility” only 2.2 and 2.4 respectively in 2021. Administrations must prioritise investments in these underperforming dimensions to ensure sustainable future progression and convergence with EU member countries.

⁷ The regional summary is based on the findings of the SIGMA monitoring reports of Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia. Bosnia and Herzegovina is not included as the monitoring of the service delivery area will be conducted in 2022.

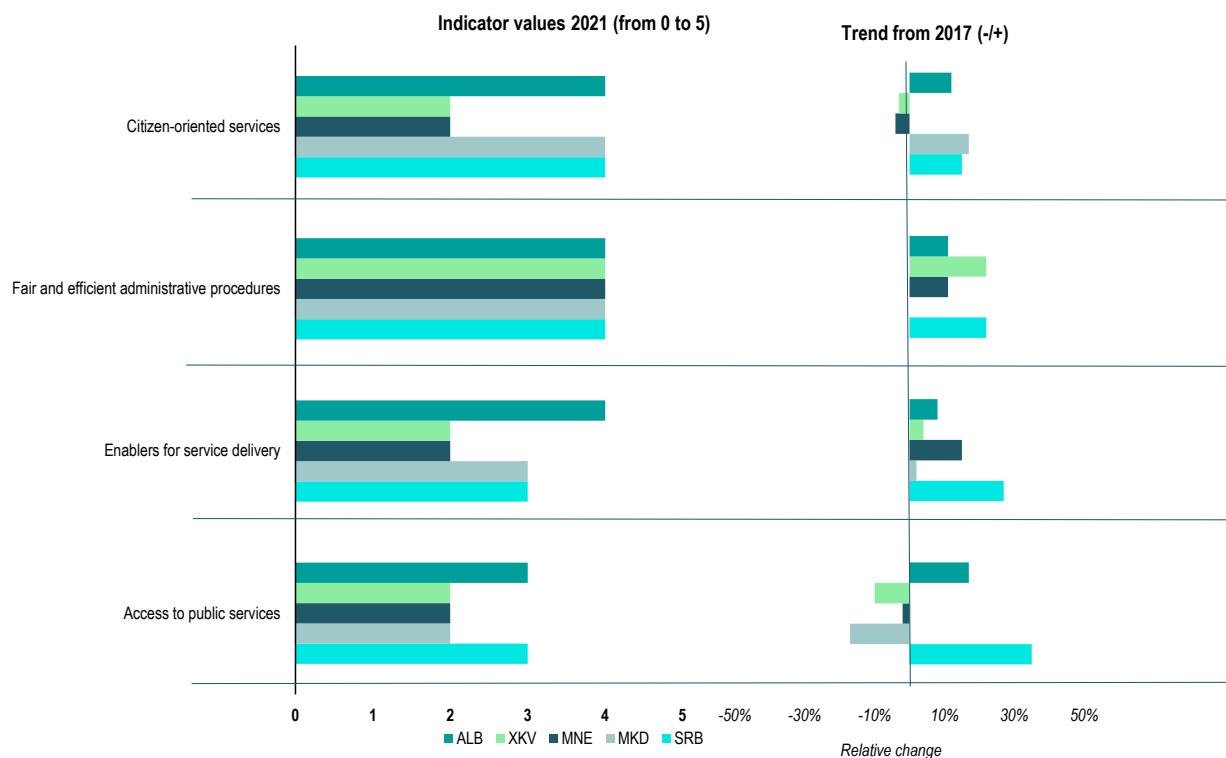
Figure 2. Improvement in all dimensions of service delivery since 2017



Source: OECD, Principles of Public Administration Data Portal [database], <https://par-portal.sigmaweb.org/areas/5/>.

Figure 3 provides a view of indicator values since 2017 with relative change. Kosovo and Montenegro demonstrated lower maturity in three of four dimensions and regressed in terms of citizen-oriented service delivery and accessibility of public services. North Macedonia has regressed the most in the accessibility of public services.

Figure 3. Service delivery 2021 indicator values and trends since 2017



Strategic framework and institutional set-up proves a solid basis, but is not yet present across the region

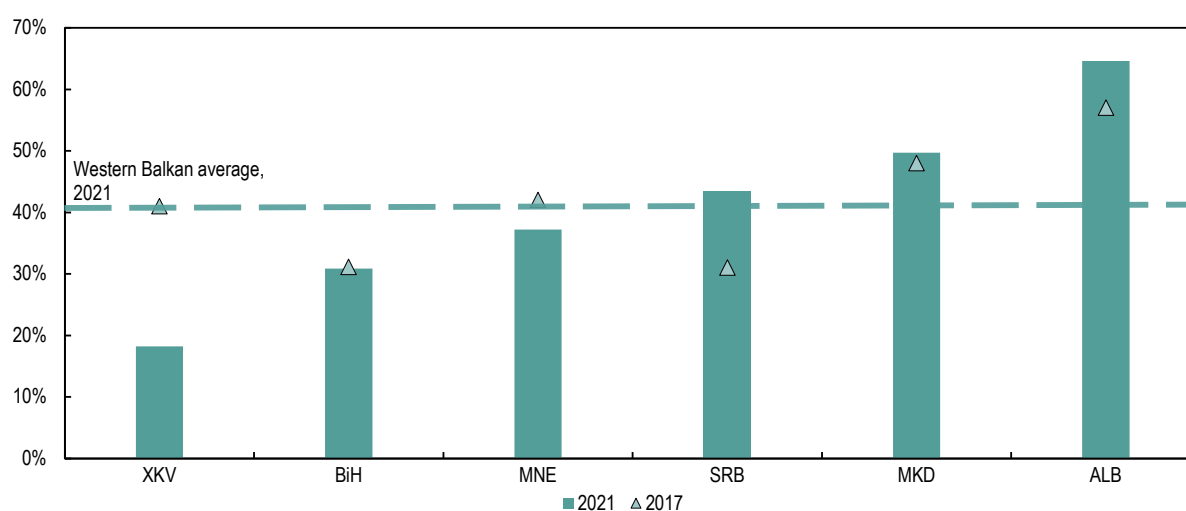
A sound policy framework is in place or currently in progress in the administrations in the region. At the time of the 2021 SIGMA monitoring exercise, the expired strategies and plans on service delivery in Kosovo and Montenegro were not yet replaced by a comprehensive and coherent strategy and action plan that applies a complete set of policy measures, actively supports institutions and monitors progress. Moreover, in addition to the general PAR strategies, the modernisation of service delivery is also guided by other strategic documents related to digital government (eGov, artificial intelligence, administrative simplification).

Administrations benefit from a responsible leading and co-ordinating actor and clear administrative and political leadership on service delivery policy. This is lacking in Kosovo. Central ministries in Montenegro and North Macedonia have a mandate to co-ordinate the entire service delivery area, but the modernisation of public services is still fragmented and the ownership of some of its aspects remains unclear. Although dedicated teams are in place in several institutions in Serbia, the responsibility for the development of public services in general is still fragmented, and some of the aspects remain uncovered.

In Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, there is no review of major digital government projects by a central agency. This could hamper the interoperability and integration of the information systems established via these projects.

It is interesting to note that these regional differences are also reflected in citizens' perception of public service delivery.

Figure 4. Perceived quality of public service delivery by citizens (%)



Note: The 2017 Western Balkan average was one percentage point higher than the 2021 average.

Source: Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) (2021), Balkan Barometer Public Opinion database (<https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer/>).

Administrations have understood the importance of digitalisation, but progress is uneven

Regionally the digital transformation has been high on the political and administrative reform agendas, but results within administrations have been uneven. Based on a clear policy framework and political support, countries like Albania and Serbia rapidly digitised services. The availability of online services has proved to be an asset during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the improvements in digitalisation, many services are still provided only in a traditional form, leaving the potential provided by digital enablers often underutilised.

Besides the unevenness of digitalisation throughout the administrations, the differences in focus should be noted. Digital for business already yields very positive results (Table 1); however, for citizens results are more mixed (Table 2).

Table 1. Digital uptake for businesses

	Albania	Kosovo	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia
Starting a business – a one-stop shop or fully digital	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Digital uptake corporate income tax (%)	100	99	No data	96.32	100
Digital uptake value added tax (%)	100	100	100	100	100

In dealing with personal income tax, the level of digitalisation is very high in all administrations, whereas in other services like renewing an identification (ID) card or registering a vehicle, only a few process steps can be completed digitally.

Table 2. Digital uptake for citizens

	Renewing ID			Vehicle registration			Personal income tax		
	Appointment	Application prefill	Fees	Appointment	Application prefill	Fees	Digital process	Support docs	Pay
Albania	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Kosovo	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Montenegro	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
North Macedonia	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Serbia	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓

Service delivery enablers are in place, but their potential remains untapped

The digitalisation of services is well-supported by the instalment of interoperability platforms and an increasing number of interoperable information systems in all administrations. The number of information systems exchanging data over the interoperability platform (the Government Gateway, Government Service Bus or others) has increased, but the quality assurance of the registries is not systematically assured and is often inadequate.

Important enablers such as the digital signature are becoming more streamlined with the EU electronic identification, authentication and trust services (eIDAS) regulation, except in Albania and Kosovo. Although the electronic signature is operational and freely available or at least offers a free option for obtaining a certificate, except in North Macedonia, the uptake is still very low. This severely limits the wider use of digital services.

Despite inventories or catalogues of services existing in Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia, a general lack of service standards, systematic and methodological support for service providers, and central monitoring of service delivery against established metrics should be noted. Apart from Albania, there are no service standards set and, apart from e-services, no performance data on service delivery centrally collected.

Table 3. Developing and monitoring service standards and performance

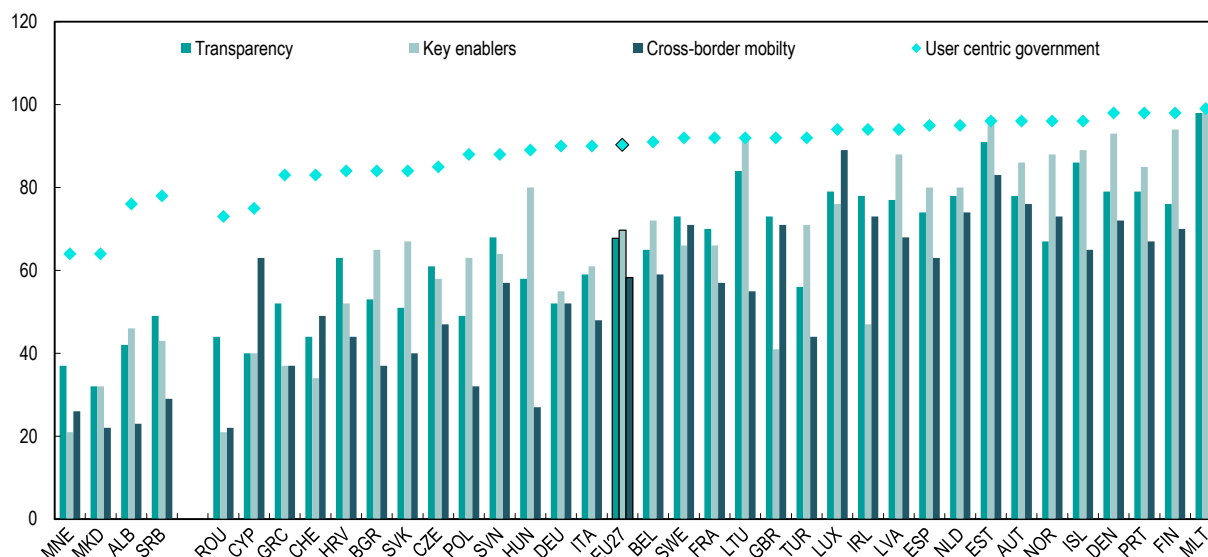
	Albania	Kosovo	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia
Service standards	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Inventory of services	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
Responsibility for monitoring service delivery	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Methodology performance metrics	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Performance metrics on total volume	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Performance metrics on cost	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗

Note: A bold green checkmark denotes that this criterion was fulfilled. A red cross shows where the criterion was not fulfilled.

The adoption of quality management and user engagement tools and techniques is modest, and not centrally encouraged or supported.

Through the European Commission's eGovernment Benchmarking reports, the EU member states and four Western Balkan administrations' performance is measured on four aspects. Figure 5 shows that despite progress on several key enablers, work still needs to be done as the Western Balkan administrations perform lower than the EU countries. Albania and Serbia are achieving close to the EU average for user-centricity. For the other areas, the administrations in the Balkan region do not meet the EU average.

Figure 5. Western Balkan region compared to EU member countries



Note: Biannual average 2019 and 2020.

Source: European Commission (2021), "User Centricity compared to Transparency, Key Enablers and Cross-Border Mobility", in *eGovernment Benchmark 2020 Insight Report*, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/egovernment-benchmark-2020-egovernment-works-people>, p. 21.

Administrative procedure legislation guarantees a due-process right to good administration, yet the harmonisation of the special laws is slow and the monitoring mechanisms are weak

The principles of good administrative procedure are safeguarded by the recently adopted Laws on Administrative Procedures (LAP) in the Western Balkan region. Although the LAPs took effect four to five years ago, harmonising the special legislation with the LAPs has been a slow process. It has mainly focussed on laws, but the secondary legislation often containing the detailed provisions followed daily by the administrative authorities conducting the procedures is excluded. Lastly, the harmonisation process is being approached from a purely legal perspective and is not sufficiently integrated with the simplification, digitalisation and re-engineering processes.

Table 4. Overview of harmonisation of special legislation with the Laws on Administrative Procedure

	Number of laws to be harmonised	Number of secondary legislation to be harmonised	Progress by 2020
Albania	There has been no systematic review to determine which legal acts should be changed to comply with code on administrative procedures.		Limited
Kosovo	About 200 laws	Not known	Limited
Montenegro	181 laws	Not known	12 laws harmonised as of 2020
North Macedonia	169 laws	Not known	Limited
Serbia	About 250 laws	Not known	About 150 laws harmonised

Source: Information provided by the ministries responsible for the Laws on Administrative Procedure in SIGMA Paper 62⁸.

Administrations are paying more attention to reducing administrative burdens. Aside from Montenegro, where the plan is under development, all other administrations have a formally approved plan in place that is no more than five years old, as a separate policy document or part of the general service delivery policy that establishes clear objectives for administrative simplification. The responsibility for steering administrative simplification is explicitly assigned to a central institution or unit in these administrations. The efforts still result in a mixed picture when it comes to simplified procedures, shortening of waiting times and efficiency of service delivery processes both related to citizens and businesses. Certainly many services have been improved and have become more efficient, though several popular services assessed still tend to suffer from cumbersome procedures.

Weak mechanisms for improving the accessibility of services for disadvantaged groups

Besides the policy on improving accessibility to public services via online portals, in-person services are limited. Even though the number of one-stop shops is increasing and therefore providing better access to public services across Albania and Serbia, the creation of these shops has proceeded more slowly than planned.

The legislative and policy framework in the Western Balkan administrations aims to increase the accessibility of services to people with disabilities, alongside standards for accessibility. The legal, policy and institutional framework for accessibility of citizens with special needs is in place in all administrations, but is not equally implemented in practice. Buildings and related facilities are subject to mandatory accessibility standards in all administrations and sign language is officially recognised, except in Montenegro. On the other hand, only in Albania do central guidance or training capacities exist on how to improve access to public service users with special needs and is the use of plain language promoted. Progress has not been easy, and a mechanism to centrally monitor the accessibility of services for disadvantaged groups has not been established; therefore, the relevant data is scarce.

Common guidelines for government websites exist, except in North Macedonia, but government websites continue to contain many errors as there is no set standard to which they must comply, since there is no formal obligation for public administration websites to comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Montenegro has recently redesigned all ministerial websites, as shown below.

⁸ Ligi, T. and A. Kmecl (2021), "Implementation of laws on general administrative procedure in the Western Balkans", SIGMA Papers, No. 62, OECD Publishing, Paris, p.9. <https://doi.org/10.1787/e5162057-en>. For Montenegro "Report on the conduct of administrative matters for the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020, Ministry of Public Administration, June 2021: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/4f2a9033-a42e-416f-8830-e6ffe3b49702>.

Table 5. Common standards and quality of government websites

	ALB	XKV	MNE	MKD	SRB
Common content and design guidelines exist for government websites	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is a mandatory requirement	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
Compliance of government websites with WCAG. Number of mistakes in 2017 compared to 2021.	14 -> 35	14 -> 30	13 -> 7	27 -> 35	26 -> 29

The way forward

- While service delivery has improved in the region, it requires political and administrative leadership to maintain sustainable progress and guarantee ownership to initiate and co-ordinate service delivery improvement initiatives.
- The harmonisation of the General Laws on Administrative Procedures with secondary legislation needs to be intensified and steered away from a too-often purely legalistic approach to be integrated with the simplification, digitalisation and re-engineering of processes plans.
- To increase the uptake of digital signature, governments in the region should continue to make digital signatures and e-payment more appealing by offering user-friendly solutions and promoting their use.
- Developing and monitoring service standards and tracking performance are a key challenge for the region. This should be a key focus in order to increase the use of general quality management instruments and tools in public institutions.
- The legal and policy framework to improve public service accessibility for people with special needs is in place in the region, but governments should take measures in co-operation with representative organisations of people with disabilities to implement, monitor, evaluate and communicate on the implementation of regulations to improve accessibility of on- and offline services.

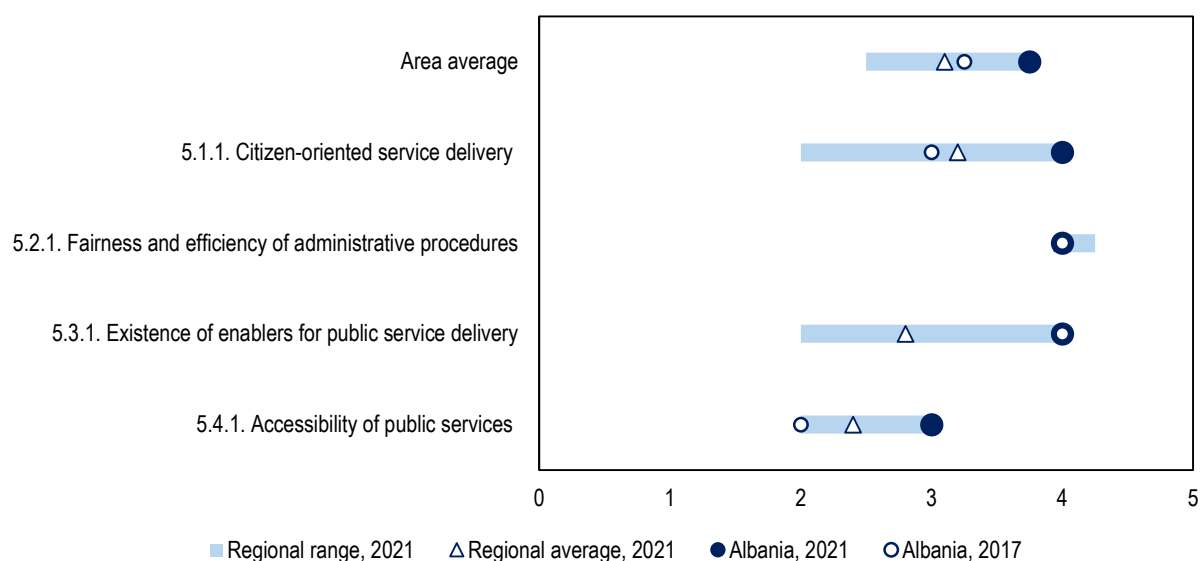
Albania

Albania

Summary and recommendations

With a composite average indicator value of 3.8 in the area of service delivery, Albania has maintained the positive trend noted in the 2017 assessment (value 3.3). With Serbia, it is one of the leading countries in the region (regional average 3.1) in improving service delivery, with a strong focus on digital services.

Increased progress in the Service Delivery area in Albania over time and compared to the region

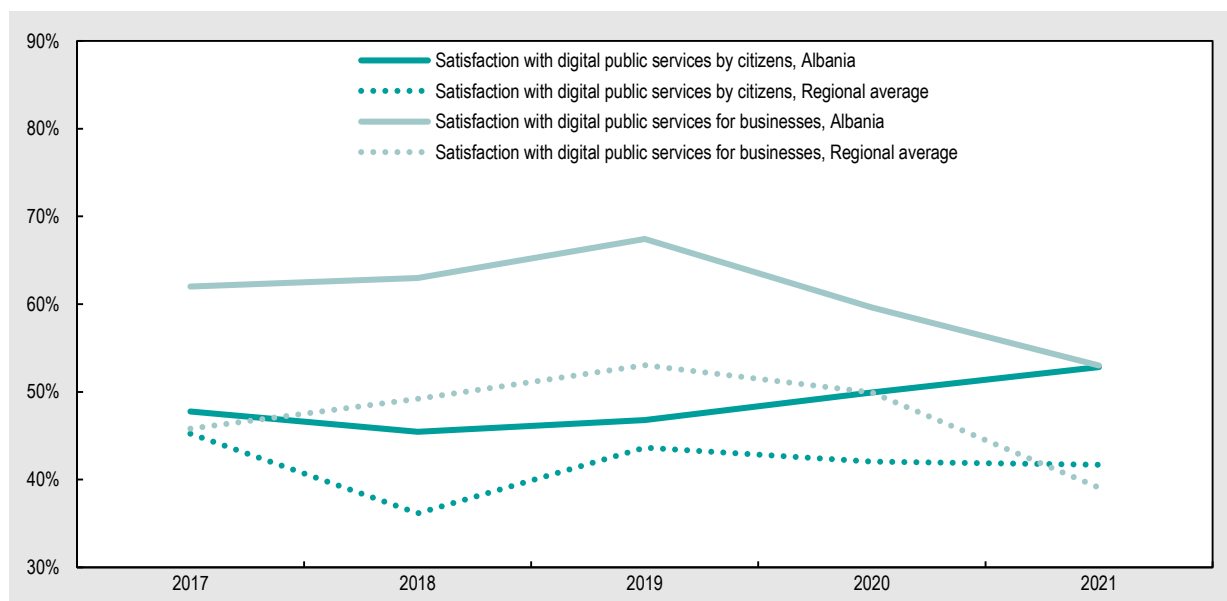


Based on a solid and stable policy framework and supporting institutional set-up, Albania continues to make good progress in the “citizen-oriented service delivery” area. The political leadership has persistently focused on digitalisation, and 95% of administrative services have been made available online in recent years. 1 207 electronic services in the e-Albania portal are of level 3 or 4, according to the UNPAN⁹ classification, of which 830 are electronic services of level 3 that can be applied online and 377 are electronic services of level 4, where the procedure begins and ends online. The availability of online services has proven to be an asset during the pandemic. Despite citizens’ and businesses’ generally high satisfaction levels with public services, however, individual services still tend to suffer from cumbersome procedures.

⁹ United Nations Public Administration Network

<https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/portals/egovkb/Documents/un/2003-Survey/unpan016066.pdf>.

Trends in satisfaction with digital public services among citizens and businesses in Albania, 2017-2021



Note: Includes the average share of citizens and businesses who answered “mostly satisfied” or “completely satisfied” to the statement: “Could you please tell how satisfied you are with each of the following in your place of living?” in relation to: “Accessibility to public services via a digital channel” and “Digital services currently provided by the public administration for businesses”. The share of citizens consider only those respondents who have been in contact with central government services in the past year. Data for 2020 citizens’ satisfaction is not available.

Source: Regional Cooperation Council, Balkan Barometer Public and Business Opinion databases (<https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer>).

The Code of Administrative Procedure (CAP), which came into force in 2016, is a crucial milestone in the “fairness and efficiency of administrative procedures”. **The percentage of citizens agreeing that administrative procedures in public institutions are efficient is 72%, and the rate of repeals or amendments to administrative decisions has substantially decreased since 2017.** The structures and methodologies are in place, but nevertheless, the process of harmonising legislation with the CAP has been slow. General awareness, guidance and support on how to integrate different perspectives (such as legal, technological and user-centric service design) into a coherent approach for simplifying administrative procedures, would make harmonisation less of a legalistic exercise. **It could also strengthen the application of the “once only” principle.**

The Government maintained its effort to establish several enablers to ensure the quality of public services. This resulted in good progress overall, although some potential, in terms of interoperability and electronic payment, remains untapped. Monitoring service delivery is functioning well and has proved useful in providing information about the need to make corrections at the level of individual public institutions. Digitalisation of services is well-supported by the interoperability platform and by an increasing number of interoperable information systems, which allow forms to be filled in automatically. Digital signature take-up could be increased. Although online payment is technically possible through the Government Electronic Payment Platform, it is still not available for all services, which makes it difficult to transform services into a fully digital format. The use of quality management tools in state administration is still sporadic and could contribute to the spread of a user-centric service delivery culture.

Improving accessibility to administrative services has been a major policy objective of the Government in recent years. This has been accomplished through the network of 22 front offices of the Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services in Albania (ADISA) in 21 municipalities and a mobile office. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the digitalisation and provision of services through the e-Albania portal was increased. The e-Albania portal provides a full overview of and access to the digital services offered, and includes information about non-digital services. **Albania scores above the regional average in citizen satisfaction with different aspects of service delivery. The legal, policy and institutional framework for accessibility of citizens with special needs is in place but is not fully implemented on the ground.**

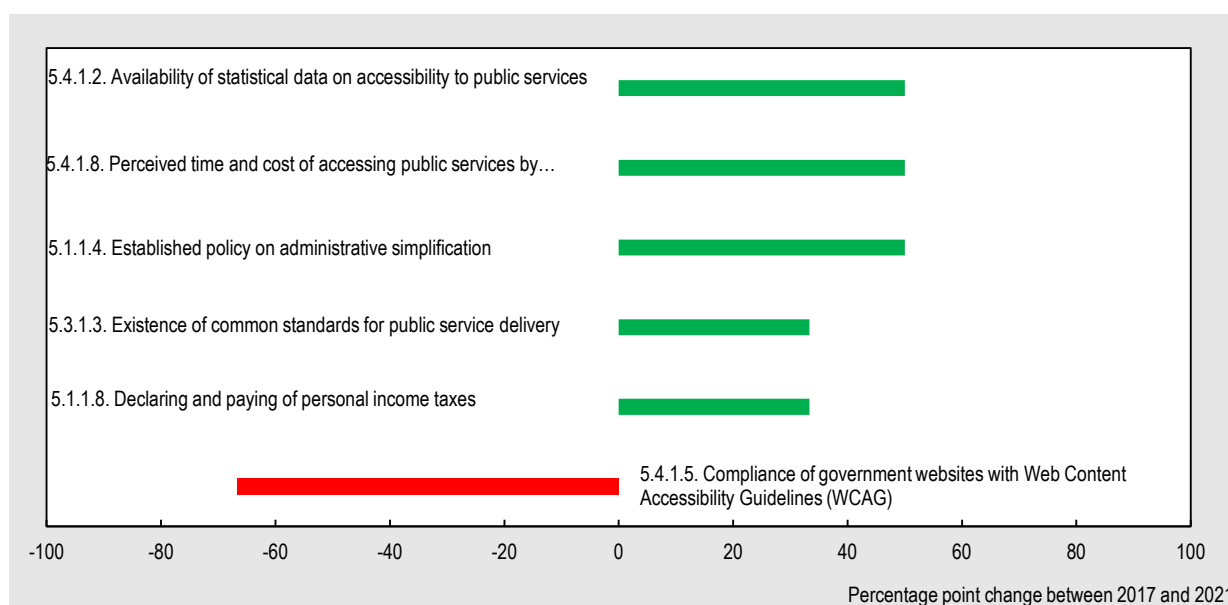
Short-term recommendations (1-2 years)

- 1) The National Agency for Information Society (NAIS) should upgrade the e-Albania portal to include information about non-digital services provided by local and central government. An approach that presents life-event-based categorisation of information would also be useful in making the otherwise rich information content more easily accessible.
- 2) The Government should make it a priority to complete the harmonisation of special legislation with the CAP, based on the agreed methodology and providing the necessary resources. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ), in co-operation with ADISA and NAIS, should also use this opportunity to simplify and re-engineer administrative procedures.
- 3) The Government should establish web accessibility standards. NAIS should then implement these standards for all government webpages and support public bodies, to improve accessibility for all, including for people with disabilities.
- 4) ADISA should consider introducing service design frameworks and toolkits, as well as assistance to public bodies, with the goal of helping them to introduce practices that would improve the service experience for users.
- 5) The Government should continue to make digital signatures and e-payment more appealing by introducing convenient solutions for individual citizens (e.g. smartphone-based options) and by promoting their use among private sector service providers, as well as across the administration, and informing the citizens of their benefits.

Medium-term recommendations (3-5 years)

- 6) ADISA should make plans for completing the policy framework on quality management, including developing an operational roadmap on how to increase the use of quality-management instruments and tools in public institutions, including awareness raising, promotion, knowledge sharing, recognising good practices and capacity building.
- 7) Following the activities of the working group in place, ADISA and NAIS, in co-ordination with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the National Council of Accessibility, should complement the general policy on accessibility of public services for special-needs users, with concrete policy measures and metrics to improve the situation.

The five highest percentage point increases and decreases for all sub-indicators in the area compared to 2017. Progress in services delivery monitoring and data, only backsliding in the quality of government websites



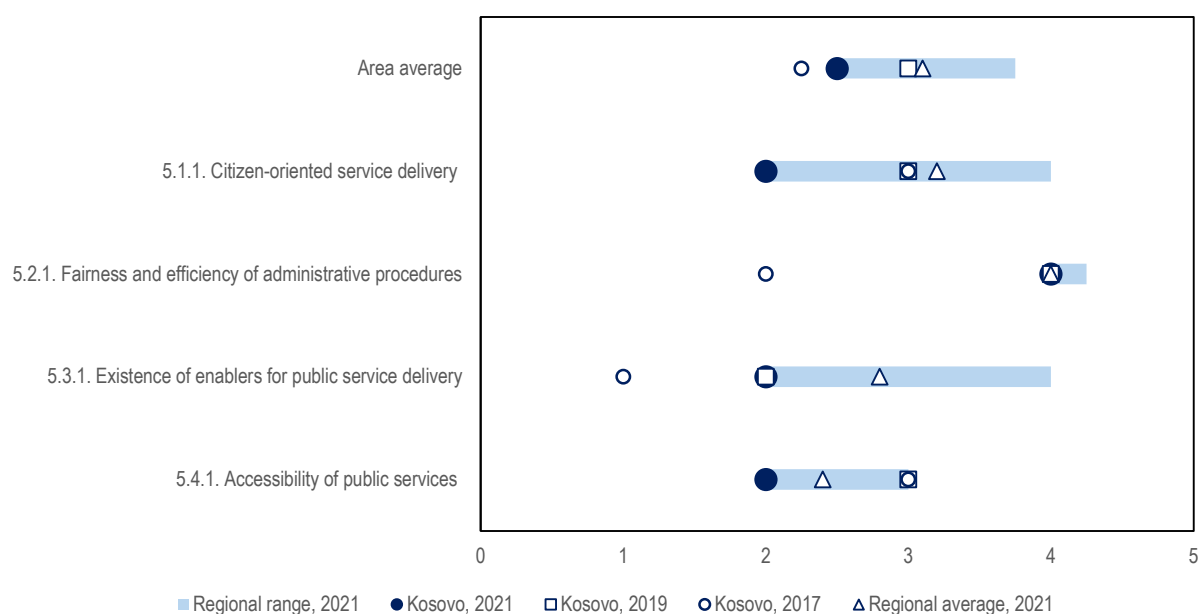
Kosovo

Kosovo

Summary and recommendations

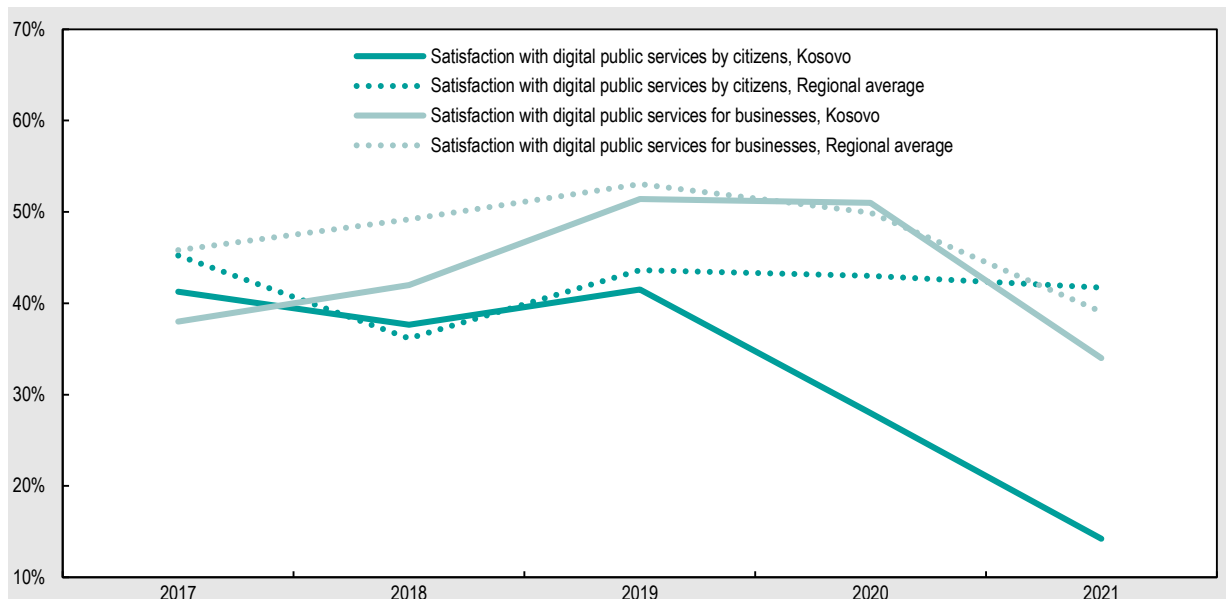
With an area average of 2.5, Kosovo did not manage to maintain the progress made in the 2019 monitoring report in the service delivery area. Compared to the region (average of 3.1), Kosovo is also making slower progress in improving service delivery, including the digital transformation.

Advances in 2019 were reversed on average in 2021. The quality and accessibility of public services are below the regional average



Despite achieving some important milestones (the coming into force of the Law on General Administrative Procedures, a functioning Government Gateway and the setting up of the e-Kosovo portal) these **have not been sufficiently translated into improved service delivery for citizens and businesses**. This is demonstrated by the deteriorating perception of satisfaction of citizens and businesses with the service delivery, measured by the Balkan Barometer survey. The progress in individual institutions tends to be piecemeal rather than part of a comprehensive transformation of service delivery.

Satisfaction with digital public services is falling even more steeply for citizens than for businesses



Note: The percentage of respondents who answered “tend to be satisfied” or “strongly satisfied” in relation to “Accessibility to public services via a digital channel” and “Digital services currently provided by the public administration for businesses”. Satisfaction with digital public services by citizens’ data is not available for 2020.

Source: Regional Cooperation Council, Balkan Barometer Public and Business Opinion databases (<https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer>).

A comprehensive **Citizen-oriented service delivery modernisation is hindered by the lack of a stable institutional set-up** and illustrated by the fact that no responsible unit for service delivery policy has been installed. The recent appointment of the Government Chief Technical Officer (CTO) can be seen as a positive step. The expired strategies and plans on service delivery (including public administration reform, administrative simplification and digitalisation) have not been replaced by a comprehensive and coherent strategy and plan of action in the service delivery area that applies a comprehensive set of policy measures, actively supports institutions and monitors progress. **In the absence of a comprehensive approach, individual service delivery remains cumbersome** – although generally better for businesses than for citizens – and at a low digital maturity level.

With the adoption of the Law on General Administrative Procedures (LGAP), an important milestone was set in the area of fairness and efficiency of administrative procedures, and this is positively reflected in citizens’ perception. However, harmonisation of special laws with the LGAP has been slow and is behind the targets set. Moreover, separate reform initiatives on simplification and administrative burden reduction lack co-ordination. General awareness of how to turn the LGAP principles into service delivery practices is needed.

Some enablers for public service delivery have been installed, but their potential remains untapped. The number of information systems exchanging data over the interoperability platform (the Government Gateway) has substantially increased, but the quality assurance of the registries is insufficient and the ‘once only’ principle has not materialised in practice. The e-Kosovo portal shows potential, but it is currently limited to offering only 36 services online, some of which are fully digital, while others offer information. More services are being prepared to be uploaded. An initial inventory of administrative procedures was carried out, but there is a general lack of service standards, systematic and methodological support for service providers, and central monitoring of service delivery against established metrics. Moreover, important enablers such as the digital signature are not compatible with eIDAS¹⁰, and e-payment solutions are still not available. **In the absence of a lead institution, there is no general approach to promoting quality management systems and user engagement practices**, which is leading to their anecdotal use in public administration.

¹⁰ EU Regulation on electronic Identification and Trust Services for Electronic Transactions in the Internal Market.

Government policy on improving ‘accessibility to public services’ is limited to providing services through the e-Kosovo portal and does not address over-the-counter service delivery. The creation of one-stop shops has proceeded more slowly than planned. The Strategy for People with Disabilities 2013-2023 is in place, but **accessibility to public buildings remains poor**, despite the adequate regulatory framework. Government websites continue to contain many errors as there is no set standard to which they must adhere. **Public satisfaction with public services and accessibility of digital services is low**. However, citizens grade the time and cost of accessing public services highly.

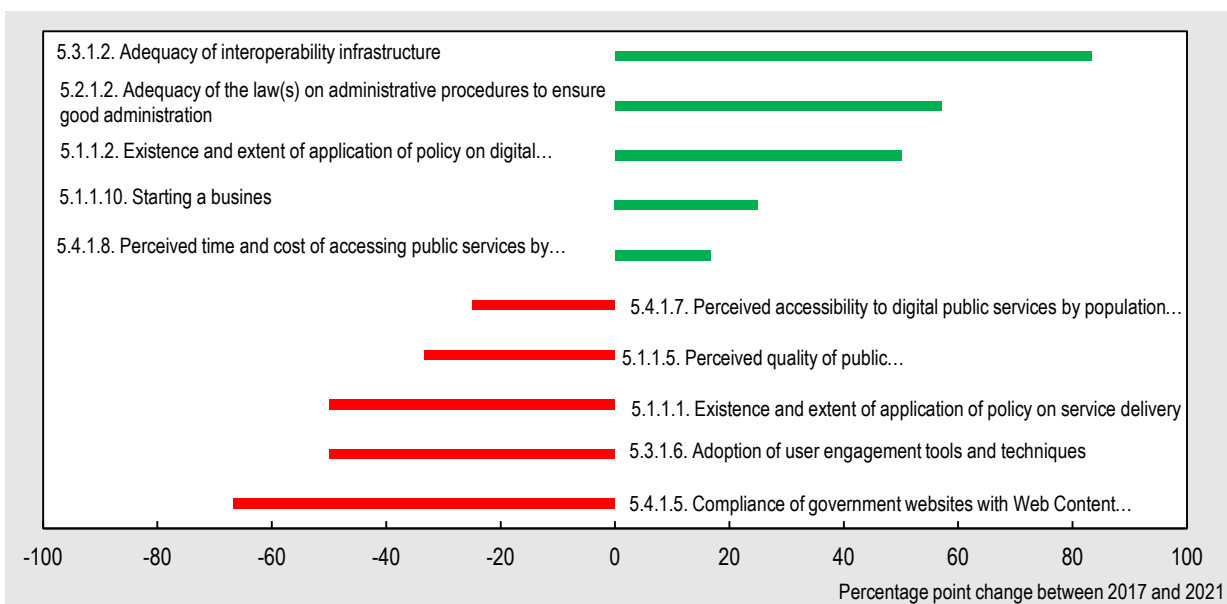
Short-term recommendations (1-2 years)

- 1) The Government should develop a comprehensive service delivery strategy – including digital transformation – with clear objectives, a dedicated action plan and a supporting performance monitoring framework. The development and implementation of the service delivery strategy needs to be supported by a clear and stable institutional set-up, clearly assigning a leading responsible actor.
- 2) The e-Kosovo portal needs to evolve into the central one-stop shop for digital service delivery by extending the number of services offered via the platform and rigorously improving the usability of the portal by applying a life-event approach.
- 3) The Government should clarify its one-stop shop policy.
- 4) The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) should strengthen co-ordination between the harmonisation of special laws with the LGAP and administrative simplification, including the re-engineering of services.

Medium-term recommendations (3-5 years)

- 5) The Government should promote a user-centred approach in public institutions and should appoint a leading actor in developing, promoting and supporting tools and techniques, including user feedback management mechanisms, to be deployed government-wide as well as by individual agencies.
- 6) The Government should promote the uptake of the digital signature by producing a user-friendly and widely usable application, along with e-payment solutions that should be integrated with all services that would benefit from them, most notably through the e-Kosovo portal.
- 7) The Government should take measures to improve public service accessibility for people with disabilities (including customising e-services and government websites in general) in co-operation with representative organisations of people with disabilities. The OPM should set up a comprehensive system to monitor, evaluate and communicate on the implementation of regulations.

The five highest percentage point increases and decreases for all sub-indicators in the area compared to 2017. Infrastructure for interoperability has improved as has the legal framework for administrative procedures, but the quality of public websites have fallen and user engagement tools are less used



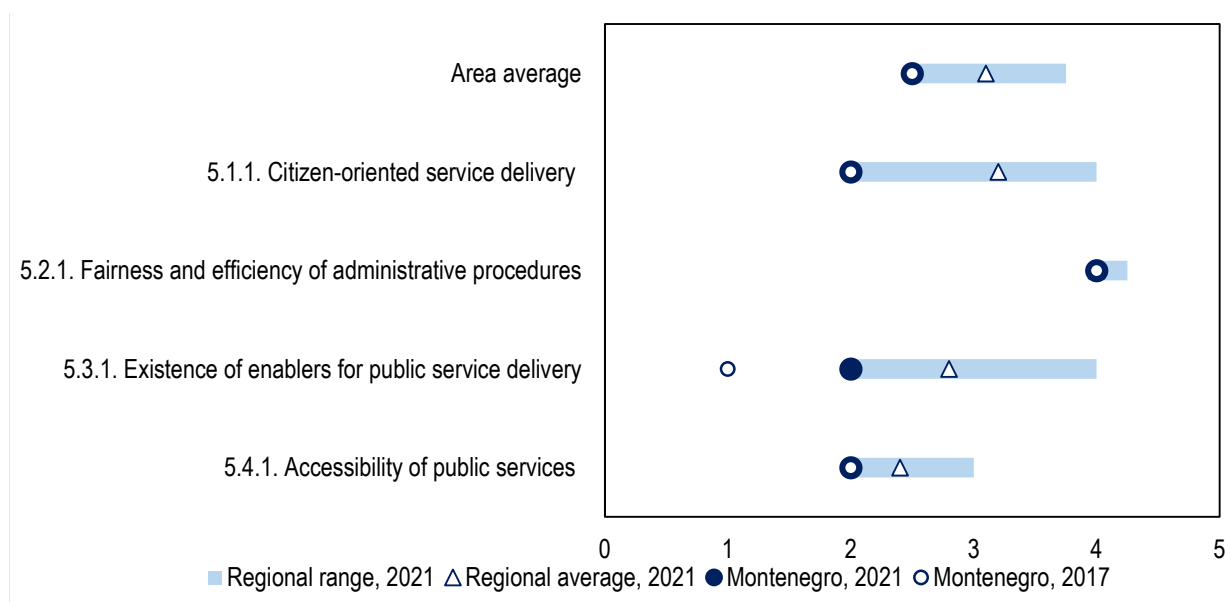
Montenegro

Montenegro

Summary and recommendations

The process of modernising public service delivery in Montenegro has stagnated in recent years, and the values of all indicators are in the lowest range in the region. This is due partly to the expiration of guiding strategic policy documents, but also to a drastic decrease in the satisfaction rates of both citizens and businesses regarding public service delivery. There has been an improvement compared with 2017 only with the enablers for public service delivery owing to developments in the interoperability infrastructure and the affordability of e-signature. Still, the digitalisation of public services is modest, particularly in the case of services offered to individuals, and services in general remain bureaucratic and non-user-friendly.

Montenegro is below the regional average across the service delivery area, and improved the indicator value for enablers compared to 2017



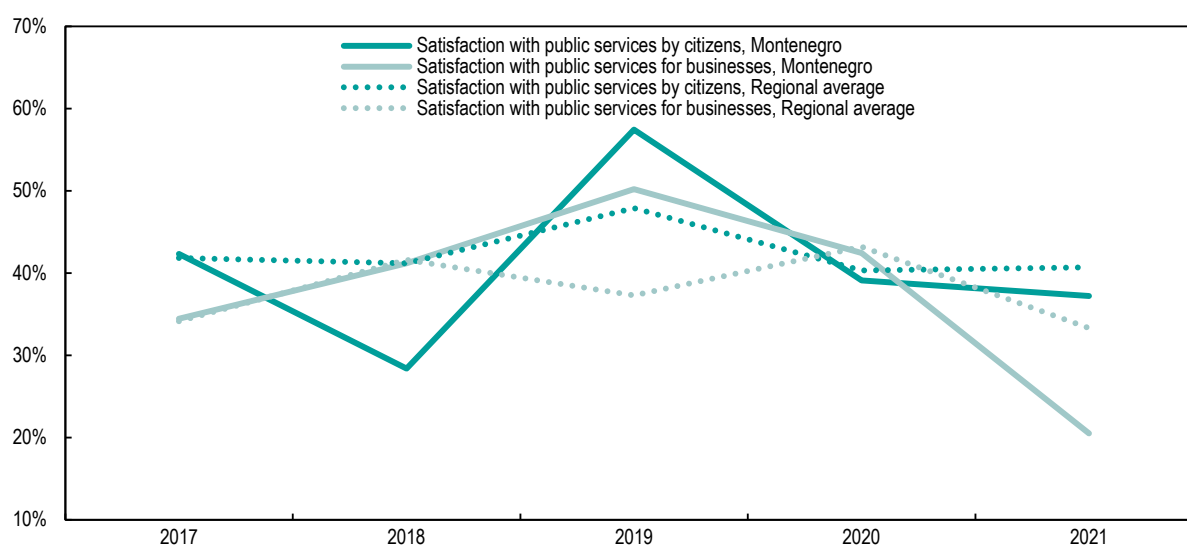
The policy framework for the modernisation of service delivery and digital service delivery was not in place during the assessment period as all respective strategies had expired, while the targets set in the previous strategies were largely unattained. The progress in improving both in-person and digital service delivery has been slow. The Ministry of Public Administration, Digital Society and Media (MPADSM), which is responsible for developing digital services, has made some progress in strengthening the enablers of the digital government. But even in this area, the MPADSM's role across the administration is rather weak. **Clear ownership and leadership for the development of public services in general is missing.**

The principles of good administrative procedure are safeguarded by the Law on Administrative Procedures (LAP). Although **most of the special laws have been harmonised with the LAP, there is no information on the harmonisation of the secondary acts.** Therefore it is not possible to say whether the encompassing principles and values are fully applied, even after the law has been in force for four years, and the public services and their underlying administrative processes remain bureaucratic and burdensome. Guidance and support on how to integrate different perspectives (legal, technological and user-centric service design) into a coherent approach in improving administrative procedures are missing.

Due to the lack of ownership over the modernisation of service delivery in general, the progress in its enabling environment has been moderate. **The central monitoring of service delivery performance and perception has not been established,** and support to service delivery institutions in developing their services is missing. Therefore, no service standards exist for either in-person or digital services. This

results in very weak feedback mechanisms for improving services. The adoption of quality-management and user-engagement tools and techniques is modest and not centrally encouraged or supported.

Declining satisfaction with public services in Montenegro, 2017-2021



Note: The respondents were asked “Could you please tell how satisfied you are with each of the following in your place of living? The percentage shows the share of citizens and businesses who “strongly agree” or “tend to agree” in relation to the following statements: “Administrative services from central government (such as passports and personal identification [ID])” and “Public services for businesses”. Only those respondents who have been in contact with central government services in the past year are included.

Source: Regional Cooperation Council, Balkan Barometer Public and Business Opinion databases (<https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer>)

Even though the established interoperability framework is solid, in practice the quality of public services is hindered by a limited data exchange between public registries. A free option of obtaining a digital certificate has been provided recently, which should improve the current low uptake. The number of registries connected to the technical interoperability Government Service Bus (GSB) system is still limited, which hinders the user-friendliness and efficiency of public services. A positive development is the creation of the catalogue of e-services, which is still at an initial stage and will have great potential once fully established.

The legislative and policy framework aims to increase the accessibility of services to people with disabilities, alongside standards for accessibility. Progress has not been evident, however, and a mechanism to centrally monitor the accessibility of services for disadvantaged groups has not been established. **No valid policies exist for improving territorial access, nor is there clear evidence of major progress in the area.** Common guidelines for government websites exist and, owing to a recent overhaul of their design, the compliance is very good.

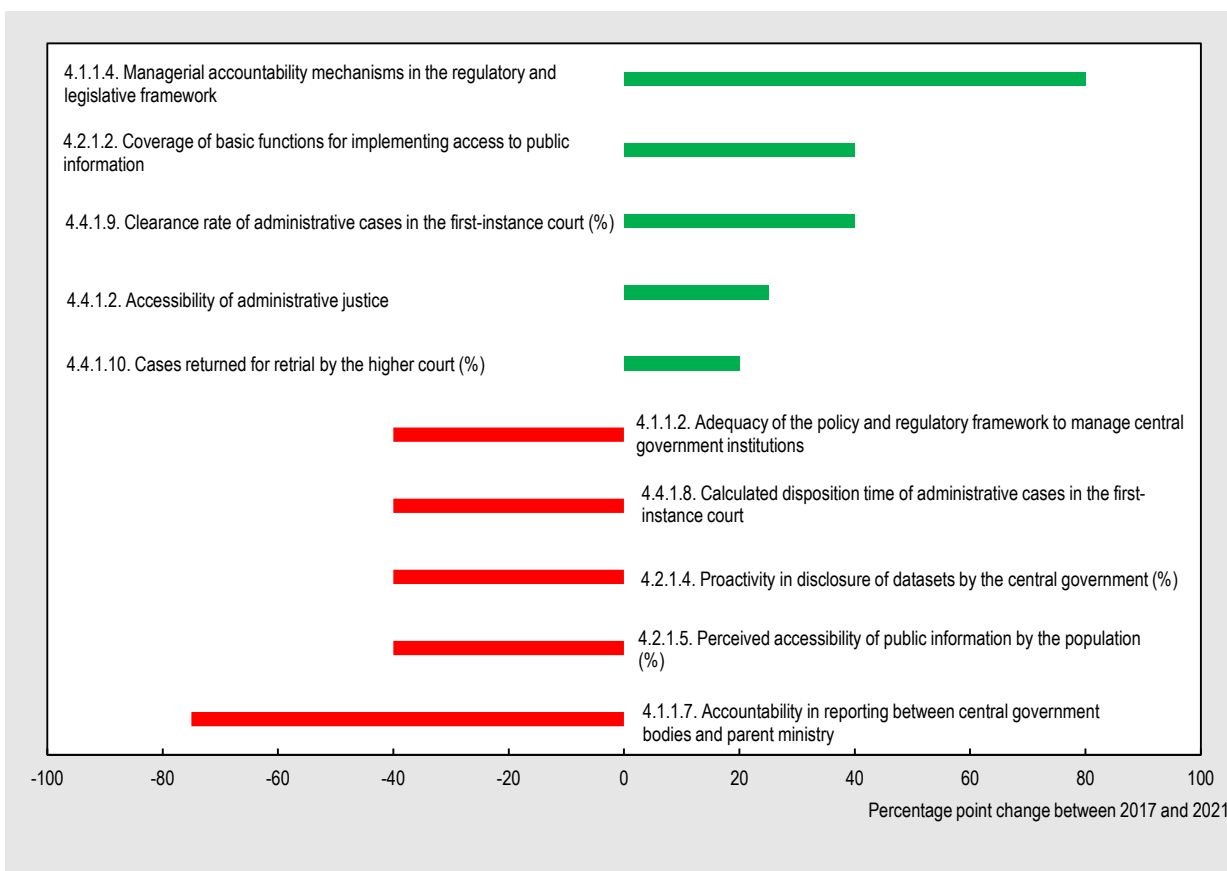
Short-term recommendations (1-2 years)

- 1) The Government should establish an ambitious and comprehensive strategic framework to improve user-centric service delivery (general and digital services, ICT, accessibility, simplification).
- 2) The Government should clearly assign ownership for overall service delivery to ensure a user-centric and integrated approach across the administration, establish service standards and monitor the performance of both digital and in-person services.
- 3) The MPADSM should finalise the catalogue of e-services, containing key information about the delivery process for each service (service passport including cost, actions/documents required, etc.) and extend it to all public services as the foundation of the e-Government portal.
- 4) The Government should increase the number of registries connected to the GSB and ensure that all institutions involved develop the digital services necessary for data exchange and adjust their procedures to reduce the volume of data currently required from applicants.
- 5) The MPADSM, in co-operation with the General Secretariat and the Secretariat for Legislation, should start monitoring the harmonisation of the secondary acts with the LAP. The MPADSM should also use the harmonisation process to promote simplification and re-engineering of administrative procedures.
- 6) The MPADSM, in co-operation with other key service provision institutions and private-sector service providers, should design a roadmap for increasing the use of digital authentication tools by the general population and integrating them into administrative processes.

Medium-term recommendations (3-5 years)

- 7) The MPADSM should establish an operational roadmap on how to increase the use of quality-management instruments and tools in public institutions, including awareness raising, promotion, knowledge sharing, recognising good practices and capacity building.
- 8) The MPADSM, in co-operation with the Human Resource Management Authority (HRMA), should design a roadmap for improving the digital capacities and skills of both civil servants and the general public to support the modernisation of public services and their wider use.

The five highest percentage point increases and decreases for all sub-indicators in the area compared to 2017. Administrative procedures have been improved as has the operability infrastructure and quality of websites. Public satisfaction with service delivery has deteriorated since 2017.



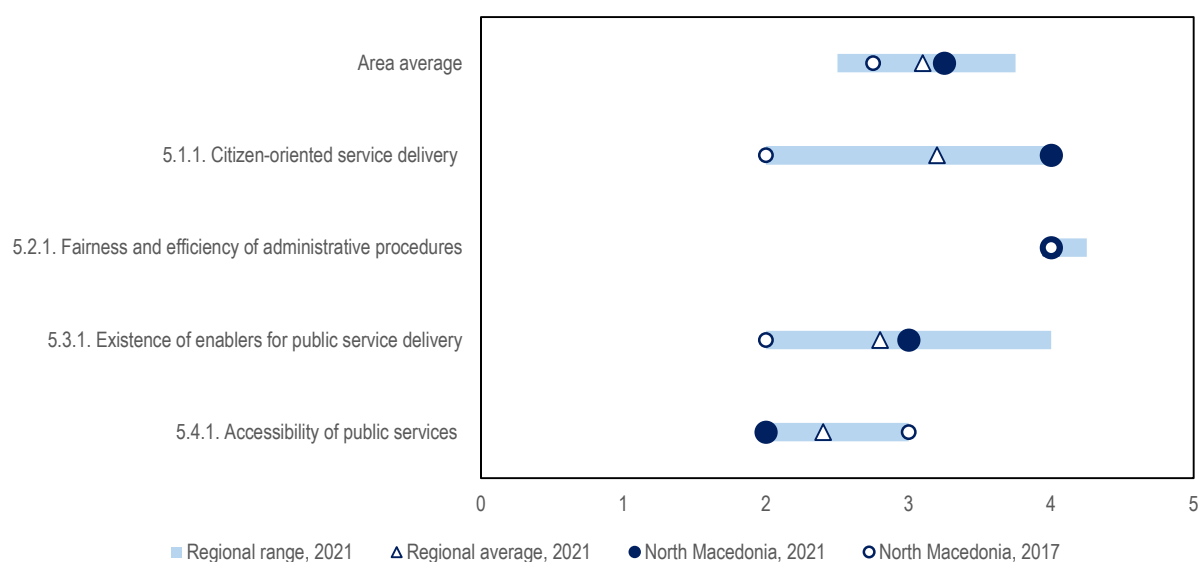
Republic of North Macedonia

Republic of North Macedonia

Summary and recommendations

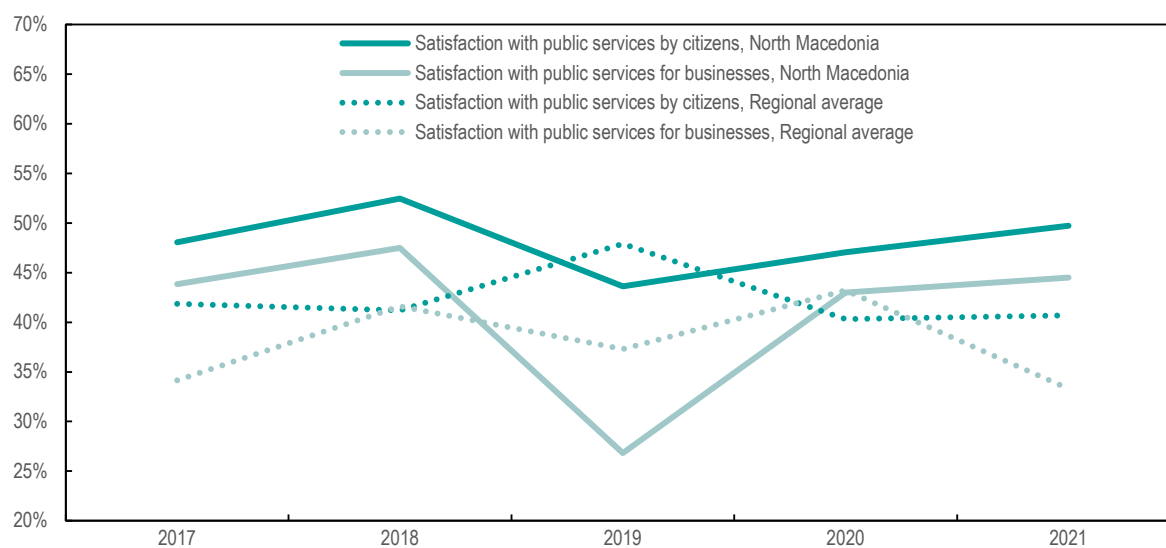
The average indicator value for the service delivery area has improved slightly to 3.3, compared to 2.8 in 2017, which places North Macedonia slightly above the regional average. The value of the indicators related to citizen-oriented service delivery and its enablers have improved. Despite these positive developments, the number of digital services is still low and the simplification process is slow. The indicator value related to the accessibility of services has decreased and there is no change for the fairness and efficiency of administrative procedures.

Indicators values have improved since 2017 on average and are now above the regional average. Only regression was for accessibility of public services



The policy framework has improved and provides clear direction for the service delivery area through the PAR Strategy 2018-2022. Three key laws (on central registry of population, on electronic management of services and on electronic documents and trust services) were adopted to facilitate e-services. Although the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) has a mandate to co-ordinate the entire service delivery area, **the modernisation of public services is still fragmented, and the ownership of some of its aspects remains unclear**. Despite the improvements in digitalisation, many services are still only provided in a traditional form. **The potential provided by digital enablers is often underutilised and could be leveraged to improve citizen orientation**. Some business-related procedures have worsened, as has the satisfaction of businesses with digital services. The Government has acknowledged these problems and established two working groups that should co-ordinate the review of over 150 laws to improve the level of digitalisation in the public administration and to ensure technological readiness for that. The satisfaction of citizens and businesses with the public services has slightly increased in the past years, although remains at the same level compared to 2017, and is above the regional average.

The satisfaction with public services is above the regional average



Note: The respondents were asked “Could you please tell how satisfied you are with each of the following in your place of living? The percentage shows the share of citizens and businesses who “strongly agree” or “tend to agree” in relation to the following statements: “Administrative services from central government (such as passports and personal identification [ID])” and “Public services for businesses”. Only those respondents who have been in contact with central government services in the past year are included.

Source: Regional Cooperation Council, Balkan Barometer Public and Business Opinion databases (<https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer>).

Although the general legal framework is robust and well aligned with the principles of good administration, the harmonisation of special laws with the provisions of the Law on General Administrative Procedures (LGAP), adopted in 2015, is not complete. The once-only principle is not fully applied, as public authorities still request documents from citizens that they already possess, despite the explicit prohibition in the LGAP. The MISA supports the harmonisation process proactively with the creation of a unit that acts as a help desk for other ministries. Nevertheless, the guidance and support on how to integrate various perspectives (legal, technological and user-centric service design) into a coherent approach to improve administrative procedures is missing. The perceived efficiency of administrative procedures in public institutions by citizens has stagnated, according to Balkan Barometer survey data.

The use of quality management techniques has declined, despite a special law being in place since 2013. The recently launched Methodology for Assessing the Quality of Institutions has the potential to revitalise this area. **There are no service standards set and, apart from e-services, no performance data on service delivery collected centrally.** The infrastructure for interoperability of basic registries has been put in place and is operational for the key registries; however, some registries are still not accessible via the common data exchange infrastructure. The National e-Services Portal is fully operational and provides a Catalogue of Public Services, a key enabler of service simplification and improvement. Still, **the uptake of e-services is low.** The digital signature framework is aligned with the European Union (EU) electronic identification, authentication and trust services (eIDAS), but obtaining certificates is expensive, and using the signature is complex, which inhibits the wider digitalisation of services.

The situation with the accessibility of services has deteriorated. Accessibility for people with special needs is recognised in legal documents and set as a PAR Strategy objective, but there is no evidence of the practical implementation of these requirements. Despite the legal recognition of sign language and the recent improvements in removing physical barriers to access public buildings, **the implementation of accessibility policies is poor in practice.** There is no formal obligation for public administration websites to comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), and compliance with the standards has decreased.

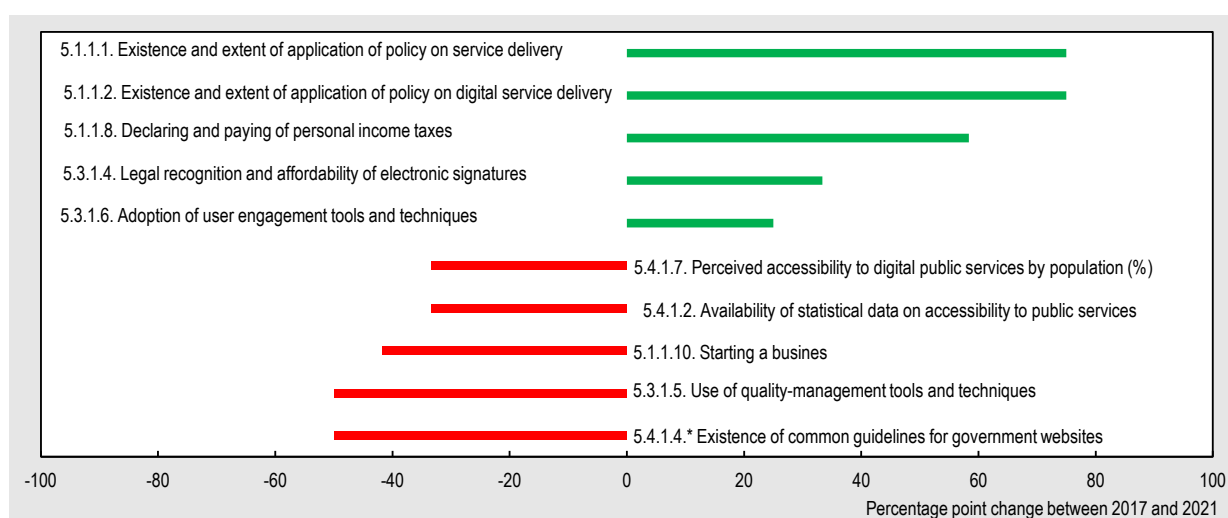
Short-term recommendations (1-2 years)

- 1) The Government should adopt a Digital Service Roadmap aligned with the National ICT Strategy, based on the analysis of the working groups established for the improvement of digitalisation of administrative procedures.
- 2) The MISA should take clear ownership and leadership of the co-ordination of overall public service delivery (in addition to e-services) to guarantee a uniform approach across different sectors and develop relevant competences.
- 3) The Government should adopt the guidelines prepared by the MISA: “Standards for Service Delivery”, “Guidelines for Optimization of Services” and “Methodology for Inclusion of the End-Users in the Process of Improvement of Public Services. The MISA should guide other institutions on implementation and regularly monitor public service delivery in accordance with these standards.
- 4) The MISA should reanimate its role as a leader in promoting quality management practices, prepare a new National Quality Management Plan in the public sector and conduct annual studies based on the Methodology for Assessing the Quality of Institutions.
- 5) The MISA should analyse the main hindrances to increased uptake of digital services and design a roadmap to overcome them in co-operation with the main service provision institutions.
- 6) The MISA, in co-operation with other key service-provision institutions and private-sector service providers, should design a roadmap for increasing the use of digital authentication tools by the general population and integrating them into administrative processes.
- 7) The MISA should monitor the harmonisation of legal acts with the LGAP. The MISA should also use the harmonisation process to promote the simplification and re-engineering of administrative procedures.

Medium-term recommendations (3-5 years)

- 8) The Government should draft a comprehensive strategy for enhancing public service accessibility and set a monitoring framework for assessing progress.
- 9) The Government should start piloting proactive and predictive service delivery for some life events.
- 10) The MISA should design a roadmap for improving the digital capacities and skills of both the civil servants and the general public to promote the modernisation of public services and their wider use.

The five highest percentage point increases and decreases for all sub-indicators in the area compared to 2017. The policy framework for service delivery has improved, whereas deteriorations have happened in the quality of government websites, the use of quality-management tools, and the perceived accessibility of digital public services



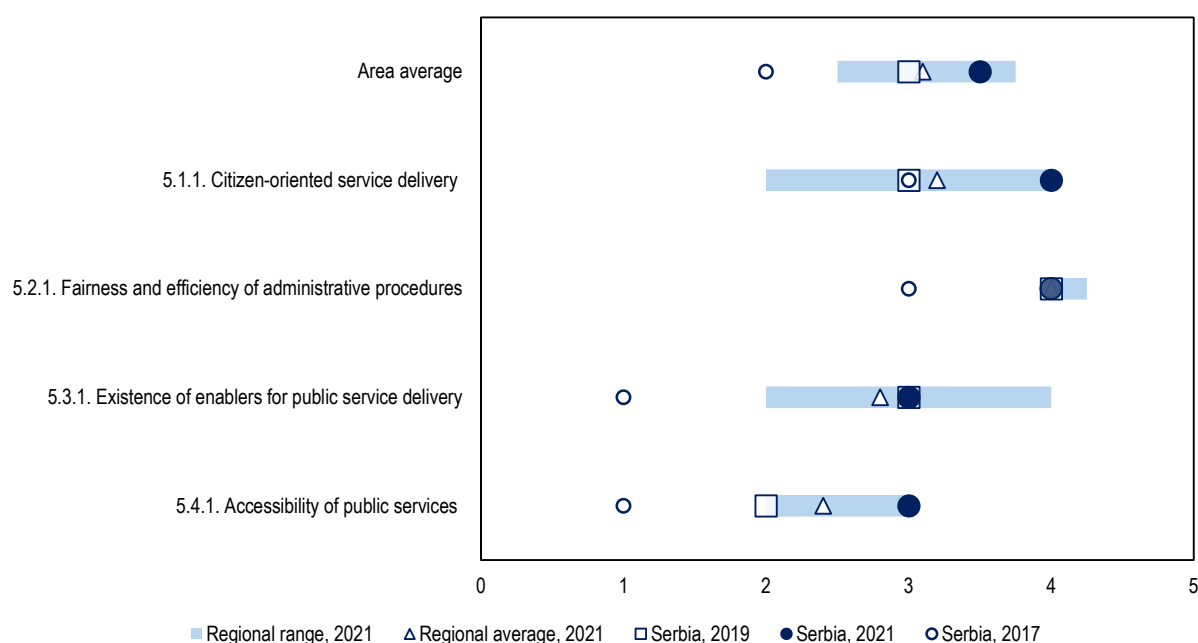
Serbia

Serbia

Summary and recommendations

With an area average of 3.5 in service delivery, Serbia strengthens its position as a regional leader (together with Albania) in the Western Balkans in modernising service delivery. The overall value has been improving steadily from 2 in 2017 and 3 in 2019. This is reflected in the improvement of citizens' and businesses' perceptions of the different aspects of service delivery. The main developments have been in the overall strategic framework for service delivery and the accessibility of services. The digitalisation of public services is also continuously improving. As the main priority so far has been on digitalisation, clearer ownership for the overall provision of public services through all channels would help improve user orientation even further.

Service delivery has improved significantly from 2017. This is reflected in all indicator values. Serbia is above the regional average and consistently at the top end of the regional range

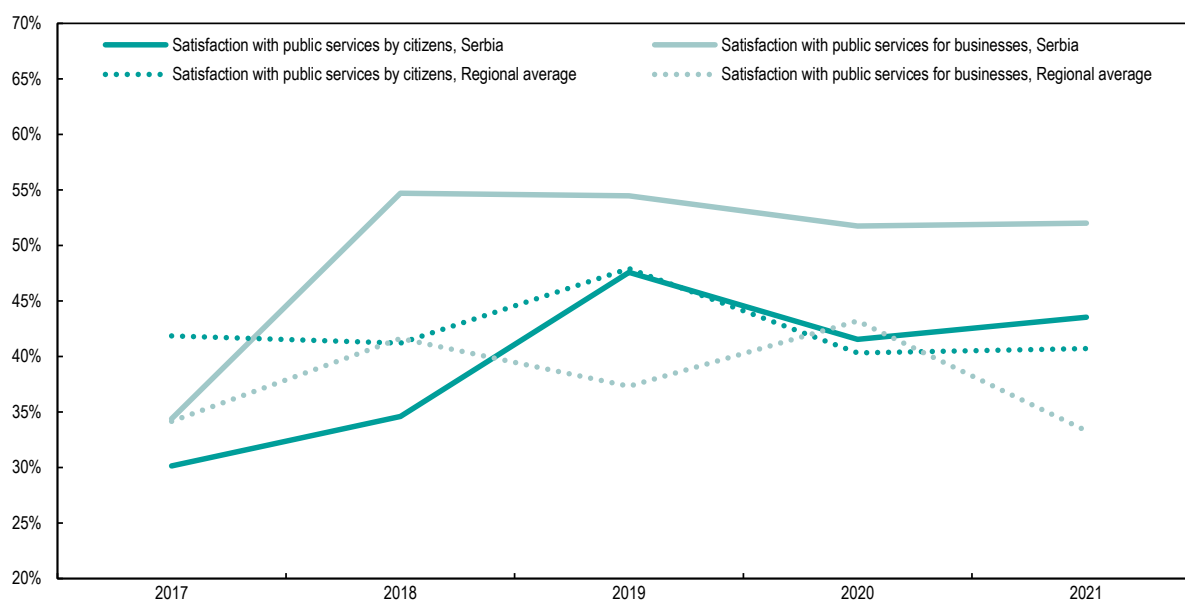


A sound policy framework is in place for service delivery in general and digital government more specifically. The Government is committed to reducing administrative burdens by strengthening the programme of process simplification and establishing a registry of administrative procedures. Although the dedicated teams are in place in several institutions, the **responsibility for the development of public services in general is still fragmented**, and some of the aspects remain uncovered. Several public authorities have partial responsibilities for improving public services, and integration of these responsibilities needs to be strengthened. Despite the good progress made in improving the enablers of digital government, an analysis of a sample of **services for citizens indicate that they are still highly bureaucratic and are at a low level of digitalisation (e.g. issuance of identity cards or registering a vehicle)**.

The implementation of the robust general legal framework established with the Law of General Administrative Procedures is still progressing slowly. The share of non-harmonised special laws and their legislation acts remains high. There is no monitoring mechanism in place to apply the once-only principle, and some public authorities still request documents that they already possess from citizens. The guidance and support on integrating different perspectives (legal, technological and user-centric service design) into a coherent approach to improving administrative procedures are missing.

The central monitoring of performance and quality of the delivery of public services remains a significant shortcoming. Despite the numerous public institutions dealing with the different aspects of service delivery, there is no clear responsibility in this area. No central service standards have been set, neither for digital nor in-person services. Performance data are regularly collected only for the digital services provided via the e-Government Portal. Although there are public institutions that use quality management and user engagement tools, no central guidelines nor co-ordinated support exist to increase their use. **The list of datasets connected to the Government Service Bus (GBS) has expanded,** including the Population Register as one of the registries in terms of interoperability of services. **Although the electronic signature is operational and has a free option for obtaining a certificate, the uptake is still very low.** This sets severe limits on the wider use of digital services.

Businesses are more satisfied with public services than citizens in Serbia



Note: The respondents were asked "Could you please tell how satisfied you are with each of the following in your place of living? The percentage shows the share of citizens and businesses who "strongly agree" or "tend to agree" in relation to the following statements: "Administrative services from central government (such as passports and personal identification [ID])" and "Public services for businesses".

Source: Regional Cooperation Council, Balkan Barometer Public and Business Opinion databases (<https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer>).

The number of municipal one-stop shops is increasing and, in this way, providing better access to public services across the country. A strategy exists to increase accessibility for people with disabilities but there is little evidence on implementation and monitoring. Although the government websites have common guidelines, the quality of the websites remains poor. The Government has acknowledged this issue and has conducted a comprehensive study on this issue recently. The perception of accessibility to public services has improved.

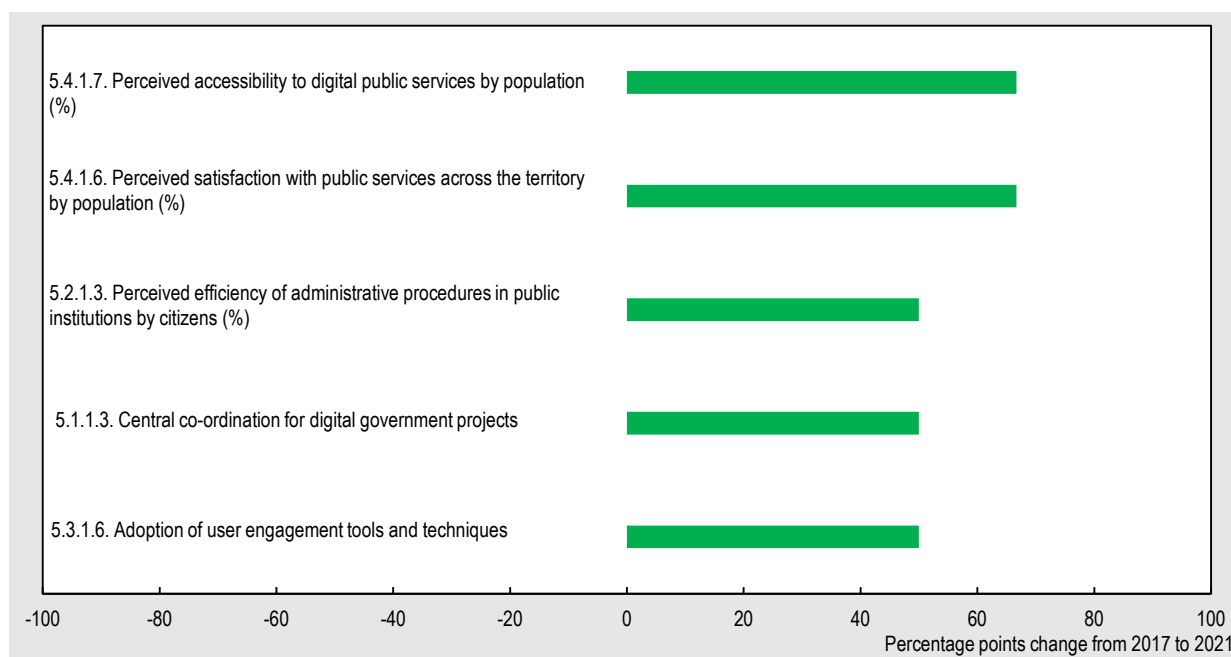
Short-term recommendations (1-2 years)

- 1) The Government should clearly assign ownership for overall service delivery to ensure a user-centric and integrated approach across the administration by establishing service standards and monitoring the performance of both digital and in-person services.
- 2) The e-Government Office should continue making the digital signature more useful for individual citizens by ensuring the successful launch of cloud and mobile phone-based solutions in co-operation with other stakeholders and by actively promoting the digital signature across the administration and among citizens.
- 3) The e-Government Office, with the backing of the Government, should further enforce the implementation of the interoperability framework and increase the number of registries connected to it.
- 4) The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MPALSG) should evaluate the implementation of the physical one-stop shops in the territory and expand support to this initiative by strategically targeting those municipalities and services where benefits are more relevant for citizens.
- 5) The Government should set clear deadlines for the authorities to harmonise their legislation with the Law on General Administrative Procedures (LGAP) and regularly monitor the situation. The MPASLG and the Public Policy Secretariat (PPS) should also integrate the harmonisation process with the efforts done in simplifying and re-engineering administrative procedures.
- 6) The Government should appoint an administrative body responsible for a central review process to examine the purpose and implementation of large impact government IT projects.

Medium-term recommendations (3-5 years)

- 7) The co-ordinating body should establish a policy framework on quality management complemented by an operational roadmap on how to increase the use of quality management instruments and tools in public institutions, including awareness-raising, promotion, knowledge sharing, recognising good practices and capacity building.
- 8) The Government should develop an action plan with civil society organisations to improve accessibility for people with disabilities to the most demanded public services (physical and digital). A regular public report should be published on the efforts of government bodies and municipalities concerning improving accessibility to public services for those with disabilities.

There were no negative trends at sub-indicator level from 2017 to 2021. Rising public satisfaction with public service delivery reflects the actual progress made



For more information:

OECD/SIGMA

2 rue André Pascal
75775 Paris Cedex 16
France

mail to: sigmaweb@oecd.org
Tel: +33 (0) 1 45 24 82 00

www.sigmaweb.org