'Transformation of the Administrative Service Model'

Case study of Bulgarian ESF project under the study 'Progress Assessment of the ESF Support to Public Administration' (PAPA)

Written by Ms Stanka Delcheva
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Operational Programme	Operational Programme Good Governance 2014-2020, Priority Axis 'Administrative service delivery and e-governance', Specific objective 1.1: Reduction of administrative and regulatory burden on citizens and businesses and introduction of services based on "life events" and "business events"
Beneficiary organisation	Directorate 'Modernisation of the administration' in the Council of Ministers' administration
Target groups	Public administration structures at all levels and public service providers
Project duration	1 December 2015 - 30 June 2020
Budget	EUR 2,543,605.53
Project manager (email address)	Directorate 'Modernisation of the administration' in the Council of Ministers' administration (e.enchev@government.bg)
Partners	National Association of the Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB)
Project/ organisation website	n/a

This case study was produced during the project 'Progress Assessment of the ESF Support to Public Administration' project that was contracted by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission. The purpose of this project was to present specific cases of ESF-funded public administration reform and capacity building initiatives, as well as to show the role of ESF financial support to public administration for accountability purposes. This report provides a story on the project **'Transformation of the Administrative Service Model'**, which discusses its context and purpose; characteristics of the team implementing it; main challenges faced and difficulties encountered during implementation; key developments during the implementation process; results and impacts achieved; as well as lessons learnt and the contribution of ESF.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE MODEL

Introduction: the context of the project

The modernisation of the public administration and its work has been one of the priorities of the Bulgarian government in recent years. Improving administrative services has been a key element of implementing this policy, since the adoption of the Law on Administrative Service of Physical Persons and Legal Entities in 1999. In the initial years, the government focused its main efforts on alleviating the burden of administrative regulations by reducing the requirements on business, including the provision of documents, and the integration of administrative services through the opportunity for the administrations to verify data and circumstances with information collected by other administrations.

For the purposes of this case study, 'administrative service' is understood as any interaction between administrations and citizens or businesses, where the administration requests or provides documents certifying facts or the presence or absence of rights and obligations, or otherwise respond to the legal interests of the citizens or business. Examples of such services include issuing a birth certificate (by the municipal administration), a certificate of no tax or social security liabilities (by the National Revenue Agency branches), or a driving license (by the Ministry of Interior). Administrative services for businesses are diverse and are linked, in some cases, to the specific economic sector. Examples include: registering a company (by the Registry Agency), registering an employment agreement (by the National Revenues Agency), and issuing a hotel or guest house category certificate (by the Ministry of Tourism or the municipal administration). Usually the provision of an administrative service demands data or information to be provided by the citizen or business. Service coordination and integration would mean that the specific administration gets this information from other administrations that hold it without demanding submission of any documents. This would reduce significantly the administrative burden on the citizens and businesses.

Prior to 2002, the main focus was the elaboration of a 'Strategy for Integrated Service' that would include:

- defining a system of rules that would introduce an official relationship between the separate administrative structures when delivering administrative services, in order to coordinate them;
- establishing a model for integration of the information kept by the individual administrations (information pools); and
- building a common information governance system for administrative services.

These ideas were rooted in a very ineffective system that existed at the time, whereby businesses and citizens are actually 'obliged and responsible for coordinating service activities provided by the administration'[1]. In other words, the burden of 'joining up' administrative services to meet the user's needs and expectations was placed on the shoulders of the user, rather than the Bulgarian administrative system, its entities and staff.

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[1] General review of the policy for modernization Bulgarian civil service (1997 – 2002), Analytical Paper prepared by the STRATEGMA Agency, May 2002.

In 2001-2002, the administration of the Council of Ministers implemented a project to collect and analyse information about the administrative services provided by administrations at all levels. It subsequently approved a concept for improving the administrative service using the 'one-stop-shop' (OSS) principle as a basic model. A self-evaluation system of administrative service was built that helps administrations to monitor the model's integration into their structures. The results of this project had an impact on the modernisation of the administrative service for a long period, but the existing capacity for official coordination of the service activities remained unfulfilled. The reasons for this inconsistency are rooted in the fact that the 'OSS concept' was literally implemented by organising only one access point in the administrative structures. Each administration tried to reorganise its internal processes and physically designate a place (the one-stop shop) where citizens and businesses could get information about the service provision requirements, submit an application and accompanying documents, and pay the service fee. On many occasions, these efforts have produced real results and replaced the previous model, whereby the citizen toured the offices to submit or receive information and documents. In this sense, the implementation of the concept made tangible changes in the service organisation, but they remained confined to the individual administrations, because the service coordination measures were only conceptually and not organisationally developed and hence did not happen. The reasons for this could be lack of planning and centralised actions, or limited resources.

Internal coordination of service provision was introduced for the first time by the 'Ordinance on Administrative Services' of 2006. The ordinance obliged public administration bodies to provide all documents they issue, which are necessary for administrative service provision, through official channels. The obligation is also envisaged for the administrations to access the necessary documents **internally** from other administrations that hold them, who were obliged to provide them. However, the introduction of a normative obligation of itself could not enable this internal coordination in practice, unless it was accompanied by the necessary procedures and resources.

Further progress towards integrated administrative services was made with the adoption of the 'Law on Electronic Governance' in 2008, which introduced the obligation for the administrations to provide electronic access to the data and information they collect to other administrations. This would have increased the potential for cross-administration coordination by using the networking and processing power of e-government to accelerate the exchange of information. Despite these legal requirements, public administrations continued to demand various paper documents from citizens and businesses, thanks to the condition included in the Law that this should happen 'if technically possible'. In fact, in the following seven years, the administrations failed to 'discover' any technical opportunities to develop the practice of providing other administrations with access to the information they collect (introduce the practice of internal provision of all the documents they issue.)

The possibility for internal electronic administrative services is a condition for achieving one of the main goals of the electronic government – providing administrative services to citizens and businesses without obliging them to visit more than one administration. The design and development of RegiX – an inter-register software exchange environment – created this possibility. This is a platform that ensures automated access to the information contained in registers between administrations. The access requires automated certification of legal grounds, i.e. an automated check of whether the requesting administration has the right to receive the requested data. RegiX is a key component of actual electronic administrative service performance. It is the environment that provides automated submission and servicing of standardised applications electronically. By connecting the information systems in the administration, it provides the possibility for automatic extraction of data from the main registers, among them the National 'Population' Database, the Property Register, the Trade

Register, the Registered Personal Data Operators Register, the Bulgarian Identity Documents Register, the Single Register of Foreigners, etc. The core of RegiX was developed with ESF Operational Programme Administrative Capacity (OPAC) support before 2015. Its full configuration, however, necessitated inclusion of further activities in the electronic government projects.

The role of the Administrative Register in improving access to administrative service is important. It was created in 2006 to provide information about the structures in the state administration, their management bodies and the services they provide. The register's development was supported with an ESF co-financed OPAC grant in the period 2010-2015. It contains information about the existing administrative structures and their related legal entities, their management bodies, structure, rules and administrative services, including the internal ones, electronic administrative services, registration, licensing, permits and coordination regimes and their document templates, terms and tariffs. The register publishes information about the vacant positions in the administration and the recruitment procedures' announcements. The integrated information system of the State administration (IISDA) maintains the Administrative Register[2].

The ESF co-financed project that is most closely related to the case study project 'Transformation of the Administrative Service Model' (TASM) is the 'Introduction of complex administrative service for quality service provision to the citizens and the business', which was implemented from 2011 to 2013 by the administration of the Council of Ministers. This project developed the basic model for the so-called 'complex administrative service delivery' (CAS), produced a methodology for improving work processes for administrative service provision and a manual for its implementation, and delivered training programmes for the administrative officers. The project resulted in the reengineering of work processes for 50 administrative services, of which 12 were developed into complex administrative services in three pilot administrations.

The CAS concept also includes introducing the opportunity to request administrative services by post, electronically or at a desk, according to the service user's preference. These channels may be combined and the inherent flexibility can be essential, especially for citizens living in remote areas wishing to request a service by post. Citizens and businesses should no longer be obliged to present themselves in offices, and would henceforth have the opportunity to interact with the public administration remotely and virtually, not face-to-face. CAS envisages electronic service provision, a serious relief for the business. All those changes were introduced with amendments to the Administrative Code of Procedure and came into force from 1 January 2015. Before these amendments, the electricity distribution companies, water and sewerage companies, and mobile operators, among others, were not explicitly obliged to apply the administrative service rules, and set their own deadlines, which they often did not comply with.

In spite of the great ambitions for broad integration announced by the CAS model and the normative amendments, the official exchange of information still did not work in practice, due to limitations in the technical capacity of public bodies and restrictions on the exchange of data between the registers of different administrations. The current situation can be well illustrated by the following example (Box 1).

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[2] Regulated in the Administration Act (Article 61).

Box 1. An example illustrating above-mentioned limitations

The case of Ms. D (May 2019)

Ms. D lives in municipality A. Together with her mother and sister who live in municipality B, she owns an apartment located in the centre of municipality X. The apartment was announced for sale, a buyer appears and Ms. D starts collecting the necessary documents for the sale. After consultation with a real estate expert and with the buyer's bank, she compiled a list of the necessary documents. It turned out that, in most cases, she would have to submit an application to municipality X or the local offices of central administrations in municipality X, such as the Registry Agency – Property Register and the National Revenue Agency, in order to access the required documents. Having reviewed the conditions for having them issued, Ms. D found out she could not request and receive them electronically. She could only do it in person, so she decided that the most effective and fastest way was to take a day and a half off work, travel a total of 500 km both ways and get the documents. However, a problem emerged in her tight schedule. One of the necessary documents was a Certificate of Heirs, issued in the past six months, which had to be issued by municipality Y, located at a distance of 35 km from the centre of municipality X. Even though the issuing of Certificates of Heirs is presented in the register of municipality Y as an electronic service, a phone call revealed that only the request for issuing this certificate can be made electronically. Although the law envisages the opportunity for the applicant to receive it in a manner of her choice, for instance by post, the officers in the administration informed Ms. D that she could only get it in person or with a duly authorised representative, as: 'How could we know where this important document will go if we send it by post?'

For this reason, it was decided to take a new approach to administrative services and e-government within the framework of the 'Strategy for Development of the State Administration 2014-2020' and the 'Road Map for implementation of the Strategy for Development of Electronic Governance in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2016-2020'. While EU structural instruments had helped to finance and implement numerous individual projects in 2007-2013 on the introduction of individual electronic services (e-services) in separate administrations, the decision was taken to secure the model of service integration *centrally* first, before engaging in further implementation by, specifically, *municipal* administrations. This led to the planning of the ESF-financed project 'Transformation of the Administrative Service Model' (TASM) as the first project financed by the 2014-2020 Operational Programme Good Governance (OPGG).

TASM was developed and implemented by the team of the Directorate 'Modernisation of the administration' in the Council of Ministers' administration, which has been a direct participant and often a beneficiary of all initiatives in the field of public administration reform and improving administrative services post-2006. Most of these initiatives were co-financed by ESF through the 2007-2013 OP Administrative Capacity (OPAC), and the 2014-2020 OP Good Governance (OPGG).

For example, efforts were also invested in increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the central public administration through the implementation of the ESF co-financed project: 'Introducing the principles of shared services in the organisation and work of the central administration'[3] (January 2017 – July 2019). This project envisaged detailed analysis of the current status of human resources management, financial and accounting activities and IT activities, and the development of a model for gradual outsourcing of general and auxiliary irrelevant activities, thus enabling them to focus on their key functions. The aim was to create

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[3] BG05SFOP001-2.001-0009-C04.

a model where one unit or administration provides shared services on behalf of other administrations. The activities would be prioritised and a road map drawn up for the introduction of the shared services. The project aimed to create two shared service units and the implementation of the model will be put to continuous monitoring in view of its multiplication in other administrations.

Design and execution of the ESF-funded project

ESF-supported project 'Transformation of the model of administrative service delivery

The 'Strategy for Development of the State Administration 2014-2020' envisages a thorough transformation of the delivery of administrative services, while the related Road Map incorporates CAS as an innovative form of service delivery to benefit citizens and businesses. As a result of CAS, it was intended that first, the public administration would offer e-Services more systematically and second, services would be grouped by applying the 'life events' and 'business events' principle.

TASM was developed to support the achievement of specific objective 1 of OPGG's priority axis 1, namely 'administrative service and e-governance', and to contribute to two result indicators, namely 'administrations supported for the introduction of complex administrative services' and 'number of municipal services supported for standardisation'.

The project was designed to target the deficit of full and structured information about the administrative services, regimes, information pools and registers. It was intended to answer the many open questions that existed at the time of its launch: how many and which services exist, how are they provided, what documents are required, what fees are collected and on what normative grounds.

The overall project goal is to achieve the sustainability, effectiveness, transparent prioritisation and predictability of the future stages of administrative reform, CAS and e-government. The specific project objectives are: to improve the organisational model and maintenance of the registers of the state administration; to remove the normative impediments to the introduction of CAS, improving the work processes for provision of administrative services; and to standardise key municipal services for citizens and businesses. The total project value is EUR 2,543,605.53, of which EUR 2,162,064.70 was financed by ESF.

The project has six main activities:

1. Developing electronic forms (user interface) for requesting and receiving certificates through official channels from the administrative registers, integrated in RegiX;
2. Upgrading the existing IISDA[4];
3. Conducting a large-scale inventory of: a) administrative services and regimes and their compliance with the legislative requirements[5]; b) the existing information pools and registers included in the work processes for provision of administrative services; c)

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[4] See: http://iisda.government.bg

[5] Assessment of compliance with the forecasts and requirements of the Administrative Code of Procedure and the Law on restricted administrative regulation and administrative control of economic activity.

identification of administrative services provided by the public service providers[6] and ensuring the application of administrative service organisation rules;

4. Analysing the condition of registers in the state administration and preparing a concept and a road map for reform of the registers;

5. Analysing the practices and construction of the service provision on the basis of the 'life events' and 'business events' principle; and

6. Selecting priority services provided by the municipalities and developing unified procedures and forms of requesting and provision.

TASM has solid political support. It was initiated by the Directorate 'Modernisation of the administration' in the Council of Ministers' administration and the political cabinet of vice-premier Donchev who is in charge of the administrative reform. The project is being implemented in partnership with the National Association of Municipalities of the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB), given the specific attention to the role of local self-government in providing administrative services in the community.

TASM is complemented by another key ESF co-financed project for improving administrative services, which is also the subject of a PAPA case study: 'Development of the horizontal and central e-Government systems in relation to the application of a Unified Model for Application, Payment and Provision of Electronic Administrative Services'[7], implemented by SEGA. It develops the electronic government systems created in the period 2007-2013 and provides a long-term solution for the provision of internal administrative services through upgrading and integrating the existing information systems in a way that allows automated extraction of evidence and circumstances from the registers.

The financing of TASM has enabled the beneficiary to implement activities that are considerable in both volume and scope, including to attract external consultant capacity from the business and academic communities as key experts, and evaluate the achieved results. This is an opportunity to secure the necessary capacity, as the team of the Directorate 'Modernisation of the administration' is too small to accomplish such ambitious activities on its own.

The management of such a large project is dependent on many factors and entails high risks. The competence of the project management team and the external expertise are crucial in terms of implementing individual activities, but especially the management of change (as this is a transformative initiative), overcoming emerging challenges, and achieving the first positive results of the project implementation, given 'early wins' are always valuable in building momentum.

Implementation of the ESF project: main developments and challenges

The project management team was mobilised straight after the signing of the grant agreement. The first challenge emerged at the very start – in its initial format, the project was planned for just 12 months, which was too short for such a sophisticated and extensive initiative. The character of the envisaged activities was not properly assessed in the planning stage. It soon became apparent that the project was complex, broad in its scope and extensive in its reach, and given it depended on securing the participation of various administrations as pilot organisations in activity 1, it would involve both coordination of the technical means and the implementation of administrative procedures. In the opinion of Encho Enchev, the leader of the management team, completing such a work volume in such a short time is as if 'we are building

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[6] Public service providers are generally the utility companies, internet and telecommunication companies. The project considers as providers of public services and hospitals, schools and kindergartens, banks, notaries.

[7] Detailed description in the other Bulgarian case study.

a spaceship launching centre in 12 months'. Thus, the first change in the project implementation was to extend the project period and the management team submitted a request to the Managing Authority of OPGG. The period was extended to 58 months; the project started in December 2015 and should be completed by 30 June 2020.

Another significant change in the project parameters was related to its budget. The need for extra funding was established in the course of preparing the tender procedure for the planned inventory of administrative services, regimes, registers and information pools (activities 3 and 4), which would include, for the first time, public service providers. In verifying the scope and preparing the terms of reference, it became clear that the number of organisations in the research should increase from 576 to 1,276. With a request to the Managing Authority, the scope of the survey was enlarged, and the budget was increased by EUR 238,733.

In fact, the project implementation started logically with the tender procedures for selection of external consultants for the main activities.

First, in October 2016, the implementation of activities 1 and 2[8] was merged in a single public procurement with two lots[9]. The only candidate for lot 2 was rejected due to irregularities in the documentation. The implementation of lot 1 was assigned to the candidate ranked first in the procedure in May 2017[10]. Meanwhile, the State e-Government Agency (SEGA) was established in July 2016 through amendments to the Law on Electronic Governance[11], with functions for developing, enforcing and controlling policies, rules and good practice in the field of electronic governance, strategic planning and initiatives, budget programming and control, and coordination of sector policies. SEGA also maintains centralised registers for the purpose of electronic government, other centralised registers, the 'state hybrid private cloud' infrastructure and a communication network of the state administration.

The meeting with the project management team was held in a period when the main project implementation activities have been concluded and the normative amendments proposals were in the process of agreement, and several serious challenges have been overcome.

One of the important decisions taken by the management team was whether to continue with the contracting of activity 2, or to wait and give SEGA the opportunity to take part in preparing the terms of reference and hence include its requirements in the activity's implementation. In the meantime, SEGA started another key project from August 2017 for electronic government and official exchange of information, financed by OPAC[12], which also included upgrading and development of RegiX. As a result, the project management team decided to postpone the start of activity 2 to provide time for preparation of the terms of reference in a way that allows the upgraded RegiX to receive automated information about the services and their legal grounds from IISSA. The tender documentation preparation for activity 2 is close to completion.

The public procurement process leading to selection of external consultants is one of the factors that led to delayed implementation of the main activities and required changes in the work schedule for the project's implementation. For instance, the choice of contractor for the

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[8] Activity 1 is related to modelling, development and integration in 50 pilot administrations of electronic forms and/or processes for the administrations to officially request and receive electronic certificates from the registers, integrated in RegiX. Activity 2 is related to updating and development of the existing IISDA, containing information about all administrative services.

[9] 'Design, programming, building and pilot integration of a centralised mechanism for official request and receiving of certificates from existing systems and upgrading of IISSA', 2016/S 185-331931 and 2018/S 092-209193.

[10] See: http://customerprofile.government.bg/vieworder.php?id=7cd9a3e7-7739-11e6-8d3f-f04da2031065

[11] Published in State Gazette, issue 50 of 2016.

[12] 'Development of the horizontal and central eGovernment systems in relation to the application of the Unified Model for Application, Payment and Provision of Electronic Administrative Services'.

implementation of key activities 3 and 4 – inventory of the administrative services, and analysis of the regimes and status of the registers, was appealed by a tenderer in March 2017, which in turn delayed contracting by five months in total. In the opinion of the expert in charge in the Managing Authority, the delay was overcome thanks to very good planning and well-organised implementation by both the project management team and the external consultants.

The delayed commissioning of contractors for the main activities was a considerable challenge to the project's implementation. However, the team leader, Encho Enchev, and Aleko Dzhildzhov, a key expert in the team, believe much more serious and important impediments had to be addressed from the very beginning. The main challenge was to the resistance of some administrations to participate in the pilot implementation of the modules for official requesting access to electronic certificates. This was crucial not only for achieving the project results, but also for achieving the interim indicators of the operational programme by 2018. Failure to achieve them would mean the emerging risk of reduced financial resource allocated to the priority axis. According to the project management team, the main factor generating distrust was the managers' traditional freedom to take their own decisions in their administrations without having to refer or defer to others. Any procedures for joint work and exchanging internal information and documentation between administrations is a great challenge to the existing administrative culture, among the municipalities in particular, and required a change in mindset. Encho Enchev asserted it was not possible for the administration of the Council of Ministers as the project beneficiary to force the local authorities (municipalities) to participate in the implementation. The team said it managed to achieve the planned inclusion of 50 administrations in the activities (status analysis and implementation of the official information exchange model) through intense convincing about the usefulness of the ideas and explanations how the lesser administrative burden and the electronic government will contribute to the local development and a changed working environment. This included making use of a network of personal contacts to overcome doubts and the fear of change in the administrations.

The transformation of the administrative service model is a huge reform whose impact goes beyond the administration itself. The early Law for Administrative Service of Physical Persons and Legal Entities adopted in 1999[13] envisaged application of its provisions to administrative services provided by public service providers, as well as by central and local government administrations. Nevertheless, such a large-scale inclusion of public service providers in the inventory activities under TASM was performed for the first time and therefore provoked a very strong reaction among them.

The research revealed, for example, that the public service providers in 2016 were demanding 242 different types of documents from citizens that they should officially request from the administration. The analyses showed that some public service providers have a work organisation that guarantees the service provision conditions in compliance with the normative requirements. However, this is due much more to the business logic and the management of respective activities than to the enforcement of any norms. The project management team pointed out that the battle to convince them is still ongoing. All regulatory bodies of economic activities participated in the discussions from the very beginning. Some public service providers insist they are not obliged to apply the administrative service requirements with the argument that they are anyway controlled by the respective regulator. This project topic appears to be an enormous challenge. Achieving correspondence between the norms of the Administrative Code of Procedure in this field (public service provision) and the requirements of the special laws in the field of public services and regulators was an exceptional effort that required a lot of work and dedication.

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[13] Published in State Gazette, issue 95 of 2 November 1999.

As TASM project partner, NAMRB implemented activity 6, which started at the beginning of 2016, analysing the work procedures and unifying the applications and provision processes of municipal administrative services. This activity aimed to overcome the variety in practices for providing the same administrative services across different municipal administrations. After a prioritisation process, 17 services were selected and unified, including the required documents, forms and application templates for requesting and receiving the services, as well as the time for their delivery. Ventsislav Kozhuharov, expert in the NAMRB, says this activity is expected to produce a significant effect, especially if the introduction of unified procedures (including the necessary normative amendments) are aligned with the central administrations and the different policy fields, where proposals for normative amendments, procedures and processes related to the service unification have already been made. He defined the service unification and standardisation as a process, and not just a selection of a certain number of services to be put to analysis and unification measures. Fast actions are needed to integrate the proposals and search for continuous balance between the initiatives of various participants in the process. The expert's opinion is that the choice of approaches should not only consider the service users, but also their providers. Prioritisation of some of the measures included in the Road Map for implementation of the Concept for Reform of Registers (the result of the implementation of activity 4), for example, would allow priority actions for creation of centralised registers where the data will be uploaded and used by all municipal administrations.

Some administrations, however, remain cautious in their opinions of the internal exchange of documents and information and the access to the registers of other administrations. The secretary of a medium-sized municipality, which is a stable economic centre, said they were still exploring and testing the use of the systems, including RegiX. The current responses are that it is still complicated to work with, and clear rules are necessary. The interaction between the individual administrations is considered complicated. At the same time, the secretary expressed a very positive opinion of the usefulness of the unification of 17 municipal services (activity 6). She believes that they have greatly facilitated the municipal administrations, since they use uniform application forms and the municipalities do not have to look for and verify the legal grounds of the service.

The project management team evaluates the coordination between the parties included in the project as very intense but difficult. The transformation is a great change that affects the administrations at all levels, as well as the public service providers, in terms of technological provision – provision of equipment and software, digitalisation of the information assets (a good part of the registers are still on paper or unstructured electronic tables that do not allow automatic data extraction), changes in the internal rules and procedures, and changes in the administrative and organisational culture of various participants, given their different levels of readiness to accept and manage change. The team's perception is that the reform is a continuous process and there is still a lot to be done to integrate the developed models and procedures in the practice of all administrations.
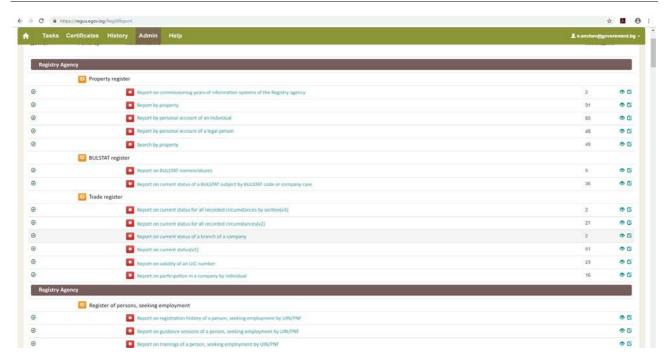
As a result of the team's intense work, the set targets for the main project indicators were achieved - 1 085 administrative regimes have been reviewed for simplification, 50 pilot administrations have introduced **a complex administrative service delivery, 17 municipal services** have been standardized.

Conclusion: results, lessons learned and the role of ESF financial support

Main results

The project is still ongoing and hence the full benefits have yet to be realised. Nevertheless, there are already visible results of the accomplished activities, despite the numerous difficulties and challenges the project has been confronted with during the course of its implementation. Already, the 50 pilot administrations are using the developed modules for connection and official exchange of information in the inter-register exchange environment, RegiX, as at June 2019 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Types of certificates provided electronically

Source: RegiX

Based on a review of all provided administrative services and their impact on the administrative burden on the citizens and businesses, numerous proposals for normative amendments to the Administrative Code of Procedure and more than 140 other acts have been formulated. These amendments aim to ensure the introduction of complex administrative services by the administrations and public service providers.

The entire information from the accomplished inventory is available in Bulgarian at: http://kao.mapex.bg. The proposals for normative amendments have been through two circles of public consultations[14], the second of which concluded in June 2019.

The Concept for Reform of Registers and its accompanying Road Map are expected to be very effective tools of overcoming the 'disarray of registers' in the administration, which hinders an efficient electronic government. Aleko Dzhilzhov said that, without tidying up the field, 'knowing what they are, how many they are, we cannot build them, manage and maintain them in the

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[14] Public Consultations Portal: www.strategy.bg

future and the electronic government cannot happen'. According to Ventsislav Kozhuharov, expert in the NAMRB, the clear road map and the planned normative amendments will ensure more effective electronic government, reduce the maintenance costs, unify the formats and reduce the dependence of the maintenance of the information pool on the capabilities and capacity of individual administrations[15].

As a result of the project implementation to date, more than 1,500 measures for simplification and aligning the services with the Law for restricting administrative regulation and administrative control of economic activity were adopted in compliance with the Administrative Code of Procedure, the Law for Administration and the Law for Electronic Governance for deletion from, and entry of, administrative services in the Administrative Register as internal administrative services[16].

In the short-term perspective the project implementation will implement in practice the developed CAS model. The project is also expected to have a long-term impact, since it will accomplish one stage of the reform. At the same time, the implementation of the activities and their planned measures will provide one of the main elements of the actual introduction of electronic government – the digitalisation of the information resources in the administration and their proper formatting. In this way, the automatic extraction of information and exchange between registers will be enabled. On the institutional level, the TASM is expected to increase the capacity of the administrations for management and delivery of change.

Lessons learnt

The lessons learned by the project team have various dimensions. It was confirmed that an experienced team with clearly allocated responsibilities is necessary for the implementation of a project of this scale. This will contribute greatly to the organisation of project implementation in a dynamic and changing external environment and the need for management of changes depending on both external and internal factors.

Within the Directorate 'Modernisation of the administration', the team members are also experts in the implementation of policies for development of the administration. The members of the team agree that working on the project exposed them to many details of the level of professionalism, motivation and organisational culture in the different administrations and that long-term efforts will be necessary to develop their capacity for integrating innovations and managing change.

Another lesson refers to the fact that such comprehensive reforms that change the work principles of the organisation are difficult to implement because they involve administrations at different levels, with different degrees of organisational development; there will always be contradictory interests and the inevitable influence of external factors. When realising such large-scale projects, it is necessary to consider and use tools for attracting and winning allies of innovation and for change management.

The team identified several factors as critical to project success:

- The competence of the experts included in the project management and the clear distribution of responsibilities;

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[15] Opinions expressed at a forum organised by the Council of Ministers administration for reporting the results of project 'Concept and Road Map for Reform of the Registers'.

[16] Decision of the Council of Ministers № 704 of 5 October 2018 on adoption of measures for transformation of the administrative service model.

- The strong political support of the prime minister and deputy prime minister, including for the discussion and adoption of the normative amendments;
- Project objectives that correspond to the actual problems and needs of the citizens and the administrations;
- Implementation of the activities for optimising administrative services provided by the municipalities coinciding with the full term of office of the local authorities in the period 2015-2019, as contributing to the smoother occurrence of the changes.

A potential failure can be considered the rejected amendments to the Administrative Code of Procedure and the other laws, and failure of the public service providers to use the systems since they do not identify themselves as 'administrative bodies'.

The impact of the project results after its completion is expected to be enormous. The changes in the administrative service provision should be indispensable, real and measurable, and in the words of Encho Enchev, 'can be touched'. That will make them discernible and recognisable for the citizens and businesses, unlike most 'paper' or 'procedural' results achieved in the previous stages of the reform. This will also enable the next stages in the process development to be planned and provide funding to the administrations for introduction of the changes. The Institute of Public Administration has already developed a programme and offers training on administrative service provision.

Role of ESF support

During 2007-2013 and 2014-2020, ESF was the main instrument for improving the processes and modernising the model of administrative service provision and for reducing the administrative burden on businesses and citizens. This support was linked with the main goals and priorities of the strategic and planning documents in the fields of administration and governance. Through TASM and the other e-government project that is the subject of a PAPA case study, ESF support is being deployed to complete the last stages of the reform in the process of administrative service optimisation and the introduction of real e-government. The achievement of these goals would confirm that the significant challenges encountered over the last 15 years in reforming the administration have been overcome.

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