Newsletter
STRONG ALBANIAN LOCAL STATISTICS

Content:

October 2023 – March 2024

The project "Strong Albanian Local Statistics", SALSTAT II, is part of the project "Bashki të Forta" of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) taking place from October 2022 - September 2026. "Bashki të Forta" project is focused on different aspects of local development in Albania, supporting decentralization and local governance.

The key stakeholders of the project are INSTAT, municipalities, and some line ministries and government agencies, particularly those engaged in the collection of statistical data and/or in charge of administrative data/registers.

During the new phase, SALSTAT II will intensify the collaboration with municipalities and other state agencies to build up trust in official statistics and engage with stakeholders on the benefits of official statistics for the democratic governance and for the decision-making process, in particularly for municipalities to fulfil their tasks, duties and functions.

SALSTAT II project Yearly Plan of Operation 2024

On the 13th of November 2023, a Seminar with INSTAT staff regarding the SALSTAT Yearly Plan of Operation (YPO) 2024 was organized. The main discussions were focused on:

- Feedback and lessons learnt 2023 (SALSTAT)
- Outcome 1: Extended statistical data and indicators are available for municipalities and regions using modern tools for data collection and dissemination/ Discussions of planned activities and risks
- Outcome 2: Key elements of a harmonized register-based system of population/ household and building/dwelling statistics are in place. Discussions of planned activities and risks
- Outcome 3: Municipalities receive support to build up their statistical competencies and capacities and show increased awareness of the role of official statistics in Albania/ Discussions of planned activities and risks
- Discussions (use of census data for SALSTAT, analysis for municipalities and stakeholders 2024/2025).

After the discussions in the seminar, SALSTAT team re-worked on the draft YPO 2024 and completed as per the proposals and agreements achieved during the seminar, and finalized the YPO 2024.

YPO 2024 was presented during the Steering Committee Meeting (SCM) and was approved by all the voting members.

Workshop on "National Statistical System Strategy" of INSTAT, approved by law No 30/2022 "Official Statistical Programme, 2022-2026"

On the 24th – 25th of January 2024, as per the plan, was organized Workshop on "Exchange and incorporation of SALSTAT objectives and outcomes at the "National Statistical System Strategy" of INSTAT".

The first part of the Workshop related to the INSTAT performance indicators which are instruments for measuring the institution's performance. This is a s relevant for the future reporting to the Albanian parliament in the light of the INSTAT yearly working plan together with the national Strategy. The three INSTAT pillars (infrastructure, production, and user) and the proposed indicators were discussed in different working groups.

The second part of the workshop focused on the actions how the SALSTAT activities and the EU accession activities (Chapter 18) are incorporated in the National Statistical System Strategy" of INSTAT".

Dissemination of the Statistical Yearbook for Regions and Municipalities

On the 15th of December 2023, according to the publications calendar, INSTAT published at official website the Regional Statistical Yearbook 2023 in both languages, Albanian and English. The published book can be found at the following links:

https://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2023/regional-statistical-yearbook-2023/

https://www.instat.gov.al/al/publikime/librat/2023/vjetari-statistikor-rajonal-2023/

The project continued with the procedures for book printing, and will disseminate it during the first quarter of 2024 to all stakeholders, municipalities included.

Reconfiguration of the data center primary system; purchase of Microsoft and point for users and servers.

On the 31st January 2024, INSTAT has fallen victim to **a cyber-attack orchestrated by an Iranian hacking group named 'Homeland Justice.'** The attack, targeted INSTAT's digital infrastructure, raising concerns about data integrity, privacy, and potential disruptions to the institute's operations.

This breach prompted an urgent response from the organization, which were actively collaborating with experts from State Agency of Cyber Security to identify the causes, assess the impact, and work towards a swift resolution to restore normalcy.

Due to the Cyber-attack, during the Donor's meeting organized on 22nd February 2024, SDC expressed the support to strengthen cybersecurity and reestablishing internal/external communication as per the request of INSTAT related to the reconfiguration of the data center primary system and purchase of Microsoft and point for users and servers.

During the month of March 2024, the administrative procurement procedure including the review of the process from the financial audit and "a non-objection' from the Embassy with regards to the finalisation of procedures for procuring the licenses and services needed to make them functional.
The contract name is "Financial support for the infrastructure reconfiguration of the Data Center Primar of INSTAT, Purchase of Microsoft Endpoint for servers and users as well as Exchange Online".

SALSTAT II has supported INSTAT with acquires of the Microsoft TEAMS licences to modernise the communication between INSTAT headquarters and Regional Offices, for a period of two years (till May 2025).
From December 2022 till February 2024 the project has supported INSTAT for Server Maintenance back up system too.

Albanian Statistical Register of Building and Dwelling

In the framework of the SALSTAT project, INSTAT is implementing the Albanian Statistical Register of Building and Dwelling (ASRBD).
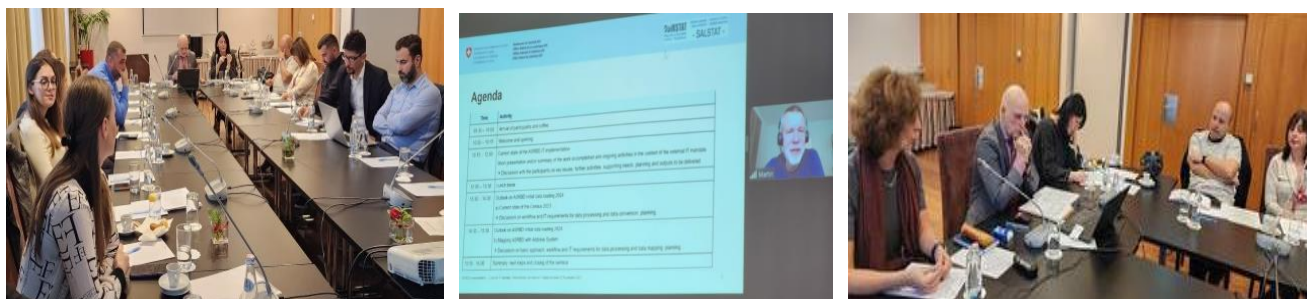
The expert of ASRBD, had two missions at INSTAT during the time period October 23 – March 24.

➢   On the 23rd of November, 2023, the "Intermediate seminar on IT implementation" for the Albanian Statistical Register of Buildings and Dwellings , took place in Tirana.
➢   On the 6th of March 2024, the seminar "Presentation of current stage of IT development, in particular ASRBD dashboard and quality management system", took place in Tirana.

His mandate relates to the planned output "2.2: A functional statistical building and dwelling register is implemented" and is part of the activity "2.2.3 Set up of the IT infrastructure and the respective data interface structure for the transmission of data between INSTAT and the respective government institutions".

During the November's seminar expert presented the current state of play of the work towards the implementation of an ASRBD in Albanian. The aim was to provide the IT experts with a common understanding of the current state of affairs.

The seminar provided valuable insights into the current state of ASRBD IT implementation as well as into the big lines to follow towards a fully functional ASRBD IT infrastructure. The design and development work done by external IT experts was very promising and its implementation will be a big step forward towards an ASRBD managed by INSTAT. The decisions made during this work-shop, were presented during the work-shop of March 2024.

During the seminar of March 2024, "Presentation of current stage of IT development, in particular ASRBD dashboard and quality management system" the following report was made from the expert, as per the results collected

The work plan for deployment of ASRBD IT infrastructure (revised in January) is seriously hampered by the cyber-attack that INSTAT encountered in February and its consequence need for recovering of the whole INSTAT IT environment. The recovery work is still ongoing and will probably last several months as the INSTAT IT environment needs to be fully rebuilt step by step.

Currently, it is not known when the ASRBD IT infrastructure can be deployed in the INSTAT IT environment. Therefore, the external IT team is asked to continue and finish the development of ASRBD IT infrastructure (database, dashboard, quality management) in their own IT environment. Furthermore, the procurement of a new dedicated ASRBD server by SALSTAT should be considered to allow the external IT team a deployment of the ASRBD IT infrastructure as soon as possible. According to INSTAT, it would be possible to transfer such a dedicated ASRBD server into the INSTAT IT environment at a later stage.

Concerning the development of ASRBD IT infrastructure, the draft version of the future ASRBD dashboard was presented and various aspects discussed. The quality management system is well advanced, however, the execution of quality rules will not allow the modification of data as specified in the current version of ASRBD quality rules. Therefore, the quality rules denoted as automatism need to be redesigned for immediate execution when saving data; all other quality rules remain for execution upon demand.

Management of a (annual) field data collection to update ASRBD

An initial discussion was held on the need for a data collection management system (similar as for the pre-Census map update exercise). However, the concept of the field data collection is not yet designed in detail. Assumption is that only buildings' being permitted, under construction or recently completed needs to be checked once a year by enumerators in the field. Furthermore, INSTAT should be able to mark additional buildings for checking in the field according to data quality. The enumerators should have the possibility to enter and test data in real time while being in the field and to confirm their visit of the requested buildings.

The overall process of the (annual) field data collection needs to be described in detail in the follow-up of the mission and will serve as input element for the second phase of IT development. At the current stage of knowledge, the focus of the future ASRBD field application should be on the support of enumerators to consult, modify and test all ASRBD data in real time according to their needs. Progress of field data collection is expected to be observed by INSTAT staff by consulting ASRBD data through the internal ASRBD dashboard.

Activity planning and next steps

The core activities in the year 2024 for the implementation of the ASRBD remain unchanged:
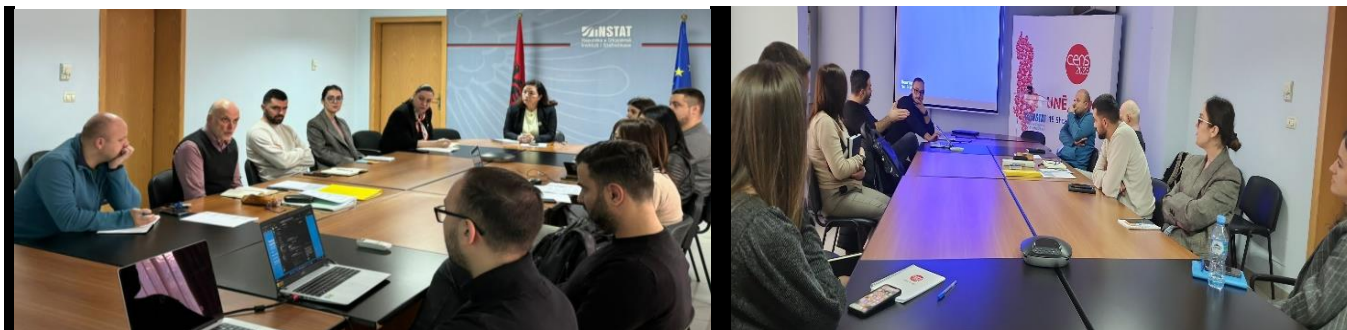
- Establishing a basic ASRBD IT/GIS infrastructure within INSTAT IT environment

- Populating ASRBD database with Census 2023 data and complementing ASRBD with official addresses from the national Address System.

- Designing ASRBD maintenance processes and preparing field data collection by Regional Offices and Municipalities respectively.

However, the tracking of new construction activities in the ASRBD data (within 12 months after Census) might start with a delay depending on the recovering of the INSTAT IT environment.

The following tasks were identified as next steps:

1   Development and deployment of ASRBD IT infrastructure (phase 1) to be finished (→ external IT experts)

2   Procurement of a dedicated ASRBD GIS server to be considered (→ SALSTAT)

3   New ToR for ASRBD IT infrastructure, phase 2 to be established (→ INSTAT, SALSTAT)

4   ASRBD specifications to be revised and completed; in particular, related to field data collection (→ SALSTAT expert)

5   Transforming of Census 2023 data and mapping of official address data to be prepared (→ GIS team)

6   INSTAT integration in e-Permit notification system and legal legitimation for INSTAT field enumerators to be prepared (→ INSTAT)

7   INSTAT has made new organizational/structural changes to their institution, which was approved by the Parliament on 25th March 2024. In these changes the progress in the

implementation of the ASRBD is reflected through introduction of the ASRBD to the Sector of Geoinformation (newly: Sector of Geoinformation and Statistical Register of Buildings and Dwellings).

Synergy between SALSTAT and HELVETAS- Bashki të Forta

On 22nd February 2024, the "Kick-off meeting for Pre-school education statistics at municipalities level, between SALSTAT/INSTAT and Helvetas Swiss Inter-cooperation took place in Tirana. The meeting was to define the need for statistics at municipality level for kids 0 to 6 years old, meaning nursery and pre-school education, and it is planned to have a web-based data questionnaire for municipalities.

At this moment, there is only an indicator for pre-school education for the kids from 3-6 years old published from INSTAT at municipality level: Number of the children registered. There are not data collected for the nurseries (0-3 years old).

The aim is to increase the number of the indicators published at municipality level for pre-school education.

- INSTAT prepared the draft of the questionnaire for the data/indicators on pre-school education, including kindergartens and nurseries, at municipality level, and it is planned that SALSTAT - INSTAT, together with the Local expert that support SALSTAT in the management of objectives and monitoring process for the project based on the SDC guidelines for quality control and measurement of progress, to visit some pilot municipalities to check and fill the pre-school education statistics at municipality level questionnaire.

Establishment / realization of the trainings as per the Module 3: Knowledge in tabulation and data analysis (Excel for beginners and advanced Excel)

In the frame of the Outcome 3 — Municipalities receive support to build up their statistical competencies and capacities and show increased awareness of the role of official statistics in Albania, SALSTAT organized the training on Microsoft Excel programme for municipalities staff, from 9th – 13th October 2023 at INSTAT premises.

The trainings were organized in groups with representatives from each municipality, and the table 1 shows the training days with participation per group.

In total were trained 88 staff of municipalities and from those were 58 women, or 69 % of total.

Each participant in the end of the training filled an evaluation report, with the following questions (including the questions from UN Women Albania on the Gender Statistics).

The findings from evaluation showed that the training was beneficiary and useful for the participants and that they would be very interested in having more training on data analyses.

The evaluation results will be also discussed internally at INSTAT/SALSTAT and UN Women Albania. The conclusions will support to improve the further trainings for municipalities.

Analyses of Census data as per the needs of INSTAT including possible new indicators at municipality level

After the Census 2023, an international mandate related the Assessment of migration statistics with Census 2023 data and applying / testing a model for migration and population estimation, started during March 2024.

The present mandate builds up on the existing work and support INSTAT and SALSTAT using the Census 2023 data to reach the following objectives:

Assessment to disseminate migration statistics (external and internal) based on the Census 2023 and to define possible migration studies. It should be clearly distinguished between analysis and dissemination in short term (probably descriptive indicators) and midterm perspective (probably migration studies).

• Indicators for internal migration with the relevant characteristics of the population (variables) according to which regional and local level

• Indicators to for international/external migration with the relevant characteristics of the population (variables) according to which regional and local level

• Description of possible migration studies (internal and external) using mainly Census 2023

Testing and implementation together with INSTAT of the developed model to estimate migration (external and internal) and to enable INSTAT to disseminate key indicators on migration (internal/external) also on the regional (12 regions) and local (61 municipalities) level using Census 2023 and other data sources:

• The required technical expertise should try to work with INSTAT that they apply the used data sources to implement the developed estimation model.

• The model to estimate migration aims to provide results on regional and, if possible, local level. The discussion should therefore incorporate questions on reliability, confidentiality and quality issues concerning the publication of indicators on the local (municipality) and regional (qarks) level.

• Based on the discussions and test a timeframe (calendar) should be established with INSTAT to disseminate key indicators (national, regional and local) applying the new model on a yearly basis.

Availability of a short final report giving an assessment about the capacities of INSTAT to implement the model as well about the possibility to disseminate migration statistics at INSTAT with some recommendations to achieve the objective it is expected to be by the end of this year.

The results will also feed into the publication planned for Census results on the municipality level, which is planned for last quarter of 2024.

THANK YOU READING OUR NEWSLETTER!

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