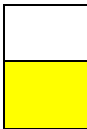
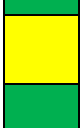
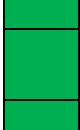
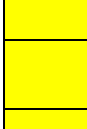
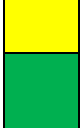
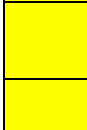
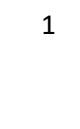
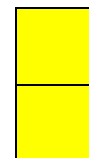


Summary of Sida's Assessment of the Development towards the Strategy Objectives and Implementation of the Contribution Portfolio

Economic integration with the EU and development of market economy	Objective¹	Portfolio²
1: Enhanced capacity to continue economic integration with the EU		
2: Competitive small and medium-sized enterprises		
Strengthened democracy, human rights and rule of law		
3: More efficient public administration		
4: Delivery of higher quality public services		
5: More efficient judicial systems		
6: A reduction in gender-based violence, hate crimes and human trafficking		
7: More democratic and effective police forces		
8: A more pluralistic civil society		
9: Improved cond. for dem. accountability and participation in pol. processes		
10: Freer and more independent media		
11: Better fulfilment of commitments on human rights, gender equality		
12: Women and men have same power to shape society and their own lives		
13: Increased trust [and reconciliation] between parties in		
A better environment and reduced climate impact		
14: Increased comp. with EU reg. & int. agreem. on enviro/climate/ energy		

15: Enhanced environm. resp. among the public, business and civil society



16: Sust. public services (water and sewage, waste managem., energy effi.)

1 Overview of the Strategy Context

Total amount for the Strategy: 8,24 billion SEK

Disbursed Amount 2017: 92 MSEK

Number of Contributions 2017: 26

1.1 Changes in the Context

Two major political developments to be reported from 2017 concerned the judicial reform and the national elections. Within the field of judicial reform there were positive developments. This showed political determination to act in line with the desire of the Albanian people and is at the same time a start to fulfil the condition defined by the EU Commission, which is a prerequisite for the opening of EU-accession negotiations. The first step within the justice reform is the vetting process, which commenced in 2017 and will continue for the rest of the strategy period.

Reorganisation within the government after the national elections held in June 2017 included merging of ministries and of different political areas, resulting in fewer but much larger ministries with wider portfolios. As a result, it took a long time before the new Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MoTE) became operational, which means that the environmental focus and priorities are still unclear. This affects the pace negatively within the environment portfolio. Sida's possibility to make strategic decisions regarding priorities and new contributions is especially affected. At this point, it is not either fully clear how the government will handle gender equality. The Ministry for Health and Social Inclusion has the main task, but the deputy Prime Minister has at the same time been appointed as National Coordinator.

1.2 Sweden's Role in the Strategy Context

Table 1. Donor Context³

Total development assistance make up 18,78 % of the national budget	Sweden's share of the total of development assistance constitute 1,4 %.
The common document for international development cooperation, is Albania's National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI), 2015-2020.	There is no joint EU-strategy or joint programming. EU's Indicative Strategy Paper 2014-2020 is the guiding document for IPA II.
The five largest donors (organisations and/or countries) are: WB, EU, Germany, IDB and IMF.	Of the EU member states Sweden is the 4th largest donor (grants and loans). Other important bilaterals are USAID, Switzerland, Italy and Austria.

Sida is one of the major partners of the Albanian government within the field of public administration. With our long term cooperation aiming at promoting increased transparency, effectiveness and accountability at national and municipal level over time, we are perceived as a solid and predictable partner. Our support is well oriented, with a strategic focus on the most important reforms within

public administration and rule of law: municipal reform, Public Finance Management (PFM), tax reform and judicial reform.

Sida continues to be one of the very few donors with a priority focus on gender equality. Most of the national strategic plans, legal improvements and increased levels of services regarding gender equality, women's rights and gender based violence, have been promoted thanks to Sida's support.

A recent external study commissioned by Sida, concluded that civil society in Albania should assess engaging in new roles at different levels, in connection to the upcoming EU integration process. Sida is one of the few donors giving substantial support to CSOs and presently the only donor supporting the development of their institutional capacities.

Within the area of environment Sida is the only donor focusing on preparing the Albanian government for the upcoming EU-negotiations connected to chapter 27 in the EU-aqui. It can also be highlighted that Sida has been assessed as a new strategic partner of the EU delegated funding (EUD) within the area of innovation. This partnership will promote further development within the first support area of the current strategy.

1.3 Synergies with Other Swedish Strategies

Synergies with other Swedish strategies, is quite limited. As in previous years, synergies can still be found with Support through Swedish NGO's. In 2017 the outcome level was at 2,7 MSEK. This funding has been delivered through the program of We Effect. Sida in Albania has a regular dialogue with We Effect and in 2017 the board of directors visited Albania. A smaller level of synergy can also be reported with strategically oriented contributions, amounting to 350 TSEK in 2017.

Besides this, synergies can also be found with the ITPs within the area of private sector development: Private Sector Growth Strategies and Strategic Business Management. Sida has been involved in seminars and dialogue. Sida has also met with the Swedish Police and with Kvinna till Kvinna, in their preparatory work of the recently launched ITP 315 on "Prevent and respond to Gender based violence".

1.4 Allocation between Areas of Support

The outcome for Albania 2017 showed the following distribution levels per support area (SA): SA1 9%, SA2a 34%, SA2b 27% and SA3 30%. This can be compared with the planned levels for 2014-2017: SA1 10%, SA2a 28%, SA2b 22% and SA3 40%. During both 2017 and previous years of the strategy period, the outcome result is 10% higher than the plan for SA2 and 10% lower for SA3. The reason for these differences are mainly connected to some delays within contributions in SA3 but also to the ongoing reforms/increasing possibilities for contribution with Swedish funding within SA2. Some payments within SA2 were also brought forward to 2017, since there was an existing smaller financial space in the country allocation for 2017.

For the rest of the strategy period, it is assessed that the levels within the SA3, can become a bit lower than the outcome levels for 2014-2017. The main reasons are the ongoing reorientation within the portfolio and the lack of clarity regarding the government's priorities within this area.

The percentage of disbursement for SA1 in 2018 will be lower, at 3%. The current main contribution within SA1 is a joint program with USAID and due to unforeseen financial situation of USAID, the

funding for the program –Swedish funding included– has decreased. For the rest of the strategy period, contributions within SA1 are expected to increase in connection to the upcoming collaboration with EUD within the area of innovation.

2 Results Reporting

2.1 Area of Support 1: Enhanced economic integration with the EU and development of market economy

1: Enhanced capacity among institutions to continue economic integration with the EU

In Albania, Sida is not engaged in contributions relating to this objective. The few contributions within the area of support 1, are limited to objective 2.

2: Competitive small and medium-sized enterprises make up a greater share of the economy

Development towards the strategy objective

For Albania's development towards market economy, the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are important building blocks. Nevertheless, the empowerment of SMEs in Albania has progressed at a slow rate. Their competitiveness has not been supported, especially by the Albanian Tax Legislation. Unpredictability is still one of the main issues of the sector. Women still fall behind in regards to economic development.

However, within the area of tourism there is an increased development. The tourism industry is an important component to the direct contribution of the total GDP, and is forecast to rise by 6,2% per year during 2017-2027. This has a direct effect on employment, with an expected 3,1% increase per year leading to 120,000 jobs (10,1% of total employment in 2027⁴). Tourism has thereby become an important sector for employment, growth and investment.

Portfolio level

The portfolio composition is mainly focused on 'Support SMEs Albania' in the area of tourism. It is in line with one of the Albanian government's priorities: 'sustainable tourism development' for job growth.⁵

The composition is complemented with support to Culture Heritage without Borders (CHwB), which aims indirectly to strengthen SMEs and tourism. There is a discussion to diversify the portfolio with a new contribution to Producer groups with a special focus on women. Also, a new programme under IPA Delegated funds is foreseen to support innovative start-ups and scale-ups. The outcome was 7 MSEK during 2017.

Contribution level

The support to SME is given through the Sustainable Tourism Programme in cooperation with USAID. The five ongoing projects within the programme⁶ give support in different aspects, both technical and infrastructural in different parts of Albania. Due to unexpected political decisions made by USAID, no further projects (besides the five ongoing ones) will be funded by this joint programme.

2.2 Area of Support 2: Strengthened democracy, greater respect for human rights and a more fully developed state under the rule of law

3: More efficient public administration, with [stronger] administrative capacity to implement reforms for EU-integration

Development towards the strategy objective

The capacity of the Albanian public administration to implement demanding reforms for EU integration has received further efforts from the Government of Albania and international partners. A number of capacity building programs are being implemented in areas like Public Finance Management (PFM), policy monitoring, decentralization and local governance/local governments' strengthened role in EU accession. However, 2017's general election resulted in a reduced central government: a number of ministries have merged, resulting in fewer but mega-ministries with huge portfolios to manage. The capacities of the ministries do not correspond to the need for human resources of the extended portfolios, which could jeopardize the work ahead, especially with the eventual start of EU accession negotiations. Furthermore, issues of internal coordination of responsibilities and effective prioritization within the ministries might emerge. Problems of coordination of policy planning and implementation are becoming prominent, mainly because of the new structure of central government. The government is on the one hand investing in and starting to apply advanced technical systems for an effective integrated planning, while on the other hand underusing the advantages of the systems throughout the whole policy planning and budgeting process.

Portfolio level

The implementation of the portfolio is assessed to be mainly on track. It covers national statistics, with two ongoing statistical contributions and a third possible one under early assessment, and two contributions in the PFM area, primarily with the central government but with strong ramifications for the local level. These include IPS phase 2 and a new cooperation with the Ministry of Finance and Economy about establishing a fiscal cadastre/property tax system, developed during 2nd half of 2017 and approved in March 2018. The new final phase of Statistical cooperation was approved in December and started as planned in January 2018. The outcome for 2017 is 9,4 MSEK.

The portfolio is strategic and relevant, with connections and synergies between the different contributions. IPS phase 2 is quite central, since it, besides improvements of budget planning and execution, also targets policy planning and coordination. The same is true for the property tax system/fiscal cadastre, which relates to STAR 2 (ongoing municipal reform) and in general to service delivery improvement at local level. Modalities of implementation and partners are various, including cooperation with Swedish authorities and multilateral organizations like WB, and direct funding to central Albanian institutions like INSTAT.

Contribution level

The IPS 2 progressed well during 2017 regarding the procurement and testing of the modern software that supports the technical processes of the Integrated Planning System. The software includes AFMIS (Albanian Financial Management System), EAMIS (External Assistance Management System) and IPSIS (Integrated Planning System Information System), that operates the data-base of the human resources of the Albanian public administration. Know-how about the functionalities/application of the systems has increased in the line ministries and the central institutions during 2017.

The direct funding for improvements of IT infrastructure at INSTAT has progressed slowly, but implementation speed has increased visibly from late 2017. Among the outputs is a new training centre and library established at INSTAT, to serve both internal staff and external users through statistical training courses and resources.

4: Delivery of higher quality public services, based on principles of non-discrimination and equal rights and with less corruption

Development towards the strategy objective

During 2017 there have been strong efforts from the government to improve the image of public agencies that deliver services directly to citizens, and also for increasing capacities of the new municipalities. Investment in the digitalization of a number of services is assumed to ease the procedures and make them more transparent and traceable. However, the quality of the services still needs radical improvement. If the interests of the citizens are to be put at the heart of the service delivery at central and local level, the working methods, internal organization and management, and accountability towards citizens require profound change. Corruption is present, especially in the high levels of the government, lowering the efficiency and quality of the services delivered by the public administration. Although there have been improvements in the merit-based selection of civil servants, there are still political influence and cases of nepotism present in the recruitment processes of public employees. This was also evident by the latest report of the Civil Service Commissioner (March 2018). According to the report, around 30% of civil service positions were still being filled by direct appointments. This raises concerns that such appointments, along with a substantial number of vacancies, are placing a big burden on professional state employees and decreasing the quality of public service.

Portfolio level

The portfolio is made up by STAR 2 which is a follow up of the Territorial and Administrative Reform (UN STAR), from IPS 2, and the newly approved Property Tax /Fiscal Cadastre project. The property Tax project, will directly serve all 61 municipalities of the country through increased property tax collection. Being fully under the municipalities' discretion, the collected taxes can be used for improving services and increasing their financial autonomy. STAR 2 contributes entirely to objective 4 with 5 MSEK as outcome for 2017, but also IPS 2, and the newly approved Property Tax project, which are accounted under objective 3.

The composition of the portfolio aims to strengthen the links between the central and local levels of government by promoting decision-making and service delivery at the closest distance from the citizens. Sida is the 2nd biggest donor to STAR 2, which is the main international support to the implementation of Albania's national agenda of local governance reform.

During the reporting period there has been no follow up from the two associations of municipalities about a joint project, but Sida has encouraged and promoted their active involvement in the STAR 2.

Contribution level

The STAR 2 has during 2017 achieved the conceptualization, agreement and procurement for local One Stop Shops in each municipality, which will facilitate service provision and simplified and digitalized procedures. It has also provided country-wide support for physical local archives in all municipalities. The project has started several capacity-building activities for increasing accountability and transparency in all municipalities, resulting in the publication of Municipal Council Legal Acts in 34 municipalities and adoption of Standard Operating Procedures in 61 municipalities. The project has provided assistance to all 61 municipalities for the development of their Transparency Plans.⁷

5: More efficient judicial systems that to a greater extent guarantee the right to fair trial in accordance with European standards

Development towards the strategy objective

During the reporting period developments in the field of Justice Reform have been mainly positive, with the most sensitive legislation almost passed and the implementation already started. The vetting process, directly assisted by EU funded international observers, will clear the judiciary from corrupt members. Justice reform, being strongly required by the Albanian population and set as a condition for opening negotiations on EU accession, will be one of the deepest reforms in the country. It will have a huge impact on the fight against crime and corruption, and improve the image of the country and its business and investment climate. A number of judges who fear failing the vetting test have already resigned, thus opening up the way to new members of the system who can stand the test of professionalism and integrity. The whole process is closely monitored by the EU and USA, the closest international partners of Albania.

Portfolio level

The amount allocated to this objective was 12 MSEK in 2017, channelled through the Juvenile Justice programme, which was approved in mid-2017 and implemented as from July. The study on a possible expansion of assistance to the justice sector has been postponed to either the end of the year or early 2019, in order to allow time for the justice reform related vetting to be carried out and insights and lessons from the newly implemented Juvenile justice support programme to be incorporated.

Contribution level

The Juvenile Justice Program has just started to deliver some outputs like training sessions, after a relatively long period of seconding staff in the Program Office. The program has already undergone replacements of key personnel. The expectations on the results of the program are high from the Ministry of Justice as the main Albanian counterpart, and the host of the Program Office.

6: A reduction in gender-based violence, hate crimes and human trafficking

Development towards the strategy objective

Despite improvements in the legal and policy/institutional framework, domestic violence (DV) and violence against women (VAW) remain serious problems. Numerous violent incidents within family relations end in homicide. The first report monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention⁸ released in 2017, points out major weaknesses of existing mechanisms for addressing VAW. Albania is recommended among other things to effectively tackle all forms of VAW (as focus primarily has been on DV), including forced/early marriage, sexual harassment and sexual violence. Ensuring stable funding for women NGOs offering services for victims and working on prevention is a challenge.

Portfolio level

The portfolio level is focused primarily on gender based violence (GBV) and is substantial in terms of fund allocations, and number of contributions, actors and approaches used. The major contribution to this objective is through the support to UN agencies work in this area and support provided to women organisations through Albania Women Empowerment Network (AWEN). The financial outcome is reported in objective 8 (AWEN) and objective 12 (Support to Gender Equality through UN). Community Policing programme and Civil Rights Defenders' Programme (support to human rights organisations work for increased access to justice for women) also contribute to the achievement of this objective. The challenges of GBV require a holistic and multi-sectoral response and call for a further harmonization of programmes and actions supported by Sida.

Contribution level

In the absence of, or limited services provided by the municipalities, the support of women CSOs has been critical for protection of girls and women. Approximately 850 girls and women have been directly assisted in 2017⁹ through service delivery by women organisations (accommodation, rehabilitation, re-integration, legal aid, social and psychological counselling, etc.). Out of these, 60 women and girls aged over 14, are victims of trafficking (VoT)/Potential VoTs, and 25 children aged 0-13 are VoTs or at risk of being trafficked. About 25 perpetrators were helped to change their violent behaviour in Shkodra and Tirana where a women's organisation offers this type of service¹⁰. Furthermore, 3850 women and girls have received online counselling/assistance and referral to other services through the National Hotline. The crucial and first-hand information and experience of women organisations have fed multiple processes in the country (justice reform, legislation on social services, social housing, DV & trafficking legislation packages, Resolution 1325, etc.).

7: More democratic and effective police forces*Development towards the strategy objective*

Albanian State Police has demonstrated good results in fighting drug cultivation during 2017. However, the police and its top management's image were compromised in connection to the investigation on drug charges towards the previous Minister of Interior and accusations of police cooperation with organized crime. In order to improve police reputation and clear out their ranks from unprofessional staff and collaborators with the criminals, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has launched a vetting process, similar to, but simpler than the one carried out in the justice sector. The vetting is to be conducted for two years of time from the approval of the respective law, which is currently for approval in the Parliament. EU and USA police missions/programs are working with the Government and the police to assist them in the replacement of incompetent and corrupt police officers of all ranks.

Portfolio level

The portfolio is primarily constituted by the 2nd phase of Community Policing program, which started in early 2017 and will run until the end of 2020. The outcome for 2017 was approximately 4 MSEK. The Juvenile Justice programme, reported under objective 5, also provides support to the Albanian State police mainly in the area of juvenile offender's investigation and detention but with effects on police organization and their institutional cooperation with other enforcement agencies. Possible synergies will be sought and promoted between the two programs now that they are both effectively in the implementation phase.

Contribution level

The implementation process of the 2nd phase of Community Policing program, has been speeded up during the 2nd half of 2017. Until March 2018 the program has supported the Albanian State Police to elaborate the priorities and objectives of the new Community Policing Policy Document 2018-2020. It has also developed and presented new efficient models for the organisational structure of one regional pilot police directorate and its commissariats with the full description of functions, in order to apply better with the Community Policing philosophy. Grants have been provided to civil society organizations in four regions focusing on domestic violence activities like awareness raising at schools, including parents and teachers, and with youth groups.¹¹

8: A more pluralistic civil society, including political parties, with strengthened popular support.

Development towards the strategy objective

A Sida commissioned report on civil society from 2017 concludes that civil society in Albania is entering a new stage of its development where it is expected to engage in various new roles at municipal and national levels which are gradually becoming more visible through the sector reforms in the EU integration process. The expected new roles place huge challenges on all stakeholders and require a deeper understanding of the sector approach and competences to engage, both on the part of the government and municipalities as well as CSOs. However, there are few sources of longer term institutional support for CSOs to pursue their missions, build institutional capacities and connect to their constituencies. The only donor presently providing such support is Sida.¹²

Portfolio level

Four contributions¹³ implemented respectively by Regional Environmental Center (REC) Albania, AWEN, Palme Center and Civil Rights Defenders contribute directly to the achievement of this strategy objective. The portfolio is well-balanced in terms of the number of organisations reached, type (an example provided below), size, themes and geographical scope. The financial outcome in 2017 was 19.9 MSEK. In addition to these programmes, Sida supports CSOs initiatives within various programmes such as Community Policing, Support to Gender Equality through UN, Forestry, etc. which contribute to the achievement of the above mentioned objective. The portfolio is currently being evaluated and a report will be ready by April 2018.

Contribution level

Palme Center's programme has significantly contributed to a more diverse civil society in Albania. In 2017 the Palme Centre supported the establishment and building the capacities of an organisation focusing on labour rights (Center for Labour Rights, CLR). Many trade unions in Albania are seen as undemocratic and unrepresentative of workers' interest and there are no other actors among civil society working in the labour area. CLR provided direct advice and assistance in 2017 to a newly established trade union "New Trade Union of Albanian Oil Workers" in the sector of oil and gas. The sector includes more than 5000 employees spread amongst public and private companies. The union movement was fragmented and divided in various unions which were not affiliated or with little influence among the workers and employees. The new union managed to enrol 1,500 workers and in early 2018 signed two collective contracts.

9: Improved conditions for democratic accountability to the people and participation in political processes, including the promotion of free elections

Development towards the strategy objective

The election held in 2017 showed that women but also men face obstacles to participate in elections. A Sida funded index¹⁴ showed – while there are some good practices in terms of the right to vote – that there are many areas of significant concern regarding the voting process, in particular women's freedom to cast their votes. These concerns include having free choice of candidates, coercion by family members, and the presence of external incentives (e.g., vote buying) to sway voters. With the introduction of 50% gender quota for local elections in the Electoral Code, the 2015 local elections witnessed an historical increase of women's representation at the local level with 35% as councilors and 15% as mayors. The increased representation created the conditions for the establishment of the first Alliance of Women Councilors in Tirana Municipality where women reached the historical representation of 51% of the Council. In the following two years 16 other Alliances were established primarily supported by Sida through UN Women.

Portfolio level

Support to popular participation through Palme Center, the support in the area of access to information through Civil Rights Defenders and support to women participation in election process through cooperation with UNW and UNFPA contribute to the achievement of this objective. The financial outcome is reported under the objective 8 (Contribution to OPC Programme in Albania/MSEK 2,7 in 2017) and objective 12 (Support to gender equality through One UN Programme).

Contribution level

A significant contribution to this objective is the creation of a conducive environment for the participation of citizens in the parliamentary elections of June 25, 2017. The POP 2017, 'Confrontation of Political Offer', an initiative of 10 local organisations supported by Palme Center, provided a platform for real and meaningful communication between politicians and citizens. The talks revolved around on political parties' manifestos and key issues identified by the citizens. This was among the very few initiatives in Albania which provided a real platform of interaction with citizens and it promoted a democratic culture of debating.

10: Freer and more independent media*Development towards the strategy objective*

Transparency of media ownership and funding is very low in Albania with private businesses significantly interfering with the editorial policies of the media. Journalists and experts identify among the challenges the infringement of labour rights, informality, lack of a self-regulatory mechanism, lack of solidarity among journalists, the use of fake news and the abusive language to portray media and journalists which is harming the free press, the moral and the professional integrity of the journalists.¹⁵

Portfolio level

There are no contributions that connect directly to this support area. Civil Rights Defenders programme and Sida regional core support to BIRN Hub are the only programmes that contribute to some extent to this objective. Support to the Journalist Union supported through Palme Center did not deliver the expected results. As part of the Operational Plan 2018, the ambition is to increase the support under this objective.

Contribution level

The support provided to Res Publica through CRD has contributed to improved conditions for human rights defenders and journalists and enhancement of freedom of expression by ensuring better implementation of the Law on Access to Information.

11: Partner countries better fulfil their international and national commitments on human rights, gender equality (including the EU's strategy for equality between women and men) and non-discrimination*Development towards the strategy objective*

Albania has made significant efforts in improving its human rights record and strengthening the national human rights institutions. Yet, human rights bodies and CSOs have raised concerns about several areas where implementation and enforcement is lagging behind such as gender based violence, human trafficking, deprivation of freedom (harsh penal policy), and discrimination to mention a few. The slow process of the justice reform has until now had negative impacts on the delivery of justice, particularly regarding access to justice for the vulnerable groups. See also objective 12 for the contribution of Sida in this area.

Portfolio level

The portfolio of civil society support, support to gender equality through UN and the support to strengthen the institutions, children and community for child protection and participation through Save the Children contribute to the achievement of this strategy objective. The financial outcome for 2017 is 1.5 MSEK (only support to Save the Children is included here).

Contribution level

Young Voices 2017 Albania, a study supported by Sida through Save the Children Albania assessed the views of children on all issues that affect them under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The findings of the study and the methodology have created public attention on children's rights, especially in connection to the disturbing finding that Albanian children see their future outside the country. Evidence will be used during the whole contribution duration to influence the design of child rights focused policies, associated with the allocation of appropriate budgets at local level to effectively implement them and ensure that no child is excluded from the realization of their rights.

12: Women and men have, to a greater extent, the same power to shape society and their own lives

Development towards the strategy objective

The recently released gender index for 2017¹⁶ shows that progress is slow especially in the area of economic participation and accountability and is more notable in the area of political empowerment.¹⁷ The structural changes in line ministries in late 2017 have resulted in a weakened national mechanism for gender equality. It is expected to have adverse effects for the successful implementation of the country national and international obligations for gender equality (see also Objective no.8). This calls for an increased role of Sida in the policy dialogue for gender equality. The evaluation of Swedish Support to the One UN in Albania for gender equality work 2012-2017 concludes that impact and sustainability of Swedish support in Albania is most clearly visible in the contribution to formal, systemic change through policies and laws (see also objective 6 and 11).

Portfolio level

Only 1% of allocations in 2017 were not relevant to gender. This means that the rest of the portfolio contributes directly or partly to the achievement of this objective and the ambition is to follow-up the results especially in the non-social sectors. The focus will be on the concrete inputs to the advancement of gender equality and if the assumptions made by Sida at the start of programmes on these inputs are realistic. Two contributions that target specifically gender equality - Support to gender equality through UN and support to women organisations through AWEN - are seen as strategic and complimentary. The financial outcome for AWEN is reported under objective 8 while the last payment for UN was done in 2016.

Contribution level

The support to sustainable management of forests, Environmental Services Project, involves training of female and male forest farmers on gender equality and on the role and responsibilities of the Forest and Pasture Users Associations (FPUAs) boards. This has contributed to the increased participation of women in the work FPUAs. All FPUAs which received project grants had at least 30% women in the boards and 3 of the winning FPUAs have a female chair person.¹⁸

13: Increased trust and reconciliation between parties in and between countries

Development towards the strategy objective

There is progress made in reconciliation within the Balkan region, but the overall environment is still fragile. The trust between parties in Albania is limited which on and off leads to harsh political dialogue and temporary boycott of parliament sessions.

Portfolio level

The portfolio is composed by one Contribution which is Culture Heritage without Borders Albania. Through one of the programme objectives the regional cooperation serves as the platform for building peaceful relations for responsible preservation and interpretation of cultural heritage in the Western Balkans. This objective outlines the regional approach through two separate but interrelated components: the Regional Restoration Camps (RRC) and the Balkan Museum Network (BMN). Through these components the aim is to increase the trust between the Western Balkans countries by working with youth and accepting the culture heritage of one another. The outcome for 2017 was 4.5 MSEK.

Contribution level

On the contribution level the organization has not reached the level of impact desired at the beginning of the programme. Since the Restoration Camps lately have been done mainly with Albanian students this component has been left behind. Measures are foreseen to be taken by the organization to highlight the importance of pacification in the region and to refocus regionally on this component.

2.3 Area of Support 3: A better environment, reduced climate impact and enhanced resilience to environmental impact and climate change

14: Partner countries increase compliance with EU regulations and international agreements on the environment, climate and energy

Development towards the strategy objective

Progress in the environmental sector continues to be slow. After elections, in June 2017, the new ministry of tourism and environment (MTE) took a long time to become operational and regrettably after a number of key people had left the ministry. Tourism receives higher priority than environment. The ministry staff seems a bit lost under the new leadership and new organizational structures.

Portfolio level

Sida is currently revising its environmental portfolio and preparing for new cooperation with a strong focus on Albania's progress towards EU approximation and negotiations while the forestry support is planned to be phased out. Unfortunately, the new minister doesn't seem to focus on reaching the EU environmental standards but rather on campaigns for short-term results (tree planting and waste clean-up) which makes a constructive dialogue on sector priorities challenging. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has just started work on strategic planning and preparations for EU-negotiations and the Swedish Chemicals Agency is carrying out a feasibility study for a new cooperation on chemicals management. Working with the Swedish agencies is expected to provide added value considering their long experience of working with EU accession cooperation and with partners in the region. There are three contributions linked to objective 14 and the financial outcome for 2017 is 26 MSEK.

Contribution level

Sida's support to sustainable forestry is on-going and has not yet achieved the project outcomes. However Sida's support to sustainable forestry has resulted in the registration of 343.000 hectares of municipally owned forests¹⁹. Support to the new national forest data base, the national forest inventory and implementation of grants for forest improvement are ongoing (involving approximately 4.400 ha at this stage).

The new forest owners, i.e. the municipalities, are under-resourced and lack capacity to manage the forests. Municipalities are further challenged by un-sufficient guidance from the national level and institutional un-clarities between government levels and institutions and uncertainty regarding the role of the forest user associations. Sida has therefore, in January 2018, decided on technical assistance to develop a national policy and support the development of a new forest law in order to address some of the key problems in the sector.

15: Enhanced environmental responsibility among the general public, the business sector and civil society

Development towards the strategy objective

The environmental civil society is slowly building up. There are about 100-120 CSO groups, with 10% of those being active over the year. Despite challenges in the way how they function and get organised, position is taken by civil society (CSOs and activists) on country priority issues such as the conservation of protected areas, the constructions of small HECs, etc.

Portfolio level

Support to environmental CSOs through REC Albania contribute to achievement of this objective primarily with regards to increasing the responsibility among general public and civil society. The outcome is reported in objective 8 (4.8 MSEK). The education component of the programme has the potential to reach a big number of young people and produce sustainable results.

Contribution level

An example of joint actions taken from the environmental CSOs is monitoring the implementation of the environmental policies in 11 municipalities. 28 CSOs have shared the findings of the monitoring among the general public and are advocating for the improvements in some areas including the solid waste management that according to the monitoring has deteriorated after the administrative and territorial reform.

16: More sustainable public services in areas such as water and sewage, waste management, energy efficiency and renewable energy

Development towards the strategy objective

A few new water and solid waste facilities are being constructed but key reform issues are not advancing much. Water is considered a governmental priority but functions and responsibilities in the water sector are fragmented and partially unclear and over-lapping. However, with Swedish technical assistance Albania has recently established a new Water Resources Management Agency which consolidates water functions under what were previously three institutions.²⁰ The new agency will be placed under the Prime Minister's office which is a sign of water's continued priority.

Portfolio level

Sida's involvement is mainly confined to the water resources sector through two projects. Sida has in dialogue with Albanian partners, the WB and Austrian Development Agency, ADA, coordinated plans

for support in the water resources sector. In addition to the above mentioned support for the establishment of the new agency other smaller reform-oriented measures have started/are planned to get the new agency up and running. Sida has, through technical assistance, provided a small support to the MTE in regards to the revision of the national waste management strategy (with GIZ support) with a focus on making the new strategy in line with EU requirements. The financial outcome for 2017 is 0.5 MSEK.

Contribution level

The new Integrated Water Management strategy, financed by Sida, was approved in 2017 and the two River Basin Management Plans and the new Water Cadaster are in their final stages.²¹

3 Implications for the Continued Strategy Implementation

As already concluded in last year's MTR-process, Sida's bilateral cooperation with Albania is assessed to be highly relevant and in line with the regional strategy. Parts of the MTR-recommendations have been acted on during 2017:

- The assessment of a new contribution regarding freedom of expression/media started off in 2017 and a decision on this was made in March 2018.
- A decision on a new strategic contribution within environment was made: agreement with Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, to prepare AL for accession talks within the field of chapter 27 of the EU-aqui.
- In order to strengthen the role of civil society – and also including a stronger watch-dog-role – an external study was commissioned during 2017 (see under objective 8). In 2018 this is being followed up by an external evaluation prior to assessing new ways of continued collaboration with and strengthening of civil society in Albania.
- Continued dialogue with the EUD on seeking synergies between bilateral contributions and EU-delegated funding under the IPA II-programmes was made in line with the MTR-recommendations. In line with this, Sida was pre-screened to become a co-delegate within the field of innovation. The project plan is currently being outlined in dialogue between GIZ, Sida and the EU-delegation.

Based on the recommendations from the MTR-review, but also on recent evolutions in the Albanian context during 2017 (see 1.1 and 1.2), the following could be highlighted for the rest of the strategy period:

- A continued dialogue with the government and more specifically with the Ministry of Tourism and Environment should be sought during 2018 and for the rest of the strategy period. The purpose should be to make the Albanian government more aware of the complexity of the upcoming negotiations within the field of chapter 27, but also to attempt to influence the AL government to make more strategic policy decisions within the field of environment. In tandem with this, there is continued need for Sida to assess new relevant contributions for the rest of the strategy period.
- The judicial reform started in 2017. Sida's contribution within this field is currently limited to juvenile justice. A complementary and strategic focus within rule of law should be considered for the rest of the strategy period.
- As indicated previously, the role Sida is playing regarding gender equality is prominent, both in relation to the AL government and organisations, but also in relation to other donors and

more particularly in relation to the EUD. Besides making an assessment on a possible renewed support to AL through the One UN coherence fund, a more direct dialogue with both the AL government and the parliament on advancing the national gender equality agenda should be considered during the rest of the strategy period.

- If a recommendation is made in June 2018 – by the COM and in conjunction with this also a decision by the Council – to open the accession-talks, the possible future effects on Sida's bilateral program in AL should be further discussed within the DC-team, in conjunction with the political section of the Embassy and with EUROLATIN.
- Synergies between the bilateral and the regional programs should be sought during the rest of the strategy period. Until now and during 2017, the possibilities to work with youth-issues and also with peace-building-efforts have been discussed. Within the field of freedom of expression, the connections between the regional and the bilateral portfolios could also possibly be developed even further.
- When assessing new contributions during the rest of the strategy period, it should be further analysed how the contributions will impact on the lives of people living in poverty

¹ Assessment of the **development towards the strategy objectives**: Green: Desirable direction; Yellow: Partially desirable direction; Red: Undesirable direction.

² Assessment of the **implementation of the contribution portfolio**: Green: According to plan; Yellow: Partially according to plan; Red: Not as planned.

³ The Information in Table 1, was acquired from Albania's donor secretariat (within Prime Minister's office) in November 2016. Due to changes within the government, entailing transferring the office for donor coordination from Prime Minister's office to Ministry of Finance and Economy (MFE) and the introduction of a new system for donor information (EAMIS), updated information has not been provided at this time.

⁴ World Travel & Tourism Council, Travel & Tourism Economic impact 2017 – Albania

⁵ NSDI – Pillar 4 ‘‘Growth through sustainable use of Resources and Territorial Development’’ 12.3.5 ‘‘Development of Tourism’’

⁶ The projects are: Tourism Investment and Finance Fund. CEBE - Center for Economic and Business Education; IntoAlbania. CBS - Creative Business Solution; Diber Trails. ALCDF; People First. Headhunter; and Agro tourism. CEED Foundation.

⁷ STAR2 Mid-Term Report (July2016-December 2017), distributed 09-02-2018

⁸ Press Release evaluation report on [Albania](#), Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), 24 November, 2017.

⁹ AWEN provided data from 1 January 2017-30 November 2017.

¹⁰ Results 2017, 1 December 2017, P.1, UM2014/47623-33.

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- ¹¹ SCPA (Support to community policing Albania) Inception report, 29 December 2018.
- ¹² Civil Society Challenges and Donor Approaches, November 2017, Karlstend Consulting AB.
- ¹³ 1) Protection and Promotion of Women's Human Rights in Albania; 2) Support to Environmental Civil Society organisations (hereafter known as SENiOR II); 3) Improving Access to Information and Equality in Albania; 4) Transparency and Accountability Programme.
- ¹⁴ Overcoming Obstacles to Women's Participation in Elections Index in Albania, 2017, UN Women.
- ¹⁵ Report of the National Conference "Media in Front of the Mirror", December 2017-activity supported by Sida through CRD: [link](#)
- ¹⁶ The Global Gender Gap report. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf
- ¹⁷ Rank: 38 and score: 0.728
- ¹⁸ World Banke Aide Memorie, 17 January 2018, p. 4-7.
- ¹⁹ World Banke Aide Memorie, 17 January 2018, p. 4-7.
- ²⁰ Report from technical assistance. Final report. Support to water sector reform. p. 11-13.
- ²¹ Report from technical assistance. Final report. Support to water sector reform. p. 11-13.