



STRATEGIC PLAN

2015-2020

Bulevardi “Bajram Curri”
Pallati Nr. 298, Hyrja Nr. 15, Kati 5.
1004, Tirane, Albania

Email: aranita.brahaj@ais.al

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 ESTABLISHMENT

Albanian Institute of Science is a non-governmental organization established in line with the existing legislation in the Republic of Albania. The Tirana-based organization was established by the judicial decision no. 3048 of the Tirana District Court, dated 28.03.2011.

In January 2011, a group of young professionals with expertise in different fields, such as ICT, economics, and public communication, started their work to promote Open Data standards in order to strengthen the transparency in Albania, a post-communist country still in transition and with limited access to information. The work was conducted in the framework of Open Data Albania project, which aimed to open up data from government institutions. Upon the successful finalization of the first phase of the project, the group co-founded the organization named Instituti Shqiptar i Shkencave (eng: Albania Institute of Science), initially consisting of two governing bodies, the Membership Assembly and the Chair.

During the period March 2011 – December 2012, the organization grew constantly, attracting a team of professionals and volunteers, who were using information technology and analytical methods to achieve concrete results in publishing public data in Open Data format, strengthening the transparency on how government is working and increasing public awareness.

In December 2012, the Membership Assembly decided to form the Board of Directors, which was officially registered in the court of Tirana District. The Board of Directors acts as a governing and monitoring body, consisting of five members that are distinguished personalities in the academic field. Through the Board of Directors, the Assembly aims to extend the institutional leadership, and carefully plan the programs and activities of the organization.

Momentarily, the governing and leadership bodies of AIS are:

- Membership Assembly
- Board of Directors
- Executive Director
- Secretary of the Membership Assembly, whose role is to call the meetings of the Assembly, keep the protocol and the acts derived from the taken decisions, and submit the acts to the Registry of Nonprofit Organizations in the court district.

During these years, AIS has been able to form a small, but strong team of professionals, recruited as associated fellow researchers, with expertise in economy, statistics, computer science, communication and journalism. Although working as part-time associated employees,

the researchers in the team have been able to deliver qualitative analyses and studies, assisting AIS in establishing a very good reputation in the public and the media.

AIS is founded by a group of professional, skillful people, with a long term vision and a strong enthusiasm to contribute to the society. The founders are continuously engaged in the activities of AIS, taking several responsibilities in the project proposal drafting and project implementation.

AIS has also attracted a consistent group of volunteers who have been actively engaged in several projects of enhancing civic participation.

1.2 IDENTITY

Name	Instituti Shqiptar i Shkencave (eng: Albanian Institute of Science)
NIPT	L11529451L
Legal Status	Non-profit organization; Court registry number 3048, Albania, 28/03/2011
Web Address	http://www.ais.al
Postal Address	Bulevardi “Bajram Curri” Pallati Nr. 298, Hyrja Nr. 15, Kati 5. 1004, Tirane, Albania
Telephone	+355682001718

1.3 VISION

Albanian Institute of Science’s vision is to be a strong, committed and sustainable organization in a country with a transparent and accountable government, where citizens are empowered with means to actively participate in decision-making processes and to conduct qualitative scientific research.

1.4 MISSION

The mission of AIS is to promote activities that offer solutions to socio-economic problems, increase transparency and strengthen civic engagement. AIS aims to encourage enthusiasm about science and innovation among young generations.

1.5 MAIN FUNCTIONS OF AIS

The programs and activities of the institute are organized around three pillars:

- Increase transparency and civic participation (eParticipation)
- Policy engagement and Advocacy (Think Tank)
- Support open access and open science initiatives (long-term goal of eScience)

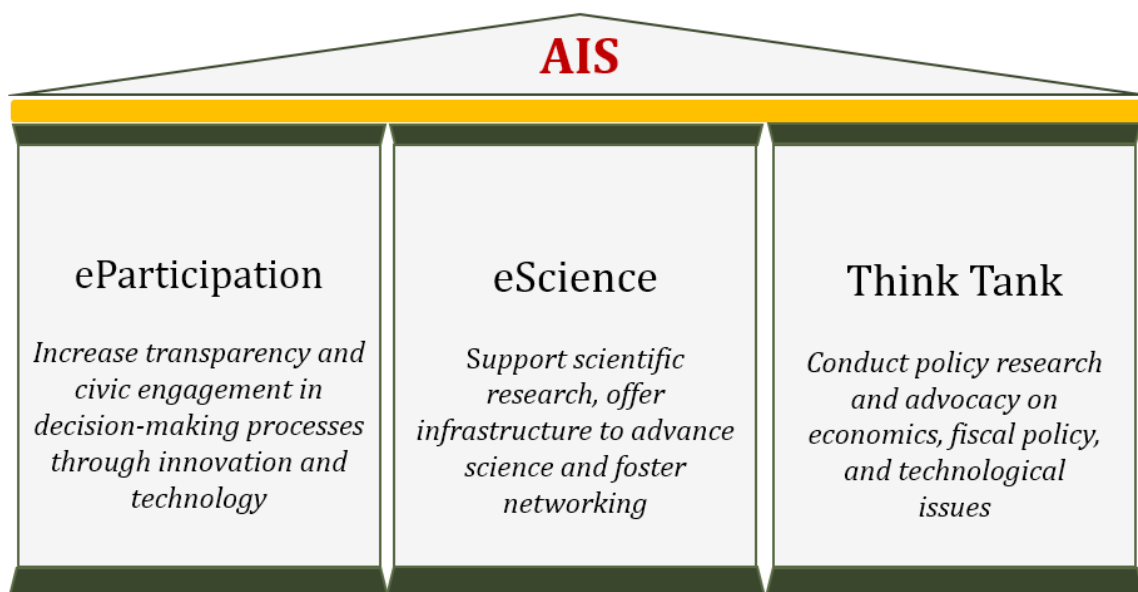


Figure 1. Three Pillars of AIS Programs

1.6 VALUES

- ✓ **Commitment:** The founding team of AIS, the staff and the associated fellows are maximally committed to achieve the objectives of each project and the overall goals of the organization.
- ✓ **Creativity:** In a short period of time, the organization has been able to propose and also implement a series of dynamic programs and activities, highly adapted to the surrounding socio-economic situations of the country in an effective way.
- ✓ **Efficiency:** Even as a young organization, AIS has managed to attract and engage dozens of individuals in its programs. Every individual engaged in the team of AIS, be it associate or volunteer, has shown high efficiency and competence in performance, always achieving the assigned objectives.
- ✓ **Cross-domain Expertise:** The founding team and the group of associates to the institute consist of skillful people of different professions, with high expertise and a strong enthusiasm to contribute to the society.
- ✓ **Credibility:** Surrounded by a community that is skeptical towards civic society and non-government organizations, AIS has managed to create a respectful and credible profile to the public and its partners. The programs of the institute have had a wide impact and dissemination in the society.
- ✓ **Cooperation:** Despite its short time of operation, AIS has gained a series of strong partners inside and outside the country, including community-based organizations, local and international NGOs, academic community, central or local government institutions, and supporters from the private sector.
- ✓ **Non-partisanship** – the representatives of the governing structure of AIS, and the activities of the organization have been consistently characterized by the lack of partisanship or any biased, political allegiances.

2. PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

2.1 ACHIEVEMENTS

Since its inception in 2011, AIS has implemented a number of projects that have contributed to the scientific research in the country. Also, the use of ICT solutions in several AIS projects has generated good results in terms of transparency, information, accountability and good governance. AIS projects have also given concrete results in the conservation and promotion of the Albanian cultural heritage values. The projects have attracted media interests and are known to the public in Albania, as well as in Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Figure 2 depicts the Albanian Institute of Science at a glance.



Figure 2 Albanian Institute of Science at a glance (2011-2013)

In the timeframe 2011-2013, there have been 14 projects implemented by the team of AIS that consists of 18 associated experts involved in these projects. Only in 2013, AIS has accomplished the successful acquisition of 7 new projects of different sizes. Overall, the projects have the financial support of 11 different donors.

Since its beginning and continuing in the present year, the institute has successfully executed its most prominent project on transparency through Open Data usability in the country. It has accomplished to publish hundreds of datasets in open data formats, deliver more than 450 analyses and studies on socio-economic topics, and launch numerous activities with the goal of creating an Open Data movement. Journalists, students, and civil society activists not only have profited from it, but also became part of the activities establishing in this way a form of e-Participation network.

Through its various projects aimed at openness, transparency, accountability, and citizen participation, AIS has provided the public with:

- ✓ open data sets, research studies and analyses published in the [Open Data Albania](#) platform
- ✓ increased accountability through information about how taxpayers' money is collected and spent via [Tax Calculator](#)
- ✓ Information about the clients of every state institution through [Treasury Monitoring](#) including total amounts of expenditures, and transactions.
- ✓ Transparency and civic participation through the open source platform Raised Voices Albania ([ZA'LART](#)), where citizens had the opportunity to denounce cases of vote manipulation, misuse of public administration or children, and other electoral distortions
- ✓ information and increased understanding of electoral spending processes through the [Electoral Spending Albania](#) project
- ✓ tools for easier analysis and verification of the amendments to the annual state budget through [Money Mapping](#)

2.2 CHALLENGES

Since inception and to date, AIS has faced the following challenges:

- ✓ There continues to be inadequate resources available (funds, human and physical resources).
- ✓ Different roles performed by the same persons (scarcity of human resources)
- ✓ AIS does not have a proper fundraising system/mechanism (staff, consistent campaign).
- ✓ AIS does not have a proper monitoring and evaluation system to report on project activities, outputs and outcomes.
- ✓ AIS is momentarily reliant only on donor funding.

3. SWOT ANALYSIS

3.1 INTERNAL ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legally known/legitimate ▪ Recognized nationally ▪ Availability of some human resources ▪ Visionary and committed founders ▪ Board of Directors with outstanding researchers ▪ Capacity with experts of different fields ▪ Democratic leadership ▪ Open workplace ▪ Voluntarism ▪ Partnership spirit ▪ Transparency ▪ Audience and public impact ▪ Presence of basic working facilities (office, computers, internet) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of proper governance bodies ▪ Lack of fundraising staff ▪ Shortage of fixed staff experts ▪ Many tasks done by same person ▪ Dependency on external funding ▪ Insufficient resources ▪ Fragile sustainability ▪ Absence of local fundraising mechanism and resource mobilization

3.2 EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Competitors:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint action in similar programs ▪ Donor support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of transparency when competing for funds
Partners:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnership with the media (Albania, Kosovo) ▪ Online presence in social networks ▪ Collaboration with academia ▪ Exchange of information, in particular through cooperation with CSOs and activists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Media dependency from particular groups of interest ▪ Deficiency of work quality in certain institutes/organizations ▪ Weak activism at the national level, often prejudged as being driven by political interest

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capacity building through sharing of experiences ▪ Coordination of activities ▪ Organization of trainings and workshops 	
Donors:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Negotiation and mobilization of local resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unreliable sustainability of programs ▪ Risk of non-transparent donation procedures and nepotism from potential Albanian donors (agencies, donor organizations) ▪ Tendency of foreign donors to work with more mature organizations
CSOs:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaboration in the acquisition of new projects ▪ Extended advocacy work and impact ▪ Association with coalitions and alliances at national and international level ▪ Extended communities of interest and impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Duplication of activities ▪ Lack of advocacy networks ▪ Deficiency in lobbying practices ▪ There is no ranking or quality evaluation system of local NGOs ▪ Partisanship with projects incentivized and implemented for political impact ▪ Lack of stability of many organizations (typically lasting only 1-2 years)
Central and Local Government:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facility to access data ▪ Hospitality towards consultancy, new policies and recommendations ▪ Disposition to praise achievements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of flexibility to cooperate with civic society ▪ Tendency to work with partisan organizations, whose activities may be politically instrumentalized ▪ Strong preference towards foreign experts or organizations outside Albania ▪ Public administration is conservative in the partnership with NGOs

4. NEEDED INTERVENTIONS

The institute needs to tackle the identified weaknesses by taking a set of measures with respect to its internal development and governing structure. First of all, the fellow researchers working with AIS until now have all been recruited in a part-time, short-term basis, depending on the small projects available. A longer term institutional development of the organization demands enhanced planning and human resource capacities. This associated group of experts should be transformed into a stable research department.

Furthermore, there is a deficiency of staff with dedicated positions, such as Program Manager, Fundraising and Communication Officer, and Financial Officer. As such, a current weakness is due to the overlapping task coordination between the two levels, on one side planning, fundraising and communication, and on the other side project implementation and administration. For instance, the position of the Executive Director has constantly covered tasks and responsibilities that should be distributed to separate positions. For the majority of tasks, the Executive Director continues to be advised and assisted by AIS founding group.

Secondly, the Board of Directors remains an external structure that is minimally engaged in the advisory process to the institute. In the last annual meeting, it was realized that the consultation with the members of the Board is very beneficial. Yet, there are not enough resources to support their closer engagement with AIS staff and fellow researchers in a continuous manner.

Thirdly, financial sustainability remains a key challenge for the institute. An important strategic objective that AIS needs to tackle is to meet the needs of its beneficiaries in the long term and in sustainable manner. While the years 2013 and 2014 showed a growing trend with respect to the projects being acquired, the institute lacks dedicated fundraising campaigns and committed operational staff to help build sustainability. The organization lacks the capacities that would rigorously contribute to devise and control a detailed financial sustainability plan, as well as to increase effectiveness of long term campaigns.

With regard to policy and advocacy work, the organization is challenged by the deficiency of capacities in methodological policy research and legal lobbying. Despite its good understanding of the problems in the area of open government and citizen participation, AIS lacks the instruments and staff to actively impact governing bodies or policymaking groups through policy recommendations and dedicated advocacy programs.

4.1 INTERVENTION AREAS

In order to overcome the described challenges and move forward to achieve its mission, AIS has identified three (3) areas of intervention:

- Capacity Building
- Sustainability
- Policy and Advocacy

5. PRIORITY AREAS

5.1 STRATEGIC GOALS

- ✓ Governance and management capacity of AIS is enhanced and sustained
- ✓ Sustainability and capacity of AIS is strengthened
- ✓ Policy engagement and advocacy is enhanced

5.2 NARRATIVE

GOAL #1: Governance and management capacity of AIS is enhanced and sustained

There is a need for AIS to enhance its governance and management structures in order to establish clear reporting lines and accountability within the organization. This will be established through the creation of a new organizational structure as well as the development of a human resource policy. AIS also needs to achieve higher engagement of its monitoring bodies, such as the Board of Directors.

GOAL #2: Sustainability and capacity of AIS is strengthened

There is a need to achieve better dissemination at international level and stronger fundraising skills, particularly in a time when the country is heading towards the association as EU candidate country, closely linked to potential initiatives of shaping the civil society by EU funds. AIS needs to strengthen its capacity in resource mobilization, financial management, project management and proposal writing.

GOAL #3: Policy engagement and advocacy is enhanced

There is a need for dedicated research projects involving a team of interdisciplinary experts that deliver findings which have the power to shape policies in the country. AIS needs to strengthen its policy and advocacy capacity, in order to go beyond research analysis and raising public awareness by manifesting stronger competences on legal lobbying and policymaking.

5.2 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

GOAL #1: Governance and management capacity of AIS is enhanced and sustained

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME		
			Y1	Y2	Y3
Governance structure and leadership of AIS is enhanced	1. Develop 3 year strategic plan and collaborate with partners to implement activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic plan created Strategic plan reviewed at year 3 	X		X
	2. Update organizational chart showing reporting lines and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational chart updated 		X	
	Strengthen the engagement of the Board of Directors by:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protocols of annual meetings created and disseminated Reports on the consultation with the board and the funded member created 	X	X	X
	3. Organizing longer annual meetings in the form of retreats				
	4. Funding one member in the position of senior associate advisors to work more closely with AIS staff in planning and monitoring capabilities				
5. Collaborate with partners in order to implement strategic activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring reports of implementation 	X	X	X	

Policies developed for human resources and financial management	1. Review existing HR policies, including job descriptions, roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of existing policies reviewed • Number of jobs, roles and responsibilities reviewed 	X		X
	2. Create job descriptions and roles to create an accountable and transparent organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff job descriptions created • Document of roles and responsibilities created and distributed 	X		X
	3. Review and update existing financial management situation and policies every 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial management policy is reviewed 	X		X

GOAL #2: Sustainability and capacity of AIS is strengthened

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME		
			Y1	Y2	Y3
Sustainability plan is created and implemented	1. Establish a small resource mobilization team of 2-3 persons within AIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource mobilization team is created 	X		
	2. Hire and train staff on fundraising and proposal writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of staff hired and trained 	X	X	X
	3. Establish an inventory of potential donors and update on a quarterly basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of donors identified 	X	X	X
	4. Conduct fundraising campaigns to solicit financial support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of funds raised Amount of fundraisers conducted 	X	X	X
Enhanced capacity in proposal writing and project management	1. Hire and train staff on proposal writing and program management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of staff hired and trained Number of projects acquired 	X	X	X
Enhanced capacity in communication and financial management	1. Hire and train staff on communication and dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of staff hired 	X	X	X
	2. Hire staff for financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of staff hired 	X		

	3. Workshop financial management and evaluation conducted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop conducted 	X		
Dissemination and online presence of AIS is strengthened	1. Hire an IT expert to update website for AIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT consultant hired • Website operational and updated 	X		
	2. Train AIS staff on website design and maintenance, so that the website can be sustained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIS staff/volunteer is trained • Website is maintained regularly 	X	X	X
	3. Dissemination of AIS activities and artifacts in online media (press, social networks, blog) is enhanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher number of articles, posts, or blogs in online media 	X	X	X
	4. Enrich the mailing list with international stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended mailing list • Monthly distribution of AIS results in the mailing list 	X	X	X
	5. Enhance participation and travel in important international events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of international events attended • Report for each event is created and short post is published online 	X	X	X

GOAL #3: Policy engagement and advocacy is enhanced

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME		
			Y1	Y2	Y3
Enhanced policy engagement at the national and regional levels	1. Building staff capacity in policy research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people involved in advocacy issues 	X		
	2. Identify distinct policy issues (focus areas: Transparency and Good Governance, Fiscal Policy, Electoral Finances)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues are identified and addressed 	X	X	X
	3. Produce extended, comprehensive studies that draw recommendations on reforms and socio-economic policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of policy studies produced 	X	X	X
	4. Quality of studies is internally and externally evaluated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of evaluation reviews for each study 	X	X	X
	1. Enhance the capacity of the staff in advocacy campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people involved in advocacy issues 	X		

Effective advocacy campaigns created and implemented at the national level	2. Increase involvement with Albanian CSOs and determine the advocacy networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of CSOs involved in advocacy issues • Number of networks identified 	X	X	X
	3. Collaboration with other NGOs in Albania to enhance the voice of civil society organizations at all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on the type of issues addressed and campaigns implemented Media record files 	X	X	X
	4. Identify and enhance partnership with the central and local government institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on the partnerships or agreements established 	X	X	X

6. GOVERNING STRUCTURE OF AIS

The following chart represents the organizational structured planned to be established by the third year of the strategic plan. A project may involve multiple experts. In the majority of the projects, the program manager acts as project coordinator.

