



Empowering Civil Society Organizations for Transparency (ECSOFT)

REPORT

on the results of survey among CSOs
on use of new online tool by the Ministry of Justice:
Individual Electronic Window System

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Background

On July 15, 2021 Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan (MoJ) launched a pilot version of its new online platform entitled Individual Electronic Window System¹ (hereafter ‘e-window system’), which is designed to facilitate provision of its services to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The range of main services includes: (1) Grants registration, (2) Service contracts registration, (3) Donations registration, (4) Submission of information on changes in statutory documents. Also, CSOs can find some relevant legal acts, receive news and notifications, as well as find records of their applications to the MoJ stored in one place.

Introduction of this tool has been impatiently expected by CSOs for quite a time, as the respective generic legislative framework was adopted back in 2013² and subsequent detailed supporting legal acts were developed by the MoJ in 2014³. Reasons of such a delay are not quite clear, but slow launch of the e-window system definitely prolonged unnecessary and excessive bureaucratic obstacles for civil society.

The present e-window system is an updated version of the previous one which turned out to be inefficient; therefore, it was suspended and modified to address identified problems. ECSOFT project had provided MoJ with assistance on improving technical capacities of the e-window system, as well as recommendations on the content and operation. The MoJ adopted many of ECSOFT’s recommendations. In addition, ECSOFT also helped CSOs to learn about the new e-windows system, e-services and how to access them by conducting webinars and training for them.

Executive summary

The e-window system offered by the MoJ to CSOs is quite operational now. ECSOFT project in close cooperation with the MoJ has made a substantive contribution to bring the system to life. Some

¹ The online tool can be accessed at <http://qht.gov.az:8080/SmartJustice>

² Presidential Decree on Measures to Improve Provision of Electronic Services to Non-Governmental Organizations, dated November 20, 2013, <https://e-qanun.az/framework/27150>

³ Decision of the Collegium of Ministry of Justice on Approval of Administrative Rules for Use of Individual Electronic Window System and Information to be Included into the System and List of Information Providers from among Public Agencies, dated May 30, 2014, <https://e-qanun.az/framework/28263>

improvements to the e-window system have been made since its original launch. However, it would still benefit from additional improvements, including on making it more customer friendly. In order to further improve the e-window system, to identify remaining problems with it and the most rational solutions, ECSOFT implemented a survey amongst CSOs.

Using the survey results, ECSOFT provided to the MoJ additional recommendations on improving the e-window system.

Methodology

The survey consisted of 12 questions, which were identified by MG Consulting in consultations with some CSOs who informally shared their experience and concerns with the e-window system, with FHI 360 and ICNL, which share their experience implementing surveys on various topics in other countries.

MG Consulting identified CSOs to be included into the Survey amongst those who responded to an open call at its Facebook as well as through a popular CSO news portal www.qht.az. Selected CSOs had to represent users of the e-windows system as well as those who never used it, those who are based in Baku and in the regions, as well as to be gender diversified.

MG Consulting selected the KwikSurveys online tool to implement the survey because local CSOS are familiar with this tool and it offers auto-generated data analysis and statistics.

The online survey was organized between April 22 - May 4, 2022 with the use of KwikSurveys online tool. Information about the survey was posted at ‘QHT Qanunvericiliyi’ (translates ‘NGO Legislation’) Facebook page which is followed by more than 1,500 CSOs, as well as at popular CSO news portal www.qht.az⁴. At the same time, invitation to complete the survey was emailed to more than 60 CSOs.

The total number of organizations who completed the survey is 36, of which one third are located in Baku and two thirds in the regions of Azerbaijan. The gender breakdown of responses is 58% male and 42% female respondents. An overwhelming majority of the survey participants (87%) are leaders of their organizations.

It shall be stressed that actual users of the e-window system constitute slightly over half of all surveyed. Therefore, a term “respondent” will be used for all survey participants, while the term “user” for those respondents who admitted having used the online platform. The latter make 53% of all respondents or 19 people.

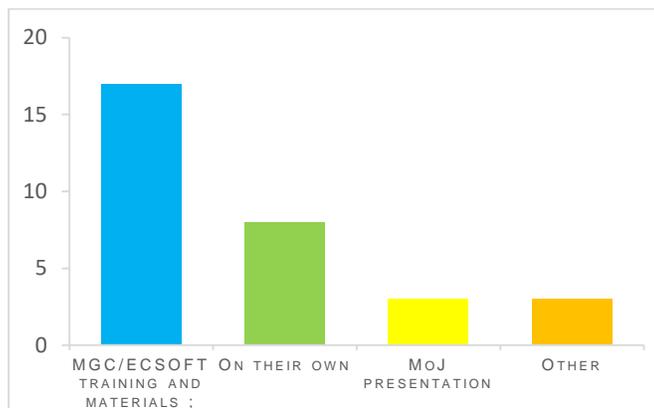
Findings of the survey

Awareness level among CSOs about e-window system

91% of the survey participants have heard of the e-window system of MoJ which means that the tool is well advertised by the MOJ and ECSOFT. More than a half of users (57%) reported that they had learned to use the online tool through training and materials provided by ECSOFT, while about a

⁴ See at https://www.qht.az/index.php?action=static_detail&static_id=50790 (viewed 3239 times as of May 06, 2022).

quarter (27%) acquired the necessary skills on their own; only one in every ten of users benefited from presentation by the Ministry, while another 10% learned how to use it from other sources.



Use of e-window system by CSOs

There is quite a substantive number of those who, being aware of the tool, had not used it. These constitute 38% of respondents (in addition to those 9% who are unaware of this possibility). This happened for two reasons:

- a) CSOs lost their username and password: Many CSOs received username and password when the platform was first introduced. Unfortunately, many CSOs lost this information over time and even those who did not lose it state that the username and password turned out to be incompatible with the new system and that the Ministry is not so much helpful in obtaining new one.
- b) CSOs did not have substantive activities that require registration with the Ministry.

Customer friendliness

71% of the users reported that they had not encountered any problems, while using the e-window system. This conclusion is supported by the fact that more than a half of users rated their satisfaction with the service as quite satisfied or very satisfied (e.g., 39% of users scored 6-7-8 and 16% 9-10 respectively on a scale from 0 to 10). Along with this, nearly one quarter of users (or 27%) reported they were rather not satisfied (by choosing scores 4-5 on the above scale).

When asked how comfortable the service was, the assessment is even higher. Thus, two thirds of users stated that the service was quite comfortable (52% of users scored 6-7-8 and another 14% preferred scores 9-10 on a scale from 0 to 10), while one quarter were not satisfied (to be precise, 23% of users ticked scores 3-5 on the above scale).

Some CSOs mentioned that they also used e-window system for other purposes, e.g., obtaining the list of CSOs in health sphere, requesting MoJ to correct mistakes in the data related to CSO and its grants, etc.

Grant registration practice in e-window system

The most popular service used by 38% of users among all respondents is grant registration, followed by submission of information on changes in statutory documents and service contract registration

(respectively, 13% and 8%), while registration of donations function has not been used by any of the users.

Timelines for e-submissions

According to the users, the Ministry did not require hard copies of the documents submitted online from 95% of all users, and applications are processed by the Ministry rather quickly – between a week and a month.

Problems encountered by users

The problems encountered by users can be summarized as follows:

- a) users lost their username and password (21% of users);
- b) the system was slow (14% of users);
- c) other problems (impossibility to use ASAN Imza⁵ for user identification, lack of mobile version, lack of assistance from the Ministry, etc.).

Recommendations

Based on the results of the survey, the following recommendations can be made to improve the e-window system of MoJ:

1. New services

MoJ can consider adding new services to e-window system, in particular the application for CSO registration.

2. New laws

The system offers some crucial laws but the list can be expanded. Also, legal acts shall be regularly updated to reflect changes concerning regulation of civil society.

3. Platform upgrade

- a. Access to the e-window system shall be made available through ASAN Imza (provided by the Ministry of Taxes and tied to taxpayer's ID) in addition to E-Imza (provided by Ministry of Digital Development and Transport).
- b. The mobile interface of the e-window system shall be introduced, so that the platform is available from mobile phone as well.
- c. Feedback mechanism shall be established. Users shall receive notification of acceptance of applications and, in case of mistakes, be advised of these to facilitate correction of mistakes.
- d. Technical improvements have to be introduced to increase the system's performance speed.

4. Technical support to users

- a. Consider introducing short video guidance on how to use the e-window system (supported by 53% of the users);
- b. Consider having FAQ section and samples of documents to be submitted (supported by 50% of users and about a quarter of users respectively).
- c. Consider introducing a hotline for users of e-window system at the MoJ (supported by about a quarter of users).

⁵ 'Easy signature' for digital signing.