Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR’s Refworld website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment, please email the Knowledge and Information Management Unit.

18 September 2017

ALB105977.E

Albania: Requirements and procedures to obtain a biometric identity card, including renewal and replacement, both within and outside the country; appearance and content of the card (2015-September 2017)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Sources indicate that Albania launched a secure Identity Card (ID card) project in 2008 (The World Bank Group et al., 35; Safran Magazine June 2014). A progress assessment for Albania by the European Commission states that "applications for [Albanian] biometric ID cards have been accepted since 12 January 2009," and that they began to be issued in February 2009 (EU 27 Nov. 2009).

According to sources, the company responsible for implementing both the ID card and biometric passport is Aleat, a joint venture of OT-Morpho (previously Morpho) and the Albanian-American Enterprise Fund [1] (OT-Morpho n.d.b; Entrust Datacard n.d., 1). According to an article published in August 2013 by OT-Morpho, Morpho (OT-Morpho) and the Albanian Ministry of Interior signed an agreement that extends, for an additional 10 years, Aleat’s production and distribution concession of identification documents, including the ID card (OT-Morpho 5 August 2013).

A joint discussion paper on "digital identity" prepared by The World Bank Group, GSMA and the Secure Identity Alliance (SIA) [2] indicates that the Albanian Ministry of Interior Affairs partnered with Aleat to re-register the entire population of Albania in a new digital database, instead of digitalizing the existing provincial, paper-based registers, "many of which were inaccurate" (The World Bank Group et al. July 2016, 35). The same source further adds that

[Aleat] collects, manages, and stores all the data, and a copy of the data is provided to the Ministry of Interior Affairs. Although the firm technically owns the data, there are security measures in place to ensure that only Ministry officials can gain access to sensitive data. (ibid.)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1. Physical Appearance of the Biometric ID Card

The joint paper issued by the World Bank Group and its partners describes the Albanian ID card as a "smartcard" which contains "digital certificates" used to access electronic governmental services through kiosks (ibid.). Entrust Datacard, which provides equipment and technical support for the Albanian electronic passport and ID card systems, indicates that the "highly secure" and "laser engraved" ID cards can be used as electronic voter ID cards (Entrust Datacard n.d., 1). A sample of the Albanian ID card obtained from the Public Register of Authentic Travel and Identity Documents Online of the European Union is attached to this Response.
2. Requirements and Procedures to Obtain a Biometric Identity Card in Albania

Sources indicate that ID cards are valid for 10 years and are issued to Albanian citizens who are over the age of 16 (Albania n.d.b; Aleat n.d.). The World Bank Group report states that, in order to obtain an electronic ID card, "citizens enroll in one of [the] 400 centers nation-wide" (The World Bank Group et al. July 2016, 35). Their personal data is verified against the central database, after which "[c]ards are then printed off-site and sent back to the municipal enrollment center for later pick-up" (ibid.). On its website, Aleat similarly explains that applicants must go to a "Civil Status Office" where their personal information is verified for accuracy and where they apply for an ID card (Aleat n.d.). Applications for ID cards are made "at each Municipality/Administrative Unit or Commune which has an application office where the citizen is registered" (ibid.). The same source further states that applicants need to purchase a voucher for an electronic ID card at the post office for 1,500 Albanian Lekë [C$16.58] as well as provide identification documents, such as a birth certificate or citizenship certificate, to the Civil Status Office in order to register their personal data (ibid.). The ID card can only be obtained by the applicant at the "office of application" (ibid.). According to the same source, the processing time for the delivery of ID cards is usually 15 days, barring any delays incurred "when the data needs clearance" (ibid.). The same source states that the existing ID card must be provided in cases of replacement or renewal as well as for changes in information, and that an original police report must be provided to replace a lost or stolen card (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3. Procedures to Obtain an Albanian ID Card Abroad

The website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministria E Punëve të Jashtme) of the Albanian government states that Albanian citizens who live abroad can apply for an ID card at one of the country’s missions abroad, namely:


According to the same source, the following documentation must be provided while applying for the ID card:

[translation]

1. Family certification; and/or
2. Old model passport; and/or
3. Driver’s licence, electronic model (the new model); and/or
4. Another valid document containing a photograph issued by the host country.
5. ID card coupon[;]
6. Confirmation of payment via the applicant’s account. (Albania n.d.b)

The information in the following paragraph regarding the procedures required to obtain an ID card is provided by the website of the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In order to apply for a national ID card, the applicant must appear in person and must have his or her identity verified. The identification data is then compared with the information found in the Albanian National Registry of Civil Status. The applicant submits a digital photograph, has his or her fingerprints scanned and provides an electronic signature. Biometric data is taken again when the applicant picks up his or her ID card (Albania n.d.b).

According to the same source, the fees associated with an ID card application are as follows:

[translation]

1. Greece, Italy: 12 [euros]
2. Brussels: 16 [euros]
3. England: 13 [British pounds]
4. Switzerland: 18 franc
5. USA: $18.00. (Albania n.d.b)

The website specifies that the processing time for an ID card is 28 business days (ibid.).

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a representative from the Albanian Consulate in New York City indicated that Albanian citizens can obtain an ID card in North America only from the Consulate
in New York (Albania 1 Sept. 2017). The same source explained that applicants complete a form found online to apply for an ID card or a passport and return it to the Consulate via email (ibid.). The representative added that someone from the Consulate reviews the application form and, if everything is in order, invites the applicants to the Consulate to have their fingerprints taken (ibid.). The same source noted that a third party, such as a family member, can apply for someone else by filling out the form on behalf of the applicant, but that the applicant will still need to go to the Consulate in person to have his or her fingerprints taken (ibid.). According to the representative, the processing time from the moment the application is received to delivery of the ID card is between 6 weeks to a maximum of 2 months (ibid.).

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a representative from the Albanian Embassy in Ottawa stated that the Embassy in Ottawa does not issue biometric ID cards or passports, but can issue a laissez-passer to Albanian citizens, which is a document valid for 30 days from the date of issuance (Albania 30 Aug. 2017). The same source further explained that an Albanian citizen who resides in Canada and who does not hold a dual citizenship with Canada can only obtain a biometric ID card in Albania (ibid.). The Embassy issues a laissez-passer, if required, for the applicant to enter Albania and request the ID card (ibid.). According to the same source, if the applicant is a dual citizen of both Albania and Canada, then the applicant can apply for an ID card at the Albanian Consulate in New York City (ibid.). In Contrast, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, the consul from the Albanian Consulate in New York City stated that "all Albanian citizens who live in Canada and the US, whether or not they hold dual citizenship, are allowed to request ID cards from the Consulate in New York" (Albania 12 sept. 2017).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes
[1] OT-Morpho is a company dedicated to digital security and identification technologies that fused with Oberthur Technologies in May 2017 (OT-Morpho n.d.a), while the Albanian-American Enterprise Fund (AAEF) is a non-for-profit US corporation that aims to promote the development of the private sector in Albania (AAEF n.d.).
[2] The GSMA is described as an organization that "represents the interests of mobile operators worldwide," while the SIA is described as an alliance of public, private and non-governmental organizations dedicated to the "development of trusted digital identities and the widespread adoption of secure eServices" (The World Bank Group et al., 2).
Additional Sources Consulted

**Internet sites, including:** Albania – Embassy in Ottawa, Consulate Office in New York; ecoinet; United Nations – Refworld; United States – Department of State.

**Attachment**