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STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

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Table of contents

[1 Introduction 3](#_Toc94529222)

[2 Context of and reasons for digitalisation 4](#_Toc94529223)

[3 ICT Vision 6](#_Toc94529224)

[4 2030 Strategic Objectives 7](#_Toc94529225)

[4.1 Management & Control 7](#_Toc94529226)

[4.2 Business processes 7](#_Toc94529227)

[4.3 Culture & Behaviour 8](#_Toc94529228)

[4.4 IT & Infrastructure 8](#_Toc94529229)

[5 How we plan to achieve this? 9](#_Toc94529230)

[5.1 Management & Control 9](#_Toc94529231)

[5.2 Business processes 10](#_Toc94529232)

[5.3 Culture and behaviour 10](#_Toc94529233)

[5.4 IT & Infrastructure 11](#_Toc94529234)

[6 Amendments, monitoring and evaluation of SAO Digital Transformation Strategy 2020-2030 13](#_Toc94529235)

# Introduction

In the past, SAO dedicated a lot of attention to digitalisation of interactions with other stakeholders in judicial proceedings, as well as its clients (i.e. state bodies, which it represents). The introduction of e-business in interaction with the courts in the field of land register cases, insolvency cases, as well as enforcement cases signalled an important milestone in the business of SAO. It is reasonable to expect that in the coming years e-business with courts will further expand to include civil (litigation and non-litigation) and labour law cases, as well as criminal proceedings and minor offences.

Digitalisation of SAO business processes has long been one of the management’s fundamental strategic objectives with the main aim to replace the current Registers IS and also the remodelling of existing business processes. In November 2013 SAO introduced the new Registers IS, which replaced the former 20-year-old system. The first system was updated and upgraded several times; however, due to unbridgeable obstacles and barriers further development was no longer reasonable. The new IS (developed in 2013) was supposed to include all functionalities for document management, IT-support of business processes and judicial proceedings, as well as connections with external systems., but despite several upgrades the system still fails to meet the initial expectations and shows obvious signs of incompleteness. Moreover, it is too complex for efficient use and provides for below-average stability. This was also confirmed by the analysis of the existing Registers IS (commissioned by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Slovenia and performed by Comtrade in March 2018), so SAO decided to once again introduce a completely new solution.

As past experience reveals, unsystematic introduction of new IS and solutions is not feasible if it does not take into account all the organisation dimensions (governance and control; business processes, culture and behaviour, IT and infrastructure), SAO decided to design the present vision and Digital Transformation Strategy, which will connect all the above-mentioned elements. By doing so, SAO wishes to capitalize on the lessons learned, while ensuring the optimal spending of available resources and successful introduction of ICT and its adoption at all levels of organisation with an overall aim to exploit ICT – to the maximum possible extent – as a tool for supporting the implementation of the basic (overall) SAO vision and mission, and for implementing its statutory responsibilities and powers.

# Context of and reasons for digitalisation

Today, information technologies have found their way into all aspects of our society and life. It is practically impossible to completely avoid modern ICT in business or private life. When a correct approach is applied, digitalisation brings many advantages, such as faster and easier work, better performance and reliability, as well as better use of available funding, improved employee satisfaction, and better (higher quality) work results. On the other hand, in case of a wrong approach, digitalisation could lead to high additional costs, additional problems and a lot of dissatisfaction of users and/or external stakeholders. Therefore, digitalisation needs to be well thought-out and well-planned, and receive adequate ownership and support at all levels of the organisation.

Partial or complete digitalisation of all fields is an important priority of both the private and public sector, while information society, information technologies and solutions constitute important components of short-term and long-term strategic documents at the level of the EU, as well as in the Republic of Slovenia. Overall direct aims of the introduction of digital solutions and digitalisation of business processes include improving of employee’s performance and work results, their mobility, as well as the quality and accessibility of services for citizens, promotion of innovations, and the technology and economic development, being an attractive employer, etc. This also applies to the judicial sector and, narrower, to the area of powers and work of SAO. Therefore, it is important that SAO adopts a proactive approach, and provides its own contribution to the attainment of these objectives. With this in mind, it needs to be reiterated that digitalisation should not be a goal on its own, but a tool and/or component of other” superior” processes.

The most important internal factor and driver of digitalisation is the increasing caseload of SAO. This in turn leads to the increase of data and document databases, which makes their management more difficult, increases the time for required administrative tasks, and increases the costs of data management and exchange. Digitalisation of business processes and information collections can thus serve as an important tool for mitigating and better management of the organisational document load. By decreasing the administrative burden, SAO can improve the quality of expert and content-related work, as it will allow for a fast and efficient overview of similar cases, including court decisions and case law in identical case, while contributing to a more efficient use of available resources.

The major external driver of digitalisation of the Slovenian justice is the digitalisation of court proceedings by the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia. As SAO needs to follow and comply with the courts’ instructions and processes in this area, the digitalisation of business with courts is practically unavoidable. By taking a pro-active role in the process, SAO can ensure that the courts shall try and consider the needs, wishes and capacity of SAO to a larger extent than in the past, so the digitalisation of both bodies’ business processes can be aligned to the maximum possible extent. Another significant factor is the application of IT in the business with international courts, as in September 2020, SAO participated in its first videoconference hearing before the Court of the European Union in Luxembourg. Consequently, it is reasonable to expect that the international courts, which already dictated specific adjustments and upgrades of IT on the side of external stakeholders in the past, will continue to intensively promote business digitalisation in the coming decade (e.g. participation at expert meetings and hearings via videoconferences, upgrades of digital document exchange systems, improved access and user experience in case law database, etc.).

**The significance, benefits, and usefulness, as well as the need for digitalisation was also highlighted in March 2020 with the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic. This experience revealed the need for alternative work forms (remote work, work from home) and business (contactless business). Without IT tools and assets these ways of work would be practically impossible. Moreover, the situation ignited SAO employees’ wish to become familiar with and use digital solutions and e-business tools where the logistic process based on physical documents could no longer support the changed circumstances.**

Last but not least, the wish for gradual efficient digitalisation, which would take duly into account the needs and demands of respective user groups, and would help decrease the workload, was also endorsed by the participants of the IT Strategy and Operational Roadmap Workshop at Terme Olimia (heads of departments, representatives of organisational leaderships, representatives of administrative staff), who see IT as a means for improving the quality of their work and improving their work performance, knowing that digitalisation and the change process has its own points off attention and risks to take into account, and require their time and attention.

# ICT Vision

State Attorney's Office is also independently in the field of ICT and actively monitors, tests and introduces into its business new IT solutions, which comply with the latest trends in the field of IT and judicial IT.

Through digitalisation of business processes, strengthened and optimal distribution and allocation of human and financial resources, and by empowering all employees with digital and other required skills SAO successfully performs its statutory responsibilities and powers, and provides efficient, safe and user-friendly solutions to both internal and external users in order to support independent effective work, independent of location and time.

A centralised Registers IT systems is used at all levels of SAO, which provides for efficient background connection of all internal information services, information systems and digitalised databases, as well as information systems of other stakeholders (public records/data bases, courts, clients) to the maximum possible extent. This allows for a fast, safe, and reliable information exchange in order to support faster and more efficient work. As a result, state attorneys will dedicate less time to time-consuming administrative task, and more time to focus on more complex legal or substance-related work.

In 2030 State Attorneys will remain foremost top legal experts, who will also be skilled and advanced users of IT solutions in their line of work. They will perform their work independent of their location, while technology will provide for their seamless, fast and simple access to all resources (case files, internal databases, public databases, etc.) required for their work. They will create documents with the help of efficient, user-friendly solutions, while AI and a vast internal case law database from their area of work will be of great assistance and will contribute to a more efficient and faster resolution of cases. Even if individuals will continue to print documents and use paper copies, all business processes will be based on digital data exchange.

# 2030 Strategic Objectives

Below, we list and describe the strategic goals which SAO wants to achieve and implement in the field of digitalisation and IT up to 2030, to realise the vision, described in the previous chapter. The emphasis of this strategy is thus not on the technical aspects of digitalisation, but on coordinated and aligned measures in all relevant fields (Management & Control, Business Processes, Organisational Culture and Behaviour, and IT and Infrastructure). The following objectives thus cover all fields which are key for an effective and efficient digitalisation and use of digital solutions within every organisation.

## Management & Control

1. Provision of own budget and financial resources for digitalisation to ensure a higher level of independence when making decisions for the planning, development, use and maintenance of IT solutions within SAO.
2. Setting up of relevant organisational structures and adoption of relevant procedures and guidelines for the effective management and control of the planning, production and use of IT solutions, which will provide for adequate representation of all sides (management, technical area, content area, users), and a transparent and reasonable distribution of responsibilities for digitalisation among them.
3. Active cooperation and searching of common solution in the field of business digitalisation with other stakeholders (Government of the Republic of Slovenia and Ministries, Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, etc.)
4. Adjustment and optimisation of regulations in the field of IT, e-business, e-justice and other areas of work of SAO to support the implementation and attainment of overarching strategic objectives of SAO.

## Business processes

1. Optimisation of business processes based on the current scope of work and their adjustment for efficient and effective digitalisation.
2. Gradual digitalisation of business processes within SAO and business processes with external stakeholders, whenever justified and feasible, and whenever such digitalisation improves accessibility and transparency of SAO services and/or contributes to better exploitation of available capacities.
3. Setting up of a QA system and controls for the implementation of working processes, and a system for controlling partial, interim, and final outcomes of working processes with a combination of digital and manual controls, as well as a suitable system for alerting about any potential deviations from the required level of quality.

## Culture & Behaviour

1. Promotion and introduction of a continuous improvement culture and mindset and the PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) approach, which shall encourage employees and users to actively participate in the planning, development, and use of IT solutions.
2. Introduction and implementation of an organisation-wide digital culture through trainings and development of digital skills and literacy of SAO staff, so all employees will know how to use all available digital solutions without problems or fear, and they will be inclined to and support their implementation and roll-out.
3. Education and raising awareness of users about the trends, as well as possibilities and advantages offered by IT’.

## IT & Infrastructure

1. Provision of relevant own/shared IT infrastructure as required for digitalisation and business continuity of SAO, as well as for work independent of the location and time – at an optimal price.
2. Respect for privacy and protection of personal data and ensuring an adequate level of information security and data integrity – so the right data is available at the right time at the right place to the right people.
3. Searching for possibilities for use, as well as testing and introduction of applicable modern IT, such as digital signing, solutions to support remote work, artificial intelligence, OCR, speech recognition to efficiently support various SAO business processes, or to improve access to SAO services for disadvantaged people and people with disabilities, vonnectino with public databases (e.g. trays or repositories and implementation of control panels to support strategic decision-making). During the testing of new technologies, special focus will be put on the exploitation of IT and AI to set up extensive digital case law databases from the SAO’s areas of work.

# How we plan to achieve this?

This section describes the measures and activities foreseen for the attainment of strategic objectives by specific area. The timelines and details of measures and activities shall be further elaborated by operational roadmaps for 4-year and 2-year periods.

## Management & Control

1. Activities for the transfer of the existing SAO IT budget, which is currently managed by the Ministry of Justice, to direct management of SAO, have been successfully completed SAO will continue to actively strive to increase the allocated funds for digitalisation and IT. At the same time SAO shall try to find additional funding sources for IT and digitalisation through projects, partnerships with academic and research institutions, and through public-private partnerships. SAO will introduce a system for the detailed monitoring of IT costs and other business process costs, so it can always acquire a real-time assessment of the impact of IT investments on the overall SAO business costs.

**KPIs/CSFs:** IT funding (total, IT funding per employee, IT per caseload); amount of acquired special project funds to support digital transformation; SAO business process implementation costs.

1. SAO has already set up relevant organisational structures and implements relevant processes to support coordination and cooperation of key stakeholders (leadership, technical area, content area, other users), such as workgroups, meetings, presentations, workshops, etc. However, these activities need to be further formalised, while SAO also needs to define clear lines of responsibility for specific areas.

**KPIs/CSFs:** clear lines of responsibility are set up within the organisation; number of IT staff and IT ambassadors; staff feedback on the involvement and representation in the planning, design and implementation of the Digital Transformation Strategy and related activities.

1. In 2020 SAO significantly strengthened its cooperation with other stakeholders (Ministry of Public Administration, courts, and organisations from the academia and research sector) in the field of IT. The main aim of such cooperation is to ensure an aligned development of IT solutions and digitalisation of business processes, as well as connectivity and compatibility of information systems. SAO is also exploring several opportunities in the area of shared infrastructure and joint procurement and development of IT solutions with the purpose of decreasing related costs.

**KPIs/CSFs:** alignment of ICT strategies and development (number of incidents/issues due to incompatibility of individual solutions): number of joint meetings, events or projects; value, quality; and impact of joint projects from the aspect of costs, quality and performance of SAO’s work.

1. During the strategy period, SAO will re-examine the regulations and requirements in the field of e-business and its professional field of work. Further, it shall determine potential barriers to digitalisation and actively engage in all activities within its powers to remedy or remove such barriers. Moreover, SAO shall monitor and actively participate in all public consultations regarding draft regulations and policies in the field of e-business and IT.

**KPIs/CSFs:** number of public consultations and submitted opinions during the legislative process, number of removed barriers to effective digitalisation.

## Business processes

1. In 2019, on behalf of SAO, an external provider performed an analysis of business process, and provided proposals for their improvement. SAO now needs to optimise the processes and ensure regular implementation of such analyses based on the type and scope of work and based on analyses of work performance and efficacy, as appropriate.

**KPIs/CSFs:** share of optimised business processes, sub-processes, (average) duration of business processes; number of completed reviews and adjustments of business processes; number of realised proposed improvements.

1. A part of SAO business processes has already been digitalised, while the central role in their further digitalisation will be focused on the modular Registers information system, which would eventually enable the full digitalisation and paperless business processes , which however will most likely not be completed during the scope of this strategy. Digitalisation of business processes shall be implemented based on expert analysis of costs, merits and needs, carried out in cooperation with users and other stakeholders.

**KPIs/CSFs:** number/share of digitalised internal business processes

3. The new Register IT system will integrate controls for verifying partial, interim and final results of business processes, as well as mechanisms for the prevention and correction of wrong entries, and systems for warning about any deviations or errors in the business process or system operation. The verification process will maximise the exploitation of advantages offered by digital technology in combination with additional manual checks, to ensure the maximum possible level of safety and reliability.

**KPIs/CSFs:** number of controls and their efficiency (number or percentage of errors/discrepancies/deviations vs. undetected errors/discrepancies).

## Culture and behaviour

1. Within SAO we wish to build a culture of continuous improvements with the help of education and training programmes, as well as by appropriate rewarding and recognition of the most active individuals and outstanding achievements. The related activities include workshops, trainings, collection of proposals, as well as other activities to improve the communication of proposed business process improvements. At the same time the management of SAO wishes to introduce the PDCA (Plan – Do – Check – Act) approach in all areas of its business to facilitate and support continuous improvements of existing processes.

**KPIs/CSFs:** number of proposed improvements or changes by employees and/or users; employee feedback on representation; level of active participation of employees in these processes; number of IT ambassadors; number of dedicated events to establish and promote the culture of continuous improvements.

1. With respect to promotion of digital culture within SAO, the main activities will also be focused on education and training, as well as development of employees’ digital literacy and digital skills, as this is the area with the largest gap between the actual and the desired state. The digital solutions on their own do not suffice for the introduction and building of a digital culture, if they are not user-friendly, or if the users are not properly empowered (i.e. they lack the necessary skills and knowledge) for their use. Besides educational and training activities, an important role in this area will be given to activities, such as needs analyses and surveys of users’ satisfaction, analyses of users’ knowledge and skills, as well as inclusion of users in the development and testing of software and IT solutions. For this purpose, during the project implemented in cooperation with CILC and funded by the European Commission, SAO will establish a network of ambassadors (i.e. highly motivated advanced users) who will assist with the roll-out and promotion of IT solutions, and who shall serve as 1st level support.

**KPI/CSFs:** Increase the level of users’ digital literacy; number of education and training events; user satisfaction with IT and digital solutions; rate of use of IT and digital solutions; number of IT ambassadors within the organisation

1. SAO intends to raise users’ awareness about the possibilities and advantages of IT, through regular informing of employees on the IT trends in general, as well as in the area of justice, by enabling employees’ participation at professional events (conferences, workshops) in the relevant field, study visits, and exchange of best practices and experience with external partners in Slovenia and abroad, especially within the international association of state attorney’s offices, which SAO wishes to establish within the project with its partner CILC and the support of the European Commission.

**KPIs/CSFs:** level of user awareness and knowledge of IT trends, number of dedicated events or information materials about IT-developments for users and ambassadors.

## IT & Infrastructure

1. SAO is already trying to ensure all the required infrastructure and assets (hardware and software) for successful digitalisation of business processes and efficient e-business of SAO. Upon provision of its own IT budget, this process will be simplified and more efficient in order to meet the needs of business processes. Even though remote work is currently possible to a large extent, the relevant processes need to be additionally formalised and standardised, and users need to receive additional training.

**KPIs/CSFs:** level of quality of IT services (business continuity), costs of IT infrastructure.

1. SAO has already provided for a high level of privacy and data protection. However, due to the growing importance of this aspect, it shall dedicate more attention and efforts to this specific area in the future. SAO thus also intends to formalise its security policy, regulations, training and informing of SAO employees, and clearly define all related roles and responsibilities in connection with information security.

**KPIs/CSFs:** number of IT security and privacy incidents; speed of incident response; number/share of resolved incidents and adopted measures

1. With respect to exploration and introduction of various technologies during the strategy period, SAO does not wish to start by introducing complex and difficult solutions, but will instead try to focus on searching for simple and efficient solutions with the maximum possible extent (i.e. quick wins). Such an approach will help mobilise users’ support and engagement for the introduction of new technologies, as their benefits are quickly visible, while they require little input and could lead to large savings (e.g. use of standardised templates, digital signing, digital data exchange). Most activities in this area in the coming years will evolve around the development and introduction of the new Registers IS, which should support all above-mentioned features, while SAO also wishes to set up a detailed internal case law database, which will employ advanced AI solutions to assist state attorneys in dealing with simple, as well as more complex cases.

**KPIs/CSFs:** number of new applications/technologies for use within SAO; overall performance and quality of SAO work.

# Amendments, monitoring and evaluation of SAO Digital Transformation Strategy 2020-2030

The success of the SAO Digital Transformation Strategy implementation will be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis, i.e. at least every two years, and upon the expiration of the period, for which the strategy has been drafted. Upon the change of internal or external circumstances, the Strategy will be correspondingly adapted. The SAO project team shall duly inform the management and SAO staff on the progress in the implementation of the SAO Digital Transformation Strategy.

On the basis of the strategy, SAO prepared a more detailed Operational Roadmap 2020-2022, listing individual activities and projects, drafted on the basis of identified SAO need and priorities in cooperation with organisational stakeholders at the last change management workshop in Postojna, in October 2021. The operational plan for the next 3 year period will be drafted in the second half of 2022.

As SAO currently does not have at its disposal all data which would enable the setting of specific target values for individual KPIs and CFSs, the first period of the operational roadmap will be also dedicated to the collecting of data, as well as to further definition and breakdown of KPIs and CFSs.

After the expiration of the relevant period, covered by the strategy, we will also conduct a review of attainment of Strategy’s objectives. The review will present the identified state of SAO after the implementation of all action plans, as well as achievements and identified problems and circumstances, which arose during the implementation of the Strategy and its implementation/action plans.

**mag. Jurij GROZNIK**

**State Attorney-General**