



LOCAL PAR MONITOR

REPORT ON THE MONITORING OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

Vladimir Mihajlović

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CONTENT

ABOUT PRATIM JA PROJECT.....	6
PRATIM JA TEAM.....	7
SUMMARY	8
▪ <i>Putting local administration in focus.....</i>	<i>8</i>
▪ <i>Review of results of monitoring research 2021/2022.....</i>	<i>9</i>
ABBREVIATIONS	12
1. INTRODUCTION.....	13
1.1. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM AT THE LOCAL LEVEL – ZOOMING OUT: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO EXPAND THE FOCUS FROM STATE TO LOCAL ADMINISTRATION?.....	13
1.2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH.....	15
▪ <i>SIGMA principes and WeBER methodology as a starting point.....</i>	<i>15</i>
▪ <i>Key criterion – importance for citizens.....</i>	<i>15</i>
▪ <i>Participatory and inclusive process.....</i>	<i>16</i>
▪ <i>Pratim JA status monitoring indicators.....</i>	<i>17</i>
▪ <i>Involvement of the professional public – consultations with SCTM.....</i>	<i>17</i>
▪ <i>Pratim JA monitoring package.....</i>	<i>17</i>
▪ <i>Criteria for selecting a unit of local self-government.....</i>	<i>17</i>
▪ <i>Campaign and survey of citizens' attitudes.....</i>	<i>19</i>
▪ <i>Pratim JA monitor time frame.....</i>	<i>19</i>
1.3. REPORT STRUCTURE	19
2. RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION IN 17 LGUS.....	20
3. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM.....	23
3.1. MONITORING FOCUS	24
3.2. MONITORING RESULTS – ASSESSMENT OF THE ACHIEVEMENT.....	25
3.2.1. THE EXISTENCE OF A PLANNING DOCUMENT FOR IMPROVING THE WORK OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURES FOR MONITORING AND COORDINATION.....	25
4. POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION.....	29
4.1. MONITORING FOCUS	30
4.2. MONITORING RESULTS – ASSESSMENT OF THE ACHIEVEMENT.....	30
4.2.1. TRANSPARENCY OF THE COUNCIL'S WORK AND THE PREPARATION OF DRAFTS AND PROPOSALS FOR DECISIONS IN LOCAL ADMINISTRATION	30
4.2.2. INCLUSIVENESS AND OPENNESS OF POLICYMAKING IN LOCAL ADMINISTRATION	32
5. PUBLIC SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.....	36
5.1. MONITORING FOCUS	37
5.2. RESULTS OF MONITORING – ASSESSMENT OF THE ACHIEVEMENT.....	38
5.2.1. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL ADMINISTRATION	38
5.2.2. OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY OF RECRUITMENT INTO LOCAL ADMINISTRATION.....	41

5.2.3.	EFFECTIVE PROTECTION OF SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS' POSITION FROM UNWANTED POLITICAL INTERFERENCE.....	46
5.2.4.	EFFECTIVENESS OF MEASURES FOR THE PROMOTION OF INTEGRITY AND PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION IN THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION	49
6.	ACCOUNTABILITY.....	51
6.1.	MONITORING FOCUS	52
6.2.	RESULTS OF MONITORING – ASSESSMENT OF THE ACHIEVEMENT.....	53
6.2.1.	PROACTIVITY OF THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION IN PUBLISHING INFORMATION ON THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE.....	53
7.	SERVICE DELIVERY.....	57
7.1.	MONITORING FOCUS	58
7.2.	RESULTS OF MONITORING – ASSESSMENT OF THE ACHIEVEMENT.....	58
7.2.1	ACCESSIBILITY AND QUALITY OF PROVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES TO CITIZENS	58
8.	PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT.....	64
8.1.	MONITORING FOCUS	66
8.2.	RESULTS OF MONITORING – ASSESSMENT OF THE ACHIEVEMENT.....	67
8.2.1.	THE DEGREE OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE BUDGET CALENDAR AND SUCCESSFUL PLANNING OF INCOME AND EXPENSES.....	67
8.2.2.	TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF THE BUDGETARY DOCUMENTS.....	70
8.2.3.	PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES ARE BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUAL TREATMENT, NON-DISCRIMINATION, PROPORTIONALITY AND TRANSPARENCY.....	73
9.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	76
9.1.	CONCLUSIONS	76
9.2.	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	79
	▪ <i>Strategic framework for local administration improvement.....</i>	<i>79</i>
	▪ <i>Policy development and coordination.....</i>	<i>80</i>
	▪ <i>Public services and human resources management.....</i>	<i>81</i>
	▪ <i>Accountability</i>	<i>82</i>
	▪ <i>Service delivery</i>	<i>82</i>
	▪ <i>Public financial management.....</i>	<i>83</i>
10.	ATTACHMENTS.....	84
	▪ <i>Attachment 1. Form of indicators.....</i>	<i>84</i>
	▪ <i>Attachment 2. Indicator 1</i>	<i>85</i>
	▪ <i>Attachment 3. Indicator 2</i>	<i>86</i>
	▪ <i>Attachment 4. Indicator 3.....</i>	<i>87</i>
	▪ <i>Attachment 5. Indicator 4.....</i>	<i>87</i>
	▪ <i>Attachment 6. Indicator 5.....</i>	<i>88</i>
	▪ <i>Attachment 7. Indicator 6.....</i>	<i>88</i>
	▪ <i>Attachment 8. Indicator 7.....</i>	<i>89</i>
	▪ <i>Attachment 9. Indicator 8.....</i>	<i>89</i>
	▪ <i>Attachment 10. Indicator 9.....</i>	<i>90</i>
	▪ <i>Attachment 11. Indicator 10.....</i>	<i>90</i>
	▪ <i>Attachment 12. Indicator 11.....</i>	<i>91</i>
	▪ <i>Attachment 13. Indicator 12.....</i>	<i>91</i>
11.	LIST OF SOURCES.....	92

ABOUT PRATIM JA PROJECT

The project **Public administration Monitoring for better local Governance – PratiM JA** (hereinafter: the Project), is implemented by the European Policy Centre (Centar za evropske politike) in cooperation with partner organizations: **Centre for Balanced Regional Development (CenTriR)** (Centar za ravnomerni regionalni razvoj), **National Coalition for Decentralization (NKD)** (Nacionalna koalicija za decentralizaciju) and **Stanište Ecological Centre** (Ekološki centar Stanište). As part of the network of the National Coalition for Decentralization, the following civil society organizations are also involved in the implementation of the project: **Ars Nova Club** from Valjevo, **Urban In** from Novi Pazar and **Human Rights Committee from Niš** (Odbor za ljudska prava). The project is financed by the Delegation of the European Union in the Republic of Serbia – within the Program of support to civil society and the media, which aims to strengthen participatory democracies and the EU integration process, through the empowerment of civil society to actively participate in decision-making, and the Ministry of human and minority rights and social dialogue – within the framework of the program *Co-financing of projects of associations and other civil society organizations to which European Union funds were allocated in 2019 and 2020*.

The project focuses on strengthening the capacity of local civil society organizations by improving knowledge and skills for monitoring public administration reform at the local level through the application of methodological tools.

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SUMMARY

- **Putting local administration in focus**

Although the administration reform started almost 20 years ago, it is considered one of the basic reform processes in the country since 2014, both from the aspect of Serbia's accession to the EU, and from the aspect of the quality of life of citizens, the main focus is on state administration and central administration. The assessment of the public administration and the capacity of the administration, which is regularly carried out by SIGMA and which the European Commission uses in its assessments of Serbia's progress to EU, is limited to state administration. The methodology for monitoring public administration carried out by *think tank* organizations in the countries of the Western Balkans within the framework of WeBER projects also focuses on the work of central institutions. On the other hand, the fact that over 70% of EU legislation is implemented by local self-government units indicates the need to shift the focus, if not completely from the central to the local level, then at least extend it to improving the work and strengthening the capacity of local governments. Through the application of methodological tools, therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of local civil society organizations to deal with the monitoring of public administration reform at the local level, and to influence the improvement of local regulations, policies, procedures and services through cooperation with local authorities.

Insufficient engagement with the local level of government in the context of public administration reform was recognized, so the project *Public administration Monitoring for better local Governance – Pratih JA* was initiated in 2020, which focuses on the assessment of administration and administrative procedures at the local level of government. One of the tasks of this project was to develop a methodology for monitoring and evaluating the public administration reform at the local level of government, which would be complementary to previously developed methodologies, used by SIGMA and WeBER, and enable a true picture of the state and capacities of the entire public administration to implement EU legislation. Identifying the shortcomings and then overcoming them would enable Serbia to become a credible and capable EU member state with a professional and efficient administration.

A pilot research on the monitoring and assessment of the public administration reform in local administration was conducted within the *Pratih JA* project in 17 local self-government units (hereinafter: LGUs) in the period from December 2021 to August 2022. The monitoring covered six areas and 14 principles of public administration, and the situation was assessed through 12 indicators that monitor those areas and principles. The research was conducted in seven cities (Niš, Subotica, Prokuplje, Vršac, Užice, Novi Pazar and Valjevo), nine municipalities (Aleksinac,

Vlasotince, Bečej, Odžaci, Arandjelovac, Despotovac, Ivanjica, Tutin and Koceljeva) and one urban municipality (Zvezdara).

▪ Review of results of monitoring research 2021/2022

The findings of the monitoring research showed that cities and municipalities in Serbia have a lot of room for improvement of their work and progress towards local administrations in which the principles of public administration are fully applied. In a sample of 17 local administrations, out of a possible 262 points, the average number of points achieved is 114,12, which is 43,56%. Accordingly, the assessment of the situation on a six-point scale of 0–5 in all six analyzed areas of public administration in 17 cities and municipalities is 2. All seven cities and municipalities achieved a result of over 50%. Particularly important notion that causes worry at the same time is that even the most successful administrations, such as the City administration of the city of Subotica and the Municipal administration of the Municipality of Bečej, are at the level of around 60% fulfillment of all the requirements of good management, set by the methodology of this research.

In addition to the two mentioned local administrations, only five other administrations achieved more than 50% of the requests: the Administration of the City municipality of Zvezdara, the City administration of the City of Užice¹, the City administration of the City of Novi Pazar², the Municipal administration of the Municipality of Vlasotince and the City administration of the City of Niš³. On the other hand, the city administrations of two cities – Vršac and Prokuplje – stand out as the worst rated administrations.

When it comes to areas, the best-rated indicators are the degree of compliance with the budget calendar and income and expenses planning, the proactivity of local administrations in publishing information on official websites and the implementation of public procurement procedures. These are the only three indicators where the degree of fulfillment of requirements is over 60%. On the other hand, the worst situation is recorded in the field of planning documents for improving the work of local administration and the policy development and coordination, especially in the field of work of city and municipal councils, where the average values of fulfillment of requirements are only around 15%.

Within the first area – *Strategic framework for local administration improvement*, the analysis was carried out by means of one indicator that monitors the existence of a planning document for improving the work of local administration and the involvement of civil society, both in the process of creating that document and in the work of local mechanisms for monitoring and coordination of its implementation. The findings indicate that no LGU has adopted a special planning document related to the improvement of the work of its administration, while in nine LGUs, within the framework of other valid planning documents – most often within the framework of local anti-corruption plans or in the umbrella strategies of the development of the city or municipality – the improvement of work of city or municipal administrations is recognized as a priority area or specific goal. When it comes to consultations with civil society and stakeholders, as a rule, they are not carried out in full capacity, nor are comments and suggestions handled adequately. Local mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the planning document for improving the work of local governments have been established in a small number of cities and

¹ Given that the administration in the City of Užice is not formed as a single body, monitoring was primarily carried out in the City administration for the affairs of city authorities, general administration and social activities.

² Considering that in the City of Novi Pazar the administration is not formed as a single body, monitoring was primarily carried out in the City administration for authentic and entrusted tasks.

³ Given that in the City of Niš, the administration is not formed as a single body, monitoring was primarily carried out in the City Administration for Finances, the City Administration for City Bodies and Civil Conditions, and the City Administration for Social Activities.

municipalities, and even where they exist, as a rule, they do not foresee the participation of civil society organizations, while there is no practice of regular annual reporting on implementation of this planning document.

In the second area of public administration – *Policy development and coordination*, the situation was measured by means of two indicators, the first of which refers to the transparency of council's work, preparation of drafts and proposals for decisions in local administration, and the second to inclusiveness and openness of the policymaking. Review of all 12 indicators for assessing the local administrations, presents that the first indicator in this area is rated the lowest, and the entire area *Policy development and coordination* is one of the worst rated areas of public administration. The practice of proactively publishing information about the councils' sessions and the agenda of the sessions is almost non-existent, and the result is even worse in the domain of publishing the minutes of the city and municipal council sessions held. Less than half of the observed LGUs have an established practice of publishing drafts and proposals of decisions that the council proposes and forwards to the parliamentary procedure. Most local governments conduct some form of public consultation when drafting planning documents and acts, but this practice is not constant. Weak representation of consultations in the early stages of drafting documents and the absence of a practice of reporting on public consultations were also identified.

Monitoring of the third area – *Public service and Human resource management* was carried out through four indicators related to the institutionalization of human resources management, openness and transparency of recruitment, protection of civil servants' position from unwanted political interference and improvement of integrity and prevention of corruption in local administration. The analysis found that in most LGUs there is no strategic framework for human resource management. Adequate institutional mechanisms have been established in half of the cities and municipalities, while in most of them the representation of jobs related to human resource management is functionally adequate. In the process of hiring officers in executive positions, legal regulations are largely respected, but a large number of shortcomings have been identified with regard to the publication of a public competition, unreasonable obstacles for external candidates, knowledge verification, skills and abilities of candidates and publication of the results of the competition. The research on the appointed and acting positions officials indicates that in less than half of the administrations there are no acting positions, but persons are appointed to positions on the basis of open competition. The monitoring did not identify negative practice of political interference and the dismissal of officials without a legal basis. When it comes to measures to improve integrity and prevent corruption, almost all cities and municipalities have adopted Codes of Conduct for officials and formed appeal committees, while, on the other hand, only slightly less than half have adopted local anti-corruption plans.

Within the fourth area of public administration – *Accountability* within which the situation was analyzed through one indicator related to the proactivity of local administration in publishing information of public importance on the official website, a high level of proactive transparency of city and municipal administrations was identified. In almost all LGUs, complete and up-to-date statutes of city and municipal administrations are easily available, as the highest legal acts of LGUs, while in most LGUs this is also the case with: Rulebooks on the internal arrangement and organization of the administration, Information sheets, which are prepared in accordance with the Law on free access to Information of public importance, contact information of organizational units and public procurement plans. On the other hand, local administrations are less up-to-date when it comes to publishing planning documents and documents related to the adoption and execution of the budget, as well as citizen-friendly information on the competences of lower organizational units. Nevertheless, although the level of proactive transparency is high, non-publication of these documents and information in the languages of national minorities in those

LGUs where minority languages are in official use, have been identified as a major problems.

The situation within the fifth area of public administration – *Service delivery* is monitored through one indicator, which refers to the availability and quality of provision of administrative services to citizens. Monitoring revealed that in most cities and municipalities there is no defined strategic framework for ensuring and increasing the quality of public services provided to citizens by local governments. A Single administrative point or at least the characteristics of a Single administrative point, as a concept that citizens can obtain all information, submit requests, etc. in one place in the local administration. – exists in less than half of the administrations. One of the obvious shortcomings in the field of providing services to citizens refers to the uneven practice of providing services in the languages of national minorities, as well as the use of the *eUprava* national portal. On the other hand, information about public services is easily available in slightly more than 50% of the analyzed websites. Given that the physical way of providing services is still dominant, the findings in the field of access to facilities where the local government provides administrative services to people with disabilities are particularly important. In slightly more than 60% of local administrations, the prescribed technical standards are met, which enable unhindered access and availability of administrative services for persons with disabilities, in accordance with the Rulebook on technical standards for planning, designing and construction of buildings, which ensure unhindered movement and access for persons with disabilities, children and the elderly.

Within the sixth area – *Public Financial Management*, the situation was analyzed through three indicators related to compliance with the budget calendar and planning of budget revenues and expenditures, budget transparency and public procurement procedures based on the principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, proportionality and transparency. When the budget is being adopted, the budget calendar is only partially respected. Budgets are by their structure – programmatic – which means that expenditures are presented according to programmatic classification, and as a rule, budgets also contain gender-responsible goals. When it comes to planning, the analysis indicates that local governments are better at planning income than expenditure. In the largest number of cities and municipalities, the deviation between initially planned and realized budget revenues in 2020 amounted to less than 15%, while the deviation in terms of planned and realized expenditures in most local governments was between 15 and 40%. The analysis further pointed to a high level of transparency of city and municipal budgets, primarily in terms of easy availability of budget decisions for the last two fiscal years. On the other hand, a bad result is recorded in the preparation of the budget execution report and its publication. While annual reports through the publication of decisions on the final budget account are available in half of the local governments, the reports prepared during the year are published only in a few LGUs. Most cities and municipalities prepare and publish Citizens' guides through the budget, and only two municipalities have Citizens' guides through the final account decision. Public procurement procedures are carried out in accordance with the Law on Public Procurement, as well as internal acts that more closely regulate the way of planning, conducting the public procurement procedure and monitoring the execution of public procurement contracts, which have been adopted in almost all LGUs. Public procurement procedures are carried out through the public procurement portal, which was developed by the Office for Public Procurement, and to a large extent they are carried out by expert commissions based on the principles of transparency, equal treatment of bidders and prohibition of discrimination. Nevertheless, a low level of competitiveness of the implemented public procurement procedures was identified in the majority of local administrations, first of all, taking into account the small number of bidders per procedure. In slightly more than 50% of the procedures, the average number of bidders is less than two, while in two-thirds of LGUs, more than half of the procedures were concluded by awarding the contract to the only bidder who participated in the procedure.

ABBREVIATIONS

AP – Action Plan

EC – European Commission

EU – European Union

GU – City Administration

LGU – Local Self-Government Unit

MPALSG – Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government

CSO – Civil society organizations

OU – Municipal Administration

POU – Open Government Partnership

RG – Working group

RJU – Public Administration Reform

SCTM – Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities

SIGMA/OECD – Support for Improvement in Government and Management

ULJR – Human Resource Management

WeBER – Projects Improving the capacity of civil society in the Western Balkans for monitoring public administration and Empowering civil society in the Western Balkans for reformed public administration

ZUP – Law on General Administrative Procedure

ZZAPJLS – Law on Employees in Autonomous Provinces and Local Self-Government Units

INTRODUCTION

1

1.1. Public administration reform at the local level – *Zooming out: why is it important to expand the focus from state to local administration?*

After the democratic changes in 2000, Serbia started a series of reform processes in the field of improving the work of institutions. The first strategic document defining the basic goals and directions of state administration reform in Serbia was the State Administration Reform Strategy adopted by the Government in 2004. The strategy was based on the principles of decentralization, depoliticization, professionalization, rationalization and modernization, and its ultimate goal was to provide a high level of quality services to citizens. However, the key shortcoming of this reform was its coverage, that is, the fact that it is limited to the central administration.

A new phase in public administration reform began in January 2014, when the Government adopted the Public Administration Reform Strategy, with which reform activities, primarily aimed at the state, were extended to public administration, including local self-government. The multi-year strategic direction in this area was completed in March 2015 with the adoption of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy, which precisely defined measures and activities for reform at all levels of government. The goals of the reform included: better organization of public administration, strengthening of the process of public policy management, development of a modern and professional official system, improvement of the local self-government system, digitization and development of electronic administration, improvement of public financial management, strengthening of internal and external control of public administration, improvement of transparency and the openness of the work of the administration.

At the same time, through the Enlargement Strategies, the European Commission, places special emphasis on the reform of public administration, as it is one of the three pillars of the enlargement of the European Union, together with the rule of law and economic management. In order to enable monitoring of the public administration, the European Commission defined six areas of public administration and established institutional mechanisms, through special groups for public administration reform with all candidate countries. Finally, considering that there are

no legal acquis of the European Union in the field of public administration, in 2014 the SIGMA initiative developed the *Principles of Public Administration* as a key document and framework for monitoring and evaluating the public administration in candidate countries for EU accession.

The six areas monitored by SIGMA and the European Commission are:

- Strategic framework for public administration reform,
- Policy development and coordination,
- Public service and Human resource management,
- Accountability,
- Service delivery,
- Public financial management.

In the period from 2014 to 2020, when the *Pratim JA* project began, a whole series of activities in the field of public administration reform was carried out. Despite the fact that during that period there were changes in key positions in the Government, including as many as four ministers of state administration and local self-government, the strategic course defined in 2014 was maintained. A whole series of activities were implemented. Certain areas had achieved greater progress while others had smaller, which was recorded both in the reports on the implementation of the Action Plan for the implementation of public administration reform, prepared by the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government, as well as in three monitoring reports on public administration in Serbia, published by SIGMA for 2017, 2019 and 2021, that is, in two WeBER national monitoring reports for Serbia for 2017/2018 and 2019/2020.

However, despite the expansion of the scope of reforms in the planning documents, the essential focus in the mentioned period remained on state administration and central administration. The assessment of the public administration and the capacity of the administration, which was carried out by SIGMA in accordance with its methodology, and which was used by the European Commission in its assessments of Serbia's progress on the road to EU accession, was limited to state administration. The methodology for monitoring public administration within two WeBER projects also focuses on the work of central institutions, as well as citizens' perceptions of the work of state bodies. On the other hand, the fact that over 70% of EU legislation is implemented by local self-government units indicates the need to shift the focus from the central to the local level, if not completely, then at least extend it to local administrations.

Insufficient dealing with the local level of government in the context of public administration reform was recognized, and in 2020 the project Public administration Monitoring for better local Governance (*Pratim JA*) was initiated, which focuses on the assessment of the administration and administrative procedures at the local level of government. One of the tasks of this project was to develop a methodology for monitoring and evaluating the public administration reform at the local government level, which would be complementary to previously developed methodologies, used by SIGMA and WeBER, which would enable a true picture of the state and capacities of the entire public administration to implement EU legislation. Identifying the shortcomings and then overcoming them would enable Serbia to become a credible and capable EU member state with a professional and efficient administration.

In parallel, during the project and the development of the methodology for monitoring the reform at the local level, the Government of Serbia adopted two important planning documents with the aim of improving the system of local self-government in Serbia. These are the new *Public Administration Reform Strategy for the period 2021–2030*⁴ and the accompanying plan

⁴ Public administration reform strategy for the period 2021–2030. year, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 42/2021 and 9/2022

for its implementation in the period 2021-2025, and the *Program for the reform of the local self-government system in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2025*. The strategy adopted in 2021 is for the first time structured according to areas monitored by SIGMA and the European Commission, while local self-government is highlighted as a special, seventh area. Given that the Strategy is a higher-level planning document, within which the local self-government system is singled out as a special goal, the Government also adopted the *Program for the Reform of the Local Self-Government System with an Action Plan*, which together represent an integral part of the Strategy and within which the goals, measures and activities are defined in detail.

The fact that local self-government in Serbia received a planning document for the first time, which strategically planned the reform of the local self-government system, indicates that the Government and the relevant ministry recognize the importance of capacity building at the local government level. Also, when it comes to assessing the capacity of local administrations, SIGMA and the European Commission have launched certain initiatives to change the approach and scope of the analysis in the future. The mentioned events in the past two years indicate that the warning of civil society organizations about the insufficient involvement of the local level of government, in the context of public administration reform in the EU accession process, which is the basis of the initiation of the PratiM JA project, was justified.

Therefore, in the coming period, it is necessary, on the one hand, to monitor the implementation of the *Action Plan for the implementation of the Program for the Reform of the Local Self-Government System* as a strategic document of the Government, and on the other hand, to monitor the situation in local administrations.

1.2. Methodological approach

▪ SIGMA principles and WeBER methodology as a starting point

The basic methodological approach on which the research is based is data and facts. The indicators used to assess the local administration are, as a rule, based on official documents that make up the local legal and strategic framework and reports on the real situation in practice, and to a lesser extent on interviews and focus groups, which are, above all, significant from the aspect of qualitative analysis. The methodology is largely based on the methodological framework for monitoring the Principles of Public Administration developed by SIGMA⁵, which the European Commission takes into account when assessing the public administration in the context of Serbia's accession to the European Union (hereinafter: EU). Also, the methodology of the conducted research relies on the *Methodology for monitoring public administration in the countries of the Western Balkans*, which was developed as part of the WeBER project⁶. Therefore, the first step in developing a methodology for monitoring public administration reform at the local level of government involved the selection and adaptation of SIGMA principles relevant to local administration.

▪ Key criterion – importance for citizens

Through a detailed analysis of the SIGMA Principles of Public Administration, out of a total of 48 principles, the research team identified 27 that are relevant for the local level of government and which were presented at the workshop to representatives of civil society organizations. The key criteria for selecting relevant SIGMA principles are: 1) relevance for public administration reform at the local level and 2) relevance for citizens and civil society, especially from the point of view of transparency, openness, accountability and integrity of local self-government.

⁵ For more details: <http://www.sigmaweb.org/>

⁶ More details on the WeBER project: <https://www.par-monitor.org/>

▪ **Participatory and inclusive process**

The basic principles in the methodology development approach are inclusiveness, participation and transparency. This meant that as many actors as possible were involved in all stages of the development of the methodology, from the identification of relevant areas and topics to the development of the indicators themselves. The key role in the development of the methodology was played by the research team. In addition to the civil society organizations that implemented the project, other civil sector representatives gathered around the platform of the *National Working Group for Public Administration Reform* within the WeBER project participated in the development of the methodology. Finally, representatives of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities gave a significant professional contribution, while a representative of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government played an active role in the workshop on the occasion of the first public presentation of the draft indicators.

In order to finalize the selection of relevant SIGMA principles, a two-day workshop was held where representatives of civil society were presented with 27 pre-selected principles with relevant sub-principles and indicators for their monitoring. After the presentation of the principles, the participants had the opportunity to comment on the proposed principles, as well as participate in the voting through the *Loomio* platform.

After the declaration of all participants of the workshop, 14 principles of public administration that are relevant for the local level of government were selected.

Table 1 presents the key principles according to the areas of public administration in which they are found.

Table 1. Principles of public administration relevant to the local level of government

Public administration area	Public administration principles
Strategic framework for local administration improvement	LGU has developed and enacted strategic document to improve the work of city / municipal administration
	The strategic document for the improvement of work of the administration is implemented purposefully; reform outcome targets are set and regularly monitored
Policy development and coordination	Local authorities' decisions are prepared in a transparent manner
	Policies and acts of LGU are designed in an inclusive manner that enables the active participation of society
Public service and Human Resource Management	The policy and legal frameworks for a professional and coherent local service are established and applied in practice; the institutional set-up enables consistent and effective human resource management practices in local administration
	The recruitment of public servants in LGU is based on merit and equal treatment in all its phases
	Direct or indirect political influence on senior managerial positions in the LGU is prevented
	Measures for promoting integrity, preventing corruption and ensuring discipline in the LGU are in place
Accountability	The right to access public information is consistently applied
Service delivery	Mechanisms for ensuring the quality of public services are in place
	The accessibility of public services is ensured
Public Financial Management	The LGU budget is determined in accordance with the legal framework, with a comprehensive indication of expenditures that are in accordance with the medium-term budget framework
	Transparent LGU budget reporting and scrutiny are ensured
	Public procurement operations comply with basic principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, proportionality and transparency, while ensuring the most efficient use of public funds and making best use of modern procurement techniques and methods

- **Pratim JA status monitoring indicators**

After the selection of relevant principles, the research team prepared draft indicators for monitoring and measuring the progress of public administration reform at the local level. 14 indicators have been developed that follow the selected 14 principles of public administration. In developing these indicators, the indicators that were developed as part of the WeBER project and the Methodology for monitoring public administration in the countries of the Western Balkans were taken as models, and to a lesser extent the indicators used by SIGMA to monitor progress in the reform of public administration, according to the Principles of Public Administration (Attachment 1 contains the indicator form).

- **Involvement of the professional public – consultations with SCTM**

After the research team prepared the first draft of 14 indicators, consultations were held with representatives of the SCTM. In accordance with the comments submitted by the SCTM expert team, all indicators have been amended and supplemented. Also, after a detailed analysis of SCTM's comments and internal consultations of the research team, a decision was made to combine two indicators in the area of Strategic framework, as well as two indicators in the area of Service provision, so that one indicator will be developed for both areas, which will be followed by two principles. In this way, the research team decided to monitor the public administration at the local government level through 14 principles of public administration, using 12 indicators for their monitoring and measurement.

In accordance with all comments, the research team prepared a new version of the indicators, which was publicly presented at a workshop with representatives of civil society organizations gathered in the working group for public administration reform within the WeBER project, with the participation of MPALSG representatives. After the presentation of the indicators proposal, the participants gave additional suggestions for changes and additions.

- **Pratim JA monitoring package**

The *Pratim JA* monitoring package consists of 17 individual reports on the local administration in seven cities, nine municipalities and one city municipality, as well as one comparative report in which a synthesis of all individual reports was made. Although the city municipality is not a local self-government unit by its status, the research team decided to include one city municipality in the monitoring, in order to identify and examine certain similarities and differences in the way they function. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, the city municipality is considered as a unit of local self-government. All reports contain a detailed overview and assessment of the situation in relation to 12 indicators, which are used to monitor six areas of public administration, as well as recommendations for improvement and elimination of identified deficiencies. The comparative report presents consolidated findings, conclusions, positive and negative examples from all 17 local self-government units included in the research. Also, the comparative report presents key recommendations at the level of all local governments, while detailed recommendations for each individual unit of local self-government can be found in individual reports.

- **Criteria for selecting a unit of local self-government**

One of the key steps in the initial phase of the project involved the selection of local self-government units that will be subject to monitoring. In order for the selection of local self-government units to be carried out in a systematic way, the project team defined basic and additional criteria for selection in the consultative process.

The selection criteria with descriptions are as follows::

Basic criteria

- 1) **NUMBER OF CITIZENS**: The first criterion during the selection of LGUs refers to the number of citizens. For the purposes of the project, LGUs are classified into three groups according to the number of citizens:

Group I – municipalities with up to 30,000 citizens;

Group II – municipalities and cities with 30,001–80,000 citizens;

Group III – cities with over 80,000 citizens.

The research included all three groups of LGUs.

- 2) **DEGREE OF DEVELOPMENT**: The second criterion for the selection of LGUs was related to the level of development of LGUs, according to the most recently adopted Decree on establishing a unified list of development of regions and local self-government units for 2014. According to this Regulation, LGUs are classified into four or five groups, namely:

Group I – The first group consists of 20 LGUs whose level of development is above the national average;

Group II – The second group consists of 34 LGUs whose level of development is in the range of 80 to 100% of the national average;

Group III – The third group consists of 47 insufficiently developed LGUs, whose degree of development is in the range of 60 to 80% of the national average;

Group IV – The fourth group consists of 44 extremely underdeveloped LGUs, whose degree of development is below 60% of the national average;

Group IV.1 – This group includes devastated areas, among which are 19 LGUs from the fourth group, whose level of development is below 50% of the national average.

The research included LGUs from all groups according to the level of development.

- 3) **ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS**: The third criterion for LGU selection refers to LGU belonging to a specific administrative district. According to the Decree on administrative districts, there are 29 administrative districts in Serbia, i.e. 24 without administrative districts in Kosovo and Metohija.

Additional criteria

- 4) **MULTI-ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION**: In addition to the three basic criteria, after the pre-selection of LGUs, a check was made to see if among the LGUs there are those that belong to multi-ethnic municipalities and cities, that is, those LGUs that, according to the last population census, have more than 5% of national minorities, and which in 2021, there were a total of 68 in Serbia.

- 5) DEVELOPMENT OF THE CIVIL SECTOR: The last criterion referred to the degree of development of the civil sector in LGUs and it was important from a logistical aspect, not so much a methodological one.

Based on defined criteria, the research team selected 17 LGUs from 13 administrative districts, namely: seven cities (Niš, Subotica, Prokuplje, Vršac, Užice, Novi Pazar and Valjevo), nine municipalities (Aleksinac, Vlasotince, Bečej, Odžaci, Arandelovac, Despotovac, Ivanjica, Tutin and Koceljeva) and one city municipality (Zvezdara).

- **Campaign and survey of citizens' attitudes**

As part of the project, a campaign for citizens was carried out in 2021, which was focused on issues of public administration reform at the local government level. The campaign included 85 street actions in 17 selected cities and municipalities, while all citizens of Serbia were enabled to share their experiences about the work of local governments online, through the *Pratim JA*⁷ portal. A total of 5.204 citizens shared their impressions of the work of local governments, thereby contributing to the campaign. The key findings are presented in the following document in the relevant chapters.

- ***Pratim JA* monitor time frame**

Research on monitoring and evaluation of the public administration reform in local administration was conducted in a period of nine months. The research teams formed within the *Pratim JA* project conducted monitoring and evaluation of the 17 LGUs in the period from December 2021 to August 2022.

1.3. Report structure

The comparative report on the local administration in Serbia is designed in six units: after the introductory part, the second chapter presents the results of the assessment of the local administration in Serbia based on the analysis of 12 indicators in 17 LGUs. In addition, this section highlights the best and worst rated areas. The following six chapters represent the central part of the report and within them key findings are presented according to the areas of public administration: 1) Strategic framework for local administration improvement, 2) Policy development and coordination, 3) Official system and Human resources management, 4) Accountability, 5) Service delivery and 6) Public Financial Management. At the beginning of each chapter, the context is presented, a brief review of the legal and strategic framework, after which the findings and conclusions of the monitoring are presented. Certain chapters, within which the topics that were also examined through citizen surveys, are covered, end with the presentation of the results of the examination of citizens' attitudes. The examination of citizens' attitudes was carried out within the Project, but it is not part of the monitoring research, and therefore, those findings are not used for the assessment. In the last chapter, concluding considerations and proposals for improvement of local administration are presented.

⁷ The portal is available at: www.pratimja.rs

RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION IN 17 LGUS



In the period from December 2021 to August 2022, the research teams conducted a detailed monitoring of the work of local administrations in 17 LGUs. As stated in the introductory part of the document, for monitoring and evaluating of local administration, the researchers used the *Methodology for monitoring the reform of public administration at the local level*⁸, developed within the project, which contains 12 indicators. The analysis is based on data related to 2021 for most indicators, except in cases where, due to legal restrictions, data related to the 2020 were taken into account (e.g. the deadline for adopting the Decision on the final budget account LGU).

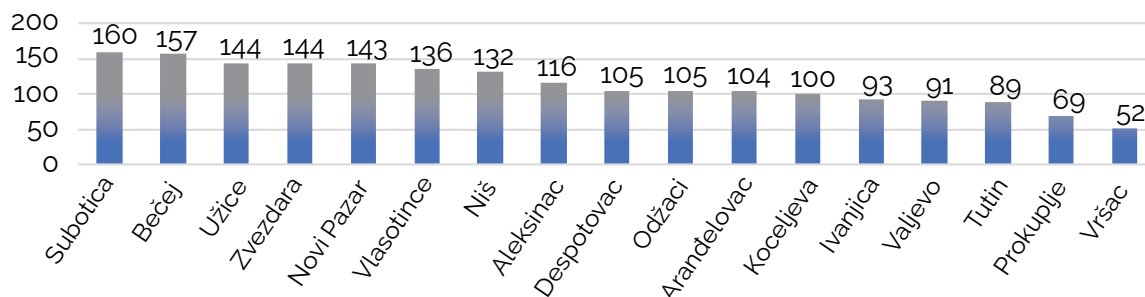
The analysis of local administration aimed to determine the current state and capacities of cities, municipalities and urban municipalities for good management in the areas covered by the principles of public administration, and to indicate what the current practice is in the aforementioned areas of public administration at the local level, such as the adoption decisions, human resource management, service provision, public financial management, etc. In addition to the above, the analysis of the situation should provide a clear insight into the deficiencies identified in the work of local administrations that should be eliminated and improved in the coming period.

The findings of the research showed **that in the 17 observed local governments the average number of points, out of a possible 262, was 114,12 – the analyzed indicators in all six areas of public administration were met by 43,56%. On a six-point scale of 0–5, the rating of 17 local administrations is 2.** The best rated is the City administration of the City of Subotica with 160 points (61.07%, rating 3) and the Municipal administration of the Municipality of Bečej with 157 points (59.92%). They are followed by the Administration of the City Municipality of Zvezdara and the City Administration of the City of Užice with 144 points (54.96%). The fifth best-ranked local government is the City Administration of the City of Novi Pazar with 143 points (54.58%). These seven local administrations were only that were rated 3, while eight city and municipal administrations obtained 2, and two city administrations were rated 1.

⁸ Methodology available at: <https://cep.org.rs/publications/metodologija-za-pracenje-reforme-javne-uprave-na-lokalnom-nivou-vlasti/>

Chart 1. Achieved results according to LGUs

Cities and municipalities (0–262 points)



The analysis showed that in local administrations, the best situation is in the areas of *Accountability and Public Financial Management*, while the worst rated areas are *Policy development and coordination and Strategic framework for improving the work of local administration*. If the analysis of the achieved results is reduced to the level of indicators, it is concluded that the best rated is the degree of compliance with the budget calendar and successful planning of income and expenses (*indicator 10*) with an average of 62.94% achieved points, followed by proactivity of the local administration in publishing information on the official website (*indicator 8*) with an average of 62.50% and public procurement procedures based on the principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, proportionality and transparency (*indicator 12*) with an average of 62.39%. The worst-rated indicators refer to the transparency of the council's work, preparation of drafts and proposals for decisions in local administration (*indicator 2*) with an average of 15.20% of achieved points, then to the existence of a planning document for improving the work of local administration and the involvement of civil society in the process of development and structures for monitoring and coordination (*indicator 1*) with an average of 19.91%, and on inclusiveness and openness of policymaking in local administration (*indicator 3*), with an average of 24.84% of the maximum number of points.

Chart 2. Achieved results according to indicators

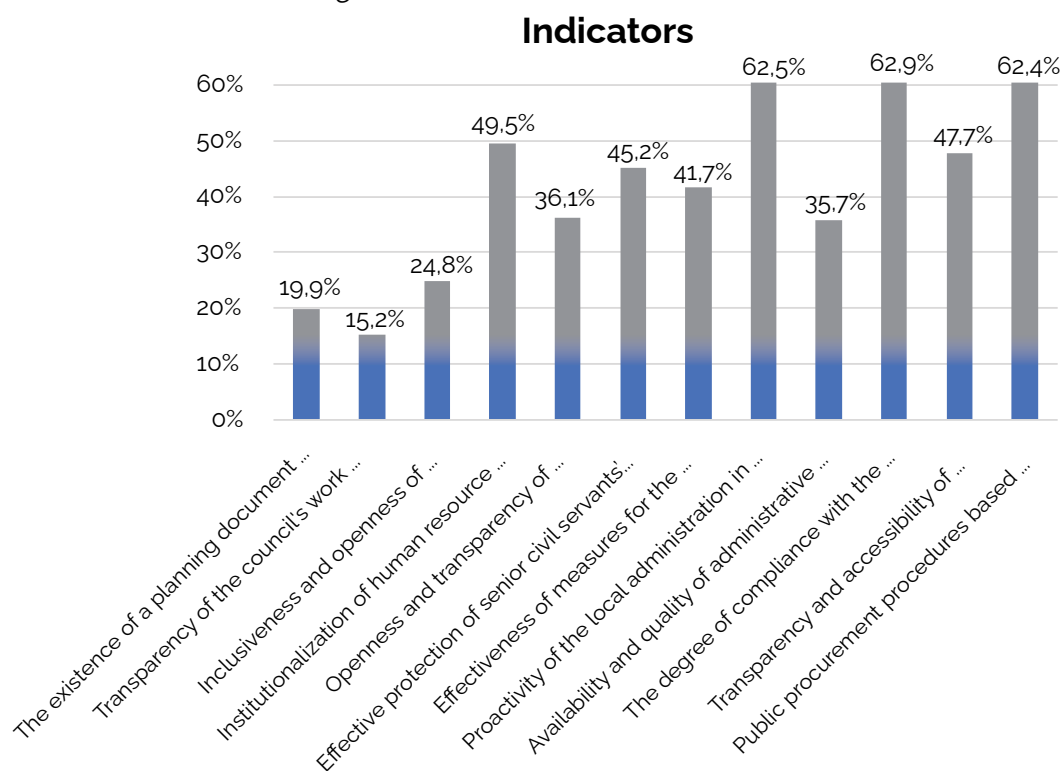


Table 2. Overview of the results of the assessment according to areas and indicators in 17 local governments

Ser. no.	AREA / INDICATOR	Maximum number of points	Average number of points and percentage	Rating (0–5 scale)	The most common rating (scale 0–5)
I. Strategic framework for local administration improvement					
1.	The existence of a planning document for improving the work of local administration and the involvement of civil society in the process of development and structures for monitoring and coordination	26	5,18 (19,91%)	1	0
II. Policy development and coordination					
2.	Transparency of the council's work, preparation of drafts and proposals for decisions in local administration	12	1,82 (15,20%)	0	0
3.	Inclusiveness and openness of policy-making in local administration	18	4,47 (24,84%)	1	0 i 2
III. Public services and Human resource management					
4.	Institutionalization of human resource management in local administration	12	5,94 (49,51%)	2	3
5.	Openness and transparency of recruitment into local administration	22	7,94 (36,10%)	2	2
6.	Effective protection of senior civil servants' position from unwanted political interference	16	7,24 (45,22%)	2	0
7.	Effectiveness of measures for the promotion of integrity and prevention of corruption in the local administration	22	9,18 (41,71%)	2	1
IV. Accountability					
8.	Proactivity of the local administration in publishing information on the official website	32	20 (62,50%)	3	3
V. Service delivery					
9.	Availability and quality of administrative services to citizens	28	10 (35,71%)	2	2
VI. Public financial management					
10.	The degree of compliance with the budget calendar and successful planning of income and expenses	20	12,59 (62,94%)	3	2 i 3
11.	Transparency and accessibility of budgetary documents	26	12,41 (47,74%)	2	2
12.	Public procurement procedures based on the principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, proportionality and transparency	28	17,47 (62,39%)	3	3 i 4
TOTAL:		262	114,12 (43,45%)	2	2

The following chapters present the detailed results of the assessment with the number of points scored for each indicator individually, as well as a qualitative analysis of the obtained results. Also, in the final part, in addition to summarizing the findings of the research, recommendations were given for the improvement of work in each of the six areas of public administration to which the research referred.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM



In July 2021, the Government of Serbia for the first time adopted a planning document that plans the strategic development of the area of local self-government system reform for a five-year period. The program for the reform of the local self-government system in the Republic of Serbia was adopted for the period from 2021 to 2025, with an accompanying action plan for the first three years of implementation (2021–2023). The Program defines the vision of local self-government as modern, professional, efficient and responsible. The purpose of adopting the Program is to contribute to the improvement of the legal and organizational framework, professionalization, efficiency and modernization of local self-government. Also, the document will contribute to the strengthening of transparency and participation, both of citizens in the management of public affairs, and of local authorities in defining public policies and regulations, capacities of institutions and officials, as well as better service delivery to citizens and the economy at the local government level⁹.

Within the Program, four specific goals have been defined, all of which are directly related to the reform of public administration at the local government level. They include: Improving the position and accountability of local self-government; Improvement of the local self-government financing system; Improvement of the organization and capacity of local self-government and Improvement of the quality and availability of services of local administrative bodies, communal services and services of public institutions.

In addition to the mentioned Program, other planning documents of the Government, in certain parts, refer to local self-government units, such as the *Public Financial Management Reform Program for the period 2021–2025*, and the *Program for the Improvement of Public Policy Management and Regulatory Reform for the period 2021–2025*. All three documents are an integral part of the Public Administration Reform Strategy that was adopted in 2021 for a ten-year period.

Bearing in mind the planning documents adopted by the Government, it can be considered that the strategic framework for the development of local self-government is well defined.

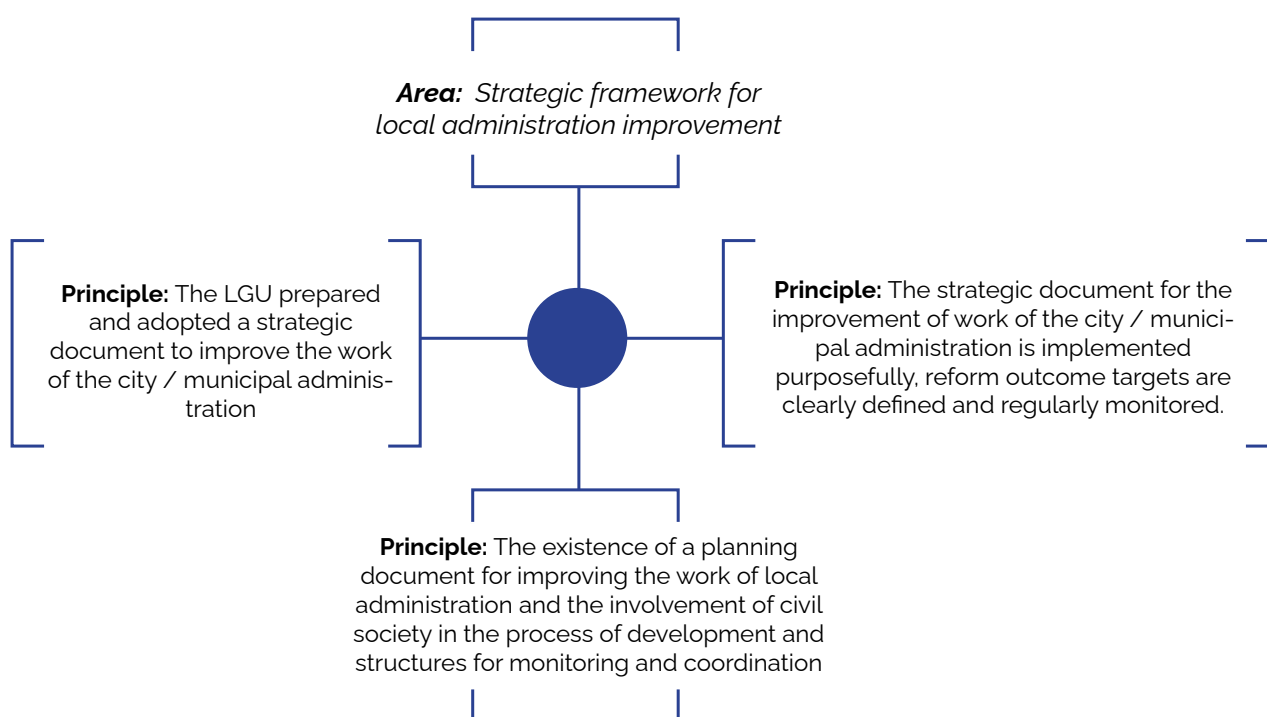
⁹ See: SCTM <http://www.skgo.org/vesti/detaljno/2714/usvojen-program-za-reformu-sistema-lokalne-samouprave-u-republici-srbiji-za-period-od-2021-do-2025-godine>

However, as the Law on the Planning System of the Republic of Serbia foresees that planning documents can be adopted by local authorities, and considering that the need to complete the planning framework exists at the local level¹⁰, as part of the monitoring of the public administration reform at the local level, a special focus is placed on planning documents in the area public administration reform, which would be harmonized with the mentioned Government documents.

The existence of an appropriate strategic framework for improving the work of local government is important in order to complete the planning framework at the local level of government. Reforms in local administration should be strategically planned on the basis of national planning documents, but also specific specific challenges, observed deficiencies and defined goals at the level of each individual LGU. The priorities and objectives of public administration reform policies must be clear, along with performance indicators, goals and responsibilities. Policies should also take into account the voices of external stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, but also the wider public and all citizens. A clear strategic framework for local government reform should ensure regular monitoring of its implementation, good coordination of all actors and include regular reporting.

3.1. Monitoring focus

The situation within the first area of public administration – *Strategic framework for local administration improvement*, was measured by means of one indicator that monitors the existence of a planning document for improving the work of local administration and the involvement of civil society, both in the process of creating that document and in the work of local monitoring mechanisms and coordination of its implementation. Monitoring of the strategic framework for local administration improvement is based on two SIGMA principles. The selected principles are evaluated from the point of view of the quality of involvement of civil society and the public in the process of drafting planning documents, as well as the structure for its monitoring, coordination of implementation and reporting.



¹⁰ Program for improving the management of public policies and regulatory reform for the period 2021-2025, p. 35.

3.2. Monitoring results – assessment of the achievement

3.2.1. The existence of a planning document for improving the work of local administration and the involvement of civil society in the process of development and structures for monitoring and coordination

The indicator monitors whether there is a planning document in the local self-government unit, the focus of which is the improvement of the work of the city / municipal administration. Another aspect that is monitored is the quality of the consultation process during the preparation of that planning document. Finally, the indicator monitors the extent to which civil society organizations are included in the mechanisms for implementing and monitoring the implementation of the planning document and the quality of reporting on the implementation.

A planning document is considered a special document that exclusively deals with local administration improvement, i.e. city or municipal administration. If such a document does not exist, it was analyzed whether there is a special goal or measure that focuses on this issue in another planning document (e.g. Local Self-Government Unit Development Plan, policy concept, action plan, etc.).

The methodology is based on the analysis of the valid planning documents of the city, that is, the municipality. The subject of the analysis were exclusively valid documents at the time of its implementation, which were adopted by the city / municipal assembly.

For the indicator elements related to the existence and quality of the consultative process in the development of key strategic documents of the city / municipality, the first source of data was the planning document itself, which contains information about the drafting process, public participation in the document drafting process, invitation to public consultations, discussions, reports etc. In addition, the researchers conducted interviews with city and municipal administration officials. Finally, as an important source for qualitative analysis, focus groups and interviews were organized with representatives of local civil society organizations, which participated in consultations in the process of drafting relevant documents.

The indicator contains 11 elements, and the table below presents all the elements as well as the maximum or average number of points for each of the elements.

Table 3. Indicator 1: The existence of a planning document for improving the work of local administration and the involvement of civil society in the process of development and structures for monitoring and coordination

Element no.	Name of the Element	Maximum number of points	Average number of points achieved
E.1	Improvement of city / municipal administration is recognized as a general / special goal in the planning documents of LGUs	4	1,29 (32,35%)
E.2	Consultations with civil society and interested parties were carried out during the preparation of the planning document for city / municipal administration reform	4	1,06 (26,47%)
E.3	Openness / public calls for the inclusion of interested parties in consultations during the preparation of a planning document for the city / municipal administration improvement (in order to enable the widest possible coverage of interested parties)	2	0,82 (41,18%)

E.4	Civil society is provided complete information for preparation for consultations	2	0,47 (23,53%)
E.5	Comments and inputs received in the consultation process are considered by the responsible local bodies in charge of developing key strategic documents	2	0,47 (23,53%)
E.6	The local authority makes public feedback on the treatment of comments and suggestions received during consultations	1	0,12 (11,76%)
E.7	Local mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the planning document for the city / municipal administration reform envisage the participation of civil society organizations	2	0,47 (23,53%)
E.8	The inclusion of civil society organizations in local mechanisms is achieved on the basis of an open competitive procedure	2	0,24 (11,76%)
E.9	Meetings of local mechanisms for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the planning document for city / municipal administration reform are held regularly with the participation of representatives of civil society organizations	2	0,24 (11,76%)
E.10	Reports on the implementation of the planning document for the city / municipal administration improvement are prepared at least annually	4	0 (0%)
E.11	Reports on the implementation of the planning document for the city / municipal administration improvement allow insight into the evaluation of performance	1	0 (0%)
TOTAL		26	5,18 (19,91%)
AVERAGE RATING (scale 0–5)		0,94	
RATING (scale 0–5)		1	

As can be seen from the table, the maximum number of points for this indicator is 26. Based on the analysis of the situation in 17 LGUs, the average number of points achieved for this indicator is 5,18, that is, only 19,91% of the total number of possible points. The rating on a six-point scale of 0–5 is 1 (average rating 0,94), and the most common rating received by seven administrations is 0. Five local administrations received 1, four received 2, while only the Municipal Administration of the Municipality of Bečej was rated 3. None of the LGUs achieved a rating of 4 or 5.

The comparison of all 12 indicators for assessing the local administrations, shows that this indicator is among the three lowest rated, and the area Strategic framework for local administration improvement is in the last place out of six areas of public administration.

As part of the monitoring, it was determined that no LGU has adopted a special planning document related to improving the work of its administration. However, even in nine LGUs, within the framework of other valid planning documents – most often within the framework of local anti-corruption plans or umbrella strategies for the development of the city or municipality – the improvement of the work of the city or municipal administration is recognized as a priority area or a specific goal.

JLS	Relevant local documents that contain goals aimed at local administration improvement
Bečej	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local anti-corruption plan Action plan of the Municipality of Bečej for improving the position of women and gender equality 2018–2022
Užice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy of local sustainable development of the City of Užice 2012–2020.¹¹
Novi Pazar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable development plan of the City of Novi Pazar 2021–2030

¹¹ The validity of this document was extended by the decision of the City assembly, until the adoption of the Sustainable development plan.

Valjevo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local anti-corruption plan
Subotica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy of local sustainable development of the City of Subotica 2013–2022 Local anti-corruption plan of the city of Subotica
Niš	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development plan of the City of Niš for the period 2021–2027
Koceljeva	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local anti-corruption plan of the Municipality of Koceljeva
Aleksinac	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development plan of the Municipality of Aleksinac for the period 2021–2028
Arandelovac	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local anti-corruption plan for the period 2019–2022

In addition to the nine mentioned cities and municipalities, the improvement of the work of the administration was recognized in the City Municipality of Zvezdara (GO Zvezdara). Namely, Zvezdara, as a city municipality, does not have the status of a local self-government unit, but that status is held by the City of Belgrade, of which it is a part, and does not have the same competences regarding the adoption of planning documents and public policy¹² documents as LGUs. Therefore, it was established that Zvezdara does not have a separate planning document related to the improvement of the work of its administration, nor any other planning document that includes among its goals the one related to the improvement of its work. However, it is extremely important to point out that GO Zvezdara is one of the first municipalities in Serbia to recognize the importance of applying international management system standards in the work of local government. GO Zvezdara has been applying ISO 9001 in its work since 2009, which refers to user requirements regarding the quality of services, and since 2013, the ISO 14001 standard, which governs the environmental management system.

Zvezdara: Since 2009, GO Zvezdara has been applying ISO 9001 in its work, which refers to user requirements regarding the quality of services, and since 2013, the ISO 14001 standard, which governs the environmental management system. These certificates represent internationally recognized proof of service quality, as well as care for citizens and other service users, i.e. care for employees and the environment, and are proof of socially responsible business. They confirm that the Administration of GO Zvezdara takes care of the quality of the services it provides to users and the preservation of the environment, as well as that its business activities contribute to better conditions for the life and work of its citizens. Certification and quality control of management of integrated management systems is performed annually by the certification body. Also, GO Zvezdara monitors the achievement of set goals and indicators, and measures the achieved performance, on which it compiles regular annual reports. In the last such report – *Analysis of the objectives of GO Zvezdara for 2020*, it was pointed out that in 2020, 86.44% of the set objectives were achieved, more precisely that the City Municipality achieved 51 out of a total of 59 objectives classified into several areas: objectives towards users, objectives according to the level of services, goals according to processes, resources and system, goals towards employees, goals towards the environment, goals towards suppliers-colaborators and goals towards the society. For more details, see: *Report on the state of local administration: city municipality of Zvezdara* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/iz-vestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-gradska-opstina-zvezdara/>)

In the remaining seven LGUs that were included in the monitoring, not a single planning document was identified within which the improvement of the administration's work was foreseen. While in some of the analyzed LGUs there are no sustainable development strategies or other similar documents at all, in others such documents do exist, but at the level of their goals or measures, improvement of the administration's work has not been identified.

Consultations with civil society and interested parties were organized in full capacity only in the municipality of Bečej and the city of Valjevo. This implies that at least one consultation method was used (focus group, round table, semi-structured interview, panel, surveys, collection of written comments, participation in the working group for the drafting of the document), that the in-

¹² In accordance with the provisions of the Law on the planning system, "Official gazette of RS" no. 30/2018

invitation to participate in the public discussion was published together with the draft documents through the official website of the LGU, that the public debate on the draft document lasted for at least 15 days, and that at least one event was held, either live or online (public presentation, open meeting, public debate, etc.) with external interested parties during the public debate. When it comes to openness and public invitations for the inclusion of interested parties in consultative processes, as well as information and materials of importance for the preparation and participation in consultations, and when creating planning documents for improving the work of administrations, positive practice is noted in Bečej, Subotica and Novi Pazar. It includes publication of invitations on the website, proactive information through regular mail or e-mail, creation of electronic forms for submission of proposals and comments, publication of starting points, draft documents and other useful information.

Bečej: During the drafting of the LAP for the fight against corruption in the municipality of Bečej, representatives of CSOs were included in the Working Group for drafting the document, while the public hearing on the draft of the document lasted for 20 days and included the holding of a public presentation where the draft of the LAP was presented, and all interested parties could review its draft on the official website of the municipality or in the premises of the municipal administration, and submit their comments, suggestions and proposals by email. Public invitations for the participation of interested parties in the public debate on the draft document were published on the official website of the municipality, along with a form for submitting comments and suggestions. On the official website of the municipality and in the local media, information was published both on the initiation of the process of drafting documents and on the public debate on the draft of the documents. Citizens were informed where they can have a public inspection of the draft document, as well as how they can submit their proposals / comments and by what deadline. Also, citizens were informed about holding public events where drafts of the document were presented and were invited to take part in them. For more details, see: *Report on the state of local administration: Bečej municipality* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-becej/>)

The inclusiveness and participative nature of the process is reflected not only in informing the public and enabling interested parties to make comments and suggestions in the consultations, but also in the way the local government handles the comments received. The analysis indicates that only four LGUs adequately dealt with the comments and suggestions received during the consultation process (Bečej, Novi Pazar, Valjevo and Subotica), while only two LGUs (Valjevo and Niš) published feedback on handling the comments and suggestions received during the consultation.

Although a number of shortcomings were observed in the process of drafting planning documents from the aspect of participation, inclusiveness and transparency of the process, the findings of monitoring indicate that an even bigger problem exists in the phase that follows the adoption of the documents. Namely, local mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the planning document for improving the work of local administrations have been established in a small number of LGUs. If, on the other hand, these mechanisms exist, they do not, as a rule, provide for the participation of civil society organizations. An even worse situation was recorded in the domain of the preparation of reports on the implementation of the planning document, because there is no practice of regular annual reporting in any LGU.

Užice: The Partnership Forum was formed in Užice, as a consultative body responsible for the preparation, development and monitoring of the implementation of the Development Plan of the City of Užice 2021–2028. The forum is an instrument both for consultations for the drafting of the document, and for creating partnerships in the local community. The Partnership Forum includes CSO members. The website also published a public invitation to CSOs for membership in thematic working groups for the development of the Development Plan. For more details, see: *Report on the state of local administration: the city of Užice* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-uzice/>)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION

4

Public policies represent the directions of action of local self-government units in certain areas, in order to achieve the desired goals at the level of the local community¹³. The policy development and coordination is of great importance for all citizens of the local community, because the public policies adopted and implemented by the authorities directly affect the lives of citizens. International standards in the creation of public policies, on which the planning system in Serbia is based, imply certain principles. The Law on the Planning System of the Republic of Serbia, which was adopted in 2018, regulates for the first time the normative framework for managing the system of public policies at all levels of government. Article 3 of the Law on the Planning System defines the principles that policy makers must adhere to when drafting and implementing planning documents.¹⁴ Although all 14 principles of public policies have the same importance for the system of public policies, from the aspect of civil society and research monitoring, the principle of publicity and partnership stands out in particular, and implies that public policies are determined within the framework of a transparent and consultative process – during the development and implementation of planning documents, as well as analysis of the effects and evaluation of the effects of public policies, consultation process with all interested parties and target groups is conducted transparently. Among them, there are also associations and other organizations of civil society, scientific research and other organizations, and it is necessary to take care to enable the realization of individual legal and other interests of all interested parties and target groups, while simultaneously protecting the public interest. Also, one of the particularly important is the principle of relevance and reliability, which implies that the data on the basis of which planning, analysis of the effects and monitoring of the implementation of planning documents are collected from various relevant and reliable sources, as well as that appropriate analyses of the expected effects of the implementation of planning documents were carried out. From the point of view of respect for human rights, the principle of equality and non-discrimination is particularly important, which implies that when drafting and implementing

¹³ Law on the planning system, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 30/2018, Art. 2.

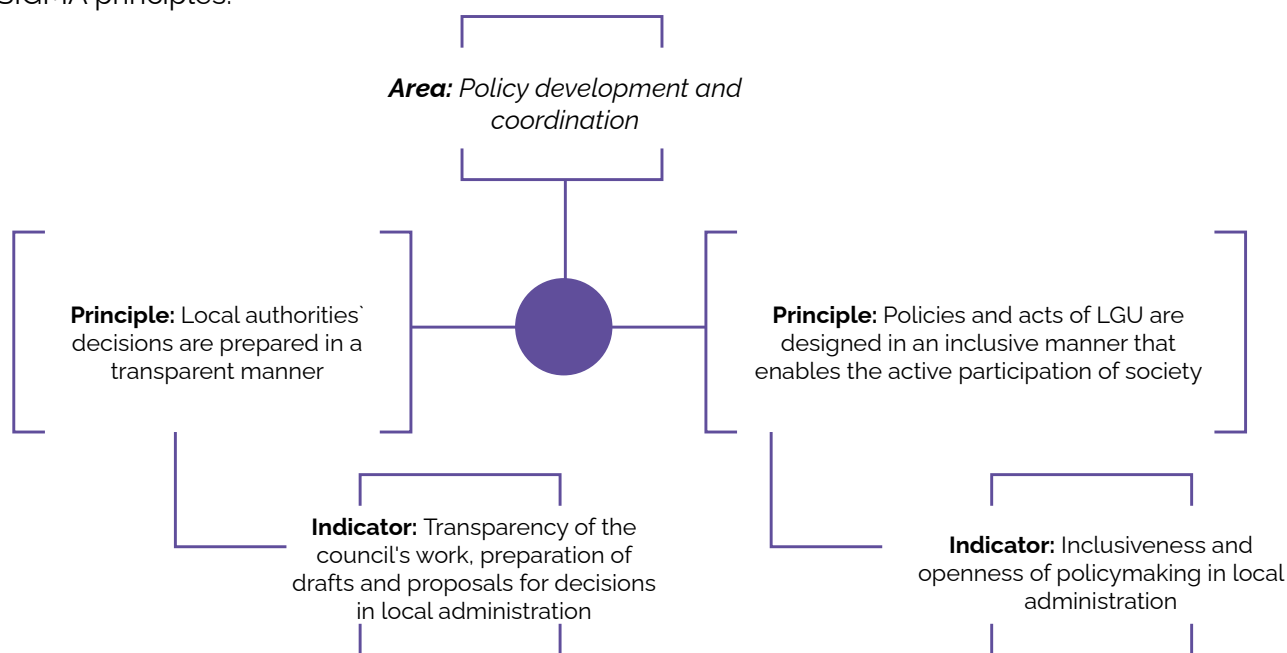
¹⁴ The principles of managing the system of public policies are: the principle of economy, financial sustainability, realism, relevance and reliability, consistency and compliance, continuity of planning, proportionality, prevention and precaution, equality and non-discrimination, coordination and cooperation, publicity and partnership, accountability, timeliness and integrity and sustainable growth and development.

planning documents, human and minority rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution and the law are respected. Additionally, in the domain of public administration reform, the principle of accountability has an important place, which implies a clear determination of responsible institutions for the implementation of public policy measures and activities. Finally, the principle of coordination and cooperation should be emphasized, which implies that planning is carried out with respect for the interests of other participants in the planning system, and especially with respect for the priority goals of the Government, as well as the initiatives, needs and priority goals of local authorities.

Therefore, it is of the greatest importance for the development and coordination of public policies, from the aspect of public administration reform at the local level of government, and from the point of view of civil society, that policy-making practices in local self-government are transparent, inclusive, open and based on evidence, data and analysis. This means that local authorities include citizens and the economy in all stages of the process, especially in the early stages of drafting documents. For this reason, transparency and inclusiveness are necessary at all stages of the policy cycle, from creation to evaluation.

4.1. Monitoring focus

The situation within the second area of public administration – *Policy development and coordination* was measured by means of two indicators, the first of which refers to the transparency of the work of the city or municipal council and the preparation of drafts and proposals of decisions in local administration, and the second to inclusivity and openness in the creation of public policy documents in local administration. The monitoring of the public policy system is based on two SIGMA principles.



4.2. Monitoring results – assessment of the achievement

4.2.1. Transparency of the council's work and the preparation of drafts and proposals for decisions in local administration

This indicator covers one principle within the area of *Policy making and coordination*. Bodies of local self-government units are obliged to be guided by the principle of transparency in their

work, i.e. to make their work accessible to the public. The indicator focuses on the work of the city or municipal council and follows the practice of informing the public about scheduled meetings, reporting on held meetings and informing the public about decisions made. The indicator is based on archival research, i.e. analysis of LGU websites and materials from council meetings. Elements of transparency measured by this indicator include: publication of information on council sessions, minutes and key decisions from the sessions, their availability to citizens, timeliness and comprehensibility.

The indicator contains four elements, and the table below presents all the elements as well as the maximum or average number of points for each of the elements.

Table 4. Indicator 2: Transparency of the council's work and the preparation of drafts and proposals for decisions in local administration

Element no.	Name of the Element	Maximum number of points	Average number of points achieved
E.1	Information about Council's sessions, including the agenda, is published in advance on the LGU website and is easily accessible	4	0,47 (11,76%)
E.2	Minutes of Council's sessions are published on the LGU website and are easily accessible	4	0,24 (5,88%)
E.3	Drafts and proposals for decisions from Council's sessions are published on the LGU website	2	0,82 (41,18%)
E.4	Information on drafts and proposals for decisions from Council's sessions is adapted for citizens and is easily accessible to the public	2	0,29 (14,71%)
TOTAL		12	1,82 (15,20%)
AVERAGE RATING (scale 0-5)		0,47	
RATING (scale 0-5)		0	

As can be seen from the table, the maximum number of points for this indicator is 12. Based on the analysis of 17 LGUs, the average number of points achieved for this indicator is 1.82, that is, only 15.20% of the total number of possible points. The rating on a six-point scale of 0-5 is 0 (average 0.47), which is also the most common rating received by as many as 13 local governments. One LGU received a rating of 1, two LGUs received a rating of 2, while only the City Administration of the City of Subotica was rated a 3. No LGUs achieved a rating of 4 or 5.

In comparison to all 12 indicators for assessing the local administrations, this indicator is among the lowest rated, and the *Area of policy making and coordination* is one of the worst rated areas of public administration, together with the *Strategic framework*.

Monitoring of the work of city and municipal councils in the last six months has revealed that, with the exception of two cities – Subotica and Novi Pazar, local self-government units in Serbia do not have the practice of proactively publishing information on meetings and their agenda. An even worse result is in the domain of publishing the minutes of the held council sessions, because only one (Bečej) out of 17 LGUs has an established practice of publishing the minutes.

Bečej: In the period from August 2021 to January 2022, 39 sessions of the Municipal Council were held. Although there is no practice of publishing information and materials in advance for sessions, there is a practice of publishing minutes from which information on the agenda of the sessions can be indirectly obtained. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: Bečej municipality* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-becej/>)

On the other hand, seven of the 17 observed LGUs have an established practice of publishing drafts and proposals of decisions that the council proposes and forwards to the parliamentary procedure. These findings contribute to the mentioned element being rated the best within this indicator. However, the situation is significantly different when observing the practice of informing the general public in a way adapted to them, e.g. through summaries, which explain in clear and simple, non-bureaucratic language the decisions made at council meetings. It is of particular importance for citizens to understand the essence, importance and usefulness of proposed decisions adopted by the city or municipal council and sent to the parliamentary procedure, because many decisions directly affect the quality of life of citizens (e.g. determining the prices of communal services, determining the amount of taxes on citizens' property etc). In order for local public opinion to be informed in a timely and simple manner (without using bureaucratic language) about adopted decision proposals, it is necessary for the city, i.e. municipal administration, instead of merely publishing the decision proposals, to try to bring the essence in simple and understandable language to the citizens through certain summaries of proposed decisions, their impact and benefits for the city, that is, the municipality and the citizens themselves.

Subotica: In the City Administration, before each session of the City Assembly, a press conference is held, where the President of the Assembly informs the citizens about the proposed decisions that will be decided, as well as why those decisions are important and useful for the city and citizens. The video from the press conference, as well as a short report from the conference, is then published on the official website of the city and in the local media. See more details in: *Report on the local administration: city of Subotica* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-subotica/>)

4.2.2 Inclusiveness and openness of policymaking in local administration

This indicator covers one principle within the area of *Policy making and coordination*. The indicator measures the scope and quality of participation and contribution of the public and civil society organizations in the process of creating planning documents through public consultations. In the framework of the research, public consultations were viewed more broadly than the public hearings themselves, which are only one type of consultation. By default, public consultations include all types of consultations that are usually used in practice, namely:

- face-to-face consultations (public discussions, round tables, panels, focus groups, semi-structured interviews);
- online consultations (sending comments / suggestions via e-mail; participation in online discussions on forums, social networks, portal for public discussions; filling in online surveys);
- submission of written comments or proposals (through the municipal office, that is, the city administration, filling out surveys and questionnaires in the service center of the municipal or city administration, etc.).

Following this principle implied a focus on public consultations and omitted internal coordination and consultation processes, in which the city authorities, i.e. municipalities or direct and indirect beneficiaries of the LGU budget (local institutions, public enterprises, local communities, etc.) participate. Monitoring, on the one hand, was based on archival research and analysis of collected data (reports on held consultations, reports from public hearings, official presentations of LGUs, media reports, etc.), and on the other hand, on the perception and attitudes of representatives of local civil society organizations, present at the focus groups.

The subject of monitoring was the public consultations that the municipal / city administrations conducted in the period of two years until the moment of conducting the research, in connection with the preparation of the following documents:

- Budget decisions (including budget rebalancing);
- Strategic planning documents;
- Spatial and urban plans.

The indicator contains six elements, and the table below presents all the elements as well as the maximum or average number of points achieved for each of the elements.

Table 5. Indicator 3: Inclusiveness and openness of policymaking in local administration

Element no.	Name of the Element	Maximum number of points	Average number of points achieved
E.1	Public consultations are conducted during the development of local public policies and regulations	4	1,53 (38,24%)
E.2	Proactivity of the municipal administration in informing interested parties about public consultations	4	0,82 (20,59%)
E.3	Uniformity and predictability of publication of information on public consultations	2	0,59 (29,41%)
E.4	Consultations are held in the early stages of drafting local regulations and policies	2	0,24 (11,76%)
E.5	Availability of reports on public consultations conducted during the development of local regulations and policies	4	0,82 (20,59%)
E.6	Quality of reporting on conducted public consultations	2	0,47 (23,53%)
TOTAL		18	4,47 (24,84%)
AVERAGE RATING (scale 0–5)		1	
RATING (scale 0–5)		1	

The maximum number of points for this indicator is 18. Based on the analysis of the situation in 17 LGUs, the average number of points achieved for this indicator is 4,47, that is, only 24,84% of the total number of possible points. The rating on a six-point scale of 0–5 is 1 (average rating 1), six LGUs received 0 or 2 each, and five LGUs were rated 1. No LGUs achieved 3, 4 or 5.

In preparing the observed planning documents and acts, most administrations conduct some form of public consultations. Nevertheless, although 11 out of 17 administrations have a developed practice of involving interested parties in these processes, a detailed analysis showed that

this practice is not constant, so that the largest number of LGUs organize public consultations in less than 90% of cases. The results are reversed when it comes to proactivity in informing the public about consultations held, because even 11 out of 17 LGUs do not use sufficiently the communication channels available to them. This is very important, because in order to ensure the widest possible coverage of interested parties in the consultation process, the local government must be proactive in disseminating information about holding public consultations, through various channels and means of communication, such as: the official website of the LGU, sending notifications to regular mail or by e-mail to potentially interested parties (e.g. municipal or city information service, office or officer in charge of cooperation with civil society, etc.); official accounts of LGUs on social networks; eGovernment portal and other media.

Vlasotince: On the website of the municipality, there is a banner called *e-Usluge* (e-Services), within which there is a Public discussions section in which draft documents, invitations to public discussions are published, and there is an opportunity for interested citizens to submit suggestions and comments on the drafts themselves. Also, this section includes reports on public hearings in connection with the adoption of the following documents: Decision on the municipal budget for 2022, Municipal Development Plan, Draft Decision for the Local Anti-Corruption Plan, Environmental Impact Assessment Study of MHE Besko, Draft for documents for social inclusion of Roma 2021–2023. etc. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: Municipality of Vlasotince* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-vlasotince/>)

Aleksinac: On the website of the local self-government of Aleksinac, there is a section called *Public hearings*, where reports from public hearings are published. Also, on the section on the left side of the front page under the name of *Associations*, invitations to civil society organizations are published. See details in: *Report on the local administration: Municipality of Aleksinac* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-aleksinac/>)

The uniformity and predictability of the publication of information on holding consultations was identified as one of the problems in the practice of 12 LGUs. Only five local administrations publish information about public consultations within a special website or banner to which a link leads on the home page of the LGU's website.

Tutin: The municipal administration of the municipality of Tutin consolidates information about all public consultations in one place on its official website, so that they are easily accessible (at most 3 clicks from the home page) to external interested parties. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: Municipality of Tutin* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-tutin/>)

Weak representation of consultations in the early stages of drafting documents represents one of the biggest shortcomings of the policy-making process in local administrations in Serbia. Only in a few cases was it recorded that public consultations were organized during the adoption of planning documents, primarily during the preparation of spatial plans, as this is a legal obligation. Finally, most cities and municipalities do not publish or prepare reports on the public consultations that were conducted during the drafting of documents, while the analysis of the available reports indicates that none contain all the necessary elements. The three elements

that reports should contain in order to be complete are: 1) comments and proposals that were submitted during the public consultation process and that are listed individually, without combining them, i.e. grouping by similarity; 2) feedback for each individual proposal / comment (accepted, rejected or partially accepted); 3) explanation for the rejection or partial approval of each individual proposal submitted during the consultation. These elements were identified in certain reports on public consultations conducted in only two LGUs.

Novi Pazar: The city administration of the city of Novi Pazar consolidates information about all public consultations in one place on its official website, so that they are easily accessible (at most 3 clicks from the home page) to external interested parties. The Internet presentation has a special section where information about public hearings is published. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: city of Novi Pazar* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-novi-pazar/>)

What do the citizens say?

The findings of the monitoring are also confirmed by the results of citizen surveys during street actions, online questionnaires and award contests in which citizens from almost all cities and municipalities in Serbia participated.

Survey results indicate that the majority of Serbian citizens do not participate in the shaping of decisions in their cities and municipalities. Almost 90% in any way never participated in the shaping of a local self-government decision (89,10%). As a reason for not participating, the largest number of respondents indicated that they did not know they could participate (27,19%) or that they were not informed about the public debate (27,23%). On the other hand, only 13,54% believe that they do not have enough knowledge to be able to participate, while a quarter of respondents (25,41%) are not interested.

Respondents who answered positively when it comes to participation in decision-making (10,90%) stated that they made proposals and participated in the work of some bodies, that they participated in surveys or public debates. The most common acts and processes in which citizens participated include: participation in public hearings during the preparation of local action plans for young people, preparation of urban and spatial plans, preparation of local economic development strategies, preparation of municipal development plans, decision-making on asphaltting roads and introduction of gas pipelines, etc. Only 7,63% of citizens believe that they had the opportunity to be involved in the adoption of the municipal or city budget. A certain number of citizens pointed to their own civic initiatives at the level of local communities related to infrastructure, environmental activism, street lighting, gas pipelines, sewage networks, implementation of organized petitions for traffic changes, street name changes, etc.

Nevertheless, a greater number of respondents among those who, in some way, participated in decision-making processes, marked their experience as negative. Among the negative impressions, it stands out that public consultations were held only to fill in the form, and that citizens and representatives of civil society were only formally invited to participate in the creation of the act. A certain number of respondents agree that everything is created in advance by the professional services of the local administration, by order of the members of the city or municipal councils, while the city or municipal assemblies are only voting machines, and that citizens have no influence. The perception that participation had no impact on the decision-making process led to the fact that citizens did not participate in subsequent processes.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

5

The Law on Employees in Autonomous Provinces and Local Self-Government Units¹⁵, which was adopted in 2016, established the basic principles of the career civil service system for civil servants employed in LGUs. With the adoption of the Law, its amendments and additions from 2017 and 2018, and the adoption of accompanying by-laws, the basic prerequisites for professionalization, depoliticization, career development and professional development of officials in local administrations have been met.

The establishment of the human resources management function in local administrations is based on Article 188, paragraph 1 of the Law, which states that "human resources management tasks are organized separately at the employer". All jobs related to human resources management are detailed in art. 189 of the Law. Amendments to the Law from 2017 and 2018 introduced significant changes and more closely regulated the areas of professional development and evaluation of employees. Also, for these two mentioned functions of human resources management, by-laws were adopted, which made it possible to initiate and implement concrete, practical steps towards the establishment of a comprehensive human resources management system.

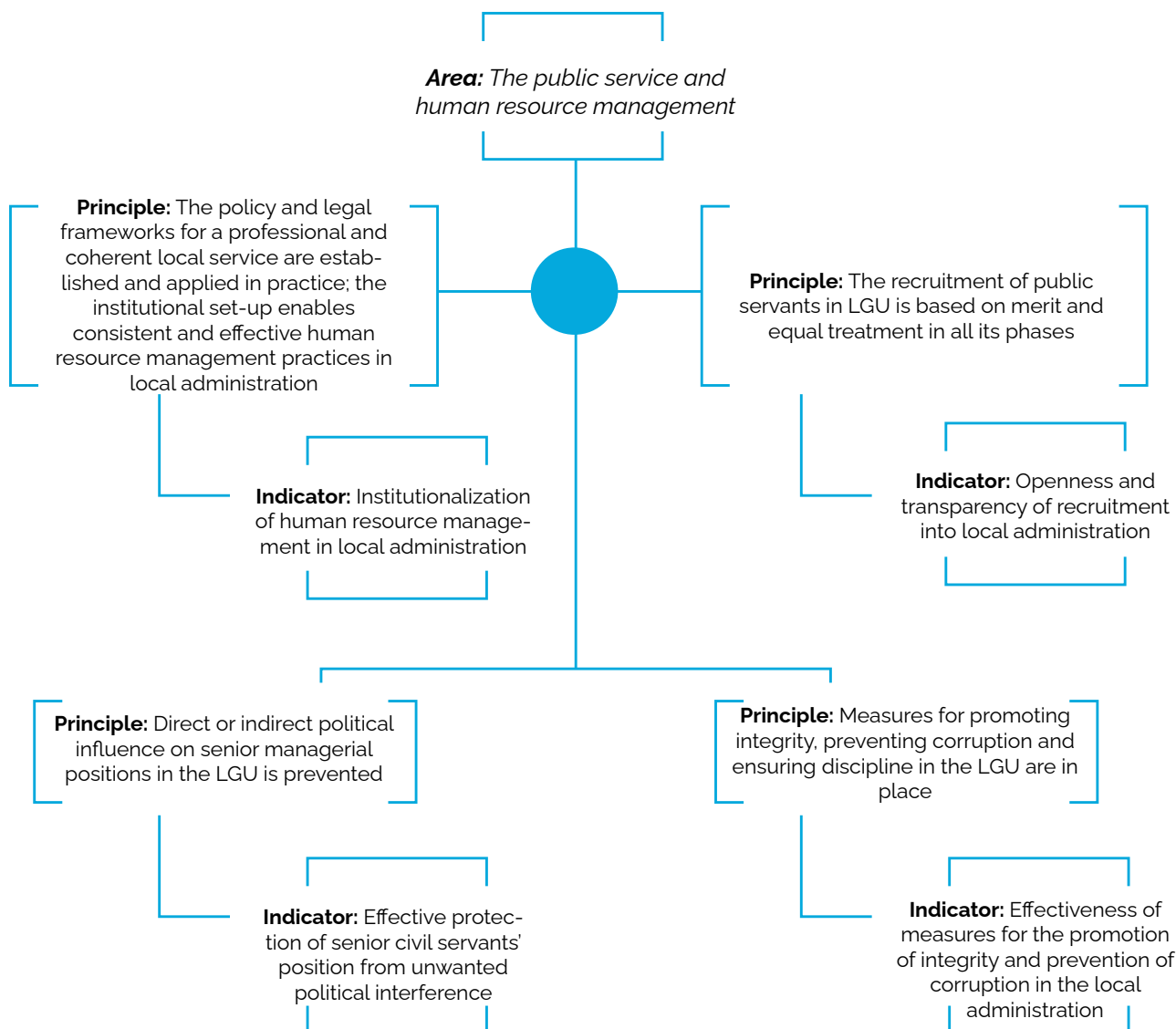
Within one of the special objectives of the Program for the Reform of the Local Self-Government System in the Republic of Serbia, which refers to the Improvement of the Organization and Capacity of Local Self-Government, two measures cover the area of human resource management. The first refers to the improvement of the human resource management function in local government, and the second is even narrower and concerns a specific function of improving the process of professional development of employees in LGUs. In order to support the further intensive development of the human resource management function in local government, a series of activities and different types of support are planned within these measures, from training, technical support, development of the information system, establishment of the competence system to changes in the legal and functional framework, etc.

¹⁵ Law on Employees in Autonomous Provinces and Local Self-Government Units, "Official Gazette of the RS" no. 21/2016, 113/2017 – other Law i 95/2018 – other law

According to the Law, as well as defined strategic goals, LGUs are obliged to organize human resources management tasks, but they have autonomy in choosing the way and modality of their organization. Nevertheless, the principles for these jobs such as professionalization, depoliticization, meritoriousness are at the basis of all processes, and all LGUs are obliged to ensure that the procedures for hiring, firing, rewarding, punishing and training employees are based on the merits and competencies of employees.

5.1. Monitoring focus

The situation within the third area of public administration – *Public service and human resource management* was measured by means of four indicators, the first of which refers to the institutionalization of human resources management in local government, and the second to the openness and transparency of recruitment into local administration. The third indicator refers to the protection of senior civil servants' position from unwanted political interference, while the fourth measures the effectiveness of measures for the promotion of integrity and prevention of corruption in the local administration. All indicators contain several elements designed to cover the four Principles of Public Administration:



5.2. Results of monitoring – assessment of the achievement

5.2.1. Institutionalization of human resource management in local administration

This indicator covers one principle within the area of *Public service and human resource management*. The Law on Employees in AP and LGUs sets the institutional framework for performing tasks related to human resource management in LGUs. In Art. 188 regulates the obligation to organize human resource management activities at the employer. However, taking into account the differences between LGUs, primarily in terms of the number of employees in the administration, which is also related to the number of citizens in LGUs, the Law takes a flexible approach on how these jobs in LGUs should be organized. This, in fact, means that LGUs have the freedom to organize these tasks according to their possibilities and needs, and in accordance with the law.

The indicator contains four elements, and the table below presents all the elements as well as the maximum or average number of points achieved for each of the elements.

Table 6. Indicator 4. Institutionalization of human resource management in local administration

Element no.	Name of the Element	Maximum number of points	Average number of points achieved
E.1	The strategic goal or the multi-year human resources management plan is defined in the LGU documents	2	0,41 (20,59%)
E.2	An appropriate institutional framework has been established for performing tasks related to human resource management in local administration	4	1,76 (44,12%)
E.3	Representation of the work of human resource management in acts of local administration and in practice	2	1,76 (88,24%)
E.4	Personnel records of employees have been established and are kept up-to-date, certain data are published regularly	4	2 (50%)
TOTAL		12	5,94 (49,51%)
AVERAGE RATING (scale 0–5)		2,18	
RATING (scale 0–5)		2	

The maximum number of points for this indicator is 12. Based on the analysis of the situation in 17 LGUs, the average number of points for this indicator is 5,94, or 49,51% of the total number of possible points. The rating on a six-point scale of 0–5 is 2, (average rating 2,18), while the largest number of LGUs (six) won a rating of 3. Three LGUs were rated 0, 1 or 2 each, while two LGUs – Bečej and Novi Pazar were rated with the highest rating of 5. No LGUs achieved a rating of 4.

The research showed that as many as 11 LGUs included in the research do not have a single planning document for human resource management. In five LGUs, the directions and goals of the development of the human resources management function are defined by some other more comprehensive planning documents, while only the municipality of Bečej has a special document that defines a multi-year plan and strategy for the management of human resources in the Municipal Administration.

Bečej: In 2021, the municipality of Bečej adopted the Declaration on the role of the human resources management function in the municipality of Bečej, which defines the basic goals and strategic directions of the development of the human resources management function, as well as the measures that will be implemented for the development and improvement of human resources. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: Bečej municipality* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-becej/>)

The situation regarding the institutional framework for performing tasks related to human resource management in local administrations was rated much better. The research methodology, when assessing the adequacy of the established institutional framework for performing work in the field of HRD, relied on the models developed within the project Human Resource Management in Local Self-Government, which is implemented by the Council of Europe in cooperation with the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government and the Standing Conference of cities and municipalities. In relation to the size of the LGU, five models of institutionalization of jobs in the field of human resources management were developed, namely:

- » **I model** – for municipalities with less than 30,000 citizens, under the appropriate institutional framework, it is considered that at least one workplace is systematized and filled, within which tasks related to human resources management are performed,
- » **II model** – for municipalities that have from 30,000 to 70,000 citizens, under the appropriate institutional framework, it is considered that there is a human resources management group (within a wider organizational unit) in which at least three positions are systematized and filled,
- » **III model** – for municipalities and cities with 70,000 to 100,000 citizens under the appropriate institutional framework, it is considered that there is a department for human resources management (within a broader organizational unit) in which at least five jobs are systematized and filled,
- » **IV model** – for cities with between 100,000 and 160,000 citizens under the appropriate institutional framework, it is considered that there is a department for human resources management (within the wider sector) in which at least eight jobs are systematized and filled,
- » **V model** – for cities with more than 160,000 citizens, under the appropriate institutional framework, it is considered that there is a human resources management sector in which at least 10 jobs are systematized and filled.

The number of inhabitants in LGUs is taken from the last official estimate of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. A special focus in the monitoring was also on the level of occupation of workplaces in practice, and not only on the analysis of institutional arrangement according to acts of local administrations – Decisions on the organization of administrations and Regulations on the organization and systematization of workplaces. The monitoring results indicate that in seven LGUs there is an appropriate institutional framework for performing tasks related to human resource management, as well as that at least 80% of systematized jobs are filled in them. These are Bečej, Novi Pazar, Despotovac, Koceljeva, Vlasotince and Prokuplje. An appropriate institutional framework has been established in one LGU (Niš), but the level of employment is not at an enviable level, as 6 out of 10 systematized positions are filled. On the other hand, in the remaining nine LGUs that were the subject of monitoring, an appropriate institutional framework for performing tasks related to human resource management was not established.

One of the best-rated elements within the entire monitoring refers to the representation of jobs related to human resource management in a functional sense. Human resource management tasks are regulated by Article 189 of the Law on Employees in AP and LGUs and they refer to:

- 1) professional tasks in the procedure of recruitment and selection of candidates,
- 2) preparation of the Personnel Plan proposal,
- 3) preparation and implementation of professional training programs in local self-government units,
- 4) preparation and implementation of training programs in accordance with this law,
- 5) evaluation of implemented professional development programs,
- 6) determination of the need for professional training of employees and additional education of employees,
- 7) analysis of the results and monitoring of the effects of employee evaluation,
- 8) keeping personnel records of employees,
- 9) other tasks of importance for the career development of officials.

These jobs were identified and confirmed by the analysis of the Rulebook on the organization and systematization of jobs in bodies and services in as many as 15 of the 17 observed LGUs. In the city administration of the city of Vršac, it is not planned to carry out tasks related to the analysis of results and monitoring the effects of employee evaluation, while in the municipality administration of the municipality of Odžaci, there are no tasks planned for the preparation of the HR plan proposal and the analysis of results and monitoring of the effects of employee evaluation.

Finally, the subject of the research was to determine whether personnel records on employees are kept up-to-date, and whether reports on the number and structure of employees are prepared and publicly available. Personnel records are the basis for managing personnel and other needs in the field of labor relations, but at the same time it is also a basic tool for preparing analytical reports in this field. Personnel records should contain the following information, which is determined by the Law on Employees in AP and LGUs (Art. 190):

- 1) personal name, address and unique citizen identification number,
- 2) mother tongue,
- 3) the language in which primary, secondary and higher education was obtained,
- 4) the type of employment and the date of its establishment,
- 5) change of workplace,
- 6) type and degree of vocational qualification, i.e. education, passed vocational exams, vocational training of interns, vocational training and professional development and special knowledge,
- 7) special knowledge and skills,
- 8) years of work experience, insurance experience and insurance experience which is calculated with increased duration,
- 9) date of completion of working life,
- 10) annual performance evaluations,

- 11) pronounced disciplinary measures and established material responsibility,
- 12) salary calculation,
- 13) termination of employment.

Personnel records may also contain other data determined by law and other regulations.

Monitoring results indicate that only in four LGUs (Subotica, Bečej, Zvezdara and Novi Pazar) are personnel records kept up-to-date and that they contain all the elements provided for by the Law, and that reports on the number and structure of employees are prepared based on data from personnel records. Personnel records have been established in almost all remaining LGUs, but reports on the number and structure of employees are not prepared or published based on it.

Zvezdara: City municipality of Zvezdara (GO Zvezdara) maintains personnel records within the framework of two programs – Hermes and SAP, in which it stores the largest amount of data provided for in Art. 190 of the law. In addition to the software, data is also kept within personnel files, such as evidence of professional development, initiated disciplinary procedures, etc. The research also established that the existing personnel records are used for the preparation of reports, and that GO Zvezdara make public reports on the number and structure of employees in accordance with the Regulation on the procedure for obtaining consent for new employment and additional employment with users of public funds. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: city municipality of Zvezdara* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-gradska-opstina-zvezdara/>)

5.2.2. Openness and transparency of recruitment into local administration

This indicator covers one principle within the area of *Public service and human resource management*. The focus of this indicator is on the process of employment for an indefinite period in LGU bodies through the analysis of the process of conducting public competitions, which as an open and transparent method of employment should ensure that the best candidates get a job in the local administration. Hiring officials based on competencies, that is, knowledge, skills, abilities and behavior is one of the key factors for ensuring professional administration. The analysis of the employment process in local administrations was done on a sample of the three most recently conducted and completed public competitions for filling jobs in LGUs in 2021, except in cases where there were no competitions during 2021, so the sample included 2020 as well. This indicator only monitors public competition and does not refer to internal competition which, in accordance with the Law on Employees in AP and LGUs, must be carried out before the public tender. In accordance with the Law, only employees employed for an indefinite period in all bodies, services and organizations of the employer who advertises the internal competition can participate in internal competitions. The analysis included only employment in city and municipal administrations, that is, the administration of a city municipality and services and organizations to which the Law on Employees in AP and LGUs applies.

The indicator contains eight elements, and the table below presents all the elements as well as the maximum or average number of points achieved for each of the elements.

Table 7. Indicator 5. Openness and transparency of recruitment into local administration

Element no.	Name of the Element	Maximum number of points	Average number of points achieved
E.1	Information about public competitions is available to the public	4	1,53 (38,24%)
E.2	Advertisements about public competitions are written in simple, clear and understandable language	4	1,76 (44,12%)
E.3	During the public competition, the local administration in practice provides all interested parties with additional explanations and information and make them public	2	1,29 (64,71%)
E.4	There are no unreasonable obstacles for external candidates, due to which positions on public competitions are more easily accessible to candidates who already have work experience in the administration	2	0,24 (11,76%)
E.5	The application procedure for the public competition imposes a minimal administrative burden on the candidates	2	1,29 (64,71%)
E.6	The competition committee treats all participants in the procedure equally, and the minutes kept by the competition committee contain all the data on the results achieved by the candidates in the selection process	2	0,53 (26,47%)
E.7	The decisions of the competition commissions are publicly available, with guaranteed protection of personal data	4	0 (0%)
E.8	Information about unsuccessful competitions is publicly available, with an explanation as to why the competition was unsuccessful	2	1,18 (58,82%)
TOTAL		22	7,94 36,10%
AVERAGE RATING (scale 0–5)			1,76
RATING (scale 0–5)			2

The maximum number of points for this indicator is 22. Based on the analysis of the situation in 17 LGUs, the average number of points for this indicator is 7,94, or 36,10% of the total number of possible points. The rating on a six-point scale (0–5) is 2 (average rating 1,76), while eight LGUs received a rating of 2. Three LGUs were rated 0, two LGUs were rated 1, and four LGUs were rated 3. No LGUs achieved a rating of 4 or 5.

Public availability and content of announcements about public tenders is a key prerequisite for the transparency of the recruitment process in local administrations. In accordance with the Research Methodology, public availability implies that the text of the competition or notice of the implementation of the competition has been published through at least two different advertising methods that are available throughout the country, while for the maximum number of points it is necessary that the information be published through at least three different advertising methods. The entire text of the competition must be published on the official website of the LGU, while in the case of other communication channels, it is sufficient to publish a notice about the public competition and the address of the website where the advertisement was published. Other communication channels include daily newspapers that are distributed throughout the territory of the Republic of Serbia, other portals (e.g. www.poslovi.infostud.com), the Internet presentation of the Personnel Management Service of the Government of the RS, publications of the National Employment Agency, and other employment portals, official pages of LGUs on a social network such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, etc.

Bečej: To advertise the analyzed competition procedures, information about competitions for filling executive positions in the municipal administration of the municipality of Bečej, was published on the official internet presentation of the municipality, as well as in the daily newspaper *Dnevnik*, which is distributed throughout the territory of the Republic of Serbia, and the daily newspaper *Magyar szo* in the Hungarian language. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: Municipality of Bečej* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-becej/>)

The analysis of samples of competition procedures in 17 LGUs indicate that only two LGUs – Subotica and Bečej, use at least three communication channels to advertise a public competition for executive positions. Nine LGUs, in addition to their websites, publish information about the competition through another media channel, while six LGUs do not use even two channels for advertising the competition. LGUs that publish ads, in addition to their website, usually do so in daily newspapers.

Another aspect of the competition's transparency refers to its content. Therefore, special attention was paid to the analysis of the competition texts and whether they were written in simple, clear and understandable language. In 13 LGUs, the analysis of the advertisements from the sample showed that the texts were clear and understandable, and from the texts of the advertisements candidates could clearly and unequivocally find out: the job description for each position (in accordance with the *Rulebook on the organization and systematization of job positions*), the necessary conditions that candidates should fill out, a list of documents that candidates should submit, as well as requirements and expectations from candidates in the election procedure (e.g. the method of checking professional knowledge and skills, the name of the professional field in which the knowledge check will be carried out, etc.). In addition to this, the research methodology additionally values the practice of making public competitions more attractive and easier for external candidates to understand, and that, instead of using bureaucratic language (literally copied wording from the *Rulebook on the organization and systematization of jobs positions*), job descriptions in competitions are presented in a simple and easy to understand manner. A detailed analysis of the texts from the aspect of the use of bureaucratic language indicates that, as a rule, the texts of the advertisements are written in such a way that external candidates who have never worked in public administration, nor are they familiar with the administration system, can make it difficult to understand. However, bearing in mind that in none of the analyzed procedures in 12 out of 17 LGUs, interested parties and potential candidates did not send a request for additional explanations and information, it can be concluded that the advertisements were clear and understandable.

Subotica: The advertised information of the analyzed competition procedures about the competitions for filling executive positions in the Subotica Municipal Administration was published on the official website of the city, as well as in the daily newspaper *Danas*, which is distributed throughout the territory of the Republic of Serbia, in local papers *Hrvatska riječ* in the Croatian language, as well as the daily newspaper *Magyar szo* in the Hungarian language. See more details in: *Report on the local administration: city of Subotica* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-subotica/>)

On the other hand, there are very negative findings when it comes to the existence of unreasonable obstacles for external candidates to participate in tender procedures. This refers, on the one hand, to the fact that the public competition should not contain requirements that represent a special burden for external candidates (e.g. passing the state exam as an eliminatory condition when applying for the competition, i.e. the requirement to provide evidence of attending certain trainings that are available only to officials working in the administration, etc.). On the other hand, the conditions for working in the advertised position should not be adjusted in advance for the reception of a specific candidate, by amending the *Rulebook on the organization and*

systematization of positions, immediately before the announcement of the public competition. The analysis of the documentation from the public tenders indicated that even in 15 LGUs there were conditions due to which jobs were more easily available to candidates who already had work experience in administration. The only exceptions and positive examples of open procedures are Zvezdara and Ivanjica. In the largest number of analyzed competition procedures, passing the state professional exam is explicitly required as a condition, although Article 131 of the Law on Employees in AP and LGUs enables an employee who has established an employment relationship for an indefinite period, but has not passed the state professional exam, to take state professional exam within six months from the date of employment¹⁶. Also, in several cases, it was identified that immediately before the announcement of the public competition, the conditions for working at the workplace were changed, namely through the change of the title in which the jobs are performed, which directly affected the reduction of requirements in terms of education. In one case, the title of advisor was changed to the title of junior advisor, which changed the required work experience of at least three years to the condition that the candidate completed an internship.

Ivanjica: As a rule, the conditions of the competition state that candidates must also have passed the state professional exam. However, in a special note, it is stated that probationary employees or those who establish an employment relationship for an indefinite period, and have not passed the state professional exam, must take the state professional exam within six months from the date of establishment of the employment relationship. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: Municipality of Ivanjica* <https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-ivanjica/>)

Furthermore, during the monitoring, special attention was paid to the administrative burden of the candidates when applying for the competition. This is very important from the aspect of openness and attracting as many candidates as possible, because a small administrative burden can increase the interest of external candidates. Therefore, the coverage of the data required from candidates when applying for the competition was analyzed and it was specially checked whether documents from official records (e.g. birth certificates, certificates of citizenship) are obtained by the local administration itself, or whether candidates are required to obtain and data. The Regulation on the implementation of internal and public competitions for filling positions in AP and LGUs regulates the evidence to be attached to the public competition application. Along with the application for the public competition, the participant of the public competition submits evidence of appropriate professional training, evidence of work experience and other evidence of meeting the prescribed conditions for working in the position being filled, as well as a contact phone number and, if possible, an Internet address. If the knowledge of a foreign language, i.e. the language and script of a national minority, or digital literacy can be proven by certificates, certificates or other written evidence that are specified in the job advertisement, the person submits the said evidence at the same time as the application. Also, a member of a national minority can, in accordance with the principle of voluntariness, attach a statement of belonging to a national minority which, according to the job advertisement, is insufficiently represented among employees, or a birth certificate in which information about that nationality is entered, in order to information about belonging to a national minority, which, according to the job advertisement, is underrepresented among employees, could be taken as an advantage in the election in case of equal results for qualified candidates¹⁷. Furthermore, in accordance with the Law on General Administrative Procedure, there is a duty of authorities to obtain data ex officio (Art. 103). The authority is obliged to inspect, obtain and process data on the facts of which official records are kept, and which are necessary for decision-making, by official duty, in accordance with the law. If official records are maintained by another authority, the authority conducting the procedure is obliged to urgently request the data, and the requested authority to provide the data free of charge within 15 days, unless otherwise prescribed. If the requested data

¹⁶ Law on employees in AP and LGUs, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 21/2016, 113/2017, 95/2018 and 113/2017 - other law, Art. 131

¹⁷ Regulation on the implementation of internal and public competition for filling positions in AP and LGUs, "Official Gazette of the RS", no. 95/2016 and 12/2022, Article 14

can be obtained electronically, the requested authority shall deliver it as soon as possible. The research showed that 11 out of 17 local administrations, when conducting public competitions for executive positions, independently collect data from official records, and do not require it from candidates.

Further research analyzed the transparency of the work of the competition commissions and respect for the equal treatment of all candidates, primarily in the field of checking the candidates' competences, i.e. their professional qualifications, knowledge and skills – therefore, the minutes of the competition commission were analyzed in order to determine whether they contain all the data on the results that were achieved by the candidates in the electoral process. The minutes kept by the competition committee should clearly state and document all the actions taken during the election procedure, including checking the professional qualifications, knowledge and skills of the candidates. Special focus was on examining the form of verification of professional qualifications, knowledge and skills that were used in competition procedures. Namely, the Regulation on conducting internal and public competition for filling positions in AP and LGUs stipulates that the selection procedure is carried out by a written and/or oral examination of professional qualifications, knowledge and skills and an interview with the candidate. Forms of written examination can be: essay and written simulation, practical work and knowledge test, and the form of oral examination is oral simulation¹⁸. According to the Research Methodology, in order to ensure equal treatment of all candidates, it is necessary that in the case of written tests, all candidates solved the same task, that is, that all candidates were asked the same questions if there was only an oral method of testing. The minutes of the commission are, as a rule, complete and contain all or most of the information about the actions taken during the election process, as well as about the results achieved by the candidates in the election process. However, the key problem that can be seen from the minutes is that, as a rule, the commissions do not verify professional competence in writing, which is not contrary to the regulations, but was assessed as a negative practice. Through monitoring, it was established that only in two LGUs – Bečej and Ivanjica, competence testing was performed, in addition to oral, and written forms of verification. All other LGUs use exclusively oral forms. However, in four LGUs, equal treatment of candidates was ensured by asking candidates the same questions on the test. This practice was identified in Novi Pazar and Uzice, as well as Zvezdara and Aleksinac, but in the latter two LGUs, only one candidate participated in the competitions.

Finally, in the last stage of the competition procedure, the monitoring covered the transparency of the outcome of candidate selection procedures, i.e. it was checked whether the decisions on the selection of candidates for employment, i.e. the decision on the failure of the public competition, are publicly available. The analysis found that no LGU has publicly announced decisions on the selection of candidates or unsuccessful competitions, with the fact that in 10 LGUs there were no unsuccessful competitions.

What do the citizens say?

Regarding the employment procedure in local administrations, the perception of citizens (4,977 respondents) is extremely negative. Only 3,5% of the respondents stated that officials in the municipal or city administration are employed entirely on the basis of competences, that is, qualifications, expertise and abilities. A slightly larger number of respondents (13,06%) believe that employment takes place somewhat according to competencies, while other citizens (4,153 respondents, 83,44%) believe that political and personal connections are an important factor for employment. Furthermore, more than half of that number of respondents (53,43%) believe that employment takes place entirely on the basis of political and personal connections, while 30,02% believe that this is somewhat the case in local administrations. Of the 4,122 citizens who answered the question whether personal or political connections prevail in the employment of civil servants, one fifth (21,76%) marked personal connections as a key factor, while the overwhelming majority (78,24%) highlighted political connections as the most important factor for employment of officials in local administrations.

¹⁸ Regulation on the implementation of internal and public competition for filling positions in AP and LGUs, "Official Gazette of the RS", no. 95/2016 and 12/2022, Article 18

5.2.3. Effective protection of senior civil servants' position from unwanted political interference

The indicator covers one principle within the area of *Public services and Human resource management*. The focus of this indicator is to determine the extent to which there is effective prevention of unwanted political influence on the work of civil servants in local administrations. According to the Law on employees in the AP and LGUs, the positions of the head of the city, municipality, or city municipality administration and their deputies are considered to be employees in position. Additionally, in the city of Belgrade, where the city administration is organized as a single body, the positions are the head of the city administration, his deputies (secretary of the secretariat of the city administration of the city of Belgrade) and undersecretary of the secretariat (hereinafter: head of the administration)¹⁹. Officers have a specific and very important place in the official system, because they represent the highest level of professionals and are in the highest management positions immediately below officials. This category of officers represents a bond between elected, appointed and nominated officials and officers from the administration that does not change with political changes. Therefore, it is extremely important to ensure the protection of senior civil servants in the position from any political influence, as stipulated by the regulations. The indicator measures the extent to which formal and informal practices protect senior civil servants in positions from political influence, through the analysis of the appointment of senior civil servants in positions, implementation of competition procedures and protection from the discretionary powers of officials as key decision-makers in LGUs.

The indicator contains six elements, and the table below presents all the elements as well as the maximum or average number of points for each of the elements.

Table 8. Indicator 6. Effective protection of senior civil servants' position from unwanted political interference

Element no.	Name of the Element	Maximum number of points	Average number of points achieved
E.1	Information about public competitions for filling the positions of civil servants is available to the public	4	1,29 (32,35%)
E.2	The members of the competition committee are experts	2	0,71 (35,29%)
E.3	The competition committee has equal treatment of all participants in the procedure and the minutes kept by the competition committee contain all the data on the results achieved by the candidates in the selection process.	2	0,53 (26,47%)
E.4	Information about unsuccessful tenders is publicly available, with an explanation as to why the tender was unsuccessful	2	1,53 (76,47%)
E.5	Acting civil servants are appointed for a certain period of time from among civil servants	4	2,12 (52,94%)
E.6	The reasons for the dismissal of officials from positions in LGUs are adequately applied in practice	2	1,06 (52,94%)
TOTAL		16	7,24 (45,22%)
AVERAGE RATING (scale 0–5)		2,12	
RATING (scale 0–5)		2	

The maximum number of points for this indicator is 16. Based on the analysis of the situation in 17 LGUs, the average number of points for this indicator is 7,24, or 45,22% of the total number of

possible points. The score on a six-point scale of 0–5 is 2 (average score 2.12), while seven LGUs received a score of 0. One LGU was rated 2, three LGUs were rated 3, five LGUs were rated 4 and one LGU (Bečej) was rated 5. No LGU achieved a rating of 1.

Public availability and the content of advertisements about announced public competitions were analyzed in the same way as for the needs of the first element within indicator 5, with the fact that the monitoring included the analysis of one and the most recently conducted competition procedure for filling positions, in contrast to executive positions where observed three competition procedures.

Bečej: The public competition for filling the position of deputy head of the Bečej Municipal Administration (2020) was published on the official website of the Municipality, in the daily newspaper *Dnevnik*, which is distributed throughout the territory of the Republic of Serbia, and in the local newspaper *Bečejski mozaik*. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: Municipality of Bečej* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-becej/>)

Analysis of samples of competition procedures in 17 LGUs indicate that only two LGUs – Subotica and Bečej, used at least three communication channels for advertising public competitions for filling positions. Seven LGUs, in addition to their website, publish information about the competition through another media channel, while eight LGUs do not use even two channels for advertising the competition. LGUs that publish ads, in addition to their website, usually do so in daily newspapers.

Subotica: The public advertisement for filling the position of Deputy Head of the City Administration (2016, before the entry into force of the Law on Employees in AP and LGUs) was published on the official website of the city, in the daily newspaper *Danas*, which is distributed throughout the territory of the Republic of Serbia, in the local newspaper *Hrvatska riječ* and *Subotičke novine*, daily newspaper *Magyar szo* and in the publication *Poslovi* published by the National Employment Agency. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: the city of Subotica* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-subotica/>)

The next aspect that was analyzed related to the structure of competition commissions, and the expertise and competence of their members. Article 96 of the Law on Employees in AP and LGUs stipulates that the election process is conducted by a three-member competition committee. Furthermore, the Law stipulates that at least one member of the committee must have acquired higher education at basic academic studies in the scope of at least 240 ECTS, master's academic studies, master's professional studies, specialist academic studies, specialist professional studies, i.e. basic studies lasting at least four or specialized studies at the university (1), one member who is an expert in the field for which the position is being filled (2) and an official who performs tasks in the field of human resources management (3). The analysis of the available documentation indicated that in only six LGUs, the commission that carried out the competitive procedure for filling positions was formed in accordance with the valid provisions of the Law on Employees in AP and LGUs. Further research analyzed the transparency of the work of the competition commissions and respect for the equal treatment of all candidates in the same way as for the purposes of monitoring the filling of executive positions (Indicator 5, Element 6). The findings of the monitoring show that the minutes of the competition committee contain all the data on the results achieved by the candidates in the election process. However, the verification of professional qualifications, knowledge and skills of candidates is, as a rule, only verified orally, which has been identified as the biggest problem in the field of commissions and competence verification from the aspect of equal treatment. The best-rated area within the analysis of the employment of civil servants in the position refers to unsuccessful competitions, which did not occur in as many as 13 administrations.

One of the most common instruments for the politicization of public administration at all levels of government is the practice of appointing acting officials to key management positions. According to the Law on employees in AP and LGUs, in situations where the head of the administration, as well as his deputy, has not been appointed until the appointment of the head of the administration, as well as when the head of the administration is unable to perform his duties for more than 30 days, the Council can appoint an acting officer, without conducting a public competition. However, the Law stipulates that an official who meets the established conditions for the position of an official can be appointed as an acting official, and also stipulates that this person can perform the duties of the head of the administration for a maximum of three months. In addition, the regulation stipulates that if the official in the position is not appointed, a public competition for filling the position is advertised within 15 days from the appointment of the acting official. Exceptionally, in the event that the public competition does not end with the appointment to the position, the acting status can be extended for a maximum of another three months. In practice, this means that the person in the position of acting head or deputy head of the administration must be a person with a higher education and at least five years of work experience in the profession, as well as that he can stay in that position for a maximum of six months. The results of the monitoring show that during the research only in one LGU – Niš, an acting official was appointed according to the mentioned provisions of the Law. However, in eight LGUs there were no acting officials, but persons were appointed to the position on the basis of a competition, which also gave these LGUs the highest rating. On the other hand, eight out of 17 LGUs did not submit answers or data for the analysis of the appointment of acting officials to positions in local administration.

Niš: By looking at the text of the decision on the termination of work in the position of acting of the head of the City Administration for the city authorities and civil conditions of the city of Niš, it was determined that the acting chief was appointed for 3+3 months, and that after that his work in the position of acting chief was terminated by decision. The person who was appointed as the new acting the head of the City Administration for city bodies and civil conditions for 3 months is a law graduate, former head of the sector for labor relations and general and office affairs, and the following text of the decision clarifies the requirements related to the professional education and experience possessed by the new acting head of administration for city authorities and civil conditions. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: the city of Nis* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-nis/>)

Finally, as part of the examination of the protection of officials in their positions from unwanted political interference, the monitoring also included an analysis of the dismissal of officials. The reasons for the dismissal of an official from a position are regulated by Article 52 of the Law on Employees in AP and LGUs. This article specifies that an official is dismissed from his position if his employment is terminated due to:

- 1) final judgments of unconditional imprisonment of at least six months – on the day the judgment becomes final,
- 2) the final decision imposing a disciplinary penalty of termination of employment,
- 3) of the final decision by which he was assigned a grade of "not satisfactory" at the extraordinary evaluation,
- 4) implementation of the initiative for dismissal based on the measure of public publication of the recommendation for dismissal issued by the Anti-corruption Agency,
- 5) other reasons provided for in the general labor regulations governing the termination of the employment relationship regardless of the will of the employee and the will of the employer.²⁰

²⁰ Article 52 of the Law on Employees in AP and LGUs

Also, the official is dismissed from his position if: 1) the body of the local self-government unit responsible for his appointment to the position accepts a public recommendation for the dismissal of the city or municipal protector of citizens' rights, 2) twice, regardless of the order of grades, he is determined by a decision grade "does not satisfy". The research showed that in six LGUs there were dismissals of officials in the last two years. In Zvezdara, Odzaci and Subotica, there were a total of five dismissals both due to the passage of time during which the persons were appointed (two cases) and due to written resignation (three cases). Thus, it was established that in nine LGUs, there is no practice of political interference and dismissal of officials without a legal basis. On the other hand, eight LGUs did not submit answers or data for the analysis of the dismissal of officials.

5.2.4. Effectiveness of measures for the promotion of integrity and prevention of corruption in the local administration

This indicator covers one principle within the area of *Public Services and Human Resource Management*. The focus of this indicator is on measures to improve integrity and prevent corruption in local administration through monitoring the implementation of the Code of Conduct for officers and nominated officials in local administrations and monitoring the work of appeals commissions. Article 196 of the Law on employees in AP and LGUs prescribes that the local self-government unit should adopt the Code of Conduct for officers and officials within one year from the beginning of the application of the law. Also, according to Article 173 of the Law, the appeal commission that decides in the second instance on the rights and duties of officers, as well as on appeals of participants in internal and public competitions, is formed by the city or municipal council.

The indicator contains seven elements, and the table below presents all the elements as well as the maximum or average number of points achieved for each of the elements.

Table 9. Indicator 7. Measures for promoting integrity, preventing corruption and ensuring discipline in the LGU are in place

Element no.	Name of the Element	Maximum number of points	Average number of points achieved
E.1	The Code of Conduct for officers and officials in local government was adopted	2	1,76 (88,24%)
E.2	The implementation of the Code of conduct for officers and officials is regularly monitored and reported to the public	4	0,59 (14,71%)
E.3	A Complaints Commission was formed in the local administration and its work is precisely regulated	4	2,71 (67,65%)
E.4	The members of the Appeals Commission are competent and appointed in accordance with the regulation	2	1,29 (64,71%)
E.5	Share of decisions of the Appeals Commission that were overturned in an administrative dispute	4	1,18 (29,41%)
E.6	Local anti-corruption plan adopted	2	0,94 (47,06%)
E.7	Established mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the local anti-corruption plan	4	0,59 (14,71%)
TOTAL		22	9,18 (41,71%)
AVERAGE RATING (scale 0–5)		2	
RATING (scale 0–5)		2	

The maximum number of points for this indicator is 22. Based on the analysis of the situation in 17 LGUs, the average number of points for this indicator is 9,18, or 41,71% of the total number of possible points. The rating on a six-point scale from 0–5 is 2 (average rating 2), while the largest number of local governments received a rating of 1. Four LGUs were rated 2, five LGUs were rated 3 and one LGU was rated 4. No LGUs received a rating of 0 or 5.

The code of conduct for officers and officials, which all LGUs were required to adopt by December 2017, regulates the general rules of conduct for officers and officials. The Code specifies the constitutional and legal norms in this area, which represent the basis for improving the work of organs, services, organizations and their employees, when they perform tasks within the competence of local self-government and tasks of importance for the realization of the rights and freedoms of citizens. The monitoring findings indicate that 15 LGUs have adopted Codes. However, only five LGUs prepare reports on their application, while no municipality publishes these reports on its website.

When it comes to appeal commissions, only three LGUs – Novi Pazar, Ivanjica and Odžaci, do not have this commission formed, with the fact that in Odžaci during the period of conducting the research, the formation of an appeal commission was in progress. Also, the Administration of the Zvezdara City Municipality does not have a specially formed appeals commission, but in the second instance, the rights and duties of officers, as well as the appeals of internal and public tender participants, are decided by the Appeals Commission of the City of Belgrade. It is also important to note that, independently of city municipalities, the Law leaves the possibility that two or more LGUs can form a joint appeals committee by agreement. Although the commission was established in 14 out of 17 LGUs, only in nine LGUs were the Rules of Procedure adopted. All LGUs that formed an appeal committee did so in accordance with the regulation. The Law on Employees in AP and LGUs prescribes that at least two members of the appeals committee must have a higher education in the scientific field of legal science at basic academic studies in the scope of at least 240 ESPB, master's academic studies, master's vocational studies, specialist academic studies, specialist vocational studies, i.e. basic studies lasting at least four years or specialist studies at the university, with at least five years of work experience in the profession. The subject of monitoring was the quality of the decisions made by the appeals commission, and in connection with that, the outcome of initiated and concluded administrative disputes that resulted in the annulment of the decisions of the Appeals Commission was examined. In accordance with Article 176 of the Law on Employees in AP and LGUs, an administrative dispute can be initiated against the decision of the appeal commission. A large number of local administrations did not submit data for the analysis of this element, and only in 5 administrations was it found that in the last two years there were no annulled decisions of the Appeals Commission, while in four cases no administrative dispute was even initiated.

Furthermore, mechanisms for preventing corruption in local administrations were also subject to monitoring. The action plan for Chapter 23 in the accession negotiations for membership in the European Union envisages the strengthening of preventive anti-corruption mechanisms at the local self-government level. This implies that cities and municipalities should adopt and implement local action plans for the fight against corruption, which identify jurisdictions, areas, processes and procedures where there is a risk of the emergence of various forms of corruption and propose ways to manage these risks. By implementing local action plans and establishing adequate mechanisms for monitoring their implementation, local self-government units strengthen their resistance to the emergence of corruption, irregularities and misuse of public resources, that is, they strengthen their capacities for protection, representation and realization of the public interest of the local community. Despite the obligation from the aforementioned Government planning document, monitoring determined that only slightly less than half of the observed LGUs complied with the obligation to adopt a local anti-corruption plan. The findings are even more negative when looking at the mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the local anti-corruption plan. The local anti-corruption forum or a similar body should have the task of monitoring the implementation of the local anti-corruption plan of the city or municipality, eliminating the risks of corruption and raising awareness of the importance of the fight against corruption. The findings indicate that only in five LGUs – Subotica, Bečej, Novi Pazar, Užice and Koceljeva, a local anti-corruption forum was formed, but that the implementation of the local anti-corruption plan is nowhere monitored, and no annual reports are prepared.

ACCOUNTABILITY

6

Accountability is one of the most important concepts in the public administration system. It is a comprehensive concept that includes a number of elements from the organization of local administration, through internal and external accountability and accountability between employees and managers, openness and transparency of the administration's work, to institutions and mechanisms for monitoring the administration's work. Local authorities and local administration, as an administration in charge of implementing policies and providing services to citizens, are primarily responsible for their work to citizens. In order for the public administration to be able to efficiently, effectively and professionally respond to the needs of citizens and provide quality public services in accordance with the principles and standards of "good governance", part of the reform activities is to increase the transparency of its work and improve ethical standards and accountability in the performance of public affairs administration.

The obligations regarding the work of public administration bodies and organizations, as well as the right of the public to access information of public importance, have been determined in the Republic of Serbia. The Law on free access to information of public importance regulates the rights to access information of public importance that are available to public authorities, in order to protect the public's interest and to maintain free democratic order and an open society.²¹ The right to free access to information of public importance is, in essence, the right to access official documents.

Nevertheless, modern and open administrations go one step further and do not wait to receive formal requests for access to information of public importance, but proactively publish data and information important for their work, which can be useful for citizens, the business community, the professional public, research organizations, etc. Accordingly, in 2011, eight world governments adopted the Open Government Partnership Declaration, which established the Open Government Partnership as an international initiative. The purpose of the Partnership is to provide support and greater engagement of governments around the world in order to improve

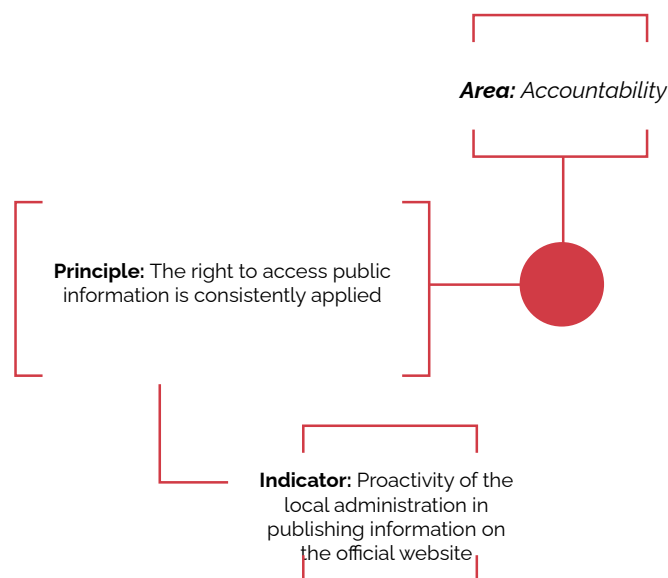
²¹ Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance, "Official Gazette of RS", No. 120/2004, 54/2007, 104/2009, 36/2010 and 105/2021, Article 1.

the integrity, transparency, efficiency and accountability of public authorities, through building public trust, cooperation with civil society organizations, strengthening citizens' participation in governance, fighting corruption, access to information, use of new technology, all in order to achieve more effective and responsible work of public authorities.²² Today, this initiative has 77 participating countries and 76 local communities, and in addition to the Government of the Republic of Serbia, one local self-government unit from Serbia is also a member of this initiative.

In 2016, the Open Government Partnership decided to expand its activities to the local government level. Thus, in 2016, a pilot program was launched in which 15 regional and local authorities are currently participating, which submitted Action Plans at the global Summit in Paris in December 2016, which were implemented during 2017. One of the main reasons for the expansion of the Partnership to the local level of government is the fact that the majority of government decisions are implemented at the local level, public administration is closest to citizens in cities and municipalities as places for providing public services. In addition, the local level of government has the potential to be more responsive to the needs of citizens, more flexible and less bureaucratically burdened than the administration at the national level. Initiatives aimed at increasing the openness and transparency of all levels of government at the local level potentially generate greater impact, have greater visibility and are easier to monitor and track. The city of Novi Pazar is the fourth local self-government unit in Serbia, after Šabac, Lapovo and Vlasotince, which received the Local Action Plan of the for Open Government Partnership (OGP). The city assembly adopted this document in September 2019, after which great strides were made in improving the transparency and openness of government in this city, which resulted in the inclusion of Novi Pazar in the global initiative. Namely, in May 2022, the OGP community received 30 new members representing local communities from 19 countries. The city of Novi Pazar is one of 30 new OGP members from around the world, which makes it the first city or municipality from Serbia, and one of the four local self-government units from the Western Balkans in the Open Government Partnership initiative.

6.1. Monitoring focus

The situation within the fourth area of public administration – *Accountability* was measured by means of one indicator, which refers to the proactivity of the local administration in publishing information on the official website. This indicator contains 8 elements designed to cover one principle of public administration – the right to access information of public importance is consistently applied.



²² More details about the initiative and Serbia's participation in it can be found on the website of the Partnership for Open Government of Serbia <https://ogp.rs/> and on the initiative's official website <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/>

6.2. Results of monitoring – assessment of the achievement

6.2.1. Proactivity of the local administration in publishing information on the official website

This indicator measures the proactive transparency of local governments. This indicator checks whether administrations publish information of public importance, i.e. how much they "meet" the public, instead of waiting for the public to turn to them with a request for access to information. The selected documents, the availability of which is analyzed, are of particular importance to citizens and can often be the subject of requests for access to information of public importance, and include the organization of local administration, the competences of organizational units, the leadership of the city or municipality, public procurement, the budget and public policy documents. A special research requirement is that the information and documents that are published must meet the following criteria:

- completeness, i.e. that the documents contain all the necessary information (1),
- up-to-date, i.e. that the documents are valid and current (2), and
- easy accessibility, i.e. whether the documents can be accessed with a maximum of three clicks from the home page of the LGU website (3).

Also, in certain elements, it is analyzed whether the information is **adapted to citizens**, i.e. whether it is written in understandable language and style for citizens (4).

Finally, in the case of local self-government units, in which the language of the national minority is in official use, this criterion implies that the information, i.e. the document, is also available in the language of the national minority (5).

The indicator contains eight elements, and the table below presents all the elements as well as the maximum or average number of achieved points for each of the elements.

Table 10. Indicator 8. Proactivity of local government in publishing information on the official website

Element no.	Name of the Element	Maximum number of points	Average number of points achieved
E.1	The organizational chart and information on the prescribed competences of all organizational units within the city / municipal administration can be found on the official website of the LGU	4	1,76 (44,12%)
E.2	The contact information of the organizational units can be found on the official website of the JLS	4	2,82 (70,59%)
E.3	Information on the work of the city / municipal administration is available on the official website of the LGU	4	2,59 (64,71%)
E.4	The statute of the municipality / city can be found on the official website of the LGU	4	3,29 (82,35%)
E.5	The Rulebook on the organization and systematization of workplaces is published on the official website of the JLS	4	2,59 (64,71%)
E.6	The annual public procurement plan is published on the official website of the local self-government	4	2,59 (64,71%)

E.7	The list of valid planning documents (strategic documents, action plans, programs) can be found on the official website of LGUs	4	2 (50%)
E.8	Documents related to the preparation and implementation of the LGU budget can be found on the LGU's official website	4	2,35 (58,82%)
TOTAL		32	20 (62,50%)
AVERAGE RATING (scale 0–5)		3,43	
RATING (scale 0–5)		3	

The maximum number of points for this indicator is 32. Based on the analysis of the situation in 17 local administrations, the average number of points for this indicator is 20, or 62,50% of the total number of possible points. The rating on a six-point scale of 0–5 is 3 (average 3,43), which was also won by eight local governments. Six administrations were rated 2, one was rated 4, and two were rated 5. No local administration achieved a rating of 0 or 1.

The initial step in giving proactive information to citizens implies that the local government publishes information about its internal organization on its official website, which includes the organizational chart, information about the competences of each organizational unit and contact information. By searching the official internet presentations of 17 LGUs, **it was found that 11 local governments** publish information that is complete, up-to-date and easily accessible, as well as that it is available in the language of the national minority (for LGUs where it is in official use). However, as a rule, this information is not adapted to citizens, but the competences of organizational units are generally copied verbatim from the Rulebook on the Organization and Systematization of Jobs in Administrations. The contact information of the organizational units can be found on the official website of LGUs in 15 administrations, with the fact that only in certain administrations they are easily accessible – can be reached with a maximum of three clicks from the home page.

Prokuplje: On the website of the city of Prokuplje, on the main menu, there is a section called *City authorities*, within which there is an icon of the *Department*. By clicking on it a list of departments of the city administration is open, while clicking on each department provides information on departments and groups within each department, contact telephone numbers, a description of responsibilities and tasks, as well as contact persons who manage the departments. Information is available 2 clicks from the front page and is understandable for the general public. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: the city of Prokuplje* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-prokuplje/>)

Further, the monitoring included an analysis of compliance with the provisions of Article 39 of the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance, which stipulates that the authority prepares an information sheet with basic data on its work at least once a year, which should contain all prescribed elements. In addition to the Law, the Instruction for the preparation and publication of information sheets on the work of state bodies, regulates in detail the manner of preparation and publication of information sheets on the work of state bodies, bodies of territorial autonomy, local self-government bodies and organizations entrusted with the exercise

of public authority. The Instructions provide for regular updating of the information sheet, so that all changes made during the month must be entered by the end of the month at the latest²³. The analysis showed that almost 14 local administrations publish an information sheet about their work, that the content of the information sheet complies with the regulations, and that it is up-to-date in accordance with them. However, only in half of these 14 administrations are information sheets easily accessible to citizens.

When it comes to the statutes as the highest legal acts of LGUs²⁴, they are published on the official websites of all analyzed administrations. Nevertheless, the analysis indicates that in certain LGUs, in which the languages of national minorities are in official use, there is no practice of publishing statutes in the languages of national minorities

Despotovac: On the website of the municipality of Despotovac, there is an information sheet on work that is easily accessible, because it is located on the homepage. The information sheet is regularly updated and contains all the information prescribed by positive regulations. See details in: *Report on the local administration: municipality of Despotovac* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-despotovac/>)

Bečej: The Statute of the municipality is available on the website of the municipality of Bečej and is available in all languages in official use. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: municipality of Bečej* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-becej/>)

Further research has shown that in about 65% of the analyzed administrations, two more important acts are available on the Internet – regulations on the organization and systematization of workplaces and public procurement plans for 2022²⁵. Somewhat weaker results are recorded in the domain of publication of valid planning documents and documents related to the preparation and implementation of the budget. Planning documents are published in most administrations, but as a rule, the documents are not easily accessible, i.e. in three clicks. Also, the Decision on the Budget, the Decision on the Statement of Accounts and the Citizen's Budget are available on the websites of most municipalities and cities.

²³ Instructions for creating and publishing information sheet on the work of a state authority, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 68/2010 and 10/2022 - Other instruction, point 17.

²⁴ According to the Law on Local Self-Government, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 129/2007, 83/2014 - Other Law, 101/2016 - Dr. Law, 47/2018 and 111/2021 - Other Law, Art. 11

²⁵ Accessible at: <https://zvezdara.rs/javnost-rada/javne-nabavke/>

Subotica: The city's Statute is available on the website of the city of Subotica and is available in all official languages. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: the city of Subotica* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-subotica/>)

Ivanjica: On the website, within the framework of budget documents, documents are published from which citizens can find all information related to the budget – Budget Decision, Citizen's Guide, Citizen Participation, Program Performance Report. The documents are easily accessible because the banner is on the front page – the main menu of the Budget of the Municipality of Ivanjica. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: municipality of Ivanjica* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-ivanjica/>)

What do the citizens say?

From the perspective of citizens, the transparency of local government work is a key principle. One of the mechanisms for realizing the right to information about the work of local administrations is based on the right of access to information of public importance. Only a little more than half of the surveyed citizens (54,35%) are aware of their right to access information of public importance that arises in the work of local government bodies. However, the results are noticeably different when the question is raised whether citizens know how they can request access to information of public importance. While 62,19% of respondents do not know how they can request access to information of public importance, 37,81% of respondents do, which is 830 affirmative answers less than when asked if they know about this right.

SERVICE DELIVERY

7

The concept of the state as a service to citizens has long been present in European administrative systems through the principles of good governance, and since 2014 it has been gradually introduced in Serbia as well. From the point of view of citizens, this area is the most significant, because when providing public services, the state and citizens have a direct relationship of cooperation. This particularly applies to the local level of government, because the largest number of services to citizens is provided by the local administration.

Improving the quality of services to citizens, first of all, means simplifying administrative procedures and reducing bureaucracy. On the other hand, in parallel with these processes, it is necessary to develop electronic services. Therefore, reform processes in the field of service provision in Serbia took place on two tracks. The first involved the development of electronic administration, primarily through the implementation of the *Action Plan for the Implementation of the Electronic Administration Development Program in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2020–2022*. Second, a whole series of planning documents and activities are aimed at regulatory reform and simplification of administrative procedures, such as the *e-Papir Program and the Program for the Improvement of Public Policy Management and Regulatory Reform for the period 2021–2025*.

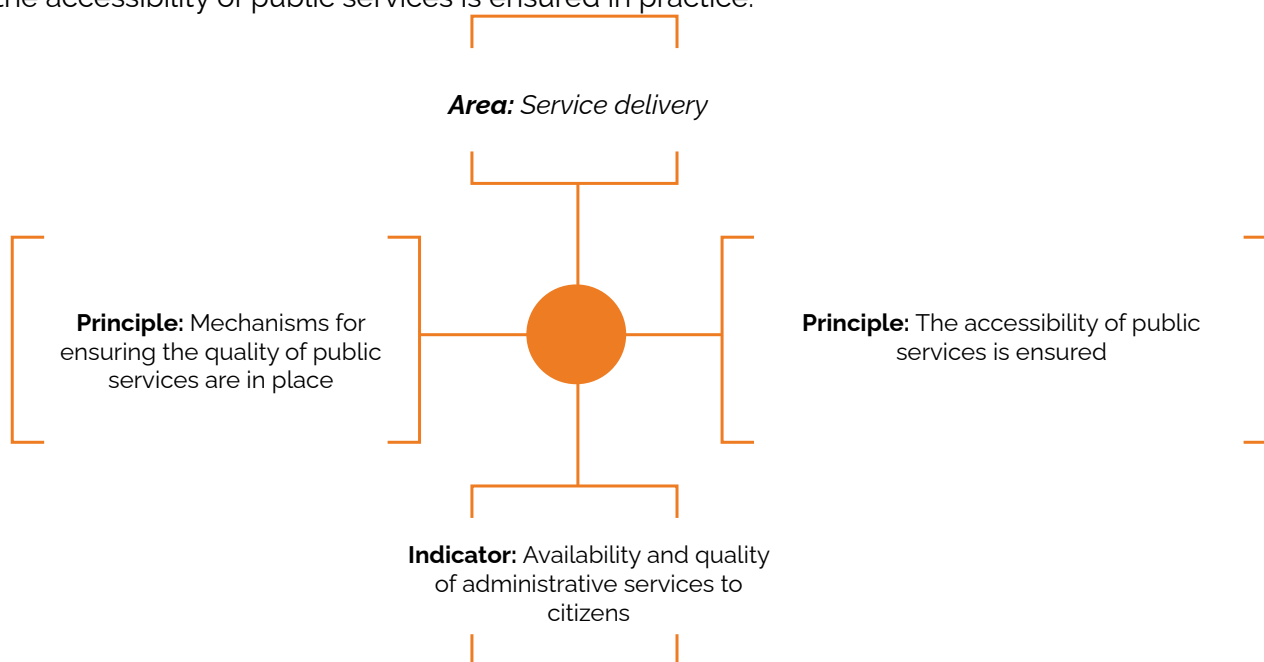
With the adoption of the Law on General Administrative Procedure in 2016, the legal framework for the simplification of administrative procedures was defined, and two key innovations are directly aimed at reducing the burden on citizens when exercising their rights. First, this Law introduced, for the first time, the concept of a Single administrative point as one place where citizens can get all information and complete all tasks at one "counter". Secondly, this Law introduced the obligation to exchange data from official records between administrative bodies, which relieves citizens of the obligation to obtain documents that the authorities already possess.

Furthermore, the Law on Electronic Administration, which was adopted in 2018, established the normative framework for electronic administration. Among other things, the Law stipulates the obligation to use information technologies in the work of public administration bodies, both in administrative procedures and in communication with citizens.

In addition to the development of electronic services, it is necessary to simultaneously improve the quality of the provision of physical services, especially taking into account access to facilities for people with disabilities and access to services for members of national minorities in their native languages.

7.1. Monitoring focus

The situation within the fifth area of public administration – *Service delivery* is monitored through one indicator, which refers to the availability and quality of provision of administrative services to citizens. The indicator contains 8 elements designed to cover two principles of public administration – that there are mechanisms that ensure the quality of public services and that the accessibility of public services is ensured in practice.



7.2. Results of monitoring – assessment of the achievement

7.2.1 Accessibility and quality of provision of administrative services to citizens

Certain elements of the indicator monitor the extent to which mechanisms have been established, through a strategic and institutional framework, for the provision of administrative services in local government. The degree of development of the mechanisms is monitored through the establishment of a single administrative point, facilitating access to services for persons with disabilities, enabling access to digital services and through the availability of services in the languages of national minorities, which are in official use in LGUs. The first two elements cover the public policy document that deals with improving the quality of public services. After that, the degree of satisfaction of citizens with the services provided by the local administration, as well as the availability of services in the languages of national minorities, and accessibility for persons with disabilities is examined. A special aspect that is monitored within the indicators is the availability of services on the *eUprava* portal.

The indicator contains eight elements, and the table below presents all the elements, as well as the maximum and average number of points achieved for each of the elements.

Table 11. Indicator 8. Accessibility and quality of provision of administrative services to citizens

Element no.	Name of the Element	Maximum number of points	Average number of points achieved
E.1	In local administration, there is a public policy document that deals with ensuring and increasing the quality of public services provided to citizens by local administration	4	1,06 (26,47%)
E.2	The public policy document dealing with improving the quality of public services to citizens is comprehensive	4	0,59 (14,71%)
E.3	A single administrative point was established in the local administration	2	0,94 (47,06%)
E.4	The degree of satisfaction of citizens with the services they received within the framework of a single administrative point in the local administration	4	0,35 (8,82%)
E.5	Services provided by the local administration are available on the eUprava portal	4	0,71 (17,65%)
E.6	The local administration provides services to citizens in all languages in official use and members of national minorities are provided with access to services in the languages of national minorities (for those LGUs in which the language of the national minority is in official use)	2	1,65 (82,35%)
E.7	Persons with disabilities have access to facilities where administrative services are provided	4	2,47 (61,76%)
E.8	The LGU website contains all the necessary and easily accessible information about services and how to provide services for citizens	4	2,24 (55,88%)
TOTAL		28	10 (35,71%)
AVERAGE RATING (scale 0–5)		1,82	
RATING (scale 0–5)		2	

The maximum number of points for this indicator is 28. Based on the analysis of the situation in 17 local administrations, the average number of points for this indicator is 10, or 35,71% of the total number of possible points. The rating on a six-point scale of 0–5 is 2 (average rating 1.82), which eight local administrations won. Four administrations were rated 1, two were rated 0 and 4, and one was rated 3. No local administration achieved a rating of 5.

Monitoring revealed that in 10 cities and municipalities there is no defined strategic framework for ensuring and increasing the quality of public services provided to citizens by local administrations. Only two municipalities – Despotovac and Zvezdara, defined these frameworks in separate documents, while in the remaining five local administrations this was done within the framework of some other documents. However, as a rule, those documents are not comprehensive, because at the level of goals and measures, defined minimum elements have not been identified, which include: 1) the introduction, i.e. the development (if it already exists) of a single administrative point in the administration (one stop shop), 2) improving the accessibility of public services for all users with a special aspect for people with disabilities, 3) achieving equal territorial access for public services in the territory of large cities and municipalities, which are territorially dispersed, and 4) enabling access to services in the languages of national minorities in those areas in which have more than one language in official use.

Zvezdara: The management of municipality of Zvezdara (GO Zvezdara) has been applying the international ISO 9001 standard in its work since 2009, which refers to the requirements of service users regarding their quality. This means that on an annual level, goals are set in connection with the improvement of the service delivery to individuals and legal entities, processes are monitored within all organizational units of the Administration, and the set goals are evaluated for the purposes of creating an annual analysis of achievements. From the *Analysis of GO Zvezdara goals for 2020*, it is concluded that 80% of service users are satisfied with the courtesy and helpfulness of the employees, and that the rating of user satisfaction with the work of the Administration is 3,92 on a scale of 1–5. The percentage of annulled decisions and conclusions of higher authorities (organizational units of the Administration) in 2020 ranged from 0 to 1%, and the highest number of subsequently annulled decisions and conclusions was made by the Department for construction affairs. The percentage of cases that are resolved within the legal term ranges from 92 to 100%, and the Department for social affairs is the most effective in this regard, while the percentage of pending cases out of the total number of active cases in 2020 ranged from 0 to 3,4%. The Department for construction affairs had the most active pending cases at the end of 2020. Out of 24 indicators that measure the success of goals in relation to user requirements and the level of services, 22 indicators were achieved in 2020, i.e. 91,7%. For more details, see: Report on the local administration: city municipality of Zvezdara (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-gradska-opstina-zvezdara/>).

Subotica: Features of the single administrative point in the city administration of the city of Subotica has a service center established in 2004 on the ground floor of the city administration building on an area of about 200 m². By establishing a service center, the city administration wanted to ensure that citizens can exercise their rights and fulfill their obligations in one place in the fastest and simplest way. Since the establishment of the service center, there has been continuous work on its modernization, through employee training and the introduction of innovative procedures. In accordance with the City Statute, all forms and required documents are available in four official languages: Serbian, Hungarian, Bunjevac and Croatian. In the service center, there is a system where users choose in which official language they want to exercise their right, and in accordance with the chosen language, the local official speaks in the chosen language. All services provided by the city administration are available to users in the service center, and in addition to submitting various requests and submissions from the scope of work of the city administration, they can get all the necessary information, as well as download certain documents. For more details, see: *Report on the local government: city of Subotica* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-subotica/>).

The concept of a single administrative point was developed in order to provide better and more efficient services to citizens. It implies that all information is obtained and all requests are submitted and resolved in one place in the local administration. The basis for the establishment of the Single administrative point is found in the Law on General Administrative Procedure, and its goal is to make the procedure easier for citizens and to consolidate the administrative tasks performed by one or more different bodies, in a way that would enable the user to exercise their rights more easily and efficiently. However, since the concept of a Single administrative point is not fundamentally defined, certain elements need to be worked out by a by-law, which was not done until the implementation of this monitoring. Therefore, the research methodology foresees that under the Single administrative point, it will be considered that citizens are enabled to submit multiple (related) requests in one place, whereby multiple rights could be exercised only through one visit of the party to the counter or through one request on the web-service. Through monitoring, it was determined that the features of the Single administrative point exist in eight of the 17 observed administrations.

Zvezdara: In the Counter Hall of GO Zvezdara, there is a *Book of impressions* in which, in the period from November 2021 to April 2022, a total of 7 users left their comments, 4 of which were positive (57,1%). For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: city municipality of Zvezdara* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-gradska-opstina-zvezdara/>).

One of the ways to check citizens' satisfaction with the services provided by the local administration is to look at the *Book of impressions*, which should be available to citizens in the room where the Single administrative point is located. The Book of impressions exists only in two administrations – Subotica and Zvezdara.

Subotica: In the service center of the City Administration, there is a *Book of impressions* that was filled in by a total of five users in the period from November 2021 to April 2022, with four comments being positive (80%). For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: the city of Subotica* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-subotica/>).

Furthermore, the availability of services to citizens in all languages in official use was analyzed in this area. The purpose of this element is to examine whether members of national minorities have access to services in their mother tongue. In accordance with the Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts, in the territory of LGUs where members of national minorities traditionally live, their language and script may be in equal official use. LGUs are obliged to introduce in their statutes the language and script of the national minority into equal official use, if the percentage of members of that national minority in the total number of inhabitants in the territory of the city or municipality reaches 15% according to the results of the last population census.²⁶ Out of 17 LGUs, in six of them the language of the national minority is in official use. The findings of the monitoring indicate an uneven practice in these LGUs when it comes to providing services to citizens in the languages of national minorities.

When it comes to the availability of local services on the eGovernment portal²⁷, led by the Office for Information Technologies and Electronic Administration of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the findings also indicate uneven practice. The analysis was performed on a sample of three public services, namely:

- » registration of a child in a preschool institution,
- » submitting a request for the issuance of a birth certificate,
- » submitting a request for location information (Art. 53 of the Law on Planning and Construction).

The findings indicate that only one administration – the municipality of Vlasotince, has all three services on the *eUprava* portal. Another four administrations have at least two services, and the

²⁶ Law on the Official Use of Languages and Script, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 45/91, 53/93, 67/93, 48/94, 101/2005 - other Law, 30/2010, 47/2018 and 48/2018 - corr. Art. 11

²⁷ <https://euprava.gov.rs/>

service of submitting a request for the issuance of a birth certificate is most often missing. Other administrations either do not use the portal at all or have only one of the analyzed services

Special attention within the framework of monitoring was devoted to verifying whether persons with disabilities are provided with unhindered access to facilities where the local administration provides administrative services. This is about testing standards that are regulated by the Rulebook on technical standards for planning, design and construction of buildings²⁸, and which ensure unhindered movement and access for people with disabilities, children and the elderly. The analysis found that slightly more than 60% of local governments meet the standards defined by this Rulebook.

Zvezdara: At the left external entrance to the building of the Administration building of GO Zvezdara, there is a ramp that enables unhindered entry into the building for people in wheelchairs, and inside the building there is an electric passenger elevator that enables unhindered movement and stay in the Administration building. Also, a separate toilet for people with disabilities has been built on the ground floor of the building, and accessibility to public transport has been made possible. Namely, appropriate sidewalks, footpaths, pedestrian crossings and pedestrian islands, public transport stops were built in the immediate public environment of the Administration building, and parking spaces for people with disabilities were reserved and marked. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: city municipality of Zvezdara* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-gradska-opstina-zvezdara/>).

Valjevo: The City Administration building meets the conditions prescribed by the Rulebook, which ensures unhindered movement and access for people with disabilities, children and the elderly. There is a specially marked parking space in front of the building, the building itself can be entered without hindrance from the pedestrian area and no ramp, lifting platform, etc. is needed, while the building allows for unhindered movement and stay, given that there is an elevator. It should also be noted that the counter hall is located on the ground floor of the building. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: city of Valjevo* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-valjevo/>).

Finally, an important prerequisite for the easy availability of administrative services is timely information to the public about the services that local administration provides to citizens and the way they are provided. This means that a list of all services provided by the local government, as well as a description of each service, contact information of the official or organizational unit that provides a certain service, or in the case of online services, a description of all necessary steps that must be taken in order to provide the service (creating an account, installing the application, etc.). The monitoring was carried out on a sample of three public services, namely:

- » issuance of building permits for the construction of buildings,
- » the procedure for enrolling children in a preschool institution,
- » issuance of the marriage certificate.

The research found that information about the mentioned public services is available on slightly more than 50% of the analyzed websites, and that they are easily accessible to citizens, as they can be reached with a maximum of three clicks from the home page.

²⁸ Rulebook on technical standards of planning, design and construction of buildings, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 22/2015

Prokuplje: On the website of the city of Prokuplje, there is a special icon to facilitate access to the site, services and information for blind and partially sighted people. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: the city of Prokuplje* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-prokuplje/>).

Valjevo: On the website of the city of Valjevo, there is a section Services to citizens, which contains a description of services, contact information – phone number and electronic address of officials / organizational units responsible for providing useful information to citizens, as well as information about the place where the service is provided, including the address, working hours – if the services are partially or fully online, all necessary information is provided. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: city of Valjevo* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-valjevo/>).

What do the citizens say?

Despite the legal framework on obtaining data from official records, set by the Law on General Administrative Procedure, only 26,98% of respondents said that the official informed them that he could obtain the documents instead of them. In all other situations (73,02%), citizens were asked to submit documents from official records themselves. Citizens' impressions of the quality of services provided by local administrations are divided. While 12,13% of them are completely satisfied with the services, and 31,06% are somewhat satisfied with the quality of services provided by local administrations, which indicates that a total of 43,19% of respondents have a positive attitude towards the quality of services. On the other hand, 40,89% have a negative attitude about the quality of local services, and 18,74% of the respondents are somewhat dissatisfied, while 22,15% are completely dissatisfied with the services. The remaining 14,95% of respondents stated that they could not estimate, because they had not used local services in the last 2 years. The findings further indicate the need to give citizens the opportunity to express their opinion or experience regarding the services provided to them by the administration, as 84,14% of respondents answered that they did not have the opportunity to share their impressions with the local administration about the services provided.

PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

8

Public financial management is probably the most complex area, as evidenced by the fact that as many as 16 SIGMA principles of public administration are found in this area. This area consists of four major units: budget management, internal control and audit, public procurement and external audit. The overall assessment of public administration and good management, especially the planning process and the degree of transparency of the work of public administration, including local self-government, is often based on the observation and analysis of budget processes.

In Serbia, the main guidelines for public financial management are defined in the *Public Financial Management Reform Program for the period 2021–2025* which was adopted by the Government in 2021. The general goal of the Program is to achieve a sustainable budget with a stable public debt, in relation to GDP, with the help of better financial management and control, the internal audit process and the connection of budget planning with Government policies.²⁹ Of course, considering the planning system of the Republic of Serbia and the fact that this Program is part of the ten-year *Public Administration Reform Strategy*, which was also adopted in 2021, this general goal from the program is one of the Strategy's special goals.

This area found a special place in the Program for the Reform of the Local Self-Government System, as a special goal that implies the improvement of the local self-government financing system. From the perspective of monitoring public administration reform at the local government level, and from the point of view of civil society organizations, two measures are particularly significant in this area. The first – support to LGUs for the improvement of the budget planning process is foreseen for direct support to a certain number of LGUs as to prepare the medium-term plans, which operationalize development plans and other planning documents by harmonizing them with budget planning. The second measure refers to improving the transparency of the local finance system. This is a very significant measure, which is in the special focus of civil society and citizens. Increasing the availability of information on local public finances is one of the key demands of local civil society organizations, but also of other international partners and expert

²⁹ Public financial management reform program for the period 2021–2025, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 70/2021

bodies. It is through this measure, and a series of activities within it, that the Government decided the direction for improving the transparency of local public finances. One of the activities refers to the establishment of a public display in an electronically readable format of local budgets.³⁰

Electronic or machine-readable formats are a very important aspect of transparency and are one of the key factors for the concept of "open data". Institutions produce and collect a large amount of different data, and by ensuring its availability in an open format, they make it easily accessible to a wide range of users. Institutions thereby ensure not only a higher level of publicity of the work, but also provide citizens and the economy with the opportunity to create some new value from that data (application, business model, visualization, map, research project, etc.). In the Republic of Serbia, the Law on Electronic Administration³¹ introduces the concept of open data, defines their reuse, as well as other conditions under which the authorities allow or restrict citizens' access to open data. Also, in order to facilitate access and search of open data, a national internet portal was launched³² which in one place collects all open data produced and published by state authorities, including cities and municipalities. Open data are data that are created as a result of the work of the authorities on some activities and can concern any aspect of the work of the authorities. This can be data on spending money from the budget, training of officials, public procurement, concluded contracts, etc.

The modern European system of public procurement, to which Serbia aspires, is based on a series of principles that include: transparency, equal treatment, competitiveness and freedom of market competition and non-discrimination.

Bearing in mind that the Republic of Serbia is in the process of joining the European Union, the starting points for the modernization of the public procurement system are based on public procurement priorities, which the European Union established in its Public Procurement Strategy. That are:

- ensuring wider acceptance of innovative, green and social procurement,
- professionalization of clients,
- increasing access to procurement markets,
- improving transparency, integrity and availability of data,
- digital transformation of procurement,
- cooperation for joint procurement.

The strategic direction of improving the public procurement system in Serbia is defined by the *Public Procurement Development Program for the period 2019-2023*. The Program defines as a general goal the further development of a modern and efficient public procurement system, with a focus on the efficiency and economy of procedures, strengthening competition on the public procurement market, reducing the risk of irregularities and encouraging environmental and social aspects in public procurement.

The field of public procurement in the Republic of Serbia is governed by the Law on Public Procurement.³³ The law improved transparency in public procurement procedures, procurement

³⁰ Program for the reform of the system of local self-government in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2025, p. 133-134.

³¹ Law on electronic administration, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 27/2018

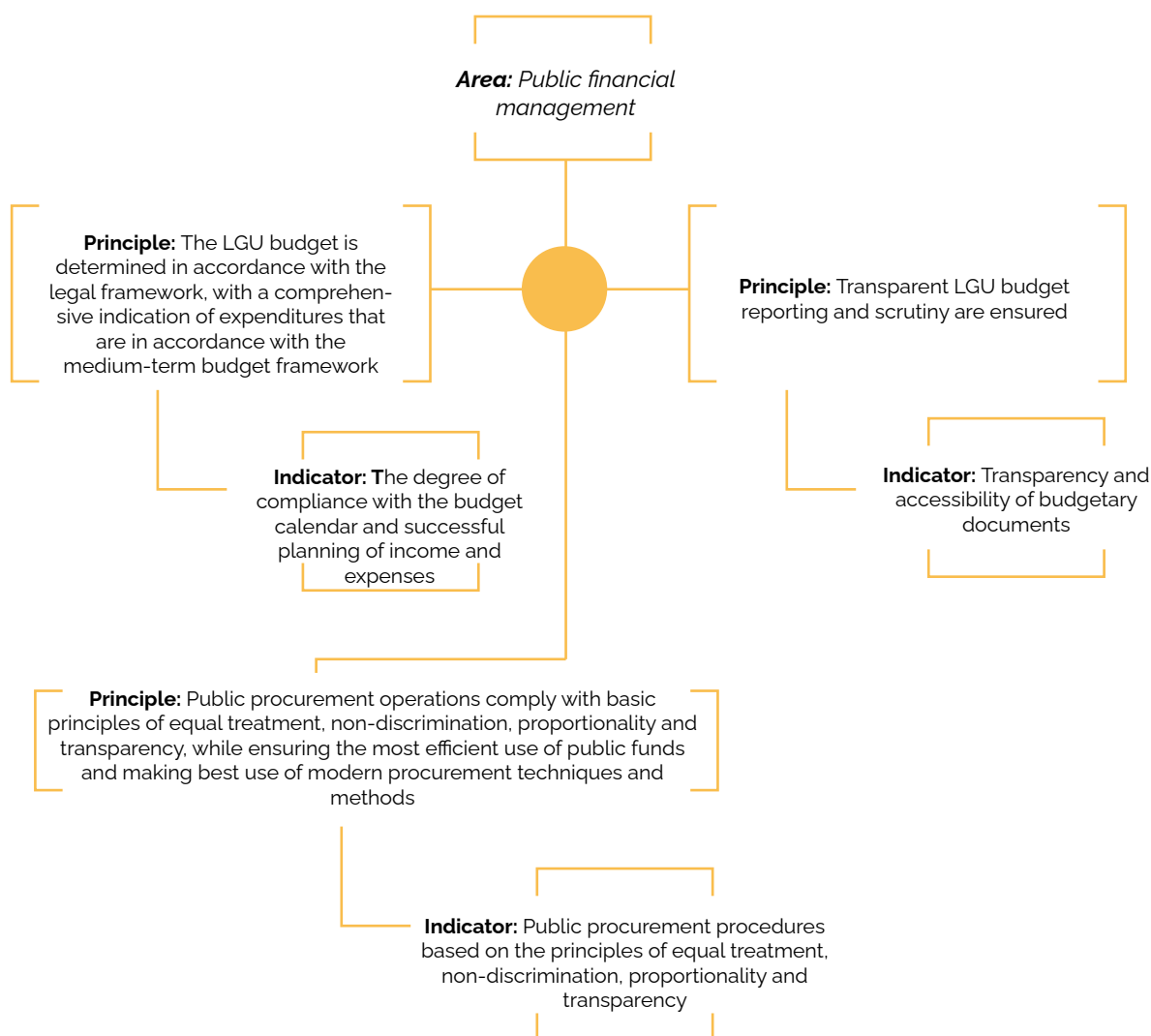
³² The national open data portal is available via the link www.data.gov.rs

³³ Law on Public Procurement, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 91/2019.

planning, simplified the way of proving the mandatory conditions for participation in the public procurement procedure, provided for the establishment of a Register of Bidders, reduced the possibility of rejecting offers for formal reasons, provided for the obligation to record and monitor the execution and amendment of public procurement contracts, organized implementation of centralized public procurements, introduced the possibility of concluding framework agreements, as well as competitive dialogue, as a new type of public procurement procedure. Also, the competences of the Public Procurement Office and the Republic Commission for the Protection of Rights in Public Procurement Procedures (Republic Commission) have been significantly expanded, with the aim of more effective application of the law.

8.1. Monitoring focus

The situation within the sixth area of public administration – *Public financial management* is monitored through three indicators, which refer to the observance of the budget calendar and planning of budget income and expenses, budget transparency and the basis of public procurement procedures on the principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, proportionality and transparency. All three indicators contain several elements designed to cover the three principles of public administration – that the LGU budget is determined in accordance with the legal framework, with a comprehensive indication of expenses, that the transparency of the LGU budget is ensured, that public procurement is based on the basic principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, proportionality and transparency.



8.2. Results of monitoring – assessment of the achievement

8.2.1 The degree of compliance with the budget calendar and successful planning of income and expenses

The elements of this indicator cover the process of budget preparation and adoption. The budget system law regulates the budget calendar and deadlines for the implementation of each phase during the preparation and adoption of the budget. Also, the Law on the Budget System and the Instructions for the Preparation of the Budget, prepared every year by the Ministry of Finance, define the uniform program structure of the LGU budget. In planning revenues, the local government is obliged to plan them in advance – it is necessary to start from the realization of income for three quarters of the previous year and their assessment for the last quarter of that year, which is the basis for their increase. The first three elements focus on respecting the budget calendar, one element follows the respect of the programmatic approach in creating the budget, while the last two elements refer to the degree of success of income and expenditure planning.

The indicator contains six elements, and the table below presents all the elements, as well as the maximum and average number of achieved points for each of the elements.

Table 12. Indicator 9. The degree of compliance with the budget calendar and successful planning of income and expenses

Element no.	Name of the Element	Maximum number of points	Average number of points achieved
E.1	Preparation of the budget in accordance with the budget calendar	4	2,59 (64,71%)
E.2	Budget proposal in accordance with the budget calendar	2	0,94 (47,06%)
E.3	Adoption of the budget in accordance with the budget calendar	4	2,35 (58,82%)
E.4	The degree of comprehensiveness of the budget according to the program structure of the budget	2	1,29 (64,71%)
E.5	The degree of success of income planning in the LGU budget	4	2,94 (73,53%)
E.6	The degree of success of expenses planning in the LGU budget	4	2,47 (61,76%)
TOTAL		20	12,59 (62,94%)
AVERAGE RATING (scale 0–5)			2,88
RATING (scale 0–5)			3

The maximum number of points for this indicator is 20. Based on the analysis of the situation in 17 local administrations, the average number of points for this indicator is 12,59, or 62,94% of the total number of possible points. The grade on a six-point scale of 0–5 is 3 (average grade 2,88). Five administrations received a grade of 2 or 3. Four administrations were graded 2, three were graded 5, two were graded 4, and one each was graded 0 or 1.

The analysis of the compliance of the budget calendar during the preparation of local budgets included detailed monitoring of the compliance of the deadlines for the preparation of the budget, established by Article 31 of the Law:

- » **August 1st** – the local administrative body responsible for finances submits instructions for the preparation of the draft budget of the local government,
- » **September 1st** – direct users of local government budget funds submit a proposal for a financial plan to the local administrative body responsible for finances, for the budget year and the following two fiscal years, which contains a report on the performance of the program for the first six months of the current year,
- » **October 15th** – the local administrative body responsible for finances submits a draft decision on the budget to the competent executive body of the local government,
- » **November 1st** – the competent executive body of the local government submits a proposal for a budget decision to the assembly of the local government,
- » **December 20th** – the local government assembly makes a decision on the local government budget,
- » **December 25th** – the local administrative body responsible for finances submits the decision on the local government budget to the minister.

In order to identify in detail the possible phases that are the most problematic, all deadlines established by the Law on the Budget System were analyzed through three different elements, according to whose jurisdiction the activities are located. As a sample for examining these deadlines, the process of adopting the last valid budget was analyzed, i.e. the compliance of the budget calendar during the preparation of decisions on the budget of 17 cities and municipalities for the 2022.

The first element included three initial deadlines, in which the local administrative authority responsible for finances plays a key role. In seven local administrations, all three deadlines were met and the draft decision on the budget was forwarded to the competent executive body of the local government no later than October 15. In six administrations, certain activities were carried out within the defined deadlines, but the local administrative bodies responsible for finances did not submit the draft budget decisions to the competent executive body of the local government by the final deadline (October 15). The next phase, which implies that by November 1, the competent executive body of the local government submits a proposal for a decision on the budget to the assembly of the local government, turned out to be a somewhat weaker link, as this deadline was met in slightly less than 50% of the analyzed cases. Nevertheless, the analysis of the latest deadlines indicates that in certain situations the assemblies of local authorities made decisions on the budget within the given deadlines, despite the fact that they did not receive a proposal for a decision from the executive authorities on time. Certain non-compliance with the deadline was also found in the last stage, which involves submitting the decision to the Ministry of Finance, even in some cases when the decisions were adopted on time.

Despotovac: The municipality administration of the municipality of Despotovac prepared the draft budget in accordance with the defined deadlines, but the draft decision on the budget was not submitted to the Assembly of the municipality of Despotovac in a timely manner. Despite this, on December 20, 2021, the Assembly passed the Decision on the budget for 2022, after which it was submitted to the Ministry of Finance. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: municipality of Despotovac* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-despotovac/>).

Zvezdara: In the Decision on the budget of city municipality of Zvezdara, expenditures and expenditures in the budget are shown by program classification, and the budget contains several gender-responsive goals in the following programs:

Program 11 – Social and child protection (indicators: 50% of women among all beneficiaries of material support measures, 12 women employed through the measures of the Local Employment Action Plan).

Program 14 – Development of sports and youth (indicators: 1,000 girls involved in sports activities in relation to the total number of school children, 100 girls beneficiaries of the youth policy). For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: city municipality of Zvezdara* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-gradska-opstina-zvezdara/>).

Further analysis included checking whether the adopted budgets follow the prescribed uniform program structure of the LGU budget, as well as the existence of the practice of gender-responsive budgeting. The program structure of the budget is regulated by the Law on the Budget System and the Instructions for the Preparation of LGU Budgets, which are prepared every year by the Ministry of Finance. The budget structure includes 17 uniform programs within which program goals, program activities and indicators need to be defined³⁴. In addition, the monitoring included an analysis of whether there is a gender-responsive goal in budget decisions. The law on the budget system stipulates that gender-responsive budgeting represents the introduction of the principle of gender equality into the budget process, which implies a gender analysis of the budget and the restructuring of income and expenses with the aim of improving gender equality. The analysis of 17 decisions on the budget showed that expenditures were shown according to program classification and that there is at least one gender-responsive goal in 11 cities and municipalities.

The last two elements of the indicator measure the success of LGUs in planning budget income and expenses. The success of income and expenses planning was measured on the basis of data from the initially adopted Decision on the budget for the observed year (not the last Decision on budget rebalancing) and the Decision on the final account for the same year. When it comes to income, the Research Methodology provided for the analysis of only current income originally belonging to LGUs (economic classification 7 and 8), without self-contributions (711180), capital transfers from RS and APV (733252), loans (911) and donation. In analyzing budget expenses, the research methodology provided that only planned and executed current expenses should be taken into account (economic classification 4, without capital transfers 4632, because they are obtained from RS and APV) and capital expenses (economic classification 5).

The findings of the monitoring show that cities and municipalities are more successful in planning income than expenses. In nine LGUs, a discrepancy between planned and realized income of less than 15% was recorded, while in six administrations the discrepancy was between 15% and 40%. Only one LGU had a deviation greater than 40%. When it comes to expenses, in six LGUs the deviation between planned and actual expenses was less than 15%, while in eight the deviation was between 15% and 40%. This analysis was done for the 2020, because that was the last fiscal year for which data were available at the time of monitoring. Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that the fiscal year 2020 was extraordinary by all parameters, due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, and existing deviations in terms of planning and execution of budget income and expenses should be interpreted in this light.

³⁴ The document containing the objectives of the program and program activities and the list of uniform indicators can be found on the website of the Ministry of Finance: https://www.mfin.gov.rs/upload/media/jUNDBf_601681d337088.pdf

8.2.2 Transparency and accessibility of the budgetary documents

This indicator monitors whether and to what extent key budget documents in cities and municipalities are transparent and accessible. The documents that are monitored include decisions on the budget, reports on the execution of the budget during the year and decisions on the final account. The first three elements focus on the availability and access to documents on the JLS website. The remaining elements focus on the transparency and quality of the data from these documents, in relation to how citizen-friendly they are, whether they contain performance information and whether the data is available in an open format (open data).

The indicator contains eight elements, and the table below presents all the elements as well as the maximum or average number of points for each of the elements.

Table 13. Indicator 11. Transparency and accessibility of the budgetary documents

Element no.	Name of the Element	Maximum number of points	Average number of points achieved
E.1	The adopted annual budget of LGUs is easily available on the official website of LGUs	4	3,53 (88,24%)
E.2	Reports on the execution of the budget during the year are easily available on the official website of the JLS	4	0,82 (20,59%)
E.3	Decisions on the final budget account are easily available on the official JLS website	4	1,88 (47,06%)
E.4	Budget execution reports contain data on budget spending in terms of programmatic, functional, organizational and economic classification	4	1,41 (35,29%)
E.5	Information on the use of budget reserves is easily available on the official website of the JLS	2	0,47 (11,76%)
E.6	Citizens' guides through the Budget Decision are regularly published on the LGU website and easily accessible	4	3,06 (76,47%)
E.7	Citizens' guide through the decision on the final budget account is easily accessible to citizens	2	0,24 (11,76%)
E.8	Budget data is published in an open format (open data)	2	1 (50%)
TOTAL		26	12,41 (47,74%)
AVERAGE RATING (scale 0–5)		2,24	
RATING (scale 0–5)		2	

The maximum number of points for this indicator is 26. Based on the analysis of the situation in 17 local administrations, the average number of points achieved for this indicator is 12,41, or 47,74% of the total number of possible points. The grade on a six-point scale from 0–5 is 2 (average grade 2,24). Six administrations won a grade of 2, three administrations got a grade of 1 or 4, and two got a grade of 0 or 3. One administration got the highest grade of 5 (City municipality of Zvezdara).

The basic requirement regarding budget transparency refers to the easy availability of adopted budgets on the official websites of cities and municipalities. Through monitoring, it was determined that 14 local governments have easily accessible budget decisions for the current (2022) and

previous fiscal year (2021) on their websites, while in two LGUs decisions for 2021 are available, but not for 2022. On the other hand, only one municipality did not publish any decision on the website, but the decisions are available through the Official Gazette of the municipality.

Vršac: On the website of the city of Vršac, the budget decisions for 2021 and 2022 can be easily accessed from the main page, with just two clicks. Also, within the Documents and forms menu on the main page of the site, there is a Finance page. By clicking on this page, a page opens where basic Budget Decisions and Budget Rebalancing Decisions for each year in the period 2014-2022 are available in PDF format. For more details: *Report on the local administration: the city of Vršac* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-vrsac/>)

For citizens, the transparency of the spending of funds from the budget is of even greater importance, which they can monitor thanks to reports on the execution of the budget. The Law on the Budget System prescribed mandatory six-monthly, nine-monthly and annual reporting on the execution of the budget (Statement of accounts). Decisions on the Budget statement of accounts are acts by which the assemblies of local authorities determine the total realized income, revenues, expenses, expenditures and financial results of the budget of local authorities (budget deficit or surplus) for each budget year. The research methodology additionally predicted that the existence of monthly and quarterly budget execution reports will be especially valued as a good practice, precisely because of the importance of the budget as an instrument that allocates public funds to meet the needs of the public interest. The subject of the research was reports on budget execution for the previous calendar year (year 2021). Unlike budget decisions, which are largely easily accessible, the transparency of spending reports is insufficient. Only one municipality – Zvezdara, prepares monthly, in addition to six-month and nine-month budget execution reports. On the other hand, on the website of even 11 administrations, it is not possible to easily find at least two reports on budget execution, the preparation of which is mandatory according to the Law on the Budget System. Furthermore, in as many as seven administrations, decisions on the final budget account are not available.

Zvezdara: City municipality of Zvezdara prepares six-monthly and nine-monthly reports on budget execution, as well as Statements of accounts. These reports are easily available on the municipality's website. Also, the Department of Finance and Economy prepares various monthly reports on the execution of the budget for the needs of various authorities, but of all the monthly reports, only the one that is an integral part of the Informant on the work of City municipality of Zvezdara is publicly available. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: city municipality of Zvezdara* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-gradska-opstina-zvezdara/>)

Apart from the problem of accessibility, there is an additional shortcoming of budget execution reports that concerns their structure. The analysis also included an overview of the structure of expenses and expenditures and their presentation according to the following classifications:

- » organizational, according to budget users (e.g. city / municipal administration, city / municipal council, etc.),
- » economic, according to the type of expenditure (e.g. social protection, salaries, capital investments, donations, subsidies, etc.),
- » functional, according to the purpose / sector of expenditure (e.g. education, housing, health care, etc.),
- » programmatic, according to program activities and projects.

Three documents were taken as a sample: the last available six-month and nine-month budget execution report (2021), as well as the last available Decision on the Statement of accounts (2020). The analysis showed that in only five analyzed reports on the execution of the budget, expenses were classified according to all four classifications – organizational, economic, functional and programmatic. The picture is even worse when it comes to the use of budget reserves, because data on this is available in only two decisions on the final account.

Subotica: Within the Decision on the consolidated final account of the City of Subotica for 2020, there is also a Report on the use of current and permanent budget reserve funds. This report as well as the decision itself are easily available on the city's website. The report is exhaustive in terms of indicating the use of both current and permanent budget reserves. In 2020, the mayor passed 35 decisions for the use of the current budget reserve in the total amount of more than 80 million Dinars, and one decision for the use of the permanent budget reserve in the amount of 6 million Dinars. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: the city of Subotica* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-grad-subotica/>).

Furthermore, the monitoring included the analysis of citizens' guides on budget documents. Citizen guides through budget decisions and Statement of accounts decisions were analyzed.

Zvezdara: On the front page of the official website of city municipality of Zvezdara, there is a special banner Budget for citizens, within which citizens' guides through the decision on the budget and the decision on the Statement of accounts have been published since 2018. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: city municipality of Zvezdara* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-gradska-opstina-zvezdara/>).

A citizen's guide to the budget is a document that communicates the purpose and main elements of the annual budget to the general public in a simplified manner. Also, the citizen's guide through the decision on the Statement of accounts implies that the information on realized income and expenses, execution by budget users, and by functions, i.e. areas of jurisdiction of LGUs, is clearly and transparently presented. In recent years, the practice of creating citizens' guides has been developing at the level of local self-government units, primarily thanks to the efforts of the Standing Conference of Cities and Municipalities. The research showed that almost all local governments have the practice of preparing citizens' guides through the budget, but the practice is completely different when it comes to the preparation of citizens' guides through the decision on the Statement of accounts, because only two municipalities – Zvezdara and Vlasotince, have this practice.

The last segment of the research was about whether budget data is published in an open format on the national Open Data Portal. Publishing budget data in an open format means that datasets are available that are: 1) machine-readable (CSV, XLS, XML, JSON, RDF, TXT, etc.), 2) available for multiple downloads by different users, and 3) free. The results of the analysis indicate an uneven practice in publishing data on the budget and its spending. Through monitoring, it was determined that six administrations do not publish budget data in an open format, that five administrations have data for one fiscal year, and that six cities and municipalities have published data for two fiscal years on the national portal.

Despotovac: The Open Data Portal (<https://budzeti.data.gov.rs/>) contains the budget data of the municipality of Despotovac covering the years 2020, 2021 and 2022. For more details, see: *Report on the local administration: Despotovac municipality* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaji-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-despotovac/>).

8.2.3. Public procurement procedures are based on the principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, proportionality and transparency

This indicator checks whether public procurement is based on the principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, proportionality and transparency. The elements of this indicator cover the key principles on which the system of public procurement procedures is based. The focus is on examining public procurement procedures in practice, that is, checking whether and to what extent they are carried out in accordance with regulations and defined principles, with a special focus on the use of the Public Procurement Portal. The new Law on Public Procurement, which regulates the rules of public procurement procedures, was adopted in 2019. The law defines the principles that the contracting authorities are obliged to adhere to. They imply that the contracting authorities are obliged to act in an economical and efficient manner, to ensure competition, the equal position of all business entities, without discrimination, as well as to act in a transparent and proportional manner.³⁵ In accordance with the Law, the contracting authority is obliged to take all necessary measures to prevent corruption in the planning of public procurements, in the public procurement process or during the execution of public procurement contracts, in order to detect corruption in a timely manner, to eliminate or reduce harmful consequences of corruption and how the participants in corruption would be punished.³⁶

The indicator contains eight elements, and all elements are presented in the table below, as well as the maximum or average number of achieved points for each of the elements.

Table 14. Indicator 12. Public procurement procedures based on the principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, proportionality and transparency

Element no.	Name of the Element	Maximum number of points	Average number of points achieved
E.1	The city / municipal administration has adopted an internal act that regulates the public procurement procedure more closely in accordance with the Law on Public Procurement	2	1,76 (88,24%)
E.2	An organizational unit has been established in the local government whose scope of work is the implementation of public procurement and there are personnel capacities for the implementation of public procurement in accordance with the regulations	4	2,47 (61,76%)
E.3	The local government uses the public procurement portal to implement public procurement procedures	4	3,53 (88,24%)
E.4	Average number of bidders in public procurement procedures	4	1,06 (26,47%)
E.5	Share of public procurement procedures that were awarded to the only bidder who participated in the procedure	4	2 (50%)
E.6	The share of public procurement procedures in which the Republic Commission for the Protection of Rights in Public Procurement Procedures issued a decision on prohibiting the procedure, conclusion or execution of public procurement contracts	4	3,29 (82,35%)
E.7	The public procurement procedure is carried out by a competent commission in accordance with the Law on Public Procurement	4	2,59 (64,71%)
E.8	Availability of information on the initiation and outcome of the public procurement procedure on the JLS website	2	0,76 (38,24%)
TOTAL		28	17,47 (62,39%)
AVERAGE RATING (scale 0-5)			3
RATING (scale 0-5)			3

³⁵ Law on Public Procurement, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 91/2019, Art. 5.

³⁶ Law on Public Procurement, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 91/2019, Art. 49.

The maximum number of points for this indicator is 28. Based on the analysis of the situation in 17 local administrations, the average number of points for this indicator is 17,47 or 62,39% of the total number of possible points. The rating on a six-point scale of 0–5 is 3 (average rating 3). Six administrations received a rating of 4 or 3, two administrations received a rating of 1, and one received a rating of 0. One administration received the highest rating of 5 (Vlasotince).

Monitoring has shown that 15 out of 17 cities and municipalities have adopted an internal act that more closely regulates the method of planning, conducting the public procurement procedure and monitoring the execution of public procurement contracts (method of communication, rules, obligations and responsibilities of persons and organizational units), then the method of planning and the implementation of procurements, to which the Law on Public Procurement does not apply, as well as the procurement of social and other special services. The obligation to adopt this act is regulated by paragraph 2 of Article 49 of the Law on Public Procurement. In addition to the normative framework, for the efficient performance of public procurement work, it is important that there are organizational and personnel capacities within the local administration for their implementation in accordance with the regulations. The analysis showed that in 12 local administrations an organizational unit was formed that deals with planning and implementation of public procurement in the form of a group, division or department. In particular, the level of employment was analyzed, in order to determine whether there are adequate capacities in practice. The analysis indicates that in nine of the 12 administrations, where the organizational unit was formed, at least 80% of the systematized jobs were filled.

When it comes to Public Procurement Portal, which was developed by the Public Procurement Office of the Ministry of Finance³⁷, monitoring reveals that local governments largely use the portal for conducting public procurement in accordance with the Law on Public Procurement. The use of the Portal is analyzed only for the procedures that the Law foresees to be carried out through it. Out of 17 administrations, 16 were found to use the Public Procurement Portal, of which even 14 do so in more than 80% of analyzed cases.

A special aspect of public procurement refers to the competitiveness of the procedures, which is two-fold within the framework of evaluation monitoring, namely through the average number of bidders in the procedures and the share of the procedures that were assigned to the only bidder who participated in the procedure. The analysis of all public procurement procedures in the last 12 months in 17 administrations shows that in slightly more than 50% of the implemented procedures, the average number of bidders is less than two. In slightly less than half of the cases, the average number of bidders is between two and three, and only in one municipality is there an average of three bidders. The situation in another aspect of the competitiveness of procedures is similar, although somewhat better. In five administrations, it is noted that in over 80% of cases the contract is awarded to the only bidder who participated in the procedure, while in seven administrations this is the situation in 50–80% of the analyzed cases. On the other hand, in five administrations, the share of public procurement procedures that were awarded to the only bidder that participated in the procedure is less than 50%.

Aleksinac: During 2021, the average number of bidders in the Aleksinac Municipal Administration in 106 public procurement procedures was three. Out of the total number of public procurement procedures (106), 41 procedures were completed by awarding the contract to the only bidder. See details in: *Report on the local administration: Municipality of Aleksinac* (<https://cep.org.rs/publications/izvestaj-o-stanju-lokalne-uprave-opstina-aleksinac/>).

³⁷ The new Public Procurement Portal started operating on July 1, 2020, and is available on the website: www.jnportal.ujn.gov.rs

Through further research, it was checked whether public procurement procedures are based on the principle of equal treatment of bidders and the prohibition of discrimination, by determining the share of public procurement procedures in which the Republic Commission for the Protection of Rights in Public Procurement Procedures made a decision to prohibit the procedure, conclusion or execution of contracts on public procurement. In accordance with Article 187 of the Law on Public Procurement, the Republic Commission for the Protection of Rights in Public Procurement Procedures has the authority to decide on the request for the protection of rights, appeals against the decision of the contracting authority, on the request for the protection of rights to prohibit the continuation of the public procurement procedure, the conclusion or execution of public procurement contracts, etc. The analysis showed that in 11 cities and municipalities there were no procedures for which the Republic Commission for the Protection of Rights made a decision to prohibit the procedure, conclusion or execution of public procurement contracts. In five administrations (Ivanjica, Niš, Novi Pazar, Tutin and Užice) there were between one and four such procedures, while no data was submitted for three local administrations (Vršac, Valjevo and Prokuplje).

The competences of the members of the commissions that carry out the procedure with the client was a special aspect that was analyzed. Article 92 of the Law on Public Procurement stipulates that the public procurement procedure, the estimated value of which exceeds 3,000,000 Dinars, is carried out by the public procurement commission appointed by the contracting authority. In the commission for public procurement, which as a rule has an odd number of members, one member must be a person who has acquired a higher education in the legal scientific field at second degree studies (graduate academic studies – master's, specialist academic studies, specialist vocational studies), i.e. higher education which is equated by law with the academic title of master's degree in basic studies lasting at least four years or a public procurement officer with higher education in second degree studies (graduate academic studies – master's, specialist academic studies, specialist vocational studies), i.e. higher education which is equated by law with the academic title of master's degree in basic studies lasting at least four years or a person who obtained a certificate for a public procurement officer by the date of entry into force of the Law on Public Procurement. The analysis was performed on a sample of the three most recently conducted public procurement procedures in 2021, the estimated value of which was over 3,000,000 Dinars. The results indicate that in 11 administrations, all procedures are carried out by an expert committee that was formed in accordance with the regulations, while in three administrations either there was no committee or the members of the commissions did not meet the prescribed conditions, and for three administrations no data was submitted.

Finally, monitoring includes proactive transparency and openness in the implementation of public procurement procedures. Article 105 of the Law on Public Procurement stipulates that advertisements are published through the Public Procurement Portal on standard forms, the content of which is determined by the Office for Public Procurement. However, the Methodology additionally provides that local governments should increase the transparency of public procurement by publishing information on the initiation and outcome of public procurement procedures on their own official website. The analysis indicates that only in five local governments there is data on both the initiation and the outcome of all public procurement procedures, while in three cities there is data on the initiation, but not on the outcome of the procedures. For the remaining nine administrations, there is no data on the initiation or outcome of public procurement procedures on the website.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9

9.1. Conclusions

The findings of the research showed that cities and municipalities in Serbia have a lot of room to improve their work in local administrations where the principles of public administration are fully applied. In a sample of 17 local self-government units, the average number of achieved points is 114,12 out of a possible 262 points, which is 43,56%. Accordingly, the assessment of all six analyzed areas of public administration in 17 cities and municipalities is 2 on a six-point scale of 0-5. Only seven cities and municipalities achieved a result of over 50%, and it is particularly important, and at the same time worrying, that even the most successful administrations, such as the City administration of the City of Subotica and the Municipal administration of the Municipality of Bečej, are at the level of around 60% fulfillment of all requirements of good management, set by the methodology of this research. In addition to seven administrations that were rated 3, eight city and municipal administrations were rated 2, and two city administrations were rated 1. No local administration was rated 0, 4 and 5.

However, a detailed analysis by area in all 17 LGUs indicates that the situation differs greatly not only between cities and municipalities, but also according to various areas of public administration.

When it comes to LGUs, the City administration of the City of Subotica and the Municipal administration of the Municipality of Bečej stand out as the most successful. Then, the next group consists of three administrations: the Administration of the City municipality of Zvezdara, the City administration of the City of Užice and the City administration of the City of Novi Pazar. Behind them, as the only administrations that have over 50% of achieved points, are the Municipal administration of the Municipality of Vlasotince and the City administration of the City of Niš. On the other hand, the city administrations of two cities – Vršac and Prokuplje – stand out as the worst rated administrations.

The best rated areas, i.e. indicators, are the degree of compliance with the budget calendar and the successful planning of income and expenses, the proactivity of local administrations in publishing information on official websites and the implementation of public procurement procedures. These are the only three indicators where the degree of fulfillment of requirements

is over 60%. On the other hand, the worst situation is recorded in the field of planning documents for improving the work of local administration and the policy development and coordination, especially in the field of work of city and municipal councils, where the average values of the degree of fulfillment of requirements are only around 15%.

Within the first area – *Strategic framework for public administration reform*, the findings indicate that no LGU has adopted a special planning document related to the improvement of the work of its administration, while in nine LGUs, within the framework of other valid planning documents, the improvement of the work of the city or municipal administration is a priority area or specific goal. When it comes to consultations with civil society and interested parties, they were organized in full capacity only in the Municipality of Bečej and the City of Valjevo, while in other LGUs the process had certain shortcomings or was not implemented at all. Only four LGUs adequately dealt with the comments and suggestions received during the consultation process (Bečej, Novi Pazar, Valjevo and Subotica), while only two LGUs (Valjevo and Niš) published feedback on handling the comments and suggestions received during the consultation. Finally, local mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the planning document for the improvement of the work of local administrations have been established in a small number of cities and municipalities, and even where they exist, as a rule, they do not foresee the participation of civil society organizations, while there is no practice of a regular annual meeting in any LGU reporting on the implementation of this planning document.

The situation within the second area of public administration – *Policy development and coordination*, was measured by means of two indicators. Considering all 12 indicators for assessing the local administrations, the first indicator in this area is the lowest rated indicator, and the entire area of policy making and coordination is one of the worst rated areas of public administration. With the exception of two cities – Subotica and Novi Pazar, local self-government units in Serbia do not have the practice of proactively publishing information about the council's sessions and the agenda of the sessions, while the result is even worse in the area of publishing the minutes of the held council sessions, because only one (Bečej) of 17 LGUs has an established practice of publishing minutes. However, on the other hand, seven of the 17 observed LGUs have an established practice of publishing drafts and proposals of decisions that the council proposes and forwards to the parliamentary procedure. Most local governments conduct some form of public consultation when drafting planning documents and acts. Nevertheless, although 11 out of 17 administrations have a developed practice of involving interested parties in these processes, a detailed analysis showed that this practice is not constant, so that the largest number of LGUs organize public consultations in less than 90% of cases. Weak representation of consultations in the early stages of drafting documents represents one of the biggest shortcomings of the policy-making process in local administrations in Serbia. Also, only five local administrations publish information about public consultations within a special website or banner to which a link on the home page of the LGU website leads. Finally, most cities and municipalities do not publish or prepare reports on public consultations conducted during the drafting of public policy documents, while the analysis of available reports indicates that none contain all the necessary elements.

Monitoring of the third area – *The public service and human resource management* was carried out through four indicators. The analysis found that in most LGUs there is no strategic framework for human resource management. Only in five LGUs, the directions and goals of the development of the human resources management function are defined in some planning documents, while only the municipality of Bečej has a special document that defines the multi-year plan and strategy of human resources management in the Municipal administration. On the other hand, adequate institutional mechanisms have been established in half of the cities and municipalities, while in most of them the representation of jobs related to human resource management is functionally adequate. Further, the analysis showed that in the process of hiring officials in executive positions, legal regulations are respected, but that the implementation of public competitions could be more transparent, first of all, in terms of publishing the public competition in a larger number of media than the legal minimum, introducing in addition to oral and written knowledge check, skills

and qualifications of candidates, but also that decisions on the selection of candidates should be made public. Also, the findings are very negative when it comes to unreasonable obstacles for external candidates who participate in competition procedures, primarily due to the requirement to pass the state professional exam. The analysis of the appointment of officials to the position and acting officers to the positions, indicates that in eight LGUs there are no acting officers, but persons were appointed to the position on the basis of a competition. Also, the monitoring did not identify the negative practice of political interference and the dismissal of officials without a legal basis. Finally, measures to improve integrity and prevent corruption were analyzed in this area. Almost all cities and municipalities have adopted Codes of Conduct for officials and employees and formed appeal commissions, while on the other hand, only slightly less than half of LGUs have adopted local anti-corruption plans.

Within the fourth area of public administration – *Accountability*, a high level of proactive transparency of city and municipal administrations was identified. By searching the official websites of 17 LGUs, it was found that in almost all LGUs, complete and up-to-date statutes of city and municipal administrations are easily available, as the highest legal acts of LGUs, while in most LGUs this is also the case with: regulations on internal arrangements and organization of administration, Information sheets, which are prepared in accordance with the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance, contact information of organizational units and public procurement plans. On the other hand, local administrations are less up-to-date when it comes to publishing planning documents and documents related to the adoption and execution of the budget, as well as citizen-friendly information on the competences of narrower organizational units. Nevertheless, although the level of proactive transparency is at a high level, the (non) publication of these documents and information in the languages of national minorities in those LGUs where minority languages are in official use has been identified as a major problem. Certain cities, such as Novi Pazar and Subotica, which have almost all analyzed documents easily available on their websites, do not respect the obligation to make the same documents available to the public in all official languages.

Within the fifth area of public administration – *Service delivery*, monitoring revealed that in 10 cities and municipalities there is no defined strategic framework for ensuring and increasing the quality of public services provided to citizens by local governments. Only two municipalities – Despotovac and Zvezdara, defined this framework in separate documents, while in the remaining five local administrations this was done within the framework of some other documents. Research findings indicate that the Single administrative point or at least the characteristics of the Single administrative point, as a place that citizens can obtain all information, submit requests, etc. in one place in the local administration exists in eight of the observed 17 administrations. One of the obvious shortcomings in the field of providing services to citizens refers to the uneven practice of providing services in the languages of national minorities, in accordance with the Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts. Also, the practice of using the national *eUprava* (eGovernment) portal is uneven, because from the selected sample of services, it can be concluded that the citizens of most cities and municipalities do not have the opportunity to obtain the services of their local government through this method. On the other hand, the research found that information about public services is available on slightly more than 50% of the analyzed websites, and that they are easily accessible to citizens, as they can be reached with a maximum of three clicks from the home page. Given that the physical way of providing services is still dominant, the findings in the area of access to facilities where the local government provides administrative services to people with disabilities are particularly important. Examining the application of the standards established by the Rulebook on technical standards for planning, designing and construction of buildings, which ensure unhindered movement and access for people with disabilities, children and the elderly, indicates that in slightly more than 60% of local governments, the prescribed technical standards that enable unhindered access and availability of administrative services to persons with disabilities.

Within the sixth area – *Public Financial Management*, the monitoring findings showed that when adopting the budget of cities and municipalities, the budget calendar is only partially respected.

By their structure, budgets are programmatic, which means that expenses and expenditures are shown according to program classification, and as a rule, budgets also contain gender-responsible goals. When it comes to planning, the analysis indicates that local governments are better at planning income than expenses. In the largest number of cities and municipalities, the deviation between initially planned and realized budget income in 2020 amounted to less than 15%, while the deviation in terms of planned and realized expenses in most local governments was between 15% and 40%. The analysis further pointed to a high level of transparency of city and municipal budgets, primarily in terms of easy availability of budget decisions for the last two fiscal years. On the other hand, perhaps a more significant finding from the aspect of spending public funds is the poor result in the preparation and publication of reports on budget execution. While annual reports are available in half of the local governments through the publication of Decisions on the Statement of accounts, the reports prepared during the year are published only in a few LGUs. There are similar findings when it comes to the preparation and publication of Citizens' guides through decisions on the budget, that is, decisions on the Statement of accounts. While the first document is being prepared and published in almost all cities and municipalities, Citizens' guides through the decision on the final account have been recorded only in two municipalities – Zvezdara and Vlasotinci. Public procurement procedures are carried out in accordance with the Law on Public Procurement, as well as internal acts that more closely regulate the way of planning, conducting the public procurement procedure and monitoring the execution of public procurement contracts, which have been adopted in almost all LGUs. Public procurement procedures are carried out through the public procurement portal, which was developed by the Office for Public Procurement, and to a large extent, in most cities and municipalities, they are carried out by expert commissions based on the principles of transparency, equal treatment of bidders and prohibition of discrimination. Nevertheless, a low level of competitiveness of the implemented public procurement procedures was identified in the majority of local governments, first of all, bearing in mind the small number of bidders per procedure. In slightly more than 50% of the procedures, the average number of bidders is less than two, while in two-thirds of LGUs, more than half of the procedures were concluded by awarding the contract to the only bidder who participated in the procedure.

9.2. Recommendations

The recommendations that are presented below are of a general nature and are aimed at those local administrations in which the recommended mechanisms and procedures have not been established, with the aim of improving the practice in their work in order to become administrations that function in accordance with the principles of good governance. Bearing in mind the monitoring findings that indicate the different situation among LGUs in different areas of public administration, in the individual reports for 17 LGUs, that were included in the monitoring within the *Pratim JA* project, and which were the basis for the preparation of this comparative report, detailed recommendations for each city or municipality are given.

▪ Strategic framework for local administration improvement

In accordance with the findings of the monitoring, the following general recommendations were formulated for further improvement of the situation in this area in local administrations in Serbia:

1. Define a strategic framework for improving the work of the city and municipal administration by adopting a special planning document in the LGU. Alternatively, this can be achieved by defining a special goal for improving the work of local government in a more comprehensive document, such as a city or municipality development plan.
2. Ensure the equal participation of representatives of the civil sector in all phases, especially in the initial phases of the development of a planning document for the improvement of the work of local administration, based on a public, inclusive and open procedure.

3. Form a special body, e.g. working group for the implementation and monitoring of the planning document for improving the work of local administration, in which, in addition to representatives of local administration, representatives of the civil sector should also participate, who would be selected on the basis of a public and equal election procedure.
4. Establish the practice of regular meetings of the working body for the implementation and monitoring of the planning document for improving the work of local administration, at least once every six months.
5. Establish the practice of preparing annual reports on the implementation of the planning document related to the improvement of the work of local law, as well as their publication on the internet presentations of LGUs, so that they are easily accessible to citizens (the report can be reached with a maximum of three clicks from the home page internet presentation of LGUs). Additionally, the content of those reports should provide insight into the evaluation of the achieved performance in this area, i.e. to contain performance indicators in accordance with the Law on the planning system..

▪ **Policy development and coordination**

In accordance with the findings of the monitoring, the following general recommendations were formulated for further improvement of the situation in this area in local administrations in Serbia:

1. To improve the transparency of the work of city and municipal councils, which implies the establishment of the practice of publishing information on council` sessions and agenda, as well as the publication of minutes from sessions, together with adopted proposals for decisions and other acts.
2. Bring citizens closer to the content of decisions adopted by city and municipal authorities (councils and assemblies) through the preparation of documents in which simple and understandable language is used, instead of publishing acts in the original text containing bureaucratic language. This is also possible through paraphrasing the adopted decisions in the form of announcements on the official internet presentation, creation of infographics or informative video materials, etc.
3. Establish the practice of holding public consultations and public hearings when drafting local regulations and public policy documents in accordance with the Law on the planning system and the Law on local self-government. In particular, it is necessary to introduce the practice of consultations in the early stages of the preparation of regulations and planning documents (before the first draft of the document). Also, it is necessary to establish the practice of holding public consultations and discussions during budget rebalancing, due to the importance of making these decisions, regardless of the fact that this is not a legal obligation.
4. Improve procedures for informing the public about holding public consultations and discussions in the process of drafting local regulations and planning documents through the use of various communication channels (e.g. official LGU internet presentations, official LGU accounts on social networks, traditional electronic and print media, e-mail, eUprava portal).
5. Establish the practice of regular reports on public consultations conducted and make them easily available on the official internet presentation of LGUs. The reports should provide insight into all received comments and proposals on the draft document, their proponents, the status of the comments (whether accepted, rejected and partially accepted) and the reasons for such a decision.

▪ Public services and Human resource management

In accordance with the monitoring findings, the following general recommendations were formulated for improving the situation in this area:

1. Define the strategic framework for human resource management in city and municipal administrations by adopting a special planning document. Alternatively, this can be achieved by defining a special goal for the improvement of human resources management in a more comprehensive document, such as a city or municipality development plan.
2. Establish an adequate institutional framework for the performance of human resources management in city and municipal administrations that would correspond to the size of the LGU and the number of employees.
3. To improve the ways of advertising public employment competition in local administrations through several different communication channels from the official internet presentations of LGUs, through daily newspapers, official LGU accounts on social networks, publications of the National employment agency, etc. Also, it is necessary to ensure that the texts of public competition are clear and understandable, especially for external candidates who have not previously worked in public administration. This primarily refers to avoiding the use of bureaucratic language in competition texts.
4. To improve proactive information to the public through the establishment of the practice of publishing answers to the requested clarifications in connection with announced public competitions for filling job positions, and that in the same place on the official internet presentation where the text of the public competition is published.
5. When checking the professional qualifications, knowledge and skills of candidates in competitive procedures for filling executive positions in the administration, introduce mandatory written forms of verification such as essays, work samples or case studies. In addition, ensure that all candidates are asked the same questions and tasks during the written and oral competency tests.
6. The selection procedure should be based on clearly established criteria for the selection of candidates, including a pre-determined list of questions that will be asked to candidates during the competence check, a defined scoring scale with precise instructions when which points are awarded, a defined form of evaluation questionnaire that is individually for each candidates are filled in by members of the competition committee, etc.
7. The minutes of the competition commissions should provide insight into how the election process was conducted, document all actions taken and provide insight into whether all candidates were treated the same in the conducted competition process.
8. Establish the practice of publishing decisions on the selection of candidates in public competitions for filling positions on the official internet presentations of LGUs, including the results of all candidates who participated in the procedure, while taking care not to violate the provisions of the Personal data protection act.
9. Ensure that tender procedures are carried out by a competent tender committee whose members are appointed in accordance with ZZAPJLS.
10. Ensure that the acting officials in the position are appointed for a certain period of time from the officials who meet the established conditions for the position of the official in accordance with the ZZAPJLS.
11. Adopt codes of conduct for employees and officials and ensure regular monitoring of its application in all LGUs. Also, it is necessary to establish the practice of creating annual public reports on the implementation of the Code.

12. Adopt local anti-corruption plans and establish mechanisms for monitoring their implementation. In addition, it is necessary to ensure regular monitoring of implementation and the preparation of annual reports on their implementation, and to inform the public about it.
13. Form the Complaints commission, ensure that the members of the commission are experts and appointed in accordance with the ZZAPJLS, and adopt the Rules of procedure for the work of those commissions and establish the practice of regular reporting on the work of the Complaints commission.

▪ **Accountability**

In accordance with the monitoring findings, the following general recommendations were formulated for improving the situation in this area:

1. Update the official internet presentations of LGUs so that they are harmonized in all segments with the Regulation on closer conditions for the creation and maintenance of web presentations of bodies.
2. To ensure the publication of official documents of LGUs in all official languages in use on the Internet presentation of LGUs.
3. Establish the practice of regular update of Information sheets on the work of city and municipal administrations in accordance with the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance.
4. To make easily accessible, with a maximum of three clicks from the home page, all key acts of local self-government from the Statute of the city and municipality, the Rulebook on the organization and Systematization of workplaces in the administration, planning documents, budget documents and public procurement procedures.
5. Consolidate all documents related to the preparation of the budget under one section on the Internet presentation of LGUs for easier visibility and searching.

▪ **Service delivery**

In accordance with the monitoring findings, the following recommendations were formulated to improve the situation in this area:

1. Define a strategic framework for improving the quality of public services provided to citizens in city and municipal administrations by adopting a special planning document. Alternatively, this can be achieved by defining a special goal for improving the quality of local services in a more comprehensive document, such as a city or municipality development plan.
2. To establish a Single administrative point in the city or municipal administration in accordance with the ZUP, with the aim of improving the quality of providing services to citizens and enabling easier and more efficient exercise of citizens' rights.
3. To ensure easy accessibility of administrative services to persons with disabilities, from adapting the official LGU internet presentation to these persons, to physical services in the building of the city or municipal administration. Therefore, it is necessary to meet all the standards stipulated in the Rulebook on technical standards for planning and designing buildings, which ensures unhindered movement and access for people with disabilities, children and the elderly, so that the building is accessible generally and to people with disabilities.

4. Introduce the practice of examining citizens' satisfaction with the services provided by local administration, through the implementation of annual citizen surveys and the Book of *impressions*, as well as analysis of results, comments and changes to procedures in accordance with comments.
5. Increase the number of services provided to citizens through the eUprava portal managed by the Office for information technologies and Electronic administration of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

▪ **Public financial management**

In accordance with the findings of the monitoring, the following general recommendations were formulated for further improvement of the situation in this area in local administrations in Serbia:

1. Ensure compliance with the budget calendar in the process of budget preparation and adoption.
2. Improve the process of budget income and expenses planning, so that deviations during the same fiscal year should not exceed 15%.
3. Introduce gender-responsive budgeting in the process of budget preparation and adoption.
4. Introduce the practice of publishing budget data in an open format on the Open Data Portal.
5. Establish the practice of creating citizen guides through decisions on the budget and decisions on the Statement of accounts of local governments.
6. Improve the procedure of reporting on budget execution, through the preparation of monthly, quarterly, nine-monthly and annual reports on budget execution and their publication on the LGU website. In addition, it is necessary to ensure the presentation of expenses and expenditures in reports on budget execution and the Statement of accounts according to the following classifications: organizational, economic, functional and programmatic.
7. Establish the practice of public reports on the use of current and permanent budget reserve funds.
8. Adopt an internal act that more closely determines the public procurement procedure in LGUs in accordance with the Law on Public Procurement;
9. To form a special organizational unit within the local government for the performance of public procurement, and to strengthen its personnel capacities, first of all, in terms of filling all systematized jobs.
10. Increase the transparency of the implementation of public procurement by publishing information on the initiation and outcome of public procurement procedures on the official website of LGUs, regardless of their publication on the Public Procurement Portal.
11. Make an additional effort in terms of ensuring greater competitiveness of public procurement procedures, first of all, in terms of increasing the average number of bidders per procedure, i.e. reducing the number of procedures in which the procurement contract is awarded to a single bidder. This, first of all, refers to the fact that the conditions for participation in tenders should be defined in such a way as to enable the participation of as many bidders as possible, and that they must not be discriminatory on any basis. Also, it is necessary to pay special attention to the preparation of technical specifications and job descriptions in the tender documentation, so that they are not adapted to certain bidders.

ATTACHMENTS

10

▪ Attachment 1. Form of indicators

Area	<i>(Wording of the area from Public administration principle.)</i>					
Principle	<i>(Wording of the principle from Public administration principle.)</i>					
Indicator	<i>(Wording of the indicator.)</i>					
Methodological notes	<i>(Concise description of the indicator focus. See an example of developed indicators.)</i>					
INDICATOR ELEMENTS						
Element #	Element	Ponder			Verification source	
	<i>(Wording of the element.)</i>	<i>(Ponder value.)</i>			<i>(List the source of verification.)</i>	
E.1	Methodology				Point allocation	
	<i>(Describe the methodology. All the details of how the indicator will be measured should be found here, to reduce discrepancies in preparation between researchers. For example, the period covered by the indicator, the term or concept if introduced should be clearly defined here like "easily available information" or "timely notification", method of awarding points, etc. See example of already developed indicators.)</i>					
TOTAL POINTS	<i>(Point range)</i>					
INDICATOR VALUE	0	1	2	3	4	5

▪ Attachment 2. Indicator 1

The existence of a planning document for improving the work of local administration and the involvement of civil society in the process of development and structures for monitoring and coordination

JLS	Points (max. 26)	%	Rating (scale 0-5)	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11
Bečej	16	61,54%	3	2	4	2	2	2	0	2	2	0	0	0
Užice	12	46,15%	2	2	2	0	2	0	0	2	2	2	0	0
Novi Pazar	12	46,15%	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	0
Valjevo	11	42,31%	2	2	4	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Subotica	10	38,46%	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Niš	7	26,92%	1	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Prokuplje	4	15,38%	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Zvezdara	4	15,38%	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Koceljeva	4	15,38%	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Aleksinac	4	15,38%	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Arandelovac	2	7,69%	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vlasotince	2	7,69%	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tutin	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ivanjica	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Despotovac	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vršac	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Odžaci	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Average	5,18	19,91%	0,94	1,29	1,06	0,82	0,47	0,47	0,12	0,47	0,24	0,24	0,00	0,00
Overall rating			1											
Most common rating			0	32,35%	26,47%	41,18%	23,53%	23,53%	11,76%	23,53%	11,76%	11,76%	0,00%	0,00%

▪ Attachment 3. Indicator 2

Transparency of the council's work, preparation of drafts and proposals for decisions in local administration							
JLS	Points (max. 26)	%	Rating (scale 0–5)	E1	E2	E3	E4
Subotica	8	66,67%	3	4	0	2	2
Bečej	6	50,00%	2	0	4	2	0
Novi Pazar	6	50,00%	2	4	0	2	0
Vlasotince	3	25,00%	1	0	0	2	1
Užice	2	16,67%	0	0	0	2	0
Ivanjica	2	16,67%	0	0	0	2	0
Niš	2	16,67%	0	0	0	2	0
Aleksinac	2	16,67%	0	0	0	0	2
Zvezdara	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0
Tutin	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0
Despotovac	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0
Arandelovac	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0
Valjevo	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0
Koceljeva	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0
Prokuplje	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0
Vršac	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0
Odžaci	0	0,00%	0	0	0	0	0
Average	1,82	15,20%	0,47	0,47	0,24	0,82	0,29
Overall rating			0				
Most common rating			0	11,76%	5,88%	41,18%	14,71%

▪ Attachment 4. Indicator 3

Inclusiveness and openness of policymaking in local administration									
JLS	Points (max. 26)	%	Rating (scale 0-5)	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6
Novi Pazar	8	44.44%	2	2	2	2	0	0	2
Vlasotince	8	44.44%	2	4	0	2	0	2	0
Aleksinac	8	44.44%	2	2	0	2	1	2	1
Subotica	7	38.89%	2	2	4	0	1	0	0
Bečej	7	38.89%	2	2	2	0	0	2	1
Valjevo	7	38.89%	2	0	2	0	0	4	1
Niš	6	33.33%	1	4	2	0	0	0	0
Odžaci	6	33.33%	1	0	0	0	0	4	2
Užice	5	27.78%	1	2	2	0	1	0	0
Tutin	5	27.78%	1	2	0	2	0	0	1
Despotovac	4	22.22%	1	2	0	2	0	0	0
Ivanjica	3	16.67%	0	2	0	0	1	0	0
Zvezdara	2	11.11%	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Arandelovac	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Koceljeva	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prokuplje	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vršac	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Average	4.47	24.84%	1.00	1.53	0.82	0.59	0.24	0.82	0.47
Overall rating			1						
Most common rating			0 i 2	38,24%	20,59%	29,41%	11,76%	20,59%	23,53%

▪ Attachment 5. Indicator 4

Institutionalization of human resource management in local administration							
JLS	Points (max. 26)	%	Rating (scale 0-5)	E1	E2	E3	E4
Bečej	12	100.00%	5	2	4	2	4
Novi Pazar	11	91.67%	5	1	4	2	4
Despotovac	8	66.67%	3	0	4	2	2
Koceljeva	8	66.67%	3	0	4	2	2
Vlasotince	8	66.67%	3	0	4	2	2
Prokuplje	8	66.67%	3	0	4	2	2
Subotica	7	58.33%	3	1	0	2	4
Niš	7	58.33%	3	1	2	2	2
Zvezdara	6	50.00%	2	0	0	2	4
Užice	5	41.67%	2	1	0	2	2
Aleksinac	5	41.67%	2	1	0	2	2
Tutin	4	33.33%	1	0	0	2	2
Ivanjica	4	33.33%	1	0	0	2	2
Odžaci	4	33.33%	1	0	4	0	0
Arandelovac	2	16.67%	0	0	0	2	0
Valjevo	2	16.67%	0	0	0	2	0
Vršac	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0
Average	5.94	49.51%	2.18	0.41	1.76	1.76	2.00
Overall rating			2				
Most common rating			3	20,59%	44,12%	88,24%	50,00%

▪ Attachment 6. Indicator 5

Openness and transparency of recruitment into local administration											
JLS	Points (max. 26)	%	Rating (scale 0-5)	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8
Zvezdara	13	59.09%	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	0	2
Arandelovac	12	54.55%	3	2	4	2	0	2	0	0	2
Bečej	12	54.55%	3	4	0	2	0	2	2	0	2
Užice	12	54.55%	3	2	2	2	0	2	2	0	2
Subotica	10	45.45%	2	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	2
Despotovac	10	45.45%	2	2	4	0	0	2	0	0	2
Vlasotince	10	45.45%	2	2	2	2	0	2	0	0	2
Novi Pazar	9	40.91%	2	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	2
Aleksinac	9	40.91%	2	2	2	2	0	2	1	0	0
Tutin	8	36.36%	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	2
Ivanjica	10	45.45%	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	0	0
Odžaci	8	36.36%	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	2
Niš	6	27.27%	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0
Vršac	4	18.18%	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0
Valjevo	2	9.09%	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Koceljeva	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prokuplje	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Average	7.94	36.10%	1,76	1,53	1,76	1,29	0,24	1,29	0,53	0,00	1,18
Overall rating			2								
Most common rating			2	38,24%	44,12%	64,71%	11,76%	64,71%	26,47%	0,00%	58,82%

▪ Attachment 7. Indicator 6

Effective protection of senior civil servants' position from unwanted political interference									
JLS	Points (max. 26)	%	Rating (scale 0-5)	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6
Bečej	15	93.75%	5	4	2	1	2	4	2
Koceljeva	14	87.50%	4	2	2	2	2	4	2
Arandelovac	13	81.25%	4	2	2	1	2	4	2
Zvezdara	13	81.25%	4	2	2	1	2	4	2
Odžaci	13	81.25%	4	2	2	1	2	4	2
Subotica	12	75.00%	4	4	0	0	2	4	2
Novi Pazar	11	68.75%	3	2	2	1	2	4	0
Niš	11	68.75%	3	2	0	1	2	4	2
Despotovac	9	56.25%	3	0	0	1	2	4	2
Vlasotince	6	37.50%	2	2	0	0	2	0	2
Užice	2	12.50%	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Tutin	2	12.50%	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Ivanjica	2	12.50%	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Valjevo	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Aleksinac	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prokuplje	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vršac	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Average	7.24	45.22%	2.12	1.29	0.71	0.53	1.53	2.12	1.06
Overall rating			2						
Most common rating			0	32,35%	35,29%	26,47%	76,47%	52,94%	52,94%

▪ Attachment 8. Indicator 7

Effectiveness of measures for the promotion of integrity and prevention of corruption in the local administration										
JLS	Points (max. 26)	%	Rating (scale 0-5)	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7
Subotica	16	72.73%	4	2	0	4	2	4	2	2
Bečej	14	63.64%	3	2	2	4	2	0	2	2
Užice	14	63.64%	3	2	0	4	2	0	2	2
Arandelovac	14	63.64%	3	2	0	4	2	4	2	0
Koceljeva	14	63.64%	3	2	0	2	2	4	2	2
Despotovac	12	54.55%	3	2	0	4	2	4	0	0
Niš	10	45.45%	2	2	2	4	2	0	0	0
Novi Pazar	8	36.36%	2	2	2	0	0	0	2	2
Aleksinac	8	36.36%	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	0
Prokuplje	8	36.36%	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	0
Zvezdara	6	27.27%	1	2	0	4	0	0	0	0
Tutin	6	27.27%	1	0	0	4	2	0	0	0
Valjevo	6	27.27%	1	2	0	2	0	0	2	0
Vršac	6	27.27%	1	2	0	4	0	0	0	0
Odžaci	6	27.27%	1	2	0	0	0	4	0	0
Ivanjica	4	18.18%	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
Vlasotince	4	18.18%	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	0
Average	9,18	41,71%	2,00	1,76	0,59	2,71	1,29	1,18	0,94	0,59
Overall rating			2							
Most common rating			1	88,24%	14,71%	67,65%	64,71%	29,41%	47,06%	14,71%

▪ Attachment 9. Indicator 8

Proactivity of the local administration in publishing information on the official website											
JLS	Points (max. 26)	%	Rating (scale 0-5)	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8
Zvezdara	30	93.75%	5	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Niš	26	81.25%	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	2	2
Vlasotince	22	68.75%	3	4	4	0	4	4	0	2	4
Valjevo	22	68.75%	3	2	4	0	4	4	4	0	4
Aleksinac	22	68.75%	3	4	4	0	2	4	0	4	4
Prokuplje	22	68.75%	3	4	2	2	4	4	2	4	0
Bečej	20	62.50%	3	0	4	2	4	2	2	2	4
Užice	28	87.50%	5	2	4	4	2	4	4	4	4
Tutin	20	62.50%	3	2	2	2	4	4	2	2	2
Ivanjica	20	62.50%	3	0	0	4	4	4	4	0	4
Subotica	18	56.25%	3	0	2	4	4	2	2	2	2
Novi Pazar	16	50.00%	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Koceljeva	16	50.00%	2	0	4	4	4	0	2	2	0
Vršac	16	50.00%	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Odžaci	16	50.00%	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Arandelovac	14	43.75%	2	0	4	4	2	0	4	0	0
Despotovac	12	37.50%	2	0	0	4	4	0	4	0	0
Average	20,00	62,50%	3,43	1,76	2,82	2,59	3,29	2,59	2,59	2,00	2,35
Overall rating			3								
Most common rating			3	44,12%	70,59%	64,71%	82,35%	64,71%	64,71%	50,00%	58,82%

▪ Attachment 10. Indicator 9

Availability and quality of administrative services to citizens											
JLS	Points (max. 26)	%	Rating (scale 0-5)	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8
Subotica	20	71.43%	4	2	0	2	4	2	2	4	4
Zvezdara	20	71.43%	4	4	2	2	2	0	2	4	4
Vlasotince	16	57.14%	3	2	2	2	0	4	2	0	4
Novi Pazar	12	42.86%	2	0	0	2	0	2	0	4	4
Niš	12	42.86%	2	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	2
Bečej	10	35.71%	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	4
Ivanjica	10	35.71%	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	4
Despotovac	10	35.71%	2	4	0	0	0	0	2	4	0
Valjevo	10	35.71%	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	4
Aleksinac	10	35.71%	2	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	4
Prokuplje	10	35.71%	2	0	2	0	0	2	2	0	4
Užice	8	28.57%	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	4	0
Tutin	6	21.43%	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	0
Arandelovac	6	21.43%	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	2	0
Koceljeva	6	21.43%	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	0
Odžaci	4	14.29%	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
Vršac	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Average	10.00	35.71%	1.82	1.06	0.59	0.94	0.35	0.71	1.65	2.47	2.24
Overall rating			2								
Most common rating			2	26.47%	14.71%	47.06%	8.82%	17.65%	82.35%	61.76%	55.88%

▪ Attachment 11. Indicator 10

The degree of compliance with the budget calendar and successful planning of income and expenses										
JLS	Points (max. 26)	%	Rating (scale 0-5)	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	
Aleksinac	20	100.00%	5	4	2	4	2	4	4	
Niš	18	90.00%	5	4	2	2	2	4	4	
Vlasotince	18	90.00%	5	4	2	4	0	4	4	
Novi Pazar	16	80.00%	4	2	2	4	0	4	4	
Koceljeva	16	80.00%	4	4	2	4	0	4	2	
Užice	14	70.00%	3	2	2	4	2	2	2	
Despotovac	14	70.00%	3	4	0	4	2	2	2	
Odžaci	14	70.00%	3	2	0	4	2	2	4	
Arandelovac	14	70.00%	3	4	0	4	2	2	2	
Ivanjica	14	70.00%	3	2	2	4	2	2	2	
Subotica	10	50.00%	2	4	0	0	2	2	2	
Bečej	10	50.00%	2	0	0	2	0	4	4	
Zvezdara	10	50.00%	2	2	0	0	2	4	2	
Tutin	8	40.00%	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	
Valjevo	8	40.00%	2	0	0	0	2	4	2	
Vršac	6	30.00%	1	0	0	0	2	4	0	
Prokuplje	4	20.00%	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	
Average	12.59	62.94%	2.88	2.59	0.94	2.35	1.29	2.94	2.47	
Overall rating			3							
Most common rating			2 i 3	64.71%	47.06%	58.82%	64.71%	73.53%	61.76%	

Attachment 12. Indicator 11

Transparency and accessibility of budgetary documents											
JLS	Points (max. 26)	%	Rating (scale 0-5)	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8
Zvezdara	24	92.31%	5	4	4	4	4	2	4	2	0
Subotica	22	84.62%	4	4	2	4	4	2	4	0	2
Valjevo	20	76.92%	4	4	2	4	4	1	4	0	1
Bečej	17	65.38%	3	4	2	4	2	0	4	0	1
Vršac	14	53.85%	3	4	0	0	4	0	4	0	2
Vlasotince	13	50.00%	2	4	0	2	0	0	4	2	1
Užice	19	73.08%	4	4	2	4	2	1	4	0	2
Niš	11	42.31%	2	4	2	4	0	1	0	0	0
Novi Pazar	10	38.46%	2	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	2
Tutin	10	38.46%	2	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	2
Aleksinac	10	38.46%	2	4	0	2	4	0	0	0	0
Odžaci	10	38.46%	2	4	0	0	0	1	4	0	1
Ivanjica	8	30.77%	1	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
Despotovac	8	30.77%	1	2	0	0	0	0	4	0	2
Koceljeva	8	30.77%	1	4	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
Prokuplje	4	15.38%	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Arandelovac	3	11.54%	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
Average	12.41	47.74%	2.24	3.53	0.82	1.88	1.41	0.47	3.06	0.24	1.00
Overall rating			2								
Most common rating			2	88.24%	20.59%	47.06%	35.29%	11.76%	76.47%	11.76%	50.00%

Attachment 13. Indicator 12

Public procurement procedures based on the principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, proportionality and transparency											
JLS	Points (max. 26)	%	Rating (scale 0-5)	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8
Vlasotince	26	92.86%	5	2	4	4	2	4	4	4	2
Užice	25	89.29%	4	2	4	4	2	4	4	4	1
Novi Pazar	24	85.71%	4	2	4	4	2	2	4	4	2
Arandelovac	24	85.71%	4	2	4	4	0	4	4	4	2
Odžaci	24	85.71%	4	2	2	4	2	4	4	4	2
Subotica	20	71.43%	4	2	4	4	0	2	4	4	0
Tutin	20	71.43%	4	2	4	4	0	2	4	4	0
Bečej	18	64.29%	3	2	2	4	0	2	4	4	0
Despotovac	18	64.29%	3	2	0	4	2	2	4	4	0
Aleksinac	18	64.29%	3	0	4	2	4	4	4	0	0
Zvezdara	16	57.14%	3	2	0	4	0	2	4	4	0
Ivanjica	16	57.14%	3	0	4	4	0	0	4	4	0
Niš	16	57.14%	3	2	4	4	0	0	4	0	2
Koceljeva	14	50.00%	2	2	0	4	2	2	4	0	0
Prokuplje	9	32.14%	1	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	1
Vršac	6	21.43%	1	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Valjevo	3	10.71%	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Average	17.47	62.39%	3.00	1.76	2.47	3.53	1.06	2.00	3.29	2.59	0.76
Overall rating			3								
Most common rating			3 i 4	88.24%	61.76%	88.24%	26.47%	50.00%	82.35%	64.71%	38.24%

LIST OF SOURCES

11

Monitoring *Pratim JA* reports:

- Dajana Đurić, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: opština Arandelovac, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Dajana Đurić, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: opština Koceljeva, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Dejan Maksimović, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: grad Vršac, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Dejan Maksimović, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: opština Odžaci, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Džemil Huseinović, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: grad Novi Pazar, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Džemil Huseinović, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: grad Užice, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Džemil Huseinović, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: opština Ivanjica, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Džemil Huseinović, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: opština Tutin, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Maja Kamenov, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: opština Vlasotince, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.

- Maja Kamenov, Dragana Đorđević, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: grad Niš, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Maja Kamenov, Dragan Đorđević, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: grad Prokuplje, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Maja Kamenov, Dragan Đorđević, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: opština Aleksinac, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Mladen Milovanović, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: grad Valjevo, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Mladen Milovanović, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: opština Despotovac, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Vanesa Belkić, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: grad Subotica, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Vanesa Belkić, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: gradska opština Zvezdara, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.
- Vanesa Belkić, Izveštaj o stanju lokalne uprave: opština Bečej, Centar za evropske politike, Beograd, 2022.

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Public administration reform is a long-term process that started in Serbia almost 20 years ago. The main focus of reform activities in Serbia is on the state and central administration. Also, assessment of the public administration and administration capacity, which is implemented by SIGMA, and which is used by European commission in its assessments of Serbia's progress in accession to EU, as well as the monitoring of public administration carried out within the framework of WeBER project, focus on the work of central institutions. The fact that over 70% of EU legislation is implemented by local self-government units, points out on the need to extend the focus to local administration as well. CEP recognized insufficiency of dealing with the local level of government in the context of public reform administration, and initiated the project *Public administration Monitoring for better local Governance – Pratim JA* in 2020, which focuses on the assessment of the administration and administrative procedures at the local level government.

The local PAR Monitor, created within the *Pratim JA* project, provides detailed results and recommendations for improving the work of local administrations, based on comprehensive research and monitoring of the work of local administrations in 17 cities and municipalities in Serbia. Methodology of local monitoring administration is based on the SIGMA Principles of Public Administration and WeBER Methodology of research, which on the one hand puts the focus on the EU standards and requirements of good governance, and on the other hand, citizens and civil society. Key principles whose application is examined through monitoring include transparency, openness, inclusiveness, accountability, equality, prohibition of discrimination and promotion of integrity in administration.

This report was prepared as part of the *Public administration Monitoring for better local Governance – Pratim JA* project. The project is implemented by the European Policy Centre (CEP), together with partner organizations: the Centre for Balanced Regional Development (CenTriR), the National Coalition for Decentralization (NKD) from Niš and *Stanište* Ecological Center from Vršac. As part of the NKD network *Ars Nova Club* from Valjevo, *Urban In* from Novi Pazar and the Human Rights Committee from Niš are involved in the implementation of the project.

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