

Report on the monitoring of local administration – The City of Niš



NACIONALNA
KOALICIJA ZA
DECENTRALIZACIJU



Summary

By conducting an analysis based on information of the work of the public administration in Niš, it was concluded that the public administration obtained solid results and achieved the most points in the area related to the Public services and human resource management, especially in the part of the institutionalization of human resources management and effective protection of senior civil servants' position from unwanted political interference. Also, the area that monitors Public administration accountability, specifically Proactivity in publishing information on the official website and the area of Public Finances, in respect of the budget calendar and revenue planning, were also assigned high rating. What is necessary to do when it comes to the web-presentation of the city of Niš is to harmonize the content and technical standards with the Regulation on closer conditions for creating and maintaining the organ's web presentation. The areas with the lowest ratings are: Policy development and coordination with regards to the transparency of the work of the city council and the preparation of drafts and decisions in public administration, then the area that monitors Public services and human resource management, specifically the Openness and transparency of recruitment into local self-government. Given the fact that the city administration is not unified in the city of Niš, more precisely that there are several administrations, and that communication with all administrations was not uniform – the aggravating circumstance was the fact that the city of Niš did not sign a memorandum of cooperation on this research.

Conclusions

Strategic framework for public administration reform

One of the conclusions is that, at first glance, the local self-government of the city of Niš took the improvement of local administration seriously, what we can be seen from the measures and goals found in the planning document. However, when it comes to the involvement of citizens, civil society organizations and other actors in the preparation of this document, we can see that the process was not conducted in the same way, was not transparent and did not equally involve actors in all stages of the preparation of the planning document. When it comes to the monitoring of implementation, mechanisms, participation of CSOs in this, nothing is precisely specified except the deadlines when the implementation should start, and the situation is similar with proposals and comments, of which only those given by the City Council are available. We believe that this is a very important document, that the monitoring of this document is a process that will be done in stages, so, nevertheless, the positive assessment was given as an incentive for the LGU of Niš to be more up-to-date in the transparency of monitoring the application of this document.



Policy development and coordination

The situation in Policy development and coordination on the local level is surprisingly poorly rated, bearing in mind that it is the third largest city in Serbia and the fact that the city of Niš has a long practice of developing local public policies at the level of the city administration, as well as a developed civil society that participates in those processes. In conversations with representatives of civil society organizations from Niš, we obtained information that LGU of Niš uses available communication channels, that they receive invitations for public consultations, but that, as with most local governments, consultations are omitted in the early stages of public policy making, as well as mechanisms and participation representatives of CSOs in the mechanisms that monitor the implementation of those public policies.



Public services and human resource management

By analyzing the available sources of verification for this area, we came to the conclusion that, as far as the institutional framework and personnel records are concerned, the LGU of Niš is at a satisfactory level. Also, when it comes to compliance with the Law on Employees in LGUs and APs, in indicators 5 and 6, which deal with the public services of executive positions and officials in positions, the legal requirements prescribed have been complied with, but the problem arises when it comes to transparency, clarifications of the competition conditions, publication of the minutes made by the competition commissions. In addition to the contact person from the city administration, we also had to contact the City council to respond to the Request for Access to Information of Public Importance. Specifically, to provide information in this area, communication was reduced to providing a minimum of information.



Accountability

This area received the highest ratings, but it was to be expected, especially when it comes to information about the work of city administrations, because as we have already stated in the analysis of indicators, there is no single administration in Niš, but the city administration is divided into several administrations that are special units, so the presentation of each of them, their composition, contacts, job descriptions, and responsibilities is of key importance for citizens. It is also important that each administration has its own Information sheet and that basic information about the Statute, budget, public procurement are easily accessible to citizens.



Service delivery

As far as the area of service delivery is concerned, the local government of Niš still cannot boast of improving accessibility and delivering services to all its citizens. Although there is a Single administrative point, we cannot yet expect reports on the monitoring of implementation, as well as a mechanism to measure the degree of satisfaction of citizens. There is no service „Podnošenje zahteva za Informaciju o lokaciji“ on the E-governance portal. Also, for people with disabilities, services that can be scheduled or obtained online are something that could be assessed as positive, but the city administration building itself is physically accessible only for services on the ground floor, while other services on the upper floor are impossible to reach. As with many local self-governments, the practice here is to publish valid and invalid strategic documents in one place.



Public financial management

By monitoring public finances, it was noticed that the budget process in terms of deadlines was respected, but that the transparency of the entire budget process and the updating of some parts of the website containing budget documents, budget execution reports, citizens' guides through the budget and the final account are lacking, which passed through in the area of public policy making. As far as public procurement is concerned, there are no objections regarding the existence of the Rulebook on the content of acts that regulates the public procurement procedure within the bidders, the public procurement sector at the city administration and access to the Public Procurement Portal. Certain information that we requested through the Request for Access to Information of Public Importance were not provided, but only links from the public procurement portal. It is about information concerning the average number of bidders in public procurement procedures, procedures that were assigned to one bidder, procedures in which the Commission made a decision to prohibit the procedure, conclusion, execution. We consider such a procedure incomplete and non-transparent – a practice that must be changed.



This report was prepared as part of the project **Public administration Monitoring for better local Governance – PratiM JA**. The project is implemented by the **European Policy Centre (CEP)**, together with partners: the **Centre for Balanced Regional Development (CenTriR)**, the **National Coalition for Decentralization (NKD)** from Niš and the **Stanište Ecological Centre from Vršac**. The project is financed by European Union, co-financed by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue. The content of this report is entirely the responsibility of CEP, CenTriR, NKD and Staniste and not necessarily expresses the views of the European Union or the Ministry.