

Report on the monitoring of local administration – **The city of Subotica**



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Summary

The monitoring and evaluation of the functioning of the city government in Subotica, carried out during 2022, showed that the situation in all six analyzed areas of public administration in this city was assigned with rating 3, on a six-point scale 0–5. On one hand, the analysis showed that in public administration of the city of Subotica the best rated areas are Service delivery and Public financial management. Within the first area, the quality and availability of administrative services to citizens were rated with highest marks, as well as the the transparency and availability of documents related to the preparation and execution of the budget, and implementation of public procurement procedures in the second.

On the other hand, the monitoring showed that city of Subotica has the worst situation in the areas of public administration related to the Strategic framework for public administration reform and Policy development and coordination at the local level. Specifically – within the first area, 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 was rated the worst, while in the second mentioned area the inclusiveness and openness of policymaking in local administration, similarly gained such low marks.

Conclusions

The findings of the research showed that the City of Subotica won a total of 160 points (out of a possible 262), that is, **that the analyzed indicators in all six areas of public administration were met by 61.1%. The overall assessment in all six analyzed areas of public administration is 3, on a six-point scale 0–5.** In addition, the analysis showed that the best situation in Subotica is in the area Service delivery to citizens (71.4% points scored), as well as in the area of Public financial management (70.3% points scored). The area that gained lowest marks in the monitoring process is the Strategic framework for public administration reform, in which Subotica won 38.5% points.



Strategic framework for public administration reform

Within the first area – *Strategic framework for public administration reform*, it was determined that the City administration of city of Subotica ensured the participation of the civil sector and interested parties in the broad consultation process that accompanied the drafting of the Local Sustainable Development Strategy of the city Subotica 2013–2022. It is a document that, among the strategic goals of the city's development, foresees the improvement of the work of the city administration. However, serious shortcomings have been identified regarding the participation of CSOs in the implementation and monitoring of this document. The analysis showed that local mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of Local sustainable development strategy do not include representatives of the civil sector, that these mechanisms are not operational at all, and that there are no annual reports on the implementation of the this strategy.



Policy development and coordination

Within the second area – *Policy development and coordination*, the findings of the research showed that the transparency of the work of the City Council is largely ensured, that the public is informed about the sessions, agenda, decisions and other acts, but that the minutes of the sessions are not publicly available. Additionally, in the drafting process of public policies and regulations, public consultations are conducted in accordance with the law, and the public is often informed by a variety of communication channels (official internet presentation of LGUs, daily and weekly newspapers). However, early public inspection is carried out exclusively with regard to the adoption of spatial plans, because it is a legal obligation but it is not rooted as a form of consultations in the early phase during the preparation of other documents and regulations. Other shortcomings include the fact that there is no single place (page, banner, etc.) on the official internet presentation of the city where information about the public consultations (public hearings, public inspection, etc.) is published, as well as that the reports on public consultations are not prepared every time and/or are not publicly available.



Public services and human resource management

The monitoring of the third area – *Public services and human resource management* found that there is no special multi-year plan that foresees the basic directions and goals in the area of human resources management in the city administration, as well as that the existing institutional framework for the performance of HRM tasks is not appropriate considering the size of the city. The internal act of the city provide for the performance of work in the field of HRM, the up-to-date management of personnel records on employees is a good practice, as well as the preparation and publication of reports on the number and structure of employees. Furthermore, the analysis pointed to numerous shortcomings in the process of hiring officials in executive positions and the most significant are: the public call contained unreasonable obstacles for external candidates who had never worked in the administration before (obligatory state professional exam), it was not possible to collect data from public registers ex officio, the election procedure stated in the text of the public invitation was not followed, the minutes of the competition committee do not contain all the data on the results achieved by the candidates in the election procedure – on the basis of which it could be determined whether all candidates were treated equally, etc. Moreover, it was concluded that there were no unsuccessful competitions for filling the positions of civil servants in the last two years, as well as their dismissal beyond the legal basis, but there were also no appointments of acting officials to these positions. When we talk about the effectiveness of measures to improve integrity and prevent corruption, it is concluded that the city administration has introduced all measures / mechanisms provided for by law, which contribute to strengthening integrity and preventing corruption in local administration – the Code of Conduct for officers and officials, the Local Anti-Corruption Plan and the Complaints Commission, but that the implementation of the adopted measures is not monitored, annual reports are not prepared and the public is not informed about it.



Accountability

Within the fourth area – *Accountability*, a high level of proactivity of the city administration in publishing information about its work on the official internet presentation was identified. The general picture, however, is spoiled by the finding that most of the analyzed documents were published only in the Serbian language, while versions in other official languages are available only in the city's official newspapers, but not in minority languages on the versions of the city's internet presentation. On the city's official website, you can find information about the internal arrangement and organization of the city administration, along with detailed contact information for each organizational unit, but without a description of the jobs they perform. Also, the Information sheet, City Statute, Public Procurement Plan, as well as all documents related to the adoption and execution of the budget are available. However, it was noticed that all the currently valid planning documents of the city are not easily available even in the Serbian language, and some of them are only published in the official gazette of the city.



Service delivery

Within the fifth area – *Service delivery*, it was established that there is no separate planning document related to the improvement of the quality of public services provided to citizens, but that the city's umbrella strategy recognizes the improvement of the quality of service delivery as a strategic goal. On the ground floor of the City administration there is a Service centre that has the characteristics of a Single administrative point, where citizens can exercise more of their rights in all official languages and submit requests for the use of various services in one place in just one visit. Based on the comments entered in the "Guest book", it is concluded that citizens are largely satisfied with the quality of public services provided in the Service centre. When it comes to the provision of online services, using electronic services such as the national eUprava portal, the analysis showed that city administration of the city of Subotica still does not use this portal to a significant extent to provide its services. Finally, the research confirmed that in Subotica, all legally prescribed technical standards are met, which enable unimpeded access and availability of administrative services for persons with disabilities.



Public financial management

Within the sixth area – *Public Financial Management*, the monitoring findings showed that the degree of compliance with the budget calendar is not respected during the adoption of the city budget, especially when it comes to the deadlines set for the adoption of the Budget Decision and its submission to the competent ministry. The budget contains several gender-responsible goals; expenses and expenditures are shown according to program classification. The deviation between initially planned and realized budget revenues and expenditures amounted to about 20% in 2020, which can be considered an acceptable deviation considering that year was extraordinary in every sense due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis indicated a high level transparency of the city budget, first of all, in terms of easy availability of documents related to its adoption and execution. In the field of public procurement, it was concluded that public procurement procedures are carried out on the principles of transparency, equal treatment of bidders, prohibition of discrimination, and that a commission for their implementation is formed in accordance with the provisions of the law. However, the low level of competitiveness of the implemented public procurement procedures is noticeable, first of all, bearing in mind the small number of bidders per procedure, i.e. the fact that even in 70% of completed public procurements, the contract is awarded to the only bidder in the procedure.



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