

Functioning and
inclusivity of

LOCAL COUNCILS IN KOSOVO

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Pristina, Kosovo



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Contents

Introduction	5
Background	8
Methodology	12
Analysis and Discussion of Results	16
Functionality and organization of local councils	16
Election of local councils	19
Relationship of local councils with their community	21
Cooperation of local councils with municipalities	23
Financial compensation of local councils.....	25
Women, youth and other marginalized groups inclusion in local councils.....	27
Other challenges	32
Lack of gender sensitive language in the 2019 Administrative Instruction	32
The lack of open data format	32
Policy recommendations	33
ANNEX I	
Interview questions with Heads of Local Councils.....	39
ANNEX II	
Interview questions with MLGA	41
ANNEX III	
Interview questions with CSOs Representatives	42
ANNEX IV	
Online survey questions with Municipalities.....	43

Introduction

Based on article 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, municipalities are the basic territorial unit of local self-governance and their organization and powers are provided by law.¹ The specific law that regulates competences and organization of municipalities is the Law on Local Self-Government (LLSG).² According to article 34 of this law, each municipality may make arrangements with villages, settlements and urban quarters within its territory to ensure that the services are offered closer to all citizens of the municipality. Taking into account this article, the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA), is responsible for the local government as its name stipulates. In 2019, MLGA issued the *Administrative Instruction No.02/2019 on the Organization, Functioning and Cooperation of the Municipalities with Villages, Settlements and Urban Quarters* (hereinafter 2019 Administrative Instruction or instruction).³ This document provides the legal basis for public participation and inclusive local policymaking which is essential for the strengthening of local democracy. According to this instruction:



LOCAL COUNCILS – means the bodies appointed to represent the community in an organized form of one or more villages, settlements and urban quarters.”⁴

As such, local councils can cooperate with the municipality in the area of rural and urban planning, water supply, sewerage regulation, drainage, public health, local protection of environment, tourism, public spaces and cemeteries, cultural and sports activities etc.

1 See Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 12 Local Government

2 See Law on Local Self Government. Republic of Kosovo. 2008.

3 See Administrative Instruction (MLGA) no.02/2019 On the Organization, Functioning and Cooperation of the Municipalities with Villages, Settlements and Urban Quarters. Ministry of Local Government Administration. 2019.

4 See Administrative Instruction (MLGA) no.02/2019 On the Organization, Functioning and Cooperation of the Municipalities with Villages, Settlements and Urban Quarters, issued by the Ministry of Local Government Administration. Article 3 -Definitions.

They have no executive mandate, but rather an advisory role to the municipality. This advisory role can be performed in the form of written requests to the municipality, participation in public consultations, budgetary hearings, and face to face meetings with the mayor or head of the assembly at least twice per year. Thus, local councils are very important mechanisms for direct participation of citizens in implementation of the above-mentioned local competences.⁵ This right of citizens to participate in the conduct of public affairs is a democratic principle enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self - Government.⁶ Thus, the full application of this participation right can empower citizens and is a key human right aimed to combat marginalization and discrimination while supporting inclusive and evidenced decision-making.

Moreover, following the entry into force of the above-mentioned 2019 Administrative Instruction, each municipality was obliged to adopt its Municipal Regulation on cooperation of the municipality with the villages, settlements and urban quarters within six (6) months after this administrative instruction entered into force. A sample of this regulation was prepared by MLGA and shared with all municipalities, yet all municipalities were free to detail the functioning of local councils in their own municipality by adopting their local regulation, yet in compliance with the instruction.⁷

Thus, in accordance with the Law on Local Self Government and the 2019 Administrative Instruction all municipalities are obliged to establish these local councils and strengthen their role in municipal decision-making while supporting the municipalities prioritize community needs. In this context, civil society plays an important role as an advocacy body of the work of these local councils through monitoring, reporting, and raising awareness activities about the role of local councils in advancing citizen well-being and the importance of participation.

5 Ministry of Local Government Administration. "Overarching study for functioning of local government in Kosovo" December, 2019.

6 See European Charter of Local Self-Government. Preamble. Council of Europe. Available at <https://rm.coe.int/168007a088>

7 Face to face interview with Flutura Hoxha, Head of Division for Development and Harmonization of Legislation in the Ministry of Local Government Administration. 24.03.2023

Since the entry into force of the 2019 Administrative Instruction, no comprehensive study has been conducted to address the functioning and gender and social inclusion aspects of the local councils' composition. This given, in 14 randomly selected municipalities, this analysis aims to critically review and discuss the following questions:

- A** / What is the mode of organization of local councils and to what extent are they functional?

- B** / What is the actual nature of local council's cooperation and consultation with municipalities?

- C** / How are members from local councils financially compensated from the Municipality?

- D** / How and to what extent do women, youth and other marginalized groups (Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Turks) participate as chairpersons or members in local council structures?

This analysis is structured as follows: (II) background, (III) methodology, (IV) analysis and discussion of results, and (IV) policy recommendations to improve the functioning and inclusion aspects of local councils.

Background

The entry into force of the 2019 Administrative Instruction, has abrogated the previous Administrative Instruction no.2008/08 on cooperation agreements of municipalities with villages, settlements and urban quarters. This instruction has been in place for around eleven years. However, according to civil society organizations that have monitored its application, the instruction had to be changed to include new amendments like compensation for heads of local councils and inclusiveness aspects in local council structures.⁸ These changes were seen as two important preconditions for more effective organization of local councils. This given, the MLGA initiated the change of the 2008 Administrative Instruction and held several working group discussions with institutional and non-institutional actors and seven regional public discussions with citizens, supported by donors, leading to exhaustion of the public debate on this issue.⁹

The 2019 Administrative Instruction includes 18 articles and regulates organization and the functioning of local councils, composition and mandate of council members, consultations and cooperation of municipalities with the local councils, compensation of the chairmen¹⁰ of local councils, funding of the activities, amongst others. All these elements are key enablers of a functioning and inclusive local council once fully implemented in practice across municipalities. However, its successful application is being put into question by various civil society organizations that monitor the work of local councils (as will be elaborated in the discussion of results section).¹¹

What did the 2019 Administrative Instruction introduce? It did bring a number of changes including the limited number of local councils

8 Online interview with Arbreshe Demaj, Syri i Vizionit. 07.03.2023.

9 Face to face interview with Flutura Hoxha, Head of Division for Development and Harmonization of Legislation in the Ministry of Local Government Administration. 24.03.2023
Donors that supported this activity were USAID, DEMOS and Syri i Vizionit.

10 The word chairman is used in the 2019 Administrative Instruction. See below section others for lack of gender responsive language.

11 Interview with representatives of civil society organizations including Syri i Vizionit, INPO, D4D, D+ and Levizja Fol.

depending on the number of inhabitants, financial compensation for heads of local councils, gender and ethnic representation in local council structures, and cooperation of municipalities with local councils, as shown in the below table.

Table.1 The 2008 Administrative Instruction vs. the 2019 Administrative Instruction

No. of changes	The 2008 Administrative Instruction ¹²	The 2019 Administrative Instruction
1	Article 6: Number of local councils per municipality is left to discretion of the municipality through the municipal regulation	Article 4: The MLGA limits the number of local councils a municipality can establish based on the number of inhabitants
2	This instruction does not regulate the gender and ethnic composition of local councils	Article 6: The council should include gender and ethnic representation.
3	This instruction does not regulate consultations between municipality and local councils	Article 11: The mayor and the head of the local assembly should organize, at least, two meetings per year with heads of local councils. Heads of local councils are invited to participate in budgetary hearings, public consultations, and consultative meetings.
4	This instruction does not regulate financial compensation of local councils	Article 12: Compensation for heads of local councils is done in equivalent amounts to the members of mandatory committees. This compensation can be done for only six meetings within a calendar year.

12 Administrative Instruction no.2008/8 for cooperation agreements with villages, settlements, and urban areas. Ministry of Local Government Administration. 2008. Available at <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=21224>

First, heads of local councils did not receive any compensation before the introduction of article 12 (see table above) which obliges municipalities to provide financial compensation to all heads of local councils in the same value as members of mandatory committees in the assembly. This form of remuneration can encourage participation in local councils and was viewed as a positive development and appreciation of local councils' work.

Second, the number of local councils was limited depending on the number of inhabitants, as follows: (a) up to 10.000 inhabitant, the municipality should have four Local Councils, (b) from 10.001 to 20.000 inhabitants, the municipality should have up to eight councils, (c) from 20.001 to 30.000 inhabitants, the municipality should have up to twelve councils, (d) from 30.001 to 50 thousand inhabitants, the municipality should have up to twenty councils, (e) from 50.001 to 70 thousand inhabitants, the municipality should have up to twenty-five councils, (f) from 70.001 to 100 thousand inhabitants, the municipality should have up to thirty councils, (g) municipalities with more than 100.001 should have up to forty council,(h) the capital city should have up to fifty councils. This change was included in order to manage the possibility of the superfluously increased number of local councils across municipalities due to the financial compensation introduced.¹³

Third, article 6 on local council composition, introduces the requirement to have local council structures that reflect gender and ethnic representation. This change enables a legal environment for the creation of an inclusive community participation where both genders (male and female) as well as all ethnic groups living in the country (Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Turks) can have a say in regards to urban planning, public health, tourism, environment, public space, amongst others.

Fourth, the 2019 Administrative Instruction regulates the cooperation of municipalities with local councils through at least two meetings a year, invited by the mayor and the head of the local assembly. Additionally, it is foreseen that heads of local councils are invited in public consultations and budgetary consultations by the municipality.

13 Face to face interview with Flutura Hoxha, Head of Division for Development and Harmonization of Legislation in the Ministry of Local Government Administration. 24.03.2023

This implies more open and constructive cooperation between the municipality and local council heads due to more frequent meetings between the two, held within a year.

However, the extent to which this new administrative instruction is being successfully and fully applied across municipalities is ambiguous. Although, its application is crucial since it reflects the extent to which local policies are evidence-driven and responsive to all citizens no matter their gender, ethnicity, and/or age.

Methodology

This analysis utilizes a qualitative approach while employing triangulation data methodology including (1) desk research, (2) semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders, (3) one online survey with municipalities, and (4) two focus groups for result validation purposes across 14 randomly selected municipalities and 28 local councils.

To begin with, the selection of 14 municipalities was done taking into account the number of inhabitants per municipality from the latest census (2011) and the 2019 Administrative Instruction- Article 4 on Organization and Functioning of Local Councils which establishes the number of local councils based on the number of inhabitants, as follows:

Table.2 Fourteen (14) selected municipalities

No. of category	Categories based on the administrative instruction	No. of municipalities per category based on Agency of Statistics Data	Selected municipalities per category
1	up to 10.000 inhabitants, the municipality should have four Local Councils	8 municipalities	2 (Hani i Elezit, Mamushë)
2	from 10.001 to 20.000 inhabitants, the municipality should have up to eight councils	2 municipalities	1 (Graçanice)
3	from 20.001 to 30.000 inhabitants, the municipality should have up to twelve council	2 municipalities	1 (Obiliç)
4	from 30.001 to 50 thousand inhabitants, the municipality should have up to twenty councils	8 municipalities	3 (Viti, Istog, Fushë Kosovë)
5	from 50.001 to 70 thousand inhabitants, the municipality should have up to twenty-five councils	7 municipalities	2 (Vushtri, Lipjan)
6	from 70.001 to 100 thousand inhabitants, the municipality should have up to thirty councils	5 municipalities	3 (Gjilan, Mitrovice, Peje)
7	municipalities with more than 100.001 should have up to forty council	2 municipalities	1 (Ferizaj)
8	the capital city should have up to fifty councils	1 capital city	1 (Prishtine)

The random selection in each category was done under three conditions (1) covering the entire territory of Kosovo, (2) non-majority municipalities, and (3) a mixture of municipalities of all sizes. Thus, as shown in the above table the selected municipalities include 5 out of 7 biggest municipalities (Gjilan, Mitrovice, Peje, Ferizaj, and Prishtine), two non-majority municipalities (Mamushe and Gračanica), and

7 small to medium municipalities (Vushtri, Lipjan, Viti, Istog, Fushe Kosove, Obilic, Gračanica, and Hani i Elezit).

After the identification of 14 municipalities, a request for access to information in regards to the establishment of local councils and their gender composition was sent to the MLGA. The MLGA responded within the legal timeframe and according to their data only three (3) (Ferizaj, Gračanica, and Hani Elezit) out of 14 municipalities have established local councils. The same request for information was sent separately to each municipality and each one was contacted via phone. According to the data received directly from them, 7 out of 14 municipalities have established local councils. The direct communication with municipalities showed data discrepancy between municipalities and MLGA, resulting in lack of updated data by the latter.

Second, two heads of local councils were selected from each municipality, one from an urban area and one from a rural area to conduct a semi structured interview (see Annex A). This semi-structured interview contained 16 questions spread into four categories including: (a) role of the local councils, (b) functioning and organization of local councils, (c) gender and social inclusion aspects, and (d) cooperation with the municipality. Field work to conduct face to face interviews with heads of local councils took place during March and April in municipalities of Vushtri, Obiliq, Peje, Lipjan, Hani i Elezit, Ferizaj, and Gračanica. On the other hand, in municipalities which lack of functional local councils including Prishtine, Mitrovica, Gjilan, Viti, Fushe Kosove, Istog, and Mamushe, no interviews could be conducted. Based on our direct communication with municipalities, Prishtine, Mitrovica, Gjilan, Viti, and Istog will start the process of election of local councils in April or during 2023. The municipality of Fushe Kosove is still in the process of drafting the new regulation on local councils, whereas the municipality of Mamushe had no information about local councils or the municipal regulation.

Third, a semi structured interview was held with the MLGA - Head of Division for Development and Harmonization of Legislation (see Annex B) about their role in the process of the new regulation, their cooperation with municipalities, and about gender and social composition aspects of local councils.

Fourth, semi-structured interviews were held with representatives of civil society organizations (see Annex C) that have worked with local councils including Syri i Vizionit, INPO, D4D, D+, and Levizja Fol. The interviews were conducted with the purpose of gathering information about the functioning of local councils and the reasons for (lack of) inclusion of women, youth and other marginalized groups (Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Turks).

Fifth, each municipality, directorate of administration¹⁴, was sent an online survey to fill out via email. The survey contained 10 questions (see ANNEX D) related to composition of local councils and reasons behind (lack of) inclusion of women, youth and other marginalized groups (Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Turks), their relationship with local councils, and their communication with citizens during elections of local councils. 12 out of 14 municipalities responded to our email; 8 out of 12 filled out the survey; four (4) out of 12 municipalities did not fill out the survey arguing that they are not responsible because the mandate of local councils has expired and new local councils in accordance with the 2019 Administrative Instruction will be established during the year. On the other hand, two (2) municipalities did not respond to our request.

Six, desk research was conducted to identify the legal infrastructure for functioning of local councils, review of several reports conducted by local civil society organizations, journalists, review of the local governance study conducted by DEMOS and European Charter of Local Self-Government by the Council of Europe and additional credible documents published online for the scope of this analysis.

Seven, two focus groups were organized to validate the findings of the research. The first focus group was held with municipality representatives, one MLGA representative, and civil society representatives. The second focus group was held with few heads of local councils and representatives of civil society organizations.

14 In more than 90% of cases the director of administration is responsible for cooperating with local councils.

Analysis and Discussion of Results

This section discusses the findings of this analysis and is structured as follows: a) functionality and organization of local councils, b) gender and social inclusion aspects in local council structures, c) cooperation of local councils with municipalities, d) financial compensation of local councils, and (e) others.

Functionality and organization of local councils

Each municipality through an internal regulation defines the organizational structure and the format of meetings for local councils, amongst others. However, not all municipalities have adopted the Municipal Regulation on functioning of local councils in accordance with the 2019 Administrative Instruction. Out of 14 municipalities that are part of this analysis, two (2) (Fushe Kosove and Mamushe) have still not adopted the new regulation, while one of the first municipalities to adopt this regulation is the municipality of Peje. The latter was supported to draft the regulation by a civil society organization and that regulation served as a good framework example for other municipalities.¹⁵

Moreover, out of 12 municipalities that have established their municipal regulation, only seven (7) (Vushtrri, Obiliq, Peje, Lipjan, Hani i Elezit, Ferizaj, and Gračanica) have consolidated local councils. Whereas, municipalities of Prishtine, Mitrovica, Gjilan, Viti, and Istog will start the process of election of local councils in April or during 2023. Thus, this data is showing that only 50% of these municipalities have not elected local councils and 14 % have yet to adopt their municipal regulation on functioning of local councils. This data is an indication that municipalities either do not have capacities to coordinate the

15 Online interview with Arbreshe Demaj, Syri i Vizionit. 07. 03.2023.

establishment of these councils or they do not find it beneficial or of their interest to do it. The latter is linked to the idea that local councils are politicized structures and municipalities might look for a convenient timing to establish them or that municipalities are afraid of different opinions and interests.¹⁶ Thus, they prolong this process and have no interest unless there is pressure from outside, like CSOs groups who monitor these processes.

Another important aspect of local council functioning is the number of local councils per municipality. Based on article 4 of the 2019 Administrative Instruction, the number of local councils each municipality should have depends on the number of inhabitants (see section on methodology for specific number of local councils), ranging from 4 local councils to 50 local councils. However, the data on table 3 shows that not all municipalities have followed this instruction. For instance, Ferizaj has 50, Lipjan has 56, while according to the instruction Ferizaj can have up to 40 local councils since it has more than 100.001 inhabitants, and Lipjan can have up to 25 local councils. The latter has more than doubled the number of local councils per municipality.¹⁷ Whereas, Ferizaj has established local councils, with a “quick procedure”, ten (10) days before the adoption of the new regulation; hence, this high number.¹⁸ On the contrary, the other five municipalities, in compliance with the instruction have established the allowed maximum number of local councils. The below table shows the number of local councils and gender and ethnicity¹⁹ disaggregated data for heads of local councils, in each municipality. The data shows that the large majority of heads of local councils are of male gender (97%) and of Albanian ethnicity (95%). In particular, as shown below, five (5) out of 186 local councils subject of this study, are led by women presenting a worrisome state of play.

16 Face to face interview with Albulena Nrecaj, Executive Director, INPO. 07.04.2023, and face to face interview with Allen Meta, Researcher, D4D. 23.03.2023.

17 This data is received directly from the Department of Administration in Lipjan and is an updated list from January 2023.

18 Face to face interview with Albulena Nrecaj, Executive Director of INPO. 07. 04. 2023. INPO has monitored the establishment of local councils and has supported the drafting of the municipal regulation in Ferizaj.

19 Apart from Peja, no other municipality sent us ethnicity disaggregated data; however, we tried to identify from the names of heads of local councils whether they belong to a non-majority community.

Table 3. The number of local councils, gender and ethnicity disaggregated data

No	Municipality	No. of local councils	Gender of the heads of local council		Ethnicity of the head of local council	
			M	F	Majority	Non-majority
1	Peja	30	26	4	30	0
2	Ferizaj	50	50	0	50	0
3	Vushtri	25	25	0	25	0
4	Gračanica ²⁰	8	8	0	7	1 (Albanian)
5	Obiliq	13	12	1	12	1 (Serb)
6	Lipjan	56	55	1	55	1
7	Hani Elezit	4	4	0	4	0
Total	7	186	180	6	177	8

Additionally, based on article 5 of the 2019 Administration Instruction, the composition of the Municipal Assembly commission to coordinate the process of election of Local Councils should reflect a gender and ethnic representation. The data shows that seven (7) out of eight (8) municipalities has answered -yes- in the survey the question on whether the composition of the municipal assembly commission reflected gender and ethnic representation. One municipality stated that the previous party in power did not have such an inclusive commission, while they are currently in the process of consolidating a new commission to establish local councils during this year.²¹ Overall, the results show that municipalities establish inclusive (gender and ethnicity) assembly commissions, responsible for coordination of the election process of local councils.

Furthermore, local councils' composition should be gender and ethnic representative based on article 6 of the 2019 Administrative Instruction. While the municipal regulations specify this requirement

20

21 Online Survey with Municipality of Viti. April, 2023.

by asking each local council structure to include 30% women and depending on the ethnic composition of the village, settlement or urban area, minorities have to be included in the council if they are present during the elections. Municipalities were asked whether local council structures in their municipality represent both genders (women and men), youth (female and male), ethnicities (Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Turks), different age groups, and different levels of education, but the data provided does not show a clear pattern. Few municipalities answered that respective local councils do not represent gender, one answered that it does not only represent youth, and another one that it does not represent ethnicity, while two answered that their councils are inclusive of gender, ethnicity, youth, different age groups and levels of education. However, the data on table 3 shows that men in 97% of cases are heads of local councils and municipalities do not have ethnicity or youth disaggregated data. In some cases, they also lack gender disaggregated data on local councils. Thus, this divergence shows that the answers provided in the online survey are either misperceptions of municipal officers or a desire rather than the reality in the ground.

Election of local councils

In accordance with article 5 of the 2019 Administrative Instruction, each municipality establishes the Commission to coordinate the process of election of the Local Councils. This commission should have seven (7) members, four (4) representing different political entities in the municipal assembly, one (1) from the civil society and one (1) from the village, settlement or urban quarter from the location where the election of the Local Council takes place. This commission should reflect a gender and ethnic representation. The information received from municipalities through the online survey shows that all municipalities have established a commission that reflects gender and ethnic representation.²²

However, a key question in terms of election of local councils is related to how the municipality informs citizens about local council elections?

22 Online survey data analysis with municipalities.

This is crucial in order to assess whether the information process conducted by municipalities is inclusive or not. The administrative instruction does not detail how this process should take place; however, the municipal regulations list the channels of information in regards to election of local councils. For instance, the municipal regulation of Peja states that the commission informs citizens 15 days prior to elections through public announcements placed in public facilities and most frequent places within the territory where local council election is held, local media, and the official website of the municipality.²³ Similar to Peja, other municipalities that have established these municipal regulations employ the same channels of communication. Although, at first site municipalities seem to utilize a variety of communication channels, the remaining question is how inclusive are these forms of communication? For instance, data shows that citizens that use internet to print an online form or to fill out an online form from administration websites is low, 16.4% and 9.1% respectively.²⁴ This suggests that a small number of citizens are visiting government websites, including municipal websites, indicating that these websites are not effectively reaching a large portion of the population. Additionally, the notices that are posted on the walls of municipality buildings are not efficient as they are only visible to individuals who physically visit the building, and not all visitors read all the papers displayed on the walls. Moreover, the most common locations where local council elections are held in rural areas are typically places that are mostly visited by men like shops or coffee places; thus, the usual suspects take place in local council elections.²⁵ Arguably, these municipal methods of reach regarding local council elections are not effective.

23 Municipal Regulation No.01/2020 for organization and cooperation of municipality with villages, settlements and urban quarters within the territory of Peja.

24 Statistical Agency of Kosovo. Survey on use of information technology. 2020.

25 Face to face interview with Debora Peci, Project Manager, D+. 03. 03.2023.

Relationship of local councils with their community

How do local councils operate in the context of reaching, talking and hearing the community they represent? Social media, in particularly Facebook is used by local councils to communicate with citizens of their village, settlement or urban area. Through Facebook they share information about upcoming meetings or any cultural/social event that the local council organizes. Additionally, local councils spread leaflets with information regarding time and place of the meeting. Considering the high number of people that use Facebook, the latter can be considered a suitable tool to reach the community. However, the number of people attending local council meetings remains low. "The interest of people to participate in meetings is low, unless there is something urgent like electricity or water issues."²⁶ Overall, civic engagement is declining across the country and there are no differences observed between rural or urban areas.²⁷

Moreover, the analysis depicts two groups of local councils, one that has more structured and frequent meetings with citizens and another group that communicates with citizens mainly in cases of emergencies, mostly when public services like water, electricity or similar are out of service.

The first group of local councils meets to discuss any issues that can improve the well-being of their community and communicate them to the municipality, like the building of a park in the neighborhood, regulation of sidewalks and similar. Basically, in this group, the local council meets on regular basis with citizens of its community to discuss their problems and gather their requests. A good example of cooperation between local councils and community is the case of Peja local councils. "We are 6 members in the council representing 6 small neighborhoods in the city. I as head of the council, organize a meeting per neighborhood with the member of the council who is a representative of a particular neighborhood"²⁸ stated the head

26 Face to face interview with one Head of Local Council in Hani Elezit. 26.03.2023.

27 Focus group discussion, 25 May 2023, Prishtine.

28 Face to face Interview with one Head of Local Council in Peje. 28.03.2023.

of one local council in Peja. This given, this local council organizes a minimum of 6 meetings per year, which gives the local council the opportunity to be in every neighborhood and meet directly with citizens to hear their concerns and requests for the decision makers. "I share information about the next local council meeting through my social media platforms and through small posters around the neighborhood"²⁹ According to both heads of these two local councils in Peje, the meetings have a high number of participants and they are held in schools.

On the other hand, the second group of local councils it is the community that targets the head of local council to ask for help once a problem of a public service nature occurs like lack of electricity. "If something is burned, they will call me; if an electric pole falls down, they do not call the police but they call me first"³⁰ stated the head of one local council in Ferizaj. Thus, ones a problem arises they contact me directly and there is no need to meet more often, he continued. Another head of local council stated "We do not meet since people have other obligations, they are busy, plus the effect of the pandemic; thus, they call me if they have problems or emergencies with public services like lighting, etc."³¹ This indicates that this group of local councils do not meet in regular basis, but they communicate in cases of emergencies with their communities. This given, the role of the local council as a bridge between municipality and citizens with the aim of improving the well-being of the latter is better applied across the first group of local councils. On the other hand, in the second group of local councils this role is merely functional since their communication takes place mainly in cases of more emergent situations like the cut off of public services.

29 Face to face interview with one Head of Local Council in Peje. 28.03.2023

30 Face to face interview with one Head of Local Council in Ferizaj. 26.03.2023.

31 Online interview with one Head of Local Council in Ferizaj. 25.03.2023

Cooperation of local councils with municipalities

Cooperation of municipality with local councils is done about issues including rural and urban planning, water supply, sewerage regulation, drainage, public health, local protection and environment, tourism, public spaces and cemeteries, cultural and sports activities etc., based on article 8 of the 2019 Administrative Instruction. This cooperation takes place in three forms including (a) consultations between the municipality and the local councils at least two times within a year between chairpersons of the local councils and the mayor in cooperation with the chairperson of the assembly, (b) municipality invitation to local council chairpersons to participate in public debates and public consultations with citizens, (c) the delivery of community requests, in a written form, from local council chairpersons to the municipality offices. It is important to note that heads of local councils do not receive any training on their role, although some of them may perform this role for the first time.³²

First, the analysis depicts mainly one group of local councils who frame their relationship with municipality as good, while no local council stated to have a poor relationship with the municipality. Although, not all heads of local councils have met with the mayor, they did manage to meet with any of the directors or the head of the assembly, which according to them is a decent channel of communication to share their community concerns with the municipality.

Second, heads of local councils receive invitations through email/ phone in regards to public consultations or budgetary hearing from the municipality. Through participation in these activities they can share their community requests and then the municipality decides whether they are able to include them in the budget. "Yes, yes I am always invited in public consultations and budgetary hearings in the municipality building or school building. They call me though phone as head of local council", stated one head of local council in Gracanica.³³ He further explained, that their community requests are not always taken into consideration and that it depends how the assembly

32 Focus group discussion, 25 May 2023, Prishtine.

33 Online interview with one Head of Local Council in Gracanica. 08.04.2023.

decides to vote on the budget. Overall, all heads of local councils have stated that they are invited in these consultations from their municipalities.³⁴ Yet, the extent to which their requests are considered varies from request to request and from municipality to municipality.

Third, the filing of community requests, in written form, from local council heads to the municipality is another form of cooperation between the two. However, this presents an additional burden in terms of time and financial resources spent, by chairpersons of local councils, upon visiting the municipality building to file the requests. There were also cases when heads of local councils were asked to bring a copy of their personal identification document in order to submit the request. "During summer I submitted a community request and I had to go outside in the warm weather find a photocopy and pay for it, while the municipal officer did not offer to copy it for me"³⁵ stated one head of local council. This indicates lack of understanding and smooth cooperation from the municipality side. On the other hand, local councils in Peje are a good example of this form of cooperation. In Peja local councils' heads do not need to bring a copy of their identification document, on the contrary they are provided with official ID cards from the municipality to facilitate their entrance in the municipality building and their communication with municipality staff. Additionally, they use ID cards once they are in the field monitoring any capital investment in their community and they easily approach with questions the people working in the project "I only show my ID card which states that I am the head of the local council, to the company people working in the field, and I can ask various questions related to the capital investment"³⁶ stated one head of local council in Peja. Additionally, the heads of local councils from Vushtri and Ferizaj, said that they have their ID cards as chairpersons of local councils.³⁷

Moreover, this analysis depicts that the most common issues targeted by local councils, in meetings, public consultations, or through written requests include water supply, sewerage regulation, and drainage,

34 Focus group discussion, 25 May 2023, Prishtine.

35 Online interview with one Head of Local Council in Gracanica. 08.04.2023.

36 Face to face interview with one Head of Local Council in Peje. 28.03.2023

37 Focus group discussion, 25 May 2023, Prishtine.

while issues of public health, local protection, environment, and tourism have not been brought forward. This shows that communities are either less concerned about the latter or they are faced with more urgent issues like the above-mentioned one. In regards to cooperation about rural and urban planning, the analysis depicts two groups of local councils: one large group of local councils that has never participated in any committee of a planning or monitoring nature, related to rural and urban planning and the other group of local councils that are able to get the plan for a capital investment, upon request, in municipality and on random basis monitor the construction work in the field. The latter group also communicates with the municipality in case they identify any problem in the field, with the ongoing project. One head of a local council in Lipjan stated “Once a project starts in my neighborhood, I go to the municipality and ask for the infrastructure plan; thus, I go in the field and occasionally monitor whether this plan is being followed.”³⁸ This shows that this small group of local councils is involved in monitoring of capital projects and; thus, can also serve as a good example of a social audit group.³⁹

Financial compensation of local councils

Financial compensation of heads of local councils is foreseen in the 2019 Administrative Instruction, article 12 “Compensation of the Chairmen of the Local Councils”. This compensation is equivalent to the financial compensation of members of mandatory committees (50 Euro per meeting) and they can be compensated for six (6) meetings within one year. Although this is a positive development and can serve as an encouragement measure for others to join local councils, all heads of local councils argued that the financial compensation in the value of 50 Euro per meeting (300 Euro max per year, per six meetings) does not cover even expenses incurred like gasoline or phone. In further supporting their argument, they explained that as heads of local councils they need to send the requests of their

38 Online interview with one Head of Local Council in Lipjan. 03.04.2023.

39 Social audit groups are groups of people in a neighborhood that come together, on voluntarily basis, to monitor the building of a capital investment project in their community, be it a road, a school, a park, etc.

community to the municipality in person; thus, all those living in villages have to take their car or a taxi to go to the municipality building. This indicates a financial burden for them which cannot be covered with the current amount of financial compensation. Therefore, all heads of local councils interviewed, urban and rural, agreed and suggested that this financial compensation increases in the future. One head of local council in Obiliq, also suggested for members of the local council to be compensated in the value of 10 to 20 euro per meeting, as this would motivate them further to perform their role; thus, engage more with the community.⁴⁰

Moreover, all municipalities excluding Peja and Hani i Elezit, have not been paid thus far. "The municipality has not even asked for our bank account data, although we heard that some municipalities are paying their heads of local councils," stated the head of the local council in Lipjan.⁴¹ A similar statement was given by the head of local council in Vushtri "we have not been paid, our bank account information has not been required from us, on the other hand I have to spend my personal money to perform my role as head of local council."⁴² He went further, explaining that once he has a meeting with other people to advance the needs of the community he represents, he has to pay himself, which to him is also demotivating for others to get engaged in the council. However, during the focus group discussion, one head of a local council from Vushtri said that he was being paid from the municipality.⁴³ This information indicates that in Vushtri, some heads of local councils are being paid and some others are not. Another head of a local council from Ferizaj, said that he has never been paid and his bank account information was not requested from the municipality.⁴⁴ Overall, the information from interviews and focus group discussion is evidence that municipalities are failing to comply with their own municipal regulation on local councils.

Moreover, apart from this financial compensation to chairpersons of local council; the municipalities do not devote any particular funds,

40 Face to face interview with one Head of Local Council in Obiliq. 01 April, 2023.

41 Face to face interview with one Head of Local Council in Lipjan. 26 March,2023

42 Face to face interview with one Head of Local Council in Vushtri. 02 April, 2023.

43 Focus group discussion, 25 May 2023, Prishtine.

44 Focus group discussion, 25 May 2023,Prishtine.

on annual basis, to local council functioning or to their requests. Additionally, there are no mechanisms in place that would set the legal basis for in-kind compensation for local council members or chairpersons.

Women, youth and other marginalized groups inclusion in local councils

To begin with, in a recent study conducted by a CSO, gender disaggregated data for heads of local councils shows that 740 are men, while only 7 local councils are led by women, or otherwise represented in percentage, it is less than 1%.⁴⁵ This statistics is a clear indication that local councils are men-only led mechanisms aimed at influencing and participating in local policymaking related to rural and urban planning, water supply, sewerage regulation, drainage, public health, local protection of environment, tourism, public spaces and cemeteries, cultural and sports activities; although, all these public policies influence differently the life of both genders (women and men). Thus, inputs provided through these mechanisms cannot be sustainable since they leave out women who can potentially have different needs for specific public services as compared to men.

This analysis has observed in more detail the gender, youth and other marginalized groups (Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Turks) inclusion aspect in 7 out of 14 randomly selected municipalities, that have established local councils. Findings show that in only three (3) out of seven (7) municipalities with local councils, there are examples of local councils led by women (in Peja four local councils, in Obiliq one local council, and in Lipjan one local council). The legal infrastructure gives both genders (women and men), all ages (above 18) and all ethnicities (Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Turks) living in the country the same legal right to participate and be elected in local councils. However, this does not translate into equal exercise of this right by all citizens. What can be the explanatory factors for this state of play?

45 Levizja FOL (2022). Municipalities do not respect the Administrative Instruction of MLGA no.02/2019.

One major hurdle to lack of participation of women and youth in local councils is related to the history of local councils functioning. Before local councils were introduced in legislation as public participation mechanisms, each urban or rural area had its address “the old guy in the neighborhood” who was seen as the primary address in the respective neighborhood for any problem anyone could face in that area.⁴⁶ This person was also the first address for any outsider who wanted to get information about anything in the village. As the name implies, this person who performed the role of the head of local council at the time, had to be an old man/oldest man in that particular area, as this made him the citizen with the longest experience whose opinion was highly respected by inhabitants of that respective area. “It was easier for an old man to win the trust of his community”⁴⁷ said a CSO representative. Therefore, this form of cooperation in the past still has an influence on how women and youth perceive local councils and their role. Members of local councils also contribute to maintain this idea by unconsciousness prejudicing the role of youth or women in these structures. Some think that young people are not even mature enough to contribute⁴⁸ while others think that the work in local councils is mainly related to infrastructure which is not primarily a women’s job.⁴⁹

Another observed factor that contributes to lack of women participation as heads or members of local councils is culture – the customary belief that women are not able to lead or make decisions and that they have work at home to do, particularly in rural areas.⁵⁰ This implies that peoples’ prejudices towards women incompetence are a constant hurdle in their way and a heavy burden to carry. Thus, this automatically puts women in a more disadvantaged position compared to men whose competences and knowledge to lead or contribute is not prejudiced from society. One head of local council stated “Women do not want to take extra responsibilities as they already have a heavy burden with family issues and being the head

46 Face to face interview with Flutura Hoxha, Head of Division for Development and Harmonization of Legislation in the Ministry of Local Government Administration. 24.03.2023

47 Face to face interview with Albulena Nrecaj, Executive Director of INPO. 07.04. 2023.

48 Face to face interview with one Head of Local Council in Hani i Elezit. 26.03.2023.

49 Face to face interview with one Head of Local Council in Ferizaj. 26.03.2023.

50 Face to face interview with Albulena Nrecaj, Executive Director at INPO. 07.04.2023.

of the council you need often to go to the municipality to send requests and drive there since there is no public transportation from our village”⁵¹ This implies two issues: lack of women independence and lack of public transportation as two major problems, which also largely contribute to lack of women participation as members, consequently as heads of local councils. Additionally, this points to the need for digitalization of requests sent from local councils to the municipalities. Since, when heads of local councils file the requests with the municipality, they are required to submit them in physical form which is time-consuming and costly for local council heads, in particularly for women and other marginalized groups.

Moreover, the unfair opportunity to be informed about the role of local councils and elections timing contributes to lack of women, youth and other marginalized groups participation in local council structures. In particular, information does not reach all citizens, since “it is men who inform men and mobilize other men to participate” leaving out of the equation the above-mentioned groups in society.⁵² This indicates that information, about the role of the council as an important mechanism that communicates and collaborates with the municipality in relation to the needs of citizens, passes by in a closed circle of men-citizens.

On the other hand, according to information received from municipalities, they inform citizens about local council elections through social media platforms, website of municipality and local media in compliance with municipal regulations. However, according to a CSO representative, the information provided through social media platforms, meaning a municipality Facebook page, related to local councils is vague and long; thus, needs restructuring and clearance.⁵³ Moreover, it is important to highlight that the assembly members are not mentioned by any municipality as a form of communicating with the citizens in regards to local council role and contribution, and elections. The lack of women, youth and other marginalized groups in local councils implies that this form of information and communication applied by municipalities is either not

51 Face to face interview with one Head of Local Council in Vushtri. 01.04.2023.

52 Face to face interview with Debora Peci, Project Manager, D+. 03. 03.2023.

53 Face to face interview with Allen Meta, Researcher, D4D. 23.03.2023

reaching all citizens or is lacking a targeted communication strategy for specific groups in society. Some municipality representatives think that lack of these groups' participation can be argued on the basis of their lack of interest which can come due to their lack of knowledge about the role of local councils and their potential contribution or/ and they might think that this type of work is not for them.⁵⁴ This is supported by a CSO study which states that 68% of citizens have never participated in any public budgetary hearing.⁵⁵ The latter is one of the most common mechanisms practiced across all municipalities for years, while more than half of the citizens have never heard; thus, participated in such public consultations.

An additional challenge for the participation of women and female youth is the inconvenient time and place of meeting.⁵⁶ In the majority of cases, local council meetings are held later after work and in a neighborhood pub. This becomes an even major problem in rural areas where usually these places serve as man coffee places, while women feel uncomfortable visiting. Also, the limitation regarding the number of local councils per municipality, meaning that a local council can now represent three or more villages, making it more difficult for women, female youth, marginalized groups, to participate due to lack of transportation or in specific cases the lack of a driving license/car to go in the other village.

Furthermore, the lack of participation of women, youth (female and male), and other marginalized groups (Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Turks) is also viewed as lack of interest and willingness by the above-mentioned groups to participate and be elected. The head of one local council in Lipjan stated "any woman or any young citizen needs willingness and passion to participate since leading a local council requires commitment."⁵⁷ The support of family members, in particularly for women who want to participate, is another important reason highlighted during discussions with heads of local councils.⁵⁸

54 Online survey with municipality of Obiliq, March, 2023.

55 D4D. (2023). "Participation of citizens in local decision-making" Policy Analysis. Available at <https://d4d-ks.org/punimet/perfshirja-e-qytetareve-ne-vendimmarrje-ne-nivel-lokal/>

56 This is not election local council meeting, but regular local council meetings.

57 Face to face interview with one Head of Local Council in Lipjan. 26.03.2023.

58 Face to face interview with one Head of Local Council in Obiliq. 01.04.2023.

In regards to marginalized groups participation, it was highlighted that political situation is one important factor for (lack of) participation in local council meetings. “Members of minority communities are welcomed, we in our village have very good relations, and I cannot think about any hurdle, it is simply their lack of willingness to commit or their own social and economic problems”, stated one head of local council.⁵⁹ This opinion was also supported during both focus group discussions in regards to marginalized groups participation in local councils.⁶⁰ These opinions argue that it is mainly up to a woman, a young (female/male), or a marginalized citizen to participate in local council.

Additionally, another argument highlighted either directly or indirectly in discussions with all stakeholders is the low interest of people to participate in co-creation of public policies or monitoring of these policies, no matter their gender, ethnicity or age. This can be argued on the basis of lost trust in institutions or citizens’ poor socio-economic conditions. However, this is not a phenomenon present only in Kosovo, but, for instance, low participation of young people in public life across the world is recognized as a major challenge of participatory democracy.⁶¹ As one of the heads of local councils stated “it is not easy to engage people, they have no interest and they have their own economic problems”.⁶² This indicates that people either lost trust that their engagement will change anything in practice or they do not understand the importance of active citizenship. Arguably, the lack of belief that anything will change in local policymaking is embedded in the perception that local councils are politically affiliated; thus, their low impact.

59 Face to face interview with one Head of Local Council in Hani Elezit. 26.03. 2023.

60 Focus group discussion I and II. 24 and 25 May,2023, Prishtine.

61 UNDP (2022). The low level of youth participation in public life is a challenge for the whole society. Available at <https://www.undp.org/montenegro/press-releases/low-level-youth-participation-public-life-challenge-whole-society>

62 Online interview with one Head of Local Council in Ferizaj. 25.03. 2023.

Other challenges

This section highlights two findings which directly impact the inclusion aspect of local councils and the analysis dimension.

Lack of gender sensitive language in the 2019 Administrative Instruction

The 2019 Administrative Instruction lacks a gender sensitive language. For instance, the word “chairman” is used four (4) times referring to chairman of local councils or assembly; thus, making invisible the female gender or chairwoman. On the other hand, one of the main challenges of the implementation of this instruction is lack of women participation in local councils, while the language used can potentially discourage women to engage and get elected.

The lack of open data format

The data received from municipalities, in the majority of cases includes only name surname, phone number and the village, settlement or urban areas they represent, whereas information like ethnicity, age or level of education are not included. It is only the municipality of Peje that includes both gender and ethnicity disaggregated data for local councils; thus, stands out compared to other municipalities. Additionally, the data is not saved in an open format, but saved in a word format or scanned in a pdf file, which is challenging and time consuming for research/analysis purposes.

Policy recommendations

This report assesses the functioning and inclusion (gender, ethnicity and marginalized groups) aspect in 14 randomly selected municipalities in Kosovo, including Gjilan, Mitrovice, Peje, Ferizaj, and Prishtine, Mamushe, Gračanica, Vushtri, Lipjan, Viti, Istog, Fushe Kosove, Obilic, Gracanice, and Hani i Elezit. In particular, this analysis looks at the a) functionality and organization of local councils, b) cooperation of local councils with municipalities, c) financial compensation of local councils, d) gender and social inclusion aspects in local councils, and e) others. Thus, taking into account the evidence-based findings, this analysis also offers a set of policy recommendations to improve the identified existing challenges in relation to functioning and inclusion aspect of local councils. These policy recommendations target primarily the 14 municipalities that are the subject of this analysis; however, taking into consideration similarities with other municipalities functioning, they can be applicable across all municipalities. with slight modifications.

The main evidence-based findings of this analysis include the following:

The functionality and organization of local councils:

Two municipalities did not comply with the 2019 Administrative Instruction for local council regulations. Seven municipalities have not consolidated their local councils, and five of these will start the process of local council elections in 2023. Two out of seven municipalities with consolidated local councils have exceeded the maximum number of allowed local councils per municipality. Furthermore, there is gender imbalance among local council chairpersons subject of this study, the majority (97%) being male. Finally, there is also a data discrepancy between the MLGA and municipalities regarding the number of municipalities with consolidated local councils, with the MLGA data being outdated.

Cooperation of local councils with municipalities:

Local councils face challenges in their cooperation with municipalities. For instance, when filing requests with the municipality, they are required to submit them in physical form which is time-consuming and costly for local council heads. Additionally, local councils, apart from Peja, Ferizaj, and Vushtri local councils, lack ID cards that would allow them to easily enter and communicate with municipality. Furthermore, local council members receive no training from the municipality on their roles and potential contributions, even though many of them serve in these positions for the first time. Finally, most local council heads have not participated in urban or rural capital investments monitoring since they are uninformed about these processes.

Financial compensation of local councils:

The majority of municipalities fail to meet their legal obligation to pay local council heads an amount equivalent to the members of municipal mandatory committees. Additionally, some local councils are unsure of how many meetings they should be paid for and what meetings qualify for payment. Finally, the current financial compensation provided to heads of local councils is inadequate and does not cover basis expenses such as gasoline and phone bills; thus, they are dissatisfied with the current amount of compensation foreseen.

Gender and social inclusion aspects in local councils:

The traditional and historical function of local councils, which were led by older men in the village, has influenced the perceptions of women and youth regarding who should lead the council and how it should work. This, along with the belief that women are not capable of decision-making and have household duties, particularly in rural areas, contributes to the lack of women's participation in local councils. Moreover, the lack of information about the role of local councils and the timing of elections also leads to the underrepresentation of women, youth and other marginalized groups. In particular, the political situation in the country impacts marginalized groups' participation, particularly the non-majority Serb community. Finally, lack of personal interest, willingness to commit, and lack of family support also contributes to the lack of representation of women, youth, and other marginalized groups in local councils. People may not see the benefits of participating or may not have the necessary support to do so.

Others:

The majority of municipalities do not have open data formats and do not provide ethnicity, age, and gender disaggregated data. The format of data related to local councils' composition also varies among municipalities. Moreover, the 2019 Administrative Instruction does not use gender-responsive language which can have a negative impact on the participation of women in local council structures. For instance, terms like "chairman of a local council" are not inclusive of females.

Following the discussion of key findings, the below section offers a set of policy recommendations aimed at improving the functioning of local councils, inclusion of women, youth and other marginalized groups in local council structures, cooperation of local councils with municipalities and their community, amongst others, as follows:

Functionality and organization of local councils

- Participation of heads of local councils and their members can play an important role in monitoring of capital investments in urban and rural areas. Additionally, municipalities should utilize local council structures to act as social audit groups by informing them in advance about specific capital investments in their community and their role in monitoring these investments.
- Municipalities should prioritize the adoption of municipal regulations on local council functioning, followed by establishment of local councils. This will strengthen inclusive local policymaking which is essential for the consolidation of local democracy.
- Local councils should hold regular meetings with the community they represent, and it is suggested that they meet at least six times per year.
- The cooperation of municipalities with CSOs is important to conduct information campaigns that are more inclusive regarding the role of local councils and the timing of local council elections.
- The municipalities should use clear and easy-to-understand language on their social media platforms and local media websites to reach a broader audience regarding local council elections. As women, youth, and other marginalized groups are underrepresented in local council structures, the municipalities should focus on these groups. Therefore, they should receive assistance in creating specific information campaigns aimed at these groups.

Cooperation of local councils with municipalities

- The local council heads should be given the option to submit community requests through email in addition to physical means, which would streamline the process and allow communication to occur at any time. Furthermore, this would reduce costs, particularly for those in rural areas who have to travel to the municipality building.
- Once new heads of local councils are elected, the first activity of the municipality should be to inform them about the Municipal Regulation on functioning of local councils, the role of local councils, their communication and cooperation with the municipality, the payment form and necessary documents in that regard. This given, all heads of local councils will have the necessary information to perform their role and cooperate effectively with the municipality.
- Municipalities should facilitate local council entrance and cooperation with municipality staff by providing each head of local council an ID card that shows they are the head of a particular local council. Municipality of Peje has shown to be a good example in this regard by providing all heads of local council with an ID card.

Financial compensation of local councils

- Municipalities should comply with article 12 of the instruction and financially compensate all head of local councils.
- Ministry of Finance in cooperation with MLGA should consider opportunities to increase the amount of financial compensation for heads of local councils. This could also serve as a motivating factor for other groups in society to join these structures.

Gender and social inclusion aspects

- The cultural mindset about participation in local councils and leading local councils cannot be addressed through any policy change. This context needs training and targeted behavioral analysis and awareness raising towards women, youth (female and male) and marginalized groups (Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Turks) about the importance and role of participation in local councils. These activities should be of an informatory nature and should take place in continuous basis throughout the year.
- CSOs can have a significant impact in raising awareness about the importance and the necessity to participate in local councils. This is because they have established networks and conduct activities within communities, allowing them to easily reach and connect with people; thus, encourage people to participate in local councils.

Other policy recommendations

- The 2019 Administrative Instruction should be revised to remove all terms which make invisible one gender; and, thus include a gender sensitive language throughout the text.
- Municipalities should be supported to establish open data formats and gender, ethnicity, and age disaggregated data for local councils. This support should be followed by training of municipality staff on how to maintain this form of data; thus, update it.
- Members of the assembly have an important role to play in bridging the communication between citizens and the municipality. Through work in the field they can be more active during local council election time and inform citizens about the role and importance of participation in local councils. In particular, they should target women, youth and other marginalized groups in society.

ANNEX I – Interview questions with Heads of Local Councils

Role of local councils

1. To what extent do you think local councils play the role of a local democracy mechanism while ensuring that the services are offered closer to all citizens of the municipality? In particular the role the council you are part of/heading is playing within that context?

Functioning and organization

2. How does your local council function (how often do you meet, where, who takes notes)?
3. Are you being paid and what do you think of the fees provided by the municipal regulation? Is there anything that needs to be changed, in your perspective?

Gender and social inclusion aspects

4. What is the ethnic and gender composition of your council and why is that?
5. Overall, data shows that almost all local councils are head by men (740 by men and 7 by women), why do you think is this the case (list three to five reasons)?
6. What is the level of education and age of the members of the local council you are part of/heading? Why do you think this is the case?

7. Do you think women have the same opportunities to participate in local councils and head local councils? Why and how, please explain?
8. Do you think that the (current) participation of women and other marginalized groups (Roma, Ashkali, Serb, Egyptian, and Bosnian) is equally meaningful to men's participation in local council? Why and how, please explain?
9. What are the biggest challenges in terms of women and other marginalized groups (youth, girls and boys, and Roma, Ashkali, Serb, Egyptian, and Bosnian) participation in local councils?
10. Do you think that culture can be a hurdle for women's participation in local councils? If yes, how can/should be addressed?
11. How do you think that more women and other marginalized groups (Roma, Ashkali, Serb, Egyptian, and Bosnian), in particularly young people (girls and boys), can be incentivized to meaningfully participate in local councils?

Cooperation with municipality

12. How would you frame your council's relationship with the municipality?
13. What is your cooperation agreement with the municipality)?
14. To what extent do you think your requests are taken into consideration by the municipality?
15. How does the financing of your activities take place? Can you tell us examples from this or last year?
16. What should be changed in this communication between local councils and municipalities (more meetings, more serious consideration, ...)?

ANNEX II – Interview questions with MLGA

1. How did the process of drafting the new 2019 Administrative Instruction go?
2. Why some municipalities have still not adopted the municipal regulation and why some have still not consolidated their local councils?
3. How do you view the role of local councils and their relationship with municipalities?
4. What are the biggest challenges in terms of women participation in local councils?
5. What are the biggest challenges in terms marginalized groups (Roma, Ashkali, Serb, Egyptian, and Bosnian) participation in local councils?
6. What are the biggest challenges in terms of youth (female and male) participation in local councils?
7. Do you have any recommendations in relation to functionality and inclusiveness of local councils?

ANNEX III – Interview questions with CSOs Representatives

1. Can you tell us about the work of your organization in regards to local councils?
2. What are three biggest challenges that local councils face in terms of functioning?
3. Do you think local councils reach their community?
4. How do you view local council cooperation with municipalities?
5. What are the biggest challenges in terms of women participation in local councils?
6. What are the biggest challenges in terms marginalized groups (Roma, Ashkali, Serb, Egyptian, and Bosnian) participation in local councils?
7. What are the biggest challenges in terms of youth (female and male) participation in local councils?
8. How do you view the role of CSOs in monitoring local councils?
9. Do you have any recommendations in relation to functionality and inclusiveness of local councils?

ANNEX IV – Online survey questions with Municipalities

1. Did the municipality draft and publish online the - municipal regulation for the organization and operation of local councils, which should be in line with the administrative instruction (2019) in force?

- Drafted
- Drafted and published
- No

2. To what extent do you think that local councils promote social, economic and cultural well-being of communities, as well as promote democratic local decision-making?

Please comment here.

3. Does the composition of local councils reflect the following (select all that apply)?

- Gender inclusion (women and men)
- Youth inclusion (girls and boys)
- Ethnicity inclusion (Roma, Ashkali, Serb, Egyptian, and Bosnian)
- Different levels of education
- Different levels of age
- None

4. Please write down and elaborate if possible three reasons for lack of gender (women and men), youth (girls and boys), and other vulnerable groups (Roma, Ashkali, Serb, Egyptian, and Bosnian inclusion in local councils?

Please comment here.

5. Do you think women and youth (girls and boys) have the same opportunity (not legal) to meaningfully participate in local councils?

- Yes
- No
- If no, why

6. What should be changed to ensure higher participation of women and youth (girls and boys) in local councils?

Please comment here.

7. Does the commission established by the Municipal Assembly reflect a gender and ethnic representation? (article 5 of the administrative instruction no.02/2019 on the organization functioning and cooperation of the municipalities with villages, settlements and urban quarters)

- Yes
- No
- If no, why? Please identify the problems?

8. How do you reach people when elections for local councils take place?

Please elaborate (for instance through municipal website call publication, etc.)

9. Do you organize any kind of information campaign to inform citizens about the importance of participating in local councils?

- No
- Yes
- If yes, please explain how.

10. How often does municipality meet with local councils throughout a year and where and how are their requests addressed by the municipality?

Please comment here.



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