



*Duke Mbështetur Qeverisjen e Mirë dhe Qytetarinë Aktive
Supporting Good Governance and Active Citizenry*

Institutional and Public Enterprises Transparency in Kosovo III

Policy research: Evaluation of the transparency of
Municipalities

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ABOUT FOL

Movement FOL is engaged to empower the civic impact on decision – making process, responsible and efficient governance. FOL is deeply devoted to work on improvement and attainment of a better civic representation in public life. FOL works for a good governance and grounded on democratic principles, for responsible, transparent and accountable institutions, and for application and compilation of laws with participation. Therefore, expenditure of public funds, conflict of interest, negligence and institutional responsibility and access to official information, are the main components of FOL engagement. FOL attempts to fulfill these goals by fighting the citizens’ apathy and indifference and make citizens more active and more voiced, in order to serve the community interests and always alert to oppose abuse, misuse, corruption and other malpractices of governance.

1. Introduction

This policy study is the third public one that takes place in Kosovo, but the first one that focuses on the municipalities. Like the two previous studies, it aims to evaluate the transparency of Municipalities. Considering the large number of the municipalities and the complexity of the issues covered by this type of public policy study, we have selected only four municipalities: Prizren, Mitrovica, Gjakova and Podujeva. However, in the future, this study aims to cover more municipalities and gradually advance to a more precise estimation, based on indicators. The study focuses on to what level have reached the selected municipalities in the development of legal and regulatory framework, formal structures and institutional capacity to enforce the constitutional and legal provisions guaranteeing the right of citizens to access public documents and communication and public information, with the aim of strengthening transparency and accountability to the public. This paper summarizes the main achievements and the work that the four selected municipalities do being involved in the implementation of the Law on Access to Public Documents and the relevant constitutional provisions. The contents of this report is based on information gathered through a structured questionnaire, completed by each municipality selected during May-June 2012, and documents sent by these Municipalities.

The study focuses on these specific issues:

1. *Legal and regulatory framework* in force, ie provisions containing statutes and municipal regulations on transparency, which establish and regulate the internal functioning of institutional structures and mandating municipalities to have implementation capacities for public communication and information. It also includes documents that provide concrete responsibilities of responsible municipal structures and specific duties of staff required to perform public communication and information functions, respectively (Organisational Structure / Organograms - SO / O, Terms of Reference - TR, and Job Descriptions- JD);
2. *Policy framework and implementation plans*, respectively possible strategic documents and work plans regarding the issues that affect public communication and information, which documents should contain specific objectives and activities in this public policy area;
3. *Framework and institutional capacities* for public communication and information, with a focus on the existence and functioning of institutional structures for this purpose and mechanisms of their functioning (including relevant hierarchical structures and internal standards for monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the law enforcement of local policies for public communication and information, as well as those of evaluating the performance of relevant staff), but also human capacities, financial and technical support for implementation of this legislation and public policies and
4. *Implementation issues*, focusing on administrative practices and standards for public communication and information, ie media relations, civil society organizations and other interested parties (including business community), their involvement in the design and monitoring the implementation of legislation and policies in this area, and any additional measures and activities, beyond the legal obligations undertaken by municipalities for communication and better information of the public and implementation of relevant constitutional and legal provisions.

The structured questionnaire, as the main instrument for collecting information and data, is consisted of 25 components: 24 questions and a table. Through which it is gathering of quantitative and qualitative data and information on each issue. Questionnaires were sent to the Directors of Administration and municipal officials responsible for public relations and the Mayors have also been informed. Therefore,

these officials are responsible for all findings of this report. At the introduction of the questionnaire respondents were instructed specifically and exactly on how to complete the questionnaire and the type of information required to enable a more accurate and comprehensive assessment.

2. Constitutional and legal provisions for access to public documents

The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, article 41, provides that "Every person has the right to access official documents." Further, it states that "documents of public institutions and state bodies are public, except information that are limited by law due to the privacy, business secrets, commercial or security classification¹. "Through this, the Constitution creates rights and obligations. On one hand, it gives citizens the right to free access in the documents of the institutions and public enterprises, both at central and local levels. On the other hand, it obliges public institutions to establish all the mechanisms and supporting infrastructure, and to take all necessary measures to ensure fulfillment of this right, starting from the defining of their specific obligations through implementing legislation, which then should be reflected and implemented within the framework of the policies of each institution. The Constitution also provides that this right may be limited in cases where access to information containing certain documents violates privacy, or when they submit information or business secrets should be classified for reasons of public safety. Further, it reads that these restrictions should be determined in more details by law.

And this law is the Law no. 03/L-215 for Access to Public Documents (LAPD). This law states that its implementation aims to "[...] guarantee the right of every individual and body, without discrimination on any grounds, to have access, upon request, on the documents withheld, prepared or received by public institutions². "It also defines the principles, conditions and restrictions on access to public documents and rules of an easier way of having this right. Furthermore, regarding specific Municipalities, Section 123 (4) of the Constitution states that "Local government is based on the principles of good governance, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in providing public services, paying special attention to specific needs and concerns of the communities that are not majority and their members. "while Article 124 (1) provides that" municipalities have a high degree of local government and encourage and ensure the active participation of all citizens in the decision making process of local authorities. "third, the Law no. 03/L-040 for Local Self-Government³, Article 68, defines the basic principles and obligations of municipalities in terms of transparency, information and consultation of the public and ensuring public participation in local self-government. Without going into further details on the ways and procedures of access to public documents, with primary importance the implementation of these obligations effectively by public institutions. This mandates them to establish and function the necessary legal and institutional infrastructure and capacities needed to fulfill their duties.

Regarding sub-legal acts for implementation of LAPD, this law obliges the government within three months after its entry into force to draft sublegal acts to implement it⁴, but does not specify either the number or scope of these acts. Implementing legal ground should specifically define the structures, resources and specific relevant obligations within each institution for public communication and information, and mechanisms of implementing measures to achieve this, including the issue of classification and selection of sensitive public documents from public documents with the right to have access. To meet respective obligations within the relevant structures and implementation mechanisms, each institution needs to establish relevant technical regulatory infrastructure: the reflection of resources and responsibilities within their organizational structure / organogram, the existence of the

¹ The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, article 41, available at http://www.assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/Kushtetuta_sh.pdf

² Law on Acces to Public Documents, article 1, available at <http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/liget/2010-215-alb.pdf>

³ Law on Local self-government, http://www.assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/liget/2008_03-L040_al.pdf

⁴ Ibid, article 26, paragraphs 1 and 2

Terms of Reference (TOR) and job descriptions (JD), which specifically define the responsibilities of institutional structures for public communication and information and specific tasks of the respective staff.

In spite of this, effective implementation of legal and regulatory framework requires the existence of internal standards for monitoring, reporting and evaluation of their work, allocation of sufficient resources (human, financial and technical) for the operation of these internal structures, including the implementation of policy documents relevant to the work plans. Regarding the latter, the component of public communication and information should be reviewed all in all, in the form of objectives and specific activities, within the time limits. Finally, but not only that, administrative practices are needed so that within each institution / public enterprise should be created and developed a culture that promotes regular communication and involvement of the media and civil society organizations in their regular work, in particular in the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the relevant legal and policy framework.

The following section presents the findings from each selected municipality.

3. Municipality of Prizren

The Statute of the Municipality of Prizren, which entered into force on October 15, 2008, defines a number of mechanisms to provide access to public documents and transparency of municipal bodies. According to this statute, meetings of the Municipal Assembly and its committees are open to the public, except cases when it could jeopardize public safety or when it comes to sensitive information, such as those that are classified as reliable by LAPD, or personal, business and dealing with court proceedings. In cases of closed meetings, the public should be informed of the reasons for this⁵. Despite this, the statute requires that meetings of the Municipal Assembly, its committees and all public meetings should be held in the official languages in this municipality, which are Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian and Turkish⁶. Furthermore, the Municipal Assembly is obliged to publish public notices before each meeting thereof. These notices must include the agenda, date, time and place of meeting, and shall be published at least seven days before the relevant meeting, or in emergencies (including extraordinary meetings) three days earlier⁷. At the level of institutional structures, the statute requires the Municipality to establish, at any time and as required, advisory committees, in order to ensure the participation of citizens in decision making. These committees consist of members of Assembly, as well as citizens and representatives of nongovernmental organizations⁸.

At the level of development of legislation and local policy, the Statute of this Municipality contains specific provisions to ensure the participation of citizens in this process, by which the citizens can propose to the Assembly for consideration of public interest issues through consultations, and can directly participate in meetings, depending on the provisions of this statute. The latter provides a number of mechanisms for achieving this: publicity and information campaigns, contacts with selected bodies, the survey on the implementation of local policies, public advertisement of proposals regarding the draft policies or local regulations, contacts with interest groups, public meetings, public hearings, public opinion researches, advisory committees, petitions and local referendums⁹. Regular meetings with citizens represent more inclusive and participatory mechanism provided by the statute. The municipality is obliged to organize such meetings at least twice a year in which municipal representatives inform the participants on issues of common interest pertaining to life and development of municipal policies. These gatherings are open to the general public and representatives of the media, and wherein the participants can take initiatives, make proposals, suggestions and express their thoughts to resolve certain issues, in accordance with the provisions of the Statute. Time, date and place of their occurrence should be announced by the municipality through media, two weeks earlier¹⁰.

The municipality is also obliged to publish an annual report after the closer of each fiscal year of the Municipality, and after approval by the Municipal Assembly¹¹. Finally, the municipality is obliged to provide public access to formal acts and official documents and information. The Mayor is obligated to provide public access to all public documents that describe the duties and powers of the municipality, its

⁵ The Statute of the Municipality of Prizren, article 33, available at [http://kk.rks-gov.net/prizren/Kuvendi-\(1\)/Statut.aspx](http://kk.rks-gov.net/prizren/Kuvendi-(1)/Statut.aspx)

⁶ Ibid, article 12

⁷ Ibid, article 32

⁸ Ibid, article 58

⁹ Ibid, articles 89 and 90

¹⁰ Ibid, article 92

¹¹ Ibid, article 78

internal organization and way of access to services provided in accordance with the provisions of LAPD, unless required by law otherwise¹².

Municipality of Prizren has also put into effect the **Municipal Regulation on Transparency**, which was approved on February 29, 2012 by the Municipal Assembly. This regulation has three main goals: enhancing transparency of work of municipal bodies, the establishment of rules that allow easier exercise of the right to access public documents of the municipality and the implementation of good administrative practices on access to its official documents¹³. It aims to achieve these goals by regulating specifically the participation of citizens and civil society organizations in meetings of the Municipal Assembly and its committees, public meetings organized by the Municipality and its bodies (including the public notice for these meetings), consultations regarding the acts of the municipality, public participation in decision making, and access to official documents.¹⁴

In the introduction of operational provisions, respectively the definitions, there is an uncertainty regarding legal grounds. This is because the 'access to public documents' is defined as "observing and obtaining copies of official documents, in accordance with the Law on Access to Official Documents¹⁵", thus as a legal base is taken the Law no. 2003/12 on Access to Official Documents, which is expressly repealed by the Law on Access to Public Documents¹⁶. Besides the uncertainty regarding the formal validity of this article, and consequently the entire regulation, the uncertainty of the definition of this key term creates confusion in implementation. This is because it leaves open the possibility for different interpretations of the scope of the regulation, the fact that the definition of 'official document'¹⁷ in the Law on Access to Public Documents is much more precise and detailed than the definition of 'document'¹⁸ in the Law on Access to Official Documents.

Regarding the participation of citizens and civil society organizations in the meetings of the Municipal Assembly¹⁹, the majority of provisions in essence do not differ from the provisions of the statute which regulate this matter, except forms of public notice for these meetings (public announcements, media and web -site of the Municipality), their content (a provision that requires more defining of the place where citizens can be supplied with material proposed for review), and the obligation that all regulations and decisions of the Municipality, whose publication is allowed according to the legislation on access to official documents published on the website of the municipality within fifteen (15) days after the meeting at which they were found. Mentioning only the regulations and decisions as documents of Municipal Assembly which should necessarily be published, this regulation, rather than to facilitate the exercise of the right of citizens to access public documents and implementation of relevant provisions of national legislation, in fact it narrows the scope of these provisions. In addition, this Regulation provides an insufficient number of mechanisms, nor provides proactive measures to be taken by the Municipality to facilitate the access of citizens in all public documents examined and drafted from the work of the Municipal Assembly. Finally, it does not provide any specific obligation of the Municipal

¹² Ibid, article 102

¹³ Municipal Regulation for Transparency, article 1, Municipality of Prizren available at [http://kk.rks.gov.net/prizren/getattachment/Kuvendi-\(1\)/Regulations/RregullorjaTransparenc.pdf.aspx](http://kk.rks.gov.net/prizren/getattachment/Kuvendi-(1)/Regulations/RregullorjaTransparenc.pdf.aspx)

¹⁴ Ibid, article 2

¹⁵ Ibid, article 3.8

¹⁶ Law on Access to Public Documents, article 2828.1.1

¹⁷ Ibid, article 3.1.3

¹⁸ Law on Access to Public Documents, article 2 (b) available

at http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2003_12_al.pdf

¹⁹ Municipal Regulations for Transparency, article 4, Municipality of Prizren

Office for Public Affairs to facilitate the exercise of this right, nor set any mechanism to address issues which can be addressed to the Municipal Assembly by citizens, civil society organizations and other representatives of the public who participate in regular meetings and extraordinary ones.

Even the provision that regulate the participation of citizens and civil society organizations in meetings of standing committees of the Assembly²⁰ as a matter of fact narrows the scope of the relevant provision of the Statute, because of the inconsistency of definitions. Specifically, Article 5 of the Regulation specifies only the representatives of the media and civil society, while article 33 of the Statute contains a broader definition, since it refers to the public. Similar to Section 4, the majority of the provisions of Article 5 do not differ essentially from the relevant provisions of the Statute of the Municipality. Furthermore, neither this article does not provide the citizens access to all documents reviewed and issued by the permanent committees of the municipality, nor sets mechanisms, procedures and detailed standards to facilitate the exercise by citizens of the right of access to these documents. In general, the same gaps seen in the above mentioned provisions of the regulations dealing with petitions²¹, public meetings²², public consultation of municipal acts²³ and access to official documents²⁴ of the municipality.

The following section summarizes the findings of the research in the field in Prizren.

Regarding the **legal and regulatory framework at the municipal level**, the staff of this municipality responsible for public communication and information has shown considerable knowledge, although not satisfactory, the provisions of the Statute which aim enforcing the constitutional and legal provisions described in the introductory part of this study. This is because they have listed only those provisions of the Statute regulating the mechanisms of realization of the requirements for citizen participation in municipal decision making, public consultations and public meetings with citizens. Further, this municipality has mentioned Municipal Regulation for Transparency (explained in more detail above), but failed to explain what obligations, structures and specific resources within municipal structures requires it in order to meet the relevant constitutional and legal obligations. The same is true regarding the mechanisms and implementing measures provided by this act, this municipality has not given any explanation about them, including how to regulate the classification and selection of sensitive public documents of the Municipality and public documents of the municipality in which citizens have the right to access. On the other hand, lacks a full explanation of the mechanisms and implementing measures provided by this act to regulate the use of official languages and those in use in this municipality, as they only explained the aspect of written documents, without mentioning anything that other kinds of documents and materials in the municipality which are entitled to access to all citizens who speak four languages specified in the Regulations (Albanian, Serbian, Turkish and Bosnian language).

According to data provided by the Municipality of Prizren it is not clear whether its Office of Public Relations contains its organizational structure / organogram, since it was not given any explanation on the structure of this office, including in the framework of overall hierarchy of the municipality and its functioning in this context. Regarding the Terms of Reference (TOR) of this office, although it is claimed

²⁰ Ibid, article 5

²¹ Ibid, article 6

²² Ibid, article 7

²³ Ibid, article 8

²⁴ Ibid, articles 10-11

that they exist and are published on the municipality website²⁵, the published text is unclear, because that disables the difference between chronological explanations that have led to establishment of this office and its structure, on one hand, and substantial portion of TOR that they claimed to have, on the other side. Finally regarding this, the final part of the municipal website is actually a brief description of the duties of the Chief of the office, while within the research in this field this municipality have stated that they have a plan (as it seems to increase the number of officials within the office), but that such a thing is not possible due to legal restrictions for non-increasing number of employees in the municipality.

At the level of the **policy framework and implementation plans**, Prizren Municipality has not drafted any policy document or implementing plan or any annual work plan that affects the area of public communication and information. Consequently, it has not set targets to achieve in this area, nor their activities to achieve the measures and mechanisms for regular monitoring and reporting on their implementation. The same applies regarding the reflection of this horizontal public policy field within the annual plan of the municipality for the current year.

When dealing with the **institutional framework and capacities** for public communication and information, except the above mentioned difficulties related to the framework that regulates its operation, according to the data provided by the Public Relations Office of this municipality it is not clear whether within it there is and are implemented the standards of internal reporting and monitoring and evaluation work, as it is stated that they are applied in municipal departments. Regarding human resources, this municipality has stated that the Chief of the office in question has completed post-graduate specialization, he has an experience of over five years and has attended relevant training lasting a total of about five months (although they did not give any information on the topics), but there is no any figure on other resources allocated to enable the functioning of this office (they only stated that its activities are covered by the budget line of the Mayor). The same applies on the resources allocated for implementation of activities related to public communication and information with the approval of policy documents during the year and annual work plan, since it was not given any information or data, and total resources allocated for the functioning of this office during the current year.

Regarding **implementation issues**, this municipality has enlisted six local media (TV Besa, TV Prizreni, TV opinion, TV Yeni Donem, Helix Radio and Radio Prizren) and declared to have daily communication with them, but they did not listed any kind of activities for which communicate with them. The same applies regarding the inclusion of local civil society organizations involved so far in the work of this Municipality, as only four are mentioned (KDI, Youth Centre in Prizren, Ecological Association in Prizren and Women's Associations), but they did not mention the duration and the role of each of them being involved. When talking about the inclusion of non-government actors in the drafting of legislation and policies from the beginning, this municipality has offered only the data for the previous year and the present one, stating that during 2011 and first quarter of 2012 have been approved a total of 81 decisions of various natures, 3 municipal regulation and a strategy for youth policies, but did not mention any extra-governmental actors involved in their design. On the other hand, it is stated that no actor has been involved in implementing local legislation and policy documents, as it has been said that the Mayor is responsible for implementing all decisions taken by the Municipal Assembly. According to the Municipality of Prizren during the May 2011 - May 2012 no non-governmental actor is involved in monitoring and evaluating

²⁵ Municipality of Prizren, Communication and Information Office, <http://kk.rks-gov.net/prizren/Municipality/Zyra-per-komunikim-dhe-informim.aspx>

the implementation of its legislation and policy documents. Finally, it is said that in the website of this Municipality are published all the documents (in Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian and Turkish), but no details were given, and the press conferences on the right of citizens to access Municipal documents is mentioned as an additional activity for public communication and information.

4. Municipality of Mitrovica

The **Statute** of Municipality of Mitrovica, which entered into force on 23 September 2011 (completed-amended), sets a number of mechanisms to ensure access to public documents of this Municipality and transparency of the work of municipal bodies. It provides that all meetings of the Municipal Assembly, its committees and commissions, and all meetings of the Board of Directors, are allowed public participation, including representatives of the media, unless the "nature of the issue under discussion can take dimensions that can be harmful to the public interest. "Additionally, the statute also guarantees citizens the right to access to documents of the municipality, in accordance with applicable law on access to official documents. Thirdly, it sets public meetings and other forms of consultation and advice as forms of direct citizen participation in decision-making of the Municipality, on the other hand, obliges the latter to meet these requirements through mechanisms such as information and promotional campaigns, constant communication with interest groups, surveys, public announcements of various proposals, meetings and public hearings, advisory committees and local referendums. Finally, citizens have the right to nominate municipal regulations, which are approved after consultation with citizens.²⁶

Regular meetings with citizens represent an important mechanism provided by the statute. The municipality is obliged to organize such meetings at least twice a year in which gatherings the municipal representatives inform participants on issues of common interest pertaining to development activities and local development policies. These gatherings are open to the general public, and can be attended by all those concerned, who can take initiatives, make proposals, suggestions and express their thoughts to resolve certain issues. Time, date and place of these meetings are announced by the municipality through media, two weeks earlier²⁷. Furthermore, the Municipal Assembly is obliged to publish public notices before each meeting thereof. These reports must include the agenda, date, time and place of the meeting, and shall be published at least seven days before the relevant meeting, or in emergencies (including extraordinary meetings) three days earlier²⁸. At the level of institutional structures, the statute requires the Municipality to establish advisory committees in order to ensure citizen participation in decision making, which are consisted of citizens and representatives of nongovernmental organizations, and provide opinions and proposals and conduct researches related to initiatives of the Municipal Assembly, in accordance with the Statute²⁹. Municipality of Mitrovica is also obliged to publish an annual report after the closer of each fiscal year, and after approval by the Municipal Assembly³⁰. Unlike that of Prizren, this municipality is also obliged to support the functioning of nonprofit organizations if they are providing services within the responsibilities of the municipality,

²⁶ The statute of Municipality of Mitrovica, articles 11 and 12, available at [http://kk.rks.gov.net/mitrovica/getattachment/Municipality/Statut/Statuti-i-Komunes-se-Mitrovices---2011-\(1\).pdf.aspx](http://kk.rks.gov.net/mitrovica/getattachment/Municipality/Statut/Statuti-i-Komunes-se-Mitrovices---2011-(1).pdf.aspx)

²⁷ Ibid, articles 13 and 14

²⁸ Ibid, article 32

²⁹ Ibid, article 41, paragraphs 5,6,7

³⁰ Ibid, article 64

which must be done through cooperation and partnership agreements and in accordance with applicable law³¹.

Municipality of Mitrovica also has put into effect the **Municipal Regulation for Transparency**, which was approved by the Municipal Assembly on March 31, 2011. This regulation aims to increase the transparency of work of municipal bodies, increase public participation in decision making at the local level, establishing rules that allow easy exercise of this right and implementation of good administrative practices on access to official documents. It enables public participation in meetings of the Municipal Assembly and its committees, public meetings, public notice obligation, consultation regarding municipal laws and public participation in decision making and access to official documents of the municipality³². Provisions that obligate the municipality to hold open meetings to the public are essentially identical to those provided in the Municipal Statute³³. This regulation also requires the municipality to publish its acts: the budget and plans of the Municipality are declared as public documents without limitation, while the decision for municipal acts which does not allow public access can only be taken when it comes to protecting the public interest, in accordance with the Law on Access to public Documents.³⁴

Regarding the public meetings, except the rules as provided in the statute, this regulation sets out a list of municipal officials who are obliged to take part in them (Mayor and Deputy Mayor, Chairperson and Vice-Chairman of the Assembly, directors of municipal departments, chairpersons of the committees, the Head of Personnel and competent officials relating the agenda), whilst there is no timetable set for the municipal assembly to review the requirements and recommendations made by the public at these meetings³⁵. Furthermore, this regulation sets out the rules for the municipal public consultation, which expressly include charter and municipal regulations. Information Office is responsible to notify the public about public consultation sessions, while those interested can also provide recommendations, comments and suggestions in writing. The latter should be sent to the Municipal Assembly for approval.³⁶

Finally, while the provisions on access to official documents of the municipality³⁷ are essentially the same as those provided in the Statute, the Regulation obliges the municipality to provide citizens access to its annual reports³⁸, and develop and implement an action plan for transparency³⁹. The latter should include specific actions to improve transparency: more frequent reporting in the media (for issues related to the use of the municipal budget, economic development, the use of municipal property, urban planning, investments, revenues of the Municipality and other matters of general interest), organizing question-answer sessions and press conferences or debates with issues that are in interest to the public, designing the official website of the Municipality or its update (to published plans and the municipal work, meetings, phone book and contact information of persons regarding certain fields), and publication and distribution of leaflets containing information relevant to the public.

³¹ Ibid, article 68, paragraphs 3,4 and 5

³² Municipal Regulation for Transparency, Mncipality of Mitrovica, articles 1 and 2, available at https://kk.rks.gov.net/mitrovica/getattachment/Shpalljet/Rregulloret/Rregulloret-2011/Rregullorja-Nr_-01-2011-per-transparence.pdf.aspx

³³ Ibid, articles 4 and 5

³⁴ Ibid, article 6

³⁵ Ibid, article 8

³⁶ Ibid, article 9

³⁷ Ibid, article 10

³⁸ Ibid, article 12

³⁹ Ibid, article 13

The following section summarizes the findings of the research in the field in the municipality of Mitrovica.

Regarding **the legal and regulatory framework at the municipal level**, the staff of the municipality responsible for public communication and information has shown satisfactory knowledge of the provisions of the Statute aimed to enforce the constitutional and legal provisions described in the introductory part of this study. This is because they have listed all relevant provisions of the statute regulating access to official documents and citizen participation in decision making. Further, this municipality has mentioned Municipal Regulation for Transparency (explained in more detail above), but failed to explain the obligations, structures and specific resources within municipal structures requires it in order to meet the relevant constitutional and legal obligations. The situation seems slightly better in regarding mechanisms and implementing measures provided by this act, since this municipality has listed some of them: the transparency of the meetings of the Municipal Assembly and its committees, publication of the acts of the municipality, petitions, meetings with citizens, public consultation and access to official documents. On the other hand, they have not given any explanation on how to regulate the classification and selection of sensitive public documents of the Municipality and those documents in which citizens are entitled to access. Further, it appears that this act does not provide mechanisms and implementing measures to regulate the use of official languages and those in use in this municipality, as it is declared that there are no such mechanisms in spite of applicable legal obligations. According to the data provided by the Municipality of Mitrovica, the municipal office responsible for communication and information with the public has the organizational structure / organogram, Terms of Reference (TOR) and Job Descriptions (JD) for two officers, but they did not mention the content of these documents, nor any explanation on this.

At the level of **the policy framework and implementation plans**, neither the municipality of Mitrovica has drafted a policy document or implementation plan or annual plan of work that includes the field of public communication and information. Consequently, it has not set targets to be achieved in this area, nor activities to achieve the measures and mechanisms for regular monitoring and reporting on their implementation. The same applies regarding the reflection of this horizontal public policy field within the annual plan of the municipality for the current year.

When dealing with the **institutional framework and capacities** for public communication and information, except the above mentioned difficulties related to the framework regulating its function, according to data provided by this municipality, the assessment of the work is performed on a semi-annual and annual bases but yet it is not clear what standard of internal reporting and monitoring of evaluation work can be. Regarding human resources, this municipality has stated that two staff members who deal with public communication and information, both completed university studies, with experience of 12, or 30 years (although it is not clear the relevance), only one of them is said to have received training for nearly a month (although they have not given any information on the topics of training), but they only stated that this office has no specific budget for its operation. More data are provided in terms of resources allocated for implementation of activities related to public communication and information with the approval of policy documents during the year and annual work plan, having been given a figure of € 10.000 , allocated this year for the publication of monthly magazine of the Municipality and some brochures.

Regarding **implementation issues**, this municipality has listed a number of national and local media (*Koha Ditore, Zëri, Kosova Sot, Kosovapress, Kosovalive, RTK, KTV, TV Klan, Tv21, RTV Mitrovica, Radio Ylberi*, etj.)

And have stated that they have daily communication with them, but did not list any activity for which they communicate. The same applies regarding the inclusion of local civil society organizations involved so far in the work of this Municipality, as they just mentioned one of them (CBM), but they only mentioned political events in general, and did not explain the length and the role of the involvement of each of them. Regarding the inclusion of non-government actors in the drafting the legislation and policies from the beginning, this municipality has not provided any data. The same applies regarding the inclusion of such actors in their implementation, and in terms of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of local legislation and policy documents they mentioned CBM organization, but did not provide any details. Finally, it is said that in the website of this Municipality are published a number of documents, but no details were given, and the Municipal magazines, pamphlets and brochures are mentioned as additional activities for public communication and information.

5. Municipality of Gjakova

The **Statute** of the municipality of Gjakova, which entered into force on December 26, 2008, sets out a number of mechanisms to provide access to its public documents and transparency of work of municipal bodies. According to this statute, the meetings of the Municipal Assembly and its committees are open to the public, except when to do so could jeopardize public safety or risk disclosure of sensitive information, such as those that are classified as reliable by LAPD, or personal, business and dealing with court proceedings. In cases of closed meetings, the public should be informed of the reasons for this and the Assembly may approve special rules for this. Municipal Assembly is also obliged to publish public notices before each meeting, which should include the agenda, date, time and place of the meeting, and shall be published at least seven days before the relevant meeting or emergencies (including extraordinary meetings) three days earlier. This statute also establishes detailed rules regarding informing interested parties of meetings of the Assembly and its committees, obliging the Information Office for each such meeting to notify the public through public notices, local media and website of the municipality⁴⁰. At the level of institutional structures, the statute requires the Municipality to establish sectoral advisory committees to ensure citizen participation in decision making. These committees are consisted of citizens and representatives of nongovernmental organizations, and may submit proposals, conduct researches and offer opinions on the initiatives of the Municipal Assembly⁴¹.

The Statute of the municipality also contains provisions for informing and consulting the public. Under these provisions, the municipality is obliged to hold public meetings at least twice a year, in which can take part each person or organization with an interest in the municipality and that municipality shall inform the public about its activities and the latter can ask questions and make proposals. Further, the municipality is obliged to inform the citizens of any relevant plans or programs of public interest, assembly is obliged to approve local rules for transparency of the legislative, executive and administrative officer in order to increase public participation in decision making and facilitate its access to official documents⁴². This municipality is also obliged to publish an annual report after the closer of each fiscal year of the Municipality, and after approval by the Municipal Assembly.⁴³

⁴⁰ The statute of the Municipality of Gjakova, article 24 and 37, available at <http://kk.rks-gov.net/gjakove/getattachment/Municipality/Statut/statuti-i-komunes.pdf.aspx>

⁴¹ Ibid, article 36

⁴² Ibid, article 65

⁴³ Ibid, article 79

Gjakova municipality has also put into effect the Municipal Regulation for Transparency, which was approved by the Municipal Assembly on April 28, 2009. This regulation defines the principles, conditions and criteria in order of strengthening the transparency of the municipal bodies, increase public participation in decision making, facilitate public access to official documents and promoting good administrative practices on access to official documents. It regulates the access of any individual or legal body in all public documents of the municipality, public participation in meetings of the Municipal Assembly and its committees, public meetings, public notice obligation, public consultation, public participation in decision making and access in official documents⁴⁴. Legal Provisions that obligate the municipality to hold open meetings to the public are essentially identical to those provided in the Municipal Statute⁴⁵. This regulation also requires the municipality to publish its acts - including regulations, decisions and other administrative acts of the Municipal Assembly, the budget of the municipality and municipal plans - a week after the meeting they are issued, through public announcements, local media and web-site of the Municipality⁴⁶. Furthermore, this regulation requires that the municipality within 30 days to respond to citizens requests for information and their petitions relating to any matter that falls within the scope of the municipality⁴⁷.

The provisions of this regulation on public meetings are essentially similar to those provided in the Statute of the municipality, except that the regulation provides a list of municipal officials who are obliged to take part in those meetings (Mayor and Deputy Mayor, the Chairman, Vice-Chairman of the Municipal Assembly, municipal directors, committee chairmen, the head of competent staff and officials relating the agenda) and the Municipality requires that requests and recommendations from the public be reviewed within 30 days⁴⁸. On the other hand, regarding public discussion are applied the same rules that apply to the holding of open meetings to the public, or forms and content of public information for this purpose. It also sets out matters that are subject to public discussions: the draft budget of the municipality, municipal regulatory plans, statute, regulations and proposed projects related to general issues of municipal interest⁴⁹.

Finally, while the provisions on access to official documents of the municipality⁵⁰ are essentially the same as those provided in the Statute, the Regulation obliges the municipality to develop and implement an action plan for transparency. Through the latter, the municipality must allow public monitoring of the implementation of the legislation on local government in the municipality and the legislation according to which the bodies of public administration operate. This provision also provides a range of activities to improve transparency: more frequent reporting in the media (for issues related to the use of the municipal budget, economic development, the use of municipal property, urban planning, planning for health care and social welfare, planning for implementation of processes in the field of Education, Culture, Youth, Sports, investments and revenues of the municipality, and other matters of general interest), organizing question-answer sessions and debates with the press conferences on issues that are of interest to the public, building the official website of the Municipality or update the existing one (to publish work plans and reports of Municipality, schedule of the meetings, phone book and

⁴⁴ Municipal Regulation for Transparency, Municipality of Gjakova, article 1, available at <http://kk.rks.gov.net/gjakove/getattachment/0b61583a-c12b-4dc5-ba1d-9e9e62221f7f/Rregullore-per-transparence.aspx>

⁴⁵ Ibid, article 2 and 3

⁴⁶ Ibid, article 4

⁴⁷ Ibid, article 5

⁴⁸ Ibid, article 6

⁴⁹ Ibid, article 7

⁵⁰ Ibid, article 8

contact information of persons relating certain fields), and publication and distribution of leaflets containing guidance to the public important information.

The following section summarizes the findings of the research in the field in the municipality of Gjakova.

Regarding **the legal and regulatory framework at the municipal level**, the staff of the municipality responsible for public communication and information showed inadequate knowledge of the Statute provisions which aim enforcing the constitutional and legal provisions described in the introductory part of this study. This is because they only have referred to the Statute, but have not provided the content of the provisions of the Statute that regulate the legal responsibility of the municipality for public communication and information. Furthermore, this municipality has mentioned Municipal Regulation for Transparency (explained in more detail above), but failed to explain what obligations, structures and specific resources within municipal structures requires it in order to meet the relevant constitutional and legal obligations. The same is true regarding to mechanisms and implementing measures provided by this act, since this municipality has not provided any additional information and the manner of regulating the classification and selection of sensitive public documents of the Municipality and those documents in which citizens have the right to access, since they only referred to the relevant law and Municipal Regulation on Transparency. Further, regarding the use of official languages and those in use in this municipality, they have stated that they lack sufficient capacities to provide translation in Serbian. According to data provided by the Municipality of Gjakova, Public Information Office is part of the Municipality's organizational structure and functions within the Department of General Administration, and it is not clear if this office has Terms of Reference (TOR), and regarding Job Descriptions (JD), they stated that three officials work there and the JD are being drafted.

At the level of **the policy framework and implementation plans**, Municipality of Gjakova stated that the Public Information Office has worked and acted on the basis of a strategy and action plan in the field of public communication and information, but did not provide any content of these documents. At the level of objectives, they only referred to public awareness and cooperation with public, but did not mention any activity for achieving them, nor mentioned mechanisms and measures for regular monitoring and reporting on their implementation. The same applies regarding the reflection of this horizontal public policy field within the annual plan of the municipality for the current year.

When we are at the **institutional framework and capacities** for public communication and information, according to the data provided by this municipality, the assessment of work is done in six months and yearly basis, but it is not clear what standard of reporting of internal monitoring and evaluation work can be. Regarding human resources, this municipality has stated that the Public Information Office consists of three officers, all three of them completed higher studies, experienced by 10, 13, or 30 years (although it is not clear its relevance) , and each has attended trainings from one to three months (although they have not given any information on the topics of the training). Regarding the budget, they have stated that this office has no specific budget for its operation, but operates within the budget allocated to the Mayor, not giving any concrete figure. The same applies regarding to resources allocated for implementation of activities related to public communication and information with the approval of policy documents during the year and annual work plan.

Regarding **implementation issues**, this municipality has listed a number of national and local media (*Syri Vision, Radio Gjakova, TOP Radio, RTK, TV KLAN, TV 21, KTV, Radio Dukagjini, Lajm, Bota Sot, Koha Ditore, Zëri dhe Kosova Sot*) and declared to have regular communication with them, but did not list any activities they have communicated. The same applies regarding the inclusion of local civil society

organizations involved so far in the work of this Municipality, they mentioned two of them (the Association of Intellectuals "Jakova" and Literary Club "Xhon Nukolle Kazazi"), and mention political events in general and did not explain the duration and the role of involvement of each of them. Regarding the inclusion of non-government actors in the drafting of legislation and policies from the beginning, this municipality has not provided any information relevant, and has listed only BIRN as extra-governmental actors involved in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of local legislation and policy documents, but did not provide any details. Finally, it is said that in the website are published all official documents, but no details were given, and have stated that they did not perform any additional activities for public communication and information.

6. Municipality of Podujeva

The **Statute** of Municipality of Podujeva, which entered into force on October 12, 2009, establishes a number of mechanisms to ensure public access to documents and transparency of work of municipal bodies. Like other municipalities, the statute provides that meetings of the Municipal Assembly and its committees are open to the public, media, and other interested entities, except where such a thing could jeopardize public safety or discover sensitive information, such as those that are classified as reliable by LAPD, or personal, business and dealing with court proceedings. In cases of closed meetings, Municipal Assembly, with a decision, should give reasons for the meetings entirely or partially closed to the public. Municipal Assembly is also obliged by the Information Office, to publish public notices before each meeting thereof. These reports must include the the agenda, date, time and place of the meeting, and shall be published at least seven days before the relevant meeting, or in cases of extraordinary meetings, three days earlier. This statute also establishes detailed rules regarding informing interested parties of meetings of the Assembly and its committees, obliging the Information Office to inform the public through public notices, local media and web-site of the Municipality⁵¹. At the level of institutional structures, the statute requires the Municipality to establish other committees, which should be consisted of representatives of civil society, but most of their membership must be members of the Municipal Assembly. Regarding the consultative committees, they may be established by the Municipal Assembly, upon the proposal of the Mayor, the permanent committees in municipalities and citizen groups. Consultative committee members may be citizens and representatives of nongovernmental organizations.⁵²

The statute of the Municipality of Podujeva also includes provisions for informing and consulting the public. Under these provisions, the municipality is obliged to hold public meetings at least twice a year, in which can take part each person or organization with an interest in the municipality and that municipality shall inform the public about its activities and the latter can ask questions and make proposals. Furthermore, the municipality is obliged to inform citizens about its programs and plans significant to public interest and approve municipal regulation that promotes transparency in the legislative, executive and administrative bodies, with the aim of increasing participation in decision making and facilitate public access to official documents. Furthermore, any interested person or organization has the right to file a request for information regarding the activities of the municipality, and the Municipal Assembly is obliged to consider such requests, and the Mayor or any authorized

⁵¹ The statute of the municipality of Podujeva, article 39, available at <http://kk.rks-gov.net/podujeve/getattachment/Municipality/Assembly/Statut/Statuti.pdf.aspx>

⁵² Ibid, article 53 and 71

officer must respond with a written reply within 30 days after the receipt of such request⁵³. This municipality is also obliged to ensure transparency in the drafting of its normative acts, publish an annual report after the close of each fiscal year of the Municipality, and after approval by the Municipality, including, regulations, and municipal budget decisions, which must pass through discussion and consultation prior to their approval. Besides this, the statute mandates the municipality that, through the Office of Information, to make public all laws and other regulations thereof (including the municipal budget), except those whose disclosure is limited by the legislation on access to official documents, a weeks after their approval. Finally, it guarantees the right of citizens to access official documents, and oblige the latter to approve a regulation and municipal action plan for transparency, in order to increase the transparency of decision making and its operations.⁵⁴

Municipality of Podujeva has also put into effect the **Regulation for Transparency of Work of the Municipal Authorities**, which was approved by the Municipal Assembly on September 15, 2010. This regulation defines the obligations and responsibilities of municipal bodies for transparent work and creating opportunities and mechanisms for information and direct monitoring by all interested parties of the activities of these bodies. Same as the statute, it guarantees to all citizens of the municipality the right to access to official documents and information to the benefit of the common interests of citizens. Provisions that obligate the municipality to hold open meetings to the public are essentially identical to those provided in the Municipal Statute⁵⁵. It obliges the municipality to provide adequate space and conditions for participation of interested citizens at open meetings of the Municipal Assembly and its committees⁵⁶. This regulation also requires the municipality to make public the commitments, decisions taken, attitudes taken on certain issues, the manner of implementation of projects and other issues, the amounts of budget categories according to destination and the dynamics of expenditures. Further, the municipal executive is obliged to inform the public about the contents of detailed work program and provide clarification on matters of professional competence and responsibilities⁵⁷.

Regarding the means to ensure transparency, this regulation provides the use of communications and press releases, web-site of the Municipality, local media, and public announcements of periodic newsletters. In addition, the Mayor and municipal directors are obliged, in a day of the week to set a regular schedule to work with the parties, to enable citizens and interested parties be informed, consulted and to submit their suggestions and objections on specific issues within the competence of the municipal executive. This regulation also provides the operation of a service center for citizens, which is responsible for providing citizens information, and requires placement of orientation signs of the municipal offices and services and complaint box in which citizens can submit their comments on the work of the municipal bodies and possible incorrect behavior of the relevant officials.⁵⁸

Furthermore, this regulation defines the forms and content of the requests of the citizens, nongovernmental organizations, interest groups and other entities for access to official documents. On the other hand, the Municipality is obliged within 15 days to respond to these requests and provide access to required information. In case of refusal by the municipality to access the requested

⁵³ Ibid, articles 66 and 67

⁵⁴ Ibid, articles 73, 74, 75 and 76

⁵⁵ Regulation for Transparency of Work of the Municipal Authorities, Municipality of Podujeva, articles 1,2 and 3 available at <http://kk.rks-gov.net/podujeve/getattachment/205b580e-d110-4dd3-aa0a-535ec01e8d50/Rregullo-re-per-transparenc-en-e-punes-te-institucio.aspx>

⁵⁶ Ibid, article 11

⁵⁷ Ibid, articles 15, 16 and 17

⁵⁸ Ibid, articles 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23

information, the relevant parties have the right to appeal to the Ombudsman and to initiate judicial proceedings⁵⁹. Finally, the regulation establishes the criteria that restrict access to official documents, which are essentially the same as those defining by the Statute of the Municipality.⁶⁰

The following section summarizes the findings of the research in the field in the municipality of Podujeva.

Regarding **the legal and regulatory framework** at the municipal level, the staff of the municipality responsible for public communications and information have shown satisfactory knowledge of the provisions of the Statute which aims the enforcing of the constitutional and legal provisions described in the introductory part of this study, because they have given the content of all its provisions regulating the liability of the Municipality for Public Communication and Information. Furthermore, this municipality has mentioned Municipal Regulation for Transparency (explained in more detail above), but did not provide any explanation of the obligations, structures and specific resources within municipal structures provided for the purpose of fulfilling their respective constitutional and legal obligations. The same applies regarding to mechanisms and implementing measures provided by this act, since this municipality has not provided any additional information and the manner of regulating the classification and selection of sensitive public documents of the Municipality and those documents in which citizens have the right to access, since they only gave the contents of the provisions of Municipal Regulation for Transparency. Regarding the use of official languages and those in use in this municipality, they only gave the contents of the relevant provisions of the Regulation on the Use of Official Languages in the municipality of Podujeva, but did not provide any explanation on measures and implementation mechanisms in use. According to organogram, sent by the Municipality of Podujeva, the Office of Public Relations and Information functions within the Office of the Mayor. Furthermore, although they said they have put into force the Terms of Reference (TOR) and Job Descriptions (JD) of this office, even they have listed a list of relevant duties and responsibilities, it is not clear that when will they become applicable.

At the level of **the policy framework and implementation plans**, Podujevo Municipality stated that they have drafted a policy paper on public communication and information, but they only have repeated the tasks and duties of the Office for Public Relations and Information. Consequently, the municipality does not have a list of objectives for public communication and information activities to achieve them, nor mentioned mechanisms and measures for regular monitoring and reporting on implementation. The same applies regarding the reflection of this horizontal public policy field within the annual plan of the municipality for the current year.

When we are at the **institutional framework and capacities** for public communication and information, this municipality has not provided detailed explanations on the performance evaluation of officials responsible for public communications and information, but only stated that this is done directly by the Mayor, and therefore it is not clear what the reporting standards of internal monitoring and evaluation based on this work. Regarding human resources, this municipality has stated that the Office for Public Relations and Information consists of two officers, both completed higher studies, with experience of 8, or 13 years (although it is not clear its relevance) , and each has received training from one to three months (although they have not given any information on the topics of training). Regarding the budget, they have stated that this office has no specific budget for its operation, but operates within the budget

⁵⁹ Ibid, article 32

⁶⁰ Ibid, articles 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31

allocated to the Mayor, but they did not give any concrete figure. The same applies in relation to resources allocated for implementation of communication activities and public information with the approval of policy documents during the year and annual work plan.

Regarding **implementation issues**, this municipality has stated that they have regular communication directly with about 50 media (including radio, television, newspapers and Internet portals) and have listed a number of them, local and national (*Radio Vizioni, Radio Llapi, RTK, RTV 21, TV KLAN dhe KTV*), but only mentioned the Municipal Assembly meetings as specific activities what they communicate about. Regarding the inclusion of local civil society organizations in the work of this Municipality so far, they have listed a few of them (Ekovizioni, New Alternative Llapi, Aureola, AKEA, KAD, Women for Women, Youth Action Council and Youth Parliament) and the main activities they communicate with them: environmental cooperation (including financial assistance for their projects, cooperation in developing action plans for environment that has developed municipalities, consulting, partnership, exchange information, then providing facility for local youth center activities, and support on a project to eradicate illiteracy in remote rural areas. However, they do not explain the duration and role of each of their involvement. Regarding the involvement of non-government actors in developing legislation and policies from the beginning, this municipality has listed a number of municipal acts, but did not mention any non-governmental actors involved in their design. Furthermore, they have given a number of actors involved in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of legislation and local policy documents and the work of the Municipality, in general, including monitoring the implementation of the documents of the communities (by Balkan Sunflowers) and the Municipal Assembly sessions (the Youth Parliament and Local Youth Action Council). Finally, it is said that in the Web site are published all its official documents, but no further details were given, regarding additional activities for public communication and information they mentioned in general the meetings organized in the villages of the municipality.

Conclusions and recommendations

As the findings of this study of public policies show, municipalities are in the initial stage of completion and implementation of legislation and local policies that allow the public access to their public documents and other measures to improve their transparency and accountability to the public. Regarding the provisions of their Statutes, the three municipalities covered by this study so far they cover fairly comprehensive the issues of public communication and information and public access to public documents. But it seems like it is needed a more accurate determination of the competencies and responsibilities of the offices responsible for public communications and information.

Therefore it is recommended that municipalities review their statutes to ensure reflection of obligations arising from laws and regulations within the competencies and responsibilities of their offices which are responsible for public communication and information.

Regarding municipal regulations for transparency, this study has shown that while they intend to regulate a number of issues and have set very large and important goals, they contain a limited number of implementing mechanisms and measures to achieve these goals. In addition, they are not sufficiently harmonized and appropriate with laws and regulations (including statutes) on the issues related to transparency and accountability.

Therefore it is recommended that municipalities also focus on further development of these regulations, with a focus on eliminating ambiguities and inconsistencies with framework legislation, a more precise definition and comprehensive issues that aim to regulate (in accordance with and reflecting the relevant legal and statutory provisions), the definition of these provisions into mechanisms, standards, and specific task and obligations for municipal institutional structures (and not only for the offices responsible for public communication and information, but also other municipal structures), and specification of obligations of the municipalities, in particular regarding subsequent action arising from various components and activities within the area of transparency and accountability, in order to ensure good liaison between these components and thereby establish a cyclic process which will allow the systematization of the development of legislation and local policies in this area, as well as implementation, monitoring and evaluating their implementation.

At the level of institutional structures for public communication and information, this study has shown that their staff has insufficient information and knowledge on legal and policy framework for public communication and information, but also that it is less informed on sectoral issues within the scope of the respective municipalities.

Therefore it is recommended that municipalities take steps towards building human capacities of these offices, to ensure that the staff responsible for public communication and information knows in details the legal provisions and policies required to implement, and improve the capacities to implement them. It also requires that they should be included and significantly improve their knowledge on sectoral issues within the scope of the Municipality. This is necessary in order to ensure that municipal regulations and policy documents for specific sectoral areas reflect the extent of communication and public information. This will then enable the structures responsible for public communication and information to monitor and evaluate better the policy implementation for public communication and information, and so be able to assess the overall progress of the Municipalities in improving transparency and accountability to the public.

It is also recommended to be taken the following measures, which affect more detailed issues:

- Compilation of Organizational Structure / internal Organograms, Terms of Reference and Job Descriptions of the offices responsible for public communication and information and their staff;
- Compile annual work plans of the offices responsible for public communication and information, which will contain clear objectives and detailed activities to achieve them, and
- Development of database of information on communication and cooperation with non-government actors, particularly the media and civil society organizations, which would enable getting a clear statement about the purpose and types of activities which is communicated and cooperated about.