

REPORT ON TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA



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January 2017.

Human Resources Management in Local Self-Government

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Implemented
by the Council of Europe



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Central Government	National Ministries and Government Agencies
CoE	Council of Europe
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
EU	European Union
HRM	Human Resources Management
IMC	Intermunicipal cooperation
IPA	Instrument for PreAccession Assistance
IT	Information Technology
LSG	Local Self-Government s
MPALSG	Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government
MSP	Municipal support package
NGO	Nongovernmental organizations
PAR	Public Administration Reform
RDA	Regional Development Agencies
SCTM	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TNA	Training Need Assessments
PPO	Procena potreba za obukom



The Project “Human Resources Management in Local Self-Government” has been developed to respond to the needs arising from the implementation of key priorities of the Public Administration Reform Strategy in the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter: “the PAR Strategy”) and Action Plan for implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015-2017 (Action plan), as well as to reply to the requirements linked to the implementation of the existing legislative framework; the Law on employees in autonomous provinces and local self government units (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia” n. 21/2016) and the Public Sector Wage Law (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia” n. 18/2016).

The Project is financed by the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe (CoE) and is implemented by the CoE. Main project partners are the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MPALSG) and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM), who are implementing activities in line with their scope of work.

The objective of the project is to enhance the effectiveness and administrative capacities in local self-government (LSG) units through establishment of a professional training system and improved Human Resources Management (HRM) function.

Main expected results of the project are related to the improvement of human resources management system in LSG units, the development of a modern and efficient system of human resources management, and the establishment of a system for professional training of LSG employees, all contributing to more efficient and accountable public administration and its further professionalization, modernisation, depoliticisation and rationalisation.

The publication in front of you summarises the key findings and recommendations of the Training Needs Assessment report prepared by Daniel Del Bianco, Cezary Trutkowski, Dejana Razić Ilić and Maja Todorović. The authors of this report wish to express their sincere gratitude to the individuals and organisations who supported the assessment process and for their invaluable contributions to the broad understanding of the training needs of LSGs in Serbia.

Special gratitude is extended to MPALSG and SCTM, for their ongoing support and contribution within the assessment process.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK

RELEVANT LAWS

1. Law on Local Self-Government, Official Gazette RS, No. 129/2007 and 83/2014
2. Law on Territorial Division of the Republic of Serbia, Official Gazette RS, No. 129/2007 and 18/2016
3. Law on Competences of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Official Gazette RS, No 99/2009 and 67/2012
4. Law on Financing of Local Self-Governments, Official Gazette RS, No 62/2006, 47/2011, 93/2012, 99/2013, 125/2014 and 95/2015
5. Law on Local Elections, Official Gazette RS, No. 129/2007, 34/2010 and 54/2011
6. Law on the Capital City, Official Gazette RS No. 129/2007 and 83/2014
7. Law on Employees in the Autonomous Provinces and Local Self-Government Units, Official Gazette RS No. 21/ 2016
8. Law on Regional Development, Official Gazette RS No. 51/2009 and 30/2010
9. Law on General Administrative Procedure, Official Gazette of RS No. 18/2016
10. Public Sector Wage Law, Official Gazette RS No. 18/ 2016
11. Law on the Maximum Number of Employees in the Public Sector, Official Gazette RS No. 68/15

RELEVANT REGULATIONS AND DRAFT LAWS

1. Draft Law on Planning System in the Republic of Serbia
<http://www.rsjp.gov.rs/pripremljenpaketpropisaoplaniranuiupravljaju javnimpolitikama/t>
2. Regulation on Obtaining Approval Prior to New Employment and Additional Engagement by Budget Beneficiaries, Official Gazette RS No. 113/13
3. Decree on Establishment of a Uniform List of Development of Regions and Local Self-Government Units for 2014, Official Gazette RS No. 104/14

RELEVANT STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

1. Public Administration Reform Strategy, Official Gazette RS No. 9/14 and 42/14
2. Strategy for Professional Development of LSGs Employees in the Republic of Serbia, Official Gazette RS No 27/2015



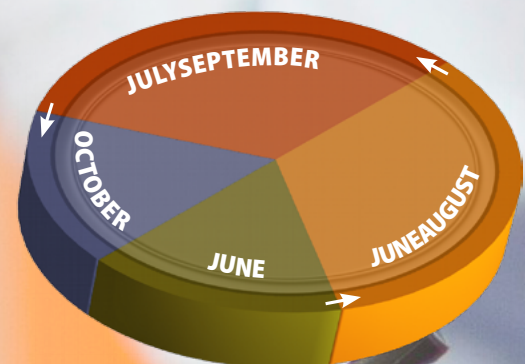
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The most important premise behind the implementation of the Human Resources Management in Local Self-Government in Serbia is that it should constitute to be a key factor promoting change in the institutional and operational framework of LSGs. The introduction of two key strategic documents, namely the Public Administration Reform Strategy and its Action Plan, and the Strategy for Professional Development of LSGs Employees and its Action Plan, should bring about development in LSGs based on the existing needs for training and the legal parameters of local government.

Therefore, a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) was performed in the June-October 2016 period to:

- ☑ Provide independent and reliable field research into LSGs training that will allow training to be developed in response to the needs and expectations of LSGs staff and appointed officials,
- ☑ Identify the training necessary for municipalities to fulfil properly their obligations.

The research developed through four main phases, during the June – October 2016 period:



The Explorative Phase was based on 10 in-depth interviews with key local stakeholders from LSGs, Central Government, Donors, CSOs and the SCTM.

The Qualitative Research Phase allowed for 33 indepth interviews and 16 group interviews with a total of 73 participants. Moreover, a data collection tool was disseminated among training providers to gather information on Past Training and Training Programmes for the 2014-2016 period (13 stakeholders provided information).

The Quantitative Research Phase implemented both: (i) a Survey at the regional meetings organised by SCTM in cooperation with MPALSG, gathering 148 questionnaires in total from LSGs stakeholders participating to the regional meetings; and (ii) an online survey distributed among all LSGs.

Through the online survey 100 valid responses were gathered. Out of this number, representatives of different municipalities filled 81 questionnaires; and representatives of city administration in various areas (gradske uprave) fulfilled 19 questionnaires. Considering 81 single questionnaires received from municipalities, and the total number of 170 LSGs in Serbia the response rate achieved is 47.6%.

Finally, in October 2016, data were validated at a Group meeting with Heads of Administration organised in cooperation with the SCTM.

The research and analysis were complemented by bilateral meetings with stakeholders in central government, stakeholders from the donors' community, LSGs representatives, CSOs and other relevant parties (regional development agencies, chamber of commerce, etc.) to take account of their experiences and perceptions and to build on current and recent initiatives.

This publication contains a summary of most important research finding that were presented in the report submitted to the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government. Introducing the methodological aspects of TNA (Chapter 1), it provides an overview of the local public administration system in the Republic of Serbia (Chapter 2), the overall assessment of LSGs in Serbia (Chapter 3), the training experience of LSGs in Serbia (Chapter 4) and the training postulates and needs (Chapter 5) as identified by LSGs, central government representative, donors and CSOs, as well as Recommendations for training (Chapter 6).

MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS

The analysis focused, first, on the assessment of LSGs performance vis-à-vis local development strategies and policies and on LSGs' development priorities. The appraisal was performed taking into consideration both LSGs' own perceptions and that of other stakeholders. Correlating LSGs priorities with the assessment of the quality of life in LSGs, it appears that **local economic development priorities, such as infrastructural investments and improving the quality of services to citizens and business, are mostly rel-**

evant for better off municipalities. Elsewhere tackling social problems and providing basic services represents the main priorities on the LSGs' agenda. However, LSGs are unified by several institutional obstacles to their performance relating to unaccomplished processes of decentralization and regionalization, uncertain distribution of tasks and competences among different government levels, nonsatisfactory local Self Government Financing schemes as well as to hyper-politicisation and partisanship at local level.

Turning the attention to operational challenges, when looking at the sources of greatest difficulties, LSGs representatives consistently highlighted the following as most relevant: staff shortages in local administration and inadequate (infra) structures, instability of the law and frequent legislation changes, and the existing legal limitations in decision making for LSGs as well as insufficient own revenues. Moreover, the lack of cooperation with central government agencies, especially in terms of prompt reactions on LSGs requests for (procedural) clarification on existing laws and the lack of systematic monitoring from the central government, were also highlighted by LSGs as factors limiting the operational capacity of their administrations. Correlating the LSGs perception of their performance with the sources of greatest difficulties faced, it appears that **negative perceptions on performance are linked mostly to the emergence of challenges such as: insufficient own resources and revenues, insufficient competencies among some employees, obstacles to access EU funds and political pressure.**

The lack of skills and knowledge of staff at the LSGs level is widely understood as a key factor hindering the LSGs' performance. Considering both that working at the LSGs level is not considered as an attractive position in terms of remuneration or career prospects but only in terms of job stability and the existing limitations on hiring new staff, it is not surprising that improving LSGs employees' skills and knowledge was consistently held by LSGs as the single most important element to boost their performance.

However, **coherent human resource management practices and professionalization strategies do not seem to be systematically implemented at the LSGs level.** 78% of surveyed LSGs do not appear to have (not even) an internal act regulating employees' professional development; and although 53% of the municipalities state that they do analyse the training needs of their employees, only 19% declare to have a formal assessment procedure.

In 2015, most training to which LSGs staff attended were free of charge training organised by external providers. On average, LSGs spend about 300.000,00 RSD a year on training (with approximately half of the surveyed municipalities spending less than 150.000,00 RSD per year). Only 40% of the municipalities spend, per year, between 2.000,00 and 5.000,00 RSD for each employee, whilst 41% spending even less than 2.000,00 RSD per employee. Although, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities results to be the single most important training provider in Serbia, 42% of surveyed municipalities (especially larger municipalities with more than 200 employees) also claimed to organize internal trainings.

It is important to bear in mind that the diagnosis of training needs should help to identify the discrepancies between the current skills of potential training participants and the skills which are required or desirable for some reason. As far as immediate training needs are concerned, very little information on the actual training needs was obtained by interviews. Most of the respondents

Common problems, common postulates	Common problems, rare postulates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Audit, internal audit, management of audit ☑ Development and management of projects ☑ Local economic development and investments attraction ☑ Implementation of e-administration and computerization of the office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Public property management ☑ Wastewater and solid waste management ☑ Ethics and anticorruption measures ☑ Inspection control in various areas ☑ Inclusion of Roma

could identify areas but hardly the topics or training methods that would be the most convenient. Overall, it seems that **most LSGs' managers hold replacement of existing staff, and changes in existing legislation (particularly with regards to financing of LSGs and property management) as much more efficient solutions to LSGs' lack of capacity, than capacity building through trainings.** However, survey respondents' indications were used to develop a list of training hypothesis or expectations. What came as a strong winner on the list was the **training related to development and management of projects** followed by issues related to **implementation of eadministration and use of IT tools.**

Correlating training postulates mentioned by LSGs' representatives with the problem areas declared as existing in municipalities, the following two clusters were identified as shown in the table above.

It turns out that, in many cases, training expectations and postulates presented by potential training participants deviate from the actual needs. This happens for many reasons, such as lack of awareness that skills are insufficient, erroneous identification of problem causes, or a stereotypical approach adopted when selecting training topics. Therefore, what is needed for the identification of training needs is the exploration of the causes of LSGs problems, which can be addressed by gaining new knowledge or developing skills. Those should be distinguished from areas, which call for other actions or specific modifications. It is also worth remembering that uncritical acceptance of postulates might expose a local government office to unnecessary burdens (financial and organisational) or even lead to unfavourable consequences (when required knowledge is not gained).



CHAPTER

TRAINING NEED ANALYSIS (TNA):

A METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

A training activity in the life of an organisation means that there is a striving to achieve a different and better and desirable state of its operation¹. Training needs arise from deficiencies related to constraints or imperfections in human activity, primarily deficiencies in knowledge or skills. In this sense, they should be distinguished from other factors, which exert influence on the functioning of organisations. Notably, it is rare that actual developmental constraints would result from insufficient competences of people who are part of the organ-

¹ Adapted from Training Needs Assessment for Local Government in Malta (2014), by C. Trutkowski, Council of Europe Expert, Poland, Appointed Expert to the project MT04/1 "A Partnership for Creative Governance" pp 810. (2014)

isation. Therefore, in an assessment of training needs, the issue that comes to the fore is not the subjectmatter of training (i.e. its content, target recipients, manner of organisation) but, rather, the reasonability of training under the existing circumstances.

TNA, therefore, should offer an answer to the question on whether it is indeed the educational effort that will help the organisation to attain the desirable. After all, it might well happen that mayors, heads of administration, or other officials do have the necessary knowledge and skills to act but legal regulations or other systemic constraints prevent them from performing their tasks efficiently.

The assessment of training needs helps to identify the discrepancies between the skills held by potential targets of educational efforts and the skills, which, for some reason, are required or desirable.

In this spirit, we can talk about two ways to identify training needs:

- ☑ Description of training related expectations (or desires), or
- ☑ Identifying the required competences (or, in other words, providing a prescriptive definition of training needs)

In the former case, we are dealing primarily with training-related wishes (desires) of specific individuals whereas in the latter case we are talking about a systemic necessity of (need for) training. The key challenge is to know how to separate desires from needs. In the case of public administration system, officials' training-related wishes are constrained by their awareness levels and their motivation for personal growth whereas needs stem mostly from the way the system is organised and from reform programmes developed by political leaders.

The key objective of the TNA was to identify training related expectations of local administration staff as well as the needs regarding further strategic training of LSGs staff in Serbia.

The research aimed at identifying:

- ✓ The existing status of knowledge and previous experience of key groups of local government staff and elected representatives;
- ✓ The need for improved knowledge and professional skills;
- ✓ Attitudes towards training;
- ✓ LSGs willingness to participate in training and the affordability of training;
- ✓ Constraints that may threaten a successful implementation of the Strategy for professional training of employees of Local Self-Government units in the Republic of Serbia (hereafter: Strategy).

Additionally, the following elements should be indicated among the goals of the research, which has been conducted:

- ✓ Identify the scope of the training and the different training methods experienced so far by key groups of municipal staff and politicians;
- ✓ Determine the training content, scope and methods to be covered by new training and development programs;

- ✓ Analyse the capacity of municipalities to organize their own internal training system on a sustainable basis;
- ✓ Define the most appropriate institutional framework for implementing the Strategy.

The TNA focused on the following groups of stakeholders:

- ✓ Central Government (National Ministries and Government Agencies);
- ✓ Local Self-Governments (LSGs) (Cities, Municipalities and City municipalities);
- ✓ Regional Development Agencies (RDA);
- ✓ Civil Society Organisation (CSOs);
- ✓ Training providers; and
- ✓ Donor organisations.

The objectives of the TNA necessitated the implementation of a relatively extensive research endeavour that consisted of the following four components:

EXPLORATIVE PHASE

10 In-depth interviews



QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PHASE

33 individual in-depth interviews
+ 16 group interviews
Case study analysis of one city and two municipalities.
Past Training and Trainings programmes
Data Collection Tool



QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH PHASE

(PAPI – Paper & Pencil Interview)
questionnaire on training experiences and needs
(CAWI – Computer Assisted Web Interview)
Online questionnaire on training experiences and needs



FDATA VALIDATION PHASE

Group meeting with Heads of Administration





CHAPTER

OVERVIEW OF THE LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The Republic of Serbia has a monotype, single-tier local government system, based on the Constitution and on the following laws:

- ☑ Law on Local Self-Government;
- ☑ Law on Territorial Division of Serbia;
- ☑ Law on Competences of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina
- ☑ Law on Financing of Local Self-Governments;
- ☑ Law on Local Elections
- ☑ Law on the Capital City
- ☑ Law on Employees in the Autonomous Provinces and Local Self-Government units
- ☑ as well as numerous systemic and sector laws.

In 2007, the Republic of Serbia ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No.122) by the Council of Europe (COE) accepting some, but not all, of its provisions². Reservations were formulated by the Serbian Government mainly regarding

² Further info on the status of Reservations and Declarations for Treaty No.122 European Charter of Local Self-Government are available at the following webaddress: https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/fulllist//conventions/treaty/122/declarations?p_auth=UfQQUtCs

the so-called 'subsidiarity principle' and focused on the following issues:

- ☑ local authorities' exercise of public responsibility and their scope of competence;
- ☑ correspondence of structures and administrative means to the local authorities' mission;
- ☑ LSGs' employees' legal status; financial compensation of elected representatives;
- ☑ proportionality in the context of administrative supervision; as well as
- ☑ regulating citizens' participation in LSGs' affairs (Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207).

The existing Public Administration Reform Action Plan envisages a set of measures that will address many of these issues such as change of LSGs employees' status, redistribution of tasks and competences, etc.

LSGs' primary tasks and competences predominantly concern the provision and management of:

- ☑ infrastructure services (including urban water supply and sewerage);
- ☑ local road maintenance;
- ☑ solid waste collection; and (in urban areas) district heating and public transport.

Public enterprises (i.e. founded by LSGs) are usually in charge of the provision of such services, with LSGs covering all or part of their operating costs through tariffs (B. Radulovic, 2015).

Moreover, LSGs provide many 'basic' services within the education sectors such as:

- » the management of primary schools and kindergartens;
- » school buildings maintenance;
- » ongoing professional development of kindergartens and primary schools staff.

It is not within LSGs' competences to employ teaching staff.

In addition, LSGs provide services in social protection (i.e. integrating governmental social assistance programmes) and so-called 'general administrative services' related to citizens' personal status (such as issue of birth, marriage and death certificates, etc.). Territorial organisation above the LSG's level:

- ☑ 2 autonomous provinces;
- ☑ 5 statistical regions; and
- ☑ 29 administrative districts.

Local Self-Government units consist of:

- ☑ the city of Belgrade (capital city with special status);
- ☑ 25 cities (*grad*);
- ☑ 119 municipalities (*opština*)

Cities

Per the Law³, a city is an economic, administrative, geographical and cultural centre of a wider area, with a population over 100.000 inhabitants. However, a territorial unit with less than 100.000 inhabitants can be determined as a city based on specific economic, geographic or historical reasons for that. In accordance with such provision, there are several cities with less than 100.000 inhabitants. Currently, Serbian cities significantly differ not only in the number of inhabitants, but also in territorial extension and in number of settlements within the city. Except for the Capital city of Belgrade⁴, all Serbian cities enjoy the same legal status (B. Milosavljević, 2016). The statute of a city allows for the establishment

³ Law on Territorial Division of Serbia, Official Gazette RS, No. 129/2007 and 18/2016

⁴ The 2006 Serbian Constitution envisages that a special law is to be passed on Belgrade Capital city special status, entrusting it with more competences than other cities. Legislation introduced so far provides for only minor differences in competences between cities and the City of Belgrade, as well as between cities and municipalities.

of the so-called city municipalities (gradska opština), which are not defined by law and are subordinated to city administrations. They do not have Self-Government competences by their own, but perform tasks delegated by cities per their specific needs and budgetary constraints. City municipalities are not LSG units.

Municipalities

A municipality is the basic unit of local Self-Government in Serbia. Municipalities usually have more than 10,000 inhabitants, but several municipalities exist with fewer inhabitants (i.e. those established prior to the adoption of the current Law or based on specific economic, geographic or historical reasons). The village where it has its official seat and the surrounding villages compose the territory of a municipality. The municipality bears the name of the seat.

Local Communities

In line with the Law⁵ and their Statute, the territory of municipalities and cities can be divided into so-called local communities (mesna zajednica) to meet general, common and everyday needs of the population in a specific area⁶.

2.1 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

The Government of Serbia enacted the Public Administration Reform (PAR) Strategy in 2014 and a PAR Action Plan followed in early 2015. The administrative responsibility for PAR within the Government rests with the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government. The PAR Strategy defines the PAR priorities and objectives, while the PAR Action Plan defines pre-

cise performance targets and actions to achieve them. The overall objective of the PAR Strategy is to create a democratic state based on the European principles of good governance. Whilst identifying the major challenges in the field of local Self-Government⁷, it seeks to achieve citizen and business oriented public administration (MPALSG, 2016).

The Draft Law on the Planning System in the Republic of Serbia⁸ addresses LSGs strategic planning and monitoring aiming to improve and standardise the design and adoption of LSGs strategic development plans and medium-term plans as well as reporting requirements.

2.2 LAW ON GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

The new Law on General Administrative Procedure⁹ (to be fully applied from June 1, 2017) aims at improving administrative legislation within European standards. Namely, to adapt public administration to citizens' needs,

5 Law on Local Self-Government, Official Gazette RS, No. 129/2007 and 83/2014

6 Law on Local Self Government, Article 7: "For meeting general, common and everyday needs of the population in a specific area, the local Self-Government unit may establish a local community or other form of community Self-Government, in accordance with the law and Statute".

7 Such as: enhancement of decentralization of public administration activities, improvement of human resource management and introduction of a professional development system of employees in autonomous province and local Self-Government bodies, improvement of budget planning and preparation process, improvement of financial sustainability, strengthening the supervision capacities, etc.

8 Public Policy Secretariat, 2016

9 Law on General Administrative Procedure, Official Gazette of RS No. 18/2016)

providing the necessary services and guaranteeing their quality and accessibility and, thus, improving the business environment and rule of law. Furthermore, it aims at modernising administrative procedures, making them simpler and more efficient.

2.3 LSGs' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Strategy for the professional development of LSGs' staff and the new Law on employees in the autonomous provinces and local Self-Government units¹⁰ have been adopted with the two-fold purpose:

- ☑ that original and delegated tasks and competences will be carried out in an effective, functional, efficient, professional, impartial, politically neutral and ethically acceptable manner;
- ☑ to introduce a fair and standardized system of employment, monitoring, performance evaluation, career advancement, professional development and protection of the legal status based on performance, which will promote legitimate, effective and efficient work performance.

This implies improvement of human resource management and professional development.

LSGs have already been obliged to establish a Human Resource Management (HRM) unit or, at least, to identify one member of staff within the LGS in charge of HRM.

¹⁰ Law on employees in the autonomous provinces and local Self-Government units, Official Gazette RS No. 21/ 2016., 2016

2.4 LSGs FINANCING

The Government has recently prepared a draft Law on Local Government Financing, which aims at achieving the following goals:

- ☑ Returning 3% of local revenue to the Republic of Serbia, correcting the imbalance of the law from 2011;
- ☑ Decreasing current expenditures for salaries and subsidies and increase investments into infrastructure; and
- ☑ Ensuring respect of the budgeting process (including strengthening capacities for program budgeting) and prevent transfers from the State budget to LSGs that are not in line with the scope of delegated tasks and competences but allocated because of the same political affiliations with the respective ministries. The law will complement the reform initiated with the adoption of the Public Sector Wage Law¹¹. Furthermore, the Ministry of Finance will be supporting the improvement of public property management at local level, financial management and control as well as strengthening of internal audit capacities.
- ☑ With the envisaged changes in the Budget System Law, in two year time, LSGs will be obliged to assess their capital investment projects and to propose mediumterm public investment priorities.

¹¹ Public Sector Wage Law.



CHAPTER

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF LSGS IN SERBIA

The LGSs organisational system is a uniform model for all LGSs regardless of their type, size, population and other differences (B.Milosavljević, 2016).

The Local Assembly is the highest representative body and its Members are elected on local elections every 4 years. It has a President, who can be permanently employed in the local government, as well as a Deputy and a Secretary. The Assembly meets six to ten times annually on average, while the Assembly 'working bodies' meet whenever needed.

Local governments have full autonomy to organise their local administration in the way that suits best their needs and capacities.

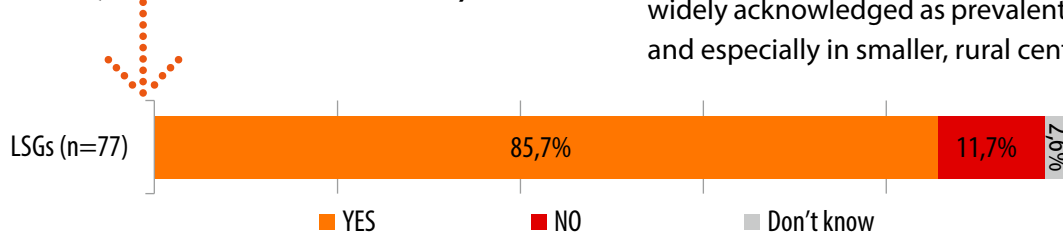
LSGs' performance in local management is hampered by the lack of adequate capacities of LSG stakeholders as well as of adequate resources (i.e. financial, institutional, human and social). Starting with the analysis of LSGs experiences in designing and implementing local development policies, the chapter focuses on the main constraints on LSGs development and on the identification of the main barriers to local development in Serbia. To this end, the interinstitutional or multilevel governance framework is depicted as well as the perception that various stakeholders have of LSGs' performance.

3.1 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

In the wake of the democratic changes of the early 2000s, Serbia started reforming its policies on Strategic and operational planning. Mostly focusing on the national level, enacted reforms appear to have geared the unstructured proliferation of strategic documents at the local level.

Per the SCTM database on LSGs' strategies, 112 LSGs adopted a 'Local sustainable development strategy', which represents the main strategic document guiding and informing strategic and operational planning at local level (SCTM, 2016). Slightly different results came from the survey implemented: a current development strategy is available in nearly 85,7% LSGs. Collected data also indicate that almost 44% of units are currently involved in work related to the development of a new strategy or updating of the existing document.

(Q): DOES YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT HAVE AN UP TO DATE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (OR AN EQUIVALENT STRATEGIC DOCUMENT)?



Despite of common practice to adopt local development strategy, several interviewed stakeholders, highlighted the poor performance of LSGs in strategic planning. As one respondent explained:

"LSGs do not think strategically. Decision making is not strategic: it is either chaotic or reactive or in line with the central government strategic priorities that are equally problematic and sometimes inconsistent"

In consequence, central government, donors' community and RDA representatives seem to think, as one of them stated, that LSGs in many cases do not have capacities to:

"properly present their LSG capacities and strategic priorities to attract investors and/or apply for donor funding. Hence, we are not using the funds that are available and will be in even bigger amounts in the future"

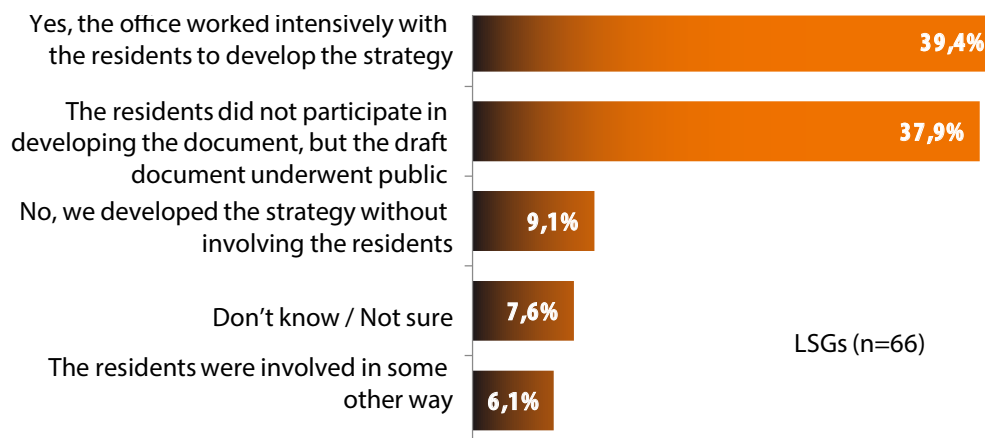
Lack of trust in LSGs capacities shared by representatives of national ministries is in direct contrast with the increased scope of delegated tasks and responsibilities passed to the local level. The representative of one of the ministries stated:

"We have problems at LSG level. The capacities are not in line with our needs (referring to infrastructure projects). Even if we establish functional managerial structures and train people, they are frequently changed/replaced. Thus, what I perceived as major general problem is that they do not understand their strategic needs, what infrastructural investments imply, what are IPA funding requirements etcetera"

Lack of adequate policy making capacities was widely acknowledged as prevalent in many LSGs and especially in smaller, rural centres.

Moreover, Central government and Donors' community stakeholders identified as critical the lack of LSGs' capacities in areas such as strategic planning, permitting, inspection, enforcement, monitoring, and management of large investment projects. Such limited expertise has hindered the opportunity for LSGs to benefit from EU funded projects and, if not properly and

WERE THE RESIDENTS OF YOUR CITY/MUNICIPALITY INVOLVED IN THE WORK ON THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY?



timely addressed, could affect negatively the future implementation of Structural Funds. Finally, interviews clearly showed that local strategies monitoring and assessment is far to be performed in many LSGs due to both lack of adequate capacity and awareness of the process.

LSGs often did not perceive authentic strategic planning as an important part of their mission or, at least, not as important as complying with party's or donors' priority. Adopted local strategies seem to be often 'donor driven' since having, at least 'on papers', a sustainable development strategy is often a precondition for obtaining donor funds. However, as some of the interviewees emphasized it, in many cases donors' support has proven to be an indispensable starting point for concretely sustainable policy drafting and implementation.

Per the collected data, almost 40% of the municipalities involved residents in the strategic planning activities and 17% did not organize any consultations (or the respondents were not aware of it). In other places strategies seems to be prepared 'by administration for administration' and help LSGs to meet formal requirements

when applying for external funding.

Although, participatory approaches to policy-making, wherever adopted, proved successful in enhancing the quality and sustainability of strategic planning, civil society participation was rather limited.

Information on LSGs' projects and actions is brokered to citizens indirectly by the media. Although, most interviewees pointed out that relevant information is also available on the LSGs websites and socials, currently there is neither a legal obligation nor a customary practice for LSG to report on the status of strategy implementation.

Another obstacle to effective planning of strategic development relates to political influence. As one interviewee pointed out:

"Local development strategies are adopted but are hardly implemented. Projects are prioritised based on political logics (for instance, improvement of infrastructure will be performed in the village inhabited by large number of leading political party voters). Moreover, it is common that a newly elected mayor is not willing to continue the implementation of strategic projects com-

menced by his/her predecessor, resulting in discontinuity in the realisation of LSG strategic priorities”.

Last, but not least, everyday burdens limit the motivation of local leaders to engage in more sustainable, longterm planning of development priorities.

Data collected by SCTM indicate that general strategies are not the only strategic documents adopted at the local level. In fact, data collected show that there are more than 890 strategic

documents¹² in the country (SCTM, 2016). Some interviewees dealing with LSG’s management seem to consider impractical having too many strategies and suggest that there should be one general, overarching local sustainable development strategy followed by detailed municipal sector specific action plans. In their opinion, this, in turn, would enable better alignment of individual action plans and better implementation of development strategies and key strategic priorities.

3.2 LSGS’ DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

Per the level of development and capacities to perform their tasks and competences, all local government units are classified in four groups, by a governmental Decree¹³. Although some of the LSGs’ representatives claim that such development criteria are not realistic, it is evident that most LSGs are ‘underdeveloped’ or ‘extremely underdeveloped’, which means that their capacities to ensure sustainable local economic development and adequate quality of services are potentially very unsatisfactory.

The Central government has designed fiscal equalisation measures aiming at securing functions performance to less developed LSGs¹⁴. Thus, the level of public services is often highly dependent on the assistance received from the state budget. However, available funds are very limited due to the financial crisis.

Local Development Strategies

Positives

- ☑ Donors’ support to strategy drafting triggered sustainable strategies at local level.
- ☑ Some LSGs hold to have adequate capacity to design and implement local strategies.
- ☑ Sound participatory processes enhanced local strategy sustainability.

Local Development Strategies

Negatives

- ☑ High proliferation of local sustainable development strategies appears to be less efficient than standardised documents.
- ☑ Micromanagement and core competencies distract resources from strategic planning.
- ☑ Local strategies in many cases stay mostly ‘on papers’.
- ☑ Local strategies are in many cases ‘donor-driven’ and are not based on contextspecific needs assessment.
- ☑ LSGs lack capacity to plan, design and draft consistent policies, which can be monitored and assessed.
- ☑ Lack of direct and transparent information to citizens.

¹² This number represents the total number of strategic documents registered since 2007 when SCTM started with the mapping process. However, 493 are still valid i.e. didn’t expired, and 51 were in the process of development during the last mapping

¹³ Decree on establishment of a uniform list of development of regions and local Self-Government units for 2014, Official Gazette RS No. 104/14.

¹⁴ Official Gazette RS, 2014 Decree on establishment of a uniform list of development of regions and local Self-Government units for 2014

Bearing in mind that two thirds of LSGs are underdeveloped, it does not come as a surprise that most LSGs' mayors listed the following as strategic development priorities (the first three represent the top priorities mentioned by all LSG representatives during the interviews):

1. Attracting investments
2. Fighting unemployment
3. Improving infrastructure
4. Improving service delivery
5. Addressing social issues
6. Investing in sport and culture
7. Investing in education

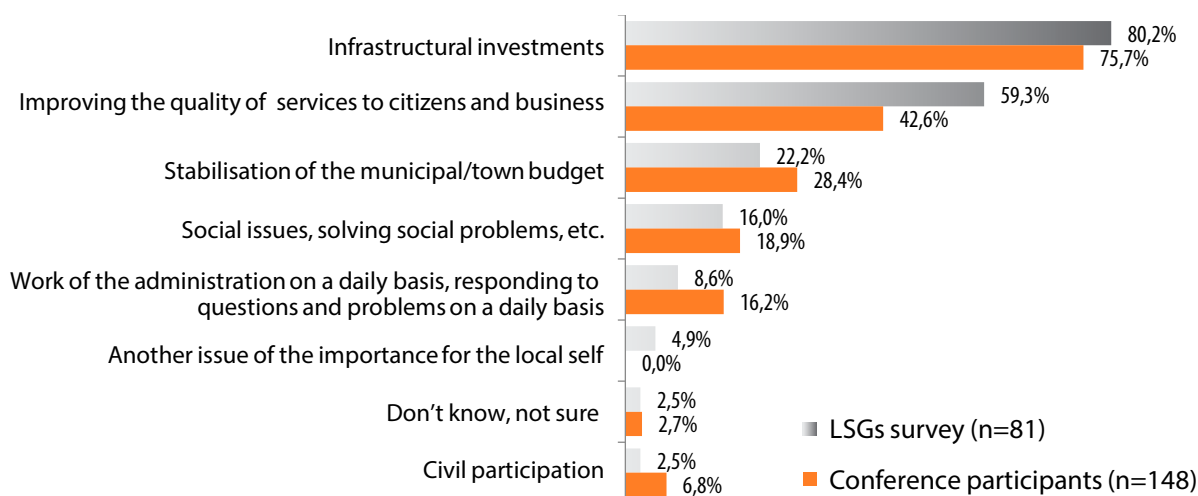
Representative data were obtained from two independent quantitative surveys conducted among Heads of Administration (N=100) as well

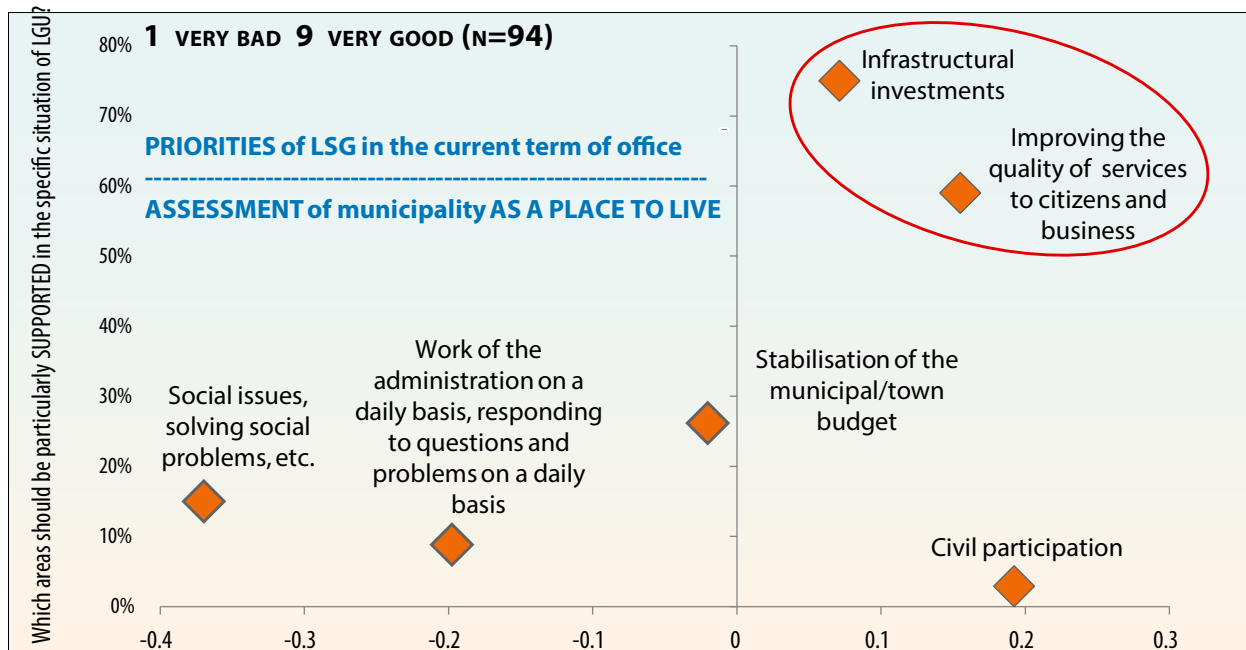
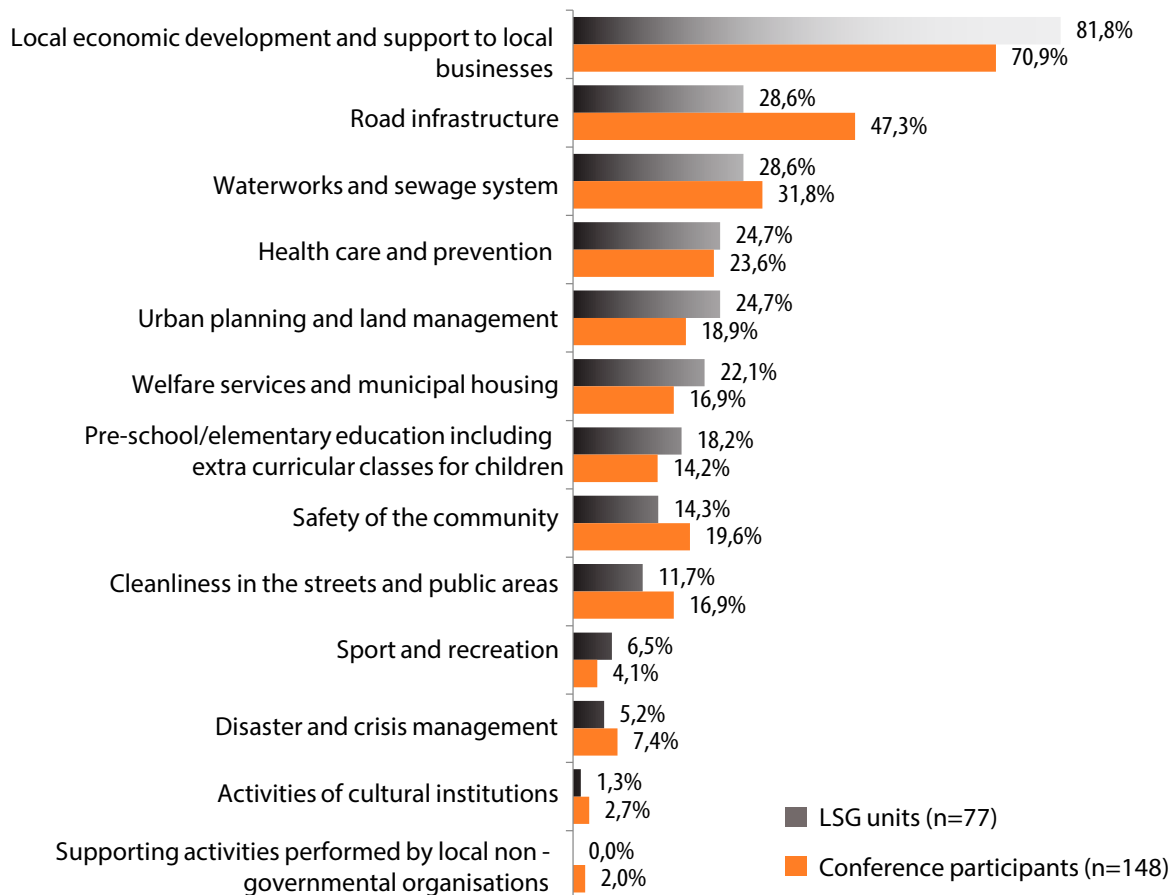
as participants of the regional meetings organized by SCTM together with the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government in July 2016 (representatives of municipalities, N=148). Their findings reveal the dominance of infrastructural investments among developmental priorities.

Two factors seem to have the decisive impact on local quality of life: development priorities related to upgrading of local infrastructure and improvement of the quality of services delivered to citizens and business. Data revealed positive correlation between the respondents' assessment of the locality as a place to live and the importance of these factors.

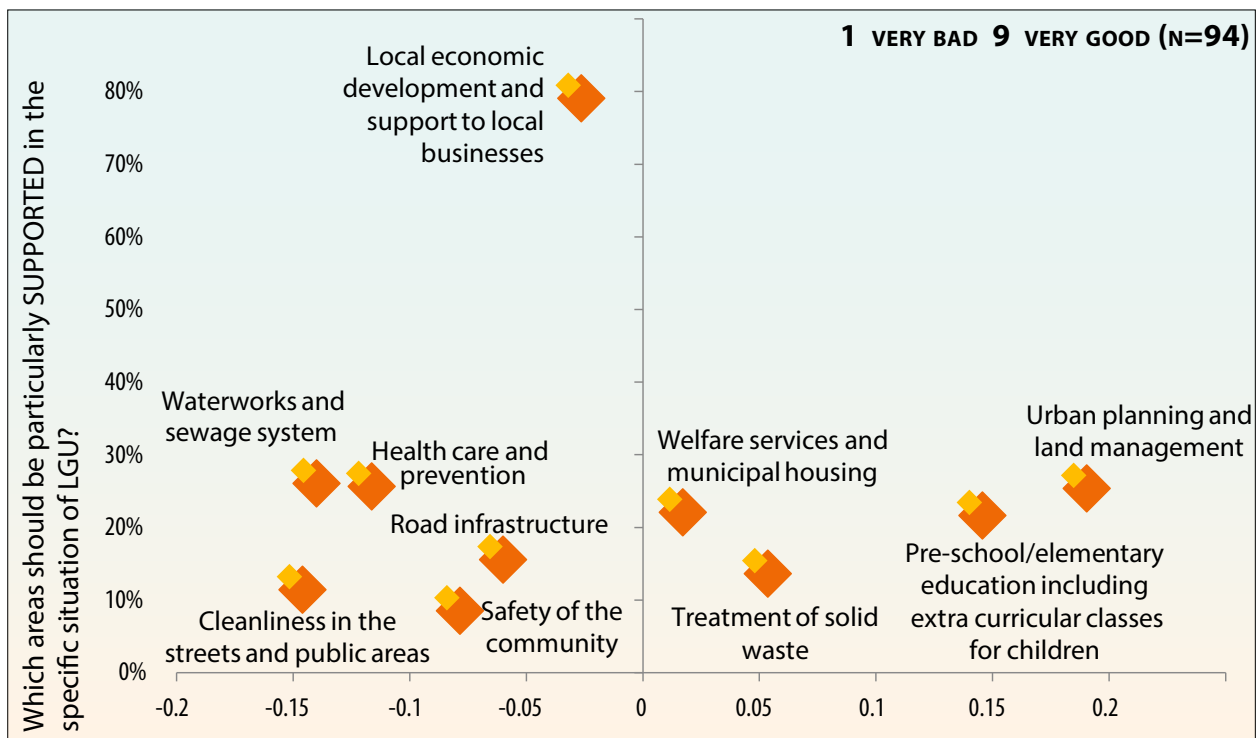
Respondents of the surveys were also asked to indicate the budgetary priorities in their LSG units. Below comparisons are presented between opinions expressed by Heads of Administration and representatives of municipalities attending regional presentations (two independent surveys). Worth noting are the relative-

(Q) WHAT IS THE PRIORITY OF YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE CURRENT TERM OF OFFICE?



CORRELATION WITH: OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF YOUR MUNICIPALITY/TOWN AS A PLACE TO LIVE?**(Q) WHICH AREAS DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE PARTICULARLY SUPPORTED IN THE SPECIFIC SITUATION OF YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT?**

CORRELATION WITH: OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF YOUR MUNICIPALITY/TOWN AS A PLACE TO LIVE?



ly small differences in the presented perspectives. When interpreting the findings, it is good to remember that respondents' opinions were influenced by the situation in their respective local government units, but the data presented on the chart below reflect a hierarchy of various problems at the local level.

The impact of declared budgetary priorities on the assessment of the local quality of life is heterogeneous. There are items positively correlated with such evaluation ('urban planning and land management', 'preschool/elementary education including extracurricular classes for children', 'treatment of solid waste'), and those which negatively impact LGSs (basic infrastructural needs, 'health care and prevention', 'cleanliness in the streets and public areas' and 'safety of the community').

3.3 EFFICIENCY OF LSGS' PERFORMANCE: STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS

In line with the Law on Local Self-Government¹⁵, LSGs' competences are divided into the original and delegated tasks and competences.

Delegated competences encompass a wide range of tasks such as registry books, electoral rolls and other records, inspection supervisions in education, health care, environmental protection, mining, goods and services trading, agriculture, water power and forestry engineering, etc. These tasks are delegated from the central state as determined by sectoral legislation. The state should provide LSGs with financial, expert and technical support for the implementation of these services. The services provided by LGSs to

¹⁵ Law on Local Self-Government, Official Gazette RS, No. 129/2007 and 83/2014

their citizens, therefore, result from such (original and delegated) competences.

Central government, donors' community and LSGs' stakeholders unanimously identified the key role of LSGs in promoting government policy development and implementation.

The overall assessment of LSGs' performance is well represented by the statement given by one of the ministry's representatives:

"Services provided by LSGs are not uniform. Some of them (LSGs) provide services in an efficient and cost effective manner while others are trapped within political and staff challenges and changes. In some cases, services to citizens and businesses are slow and inefficient".

Per **Central government's stakeholders**, LSGs are invited to participate in policy and legislation drafting, either directly (e.g. Working groups and public debates) or via SCTM representatives. However, it was pointed out that, except for SCTM, there seems to be a widespread lack of interest of LSGs to be actively involved. In addition, there is a general perception among Central government stakeholders that LSGs lack the capacities for strategic planning, policy analysis, monitoring and evaluation. When referring to LSGs strengths, Central government stakeholders mainly mentioned their ability to deal with 'daily crises'. They seem to perceive LSGs as having a good understanding of local needs and local problems as well as contextspecific capacities but as if not implementing them effectively.

At the same time, as it was emphasized by both donors' community and LSGs' stakeholders, the Central government (i.e. line ministry) does not have the capacity to monitor the quality of LSGs' performance in service provisions in the field of delegated competences and their alignment with the respective laws.

Donor organisations' stakeholders were very critical of LSGs' capacities, identifying the major shortcomings which determine LSGs' performance as follows:

1. Lack of predictability of available funds
2. Lack of capacity to provide services to businesses and investors
3. Lack of skilled staff
4. Lack of cooperation with Central Government Agencies at the local level
5. Lack of systematic monitoring from the Central government
6. Politicisation and Partisanship

According to a recent survey (Ninamedia, 2016), **citizens** see corruption and poor law enforcement as main issues to be addressed in Serbia as well as the poor quality of services provided by LSG administration. In addition, citizens tend to

Perception of LSGs performance

Positives

- ☑ SCTM active participation with Central government;
- ☑ Some improvements in LSGs capacities over the past decade;
- ☑ LSGs have context specific knowledge and capacity;
- ☑ LSGs are acknowledged as key player for development policies.

Perception of LSGs performance

Negatives

- ☑ Lack of interest/participation of LSG to Central government policy and legislative activity;
- ☑ Lack of LSGs capacity;
- ☑ Poor citizens' participation to and trust in LSGs.

perceive LSGs as unable to promote local development. The survey showed that dissatisfaction with government agencies and services is greater at the local than at the national level.

Finally, citizens' participation to the political debate is very limited and mostly confined to voting in the general elections (IPSOS, 2015) due to an overall lack of interest and trust in the institutions. LSGs somewhat fail to provide transparent and easily accessible information on their activities to citizens, thus eroding citizens' trust and willingness to exercise active citizenship.

3.4 LSGS LEVEL AND QUALITY OF COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

LSGs' operations do not occur in a vacuum but are embedded in a functional network of institutional stakeholders and social actors. The level and quality of cooperation within this networks largely impacts the overall LSGs capacity and performance.

As far as overall cooperation between the **Central government** authorities (i.e. line Ministries) and LSGs is concerned, the latter seem to perceive it as rather satisfactory. However, LSGs' stakeholders highlight that the central government has not yet addressed several key issues, which are hindering the LSGs' operational potential. LSGs concerns seem to focus mostly on the following:

- ☑ A sufficient transfer of financial resources does not parallel the transfer of (delegated) competences from the central government to LSGs nor is it coupled with adequate administrative guidance and capacity building.
- ☑ Political affiliation seems to account more than strategic priorities for central government financial support and investment funds allocation.
- ☑ National policy making, even when targeting

local issues, is not participated enough by LSGs' representatives resulting in legislation inapplicable to local, context specific cases;

- ☑ When the central government authorities reply to LSGs requests for support and clarification on relevant legislation it does so with unreasonable delays and often does not provide proper insights but just quote the law in question.

Most LSGs seem to rely heavily on the guidance and support from the central government, therefore, faulty and relented interactions disproportionately affect LSGs' operations.

For instance, most LSGs' stakeholders reported on the lack of timely responses to requests submitted to the Commission for issuing approvals for new employment and additional engagement of public funds for budget beneficiaries¹⁶. However, when national local cooperation among administrative bodies is successful, it enacts sustainable development.

Concerning the cooperation with the **Autonomous Province of Vojvodina**, LSGs' representatives expressed ambivalent views. Some seemed very satisfied with both the level of cooperation and the support received, while others stated that differences in political affiliations hampered fruitful relations.

Lack of regional identity is seriously impeding local development particularly because two thirds of LSGs are underdeveloped and small and, therefore, are not able to respond to their citizens' basic needs let alone invest in local development. Intermunicipal cooperation does not seem to be a well established practice to overcome such situation. Examples of intermunicipal cooperation are mainly related to implementation of joint

¹⁶ As foreseen by the Regulation on obtaining approval prior to new employment and additional engagement by budget beneficiaries.

donor supported projects¹⁷ (e.g. Zlatibor region with successful promotion of local brands and tourism).

Administrative regions and administrative districts have mainly statistical and administrative purposes and, therefore, have neither the capacity nor the mandate to develop regional strategies, to support LSGs or facilitate intermunicipal cooperation. It is not surprising therefore, that LSGs' stakeholders perceive relations with regional and district authorities as rather unsuccessful and inefficient. **Regional Development Agencies**, on the contrary, are regarded as a fruitful partner.

Deconcentration by means of establishing **regional and local units and branch offices of State authorities** is supposed to enhance tailoring of services to citizens' needs. Treasury and tax administration offices, police departments, regional school administrations, local customs offices, et cetera are examples of such decentralisation of state units to local contexts. These, however, are still government units performing tasks and competences, which are not transferred to LSGs. However, as these services are often located close to the local administration, and sometimes even in the same building, citi-

zens often do not distinguish between different tiers of government.

LSGs' stakeholders did not report any significant problems in cooperation with such central government units, but neither did they mention close cooperation in local policy development. Overall, it seems they work rather independently but employees and officials share good personal relations.

The lack of accountability and responsibility is exacerbated, according to most interviewees, when 'dual reporting' institutions are considered. Such entities (e.g. primary health care institutions, social welfare centres, primary and secondary education, etc.) seem to fall both within central and local government jurisdictions with undefined, shared responsibilities. Respondents chorally expressed hopes that provisions in the new Law on Administrative Procedure will address such issue¹⁸.

Cooperation between national and local levels appears relented and conflictual especially when the management of (national) public companies and related infrastructures (for instance, roads, Srbija Putevi and forestry, Srbija Sume) is concerned.

Since 2000, almost all major donors in the country promoted programmes supporting LSGs. Such programmes focused on several issues and areas, such as:

17 Per Intermunicipal cooperation in Serbia: Opportunities and Challenges • Ms Tatjana Pavlovic-Krizanic, SCTM and SDC, 2010: "Good institutional models for intermunicipal cooperation (IMC) are still not developed in Serbia. Local governments mainly individually determine forms of intermunicipal cooperation. Initiatives for establishing IMC usually come from private investors or donors who want to see joint intermunicipal projects. IMC can be regulated through a contract or a specially established joint venture. Within these two basic models, we can speak of two forms of IMC in practice: (i) institutional IMC exists when two or more LSGs (or their public companies) form a joint venture, which can be in the form of a joint utility company or joint company; (ii) contractual IMC means a longterm contractual relation between two or more units of local government, in which usually one city or larger municipality has the role of service provider and other local government units are beneficiaries, usually based on purely economic principles. Regional development agencies represent another form of IMC."

18 Reasoning of the respondents is that the new Law provides for unified provision of services in one location or single administrative point and therefore instead of contacting a number of different authorities or initiating several procedures in front of the same authority, citizens and businesses will now be able to submit a single application to a single authority, which will render a decision on the application at the end of the process. Additionally, the Law stipulates (territorial, subject matter) jurisdiction and way of solving conflict of jurisdiction of authorities.

Cooperation with different governance levels - Positives

- ☑ Cooperation with some Line Ministries has proven efficient and resulted in the implementation of sustainable actions.
- ☑ Personal relations among employees from different tiers of government at local level are generally cooperative and nonproblematic.

Cooperation with different governance levels - Negatives

- ☑ The transfer of (delegated) competences from the Central government to LSGs is not paralleled by a sufficient transfer of financial resources nor it is coupled with adequate administrative guidance and capacity building.
- ☑ Political affiliation prompting differences in Central government financial support and investment funds allocation.
- ☑ Lack of LSGs' involvement in policy-making at the national level.
- ☑ Central government authorities replies to LSGs requests for support and clarification on relevant legislation is often slow and inadequate.
- ☑ Multilevel governance of public companies and infrastructure is inefficient.
- ☑ Regional authorities do not have the competences to support LSGs.
- ☑ Local units of Central government offices are not clearly perceived by citizens as separate from LSG.
- ☑ Proliferation of public authorities at the local level creates ambiguity in responsibility and accountability.

- ☑ strengthening local governance.
- ☑ improving strategic and operational planning and budgeting.
- ☑ developing local sustainable development strategies.
- ☑ designing local economic development plans.
- ☑ redesigning local administrative services.
- ☑ improving the efficiency of public utilities at the local level and investing in urgent restoration of municipal infrastructure.
- ☑ development of local/regional business support structures.
- ☑ promoting competitiveness of Serbian enterprises.
- ☑ improving access to health; education and social protection services in a decentralised environment.
- ☑ building capacities of municipalities to programme and absorb EC investment funds; etc. (European Intergration Office, 2016).

One of the criticalities identified within LSGs co-operation with donors is the LSGs' passive, recipient role. Thus, LSGs mostly apply for funding in areas predefined by donors instead of contributing to programme and agenda setting.

In order to address such issue, the Sector Working Group for Development Assistance was established to ensure LSGs donor coordination in planning, programming and reporting on development assistance and to improve programming of IPA Funds. SCTM is represented in this body where it actively promotes donors' coordination and represents LSGs' concerns and priorities.

All of the interviewed LSGs' representatives consider cooperation with donors as an extremely important source of funding for development projects. However, the capacity of the LSGs to apply for donor funding varies. Some of them,

larger cities and municipalities, have developed internal capacity in respect to project preparation while other managed to overcome the internal lack of capacity through partnership with CSOs, local businesses, regional development agencies, etc. However, the overall perception is that due to the lack of capacity in project preparation (and implementation) donor funds are not used to their full potential.

Cooperation with **CSOs and local businesses'** representatives varies from case to case but most of the intersector cooperation mechanisms, established at local level (i.e. socioeconomic, business, interethnic councils, various working groups, etc.), envisage active participation of all three sectors ¹⁹.

¹⁹ Government of Serbia Guidelines for involving CSOs, in the process of legislation drafting, define different mechanisms for improving citizens' participation in legislation process: local councils, commissions, negotiation bodies, working groups etc. (Office for Cooperation with Civil Society www.civilnodrustvo.gov.rs/documentsandpublications/documents.198.html)

Cooperation with the donor organisations - Positives

- ☑ Sector Working Groups for Development Assistance improve LSGs Donor coordination.
- ☑ Donors resources provide indispensable resources for development projects.

Cooperation with the donor organisations - Negatives

- ☑ LSGs Donors cooperation is unbalanced, especially in priority setting.
- ☑ LSGs lack the capacities to attract and manage donors' funding and to implement donors' funded projects.

Civil society participation is always dependent on the opportunity to participate (i.e. local authority side) and the willingness to participate (citizens' side). LSGs' stakeholders' assessment of CSOs involvement is based on their perception of their efficacy as local development partners.

A Government Office for Cooperation with Civil Society was established aiming at strengthening the development of a dialogue between the Serbian Government and CSOs, as well as between LSGs and CSOs. Among other, this office has developed detailed Guidelines for Inclusion of CSOs in the Regulation adoption Process and issues an annual report on budget expenditures for CSOs.

3.5 OVERALL BARRIERS TO LSGs' EFFICIENCY

LSGs should represent the backbone of the national policy reform process, effectively enacting relevant national legislation through strategic and operation planning.

Since the 2000s, efforts were spent in the formulation of ad hoc LSGs' strategies. However, as it was already mentioned above, overall results are fragile at best due to various factors among which the LSGs' lack of adequate technical capacity is but one of them.

Although there is a widespread agreement that LSGs do indeed lack the capacity to plan, design and draft consistent policies, which can be monitored and assessed, it also appears that multiinstitutional relations somewhat limit LSGs autonomy and overall capacity to act. In fact, LSGs with strong leadership are better equipped to develop and implement local development and although, especially in such cases, specific training in some areas for their managers and

employees would enhance their overall performance, there still are factors, which would disproportionately limit their capacity.

Such issues refer to a relented decentralisation process, a scattered and unclear delegation of functions, the strong LSGs reliance on central government financing and the pervasiveness of party affiliation and party partisanship.

Moreover, the opportunities linked with EU integration and intermunicipal cooperation still seem unexploited largely.

3.6 LSGS' SERVICE DELIVERY

According to most interviewed Mayors and Presidents of municipalities, LSGs do not seem to encounter major difficulties with the provision of public services to citizens and businesses. However, focusing on the opinions of small municipalities' representatives, the lack of trained staff hinders their performance. Finally, City Municipalities envisage enlarging their mandate over a growing number of competences so to enhance their performance.

LSGs do not seem to perform a systematic assessment of the services they provide neither in terms of efficiency (cost/benefits) nor of effectiveness (quality).

Despite, the lack of formalized and systematically applied mechanisms of performance assessment, some of the mayors seem confident in their capacity to evaluate the quality of LSGs' work and services delivery.

As one mayor stated:



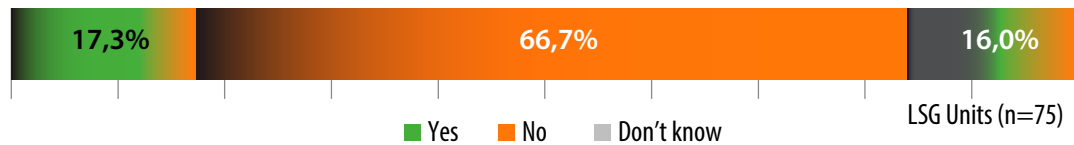
"I know how satisfied citizens are with our services since they always come directly to me to complain".

The survey results showed, that despite of the lack of systematic performance assessment, many of the Heads of Administration feel confident about the efficiency of local administration at their LSGs. The overall assessment indicates that almost 50% of respondents evaluated this efficiency in a positive manner, while only 1,3% of the respondents expressed negative evaluations.

Provisions introduced by the new Law on General

Institutional			
Lack of predictably financing and heavy dependence on State budget	Ambiguous distribution of original and delegated functions	Insufficient (fiscal) equalisation policies considering LSGs wide disparities	Lack of accountability to citizens due to hyper politicisation and party affiliation
Managerial			
Lack of clear, standardised administrative procedures	Lack of good leadership and management practices	Lack of positive communication skills and practices vertically and horizontally within the LSGs	
Organisational			
Frequent reorganisation of staff linked to political pressures rather than functional analysis	Lack of skilled employees	Lack of systematic TNA	Lack of transparent selection processes for training

(Q) IN THE LAST THREE YEARS, HAVE YOUR CITY/MUNICIPALITY ADMINISTRATION CONDUCTED ANY SELFASSESSMENTS USING ANY SYSTEMATIC TOOL?



Administrative Procedure²⁰, such as the introduction of egovernment tools and model administrative procedures as developed by SCTM, are expected to improve both the quality and efficiency of LSGs' services.

Since 2000 there were many (mainly unsuccessful) initiatives aimed at improving LSGs' organisation and service delivery. Interviewed representatives stated that many local governments performed functional analysis and made changes in the organisation of the administration; however, the outcomes of such reorganisation were mostly unsuccessful. Quoting one Head of administration:



"you perform functional analysis and start reorganisation (...) and then you get new competences and at the same time (you are) requested to reduce the number of employees (...). So there is actually no use of it. You end up adding responsibilities to existing people, those who are committed and hard-working, and combining tasks that don't fit together within existing units, because you don't have options".

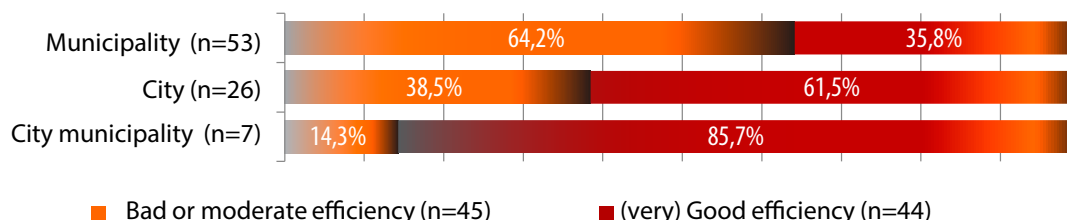
Worth noting is the fact that substantial differences in efficiency evaluation can be observed between different types of LSGs: data show that such self-evaluation is much more positive in larger cities, while representatives of smaller municipalities admit to cope with substantial difficulties.

The respondents were asked to assess the effectiveness of various activities by their respective offices. Their answers revealed the following core problems in the operation of local government offices (first five on the list):

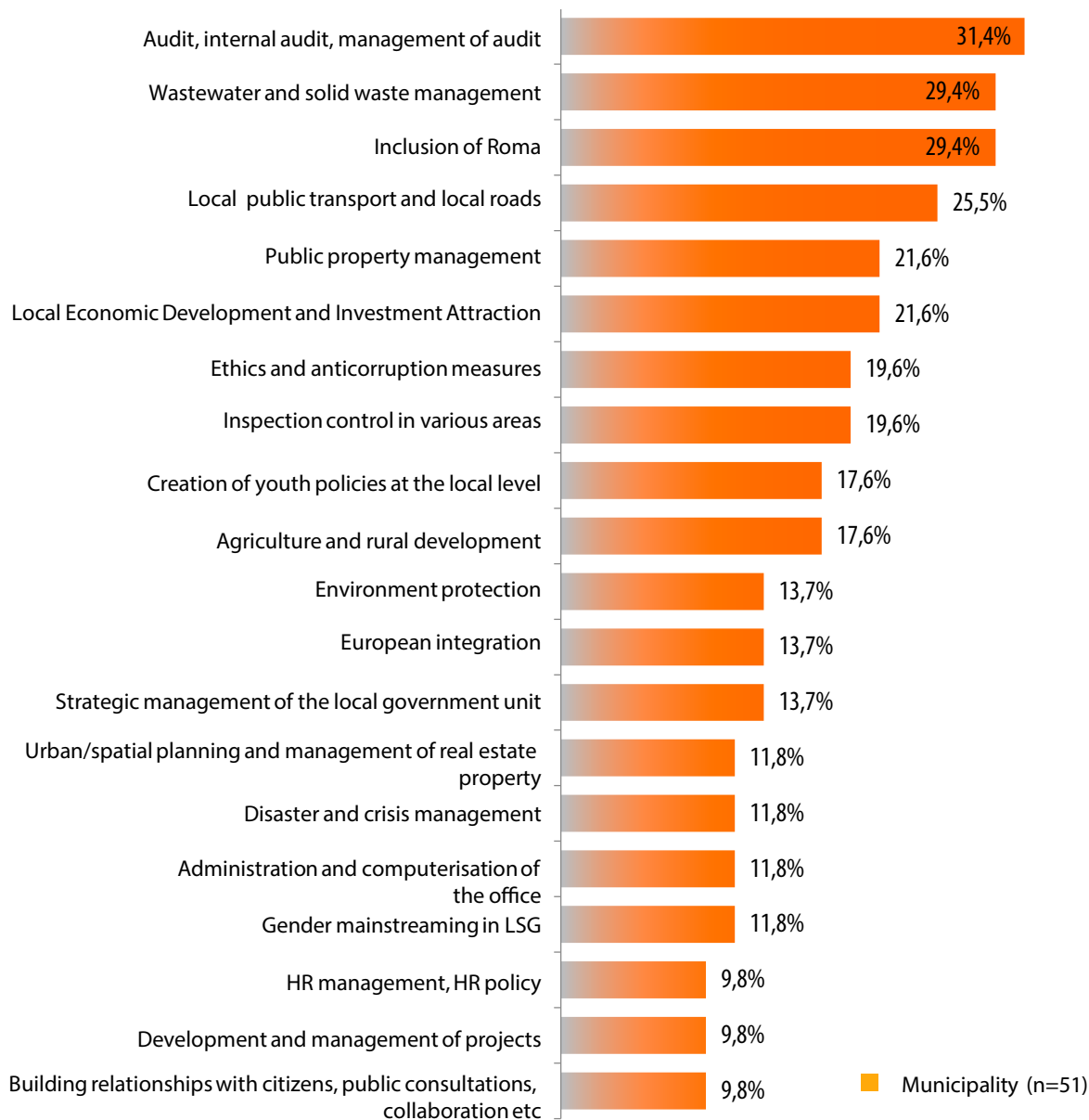
- ☒ audit, internal audit, management of audit,
- ☒ wastewater and solid waste management,
- ☒ inclusion of Roma,
- ☒ local public transport and local roads,
- ☒ public property management.

²⁰ Law on General Administrative Procedure, Official Gazette of RS No. 18/2016

**How would you assess EFFICIENCY OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AT YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT?
(BY) TYPE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT**



**GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF YOUR CITY/MUNICIPALITY IN TERMS OF THE FULFILMENT OF TASKS OR PERFORMANCE OF ACTIVITIES IN THOSE AREAS.
(MAJOR DIFFICULTIES IN FULFILLING TASKS TOP 20)**

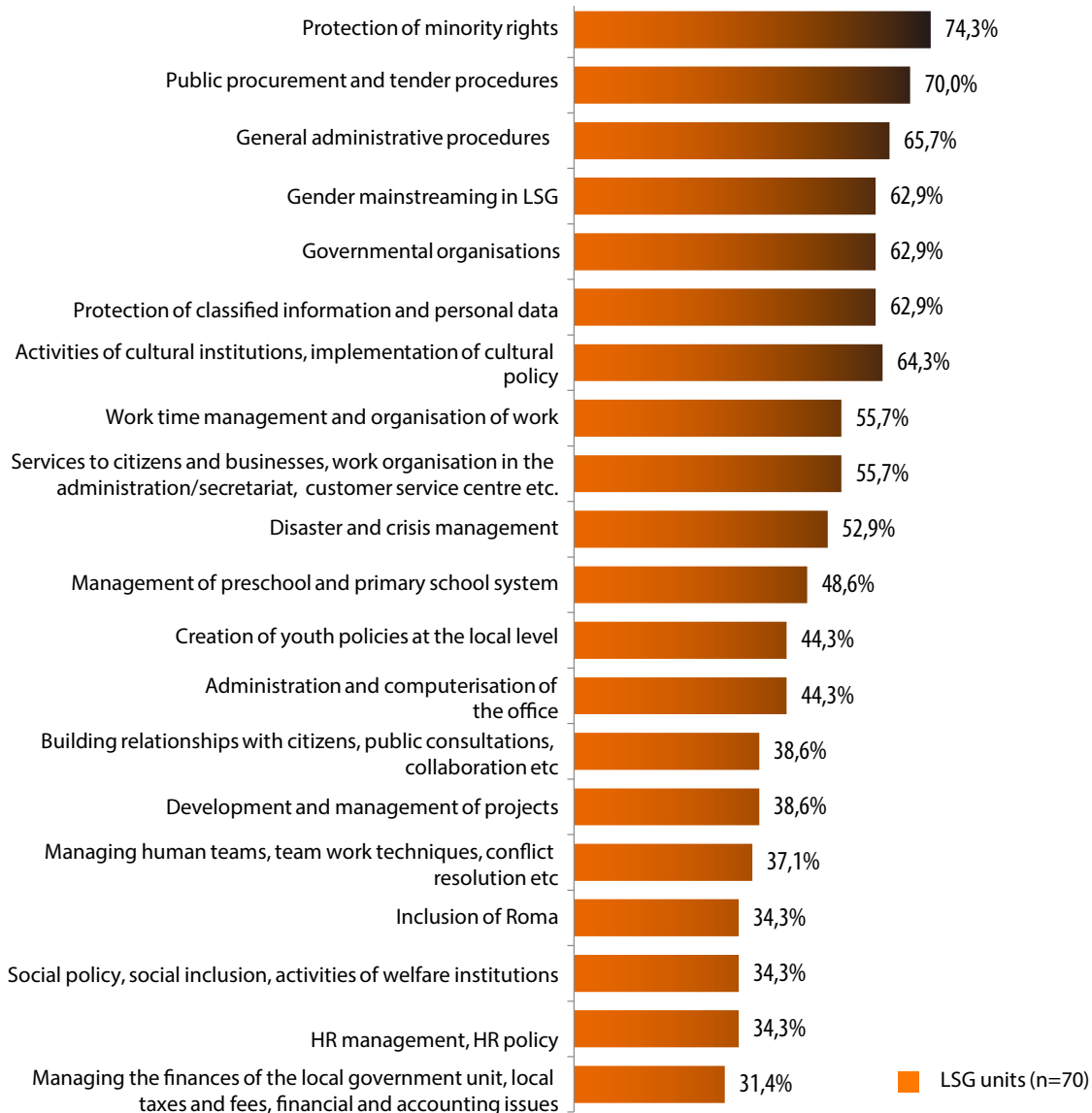


The respondents were asked to assess the effectiveness of various activities by their respective offices. Their answers revealed the following core problems in the operation of local government offices (first five on the list): audit, internal

audit, management of audit; wastewater and solid waste management; inclusion of Roma; local public transport and local roads; and public property management.

On the other hand, the respondents have

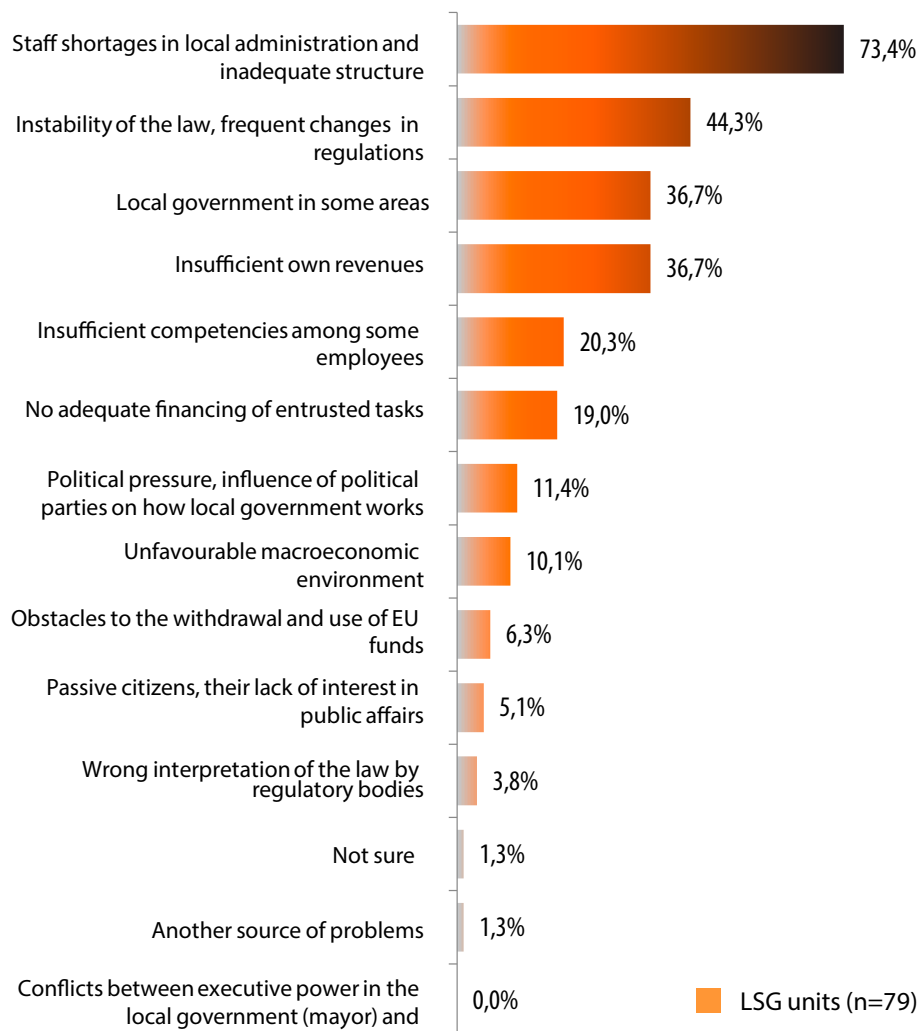
GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF YOUR CITY/MUNICIPALITY IN TERMS OF THE FULFILMENT OF TASKS OR PERFORMANCE OF ACTIVITIES IN THOSE AREAS. (AREAS WHERE TASKS ARE FULFILLED SMOOTHLY TOP 20)



indicated those areas of LSG operations in which the tasks are fulfilled smoothly. These are, first and foremost: protection of minority rights, public procurement and tender procedures, general administrative procedures,

gender mainstreaming in LSG and collaboration with non-governmental organizations. Also, the opinions expressed by survey respondents about major obstacles in the operations of local authorities give some indication of the

(Q) WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF THE GREATEST DIFFICULTIES IN THE DAYTODAY MANAGEMENT OF YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT?



structure of problems they experience on daily basis.

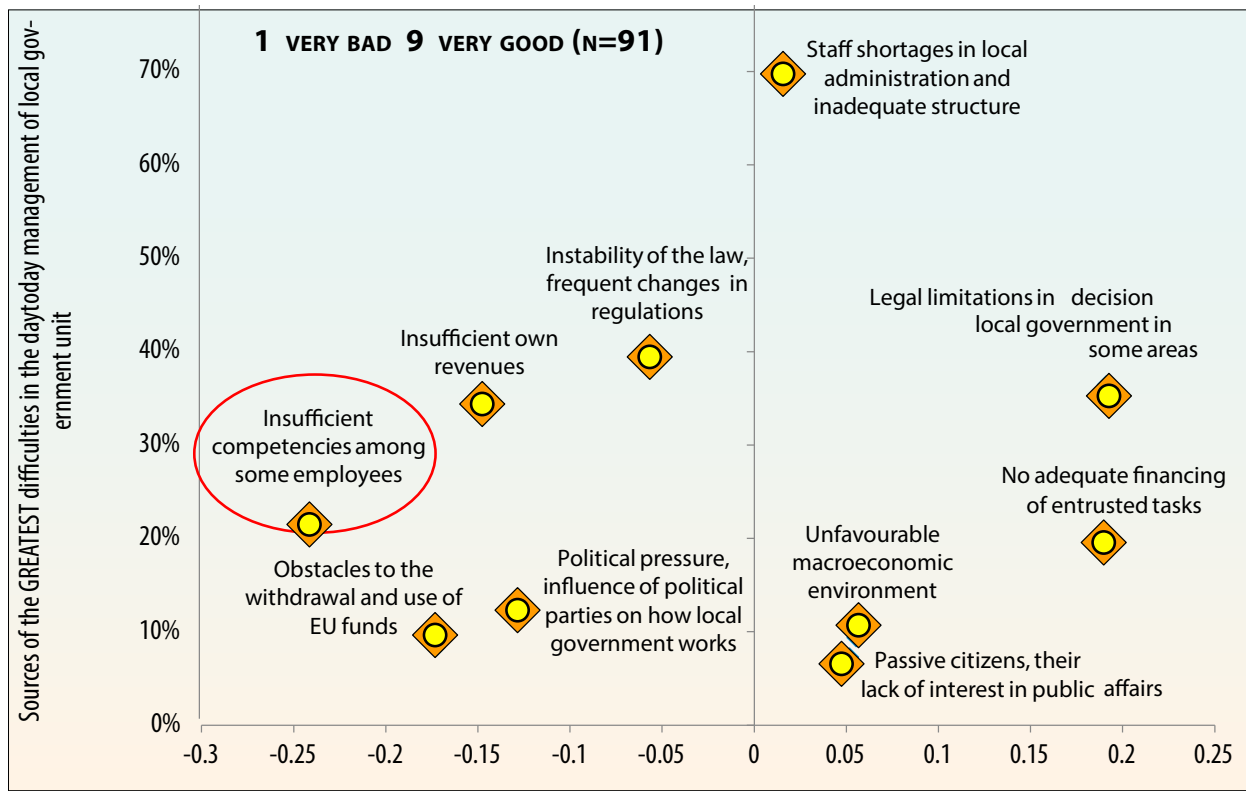
Analysis has shown that problems have a varied impact on the perceived efficiency of performance in LSGs

On the one hand, correlations show that 'insufficient competencies of some officials' are potentially the greatest burden for the effective operation of some LSGs (even though this concerns not a major group of Heads of Administration).

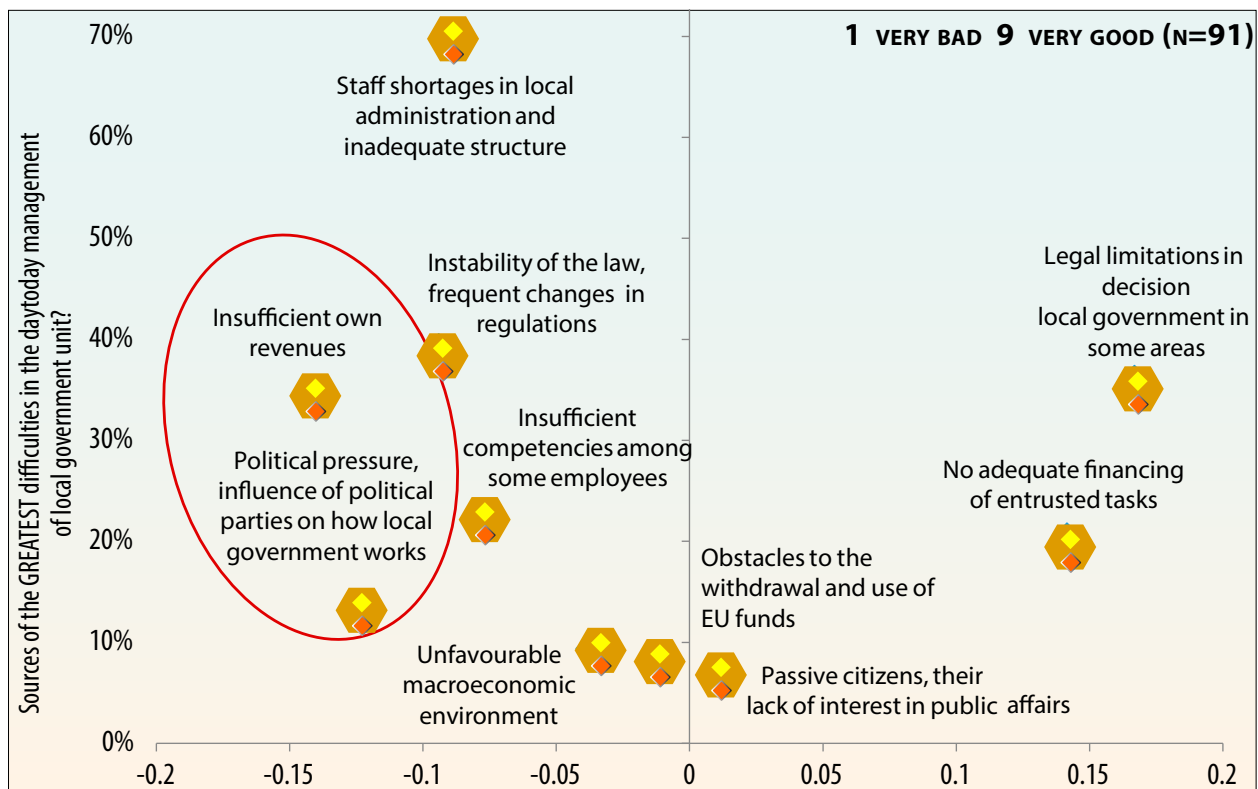
On the other hand, 'staff shortages in local administration and inadequate structure' being the most commonly mentioned source of problems has no clear impact on the assessment of the efficiency of local administration.

This means that competencerelated problems are not acknowledged as the most common constraint, at least by Heads of Administration, even though they have potentially the highest significance.

CORRELATION WITH: GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF EFFICIENCY OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT



CORRELATION WITH: GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF EFFICIENCY OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT



1.	Lack of IT skills among staff
2.	Lack of customer oriented communication skills among staff
3.	Lack of knowledge of (and implementation capacity for) legislation on internal, audit and financial management and control
4.	Lack of efficient procedures and systems for monitoring and reporting
5.	Lack of specific profiles of staff necessary to the provision of given services (civil engineers, environment protection specialists, etc.)

3.7 LSGS' MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Mayors and Heads of administration offered a variety of examples of what they consider a successful management practice. One mayor, for instance, stated that the key to success lies in:



"strict management where your subordinates fear you and you make it very clear from the beginning what are your expectations".

Others mentioned the so called 'motivating people by example' principle, whilst still others agreed with what one mayor clearly expressed:



"it is important to identify those people who are competent and dedicated and trust them

Interestingly, respondents who started working for local administration after having worked in the business sector, expressed serious concerns about the management and efficiency of local administration. To many interviewees a critical issue, as one Head of administration pointed out, is that:



"some of the mayors or member of the council tend to micromanage. That means that people stop being creative and cooperative and simply carry out orders. And that never ends well".

Leadership at the LSGs level need to endorse a clear vision and steer the development of the municipality but, as one mayor stressed:



"administrative staff should be the professionals who should know best how to do things".

Furthermore, a key issue raised by LSGs' representatives is how managers perceive themselves. As a Head of Administration had it:



"more as executive than management staff. If some things have to be done quickly and carefully it is better if I do it myself".

Several LSGs' respondents mentioned the lack of sound internal management procedures based on well established management processes as a key obstacle to an efficient management. As a respondent stated:



"The Mayor, the Assistants to the Mayor, the Members of City Council, the Head of City Administration, they are all often not certain themselves which employee/official falls within their "chain of command", and on the other hand the employees do not know who to report to on the completion of tasks. The reporting lines are clear on paper but it does not work in practice. For an example, the Head of Administration should approve employee's request to attend trainings. However, the requests are submitted to the Mayor's cabinet and the approval is received from the Mayor's assistant".

3.8 LSG'S HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

LSGs' employees are public servants but do not have the same status as civil servants at the national level.

The Law on the maximum number of employees in public sector²¹ defines the total maximum number of employees in LSGs including

²¹ Law on the Maximum number of employees in the Public Sector local administration, Official Gazette RS No. 68/15

institutions financed from the local budget (except for institutions in the field of education, health care and preschool education) and municipal companies and other institutions (except for public companies) whose sole founder is the LSG and which are financed from the budget.

The new Law on Employees in the Autonomous Provinces and Local Self-Government Units²² states the rights and obligations of appointed officials, public servants and general service employees at the provincial and local government levels. The law introduces changes in human resources management (HRM), professional development and training of civil servants in local government.

Heads of Administration perceive local government jobs as fairly attractive: on a scale from 1 to 9 (definitely unattractive vs. very attractive), the mean value was 6.38, with the median amounting to 7. While the data do not indicate any significant differentiation in the perception of attractiveness across different types of LSGs, one should nevertheless notice that the appeal of local government jobs was somewhat less likely

²² Law on employees in the autonomous provinces and local Self-Government units, Official Gazette RS No. 21/ 2016

to be appreciated in rural municipalities.

As admitted by most respondents, the main motivation for working in LSGs administration, especially in the past, is to have a 'steady job'. In smaller and less developed municipalities, the local government is the 'best' of the few possible employers. Skilled, young people seek employment elsewhere.

Considering the low salaries, for high achievers to opt for a job at the LSGs is mostly a matter of 'passion'; as one major said:

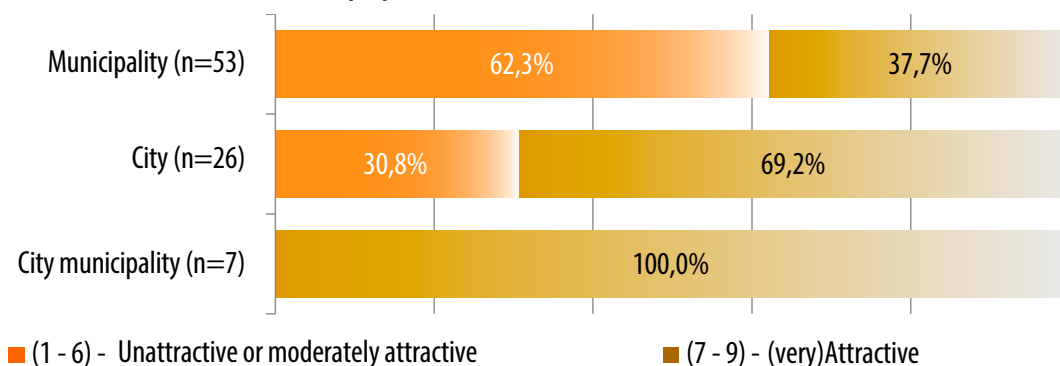
"the job is so demanding and neverending that you need to love it... or leave it".

This opinion has been confirmed by survey results.

From the perspective of Heads of Administration, the main factors which determine the appeal of a local government job include 'job stability' and 'level of remuneration'. The respondents were less likely to mention aspects such as 'proximity of work and place of residence', 'various tasks and responsibilities', 'possibility to work with interesting people' or 'working time, working hours'. Worth noting is that the respondents attached relatively lowest importance to aspects such as 'opportunities to improve one's compe-

(Q) IS A JOB AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICE ATTRACTIVE OR UNATTRACTIVE IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER AVAILABLE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES?

(BY) TYPE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT

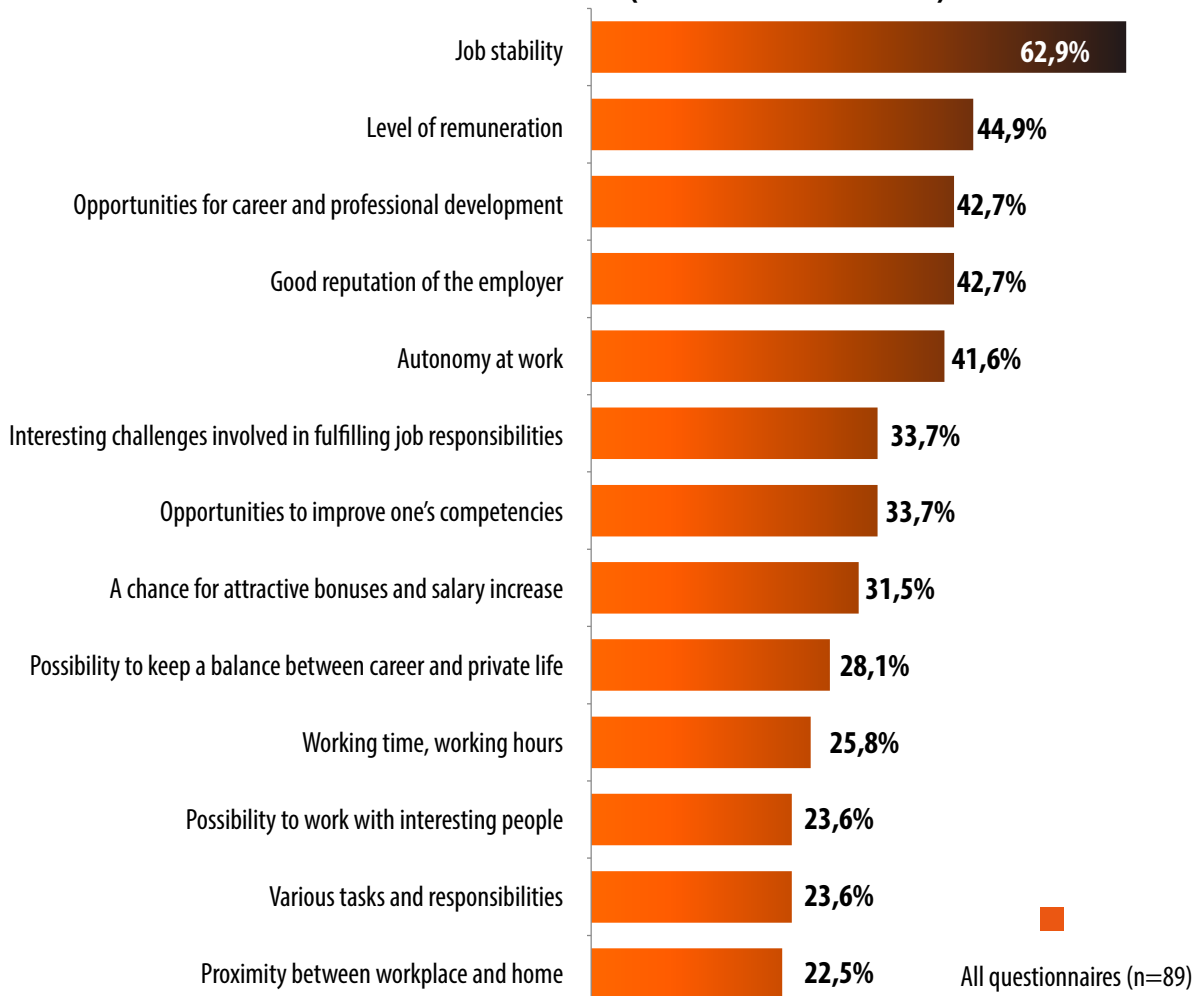


tencies, 'interesting challenges involved in fulfilling job responsibilities' or 'autonomy at work'.

In the similar vein, the surveyed Heads of Administration believe that the most important factors influencing employees' job satisfaction at their respective offices included, above all, issues related to job safety and financial security: 'job stability' and 'level of remuneration'. Other issues play a secondary role.

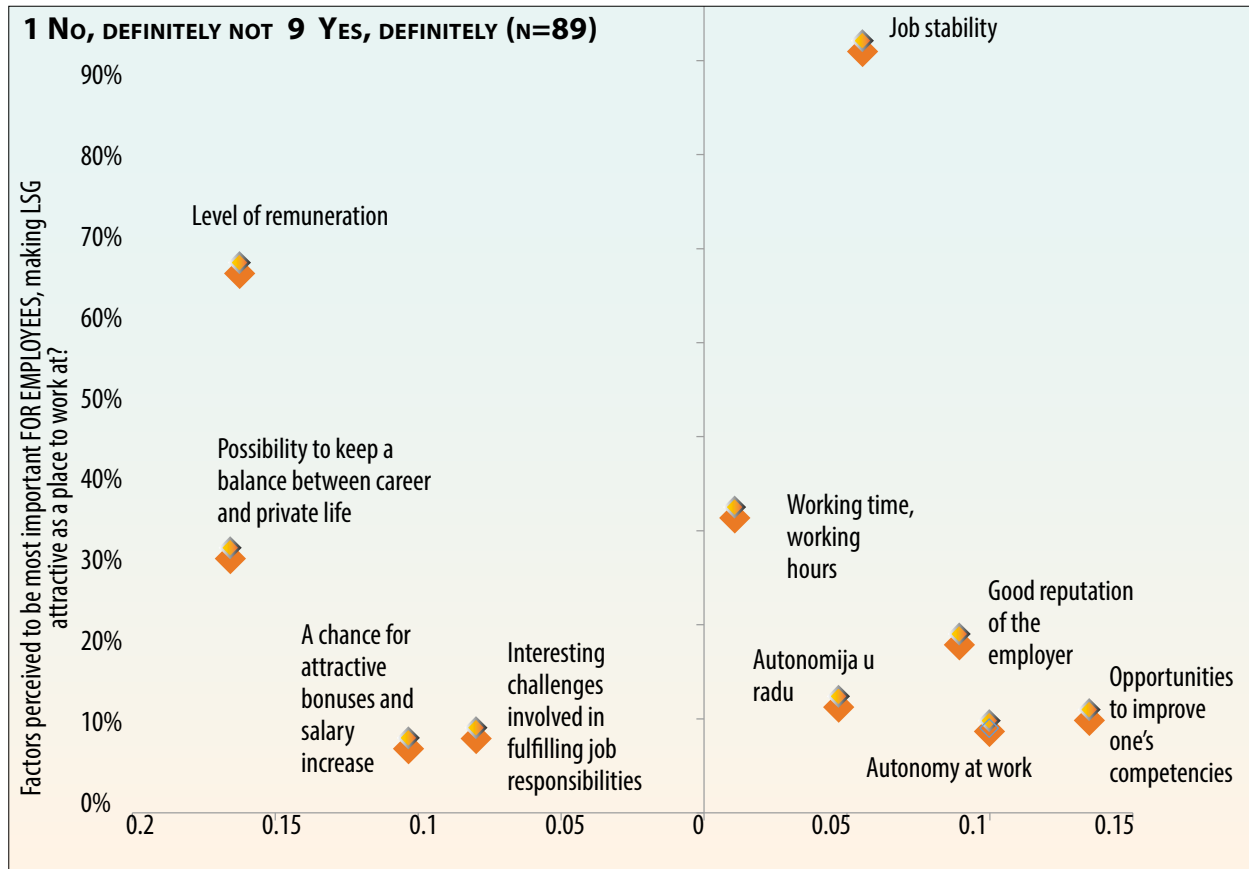
results one can assume that for those officials who attach importance to 'job stability' and 'level of remuneration' a local government job is not particularly attractive. Presumably, they treat it as any other job, without thinking much over the nature of their responsibilities, not seeing them as a mission or a chance to do something for the good of the local community. On the contrary those respondents who value 'good reputation

(Q) HOW MUCH IS EACH OF THEM IMPORTANT OR UNIMPORTANT TO YOU PERSONALLY IN THE CONTEXT OF WORKING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT? (ANSWER: VERY IMPORTANT)



Data analysis indicated that the dominant factors (related to employment conditions) do not enhance officials' job satisfaction (at least in the eyes of Heads of Administration). Based on the

of the employer' and 'opportunities to improve one's competencies' more often seem to perceive work in local Self-Government as attractive and satisfactory.

CORRELATION WITH: IS A JOB AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT SATISFACTORY FOR EMPLOYEES WHO ARE EMPLOYED THERE?

Unanimously respondents pointed out the lack of sound HRM policies and tradition at the LSG level. As one Major summarised it:



"In the 80s municipal administration was not a competitive employer in terms of salaries, since the salaries in the business sector were at least double in comparison. People that are more capable did not want to work in the municipal administration, resulting in the fact that local administration was mainly operating with less competent people. Unfortunately, thirty years later we still have similar situation in terms of employees' structure".

Capable and qualified staff is an indispensable precondition for the performance of any LSG. With very few exceptions only, respondents reported that public servants currently do not

possess adequate knowledge or skills to perform efficiently tasks related to local planning, infrastructural development and management as well as monitoring. Many respondents expressed the same concern:



"We have surplus of low capacity employees and lack of capable staff".

Within the limits of the current legislation, hiring temporary staff as well as staff repositioning have been common practices to overcome such 'surplus' along with more stringent selection processes on new employees. Especially for those municipalities with high percentages of staff close to retirement, the restrictions on employees' turnover, as introduced by the Law on Employees in the Autonomous Provinces

and Local Self-Government Units ²³, appears as a threat undermining overall staff capacity.

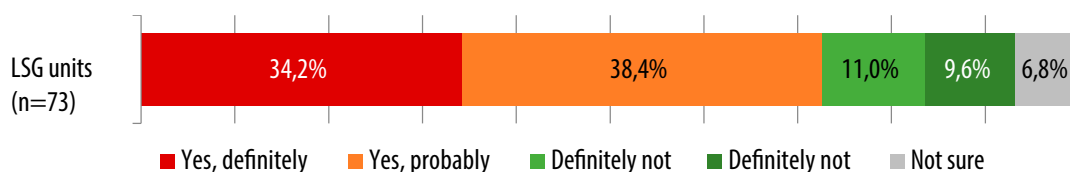
Shortage of competent staff becomes a significant issue considering the instability of the law and frequent changes in the regulations as well in relation to political pressures.

Although there are some virtuous examples among LSGs who have shown high level of pro-

cases, the practice of staff relocation and hiring of temporary staff at crucial posts. Frequent staff reorganisations, however, imply that public servants are often moved to positions for which they do not have sufficient knowledge and specific capacities. Furthermore, as one interviewee pointed out:

"it is common that during their career, public servants obtain a higher level of education

CAN YOU SEE ANY PROBLEMS IN THE WORK OF YOUR CITY/MUNICIPALITY ADMINISTRATION CAUSED PRIMARILY BY INSUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE OR INSUFFICIENT SKILLS OF EMPLOYEES AT YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT?



fessionalization in their recruitment process, this issue is still very critical to many LSGs. The perception of Human resources recruitment in LSG is still influenced by the practice that used to be common in the past (and is still in place in many LSGs) of hiring new and relocating existing staff to less attractive positions in postelection periods. This is the reason why LSG employees (the senior generation) have very low opinion of the transparency of the recruitment process, which is often perceived as subject to political influence.

In the meantime, the limited recruitment of new employees seems to exacerbate, at least in some

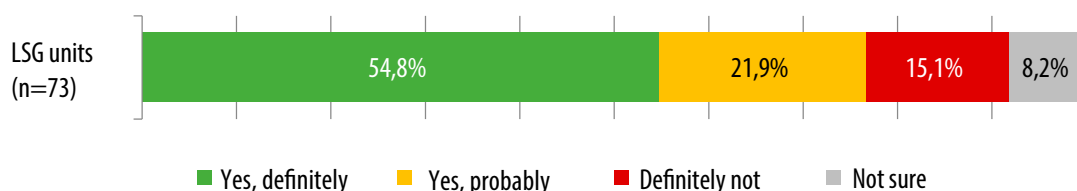


with expectation that it will. This is automatically being reflected in their salaries, regardless of the particular qualification required for a specific post. Moreover, employees do prefer to remain in the same post and be paid more without getting more responsibilities".

Donor organizations have been witnessing frequent staff changes and have faced many challenges in implementing capacity building programs. Furthermore, donor organizations often experienced staff changes even during the project implementation which resulted in prolonging if not jeopardizing the successful completion of the project. In some cases, donor organizations faced not only the staff changes but also changes in the development priorities, after the elec-

²³ Law on employees in the autonomous provinces and local Self-Government units, Official Gazette RS No. 21/ 2016

ARE THE EMPLOYEES AT YOUR LOCAL ADMINISTRATION REQUIRED TO IMPROVE THEIR PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS?



tions. As one of the donor representatives stated, clearly pinpointing a widespread opinion among interviewees:

"nepotism is present in all aspects of LSGs' work, from selecting municipal staff to establishing various local policies. Professionalization and transparent recruitment policies are not in place".

Several LSGs managers highlight the lack of a consistent and systematic assessment of staff performance. There seems to be a lack of clear job descriptions against which the single employee's performance could be monitored and assessed. Furthermore, adequate disciplinary measures are missing and sanctioning an employee for negligence or poor performance is often a time-consuming and ambiguous process.

Overall, respondents estimate that only between 20% and 40% of their employees are capable, dedicated and hardworking and, thus, represent a real value added to the LSG. It follows that these employees are those who are asked to perform an increasing number of tasks, accommodating for the poor performance of the rest of the staff, who mostly perceive their job as a 'safe job' regardless of their merit. Within such scenario, both individual and organisational sustainability is endangered.

The lack of a systematic approach to staff performance assessment is a key obstacle to the overall performance of the LSG. As one mayor pointed out:

"There is no performance appraisal since we have no financial means to reward good performance. Lately people even couldn't be paid for extra working hours. And if you can't reward you cannot sanction people either. So, what is the point of performance appraisal?"

There does not seem to be a structured approach to professional development in most LSGs. This hinders the effectiveness of any approach to the professional development of public servants at local level. In fact, as one respondent highlighted:

"Employees are not systematically encouraged to obtain knowledge or improve their knowledge and skills neither as a part of their professional obligation nor as a precondition for promotion".

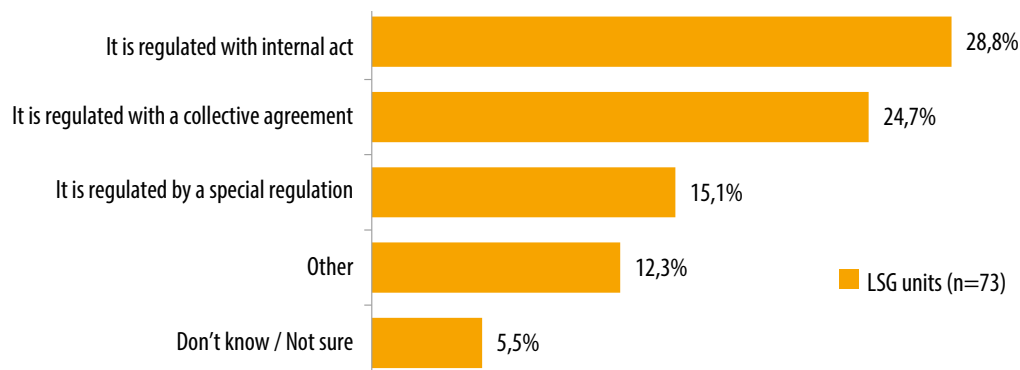
Although, per the respondents' declarations, in more than a half of municipalities employees are required to improve their professional qualifications, rarely such requirement takes the form of a formalized procedure.

Based on the data gathered through the interviews, it is roughly estimated that LSGs allocate 0.1 - 0.2% of their budget to capacity building activities (including training, licensing, conferences, etc.). Survey results indicate that, on average, municipalities spend just above 300.000 RSD for training of their employees (but about half of the municipalities spend about 150.000 RSD per year). 41% of municipalities spend on training less than 2.000 RSD per employee, and such expenditures in 40% of municipalities ranges between 2.000 and 5.000 RSD per employee.

According to respondents' declarations, participation in training events is a common practice among employees of LSGs. Most of those events are free of charge training organized by an external provider.

The second position was taken by paid training for employees from various local government structures.

Participation in training activities is equally common among all employees but less frequent among mayors. LSG staff most often participate in conferences, seminars and work-

HOW IS THIS REQUIREMENT FORMULATED?

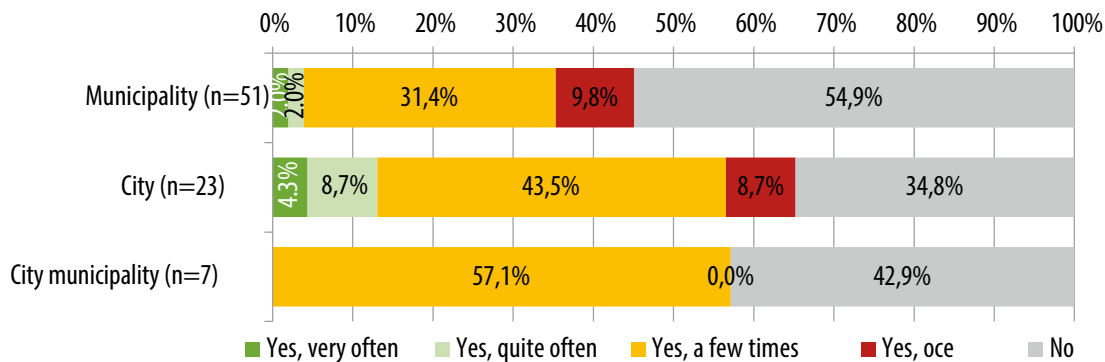
shops, while other forms of learning are less popular.

Respondents also repeatedly suggested that capacity building measures should also target

Mayors and Council Members without prior knowledge of the (local) public sector. Such activities should, inter alia, improve organisational performance and communication, leadership and conflict resolutions skills both within the

(Q) IN WHAT KIND OF (EXTERNAL) TRAINING DID EMPLOYEES IN YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT PARTICIPATE IN 2015?

(Q) WERE THERE ANY INTERNAL TRAINING EVENTS ORGANISED FOR YOUR LOCAL ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYEES DURING THE LAST YEAR? (BY) TYPE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT



LSG (interpersonal and interdepartmental) and vis-à-vis the citizens.

(Self) Organization of internal training for employees is not a common practice.

None of the interviewed LSGs ever arranged such training. Their staff mostly attends available trainings offered 'off the shelf' or organized by various ministries supported by donors' project. Survey results indicate that 42,2% of offices organised internal training events last year. Such events were more often organised by city municipalities (57,1% of offices), and cities (56,5%), with the lowest percentage for municipalities (35,4%).

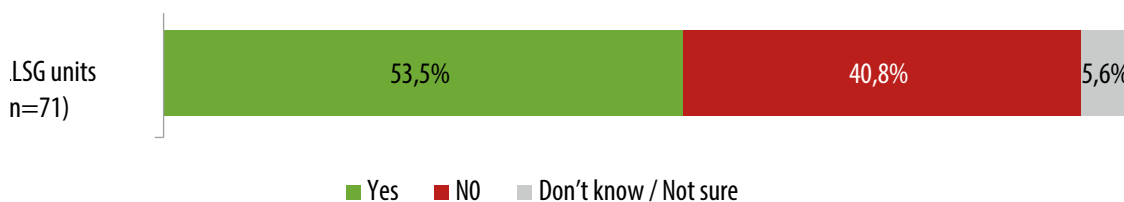
Training Need Assessments (TNAs) are not

commonly performed as basis for developing annual training plans and allocating budget for professional development. The selection of employees for accessing capacity building activities often does not follow a systematic and transparent process.

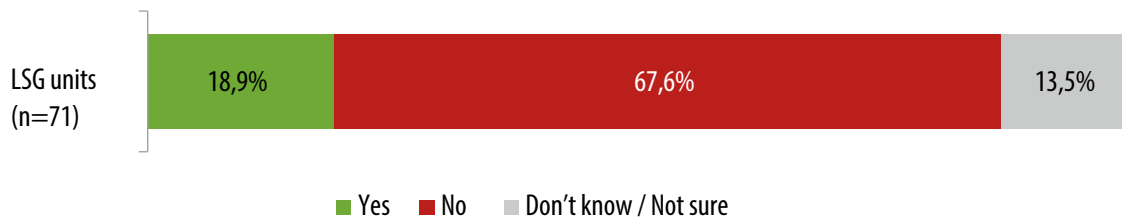
In several interviews, Heads of Administration reported that they usually identified that there was a need to send certain people to specific trainings but not because of systemic appraisal. Usually the employees themselves express interest to attend certain trainings and their direct superiors are obliged to approve their attendance.

LSGs representatives reported that their em-

(Q) DOES YOUR CITY/MUNICIPALITY ADMINISTRATION ANALYSE THE TRAINING NEEDS OF ITS EMPLOYEES?



(Q) IS THERE A PROCEDURE, AN ORDINANCE OR A RULE WHICH DEFINES HOW TRAINING NEEDS SHOULD BE ANALYSED?



employees are generally interested in trainings, often considering it even as a reward for their performance. However, several staff members are still reluctant to engage in training and, even when they do, they tend not to implement acquired skills in their daily tasks.

According to LSGs' representatives, only one out of two employees seems to have a personal training portfolio. Moreover, not in all LSGs, employees have an obligation to write a report after attending training and submit it to their Human Resource department or officer. As a Head of Administration highlighted:



"Having to approve staff attendance at trainings, I noticed that same people attend

to trainings without reporting on it. I have designated a person responsible to register training attendance. I asked the Heads of Departments to report on trainings their staff attended. When I check later I realised that only few of them responded".

The lack of a TNA approach to capacity building and professional development plan, worryingly results, in some cases, in inefficient practices. As one interviewee suggested:

"managers tend to send people who are not busy enough and have time to attend trainings, regardless of whether it is related to their work or not or, even worst, purely based on their personal preferences".



(Q) DOES YOUR CITY/MUNICIPALITY ADMINISTRATION DEVELOP A TRAINING PLAN FOR ITS EMPLOYEES?





4 CHAPTER TRAINING EXPERIENCE

Although professional and career development approaches and practices vary greatly among LSGs, the overall level of participation in professional development activities seems not to be very intense. The section on LSG's human resources management of this report provides a full account on the state of the art of HRM in LSGs. The insights from the interviews lead to the conclusion that LSGs' managers seem to believe that trainings are useful only if targeting hardworking, dedicated people, who are adequately positioned within the LSG, according with their level of education.

As far as training methods are concerned, data collected through interviews with both donors and training providers and LSGs' stakeholders, highlights that while most trainings was organised as interactive workshops, attendees preferred training including the following approaches:

- ☑ Case study and best practice;
- ☑ Hands-on exercises;
- ☑ Learning assessment;
- ☑ Mentoring and on the job assistance.

The format and methods used in trainings vary greatly and it was not possible to identify trends in terms of training duration, number of trainees, trainees' selection or training assessment. However, trainees from LSGs seem to favour those training (as those organised by the Ministries) where they can access relevant information on newly adopted legislation. Finally, e-training was welcomed by most interviewees as an innovative and efficient way to acquire information and capacity. Online training was introduced by SCTM, in 2014, on the following topics:

- ✓ Improving inspection supervision at local level;
- ✓ Asylum and migrations;
- ✓ Management and control of public finances on local level;
- ✓ Local Economic Development;
- ✓ Local Self-Government System and Good Governance Principles.
- ✓ Environmental protection at local level

The SCTM online platform supports two modalities of e-learning: 'mentoring supported' and 'self-taught'.

Overall, examples of follow up activities aimed at ensuring sustainability of trainings results can be summarised as:

- ✓ Handing over training curricula, materials and techniques mainly to SCTM for future use, replication, development of refreshment courses and update
- ✓ Within certain programmes training participants were provided opportunities to practically use obtained skills and knowledge in LSGs daily work, e.g.: prepare project proposals and apply for external funding, prepare various strategic documents, undergo business friendly certification for LSG, establish inter sector partnerships for improved public policy management in certain areas (e.g. efficient energy management), advocacy and public awareness raising campaigns, provision of additional information, etc.

According to the gathered data²⁴ over 340 training courses were organised for LSGs during the 2014-2016 period. Trainings were clustered per training areas and subareas. Three training areas were identified:

- ✓ Professional development (n=8 training)²⁵;
- ✓ Technical support (n=80 training)²⁶;
- ✓ LSGs functions (n=254 training)²⁷.

All topics of the trainings provided since 2014 were classified within the areas and subareas listed above.

It appears that most trainings was provided within the following subareas (accounting for almost half of the provided trainings):

1. Managing the finances of the local government unit, local taxes and fees, financial and accounting issues (68)
2. Local Economic Development and Investment Attraction (32)
3. Disaster and crisis management (21)
4. Public procurement and tender procedures (18).

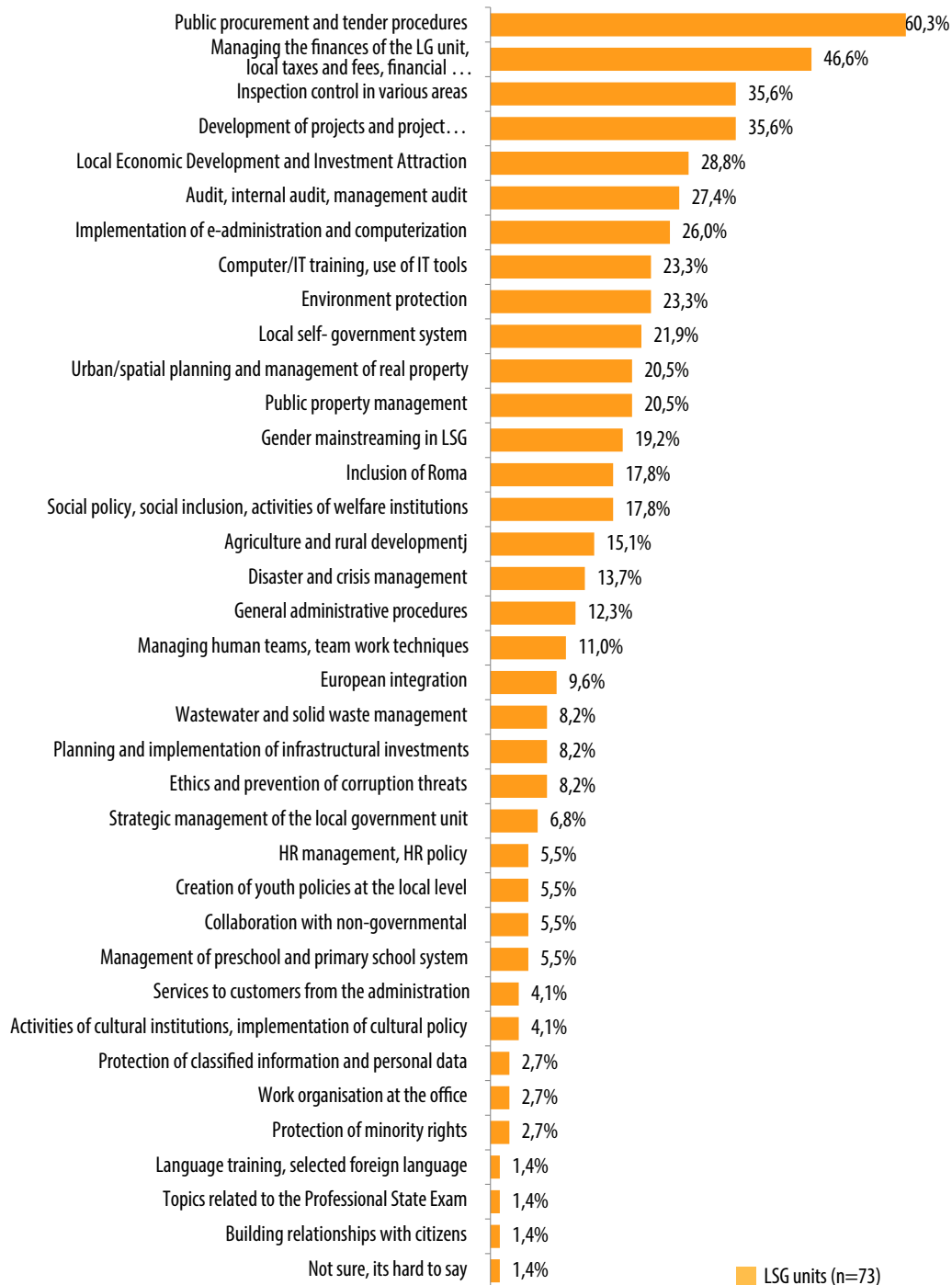
24 SCTM Training Center database was used as a base for this report but was amended to include information obtained from the Data Collector, conducted interviews and LSG visits. Therefore, any quantitative analysis is illustrative and does not present valid statistically significant data.

25 Subareas: Work organisation at the office; Team management, teambuilding, conflict resolution etc.; IT; Language courses; Worktime management

26 Subareas: Project making and management; Eadministration; Professional state exam; General administrative procedures; European integration; Customer services; Strategic management of the local government unit; Privacy and Data protection; Public procurement and tender procedures; LSGs functioning.

27 Subareas: Youth policy; Auditing; Agriculture and rural development; Cultural policy; Inclusion of Roma; Disaster and crisis management; Active citizenship; Environmental protection; Ethics and fight against corruption; Wastewater and solid waste management; Local Economic Development and Investments; Planning and implementation of infrastructural investments; Urban/spatial planning and management of real-estate property; Public property management; Social policy and social inclusion; Cooperation with NGOs; Inspection controls; HRM; Protection of minority rights; Financial management and budgeting issues; Management of preschool and primary school system; Gender mainstreaming; Local public transport and local roads; Road safety; Crosscutting trainings.

MOST POPULAR TOPICS AMONG LSGs IN 2015



It is significant that, according to the obtained data, some areas were not covered by trainings at all:

1. Local public transport and local roads
2. Wastewater and solid waste management²⁸
3. Activities of cultural institutions, implementation of cultural policy
4. Worktime management

It is worth noting that most training providers targeted the same subareas:

- ✓ Local Economic development and Investment;
- ✓ Planning and implementation of Infrastructural Investments;
- ✓ Urban/Spatial planning and management of real estate property; and
- ✓ Disaster and crisis management

This seems to reflect both donors' priorities and LSGs' strategic or urgent needs, as it was the case with training on Disaster and crisis management linked to the catastrophic floods of 2014.

²⁸ SCTM delivered 6 trainings in waste water and solid waste management in 2013 and 9 in 2016.

Collected data seem to highlight that participation fees were covered directly by LSGs especially for training organised in the following subareas:

- ✓ Managing the finances of the local government unit, local taxes and fees, financial and accounting issues;
- ✓ Public procurement and tender procedures;
- ✓ Urban/spatial planning and management of real estate property;
- ✓ HRM.

The biggest training provider for LSGs in Serbia is the SCTM (74% of all trainings in 2015 according to survey respondent). This organization heavily influence capacity building of local government staff whilst the 'next provider' are public institutions: National/provincial public institution (eg. Ministry, national/provincial secretariats or offices, etc) (41%).

The Central government, through its Ministries and other government institutions, over the same period, were likewise involved in providing training on their respective fields of competence.



5

CHAPTER

TRAINING POSTULATES AND NEEDS

Very little information on the actual training needs was obtained during conducted interviews. However, most of the respondents could identify areas but hardly the topics or training methods that would be the most convenient. Overall, it seems that most LSGs' managers hold replacement of existing staff, and changes in existing legislation (particularly with regards to financing of LSGs and property management) as much more efficient solutions to LSGs' lack of capacity, than capacity building through trainings.

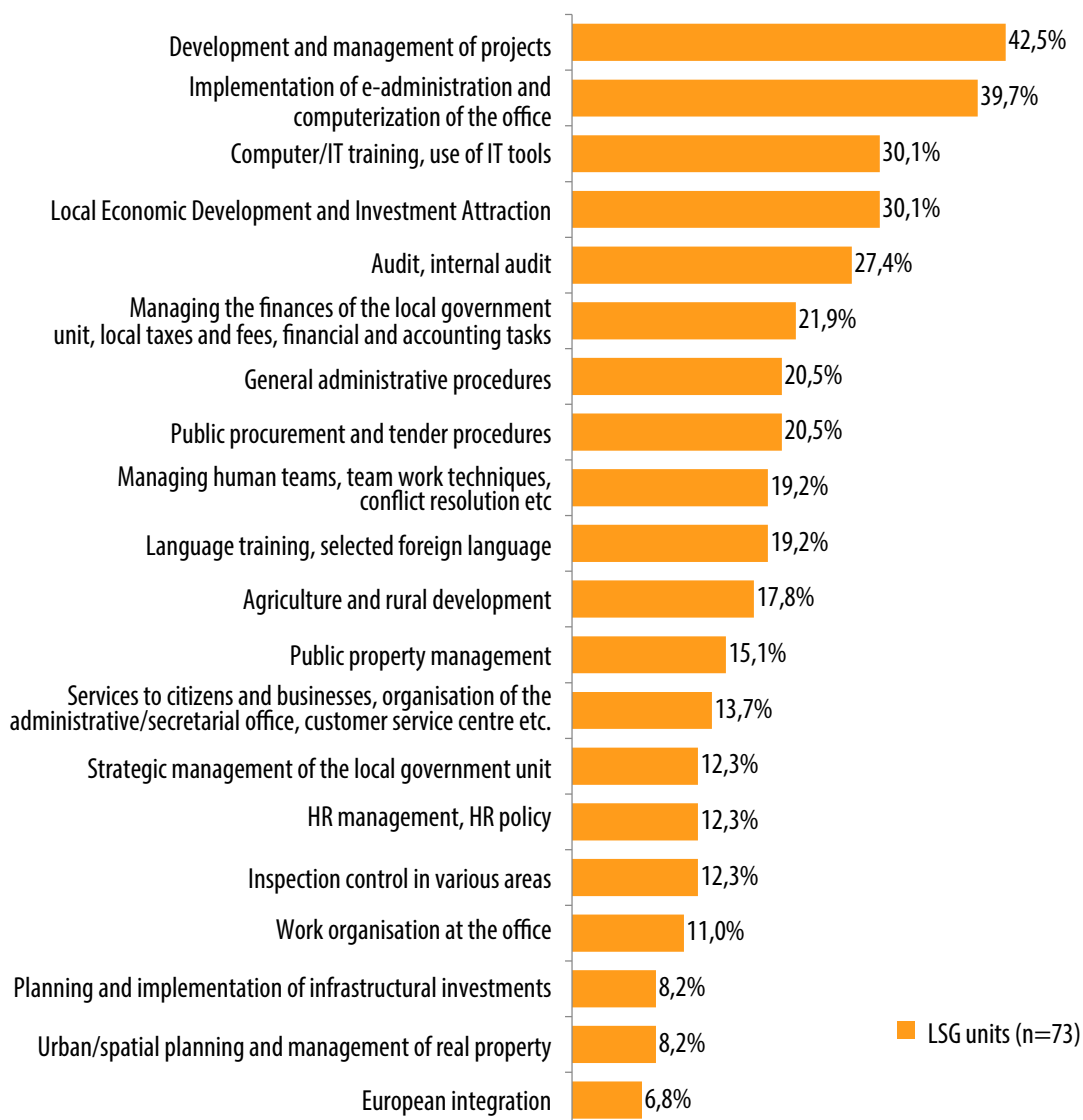
On the other hand, line Ministries and Government services identified several training needs as summarised in the following table:

INSTITUTION	IDENTIFIED TRAINING NEEDS
MINISTRY OF FINANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Program budgeting; ☑ Improvement of the Program structure; ☑ Monitoring and Evaluation of Program Budget; ☑ Preparation of Decision on Budget; ☑ Preparation of Revenues and Expenditures Estimation; ☑ Planning, selection and monitoring of capital investments; ☑ State Aid Control legislations; ☑ Types of available State Aid; ☑ State Aid awarding condition; ☑ Rights and obligations of the State Aid beneficiaries and LSGs as the State Aid providers.
MINISTRY OF TRADE, TOURISM AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Consumers' protection (extended competences activities of LSG in the area of consumers' protection – in line with the Article 129 of the Law and the Strategy on consumers' protection); ☑ Trading out of premises in line with the Article 54 of the Law on Trading (Official Gazette of RS No 53/2010 and 10/2013) for communal inspectors; ☑ Law on establishing jurisdiction APV and implementation of the Law on Special Powers for the efficient protection of intellectual property rights (for provincial inspectors); ☑ Implementation of the Law on Tourism; ☑ EU regulations – Directive on services (in view of upcoming Law on Services and EU Directive on services).
MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Program budgeting for Youth Offices; ☑ Trainings for youth coordinators in LSG on strategic planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, collection, analysis and data usage ; ☑ IPA Funds Utilization in general; ☑ Procedures and regulations regarding decision making on funding programs in the field of sport (for decision makers); ☑ Control over projects fund spendings in the field of sports financed from the LSG budget; ☑ Use the software to monitor the program for development of sport; ☑ EU projects programming, the implementation of IPA projects and EU procedures; ☑ Law on sports (for sports inspection); ☑ Development of a plan for the inspection, the development of checklists, forms of inspection, the development of training manuals, etc. (for sports inspectors); ☑ Potential ways of financing sports inspectors.

INSTITUTION	IDENTIFIED TRAINING NEEDS
MINISTRY OF ECONOMY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Project programming in line with national, EU and international standards.
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Fire prevention, as per Law on Fire Prevention (111/2009, 20/2015); ☑ Risk assessment and Disaster management planning; ☑ Capacity building for Commanders of Headquarters for Emergency situations.
MINISTRY OF HEALTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Implementation of Law on Patients' Rights for Councils members and advisors for patients' rights.
MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Public information and tasks related to project co-financing in the field of public information in line with the Law on public information and media and the Rules on co-financing projects for the public interest in the field of public information; ☑ Cultural and artistic capital in local contexts ☑ Project management in culture
MINISTER OF LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT, VETERAN AND SOCIAL POLICY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Monitoring and evaluation of public investment programs; ☑ Implementation of the Law on protection of personal data; ☑ Implementation of the Law on free access to public information; ☑ Family violence and court protection of property of persons under custody; ☑ Regulation on appropriated transfers in social protection; ☑ Implementation of legislation regarding protection of war veterans and civil war invalids protection; ☑ Implementation of unique records program and customer data rights in the field of protection of war veterans; ☑ Falsifying evidence, methods used and administrative solutions; ☑ Law on the rights of veterans, disabled veterans, civil war invalids and members of their families and bylaws for the implementation of this Act; ☑ Implementation of the program of unique records on users rights in the field of protection of war veterans and the establishment of a new lower payment system based on these records.

INSTITUTION	IDENTIFIED TRAINING NEEDS
SERBIAN EUROPEAN INTEGRATION OFFICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Preparation of project proposals; ☑ Project Cycle Management ☑ Alternative means of financing ☑ Preparation and monitoring of the programme budget; ☑ Cost benefit analysis for infrastructure projects; ☑ Regional utility management; ☑ Monitoring and evaluation of public investment programs.

LSG Training needs



Survey respondents' indications were used to develop a list of training postulates or expectations. What came as a strong winner on the list was the training related to development and management of projects followed by issues related to implementation of e-administration and use of IT tools.

Training postulates listed by Regional Development Agencies and CSOs to some extents seem to result from their experiences with LSGs but also reflect their particular expertise. Training expectations identified by the Ministries correspond only to some extents to the expectations of LSGs (particularly in case of the Ministry of Finance) but are mainly targeting ministries' particular field of competence and LSGs' capacities to implement relevant legislation and measures.

It is important to bear in mind that the diagnosis of training needs should help to identify the discrepancies between the current skills of potential training participants and the skills which are required or desirable for some reason. It turns out that in many cases training expectations and postulates presented by potential training participants deviate from the actual needs. This happens for many reasons, such as: lack of awareness that competencies are insufficient, erroneous identification of problem causes, or a stereotypical approach adopted when selecting training topics. Therefore, what is needed for the identification of training needs is the exploration of the causes of problems and the identification of those which can be addressed by gaining new knowledge or developing skills. It is also worth remembering that uncritical acceptance of postulates might expose a local government office to unnecessary burdens (financial and organisational) or even lead to unfavourable consequences (when required knowledge is not gained).

The interviews' findings led to the identification on obstacles to LSGs institutional development, which indicate that trainings should focus on the following areas:

1. Management and Leadership
2. Policy making, management and impact assessment
3. Organisation culture and procedures
4. Financial planning and management
5. HRM
6. LGSs' capacity to engage citizens and provide quality services
7. LGSs' capacity to attract investments

Moreover, the constant upgrading of LGSs' managers' and staff's knowledge and operative capacity on new regulation is acknowledged as a top necessity upon which trainings in all the above areas needs to be based. Such knowledge not only needs to be brokered via concrete examples but constantly supported with insights on the legislation application in local contexts.

Managerial and leadership skills represent key capacities upon which the whole LSG's functioning is based. The capacities of LSGs managers and leaders cannot be based on individual aptitudes but needs to be clearly structured and laid out in coherent job descriptions.

Lack of managerial and leadership skills negatively impact on the overall LSG's performance:



"Unclear instructions they are given have negative effect on their (employee) motivation. Moreover, the Mayor, Assistants to the Mayor, Member of City Council, Head of City Administration, often are not clear themselves who should give assignment to whom and how; therefore, officials are not clear which given assignments to follow and whom to inform on completion. The chain of command, clear on paper, does not work in practice".

Most respondents stressed the importance of leadership as a key engine promoting LSGs' efficient and effective performance, as it was strongly advocated by one President of a Municipality:



"Good leader understands the problems of the community, knows what resources he has, has a vision and knows how to motivate and engage people. And finally, he doesn't give up and continues searching for solutions".

Trainings targeting the upgrading of Management and leadership skills, however, should also promote LSGs' attention to team working and reporting whilst promoting the overall organisation environment and structure.

LSGs' participation and contribution to **policy-making** at the national level is limited. Besides their indirect participation through SCTM, LSGs tend to be passive recipients and mere implementers of policies designed and drafted at the national level. If the motivation and capacity to actively engage in policymaking is needed, at the local level policy management remains also complicated and burdensome.

It should be noted, moreover, that although policy making and policy management skills were identified by the clear majority of the interviewed stakeholders, both within and beyond LSGs, as indispensable capacities to build up, policy impact assessment was never mentioned neither as a priority nor as a needed phase for an effective policy making. The lack of such an acknowledgement seems to suggest that more efforts should be spent in this direction, to establish the steps and factors of an efficient policy making.

The new Law on General Administrative Procedure is expected to bring clarity in LSGs' **organisational structures and procedures**. LSGs'

stakeholders lamented a lack of organisational clarity, which they referred to both existing legal complexities and internal organisation standards (or rather the lack of them).

Many Heads of administration stated that organisational structure is changing every time the local government changes without proper analysis or reason. As one Head of administration testified:



"4 years ago we had 18 departments. Then, they were reduced to 6 (with the same amount of work). It was very difficult to organize and coordinate the work. And now, with the new systematisation, we are going to have 12".

Sound **financial management** at the LSGs' level implies the LSG capacity to perform on financial control, asset management, and programme budgeting and internal audit. LSGs' stakeholders and central government representatives alike alleged the lack of the necessary skills to implement the above tasks. As one Head of Administration stated:



"we do not have knowledge or capacities to implement the legislation related to internal audit and financial management and control"

A respondent from the central government, who clearly stressed that, paralleled this:



"they (LSGs) still have problems with the linear budgeting, let alone the programme budgeting. That requires much better planning first"

There is also an evident lack of procedures required to ensure proper participative financial planning.

Stakeholders acknowledged unanimously the importance of sound **human resource management** practices particularly focused on a result based performance evaluation. Although different LSGs suffer differently from underdeveloped human resources, there is an overall impression that within LSGs staff only a small number of employees are properly qualified for their posts.

Besides issues of politicisation and inherent organisation changes, the lack of attractiveness of LSGs' employment because of salary limitation and lack of opportunity for career development seem to discourage qualified, young professional to seek work at the local government level. As one Head of Administration affirmed:



"Hard working people are overloaded with work while the others have very little to do. The job descriptions defined by the Systematization are not implemented due to different capacities of employees. The problem is in number and structure of employees. Employees are passive".

Moreover, as one mayor added:



"You make coalition on local level and propose people who, under other circumstances, because of quality you would not consider. I am not satisfied with the executive authority nor with the structure of employees".

LSGs' stakeholders and representatives from the central government and donors' community alike stressed the importance of both improving service delivery and proactively **engaging citizens** in their local communities.

As far as the former is concerned, LSGs need to acquire relevant capacities to perform on services such as eservices, customer service centres, etc., which will both enhance the effective provision of services and further engage their interaction with citizens and local businesses. However,

qualified staff is needed to enact such services; as one Head of a Department explained:



"People working directly with customers often do not have enough patience with 'difficult citizens' and we have to remind them that customers are always right. We lack certain profiles of staff to be able to provide good services. For example, we have enough jurists but not enough specialised in certain specific areas. We don't have civil engineers and environment protection specialists to perform inspections".

Citizens' participation in local government policy making is limited to public hearings and even then there is a general perception that the citizens are reluctant to take part and that participation in political debate is mostly confined to voting in the general elections due to an overall lack of interest and trust in the institutions. A very weak civil society is not helping citizens' participation. There are not many CSOs capable of providing quality input in public policy development and of properly monitoring local government performance.

LSG finances and capacity to enact successful local development projects still heavily relies on Central government financial transfers and guidance, on the one hand, and on donors' support, on the other. Although, donors' support in the country is expected to continue, at least in the near future, LSGs should improve their capacity to collaborate within Central government and donors' strategy with the adequate skills to proactively engage in project design, management and assessment and **attract investments**.

Upgrading LSGs capacity in project making is necessary, on the one hand, to better ground international donors' project in local contexts and needs and, on the other, to parallel central government efforts to make the best use of availa-

ble EU integration funds.

As one stakeholder from a Ministry mentioned:



“with few exceptions LSGs capacities to prepare good project proposals, obtain and properly use EU assistance are very poor and at the same time crucial for the country integration process”.

Improved project making capacities and sound project implementation procedures, seem to be necessary for LSGs to create the favourable conditions for private (i.e. business) investments too.

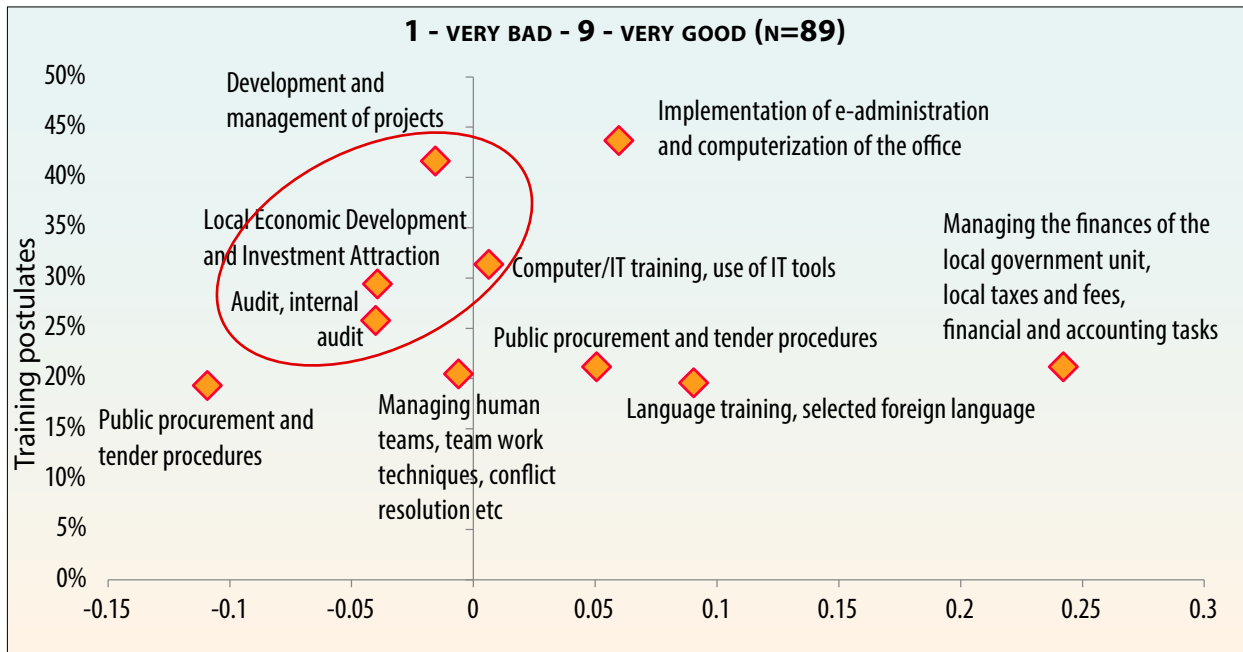
The training postulates mentioned by the survey respondents were checked in contrast with the problem areas declared as existing in municipalities. Of course, this exercise is not sufficient for a diagnosis of actual needs. After all, there are also other factors, which influence the operation of offices, such as systemic factors, or manage-

ment practices employed by leaders. However, one cannot neglect the fact that the causes of at least some problems relate to lack of skills among the staff of LSGs represented by the Heads of Administration. There is also a group of topics, which were often mentioned but are not connected with problems affecting local government offices. Of course, this does not mean that such training postulates voiced by stakeholders should be neglected: after all, they reflect the potential intention to train staff in those areas; however, the usability of such training can be questioned.

As the following graphs show, data analysis clearly identified that the most important training needs of staff of local government offices (at least in relation to the problems faced by LSGs) relate to areas such as:

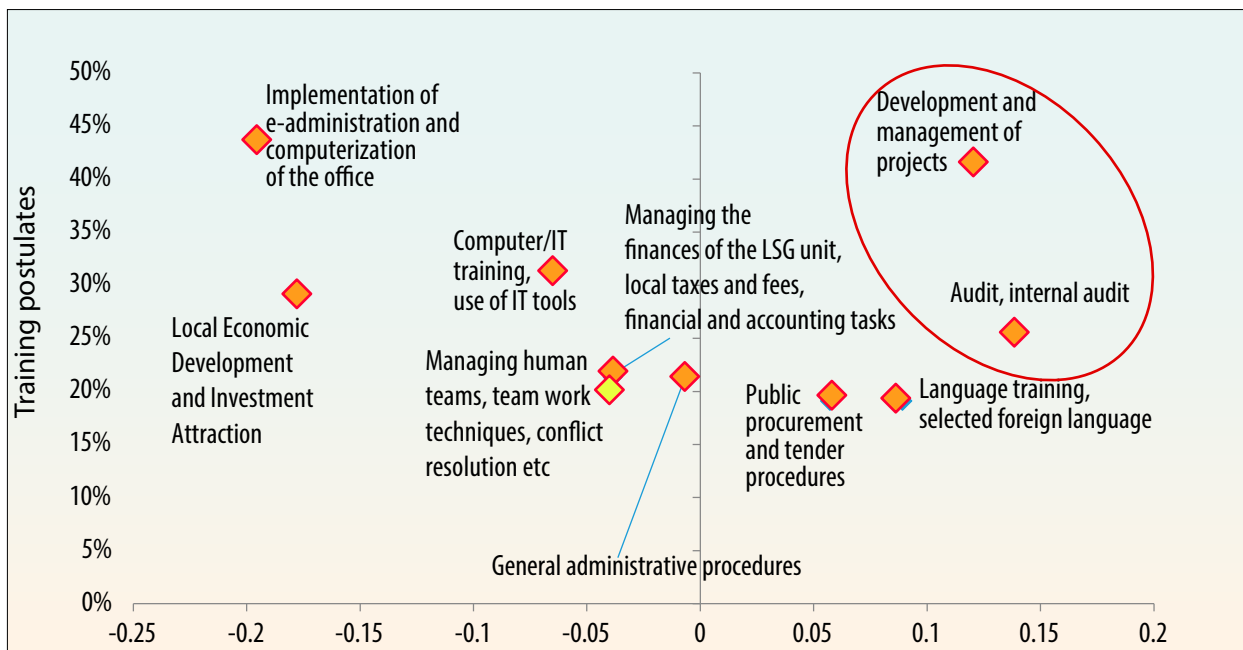
Common problems, common postulates:	Common problems, rare postulates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ audit, internal audit, management of audit ☑ development and management of projects ☑ implementation of e-administration and computerization of the office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ public property management ☑ wastewater and solid waste management ☑ ethics and anti-corruption measures ☑ inspection control in various areas ☑ inclusion of Roma

CORRELATION WITH: GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFICIENCY OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT?

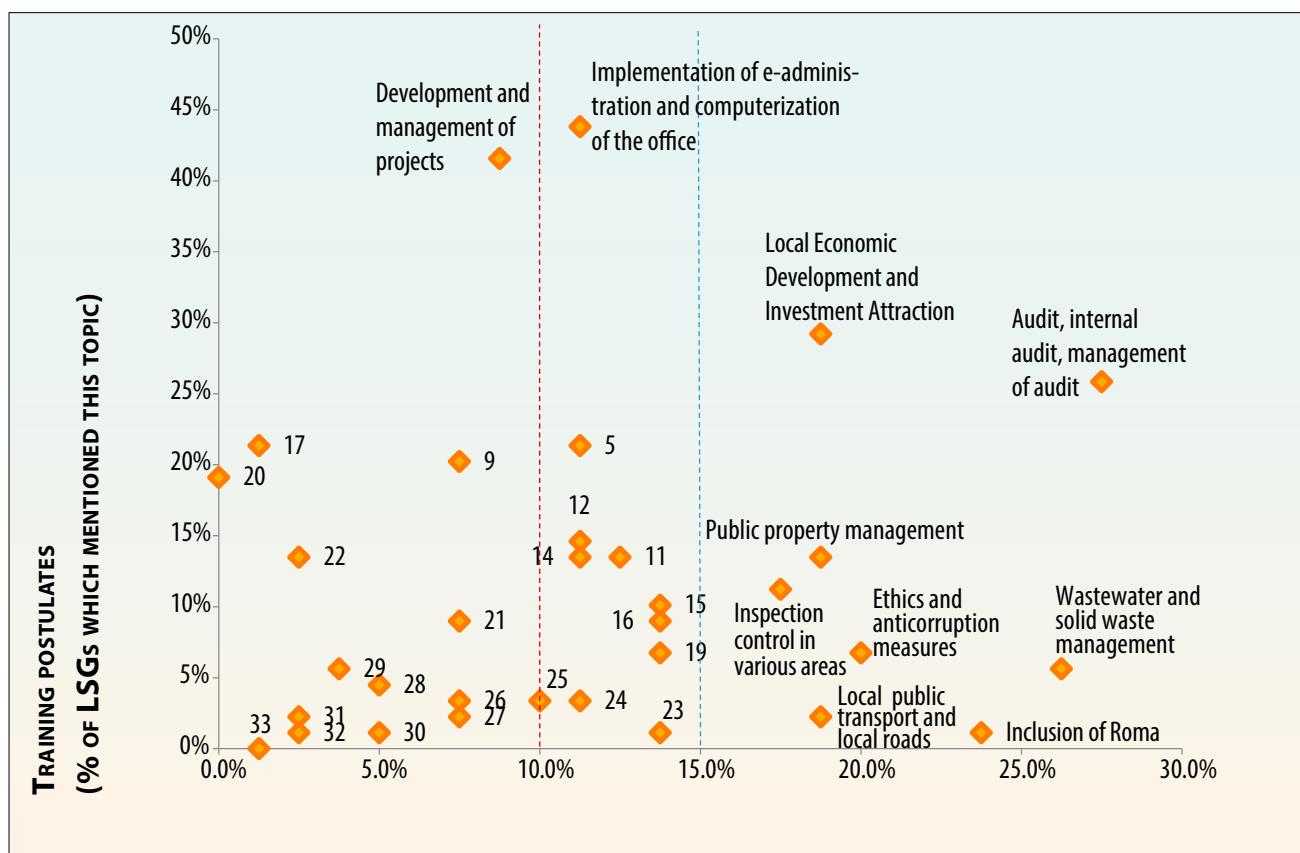


CORRELATION WITH: CAN YOU SEE ANY PROBLEMS IN THE WORK OF YOUR CITY/MUNICIPALITY ADMINISTRATION CAUSED PRIMARILY BY INSUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE OR INSUFFICIENT SKILLS OF EMPLOYEES AT YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT?

DEFINITELY NOT - YES, DEFINITELY (N=81)



AREAS OF MAJOR DIFFICULTIES IN EXECUTION OF TASKS (% OF LSGs WHICH MENTIONED THIS AREA)



- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 1 | Implementation of e-administration and computerization of the office | 18 | Local public transport and local roads |
| 2 | Audit, internal audit, management of audit | 19 | Environment protection |
| 3 | Development and management of projects | 20 | Public procurement and tender procedures |
| 4 | Local Economic Development and Investment Attraction | 21 | Planning and implementation of infrastructural investments |
| 5 | Managing the finances of the local government unit, local taxes and fees, financial and accounting issues | 22 | Services to citizens and businesses, work organization in the administration/secretariat, customer service centre etc. |
| 6 | Public property management | 23 | Creation of youth policies at the local level |
| 7 | Wastewater and solid waste management | 24 | Disaster and crisis management |
| 8 | Inspection control in various areas | 25 | Social policies, social inclusion, activities of welfare institutions |
| 9 | Managing human teams, team work techniques, conflict resolution etc. | 26 | Building relationships with citizens, public consultations, collaboration etc. |
| 10 | Ethics and anti-corruption measures | 27 | Gender mainstreaming in LSG |
| 11 | HR management, HR policy | 28 | Management of preschool and primary school system |
| 12 | Agriculture and rural development | 29 | Work time management and organization of work |
| 13 | Inclusion of Roma | 30 | Activities of cultural institutions, implementation of cultural policy |
| 14 | Strategic management of the local government unit | 31 | Protection of classified information and personal data |
| 15 | European integration | 32 | Collaboration with nongovernmental organizations |
| 16 | Urban/spatial planning and management of real estate property | 33 | Protection of minority rights |
| 17 | General administrative procedures | | |



CHAPTER

6

RECOMMEN DATIONS FOR TRAINING

Research conducted within the TNA has shown that one cannot talk about a systematic approach to development of skills and building of knowledge among LSGs personnel in Serbia. Dispersed practices, absence of effective formal requirements for the development of professional competences and organisational limitations at the level of municipal administration are certainly not conducive to a consistent training policy. Thus, municipal employees' experience of training is limited and their actual motivation to take part in formal training remains low.

The lack of skills and knowledge of staff at the LSGs level is widely understood as a key factor hindering the LSGs' performance. Therefore, as a rule, local leaders (mayors and heads of administration) do appreciate the need to improve professional qualifications – both their own and those of their subordinates.

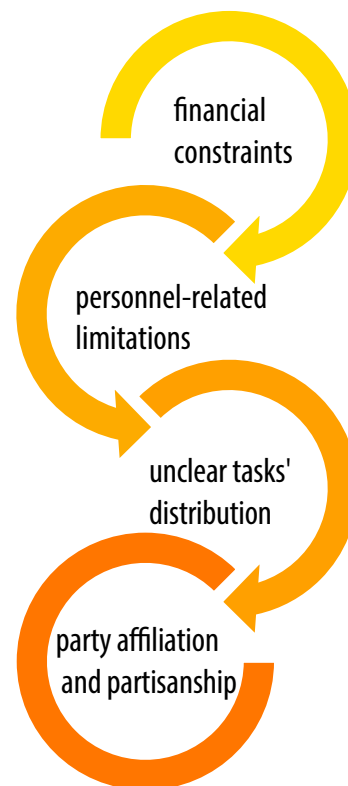
However, they also point out a few problems:

- ☑ financial constraints combined with constant pressure related to various investment needs (or, in smaller municipalities, provision of basic services) often prevent resources from being allocated to competence building of local government staff.
- ☑ personnel related limitations (staff shortages, lack of motivation for professional development) prevent officials from being intensively engaged in training. Work at the LSGs is not considered as an attractive employment in terms of remuneration or career prospects but only in terms of job stability.
- ☑ unclear distribution of tasks and competences among different government levels precludes deliberate, strategic, longterm human resource planning
- ☑ pervasiveness of party affiliation and partypartisanship at local level results in unclear patterns of employment practices as well as career development configurations.

Competences of local governments remain limited, strategic planning continue to be donor driven, and competence building efforts persist to be scattered and not coordinated. Therefore, there is a basic need to focus on narrowly defined, specialised training for officials, i.e. trainings that render immediate, direct outcomes, often related to compensation of knowledge deficiencies associated with changing legal regulations.

Given the fact that the TNA revealed some reluctance among employees of LSGs about professional training and that the systemic opportunities to build a career in local administration are heavily restricted, it is advisable to consider the introduction of a general, legallybased requirement (even a limited one) for local administration to undertake systematic professional training.

Participation in formalised events, which help staff to build their professional competence, could be associated with a kind of “performance bonus” mechanism whereas the annual bonus for local officials could depend on their participation in training activities.



6.1 SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES – GENERAL NEEDS

TNA seems to justify the following recommendations as to areas of training for the staff of LSGs:

- ☑ **Effective management of municipality requires good leadership. Staff will be more motivated to learn and develop competencies if tasks are clearly assigned and performance is monitored.**

↳ Leadership skills of mayors and other high ranked staff should be increased to introduce systemic changes in LSGs. This will allow to use existing resources in more effective way – through delegation of responsibilities provide better

TRAINING needed: leadership skills; modern management methods, organization of LG office

- ☑ **A key to a successful development of LSGs in each circumstance is a skilled and professional staff.** Survey results indicate that negative perceptions on LSGs performance are linked (among few other things) to negative assessment of competencies among

some employees. Moreover, it seems, that most LSGs' managers hold replacement of existing staff, and changes in existing legislation (particularly with regards to financing of LSGs and property management) as much more efficient solution to LSGs' lack of capacity, than capacity building through trainings. Therefore, municipalities should develop effective human resource management capacities.

- ↳ Training should be directed to strategic staff in local governments. It should be concerned with the importance of human resources management, its modern techniques and principles. The idea of local government as a learning organization should be explained and promoted.

TRAINING needed: Modern human resources management methods

- ☑ **LSGs Units should undergo performance appraisals to help assess quality of service provision and determine existing training needs on a regular basis.** Governance indicators are now used across Europe to monitor performance of local service providers, including public entities. They are widely used as tools for strategic planning, conducting development dialogue, allocating external assistance, and influencing foreign direct investment. Having identified problems related to performance one can decide upon appropriate solutions – including improvement of competences of those responsible.
- ↳ Effective, sustainable performance monitoring systems should be introduced to improve the performance of LSGs. These should include well established procedures, sets of indicators, benchmarking practices, etc.

TRAINING needed: Performance management

- ☑ **Operation of LSGs should be depoliticized to increase effectiveness and efficiency of operations and increase motivation of the staff to improve qualifications and develop professional skills.**

- ↳ Transparency of operations of LG should be substantially increased. Clear and effective procedures for recruiting, promoting and dismissing staff should be developed and introduced.

TRAINING needed: Transparency and anticorruption policies; ethical conduct

- ☑ **Local governments should assume a more active role in the promotion and encouragement of local investments.** It should be directed at securing more sustainable economic development of municipalities. New promotional techniques should be developed and better communication with potential investors should be assured.

- ↳ Training should increase understanding of the importance of local promotion as a necessary part of sustainable local development strategy.

TRAINING needed: local economic development, projects management, revenue collection, promotional techniques, etc.

6.2 CURRENT INEFFICIENCIES

IMMEDIATE NEEDS

As far as immediate training needs are concerned, very little information on the actual training needs was obtained during conducted interviews. Most of the respondents could identify areas but hardly the topics or training methods that would be the most convenient. Survey respondents indicated several training postulates or expectations. What came as a strong winner on the list was the training related to development and management of projects followed by issues related to implementation of eadministration and use of IT tools.

However, as mentioned above, one needs to bear in mind, that actual training needs often deviate from openly expressed postulates. This happens for many reasons, such as lack of awareness that competencies are insufficient, erroneous identification of problem causes, or a stereotypical approach adopted when selecting training topics.

Confrontation of training postulates mentioned by LSGs' representatives with the problem areas declared as existing in municipalities, allowed to identify a group of immediate training needs.

Data analysis has shown that such training needs (at least in relation to the problems faced by LGUs) relate to:

audit, internal audit, management of audit

local economic development and investments attraction

There is also a group of topics, which were rarely mentioned but are directly connected with problems affecting the performance of LSGs, such as:

public property management

wastewater and solid waste management

ethics and anti corruption measures

inspection control in various areas

inclusion of Roma

Finally, there are topics, which were often mentioned but are not necessarily connected to widespread problems affecting LSGs:

- ☑ implementation of eadministration and computerization of the office
- ☑ managing the finances of the local government unit, local taxes and fees, financial and accounting issues
- ☑ managing human teams, team work techniques, conflict resolution, etc.
- ☑ general administrative procedures
- ☑ public procurement and tender procedures

The fact that the abovementioned topics are not commonly acknowledged as sources of everyday problems in the functioning of LSGs, does not mean that such training postulates voiced by

Heads of Administration should be neglected: at least in some municipalities they are perceived as needed and important. In others, such needs may not exist or may not be recognized.

The scope of training needs revealed in the study indicates that there is a strong need to undertake systematic actions and make sure that efforts are not dispersed, as this could generate problems with the coordination of training support.

Research findings indicate that one organization enjoys recognition among local government staff: The Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, which is the most important training provider for LSGs in Serbia. As future institutional backup in the organisation of training for local staff remains an open question, the potential of SCTM should be seriously considered in any policy making decisions.

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English edition

Publisher

Council of Europe, Office in Belgrade

Španskih boraca 3, 11070 Belgrade

www.coe.int/belgrade

© Council of Europe, 2017.

This publication has been prepared within the framework of the Joint project „Human Resources Management in Local Self – Government“ funded by the European union and Council of Europe, and implemented by Council of Europe.

The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official position of the European union and/or Council of Europe.

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