
Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



Implemented
by the Council of Europe



TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN GREECE

Report by:

Cezary Trutkowski
Nikolaos-Komninos Hlepas

Council of Europe Experts



CENTRE OF EXPERTISE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

© 2018

Table of contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
About this report.....	3
Report's highlights.....	3
1. Introductory comments.....	8
1.1. Methodology.....	9
Survey fieldwork.....	9
In-depth interviews with local government leaders.....	12
2. Local government system in Greece.....	14
2.1. Local government reforms.....	14
2.2. Basic legal framework for local government.....	17
2.3. Competence, powers and services of local authorities.....	19
2.4. Municipal authorities.....	20
2.5. Human Resources.....	22
2.6. Local finances.....	23
3. Assessment of local government reforms.....	25
3.1. Constraints of the autonomy of local government units.....	25
Lack of adequate financing for the tasks entrusted in local governments.....	26
Extensive bureaucracy and overwhelming controls over the activities of local government institutions.....	27
Limited freedom of local governments in shaping their own human resources policies.....	28
3.2. No consideration for the special needs of local communities in the amalgamation process.....	29
3.3. Blurred responsibilities and problems in the relations between LGUs and the central government.....	30
3.4. Weaknesses in the law-making process concerning the local government.....	33
4. Local living conditions and development priorities.....	35
4.1. Social expectations towards local government.....	35
4.2. Operations of local government in times of crisis.....	36
4.3. Developmental priorities at local government units and their implementation.....	38
4.4. Strategic management at the local level.....	43
4.5. Collaboration between local governments, significant stakeholders.....	45
5. Local management and the operations of local government offices.....	48
5.1. Assessment of the performance of local administration.....	48
5.2. Provision of public services by local governments.....	50
5.3. Problems in managing local government units.....	53
5.4. Staffs' competence shortages and HR management practices.....	56
5.5. Evaluation of the quality of officials' work.....	60

5.6. The attractiveness of employment and officials' motivation to work in the local administration	63
6. Training experience and needs.....	75
6.1. Participation in training	79
6.2 Training needs and postulates.....	86
Training requests.....	86
Training needs	90
7. Recommendations.....	94
List of References	96
Appendixes	97
Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire (CAWI)	98
Appendix 2: Survey questionnaire (short – paper version for conferences).....	112
Appendix 3: Interview guidelines	115

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About this report

The Training Needs Analysis of Local Government in Greece was conducted by the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform of the Council of Europe in the framework of the European Union – Council of Europe Technical Assistance Project on Institutional Enhancement for Local Governance in Greece.

This report utilises the standard methodology described in Chapter 1 and provides a concise analysis of interviews and collected material from permanent and political staff. The content of the report however, does not necessarily reflect the opinions held by the Ministry of the Interior. Furthermore, the policy recommendations proposed by the experts could facilitate the policy options but they do not necessarily coincide with those of the Ministry.

In conclusion, the proposed set of actions could be considered within the framework of a possible long-term National Training Strategy which the Ministry could utilise in the formulation and implementation of public policy.

Report's highlights

The study participants were unanimous in saying that the Kallikratis reform fundamentally shaped the activities and the role of local government in Greece. However, the assessment of the outcomes of the reform by the participants of the study was not unequivocal: while some of the interviewees praised the achieved positive results, others pointed out more negative outcomes.

Research results indicate that three broadly understood constraints on local governance are particularly onerous for local government officials:

- a) Lack of adequate financing for the tasks entrusted in local governments - the Kallikratis reform coincided with the financial crisis and, as a result, local governments were deprived of a large part of their revenues;
- b) Excessive inspection procedures applicable to the operations of local government institutions: constraints imposed as a result of the crisis significantly undermined the freedom of local government units¹. The unclear division of powers between different levels of local government and between the local government and central institutions is a factor that contributes to bureaucratisation;
- c) Reduced decision-making powers in the management of human resources. The newly created units have to face new challenges created by the reform. In addition, some employees' competences overlap in the new circumstances.

¹Local Government Units refers to "Όργανισμοί Τοπικής Αυτοδιοίκησης" ("bodies of local self-administration") covering both tiers of local government (municipalities and regions).

Some respondents also pointed out that when the structure of the new administrative division was being defined; excessive importance was attached to the reduction of the number of local government units, without paying sufficient attention to the local spatial, social and economic peculiarities. Island municipalities face particular challenges: unwillingness of staff to remain, high costs of living and travelling, refugee crisis. In the perception of all island mayors that have been interviewed, Athens and Brussels would "*still be blind for peculiarities of island areas*".

Most respondents agreed that the most urgent problems now are fiscal stress and dramatic decrease of state grants. They generally shared the belief that Mayors are expected to create socio-economic development to an extent which is not allowed by the tools they have at their disposal.

Mitigating the social repercussions of the economic crisis and reducing the consequences of uncontrolled influx of immigrants is practically the most important task currently carried out by the local government in Greece. As said by one respondent, local government "is a shock absorber". The crisis strengthened and mobilised local government employees, at least in some units. It revealed their managerial skills and confirmed their commitment to public affairs.

According to the results of the research the imposed extended controls as well as the lack of adequate funding for the tasks entrusted to local governments, the blurred responsibilities between public institutions at various levels, and the volatility of regulations are not conducive to stable planning of local development and restrict the development potential of local communities.

Most respondents expressed positive opinions about the living conditions in their respective local government units (80.3% of positive ratings in total). The assessment of the quality of life varied, depending on the size of the local community and its location. Representatives of smaller units (many of which were located in the mountains or on the islands) often opted for negative ratings when assessing the living conditions in their respective localities.

The comparison of the findings from two independent surveys reveals significant differences in development priorities identified by mayors and other respondents. The former more strongly emphasised the importance of infrastructural investments while the latter were more likely to pay attention to problems in the social sphere and the need to improve the quality of work in administrative structures.

The perceived budgetary priorities seem largely dependent on social expectations. Respondents emphasised the need to support tasks in areas where the most serious deficits exist (roads and sewerage infrastructure), as well as those which directly translate into a higher quality of life in conditions of economic crisis (e.g. social assistance or support for entrepreneurs).

Deficits in basic infrastructure and the limited resources available to local governments mean that the reflection on the long-term objectives of local authorities is not widespread: the findings suggest that strategic planning in terms of sustainable development is not particularly widespread. Things are different at the regional level, mainly due to the fact that Regions are responsible for development planning and the management of EU funds.

The vast majority of the local government units participating in the study had not carried out any systematic assessment of administration performance in the past three years. The respondents admitted that their municipalities generally do not apply the tools that would enable some real reflection on the quality of services provided. This perspective should be borne in mind when we look at the generally positive assessment of the performance of local administration reported in the surveys.

Most of the respondents believe that local governments currently perform quite well when it comes to the execution of their primary responsibilities and they engage in active and socially appreciated work despite the difficulties.

Positive opinions about the provision of social services by local institutions (helping the poor and preventing social exclusion) were accompanied by more favourable perceptions of the municipalities as a place to live. By contrast, services provided in the sphere of culture (which were generally rated highest), as well as the protection of minority rights and the provision of administrative services had relatively little impact on the assessment of the local living conditions.

The survey respondents built a hierarchy of factors affecting the management of local government units. Both groups of respondents (mayors and employees at other levels) unanimously indicated inadequate funding for the tasks entrusted to local government as the most important issue. The other two most problematic issues are understaffing and frequently changing laws and regulations.

Increased employment was mentioned by the respondents as the most important element which, in their opinion, could improve the performance of local administration. But staff shortages have mostly a competence-related dimension: many local government units have sufficient numbers of staff but suffer from insufficient staffs' qualifications. The challenges related to competence gaps were mentioned quite frequently: the vast majority of the respondents admitted facing them in their own local administration.

The management has no formal tools that would enable the implementation of a rational, conscious human resources policy: promoting the outstanding employees, strengthening the staff's commitment or shaping the right approach to the performance of work duties.

The attractiveness of employment in local government is generally determined by such factors as employment stability (this factor strongly prevails over all others), proximity between the place of residence and place of work, and the ability to maintain a balance between career and private life. These elements can hardly be seen as driving factors for development: under the existing conditions, the hierarchy indicates the officials' need to maintain quiet, stable, and probably not very demanding jobs. This can hardly be treated with surprise: because of the financial crisis any job which brings regular pay, even if not necessarily high, enables the respondents to maintain a minimum sense of security. Among factors which were irrelevant for the attractiveness of local government jobs the respondents usually mentioned the opportunity to receive additional benefits and opportunities for pay rises.

Research results indicate that in the vast majority of LGU no staff assessment is conducted. Since the offices do not usually utilise formal mechanisms to monitor the quality of work, managers sometimes have little knowledge about the actual performance of subordinate staff and administrative units.

The respondents highly rated the officials' integrity in performing their work duties and the quality of service provided to residents by local government offices. Among the most important problems, the respondents identified the absence of teamwork skills and the lack of innovative approach to problem solving. Based on the collected data it can be concluded that officials work relatively well within the established procedures but their approach to work is mainly routinized. This may be due to the fact, that the legal framework does not offer incentives for staff motivation.

Personal ambitions of employees seem to be the most important drive and motivation for training and additional degrees. Local politicians (mayors and councilors) do not seem to be sufficiently

motivated for their own training. Some local politicians were particularly critical with the current model of training which would simply respond to subjective needs and aspirations of the employees themselves and not to real needs of the municipal service.

According to the leaders participating in the interviews, local governments lack mechanisms to develop the competences of their staff. Up to some very rare exceptions, no staff training plans are developed and no training needs analysis is performed. Training is based upon personal initiatives of employees and directors. Some mayors would be oriented mostly to day-to-day management: they seem not to be aware of the importance of special knowledge and skills and they underestimate the added value of training. It was stressed that some leaders were distrustful about the proposed training initiatives or training needs reported by the staff.

Some local leaders are willing to develop their own strategies but it seems that they do not have the resources to do that. The need for a comprehensive pattern and a toolkit for the elaboration of training strategies is obvious.

The respondents from 7% of the local government units admitted that their employees did not participate in any training in 2015. In further 6% of the units the respondents had no information on this subject. This means that in 13% of LGUs training activities are not undertaken at all or they are very rare.

The most popular training courses in 2015 focused on topics such as public procurement and tendering procedures.

Very few local government units were involved in direct exchange of experience such as forums of local government officials or study visits. Bearing in mind the very limited cooperation between local governments one should point out that there is untapped potential and untapped benefits that may derive from sharing best practices in the provision of public services and implementation of tasks by local governments. Data analysis confirms quite clearly that there is a relationship between the actual performance of the administration and the participation in an exchange of experience.

More than a half of local government units spent less than EUR 2,000 on training in 2015 (slightly over EUR 3,200 on average). The respondents admitted that the needs are greater than the means they can spend on that purpose.

The respondents in both surveys agreed about the most desirable training topics: in the first place, they usually indicated the need for improved qualifications in the organisation of work at the local government office.

However, certain differences are visible as regards other areas of competence. Mayors were more likely to mention the need to improve qualifications in the implementation of e-government, local economic development and investment planning, as well as project management. Other respondents mentioned the need for human team management training as the second most important area.

Based on respondents' statements, the training areas listed in the questionnaire can be grouped under four main headings:

1. Training postulated by numerous local government officials on topics which do not correspond with the most commonly mentioned problems in the management of local government units:

- ↳ Work organisation at the office and development of digital competences.
2. Training postulated quite often by the respondents and related to the most common problems in the work of the offices:
 - ↳ Human team management, teamwork techniques, conflict resolution and local economic development.
 3. Training postulated by a relatively small group of the respondents on topics corresponding with the most commonly mentioned management problems:
 - ↳ Language training, development of competence in integration policies applicable to the Roma community, local transport, management of road infrastructure, and the creation of youth policies at the local level.
 4. Other training topics: mentioned rarely, and unrelated to problems in the operation of local government offices.

The second group comprises those areas of competence which should be prioritised, in view of both the reported demands and the management problems identified by this study. Under the existing circumstances of operation of Greek local government bodies, as presented in this report, training in the areas classified into this group should be recommended.

The key to improving the operations of local authorities and to release the unused potential can lie in investments in developing human capital. However, as a prerequisite for the success of such projects, it is essential to develop systemic solutions resulting in increased levels of job satisfaction in local government bodies.

A potential revision of the law, in accordance with constitutional provisions, where leaders would receive more freedom in HRM (including flexibility to hire staff and/or provision of incentives), could boost the employees' motivation to perform their work effectively and efficiently.

1. Introductory comments

The diagnosis of training needs helps to identify the discrepancies between the knowledge held by potential training/education participants and the knowledge which is desirable for some specific reasons. When describing the status quo, we usually refer to the realities of potential training participants (e.g. local government officials), presenting their way of working, identifying issues they grapple with, or identifying the imperfections in how their tasks are carried out. In a nutshell, we present a description of the situation, an analysis of professional practices of a specific group of people (local officials, local government leaders, councillors etc.).

This kind of analysis may produce two types of conclusions:

- it may identify beliefs relating to the training needs among the potential target audience, which sometimes are accompanied by the desire to meet those needs, or
- it may identify the desirable level of knowledge or skills among specific groups of stakeholders, i.e. indicate the extent to which educational efforts may contribute to achieving a desirable state of things.

Therefore, we can speak about two approaches in the planning of training activities: on the one hand, we are dealing with the identification of training-related expectations and, on the other hand, we can speak of a prescriptive definition of needs related to the development of competencies. Worth remembering is that only in some cases the training expectations voiced by local officials will be identical with the development needs of their respective local government units.

Therefore, an effective analysis of training needs should cover two parallel processes:

- conducting an analysis of the legal and institutional context of operation for local administration, and
- identifying training expectations among key stakeholders in the local government sector.

This means that exploration of factors which determine efficiency, efficacy and effectiveness of local government, should incorporate the following key elements into the analysis:

- the scope and nature of decentralisation in the sphere of government;
- institutional, systemic solutions which influence the operation of local administration;
- the political context and its impact on the operations of local government; and
- social considerations which influence the condition of local government (the condition of civil society, citizens' readiness to take part in public life, participation in the elections etc.).

The nature of the factors presented above, which largely determines the outcome of the training needs analysis, indicates that two core analytical processes must be implemented, namely:

- social research among representatives of the most important groups of officials and local leaders; and
- expert work covering the diagnosis of legal and institutional background for the operations of local government.

This report refers to both of the aforementioned elements. It discusses the circumstances under which the territorial government in Greece operates and presents the findings from extended social research conducted among key groups representing the local government in Greece.

1.1. Methodology

The research comprised two components:

- two surveys: one addressed to mayors and one web-based conducted among local government units at the municipality level;
- individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with local government leaders.

The surveys and the interviews were conducted in late 2016.

Survey fieldwork

The data were obtained from two sources. The first one was a survey questionnaire distributed during regional conferences and meetings of local government leaders (its results are presented in this report on charts labelled "short questionnaire"). A total of 112 questionnaires were returned, mostly by mayors or individuals acting as deputy mayors (in total, 78.8% of the respondents completing the paper questionnaire). The coordination of data collection in this case was undertaken by the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government (hereinafter "E.E.T.A.A.").

The second survey was performed using the CAWI technique (*Computer Assisted Web Interviews*), with a questionnaire sent to all local government units at municipal level in Greece. Its results are presented in this report on charts marked as "long questionnaire" or "CAWI survey").

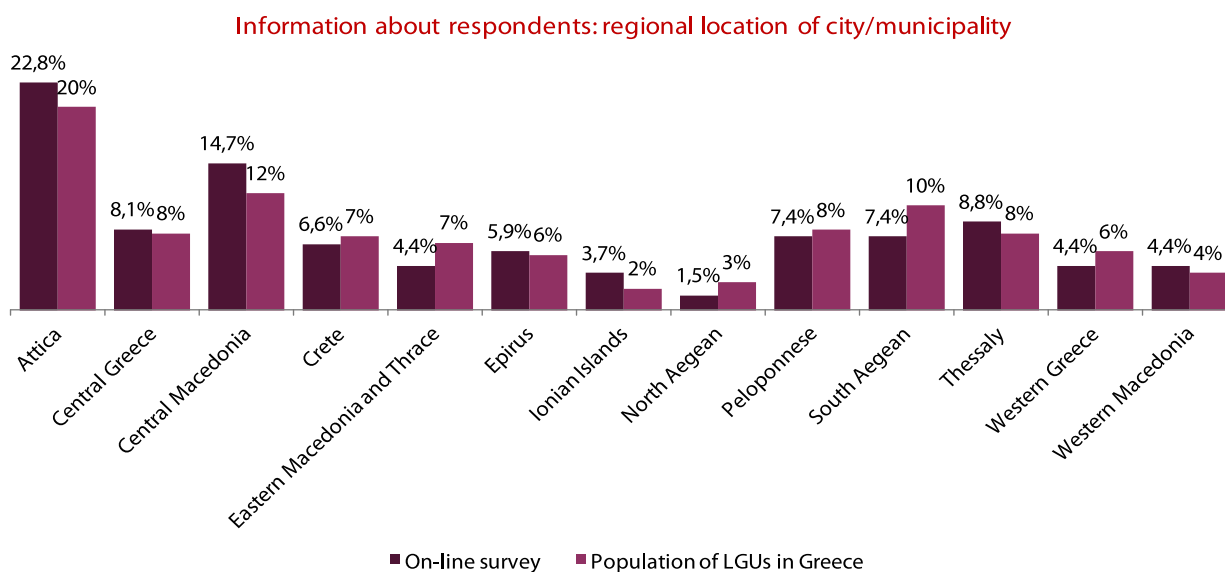
The questionnaires were opened in 241 local offices but not all of them proceeded to complete the survey. Following multiple reminders and an intensive promotional campaign co-ordinated by regional EETAA's offices, the following were returned:

- 157 fully completed questionnaires, and
- 85 questionnaires at different stages of progress towards completion.

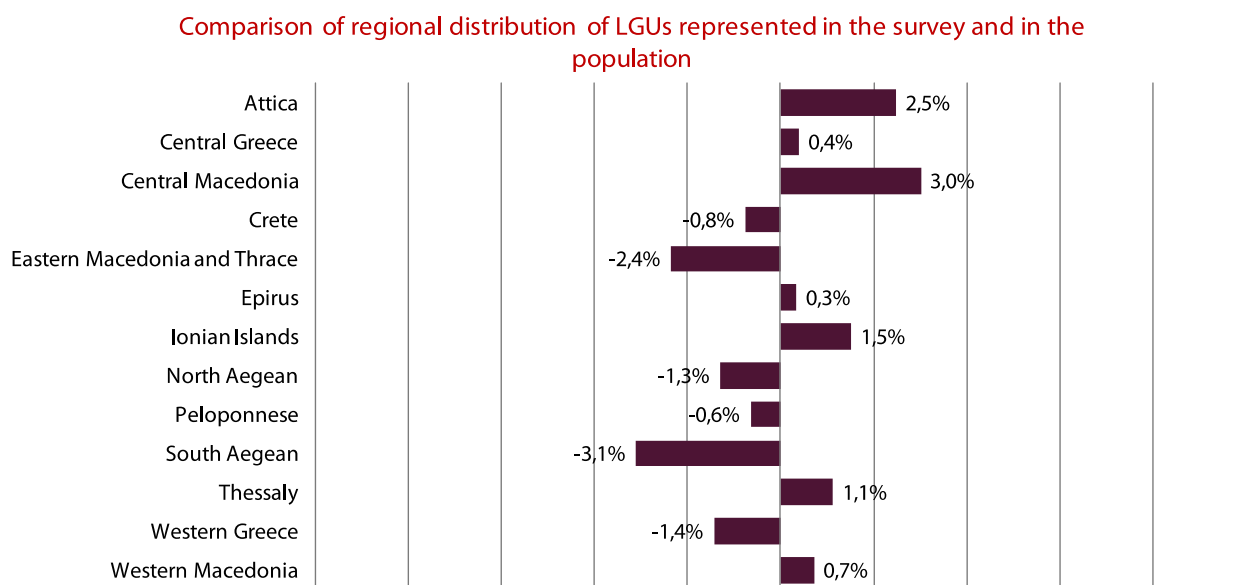
Finally, 183 questionnaires were qualified for analysis, which represents 56.3% of the population of local government units (hereinafter LGU) in Greece.

Data analysis has shown that the representation of local government units in the resultant data file is largely congruent with the characteristics of the population of those LGUs in Greece.

In the chart below the comparison between the distribution of LGU in each region as represented in the actual population and in the survey is presented. The chart illustrates that the distribution of the number of surveyed municipalities and the actual number on LGU in each region remains close (the first column presents the % of municipalities participating in the survey from each region as a percentage of the whole country and the second column shows the percentage of the municipalities in each region as a percentage of the total number of municipalities in Greece). Based on the achieved results it can be concluded that the survey results correspond well to the reality.



The graph below illustrates the differences in the distribution of the number of local government units between the sample and the total population (by region). For example, based on research results, the number of local government units from Central Macedonia in the studied sample is by 3% higher than in the total population (this region is slightly overrepresented), whereas the respective figure for the South Aegean region is by 3.1% smaller (this region is slightly underrepresented). In simple terms, one can assume that these data indicate the range of a potential measurement error: based on data analysis, the measurement error can be assumed to stand at +/- 3%.

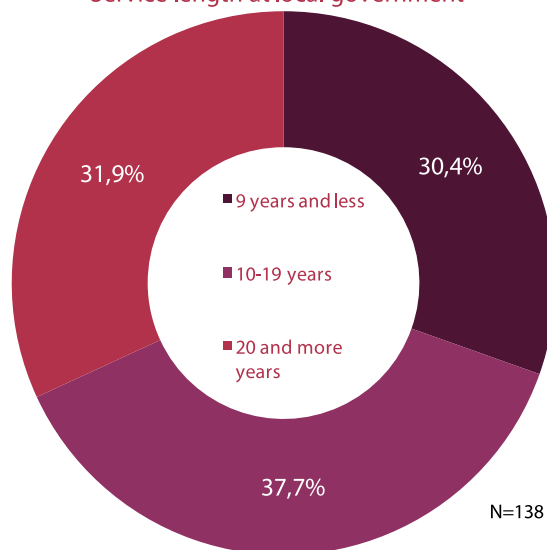


As mentioned above, the implemented research relied on a differentiated approach to data collection. A verification-based model was adopted, where the mayors and other individuals employed at local government units were asked about the same things. As already mentioned, mayors were asked to complete a short questionnaire (distributed at different conferences and meetings), while the other participants completed an online questionnaire. This approach was applied in order to confront and verify opinions expressed by various stakeholders. The main

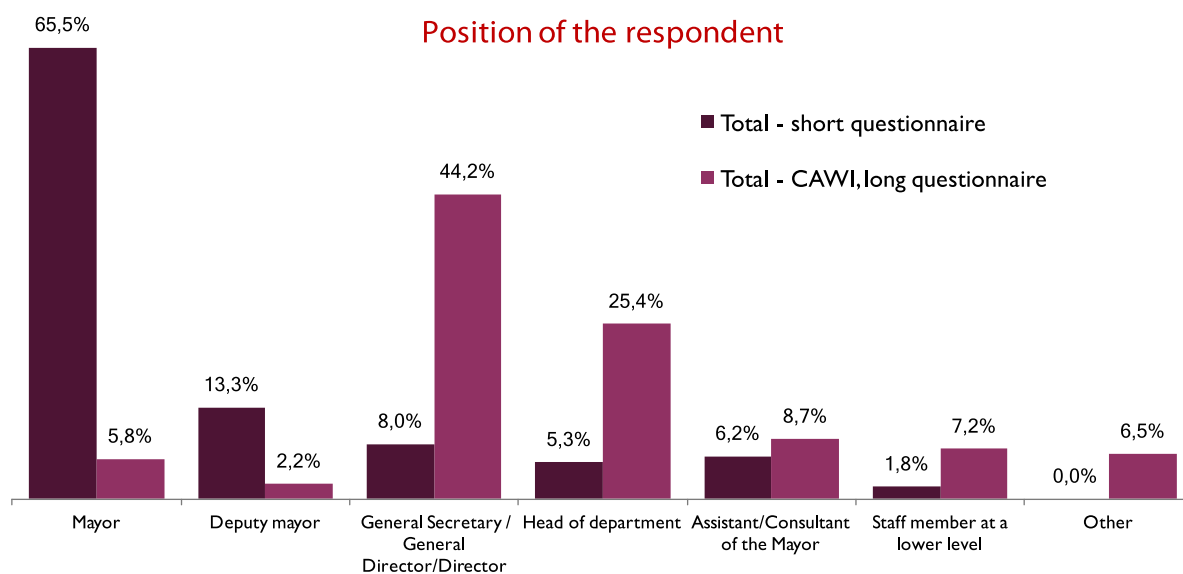
differences in perspectives are discussed further in the report. The chart below shows the respondent categories in each study (a short questionnaire and an online questionnaire).

The CAWI survey covered mostly high-level local administration officials (mayors represent only 5.8% of the respondents who completed the web survey). It should be emphasised that those respondents have certain characteristics in common: many years of experience in public administration and work in a position involving considerable knowledge about the operations of specific local government units.

Information about respondents (on-line survey) – Service length at local government

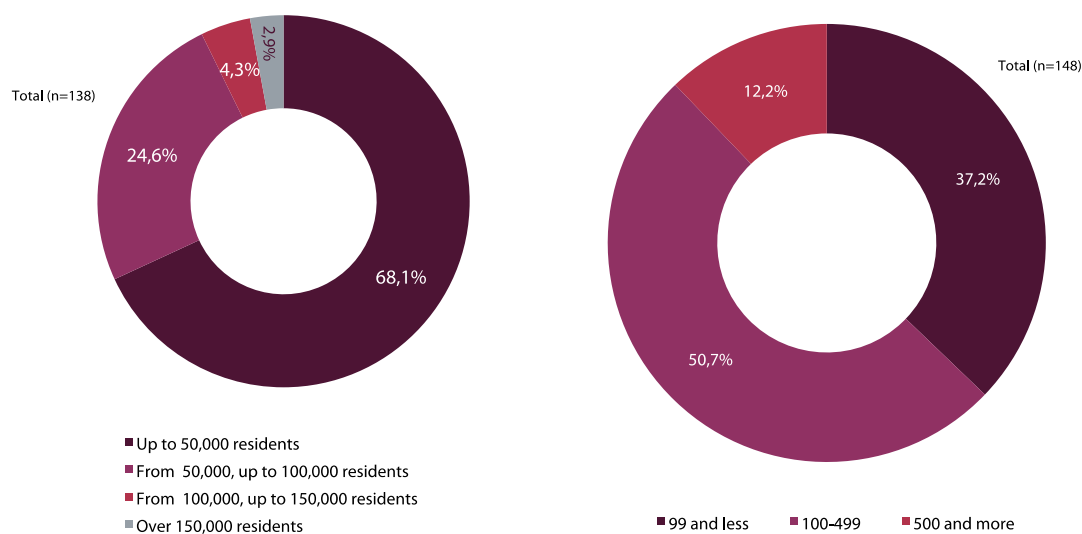


Position of the respondent



In most cases, the respondents represented local government units without a special administrative status, with no more than 50,000 residents.

Information about respondents: size of local government unit



In-depth interviews with local government leaders

Training needs analysis in Greece included also a qualitative study as an important component that would complement, cross-check, deepen and refine the quantitative analysis. From the methodological point of view, the qualitative investigation opted for both semi-structured interviews and focus groups with selected actors and stakeholders that helped to:

- identify key problems associated with lack of competence and/or skills;
- outline the scope and type of training needs, and explore the attitudes;
- assess the usability of previous training experience.

While in-depth interviews should record knowledge and experience (but also the lack thereof...) of the interviewee and disclose his/her personal perceptions and attitudes, focus groups should create an open forum and trigger a lively debate among participants. This allows to cross-check and balance different arguments and opinions, perceptions and positions of different (and sometimes even opponent...) actors and stakeholders, also bringing together those who are sometimes interacting in the real world of administrative and municipal practice.

There were, in total, fourteen interviews conducted in: Thessaloniki (31.10.2016), Larissa (31.10 and 1.11.2016), Athens (1.11, 2.11, 3.11 and 16.11.2016) and Rhodes (11.11.2016) with five Mayors, four Vice-Mayors, one Municipal General Secretary (CEO), one Chairman of Regional Union of municipalities, two representatives of regional unions of municipalities, one Regional Governor, one Regional Vice-Governor and one Director General (27.12.2016) of the state Supervision Authority at the Deconcentrated Administration (where also other civil servants of the Directory participated).

In total, three focus group sessions were organised, one in North Greece, one in Athens and one in the island municipality of Rhodes (Dodecanese, Southern Aegean).

- One Focus Group in Thessaloniki with five participants from local government (1 municipal CEO, 2 Municipal Councillors, 2 Advisors/Consultants of Regional Union of Municipalities).
- The Second Focus Group in Athens with four participants from local government (1 Vice Mayor, 1 Director of island municipality, 1 Director of suburban municipality, 1 municipal CEO)
- A Third, Special Focus Group for islands in Rhodes with four participants from local government (2 Mayors, 1 Vice-Mayor and representatives of the South Aegean Regional Union of Municipalities).

2. Local government system in Greece

2.1. Local government reforms

Following accession to the European Community (1981) a number of decentralisation reforms were conducted in Greece. In 1994 state prefectures were “municipalised” as a whole: posts of prefects (“nomarchs”) and prefectural councils became directly elected, while funds, personnel and most of the responsibilities of the former state-prefectures were transferred *in toto* to the newly established second tier. Soon afterwards, “deconcentrated” state administration was re-grouped at a higher level by establishing thirteen Regions (“Peripheries”) covering many former prefectures’ tasks.

By the late nineties, the State tried to cope with low efficiency in local government and promoted the “Capodistrias Plan” on amalgamations. The total number of municipalities was reduced by 80%. This percentage however would be even higher considering that the metropolitan areas of Athens and Thessaloniki (which did not undertake amalgamation process) are included in the calculation. The average population of the municipalities increased from 1,761 to 9,932 and the average surface from 22,65 km² to 127,74 km². While the average number of municipalities in each prefecture fell from 116,5 to 20,66 units.

TABLE 1: Number of prefectures and municipalities in Greek state regions (2008)

STATE REGIONS “Peripheria”	2d tier: PREFECTURES “Nomarchia”	1 st tier: MUNICIPALITIES “Demos” or “Koinotis”
East. Macedonia- Thrace	2	55
Central Macedonia	7	134
West. Macedonia	4	61
Epirus	4	76
Thessaly	4	104
Ionian Islands	4	39
West. Greece	3	74
Central Greece	5	95
Attica	3	124
Peloponnese	5	107
North Aegean	3	36
South Aegean	2	58
Crete	4	71
SUMS	50	1034

Source: Ministry of Interior (2008)

Many new municipalities still seemed, however, to be too small to exercise additional competences (local police, minor harbours etc.) which were therefore transferred to the first tier of local government. Metropolitan areas that had been exempted from amalgamations were suffering from on-going fragmentation into a large number of municipalities (Major Athens included more than 120 municipalities). Second tier local authorities were too small and too weak to support municipalities and overtake supra-local functions (especially concerning local development projects), whereas both tiers deprived financial resources and specialised staff.

By 2010, a new law was adopted. It radically changed structure and operation of local governance. The 'Kallikratis' reform promoted compulsory merging of local government units from 1034 to 325 (with an average population of 33,8 thousands, one of the biggest in Europe - only 87 municipalities remained unchanged), while the second tier has been 'moved' up to the regional level (13 Regions). At the same time, seven "Deconcentrated" Administrations were set-up ("Apokentromeni Diikesi"). The new reform was the first one including both tiers of local government and deconcentrated state authorities (the "deconcentrated" administrations). Furthermore, territorial consolidation was combined to decentralisation of responsibilities that should have unfolded in three successive waves (2011, 2012, and 2013). While the first (2011) and the second (2012) waves of decentralisation were realised according to the initial schedule, the third one (2013) was suspended due to the lack of resources and negative feedbacks from local authorities.

Table 2: Number of Deconcentrated State Administrations², Regions and Municipalities (2011)

DECONCENTRATED ADMINISTRATIONS	REGIONS -- "Peripheria"	MUNICIPALITIES -- "Demos"
Macedonia-Thrace	East Macedonia- Thrace	22
	Central Macedonia	38
West. Macedonia – Epirus	West. Macedonia	12
	Epirus	19
Thessaly- Central Greece	Thessaly	25
	Central Greece	25
Peloponnese-West.Greece-Ionian Islands	Ionian Islands	7
	West. Greece	19
	Peloponnese	26
Attica	Attica	66
Aegean	North Aegean	8
	South Aegean	34
Crete	Crete	24
SUMS	13	325

Source: Ministry of Interior (2011)

²In Greek the term "apokentromeni" (verbatim translated: "decentralized") is used in order to describe peripheral state authorities who are responsible for a certain territory, according to article 101 of the Greek Constitution. The term "decentralisation system" (*apokentrotiko systema*) used in article 101 in the Greek Constitution does not refer to local governments but to deconcentrated peripheral state authorities. In Greek legal terminology "apokentrosis" refers to state authorities, while "topiki autodioikisi" (local self-government) refers local government units, such as the municipalities. Since in many countries (e.g. in France) the term "decentralization" is used also for local government, we are using the term "deconcentrated", "deconcentration" etc., in order to avoid confusion. It is worth mentioning that according to Greek legal doctrine, art. 101 of the Constitution refer to state "deconcentration" («αποκέντρωση»), while art. 102 of the Constitution refers to local government («τοπική αυτοδιοίκηση»). Σ. Επ. Σπηλιωτόπουλος, Εγχειρίδιο Διοικητικού Δικαίου, Νομική Βιβλιοθήκη 2017, Πρ. Δαγτόγλου, Γενικό Διοικητικό Δίκαιο, Σάκκουλας ΑΕ, 2015. Panos Lazaratos, Dezentralization und Kommunalorganization in Griechenland, Deutsches Verwaltungsblatt 1988, 432, N-K. Hlepas, La decentralisation territoriale, in: Epaminondas Spiliotopoulos/ Antonis Makridimitris (eds.), L'Administration Publique en Grèce, Ant.N.Sakkoulas, Athènes 2001, 61.

See also the case law of the Council of State : Συμβουλίτης Επικρατείας: 888/1997 (Τμήμα Στ), 3442/1998 (Ολομέλεια)

Launched on the eve of the crisis, the Kallikratis reform included a package of fiscal restrictions and controls that were further developed through a series of rigid norms and procedures, following the bailout agreements since May 2010. Act 3852/2010 introduced the double entry accounting system for all local governments, while new loans were allowed only for investing or refinancing old loans³. Municipalities were enabled to join a “Special Economic Recovery Program” in case of fiscal problems related to:

- a) incapability of drafting a balanced budget, due to insufficient revenue in the phase of existing liabilities;
- b) annual payments of loan instalments exceeding 20% of annual municipal revenue;
- c) total debt exceeding a pre-defined ratio of annual revenue (60%).

Entering such a “Recovery Program” would provide access to special funding but at the same time it would be combined to hiring restrictions, pre-defined budgeting options and other fiscal measures, as well as strict implementation timeframe and monitoring through a Central Audit Committee at the Ministry of Interior. The obligatory nature of such “Recovery Program” triggered the protests of local government associations (municipal debt was just a small percentage of total public debt: 1,6%).

Furthermore, as a percentage of own municipal revenue, municipal debt exceeded 110% and there were some important big cities facing severe problems of over-indebtedness (Stolzenberg et Al. 2016: 51). Moreover, quite a few municipalities were simply not fulfilling their financial obligations towards private suppliers and contractors. Fiscal policy of 2012, following particular agreements with the Troika (EU, ECB and IMF), included a total sum of nearly 6 billion Euros that would be offered to public entities in order to pay suppliers and contractors and meet their overdue liabilities. In the next months, 197 municipalities (out of 325) applied for this special funding. The central government approved 690 million euros to be transferred to these municipalities, following bilateral agreements on fiscal consolidation. This way, central government also covered part of the unprecedented losses caused by the reduction of general grants (60% decrease in 2013 compared to 2009) that used to make up no less than 70% of total municipal revenue.

In 2012, the new mid-term framework for fiscal strategy (“MTFS” - Ministry of Finance, 2012), required the creation of an Observatory for Local Government fiscal management. This Observatory would have aimed at coordinating the oversight roles of Ministry of Interior over Local Governments, agreeing on targets and securing budget execution accordingly. Furthermore, a new budget process was designed in order to integrate Local Governments within the framework of the MTFS: Local Government budgets were to become subject to a review process by the Observatory. They would have been assessed and adjusted before their adoption in order to be realistic and consistent with MTFS projections. The Observatory was launched through Act 4111/2013 (art. 4) and it is a Committee supported by the Financial Directorate of the Ministry of Interior and consisting of Fiscal Judges and high civil servants as well as representatives of Local Government Associations (from the first and, respectively, the second tier). The Observatory assists the preparation of implementation of balanced budgets by local government authorities. Furthermore it follows up budget implementation and elaborates instructions and mandatory opinions in order to safeguard fiscal

³Recently, art. 73 par. 1 of law 4445/2016 gave to the Loans and Deposits Fund (a public entity) the possibility to finance studies for public works and infrastructures in municipalities through a special escrow account.

consolidation and overall economic viability of local governments. Budget implementation review is conducted on a monthly basis while quarterly operation of the “Consolidated Action Framework” is exerted by monthly and quarterly targets. In case there is a negative variance of more than 10% from quarterly budgetary targets, the Observatory can intervene and provide further instructions and opinions to local government authorities. If budget variance persists during two subsequent quarters and particular measures have not been efficiently implemented, the local authority can be subjected to an obligatory special Consolidation Program. Up to now, there were only two cases: Gortyna in Crete and Salamina in Attica.

Usually, when budget variance is not as dramatic as it was in the aforementioned cases, the Observatory tends to apply “soft” methods of persuasion. No such case has occurred yet. Through the new institutions, central governments managed to acquire comprehensive overview of fiscal situation in all municipalities. Apart from financial consolidation as such, the Observatory also aims at decreasing fiscal performance disparities among the different local governments, imposing unitary standards of budgeting and reporting even pre-defining fiscal policy and fiscal measures in local government. The Observatory appears to be the end product of a long process of gradual uniformity and homogeneity of fiscal management in local government.

2.2. Basic legal framework for local government

The Constitution of 1975 (amended in 2001) does not define the form of local governments at the first or second tier. It refers to “local affairs” for the scope of action. The resources/revenues for local government are not defined and it only provides for “universal and secret suffrage” without defining whether local election should be direct or indirect. The local government is then regulated by supra-national and international legislations.⁴From the international *acquis*, particularly worth noting is the 'European Charter of Local Self-Government' (ECLA) ratified by Act 1850/1989. According to its provisions, *indirect* election can only be introduced for 'executive' organs (Article 3, III) of local government, while the 'right' of local authorities to 'adequate resources of their own' of which they 'dispose freely' and which must be 'proportionate to their competence' (Article 9, I and II) is reinforced. Yet, the Greek state did not ratify the ECLA for the second tier local government and expressed reservations concerning Art. 5 (protection of territorial structure), Art 7 para. 2 (sufficient allowances), Art. 8 para. 2 (supervision) and Art. 10 para. 2 (local government associations).

Constitutional regulations do not put traditional centralistic patterns into question. The State competence for important subjects of public policy (education and health system, environmental protection, physical planning, economic development etc.) is explicitly consolidated by the Constitution (e.g. in Art. 21, 16, 24, 106). As regards regulatory autonomy and taxation, Article 78 of the Constitution safeguards the so called “taxation monopoly” of the Parliament (whose plenary law defines subject, percentages and exemptions of taxation). In addition, Article 102 para. 4 sets the obligation for the state to provide the necessary resources to local government authorities. Furthermore, delegation of legislative power from the parliament to local government authorities is subject to the same rigid substantial and procedural rules that were drawn by the Constitution (Art. 43) for any “organ of the executive function” (e.g. ministers, boards etc.). That means that delegation of legislative power is allowed only by parliamentary act and only if it refers to “special matters” or “subjects of detailed or technical character or of local interest” (Art. 43 par. 2).

⁴Article 28 of the Constitution provides for primacy of these legislations on the domestic law.

Accordingly, case-law of the Greek Council of State (“Symvoulío Epikratias”, the supreme administrative court) underlined that local government competence on “local affairs” (Art. 102 para. 1, see above) refers only to single administrative acts and not to normative acts (local norms of general character). The latter are subject to the restrictions of Art. 43 para. 2 just as they apply to any other organ of the executive function. Furthermore, the Council of the State rejected the delegation of new responsibilities from the state to local government whenever these refer to “important sectors of public policy” assigned by the constitution exclusively to the state (e.g. physical planning, environmental protection, or the status of teachers in public schools).

The aforementioned case law underlines the need to safeguard the distinctive role of Deconcentrated State authorities in implementing state policies at a sub-national scale. In fact, the implementation of major government policies and their adaptation to local circumstances in Greece is entrusted to deconcentrated (verbatim: “decentralised”) state administrations. The Constitution (Art. 101) establishes a state administration system that is based “on deconcentration” and provides the existence, all over the country, of deconcentrated units, in favour of which a presumption of competence for “peripheral” (sub-national but not local) state affairs is being introduced (Art. 101 para. 3). In addition, the administration has to take into account the special circumstances in the islands (101.4).

Likewise, it should be pointed out that the Constitution (following the 2001 amendment) incorporates the commensurability principle (Art. 102 para. 5) so that the State is tasked to transfer the necessary funds whenever local authorities are obliged by law to overtake a new responsibility. Additional emphasis is put on local “fiscal autonomy” (para. 5) and the principle of transparency for local fiscal management is introduced.

State supervision over local authorities is explicitly restricted “exclusively to legality control” and it “should not impede initiative and freedom of action” (Art. 102 para. 4). State supervision is traditionally deemed necessary, not only in order to ensure state unity and harmony of law implementation, but also to protect civil rights from local arbitrariness and prevent litigation. The Constitution includes provisions for disciplinary measures against holders of political posts in local government (e.g. mayors, councillors etc.) in case they are suspended or even “deposed” (fired) by a disciplinary body (whose majority of members are ordinary judges, Art. 102 para. 4). Supervision over local authorities also includes a system of fiscal control. More precisely, the Court of Audit is entitled by the Constitution (Art. 98 para. 1) and Kallikratis reform (Art. 275 and 276) to conduct legality and regularity checks of expenditures.⁵

Local autonomy is further restricted through constitutional provisions regarding human resources management (Art. 103). Personnel with the status of civil servants (so called “permanent personnel”) can only be hired if a corresponding post is provided in the organisation chart (“organigram”) of the local authority (Art. 103 para. 2). Long-term “private law employees” can only be hired as “special scientific” or “technical” or “assistant” personnel. Short-term employment according to private law is only allowed in view of “unexpected” or “urgent” needs. Since the amendment of 2001, control by an independent regulatory authority (the so-called “ASEP” authority) over hiring and contracting of civil servants personnel is being constitutionally guaranteed. Although this means that respective

⁵ Ex ante controls by an Audit Commissioner include payment orders of more than 5.000. An Audit Commissioner is also controlling ex ante municipal contracts for the provision of goods or services and for public works, whenever the value of the corresponding contract exceeds certain limits. According to Art. 278 Act 3852/2010 (as amended by act 4071/2012, art. 9 par. 2, this is the case for contracts exceeding 200.000 euros. Contracts exceeding 500.000 Euros are subject to ex ante control by a group of Auditors from the Court of Audit.

hiring and contracting procedures can require a very long time, this centralised system was deemed necessary in order to tackle *clientelism* and support meritocracy.

Main statutory laws in Greece concerning local government are the Municipal Code (Act 3463/2006 - MC) and the so called “Kallikratis” law (Act 3852/2010 - KL). The Code of Municipal Employees (Act 3584/2007), the laws on hiring employees (Act 2190/1994 as amended) and the law on transparency (Act 3861/2010) are also relevant for local governments.

As regards *protection of local government*, it should be pointed out that in Greece constitutional court and a special court for local authorities are not foreseen by law. However, the question of constitutionality can be addressed by any court. Local authorities can invoke their constitutional and legal status whenever they appeal against state decisions (e.g. decision of state supervision authorities, the audit court, or if they appeal against court decisions at a higher court). Local governments have all the substantial and procedural rights which apply to public law entities. Furthermore, they can refer to fundamental rights applicable to private entities as far as their private property rights are concerned.

2.3. Competence, powers and services of local authorities

Despite the numerous efforts to decentralise the system, centralist tradition still prevails in Greece. Some of the most important public services, such as public education, public health and social protection services are still subject to direct and comprehensive control by the central government. In addition, legislation often goes into great detail.

The “Kallikratis” law (Act 3852/2010) provided island municipalities, mountain municipalities and metropolitan areas with additional responsibilities.⁶ Furthermore, the former “2 years administrative assistance” (fulfilment of some tasks on behalf of other municipalities) provided by bigger municipalities to smaller municipalities was prolonged. In fact, many municipalities do not have the necessary human resources to fulfil demanding tasks (e.g. building supervision, provision of social allowances etc.).

Local government is considered to be an integral part of the public administration. Local authorities are therefore subject to the same legal restrictions and entitled to use the same legal instruments. Law 2690/1999 on “administrative procedure” is also implemented by local authorities. Municipalities and regions are entitled to expropriate private property for reasons of public interest and to impose fines or other sanctions (e.g. for illegal parking). Their acts are subject to state supervision and judicial control by administrative courts.

Heavy structures, lack of specialised personnel and the general legalistic attitude exacerbate problems caused by complex legislation and procedures and affect coordination within and across central and local administrations. ICT technologies and e-government applications could improve communication, as demonstrated by the Municipality of Athens where the introduction of the “electronic protocol” accelerated and improved the implementation of administrative procedures.

Moreover, the common evaluation framework (CEF) and strategic performance management are not utilised.⁷ Law 3230/2004 that introduced objectives-based management was partly implemented in very few municipalities until 2010 (afterwards, this system was abolished by law 852/ 2010 - art.

⁶E.g. island municipalities gained more competences on fishing, transport and small enterprises; while Athens and Thessaloniki were provided with additional competences on transport and environment issues.

⁷Law n. 4111/2013 on financial management by objectives was partly put in action.

267 para. 8 and art. 268 para. 15). The Municipality of Thessaloniki was one of the very few which implemented ISO 9001:2000 concerning quality standards of service and which introduced e-government tools. Some other municipalities have introduced financial management by objectives, according to the law 4111/2012 that introduced the "Observatory".

Municipal Operational Planning was launched in Greece in 2006, while the Kallikratis Law (KL) 3852/2010 turned strategic operational planning into an obligation for all municipalities. The 5-years plans are broken down in annual Action plans reflecting the annual budget and the annual "technical program" (program of constructions and public works prepared on annual basis). It should be stressed that operational planning does not match other kind of plans, such as the annual budget, or the annual technical program. Therefore, many actions which are not included in the annual Operational Plan of Action are realised thanks to extra funding such as special grants, European Programmes etc. Often the 5-years Operational Plans cannot be implemented due to lack of resources. Indeed, the budget of local governments does not depend on decision taken by the municipality. In most of the cases, the local revenue represents less than 30% of total budget.

Strategic planning could support the development of long-term policies that are missing in most of the Greek municipalities where ad hoc decisions prevail. Operational plans should be based on clear goals and performance indicators.

2.4. Municipal authorities

By law, the *municipal council*, the *financial committee*, the *quality of life committee*, the *executive board* and the *mayor* are 'municipal authorities' (Art. 7 KL). Municipalities with more than 2.000 inhabitants are entitled to up to ten *deputy mayors* (Art. 59 KL). These deputy mayors, the mayor and the Chief Executive Officer of the municipality are the members of the executive board, which is the "governmental" organ of the municipality.

The *municipal council* has *general competence* and decides upon all matters apart from those pertaining to the mayor, the executive board, the financial committee and the quality of life committee (Art. 85 KL). However, by a decision of the absolute majority of all members of the municipal council, certain of its responsibilities can be transferred to the quality of life committee (e.g. environmental affairs). Furthermore, the setting up of special *committees* (in which private individuals can serve) is also foreseen by law. The municipal council has a three-member *praesidium* (president, vice-president, and secretary), which it elects among its members for a two years term. While the president is a member of the majority, the vice-president represents the major opposition, and the secretary is from the minor opposition. The municipal councils consist, depending on the size of the population, of 13 - 49 members. Furthermore, amalgamated municipalities are entitled to chairpersons of sub-municipal councils too. The sessions of the municipal councils are public, held at least once a month and when this is sought by the mayor, the financial committee, the quality of life committee, or one-third of the total number of its members. All the decisions of the municipal councils are *enforced* as soon as they are issued (signed), *published* online and sent to the state supervision authority (Supervision Directorate in the corresponding Deconcentrated Administration), which carries out the review of legality.

The *mayor* represents the municipality, executes the decisions of its collegial organs, and is the head of the staff of the municipality (Art. 58 KL). It is worth noting that, although not being a member of the municipal council, the mayor is invited to its meetings, takes part in its debates and may require

the inclusion of specific matters in the agenda. In nearly all municipalities the mayor is 'assisted' by *deputy mayors*. The deputy mayors deal with a particular area of the municipality's activities and exercise duties delegated by the mayor.

The mayor and the members of the municipal council are elected *directly* by the registered residents (and by citizens of the European Union or third-country who reside permanently in the municipality) for a five-year term. Every candidate for the post of mayor leads a list of candidates for all the seats on the municipal council. The law explicitly prohibits candidates who are not on such a list from standing, as well as the use of party, religious, or ethnic symbols in the emblems of the municipal lists. Nevertheless, the political parties officially announce the names of the candidates they support.

The 'successful list' occupies three-fifths of the seats on the municipal councils, while the 'runners-up' are restricted to two-fifths minority. Only the list obtaining absolute majority of all the valid ballot-papers achieves victory in the elections, even at a second 'run-off' between the two lists that received most votes the first time. This electoral system, taken in conjunction with the fact that the mayor, elected for a five-year term, does not need the 'declared' confidence of the majority of the municipal council, gives rise to the conditions for a 'monocracy' of the mayor in the municipality, particularly in cases where s/he has a strong personality.

Within the Regions ("Peripheries") that were newly established as second tier of local governments, horizontal power relations seem to follow traditional patterns. Main regional organs are the head of the region (*Peripheriarch*), the *deputy peripheriarch*, the *regional council* (41-101 members, depending on population size), the *executive board* and the *financial committee* (Art 113 KL). The head of the region (*Peripheriarch*), the deputy peripheriarch in former prefectures and the regional council are directly elected for a five-year term. The electoral arrangements are reflecting the aforementioned system implemented in municipalities (as above) which means that an absolute majority is required for victory, even at a second run-off, between the two leading candidates. Roles and competences of the peripheriarch, the regional council, the executive board and the financial committee follow the patterns of municipalities. Yet, a distinction has to be made concerning directly elected deputies peripheriarch since they are responsible by law for regional services and policies affecting former prefectures. Furthermore the peripheriarch can appoint three additional deputies peripheriarch. All deputies peripheriarch are responsible for a certain section of regional activities, with powers delegated to them by special decision of the peripheriarch. It is also worth mentioning that the regional council can constitute up to two committees and delegate to them respective responsibilities of his own, including decision-making.

Cooperation between both tiers of local government is nowadays explicitly foreseen by law, that provides the voluntary establishment of cross-level "syndicates" ("diavathmidiki sindesmi", Art. 105 KL), which can deal with public works, services provision, fulfilment of concrete tasks or implementation of development programs and projects. The law provides for a wide range of contracting and networking possibilities for municipalities and regions. "Contracts of inter-municipal or cross-level cooperation" imply that one part can offer support to the other part or/and fulfil some of his tasks (Art. 99 KL). Quite common are the so-called "programmatic contracts" (Art. 100, "programmatikes simvasis"), concerning concrete projects (e.g. development projects, constructions etc.) involving local authorities and other public entities (e.g. Universities, public enterprises etc.). Finally, municipalities and regions can also be members of other cooperation schemes such as "networks" on matters of public interest, including with foreign local governments (Art. 101 KL, "diktia").

2.5. Human Resources

The status of civil servants is applied to state and local authorities' employees with no major distinctions (Art. 103 para. 6 of the Constitution). Public sector personnel, including those in central government, deconcentrated administrations and local self-government are classified into categories and grades. Categories are determined according to level of education and professional skills. Grades and posts are not automatically linked, for example grade A (a high grade) employees do not necessarily hold the post of a unit head. Apart from seniority and education level, performance appraisal is an important criterion for career advancement.

In addition to the established civil servants, public services employ people on a contract basis⁸. Officers with private law contracts of indeterminate duration occupy special posts foreseen in the service organisation chart (scientific staff, for example) and enjoy the same benefits of public servants. Employees with private law contracts of fixed duration should be recruited in order to meet temporary, unforeseen or urgent service requirements.

However, in the last decades local governments have been able to hire personnel through their municipal enterprises and on a private contract basis. In the past, temporary municipal employees used to strike in order to obtain private law contracts of indeterminate duration. Through such methods, personnel of municipalities climbed from 25.000 persons in the beginning of the eighties up to 50.000 by the late nineties and further increased until the beginning of the crisis, when it started to decrease (s. table 3 below). It should be pointed out that clientelistic methods did not favour quality-selection of personnel. For this reason, many municipalities lack specialised employees such as engineers, economists and accountants, public health inspectors and computer specialists.

Table 3: Employees of public law entities (only permanent employment)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
State and other Public Law Entities	527.942	508.212	488.235	477.567	476.126
Deconcentrated Administrations	6.786	6.454	6.811	6.790	6.749
Local Governments	94.386	84.541	81.810	82.556	82.796
Total	629.114	599.207	576.856	566.913	565.671

Source: Register of General Government Employment "apografi"

The lack of qualified staff is a problem for most municipalities, despite the implementation of the Kallikratis reform and of several norms encouraging mobility of personnel. At the same time, some municipalities are burdened with employees, mostly with secondary education diploma only that used to work for numerous local entities of private and public law connected to the municipalities (which were abolished by Kallikratis reform. These employees were transferred to the corresponding municipality in agreement with trade unions: law 3852/2010 and law 3463/2006-municipal code). Permanent lack of specialised staff led to the practice of assigning "extra tasks" to certain municipal employees, causing work overloads and blurring responsibilities. Furthermore, lack of qualified staff is also reflected in the selection of heads of units.

⁸Private law contracts of indeterminate or fixed duration; private law contracts for specific tasks.

Municipal human resources management is not only affected by rigid legal restrictions on recruitment procedures. Local government has little freedom in developing a human resources management system of its own. Managerial autonomy on salaries is limited to some temporary contracts' posts of heads of units and regards special allowance granting additional benefits and payment of extra working hours/days.

2.6. Local finances

Local Government revenues and expenditures are very low in Greece. The taxation autonomy of both tiers remains limited. Their total share of public expenditure is one of the lowest in Europe.

Table 4: Local Government Share in Greek GDP

YEAR	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
% GDP	3,4	3,4	3,6	4,1	3,8	3,1	3,3	3,5	3,3	3,4

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> (11.01.2017)

As already mentioned, local government does not enjoy self-sufficiency in terms of taxation (Art. 78 of the Constitution). The Constitution imposes on the State the duty of ensuring the necessary resources (Article 102 V). However, the law provides for own revenues (over which local authorities have some control) and transfers from government, (a percentage of certain national taxes and other special grants) (see table 5).

Table 5: Own resources and state grants

CATEGORY OF REVENUE	2013	2014	2015
OWN RESOURCES	2.745	2.525	2.496
STATE GRANTS	3.072	2.891	2.955
OWN RESOURCES AS PERCENTAGE OF STATE GRANTS	89%	87%	84%

Source: Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Finance⁹

With regard to spending, it should be mentioned that local investment expenditure is mostly funded by the state and from the EU structural funds. Therefore, these financial resources do not always appear in local budgets.

Table 6: Local Government Share in General Government expenditure

⁹In the aforementioned sums, extraordinary subventions from state budget reaching 664 million € in 2013 and 132 million € in 2014 in order to cover the overdue liabilities of local governments have not been included.

YEAR	GENERAL GOVERNMENT	LOCAL GOVERNMENT	LG/GG EXPENDITURE
2006	98.292	7.452	7,6%
2007	109.528	7.900	7,2%
2008	123.041	8.746	7,1%
2009	128.454	9.841	7,7%
2010	118.616	8.692	7,3%
2011	112.525	6.442	5,7%
2012	105.960	6.316	6,0%
2013	112.538	6.385	5,7%
2014	90.014	5.960	6,6%
2015	97.347	5.994	6,2%

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> (11.01.2017)

Municipalities have important assets (town halls, streets, parks and physical infrastructure). Streets, parks and squares are offered to “public use”, while municipal estates (town halls, kindergartens, schools etc.) are considered municipal “public property” with a special legal status. Many municipalities possess important private property (especially real estate, but also stock shares etc.) whose management is set by clear procedures. Respective actions (selling, buying, renting etc.) have to be approved by the municipal council and are subject to further substantial and procedural restrictions (tendering etc.). Second tier local governments do not have similar assets (apart from provincial roads).

3. Assessment of local government reforms

Interviewed stakeholders were unanimous in saying that the Kallikratis reform fundamentally shapes the activities and the role of local government in Greece. In their statements, most of them remarked that the merger of small local government units into greater units was essentially a good solution. They emphasised that small local government units would not be able to cope with the economic crisis, its social consequences and the influx of migrants.

“The utility of Kallikratis became immediately obvious because of the crisis. The crisis brought to the surface some issues, such as control mechanisms, procedures etc., which the smaller Kapodistrian municipalities of Rhodes could not cope with.”

Leaving aside the changes in administrative structures, the overall assessment of the impact of the reform (which was overshadowed by the economic crisis) included some criticisms, especially with regard to the limited autonomy of local government foreseen by the Kallikratis reform. One of the interviewees pointed out that: *“Kallikratis moved towards the right direction but we were not given the competences and the economic resources that had been promised”*.

3.1. Constraints of the autonomy of local government units

The respondents to the surveys emphasised that the reform was focused on reducing the number of local government units. The issues of autonomy or the scope of the tasks to be performed by local governments were not adequately addressed. Local representatives generally shared the belief that they are expected to create socio-economic development to an extent which does not correspond with the tools that they have at their disposal.

“The state has always kept and still keeps a great number of competences that could well pass on to the local self-government. Of course, here have been many steps taken from the past but I think that there is still room in order for the local government to become more effective.”

„Local issues are not only the refuse collection, [or] the maintenance of municipal lighting. A local issue is also the decentralised health units, the decentralised education units, which should have already been passed on to the local government. In this way we could have had a more effective and more essential functioning of those services because it is us who live close to the local society and we know [it] very well...”

In the aforementioned context, one respondent's statement should be considered as particularly meaningful. He said that the principle enshrined in the Greek constitution whereby the local government is responsible for local affairs is not implemented in practice.

“While Article 102 of the Constitution states that it is the local government which is dealing with local issues, in reality there is no clear explanation as to what constitutes a local issue.”

It follows from the respondents' statements that three constraints on local governance are particularly onerous for local government officials:

- d) Lack of adequate financing for the tasks entrusted to local governments;
- e) Excessive inspection procedures applicable to the operations of local government institutions;
- f) Reduced decision-making powers in the management of human resources: constraints on hiring and dismissing staff members (which also has an economic dimension).

Lack of adequate financing for the tasks entrusted in local governments

It should be emphasised that the actual possibilities to define the public service delivery at the local level and the potential for development of local government units are actually determined by the economic dimension.

"When it comes to implementing our so-called technical programmes, which means our public works, we do have degrees of autonomy but we are, to a great extent, held hostage by the state, especially when it comes to the flow of money and financing. When it comes to actually our own core competences as described by the law we do have a considerable degree of freedom but even there very often we have to deal with the requirements of successive governments."

The Kallikratis reform coincided with the financial crisis and, as a result, local governments were deprived of a large part of their revenues: budgets of LGUs shrank by up to 60% as the funds transferred from the central budget were dramatically reduced and the locally earned revenues also declined. According to the respondents' statements, a Greek mayor would nowadays consider him/herself to be "successful" if he/she manages to maintain the basic infrastructure and is able to pay the salaries of employees and cover basic running expenses of the municipality.

"The financial crisis was like a turning point in terms of the functioning of local government, you were developing and then you were struggling after 2010 you were struggling with basic financial problems..."

As a result of the economic crisis and the resulting restrictions, local governments lack the financial resources to provide basic services and to ensure efficient day-to-day operations of their institutions. The scale of the problem is illustrated, for instance, by the fact that serious difficulties are experienced by local government units trying to secure the financing of basic services such as cleaning of schools, maintenance of green areas or keeping sports facilities in a good working order.

"[it influences] the management of everyday life in issues such as schools, parks and sports grounds, in the cleaning".

"Unfortunately, our finances barely suffice to maintain our infrastructures."

Local government offices often lack the essential equipment to provide public services. The shortage of financial resources means that local governments have no funds to buy new or modernise the existing equipment, leading to more time-consuming and less efficient operations.

"There are employees who work for many hours to do a job that, if we had access to means, would

have, otherwise, been finished within 2-3 hours."

The financial crisis and the need to introduce further painful reforms means that local governments cannot be sure whether they will receive the funds guaranteed by the law or whether their share in public taxes will be depleted as a result of another amendment to the law. One respondent provided an example: he complained that his municipality had not received a transfer of mandatory funds in connection with the operations of a mine because the state is in arrears refunding the VAT to the mining company. According to the respondent the situation has persisted for four years now.

Extensive bureaucracy and overwhelming controls over the activities of local government institutions

Extensive bureaucracy is a problem commonly mentioned by the respondents in the context of the operations of local government units. The constraints imposed as a result of the crisis significantly undermined the freedom of local government units. Even simple decisions require a lot of effort: a long decision-making chain extends the time needed to bring a matter to a close and increases the costs. The decision-making process becomes opaque, arduous and time-consuming. The problem of bureaucracy manifests itself in a particularly acute way in the case of innovative projects which require particular commitment on the part of officials who prepare the documentation, and sometimes the process calls for competencies they do not have. As a result, local governments get discouraged from undertaking tasks which do not guarantee success and involve financial and personal risks.

"if I decide about something, I bring it to the municipal council and I take the decision this evening, I will have to get the legality approval from the deconcentrated administration in about one or one and half months. Then I will have to submit my decision – if it concerns the project – to the commissioner of the inspectors' board for pre-contract inspection (...). If the project that I am about to start exceeds 500,000 euros it would have, by law, to go to the inspectors' full house board in Athens and not with the local commissioner. All this means – and let us say that I get the green light – a decision taken today, in order to go through all these stages, will at least take 7- 8 months to be implemented. In worst cases, it may take a whole year. (...) It is, therefore, about a bureaucracy that all these inspections have created above us."

Another factor that contributes to bureaucratisation is the unclear division of powers between different levels of local government and between the local government and central institutions, as pointed out by a dedicated policy advice report prepared by the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform.¹⁰ Such overlap of competencies may hamper the implementation of planned activities.

¹⁰CELGR/PAD(2017)1, *Peer Review Report distribution of competences between the state and local authorities of both tiers*, 27 March 2017, <http://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/peer-review-report-distribution-of-competences-between-the-state-and-local-authorities-of-both-tiers>

"I would like a park within a residential area or to have a playground. Here comes the Forest Inspection which is saying that this is a grove. But we are going to take care of it, we say. And all these create big problems, in other words, departmental overlapping. They will not let the municipality do their job within its own space."

Another important consequence of the financial crisis was the actual restriction of local government units' freedom to shape their own economic policy (mainly financial management and disbursement of public funds). Actions taken by a number of central institutions to control the financial policy of local governments are, in the respondents' opinion, a source of major problems in the functioning of local government units. The number of statements regarding the arduousness of inspections and the fact that this issue was raised spontaneously in the context of various topics indicates that this is one of the biggest challenges for local governments.

"It is a myth that local government in Greece is autonomous (...) we pretend that we are autonomous and we want to be autonomous but we are treated as the child with special needs of a very demanding parent."

The nature and the scale of the existing control mechanisms indicate that local government leaders are not treated as partners by the central government. One respondent even expressed the view that the government treats local governments as objects, limiting their possibilities to undertake effective actions.

"In Greece, the local government is being treated as a backyard helping staff of the public administration, as a house maid, as a cleaner who changes the light bulbs. And in most cases it is being allocated with responsibilities which mainly concern issues that the state confronts without having previously armoured it either institutionally or economically. Even on such simple issues as management of stray dogs or road potholes. Self-government is mainly treated as a scapegoat in order to put the blame on, for issues that have not been solved..."

Many local government officials perceive the constraints and the control mechanisms as a token of distrust in themselves and in the idea of self-governance in general.

"We have too many inspections from the central government. There is a lack of trust all over the country and over all institutions within the country. Nobody trusts anybody else and rightly so."

Limited freedom of local governments in shaping their own human resources policies

Under the Kallikratis reform, a rule was adopted to maintain the current employment levels in the amalgamated local government units (although, as noted by one of the participants: *"There is some leeway, I mean you can find some leeway with various legalistic ways"*). As a result, the newly created units, in order to address the new challenges posed by the reform, should eliminate overlaps through various measures of human resource management-.

Local government leaders have very limited possibilities to employ suitably qualified staff (austerity rules are very restrictive for hiring employees). As a result, local governments often lack the personnel capable of implementing ambitious programmes.

Some local authorities emphasised their limited competencies in the area of human resource policies at local level. This situation has its economic ramifications: since there are shortages of suitably skilled personnel, some staff must work longer hours, which means that they need to receive overtime pay. However, this is not a problem for many leaders: given the absence of skilled personnel they are ready to bear additional costs as long as they can ensure smooth operation of their office. Moreover, some complain that even this option has its limitations.

"It is allowed within the limits given. For the administrative staff overtime is 20 hours per month...this is very little...there is a limit. For the cleaning employees who are the basic part we allow for more overtime."

The respondents often pointed out the clientelism in human resources management, i.e. the position of an official may depend on his/her family or political connections.

"There are also cases where...I am not going to mention names...an administrative employees the spouse of the opposition leader so there is this kind of balance within the municipality...in other words, how can you possibly run policies within the municipality when you are worrying that those policies are going to be ruled out by the administrative side...you understand of what we are talking about..."

3.2. No consideration for the special needs of local communities in the amalgamation process

Some respondents pointed out that when the structure of the new administrative division was being defined, excessive importance was attached to the reduction of the number of local government units, without paying sufficient attention to the local spatial, social and economic singularities.

"In my opinion, the main issue is not the number of municipalities but the structure and the hierarchy since Kallikratis Law can't apply everywhere in the same way."

When speaking about the consequences of the reform, one respondent gave an example of administrative processes not matching the regional area: he said that the southern part of his local government unit was 80 km away from the northern part. Such a considerable geographic dispersion with rigidly defined employment rules and imposed organisational standards prevents efficient management at the local level and limits the accessibility of some services for residents. One should also emphasise that those problems are interconnected: in a context of limited resources the lack of organisational autonomy is particularly painful.

"In my opinion, the dysfunction won't be solved necessarily with the existence of more municipalities but with alterations in some bureaucratic issues. For example, there's a huge problem in technical and maintenance department of the units. This happens because civil servants work mainly from 9, 8 or 7 to 3 pm depending on each person's working hours. Consequently, the necessary personnel, e.g. plumber, electrician, maintenance men, has to work in afternoon shifts, evening and night shifts."

In the Islands' Focus Group, participants said that the sharp decrease of state grants would mainly affect smaller and poorer islands that would hardly be in the position to offer basic municipal

services in some cases. Rules for human resources management would be obsolete and facing the needs of “normal” municipalities on the mainland, while peculiarities of island municipalities would not be taken into account.

3.3. Blurred responsibilities and problems in the relations between LGUs and the central government¹¹

When assessing the Kallikratis reform, the respondents pointed out the unclear division of responsibilities between the various levels of local government. Sometimes regions and municipal units are equivalent to each other and can, and should, work together while in other cases this relationship is sometimes under-defined, which is a potential source of conflict.

“So municipalities and the regions work in parlour, at times they can work in tandem, at times their relationship can be antagonistic.”

“My personal view is that regions should not have existed because the municipalities with their scientific staff that is available to them are able to fully respond – because they are closer to the citizen.”

In particular the respondents pointed to the unclear division of competences between various public institutions, local government levels or even between the local government and central agencies. The respondents drew attention to the overlap of responsibility for the same areas. Some examples include, for instance, the issues of forest management or actions related to the influx of immigrants. One respondent believes these are issues that should be coordinated solely from the central level whereas at present the responsibility is borne both by the state and the local government.

“If we have to solve a problem concerning our forests we have to address to the Forest Inspectorate which is a state service and it not belongs to the local government. This is a big problem because it extends bureaucracy and makes effectiveness a difficult matter.”

Many respondents drew attention to the high degree of complexity in the public administration system at the local level, where the multiplicity of existing entities often precludes efficient management.

“Because it is not only these two levels that we are talking about. We are talking about two levels of local government, right, which are the municipalities and the regions... To this you have to add another layer which we call deconcentrated administrations, which are basically the local state government. To this you will also have to add the so-called educational regions which actually directly report to the ministry of education. You also have to add the so-called health regions which directly report to the ministry of health, who are actually responsible for their hospitals and primary care. So, that is where it gets really complicated.”

As competences of various public administration agencies are blurred, the development potential of local government is dampened. The aforementioned excessive centralisation of tasks and responsibilities considerably reduces the efficiency of local government institutions.

¹¹ Ibidem.

"For example, in the region we have geothermic power and we have drawn excellent plans but if the ministry does not amend the law we can do nothing because in order to do something, some other 50 issues have to be settled by the ministry."

Interviewees indicated that the current cooperation between the local and central institutions is clearly a source of frustration. Local officials believe that the state does not support them in crisis situations and leaves the local communities to fare by themselves. This was most acutely felt in 2015, when the influx of migrants in Greece posed serious problems for local governments: the scale and the nature of those problems surpassed the competences and capabilities of individual municipalities. Despite numerous direct calls for help, the respondents felt that the central institutions did not want, or were unable, to provide adequate support to local governments. The interviews did not clearly reveal why such adequate support was not granted.

Regardless to emergency situations, specific cooperation in the implementation of various projects is a source of everyday problems. In the respondents' opinion, the state does not support the local government in its endeavours to boost socio-economic development. Through various central agencies, the state puts itself in the position of an inspector which imposes various requirements and restrictions rather than a partner supporting local governments in overcoming problems.

The absence of established mechanisms to support innovative, modern investments at the local level is a particular source of problems resulting from poor cooperation between the central-level institutions (also agencies of deconcentrated central administration) and the local governments. According to the respondents' statements, the decision-making process is often lengthy and complicated, which leads to delays and prevents efficient and effective implementation of projects. Sometimes, when a decision goes beyond the standard framework of action, the appropriate levels either refrain from making a decision or adopt it extremely reluctantly.

It should be also emphasised that not all the respondents describe the central-local government relations in a clearly negative way. In one of the comments a respondent pointed out that the lack of operational autonomy and the dependence on central government is a convenient excuse for some local government officials to shed responsibility.

"The central government does not want to give up power, the local government is not given the power [but] to be perfectly honest, I am not convinced that the local government wants the power. Some of us may feel very comfortable creating an alibi of some sort and blaming the central government for everything under the sun."

Among all the central agencies, the Ministry of Interior seems most important for local governments. It is "like a traffic policeman, you know, they point you to the direction of other ministries, which they do very well". Some respondents noted that one of the most important functions performed by that ministry is to standardise the activities of local governments and to promote best practices.

"One of the key things for the Ministry of Interior to do is actually help leadership of local government with new ideas, with know-how, with best practices"

3.4. Weaknesses in the law-making process concerning the local government

In the context of the presented assessments of local government reform it is worth noting that the very process of systemic change arouses much controversy among local government officials. At least some of the respondents affirmed that the law sometimes changes too often, for unclear reasons and without appropriate consultation. Frequent changes in regulations hinder long-term planning of investments and institutional development. This also increases the degree of uncertainty in the day-to-day operations of local government institutions: officials are often not sure whether their policies are lawful and they worry that those policies may be challenged during one of the numerous inspections.

"Legislation changes far too frequently (...) I was elected for the first time in 2006. From 2006 to 2016 there has been a change of group of laws within the 3852/2010 law which is the Kallikratis Programme. Within all these years there have also been all kinds of amendments, ministerial interventions, or different... The procedures in Greece delay a lot. (...) In other words, when you do not know, when you are not within the field, you blame the employees themselves. A month ago even the Local Government provisions procedure has changed which has already changed 3- 4 times."

The new regulations are quite often introduced without due preparation. The solutions are not tested before their implementation, and long-term consequences of the proposed changes are not analysed. Local government officials are often taken by surprise when new legislation is adopted. This problem has many components, with at least four that are worth mentioning here:

- a) No information on the proposed new regulations is distributed among local governments for consultation;
- b) The *vacatio legis* is too short: new regulations often become effective almost overnight and no transition periods are offered, which usually obstructs the management of public services;
- c) New legal solutions are not accompanied by information about legal interpretations (*interpretation circulars*);
- d) There is no solid training programme that would disseminate and deepen the knowledge about the new legislation.

"For example, on 8th August a law was passed concerning public works; this was one of the requirements of the institutions and it was, as a rule, a right law – but no transitory period was given... It has been three months since and not a single interpretation circular has arrived yet so that we can open a public auction for works. And even when they come, our services are not going to be well versed in order to be able to do this because this is about a new law within a transitory period. And at a time when there is a huge need for labour posts and works that have to be done, it is certain that we are going to fall back by, at least six months, and while we got the money some of us are not able to open public tenders."

In conclusion, it should be noted that the design of the local government system in Greece raises some concerns, at least in terms of the principle of subsidiarity enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The imposed extended controls, the lack of adequate funding for the tasks entrusted to local governments, the blurred responsibilities between public institutions at various levels, and the volatility of regulations are not conducive to stable planning of local development and restrict the potential for development of local communities. In interviews, the

respondents repeatedly stressed the need to strengthen the decentralisation of public administration in Greece.

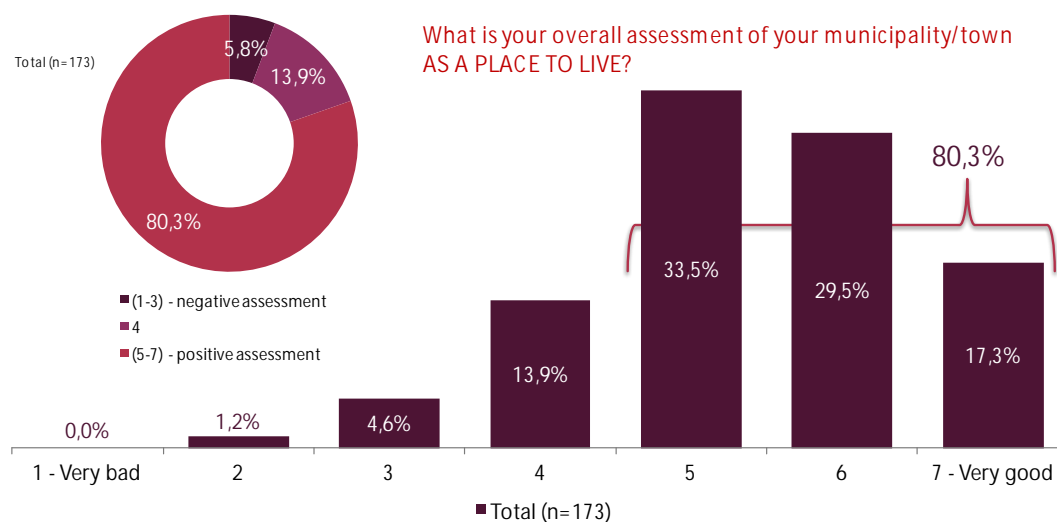
"What is one of the main issues we actually face as a country is that we have not decentralised at all. In Greece we insist on a model that is, I think that is my personal view, anachronistic. We insist on a highly centralised state. (...) This is a rather primitive form of government or at least administration. But yet the central state insists on that. So for example that probably explains why we heard complaints, in my view, they are all legitimate and justified, from Mayors that are no responsible for their hospitals, from Mayors or governors who are not responsible for the staffing of their schools etc."

It was argued that it would be very difficult to improve the socio-economic situation in the country if local governance is not strengthened. As stated by one of the mayors: *"(...) we, at least, demand a greater degree of decentralisation. Despite the fact that Kallikratis, as I said before, was a great step, Greece can never develop if it does not delegate powers to local areas"*. The statement made by another experienced local government official is also characteristic in this context, albeit quite radical:

"I have been serving Local Government for 30 years. Unfortunately, local government, despite the fact that it is independent according to the constitution, it is still today, despite our struggle, strumentalised by the Central State. We are seeking a new administrative reform, within the European model, so that whatever is produced within the local municipalities, including what is being paid, should remain in the municipalities. The municipalities should undertake everything: hospitals, health centres, schools - in other words - we should become a small government. Nevertheless, instead of things being simplified, the political noose is getting ever tighter around self-government and it is dependent on who is in power and what their ideology is and whether they have the right contacts and connections".

4. Local living conditions and development priorities

In the survey, most respondents expressed positive opinions about the living conditions in their respective local government units (80.3% of positive ratings in total). Moreover, it is worth noting that the top two boxes on the scale were chosen by nearly a half of those surveyed (46.8%). Negative ratings represented merely 5.8% of the answers.



Data analysis indicates that the most pessimistic (or perhaps realistic) assessment of the general living conditions was given by representatives of local governments receiving support from other units, as well as by representatives of municipalities located on the islands. Moreover, it is noteworthy that a fairly large number of intermediate marks (merely moderate) was chosen by the respondents working in the mountainous municipalities.

The assessment of the quality of life also varied, depending on the size of the local community. Representatives of smaller units (many of which were located in the mountains or on the islands) often opted for negative ratings when assessing the living conditions in their respective localities.

4.1. Social expectations towards local government

The respondents' opinions about the social expectations towards local government were ambiguous. Some respondents shared the view that Greeks were accustomed to handling their affairs on their own, without anyone's help. Such attitudes reportedly stemmed from the common and generalised lack of trust in the institutions of power.

"In Greece, citizens have been used to – as I am in a position to know self-government for years – what they can ask the Mayor to do for them i.e. a better road, a better square, a better car park...they are not easily going to ask, almost never, not even today, for a solution to health problems, so their expectations, I would say, are lower than the ones that they were supposed to have and this is that they have not been educated that way."

One example which probably provides a good illustration of Greeks' attitude towards the participation in local public life is the lack of success in implementing one of the initiatives under the Kallikratis reform. The Consultation Committees were set up at the local level to open up a window for increased participation of local residents in shaping local public policies, and to make the local residents more active. Regretfully, as one of the respondents noted, the new institution failed to fulfil the expectations.

"It has been brought by Kallikratis, and to me, it is very serious... this is participation and consultation...there is an institution in every municipality and every region which is called Consultation Committee and there is a process of representation of agents through a drawing process by people's representatives. This, wherever it has functioned, it has brought results. But it has operated in its minimum degree...and this has ended up (...) to simply have a committee and not to use..."

Perhaps these widespread beliefs were the reason why the respondents rarely mentioned the inclusion of citizens into local decision-making processes as a priority of local governments (even though such declarations were occasionally made in questionnaires filled in by representatives of smaller localities). Another reason behind the identified status quo lies in local officials' reluctance about making citizens more involved and in their lack of knowledge of how such participatory processes may be organised, especially in large localities.

4.2. Operations of local government in times of crisis

Mitigating the social consequences of the economic crisis and reducing the consequences of uncontrolled influx of immigrants is practically the most important task currently carried out by the local government in Greece. As said by one respondent, local government "is a shock absorber". Local government officials feel the pressure from the residents that they should be "on the front line of battle, in front of the society": they are expected to support the impoverished middle class and help the poor, to provide access to basic services in the chaotic times of crisis, to give people a sense of living in a civilised European country (at a minimum level, this means that garbage is disposed of, public places look orderly, young children have guaranteed access to preschool education, etc.).

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that in the context of the financial problems faced by local authorities some respondents vented their frustration resulting from their inability to meet enormous social needs.

"I do feel tremendous social pressure, not in terms of ... let us say victimisation of the region or that the region is targeted politically or socially...but when you are called upon to operate in a country that is bankrupt and in a country where as we all know that economic and social indicators are abysmal you cannot be happy or satisfied, by definition. You feel you are working in an oven."

Some participants stressed that the undoubted success of recent years is the fact that local government survived through the times of a deep crisis of central institutions, the progressing centralisation and gradual limitation of the powers of local governments. In this case, the criterion of success for the local government units is very simple case: they manage to pay salaries to employees and provide basic services to residents.

“Tell him that this is a very European question...of someone who does not live and have experience of the situation in Greece. When your agony is whether you can afford to pay your employees’ wages... when the question in Greece over the past five years has been to maintain those things that we used to have and pay the employees. And whoever did this was successful.”

Social services and social initiatives of municipalities seem to be the parts of municipal government that have been hardly tested by the crisis and did well in a very difficult situation - as one of the mayors stated:

".... I will mention only one small part. If there had not been local government, the depth of poverty would still be even deeper for the local populations..."

In this sense, the crisis enabled competent local leaders to stand out from the crowd. As a result, a large group of mayors lost the most recent local elections, and people genuinely interested in solving local problems were elected to the local councils. This rendered positive results in some local government units in the sense that the number of competent leaders was increased and the politicisation of local governments was reduced.

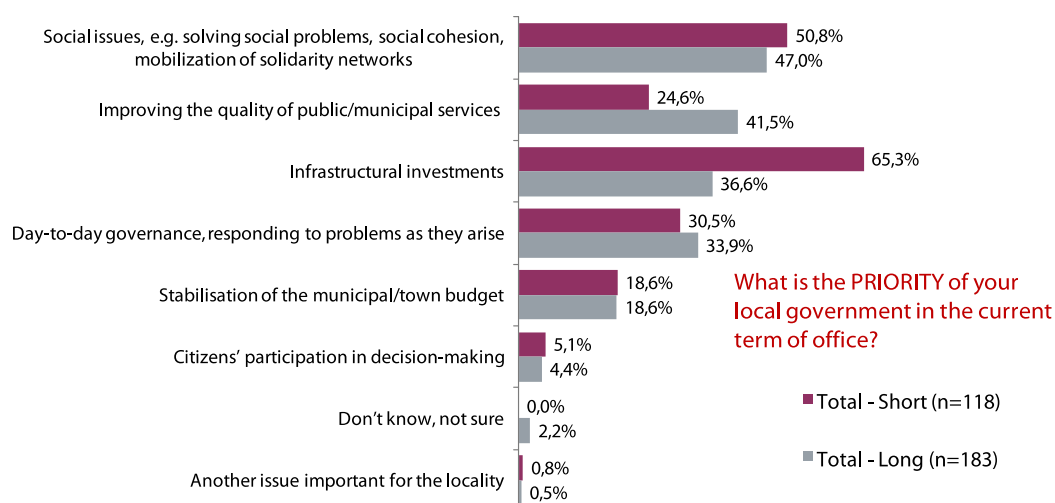
"From the 27 municipal councillors, there are about six or seven political parties represented. A thing that was unthinkable in the past. It is not that the meaning of politics has been lost but we are able to function without parties. And this allows even people who are politically homeless, like me, to function."

The crisis strengthened and integrated local government employees, at least in some units. It revealed their managerial skills and confirmed their commitment to public affairs. As a result, people are now working more and with greater commitment.

"The good thing is that there is good will and our work is based on that. (...) Today there is a service staffed with three people who have a workload that requires 15 people. (...) we work harder and for longer hours in order to achieve – within our means – fewer things than those achieved by someone at half the time."

4.3. Developmental priorities at local government units and their implementation

In the surveys, the respondents were asked to identify local development priorities. Each respondent was able to select two key directions he/she considered most crucial during the current term of office.



The comparison of the findings from two independent surveys reveals significant differences in development priorities identified by mayors and other respondents. The former more strongly emphasised the importance of infrastructural investments while the latter were more likely to pay attention to problems in the social sphere and the need to improve the quality of work in administrative structures. This discrepancy can be explained in two ways, and those interpretations are not necessarily mutually exclusive:

- by the very nature of their job, mayors are more focused on strategic objectives than on operational tasks associated with the organisation of day-to-day business at local government offices,
- mayors' work is regularly subjected to verification during elections, and infrastructural investments may be seen by voters as proof of a leader's effective work. After all, such investments receive considerable media coverage and are more impressive than changes in the daily grind of local government offices.

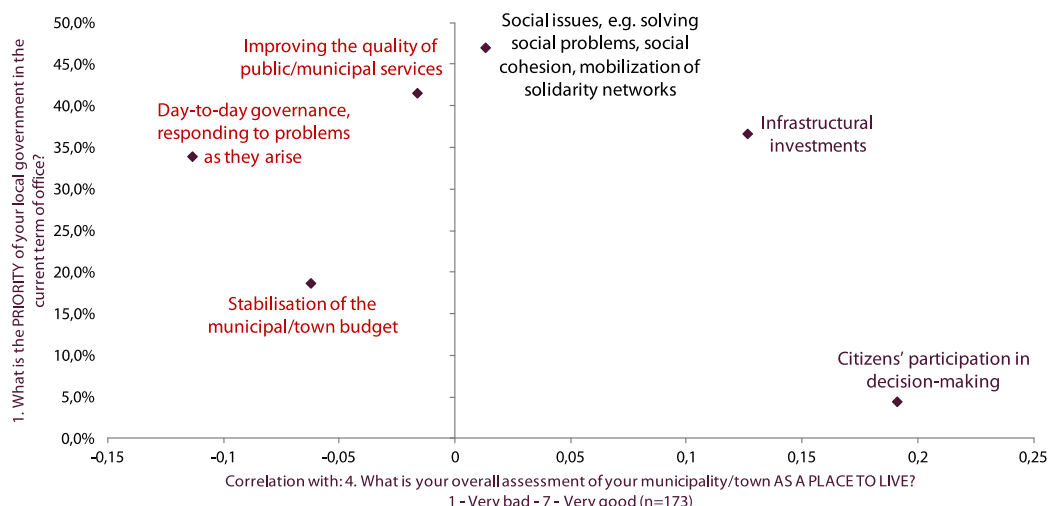
During the interviews with the local leaders, infrastructural investments were mentioned as the most important local need. The respondents reiterated the gaps in this respect which were a nuisance for the residents: while some problems have been already solved thanks to EU funding, the scale of needs is still enormous. And although, in view of the economic crisis, one cannot talk about excessive social expectations, yet expenditure on local infrastructure remains a priority for the local authorities.

"The basic problem is that of asphalt coverings. The roads, the parks, the playgrounds - even in some areas we still do not have sewage systems and water supply."

Deficits in basic infrastructure and the limited resources available to local governments mean that the reflection on the long-term objectives of local authorities is not widespread: the findings suggest that strategic thinking in terms of sustainable development is not particularly widespread. Of course, one should clearly note that the permanent economic crisis and the resultant volatility of rules relating to the operations of local government as well as the accumulation of various problems are not conducive to such policies and limit the possibility of effective planning. Although the crisis forces local governments to be more interested in social issues, the highlighted fundamental infrastructural and technical deficits hardly result in a deliberate, strategic approach to development.

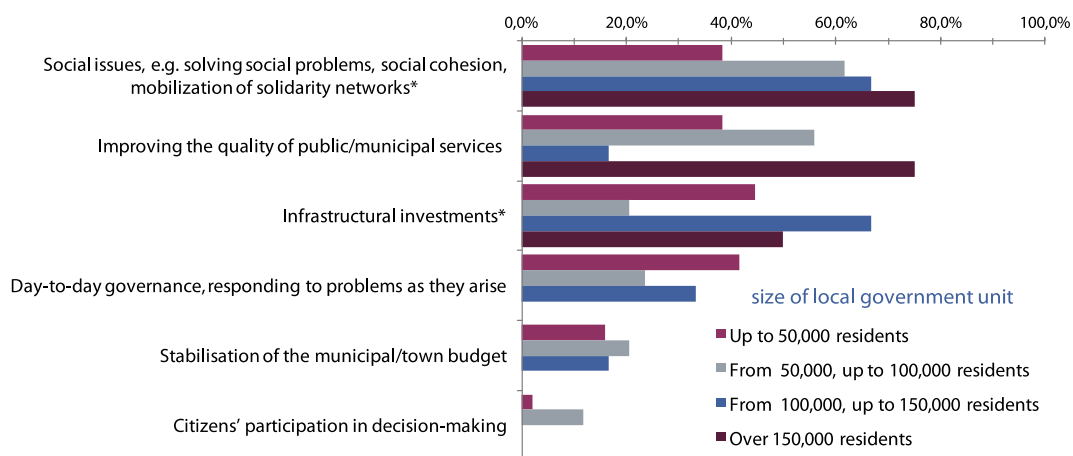
These conclusions are confirmed by the results of the quantitative research. Correlation analysis indicates a relationship between the selected priorities of local governments and the self-assessment of local living conditions. In the units where the situation was assessed negatively, the respondents mostly indicated the need to improve the day-to-day management and to address the emerging issues adequately. They also identified the need to solve the emerging social problems as the second most important priority. Notably, the former type of answers was given much more frequently than others. The aforementioned LGUs were also more likely to mention the need to stabilise the local budget. It is worth noting that none of these priorities is strategic.

At the same time, representatives of local government units which are in a better situation most commonly focused on infrastructural investments. And although they indicated social problems as the first priority (due to the prevailing crisis), they put an equivalent emphasis on improving the quality of services provided by the local government.



The data indicates that local government officials representing units of various sizes formulate their priorities in slightly different ways. Those from larger units focused much more on solving social problems, with the need to improve the quality of public services being stressed in the largest cities. Investment priorities were least likely to be mentioned in medium-sized units and most likely highlighted in larger units (although those elements topped the ranking of priorities identified by representatives of the smallest communities, which presumably confirms the special role of infrastructural deficiencies in this group).

What is the PRIORITY of your local government in the current term of office?



The situation of most local government units can be aptly illustrated by a comment made by one mayor:

"At this moment, apart from the solution of everyday problems such as road maintenance, cleaning, maintenance of green areas, we are planning big projects which in essence will give the city a huge boost (...) within these difficult circumstances, despite everything we are doing great things."

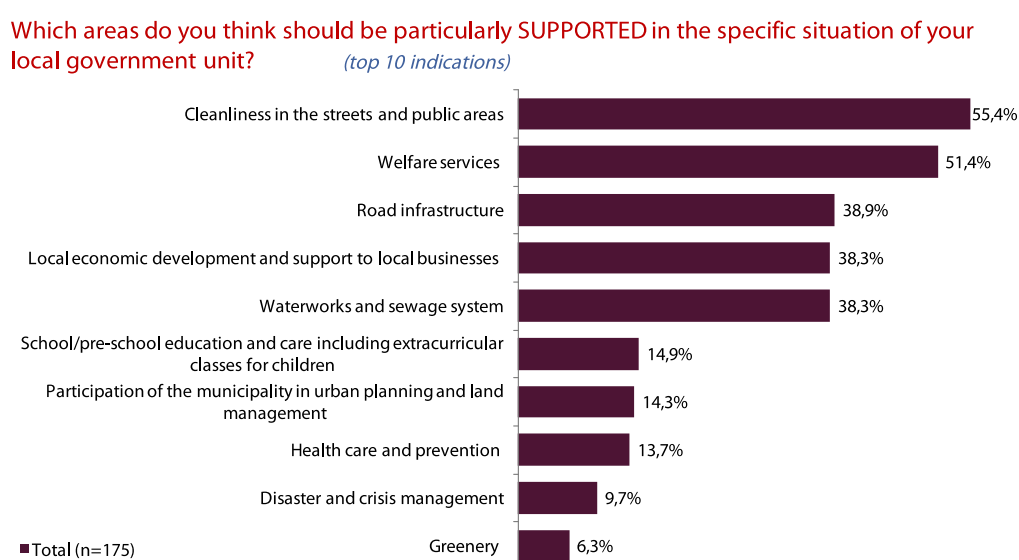
In the questionnaire, the respondents were also asked to identify the tasks which they felt should be treated as a priority in budget planning in their respective local government units. The responses can be grouped under four separate headings:

- more than a half of the respondents pointed to the need to maintain cleanliness in public places and to support social assistance,
- the respondents were somewhat less likely to choose investments in roads and sewerage infrastructure, as well as support for entrepreneurs,
- the third most mentioned priority concerned assistance in the sphere of education and health, as well as spatial planning and management,
- support of activities related to crisis management and public greenery was mentioned least often.

Thus, the findings indicate that the perceived budgetary priorities are largely dependent on social expectations.

“In Greece, the first expectation is still the clean municipality. From then on, the infrastructure is still the question and the truth is that the local government within the past 20-25 years has been working a lot on this area but there is still a long way to go.”

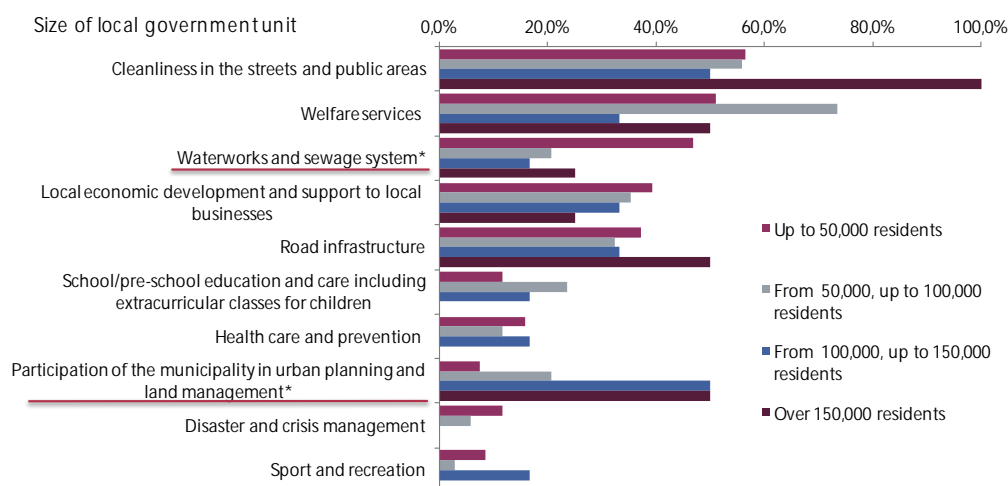
One can also conclude that local government officials put less emphasis on public services in areas where their powers are limited (e.g. crisis management, the education system or health care) or on those that do not require significant expenditures (e.g. urban greenery). They also emphasised the need to support tasks in areas where the most serious deficits exist (roads and sewerage infrastructure), as well as those which directly translate into a higher quality of life in conditions of economic crisis (e.g. social assistance or support for entrepreneurs).



The identified priorities (i.e. the maintenance of cleanliness in public places and social assistance) were strongly highlighted by the weakest local governments, i.e. those that receive administrative support from other LGUs. The respondents from mountainous regions were more likely to mention activities which are particularly cost-intensive due to the terrain conditions, i.e. the maintenance of road infrastructure and the water and sewerage system.

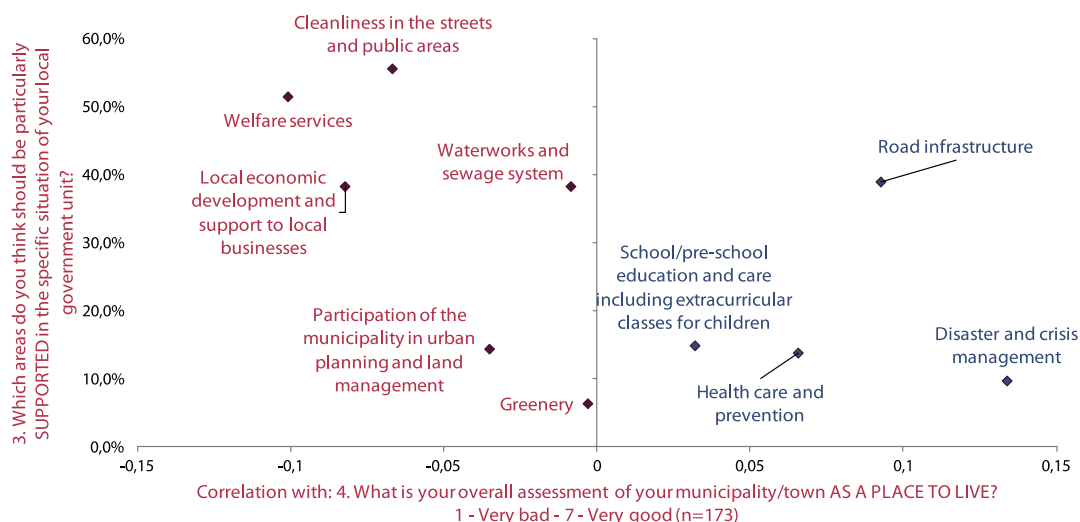
Again, units of various sizes reported different needs. The largest centres paid particular attention to maintaining cleanliness in public areas and investments in road infrastructure, whereas smaller units opted for maintaining social assistance.

Which areas do you think should be particularly SUPPORTED in the specific situation of your local government unit? (top 10 indications)



The units which had the lowest ratings for the living conditions were less likely to indicate any priorities going beyond the maintenance of cleanliness in public places, replenishment of basic infrastructural deficiencies (waterworks and sewage systems) or social welfare. In turn, representatives of local authorities who rated their localities better were relatively more likely to define the crucial needs in terms of investments in road infrastructure and support for key areas of social services (school and preschool education, disease prevention and health care).

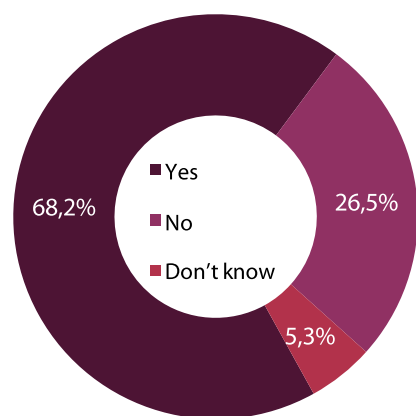
The data further indicates a negative correlation between the ratings given for the local living conditions and the frequency of reported needs to support in spheres such as social assistance, cleanliness in public places, local economic development or spatial management. Accordingly, in places where the living conditions are worse people are less likely to think about the support for social services and cost-intensive infrastructural investments. This disparity may lead to a greater gap in development potentials of local communities: the distance between the better-off municipalities, which have more resources, and peripheral, small and underinvested units will grow bigger, aggravating the demographic problems (migration and the resultant depopulation), environmental problems (spatial chaos, territorial isolation) and economic issues (reduction of municipalities' own revenues).



4.4. Strategic management at the local level

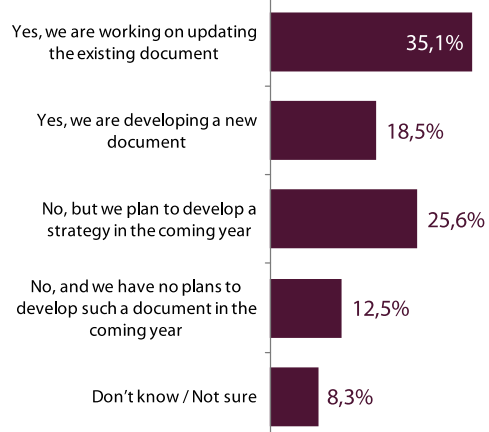
The majority of survey participants indicated that their local governments had a current development strategy or an equivalent document. In the units which do not have a strategic document (26.5%) some respondents declared that work towards a strategy was in progress or was planned.

Does your local government unit have an UP-TO-DATE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (or an equivalent strategic document concerning your entire local government unit)?



Total (n=170)

Are you currently doing any work related to the development/updating of your development strategy (or an equivalent document)?



Total (n=168)

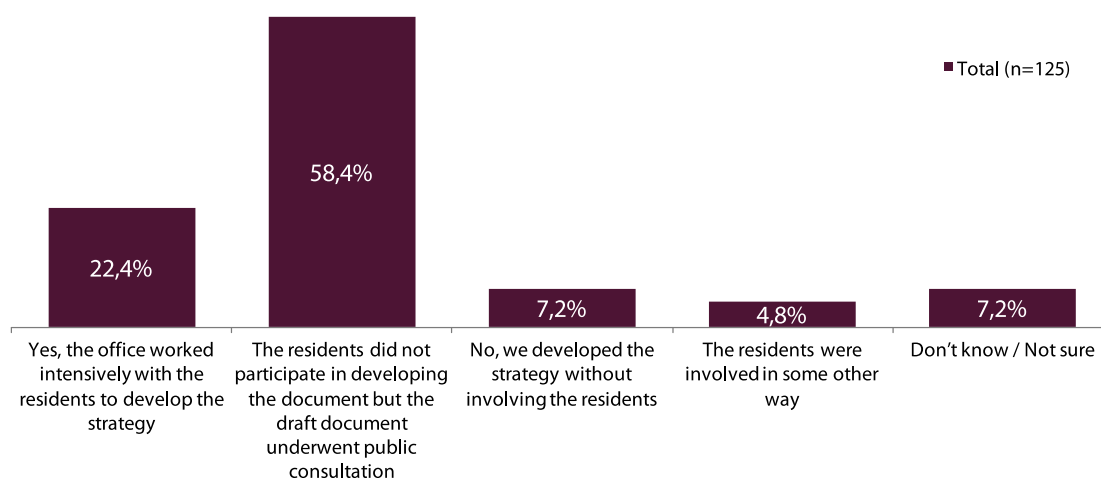
A careful analysis of the data and the observations made in the course of qualitative research lead to the hypothesis that strategic planning in Greek local government units is either very limited or even absent: the existing documents are, in fact, an expression of willingness to fulfil the formal conditions in the process of applying for external funding than a manifestation of the desire to develop a long-term, coherent and systematic approach to the coordination of strategic projects. Even though, according to the information provided by the participants, each urban unit has the legally required short-term operational plan for local development, these documents generally lack reliable diagnostics with regard to sustainable development, a clear identification of priorities and a selection of development-oriented projects. For this reason the focus group

participants admitted that one cannot talk about the real usefulness of this document for a large number of units which have a development strategy. It is important to emphasise that in many local governments the operating plan is the only planning document and municipalities usually have no other documents that would streamline the activities of the local government in the long run.

“There is an operational plan that concerns the development of the city at all levels, which is a term plan and this is by law. (...) In the local government there is no such a thing where the municipal authority is obliged to plan further than its term but only if they take the decision by themselves.”

Partial confirmation of the weakness and the illusory nature of strategic planning in Greek local governments may come from the fact that in almost 60% of the units the involvement of local community in preparing the strategy was limited only to consultations around the finished document. In most cases, the residents did participate directly or actively in the creation of that document. Therefore, any declarations about strategies submitted for public consultation must be treated with caution given the absence of more comprehensive information about the actual community involvement in the process.

Were the RESIDENTS of your municipality involved in the work on the current development strategy?



There are presumably many reasons behind the weaknesses of strategic planning. The interviewees focused on the lack of financial resources that could be used for development-oriented projects. According to these opinions, the shortage of financial resources is the fundamental barrier to strategic development: even if local government units do have a development strategy, they cannot implement it due to the lack of funding.

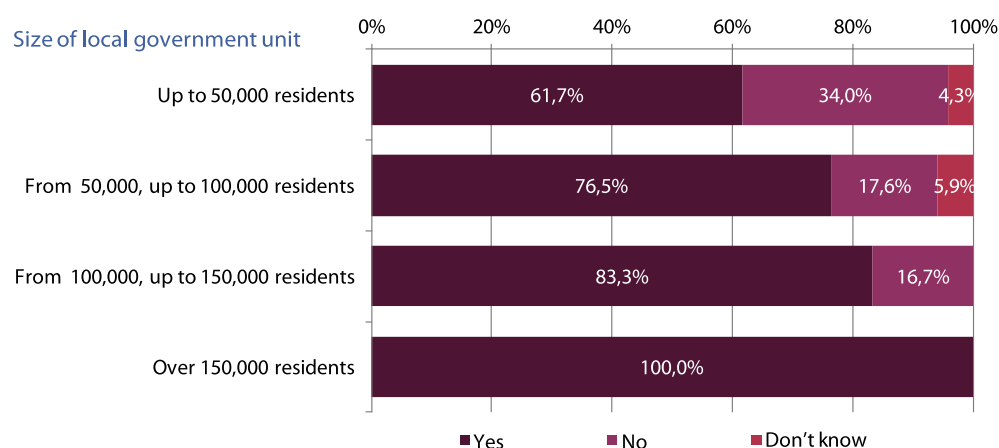
“Unfortunately, our finances barely suffice to maintain our infrastructures. Let alone draw up a strategic plan - which we have already... But, we have very limited resources. So, you can't implement your plan. It cannot be implemented”

In the municipalities which are struggling with many basic problems, long-term strategic thinking has been superseded by the focus on solving on-going problems, many of which are beyond the capacity of local authorities. However, in the light of the interviews as well as the experience of international research, one might try and reverse this relationship: a bad situation in a municipality (reflected in the negative ratings given by its officials) may result, at least in some cases, from an

excessive focus on day-to-day management while neglecting the reflection on long-term developmental challenges.

The impact of the economic situation of LGUs on the practices of strategic management can be partly confirmed by the fact that strategy documents are less likely to exist in smaller localities located in mountainous areas or on islands. The available data shows that strategic planning presumably plays a more important role in large urban centres, which are managed through extensive administrative structures and have more resources at their disposal.

Does your local government unit have an UP-TO-DATE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (or an equivalent strategic document concerning your entire local government unit)?



The responses given by local governments which do not have a current strategy are also consistent with the aforementioned hypothesis: evidence suggests that the smaller the local government unit, the greater the likelihood that the development or an update of a strategy has been postponed.

4.5. Collaboration between local governments, significant stakeholders

The collaboration between municipalities and the regions is essential for both parties. A current head of region who was formerly a mayor sees it as follows:

"We invest a lot of time and energy and effort into making sure that we have very close cooperation with municipalities. Our relationship is not antagonistic but complimentary. For us this is extremely important. And since I was a Mayor before, it is also quite easy to be honest for me because I understand where they are coming from. So that is number one."

The collected opinions suggest that collaboration focuses mostly on the development and modernisation of infrastructure. Collaboration on infrastructural projects gives rise to numerous tensions. Municipalities compete against one another for investments, which is why regional authorities do not need to endeavour to win their commitment. Sometimes, the struggle for limited resources becomes politicised.

"...Our municipality, just as all other municipalities of the country, has to cooperate with the Regions. Unfortunately, the system at this point is distorted: Regions do not dole the money out not on the basis of competition or of the most appropriate and articulate proposal. Their rationale is based on political favouritism..."

Also, the phenomenon of clientelism was observed:

"Yesterday, the head of region called me to say "Fine, you'll get what you want...", in other words, I will do you a favour. This is beyond me. I don't want favours; I have made him a proposal that has to be examined in a fair and proportional way. That's how I understand it. Doing someone a favour does not mean taking something from me or giving me something else in exchange."

Some respondents affirmed that municipalities cannot receive adequate support by the regions because the latter have weak legal foundations, insufficient competences and an insufficient influence on the central government. Some interviewees pointed out that regions should be liquidated since there is an unnecessary overlap of institutions.

"The region cannot always support them (municipalities) efficiently and technically...theoretically it could. (...)".

It seems that islanders have a lot of complaints, concerning their cooperation with upper levels of governance. One of the respondents complained that decision-makers do not understand the peculiarities of island administration and the special needs of an island region.

Collaboration between municipalities is rare (apart from collaboration on infrastructural projects coordinated by regions). The respondents referred to inter-municipal collaboration only in the context of European projects.

"We collaborate with municipalities in the framework of European programmes. Island municipalities most of all, or sometimes with other municipalities for several European programmes. And then, it depends on each activity."

"We cooperated with neighbouring Municipalities, depending on the activity. With the Municipalities of Alimos and Paleo Falironwe we joined a European Program on Health matters, using telemedicine for diabetics, and there we made very good use of Smart Care. With the Municipality of Alimos we have made certain common proposals concerning energy saving measures, some HORIZON programmes."

Apart from municipalities, the respondents mentioned few stakeholders they collaborate with, such as schools:

"Schools have been a strategic ally in various areas. (...) with the help of Parent-Teacher associations. There are seminars organised in the Town Hall either by the Municipality or by the teachers and generally we try to link Parent Associations to different activities and campaigns, so as to get both parents and their children involved in various environmental, social and mainly cultural events."

The respondents occasionally mentioned collaboration with non-governmental institutions, yet there is little indication that NGOs are an important partner of local governments in implementing public tasks.

"The athletic associations, as an important factor, as well as certain old cultural associations"

Municipalities also undertake collaboration with universities when they need expert analysis:

"We have tried to select the scientific community very carefully. We collaborate, as a municipality, with the National Technical University of Athens, in order to (...) deliver an opinion and evaluate the geotechnical and biological studies and the proposed BPE (Assessment for Suggested Works). At the same time we try to involve more institutions (...) that work in relevant fields."

5. Local management and the operations of local government offices

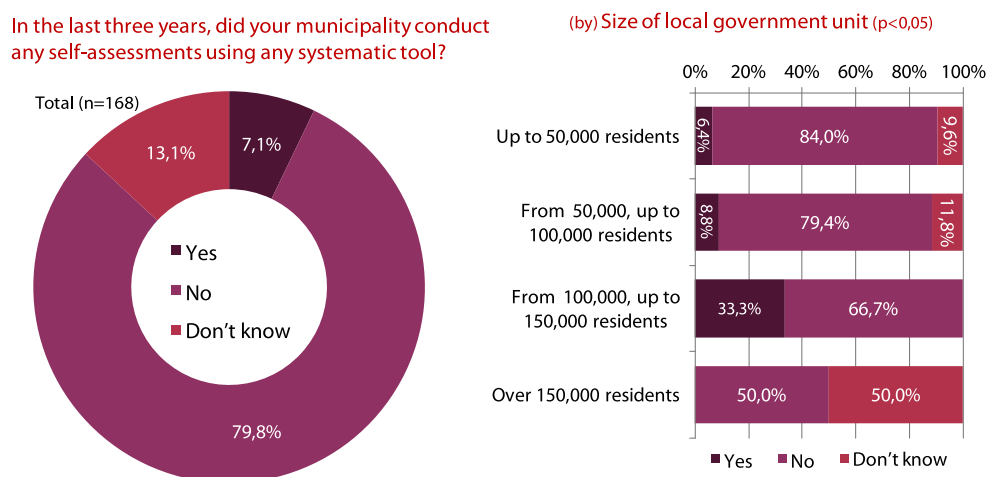
The respondents in the study believe that the right systemic solutions and adequate funding to provide public services are the necessary (albeit not sufficient) conditions to ensure efficient performance of local administration. Whether they are used properly or not depends primarily on the local government leader and his/her efficiency and skills.

"The functioning is dependent upon the person who is in charge."

While most of the respondents affirmed that the systemic solutions in Greece are far from the desirable condition and that the funding remains at an inadequate level, they also stressed that there are enough good leaders among local government officials who, if given a chance, would be able to manage local communities efficiently and competently.

5.1. Assessment of the performance of local administration

First of all, it should be noted that the vast majority of the local government units participating in the study had not carried out any systematic assessment of administration performance in the past three years. The respondents admitted that their municipalities generally do not apply the tools that would enable some real reflection on the quality of services provided: there are no management practices that could lead to profound verification of the effects of policies where such verification would help them to monitor the resources used in the process of their implementation. As one of the mayors noted, *"there is no mechanism which can assure the quality of the services provided."* Another one added that *"the deficit in the manner of the assessment is significant. The assessments are virtual reality and bureaucratic"*.

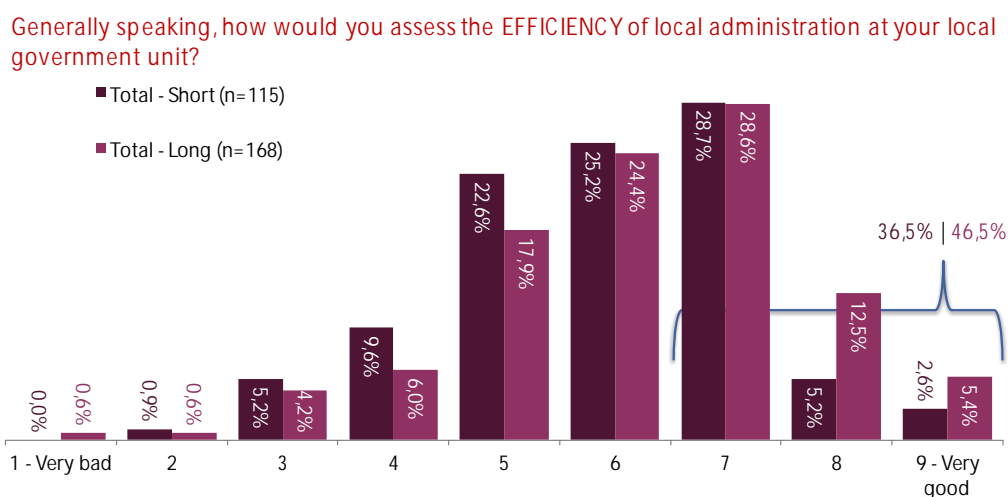


Some respondents did not see any need to implement any special self-assessment tools and believed that the local elections are a sufficient mechanism to verify residents' opinions on the quality of services provided by the local government and a sufficient token of satisfaction.

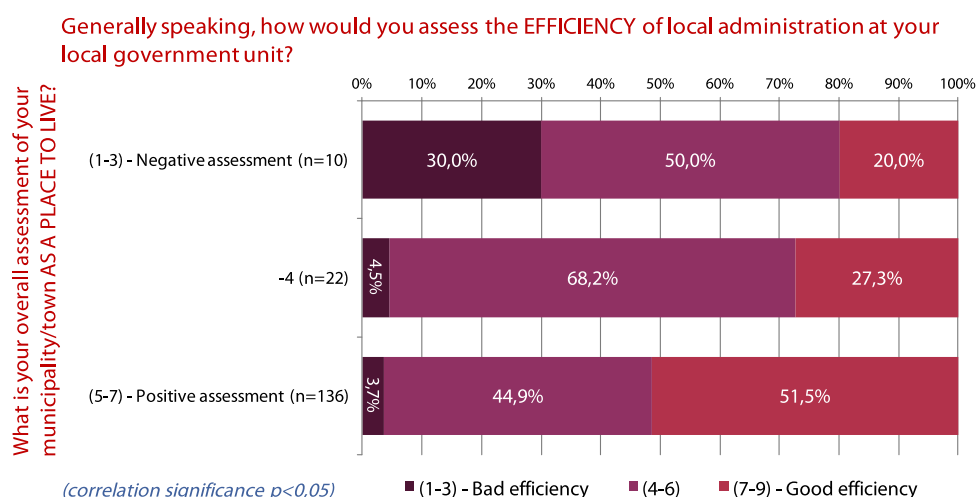
"This is appreciated by the citizens, we are re-elected or not."

As a result, the respondents' opinions on the operations of local government offices presented below are based nearly exclusively on their personal beliefs, their subjective perspective on the reality at the moment of the study.

This perspective should be borne in mind when we look at the generally positive assessment of the performance of the local administration reported in the surveys. The extremely positive ratings (one of the three top categories on the scale) were selected by 36.5% of mayors (in pen-and-paper questionnaires filled in during the conference) and by as many as 46.5% of respondents in the web survey. The sources of discrepancies in the responses can be traced primarily to the different characteristics of the respondents: most of the participants of the web survey occupied managerial positions in local government but were not leaders. Their more positive declarations may have stemmed from well-established knowledge of specific processes under their management or from the fact that they were actually reviewing their own work when assessing the performance of the administration (and, consequently, they may have been tempted to produce positive self-assessment).



Data analysis revealed a significant correlation between the respondents' evaluation of the performance of the administration and their evaluation of local living conditions: a higher rating of the quality of work at the local government office was correlated with a higher rating of the situation in the local government unit. This could mean that efficient administration helps to improve the local living conditions or it could imply that a better situation in a municipality strengthens the local officials' belief about the high quality of their work. Further, detailed analysis of data enables us to get a better understanding of the significance and reasons behind this correlation.



5.2. Provision of public services by local governments

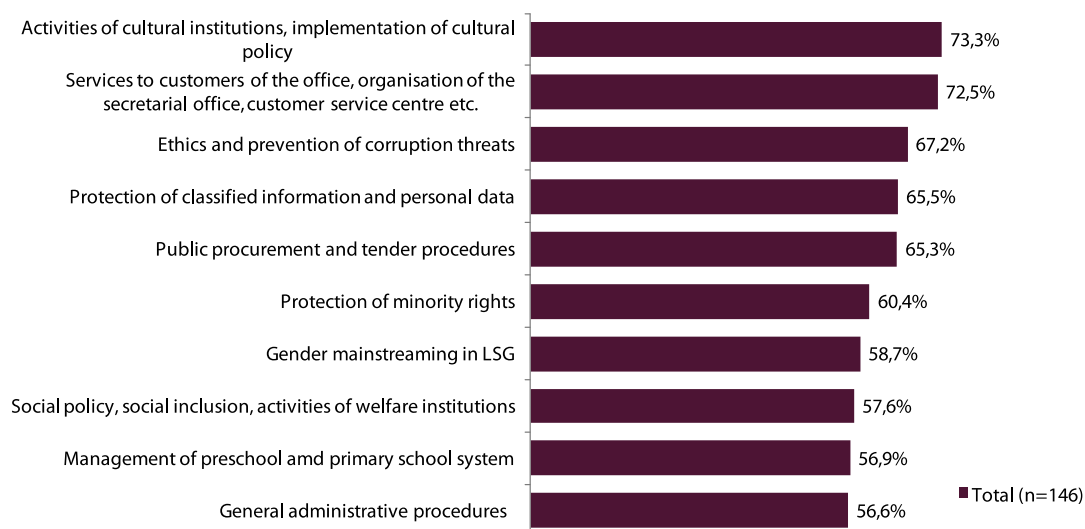
Most of the respondents affirmed that local governments currently perform quite well when it comes to the execution of their primary responsibilities and they engage in active and socially appreciated work despite the difficulties. The highest ratings were given for the implementation of social, cultural and sports policies – this is because most institutions have been maintained and provide services in those areas.

“We are doing a fine job in our social policy where there is room to help groups afflicted by the crisis. We are also doing a wonderful job in the area of culture. There is another job of equal importance done in the sports area. This does not happen at the level of works and this is where the two areas can be looked at separately.”

Strongly positive ratings were also given for the quality of administrative services provided (organisation of the secretariat) and for the quality of customer service in local government offices.

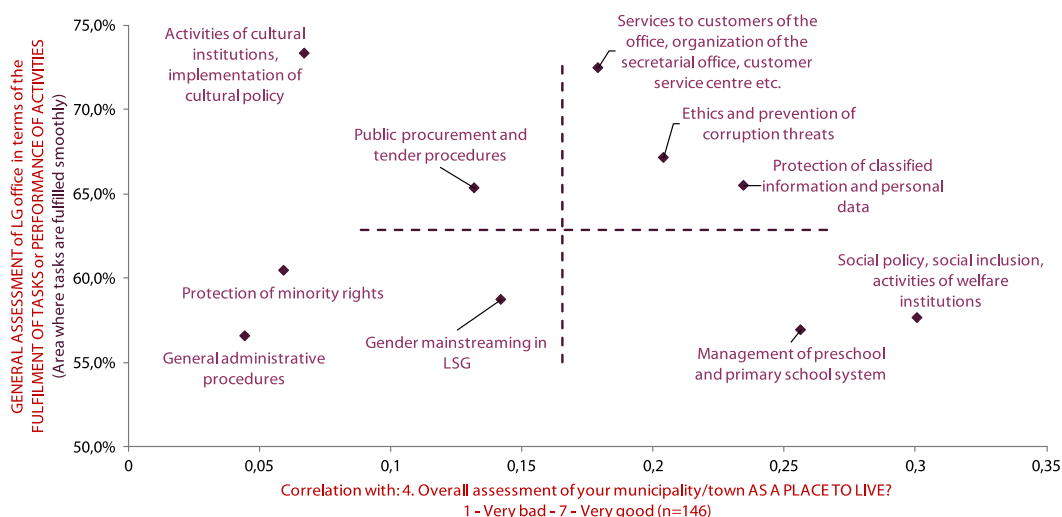
Please provide a GENERAL ASSESSMENT of your office in terms of the FULFILMENT OF TASKS or PERFORMANCE OF ACTIVITIES in those areas.

(Area where tasks are fulfilled smoothly - top 10 indications)



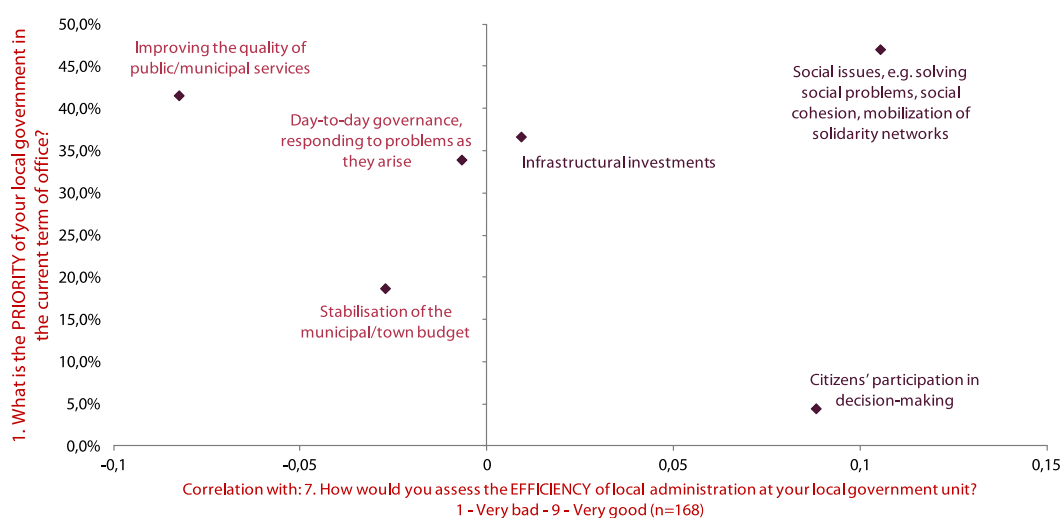
The respondents who gave a positive self-assessment of administration activities remained consistent in most of the areas listed in the survey, i.e. they gave positive ratings for the performance of tasks in these areas. However, what is notable is the distribution of responses given by the respondents from units whose performance was rated negatively: those respondents gave very high ratings for the local execution of tasks in the field of social policy, the activities of welfare institutions, gender mainstreaming and implementation of public procurement procedures.

Analysis of dependencies provides an explanation for these differences. Positive opinions about the provision of social services by local institutions (helping the poor and preventing social exclusion) were accompanied by more favourable perceptions of the LGU as a place to live. By contrast, services provided in the sphere of culture (which were generally rated highest), as well as the protection of minority rights and the provision of administrative services had relatively little impact on the assessment of the local living conditions. These relationships lead to the conclusion that in the times of particular economic hardships and the related social problems the perceived quality of life in local government units is determined mainly by the possibility to meet residents' basic needs, whereas activities aimed at meeting higher-order needs (e.g. creating options for self-fulfilment) are put on the back burner.



The data indicate, therefore, that the impact of a well-functioning administration on the improvement of the local living conditions is determined primarily by the quality of social services. The administrative services (customer service, the operation of the secretariat), though assessed positively, are clearly less important.

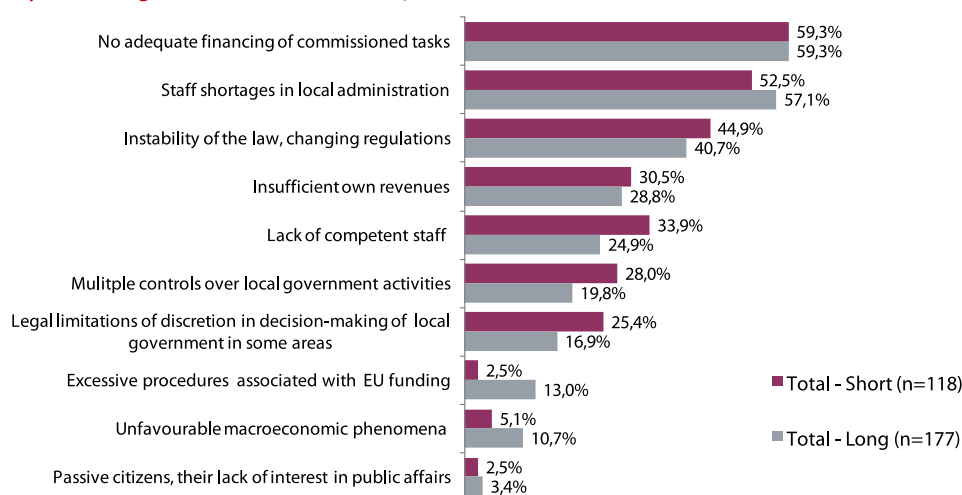
Interesting conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of correlations between the ratings given for the efficiency of the administration and the main local development priorities identified by the respondents. The data confirm that the goals identified by local government officials in underperforming units do not refer to developmental challenges but to solving on-going problems (i.e. improving the quality of services and stabilising the budget). Representatives of higher-rated units were more likely to mention strategic priorities related to infrastructure development. Positive ratings for the performance of administration were correlated (albeit relatively rarely) with attempts to include citizens in local decision-making processes. This may mean that the residents are rarely considered as partners to resolve critical situations by local government officials.



5.3. Problems in managing local government units

In addition to the economic crisis and the adverse consequences of the reforms, survey respondents built a hierarchy of factors affecting the management of local government units. Both groups of respondents (mayors and employees at other levels) unanimously indicated inadequate funding for the tasks entrusted to the local government as the most important issue. The other two most problematic issues are understaffing and frequently changing laws and regulations.

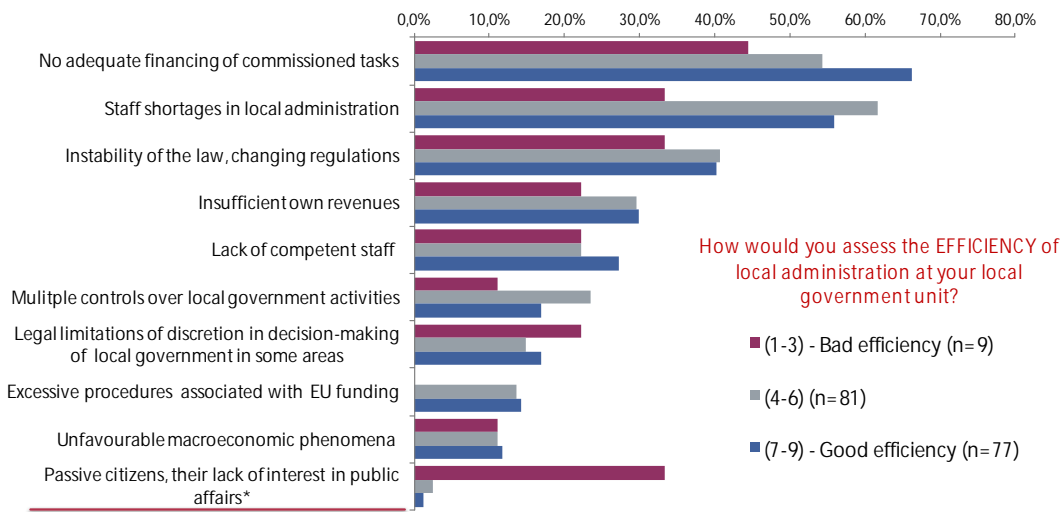
In your opinion, what are the sources of the GREATEST difficulties in the day-to-day management of your local government unit? (top 10 indications)



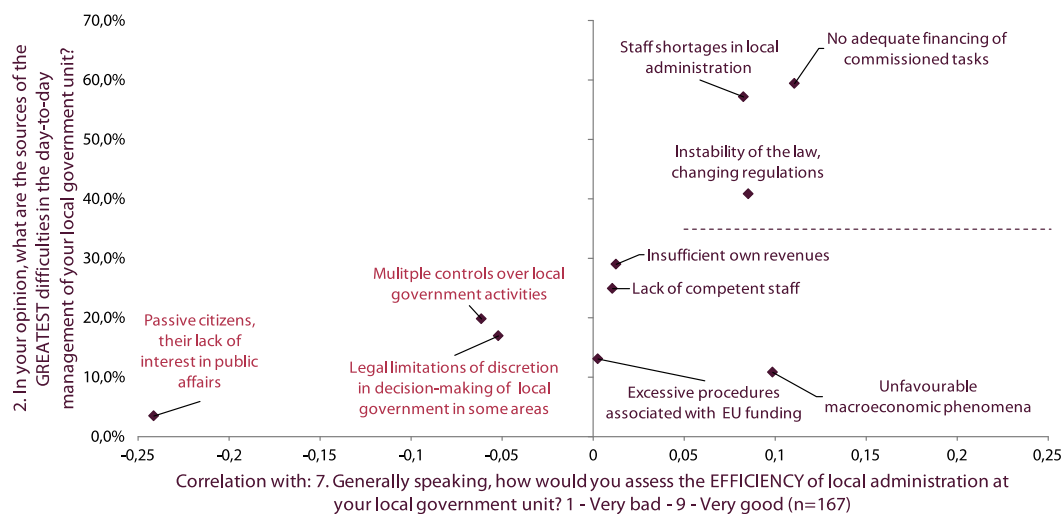
The survey results reveal the existence of interesting disparities in the perception of other factors. In comparison with individuals occupying lower positions, mayors were more likely to mention problems resulting from deficiencies in staff's competences, as well as external factors such as the changing legislation, frequent inspections and legal restrictions on the autonomous decision-making of local governments in certain areas. Conversely, the other category of respondents strongly emphasised problems linked to staff shortages. They also pointed out (though far less frequently) the burdens resulting from disproportionately lengthy procedures for the acquisition and operation of EU-funded projects and the impact of certain unfavourable macroeconomic developments. Presumably, the differences in the opinions of both groups reflect different types of challenges they face. In a sense, this conclusion can be confirmed by the opinions presented by leaders in the interviews: they rated the performance of local authorities negatively mostly in connection with the failures in dealing with labour market problems, fighting unemployment and professional activation of groups particularly affected by the crisis, whereas the same respondents paid less attention to day-to-day work of the offices.

An in-depth analysis of correlations indicates that the most important problems perceived in efficient local governments were primarily related to factors that would affect their efficiency, such as staff shortages, lack of sufficient financing of commissioned tasks (which prevents local governments from making the full use of their resources), or the changing legal regulations (which limits local government offices in effective planning of various projects). Representatives of the units assessed as less efficient mostly mentioned frequent inspections and constraints on the decision-making powers of local authorities.

In your opinion, what are the sources of the GREATEST difficulties in the day-to-day management of your local government unit? (top 10 indications)



This distribution of correlations may lead to the conclusion that external inspections and constraints on the decision-making powers of local governments (undoubtedly problematic for local authorities) are not a major obstacle to efficiency, at least according to some respondents. One might even get the impression that these factors are a fairly convenient excuse for the reported problems: based on this narrative, poor performance can be blamed not on inefficient management of resources but, instead, on oppressive external conditions.

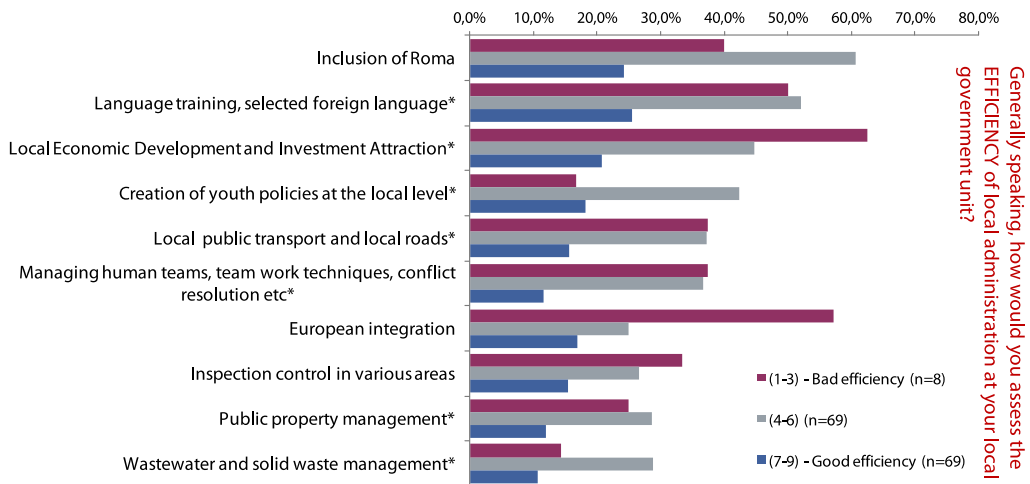


As regards factors which were rated particularly negatively in the context of the execution of tasks by local government units, the respondents most commonly mentioned lack of language skills and lack of successes in integrating the Roma minority.

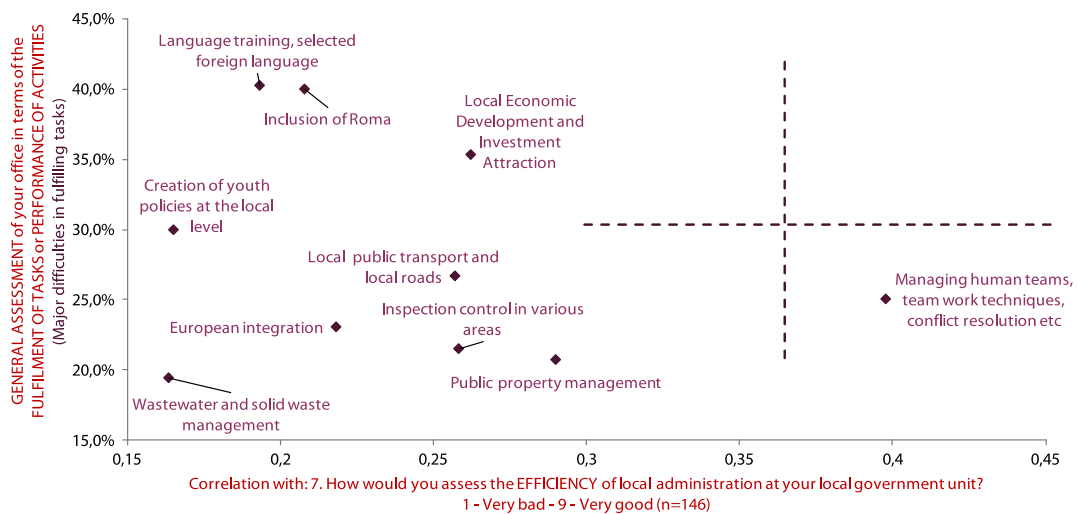
Importantly, these problems were usually highlighted by those respondents who themselves rated their local government offices as having low or average performance. They also often mentioned the difficulties in the implementation of EU regulations and the need to promote economic growth and to attract investors. Performance was not rated positively if the respondents noticed problems in the maintenance of road infrastructure and public transport, and in human resources management.

Please provide a GENERAL ASSESSMENT of your office in terms of the FULFILMENT OF TASKS or PERFORMANCE OF ACTIVITIES in those areas.

(major difficulties in fulfilling tasks - top 10 indications)

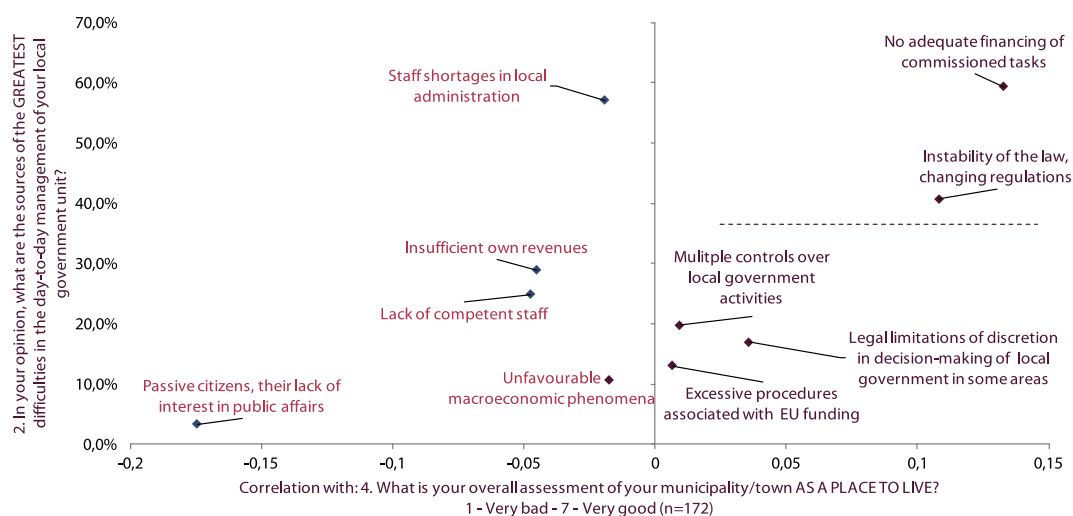


Moreover, the findings lead to the conclusion that the perceived efficiency of local government is particularly affected by problems in the field of water and wastewater management, creation of youth policies at the local level, and the limited language skills of the staff. On the other hand, performance ratings are improved when accompanied by the reflection on the limitations resulting from inefficient human resources management (within the powers available to local governments).



In addition, data analysis enabled us to identify a group of factors which have a negative impact on the local quality of life. The main factor here is the limited internal potential, whether caused by economic conditions (insufficient own revenues and the lack of funding needed to execute tasks), or resulting from the shortage of human capital (lack of staff's competence or employment restrictions). The research results show that only when their own resources are optimally utilised, do local governments begin to experience the limitations resulting from factors beyond their control (e.g. unavailability of adequate funding for commissioned tasks, or unstable legislation). The conclusions presented here indicate the existence of two equal lines of thinking about enhancement of development opportunities in local government units: work to create a favourable milieu for

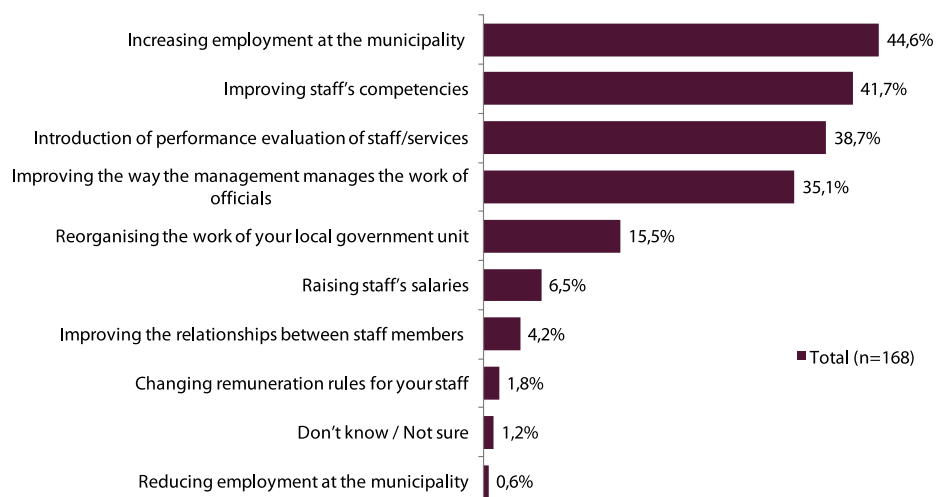
economic growth in local communities should be accompanied by investment in staff's skills. Only such a balanced approach will enable full utilisation of endogenous local potential.



5.4. Staffs' competence shortages and HR management practices

Increased employment was mentioned by the respondents as the most important element which, in their opinion, could improve the performance of local administration. Further important factors were as follows: improving staff's competences, introduction of performance evaluation of staff/services, and improving the way the management manages the work of staff.

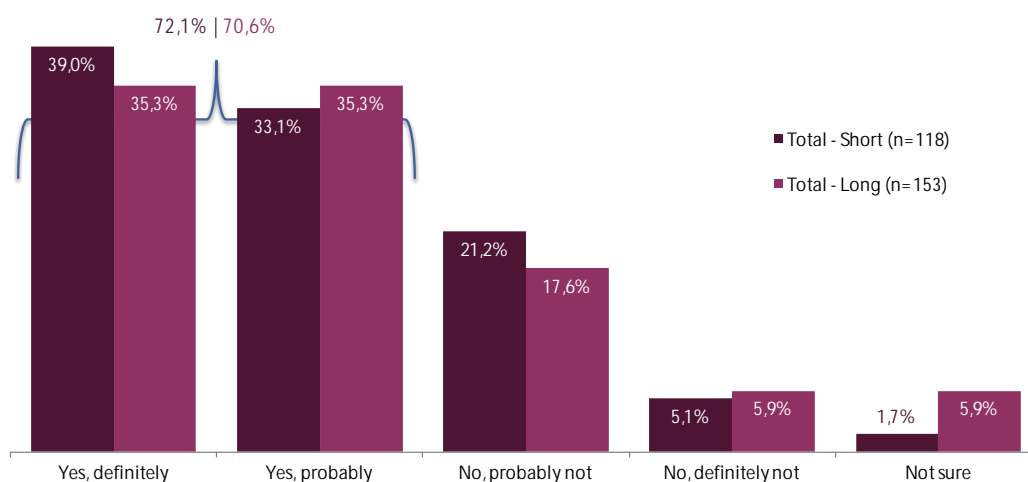
In your opinion, what would be the most effective way to boost the performance of your municipality?
(top 10 indications)



When analysing these data, one should pay attention to a number of issues. Above all, as mentioned earlier, staff shortages have mostly the competence-related dimension rather than a purely quantitative dimension: many local government units have sufficient numbers of staff but, given the applicable regulations and no possibility to replace staff members, those units suffer from insufficient competences (however, the need to increase employment is significant in smaller local government units: in mountainous areas and on islands).

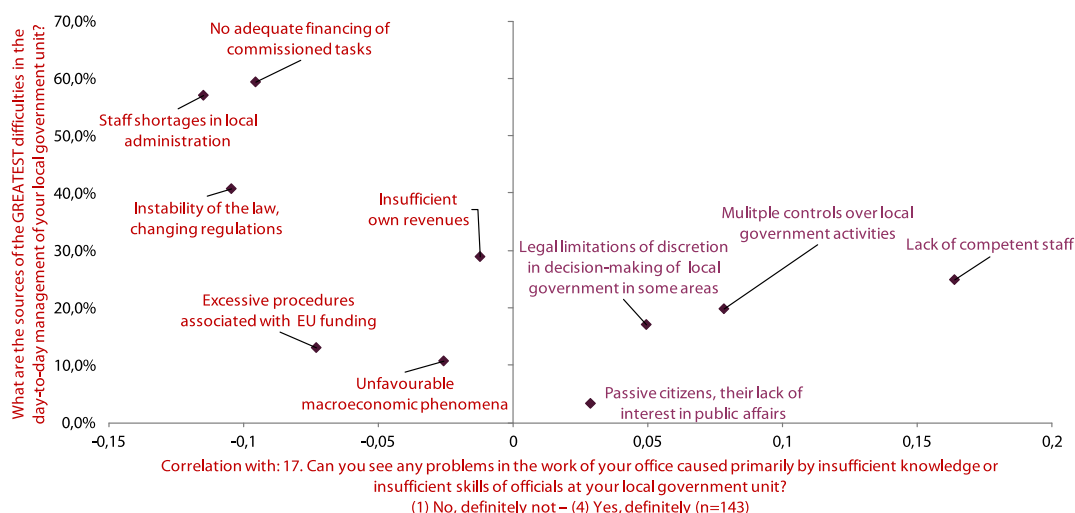
The problems related to competence gaps were mentioned quite commonly: the vast majority of the respondents admitted seeing them in their own local administration. Interestingly, opinions expressed by mayors were not much different from those given by other respondents (i.e. lower levels of management).

Can you see any problems in the work of your office caused primarily by insufficient knowledge or insufficient skills of officials at your local government unit?

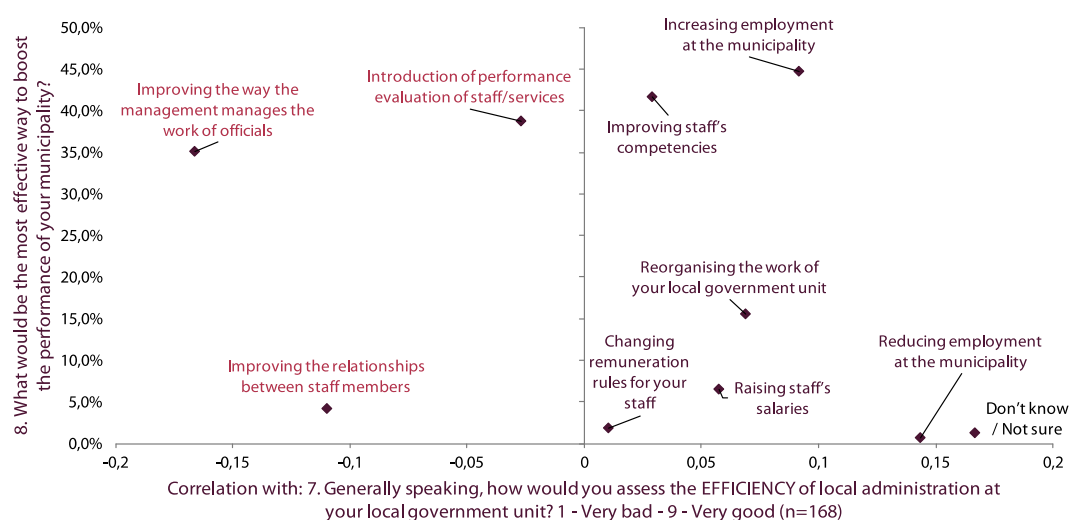


Generally speaking, representatives of smaller units were somewhat more critical in their assessments of staff's competences (as many as 40% top box answers). What may have a significant impact on the assessment of staff's competences is that the respondents from smaller units presumably have a better idea of the actual human resources at their disposal. Other reasons behind this difference may also be sought in the limited availability of specialists in small centres. This problem is most acutely felt in small towns located in tourist areas (on islands): specialised staff cannot be attracted to live there since the living costs are very high (especially rents and housing) but wages are barely higher than in mainland regions.

The significance of insufficient staff's competences in everyday work is highlighted in the relationship between the perceived sources of the most important management problems and the declared scale of shortcomings in this regard. The data indicated that the respondents who noticed competence gaps were less likely to mention problems such as the absence of adequate financing for the commissioned tasks, instability of the law or the lack of sufficient staff numbers. In other words, the data shows that the impact of many problems faced by local governments may be reduced, at least partially, by ensuring the availability of sufficiently competent staff.



As regards other important problems that undermine the performance of local government units, the respondents mentioned weaknesses in HR management and absence of widespread practices to assess work efficiency.



The essence of the former problem can be understood when we analyse the interviews with leaders. In the light of those interviews, we should conclude that local authorities can, in theory, quite freely shape the way their offices work, i.e. delegate tasks to individual employees and organisational units. However, given the very limited freedom in HRM, the practice of personnel management comes down to moving individuals between different positions and changing the scope of their job responsibilities. It should be noted, however, that such reallocation of officials has negative consequences: the already opaque structure of the office becomes even more complicated, and the scope of real accountability is difficult to define. Sometimes such actions blur the responsibility and obstruct a realistic performance assessment.

"We have an administrative-financial department that falls under both administrative and financial directorate. We have the department of cleaning maintainers that falls under both administrative and green directorate and under cleaning."

As a result, the organisation of offices is rated as too complicated and inefficient, even by their leaders. Sometimes heads of departments have little knowledge about the scope of responsibilities of all their subordinate officials.

"Many times, the directors themselves have no total knowledge of what is happening in the directorates they are supervising. They cannot know. Of course, they know their staff..."

Deprived of real management tools, mayors rely on "leading by example" or, in other words, they hope that officials, inspired by their leader, will work with commitment and efficiency.

"In Greece the most important way to teach your employees is leading by example through your work. (...) Last Saturday the City Hall flooded...there was a lot of rain ...and me along with a female cleaner...because everybody had gone on Saturday...I was pushing waters out of the Hall for three hours...with brooms. This is really one way to show them, along with what we call in Greek a good will, how to become engaged in a working process. Training of the type "come and we will show you" and so on...But this usually does not have the expected result."

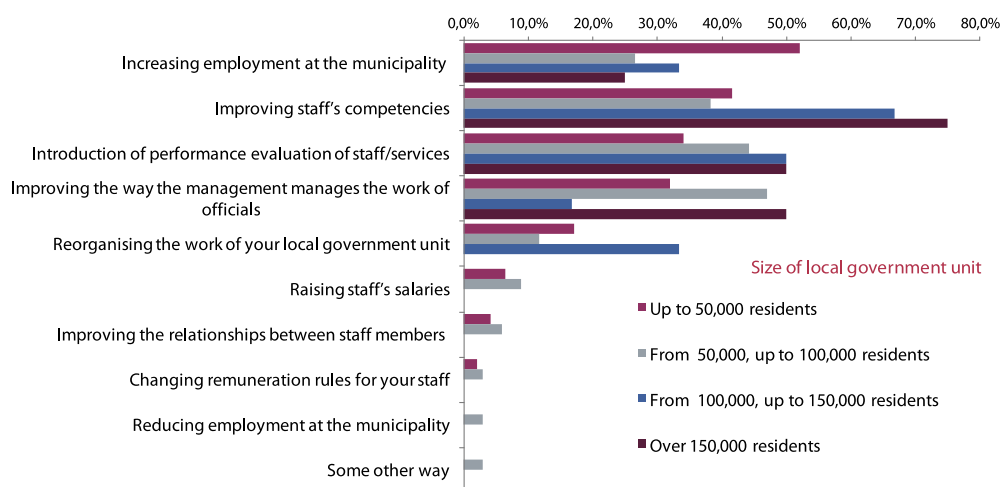
Another issue is the absence of systematic employee performance assessment practices. Systematic staff assessment is conducted in municipalities very rarely (only 7% of the respondents confirmed that in the last three years their municipality conducted self-assessment using some systematic tool). Managers sometimes have little knowledge about the actual performance of subordinate staff and administrative units. Most respondents do not appreciate the importance of such mechanisms, and some believe that staff assessment in small offices is not needed at all.

"In small municipalities we have a personal view (...) For example, in the old municipality (...) there were 200 employees and I was there for many years – knew everyone so I had a picture of...who, what and why."

However, it should be underlined that according to Law 4369/2016 there is an official staff assessment mechanism in place, which is not implemented by most of the municipalities.

The need to strengthen staff's competence and to improve HR management methods was particularly strongly highlighted by representatives of the largest units, where the organisational problems are felt most acutely due to high employment figures. This is probably due to the fact that procedures which define the execution of specific tasks play a more important role in larger organisations. In small units, with a limited number of employees, deficiencies in work organisation or competence gaps may be compensated thanks to informal support provided by closely cooperating colleagues.

In your opinion, what would be the most effective way to boost the performance of your municipality? (top 10 indications)



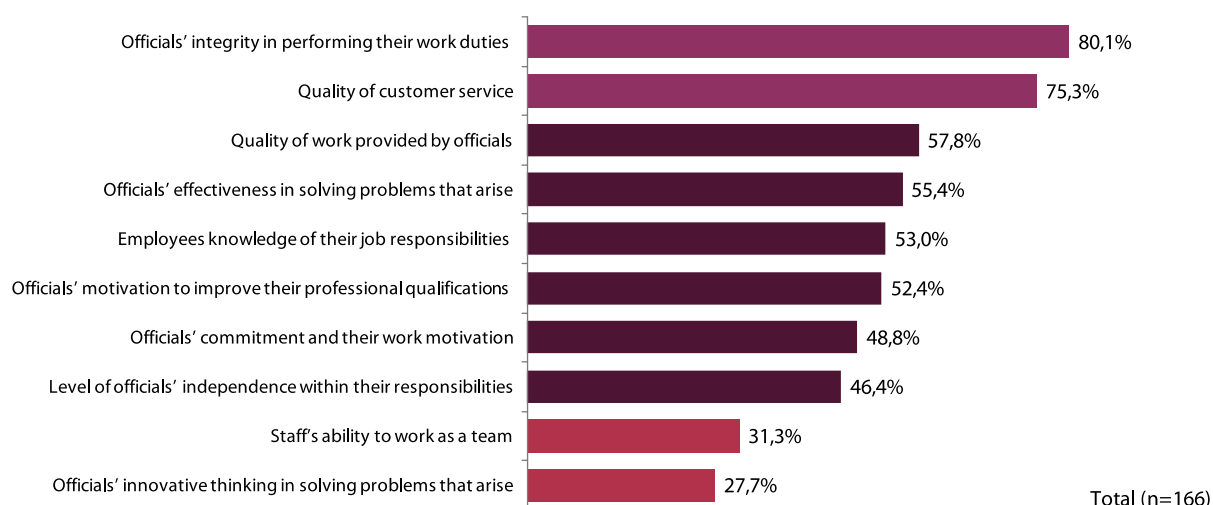
An additional obstacle to rational human resources policy lies in the promotion system based on the so-called “promotion points”: their acquisition is regulated by specific, highly formalised rules. According to some respondents, this system leads to a situation where the mayor is forced to promote an inefficient official just because he/she has accumulated the required number of promotion points.

“...the system is, in my opinion, conceptually wrong. Also, may I ask you something quite frankly? What am I supposed to do with a bunch of senior officials or directors that I would never have employed in the first place? if this was a private company – my experience comes from the private sector – I would never have given these people a job... On the other hand, I have excellent staff members that are simple employees, with outstanding qualifications. For instance, an engineer in my staff cannot be promoted because his work experience in the private sector is not officially recognised for promotion. The evaluation method must change. Some people are taking it easy and do not work. It is as simple as that. They simply refuse to learn.”

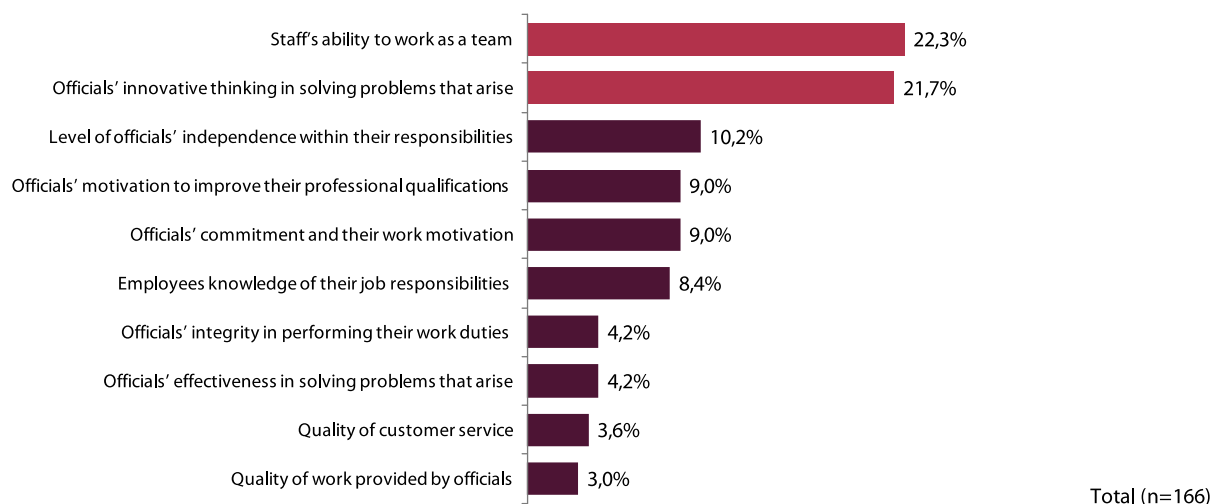
5.5. Evaluation of the quality of officials’ work

In the surveys conducted under the study, the respondents highly rated the officials’ integrity in performing their work duties and the quality of service provided to residents by local government offices. Among the most important problems the respondents identified the absence of teamwork skills and the lack of innovative approach to problem solving. Based on the collected data we can therefore conclude that officials work relatively well within the established procedures but their approach to work is mainly routinized.

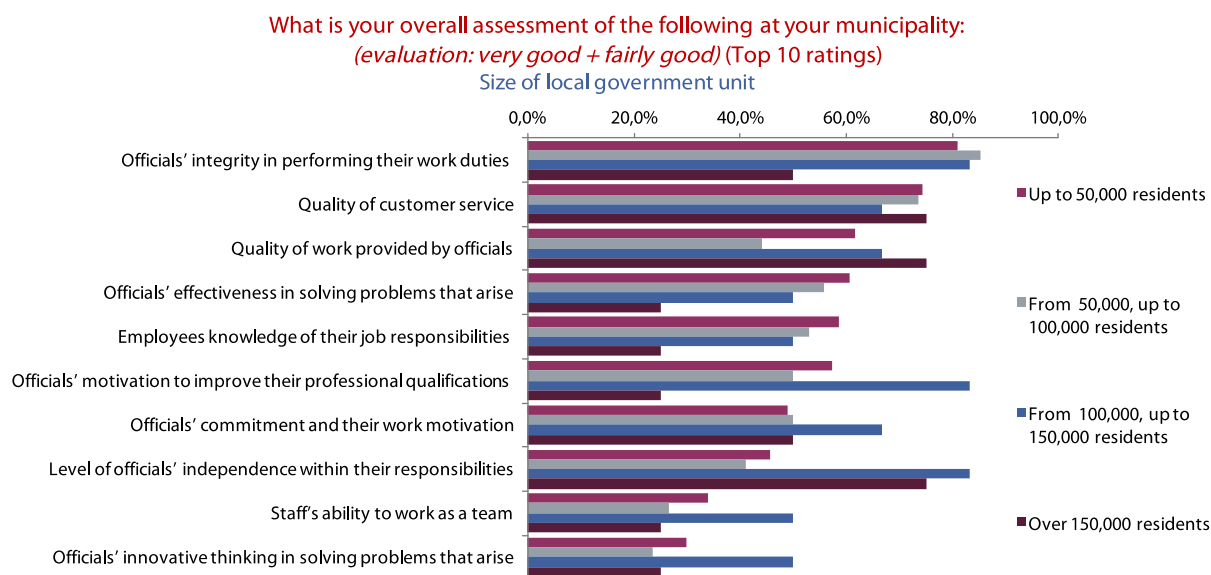
What is your overall assessment of the following at your municipality:
(evaluation: very good + fairly good) (Top 10 ratings)



What is your overall assessment of the following at your municipality:
(evaluation: fairly poor + very poor) (10 lowest ratings)

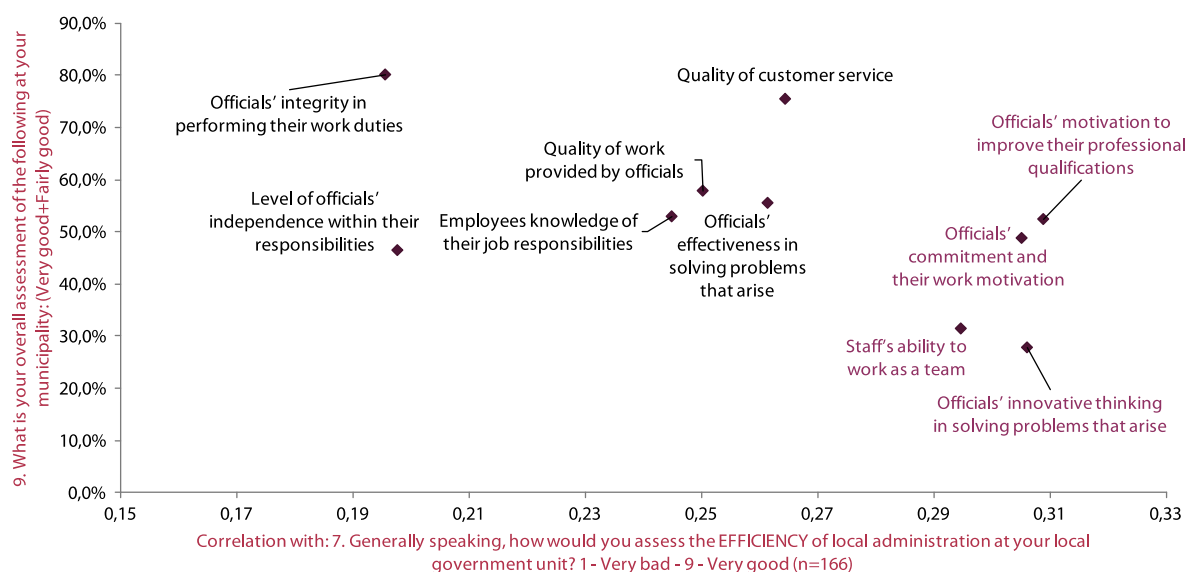


Representatives of the largest local government units rated professional liability of officials lower than respondents representing small and medium size units. Moreover, the data indicates more positive ratings for self-reliance and motivation of employees of larger units as well as greater appreciation of the employees of smaller units for the effectiveness in carrying out their tasks and for knowledge of issues related to their work duties.



The revealed dependencies allow us to illustrate the likely operation conditions of offices of various sizes. In larger units, characterized by a higher personnel headcount, the possibility of exercising direct supervision over employees is limited. In this context, the poor quality verification procedures identified in the survey should probably be interpreted as respondents' lower confidence in "officials' integrity in performing work duties." At the same time, the situation in larger units creates more opportunities for motivated, independent and innovative employees. In the case of smaller offices, whose business is based largely on implementing standardised, routine tasks, what becomes more important is the knowledge of administrative procedures and the direct nature of the prevailing social relations (which entails greater transparency of actions taken by employees). Meanwhile, the ratings of professional integrity of officials, the quality of their work and the quality of customer service were much higher in units where the local living conditions were also rated higher.

The analysis of the relationship between the ratings given for specific aspects of officials' work and the general evaluation of the efficiency of local administration enabled us to identify a group of factors which have the greatest positive effect on the work of local government offices. These include: the engagement of employees, their motivation to improve their professional qualifications, teamwork skills, and a creative approach to solving problems. Issues such as professional integrity, self-reliance, knowledge of issues related to one's job responsibilities are of less importance. This means that the key to improve the operations of local authorities and to release the unused potential can lie in investments in developing human capital. However, as a prerequisite for the success of such projects, it is essential to develop systemic solutions resulting in increased levels of job satisfaction in local government bodies.



At the same time, it should be emphasised once again that some of the interviewed leaders quite critically perceived the potential of their employees, arguing that most of them were poorly educated and had generally low motivation to work.

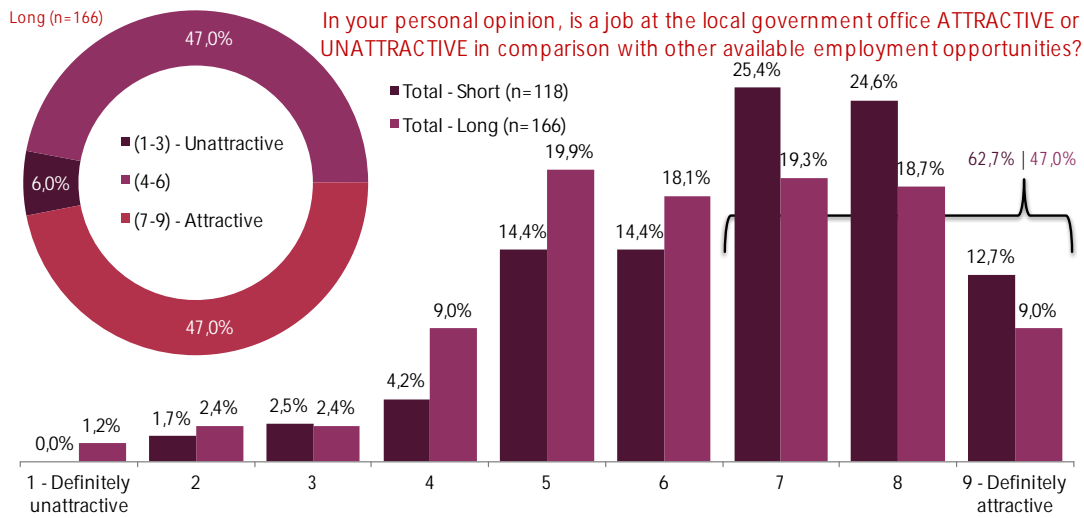
"we have uneducated personnel, a public sector that has never been able to learn to feel and love what they are doing and do it with enjoyment...but they are trying, under quick retirement relaxations terms, to respond to things. This generates many problems because we may have personnel in some cases but this staff is not performing to the degree that they should have, which is a lot more, and this is getting on my nerves...in a crisis period that people do not have work and they are hungry, our employees that have a regular post...month in, month out...they should respect that, a lot more and be prepared to produce a lot more."

5.6. The attractiveness of employment and officials' motivation to work in the local administration

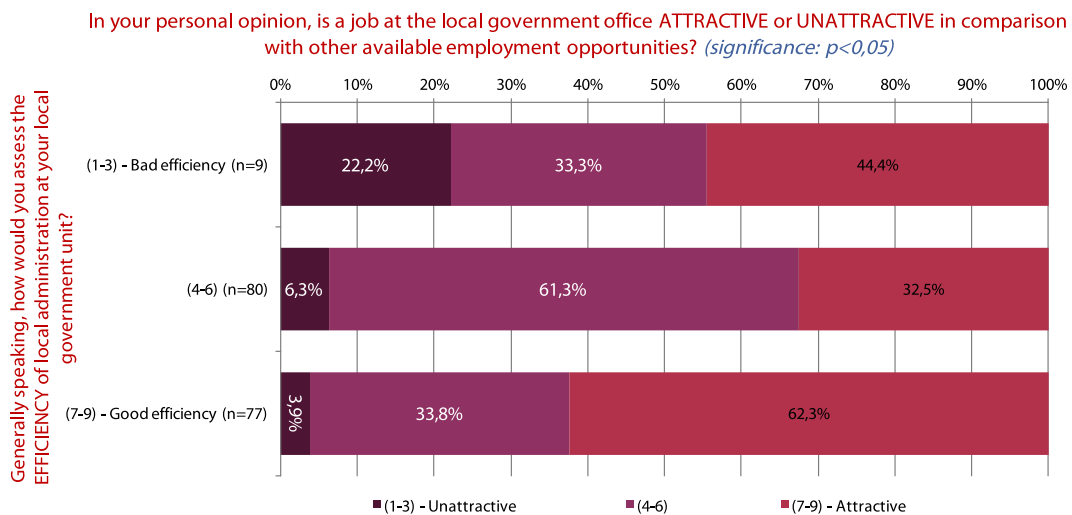
The respondents were divided in their opinions on whether work for the local administration is attractive compared with careers in other spheres of the economy. Mayors were clearly more likely to see local government as an attractive place of employment than their subordinates (most often also occupying prominent positions): taking into account three extreme (highest) points on the scale, the difference is as high as 15.7%.

The reasons for this situation can be sought in two sources:

- The work of a mayor is probably more attractive socially and may involve additional benefits (both in terms of image and probably also financial benefits);
- As individuals obviously representing the administrative apparatus in their municipalities, mayors were less likely to give negative ratings for the attractiveness of the work in the offices which they headed.

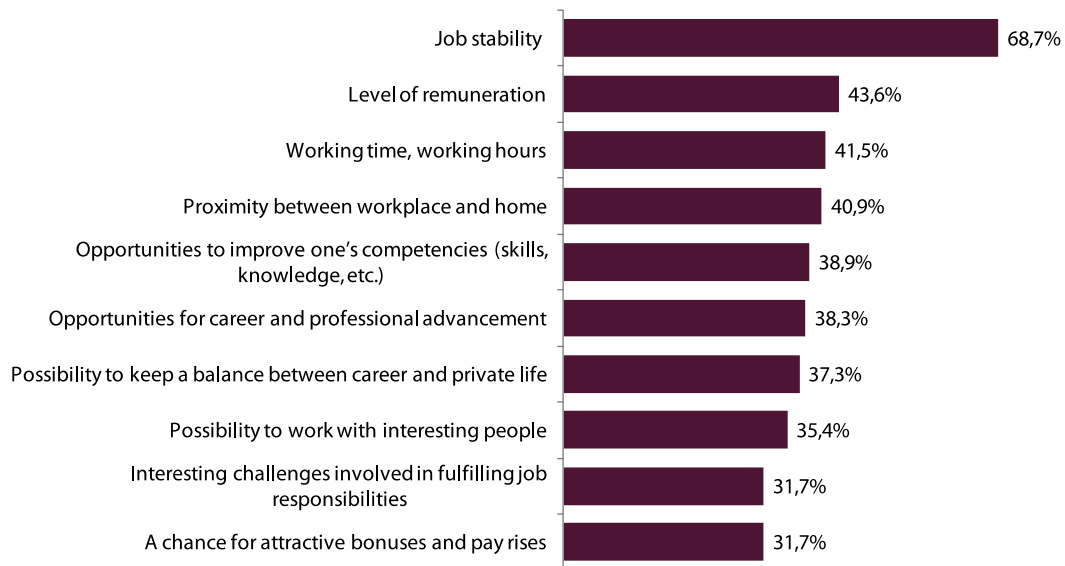


The rating of the attractiveness of working for local government is influenced by the more general beliefs about the overall performance of the unit concerned.

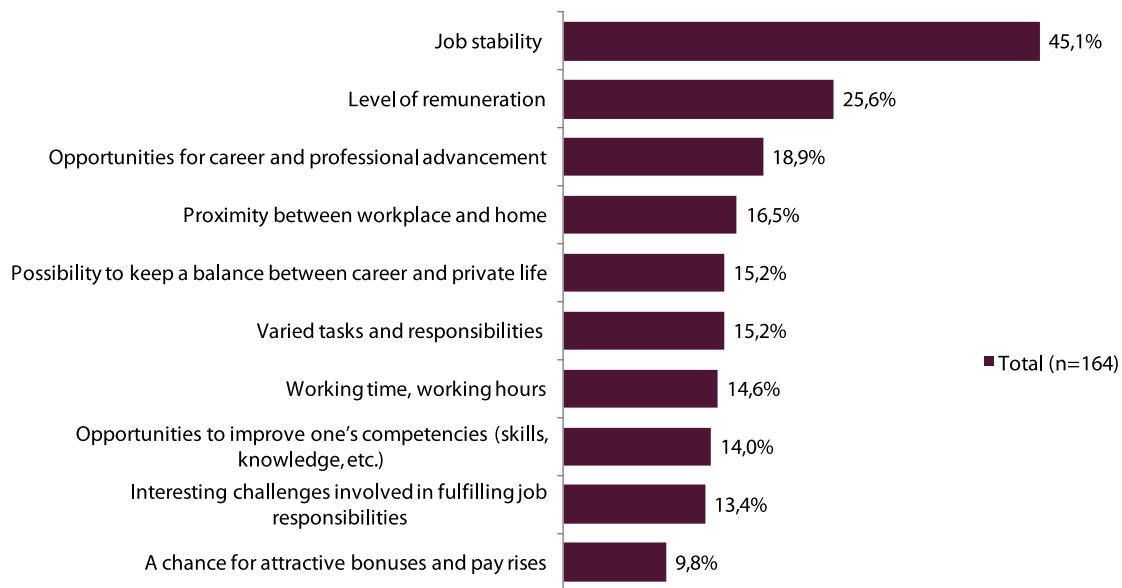


The respondents were asked to indicate the factors which, in their opinion, influence the attractiveness of local government jobs. The responses clearly highlight the importance of stability of employment. Other elements, such as earnings or working time, are also important but clearly not as much as the former factor. Among factors which were irrelevant for the attractiveness of local government jobs the respondents usually mentioned the opportunity to receive additional benefits and opportunities for pay rises (the possibility of earning additional income is presumably perceived as unlikely, even though there is a limited opportunity to work overtime and receive additional pay for it).

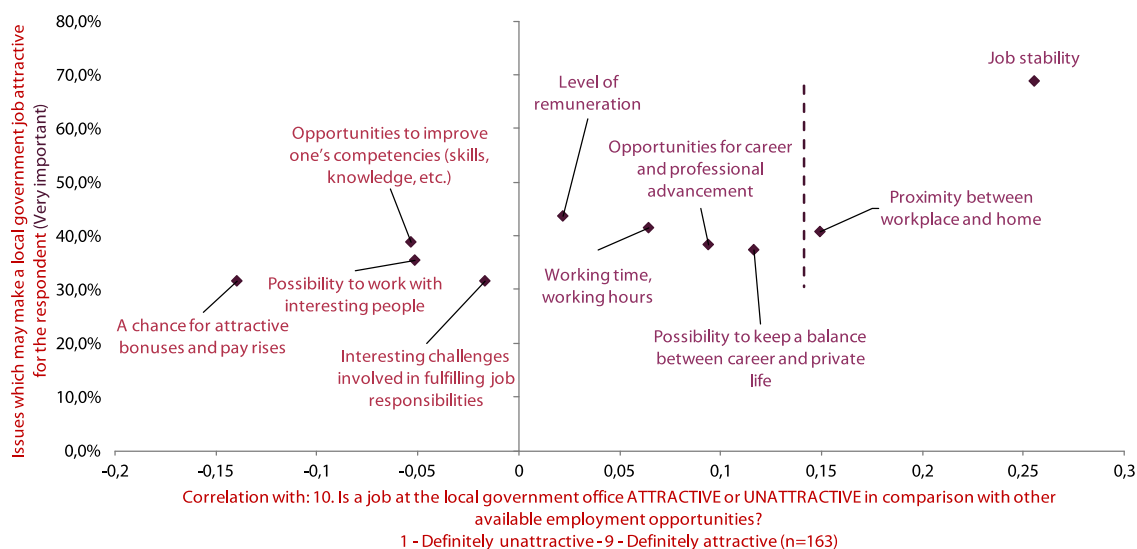
Below is a list of various issues which may make a local government job attractive. Please specify if each of them is important or unimportant TO YOU PERSONALLY in the context of working for local government? (indication: very important – top 10)



And which of those factors play the most important role for you in the context of your work for local government? (Top 10 indications)



The data further indicates that the attractiveness of employment in local government is generally determined by such factors as employment stability (this factor strongly prevails over all others), proximity between the place of residence and place of work, and the ability to maintain a balance between career and private life. These elements can hardly be seen as driving development: under the existing conditions, the hierarchy indicates the officials' need to maintain quiet, stable, and probably not very demanding jobs.



In the interviews, the respondents repeatedly stressed that because of the financial crisis any job which brings regular pay, even if not necessarily high, enables the respondents to maintain a minimum sense of security. While the survey data suggests that this factor does not drive the appeal of the workplace as such but it is a highly stabilising element in uncertain times

"They are satisfied since they don't feel that their salaries are in danger."

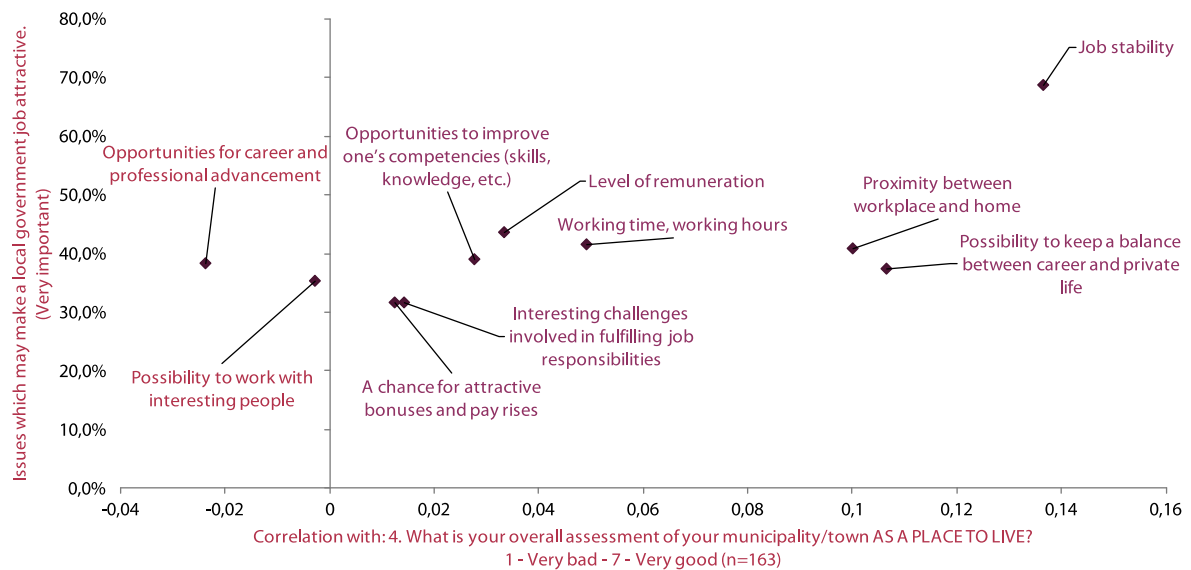
This rule is not universal, however. Compensation of local government personnel has been reduced significantly in the last few years, which is why in some cases, particularly in tourist areas, where living costs are higher than the average; it is problematic to make both ends meet on a salary of a local government official.

"A female employee in our municipality earned 1,000 euros per month in 2010 which very simply was a satisfactory salary in order to make a living. (...) [She used to] earn 1.000 euros x 14 salaries along with the bonuses at 12,000 euros of tax exception. Today she earns 700 euros x 12 salaries at 5,000 tax exception. The same person is forced to live, along with the taxes, with the same amount of expenses and a tax increase on the region of 40% than she used to live."

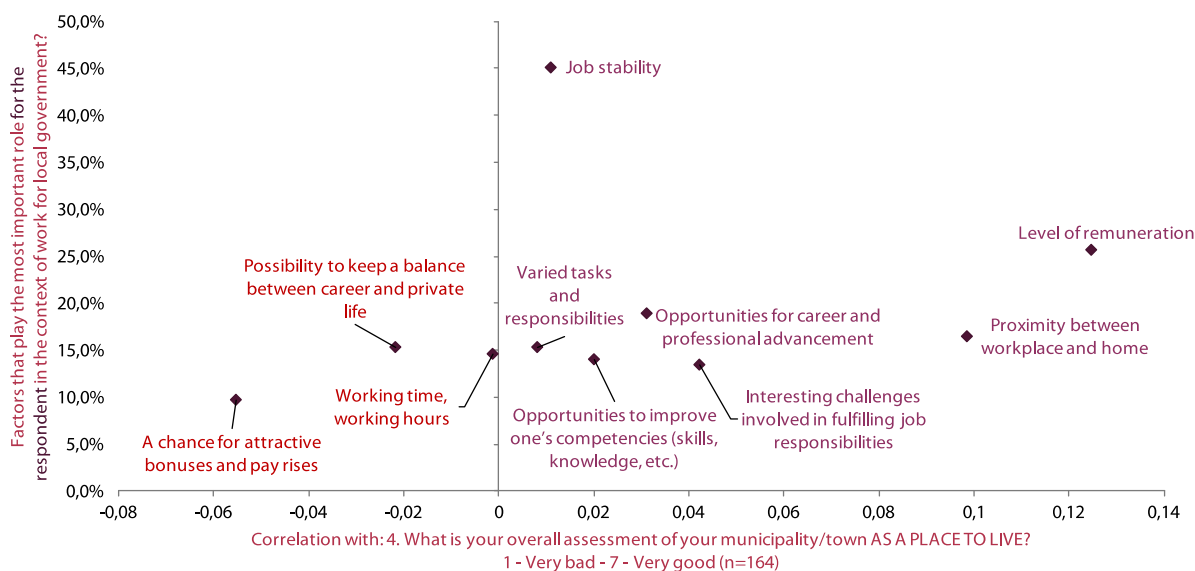
In light of these comments, it seems interesting to look at the different expectations regarding employment. In locations considered as 'a good place to live', the stability ensured by a local government job is especially important, alongside the other elements associated with a sense of security, such as a balance between career and private life, and proximity between home and the workplace. These elements essentially coincide, i.e. satisfaction with life in a given location (it can be assumed that when answering the question about the general quality of life the respondents were

largely guided by their own feelings) and the compatibility of career and private life make up a cluster of features characteristic of general welfare and sense of security.

In the case of municipalities characterised by less favourable living conditions, the elements which gain importance are those which create opportunities for personal growth (career opportunities and opportunities for professional development) or may be a counterweight to the adverse conditions of everyday life (the ability to work with interesting people).

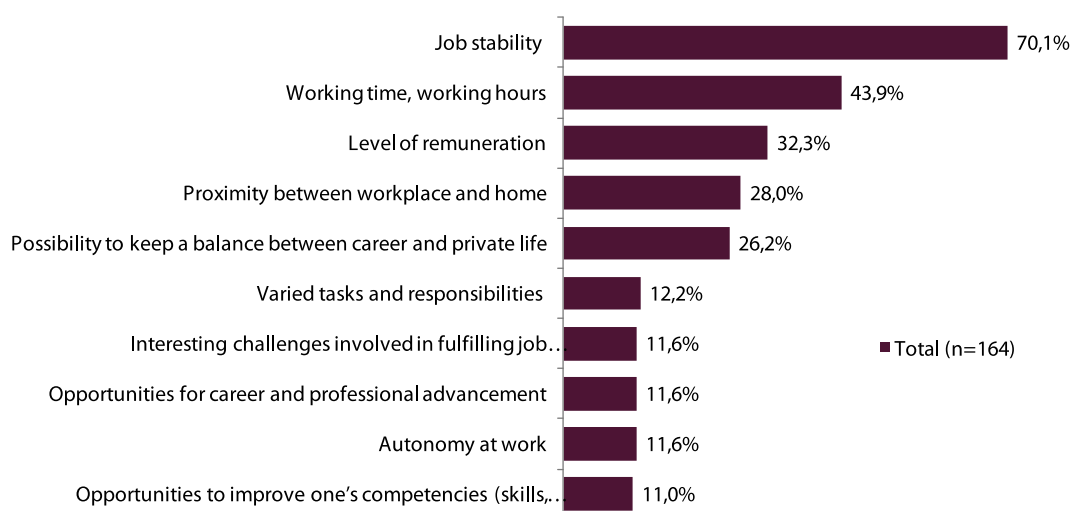


However, when the possibility to choose factors determining the attractiveness of employment was reduced to a maximum of two, the aforementioned relationships were eliminated. What came to the fore were issues which turned out to be crucial for all the respondents (i.e. stability of employment and salary levels), thus blurring the importance of other factors.

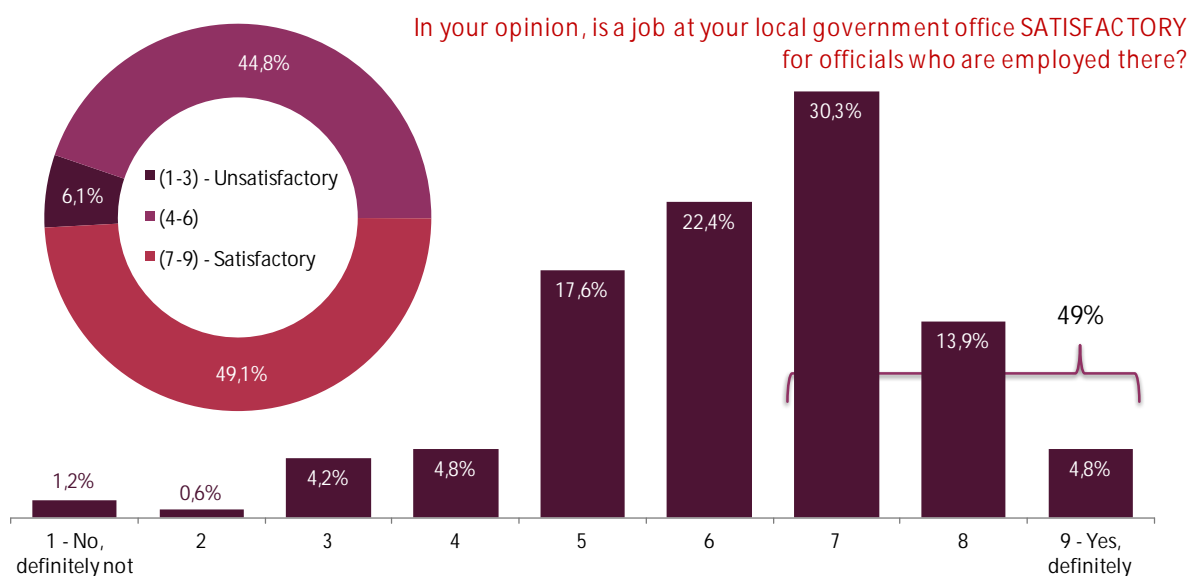


When asked a projective question about the importance of various elements that influence the attractiveness of local government jobs, the surveyed respondents also mentioned stability of employment as the key factor. Other elements played a lesser role, although it is worth noting that the hierarchy looked somewhat different here. While the level of salaries was the second most important aspect, yet when asked about employees' preferences, the respondents first chose the working time and only then the level of salaries. Interestingly, the opportunities for personal growth and competence development came last. This may indicate either a subjective belief that the personnel do not expect to have opportunities for professional development, or a bitter realisation that the offices are not able to provide their staff with such opportunities under the existing conditions.

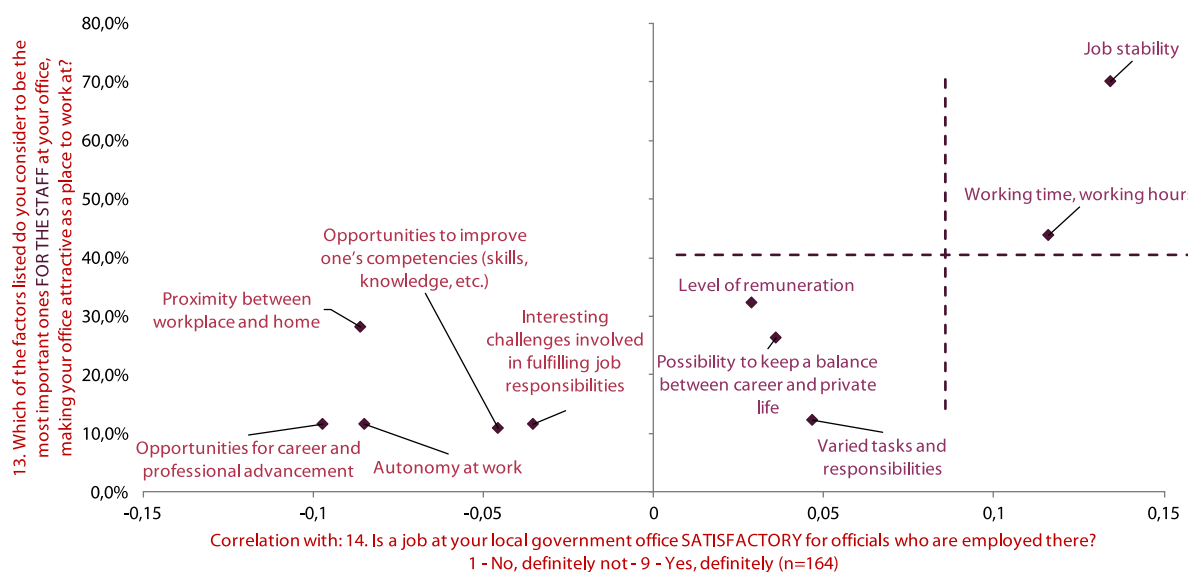
Which of the factors listed do you consider to be the most important ones FOR THE STAFF at your office, making your office attractive as a place to work at? (Top 10 indications)



Most respondents believe that local administrative employees are fairly satisfied with their jobs. Although positive ratings represent less than a half of the opinions, one should take note of the very few negative ratings.



According to the respondents, officials attach special importance to job stability and predictable working hours.



Statements made by the participants of qualitative research reflected the findings from the survey data. In interviews, the participants often emphasised that local government creates a friendly and relatively safe employment environment, which comprises fixed working hours, a friendly atmosphere in the office, limited requirements or little control from superiors.

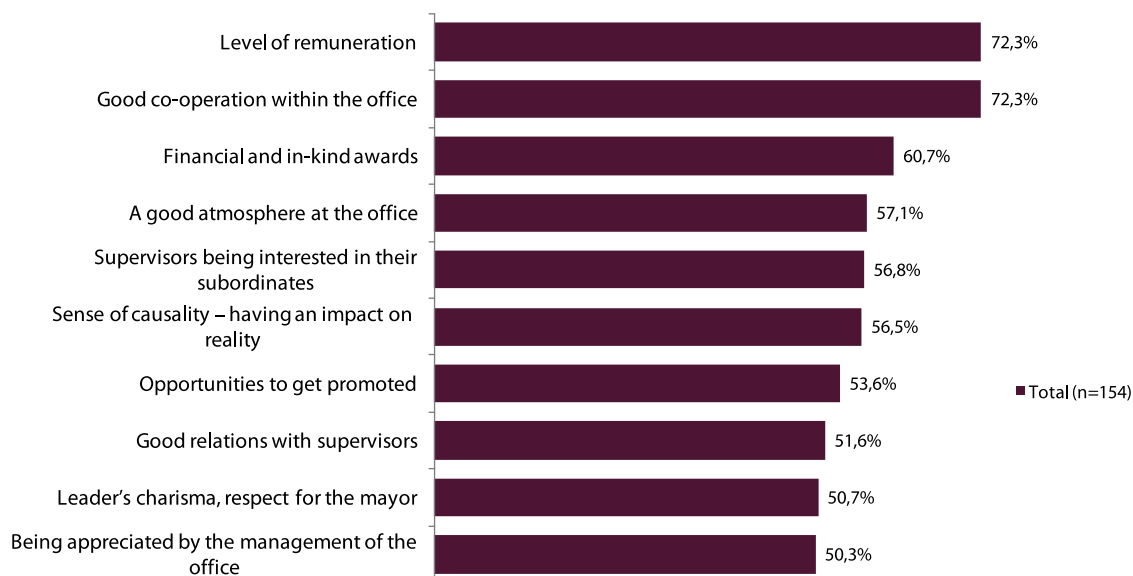
"I think the majority is happy. From the point of view that, you know, we try to create a healthy work environment. They are as happy as they can be in the Greek state."

The current regulations limit the possibility to implement effective incentive systems in government offices. The management has no formal tools that would enable the implementation of a rational, conscious human resources policy: promoting the outstanding employees, strengthening the staff's commitment or shaping the right approach to the performance of work duties. Municipal leaders can only pay restricted overtime (up to 22 hours per month) and sometimes offer extra leaves as a kind of "performance reward" (although this is not easy, due to the lack of personnel). As a result, many employees are not really committed to their job and only few are those who are really ambitious and moving things ahead.

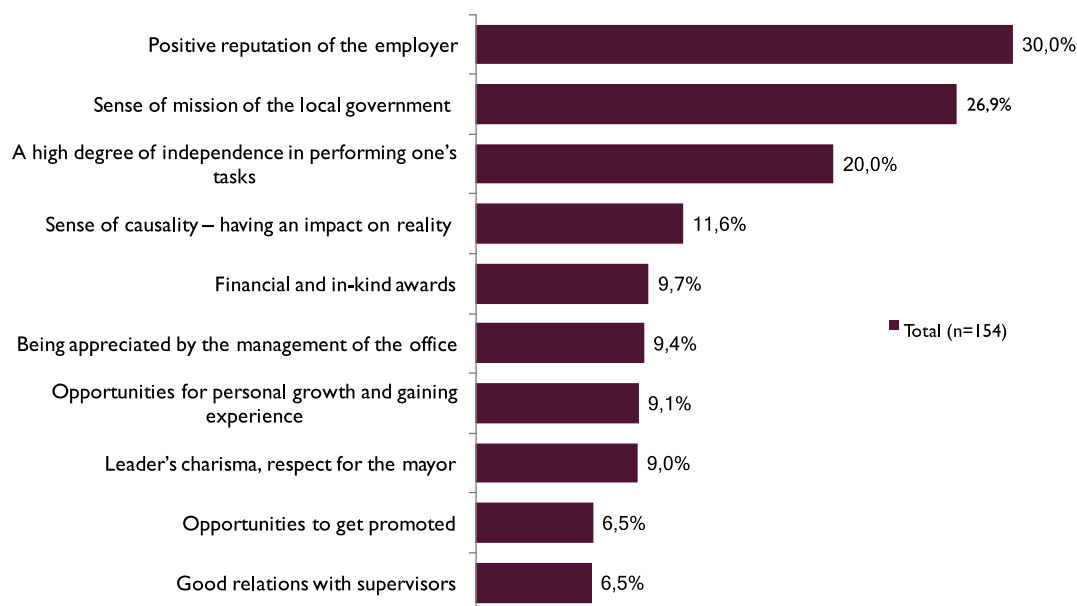
"The only thing we can do is (...) to give a day-off."

When indicating the factors that could motivate local administration employees to work better, the respondents pointed primarily at the level of remuneration and good cooperation with the team at the office. Among other relevant but not critical factors the respondents mentioned the good reputation of the employer and the feeling that this job is important for the local community.

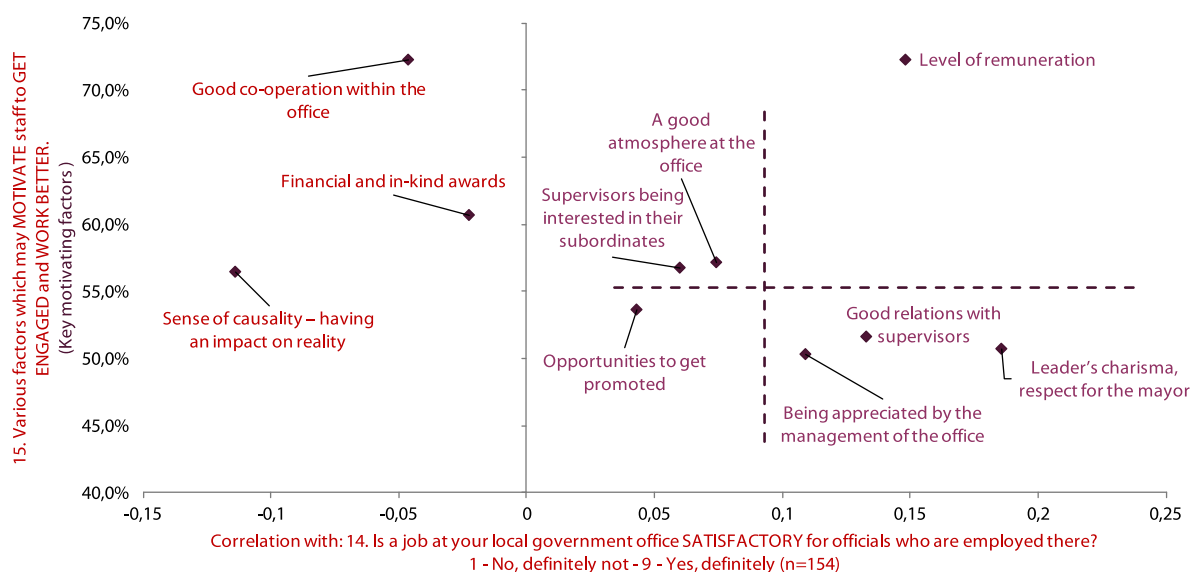
Below listed are various factors which may MOTIVATE staff to GET ENGAGED and WORK BETTER.
 (key motivating factors - top 10 indications)



Below listed are various factors which may MOTIVATE staff to GET ENGAGED and WORK BETTER.
 (indication: without much importance)



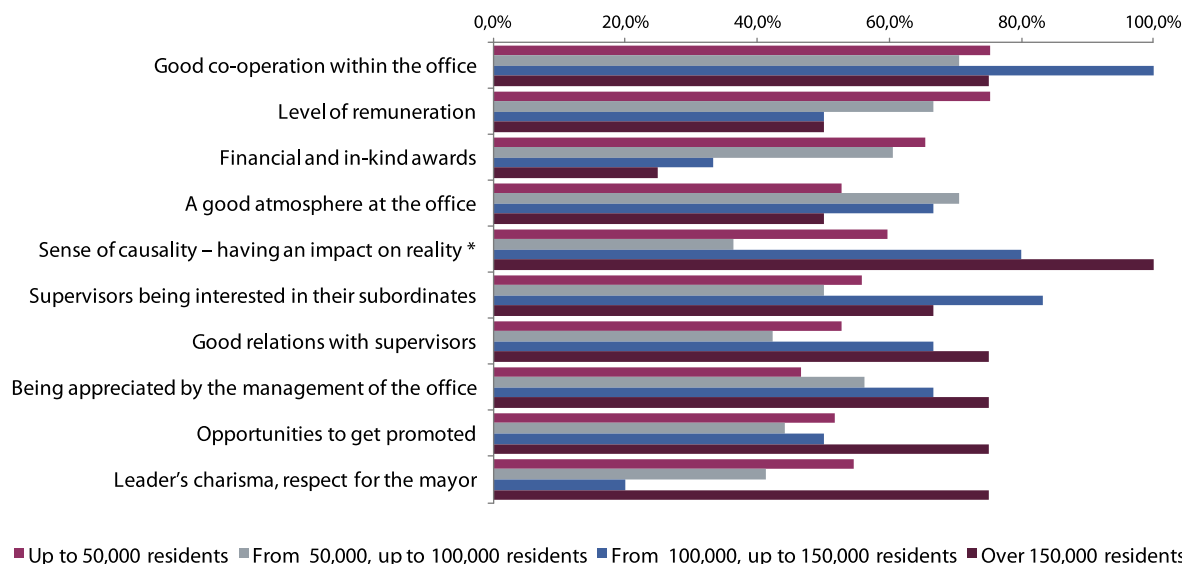
Among the motivating factors there are three clear elements relating to the quality of social relations in the office: the leader’s charisma, relations with superiors and appreciation by superiors. The results of data analysis suggest that the right attitude among the management may be an important factor influencing the atmosphere and efficiency of the work, especially in situations where other employee motivation tools are very limited.



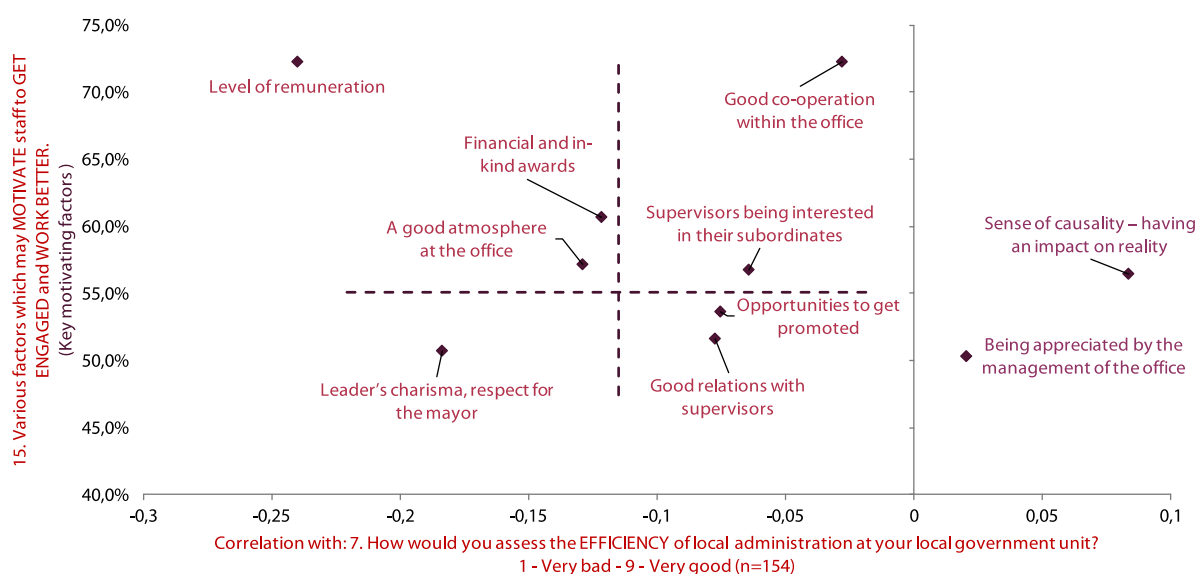
In comparison with the respondents from smaller units, those from the largest units stressed the importance of such factors as a sense of meaning, impact on the reality and the authority of the mayor. In the opinion of some leaders, a local government job entails challenges and difficulties which, if overcome, may be a source of satisfaction that comes from 'doing things', at least for some officials:

"The feeling of satisfaction that part of the team gets things done."

Below listed are various factors which may MOTIVATE staff to GET ENGAGED and WORK BETTER. (key motivating factors - top 10 indications) ---- size of local government unit



The data indicates that the efficiency of operations in local administration is clearly boosted if employees have a sense of meaning and purpose when performing their tasks and when they feel appreciated by their superiors.



Despite the difficulties and existing limitations, local governments affirmed they try to motivate them officials by:

- a) Invoking the employees' good will, leading by example to show how important and rewarding good work can be.

"It is through good will. It is about bringing up the best in people."

"You are trying to establish a continuous contact with them and appeal mostly to their good will rather than their conscience."

"Through good behaviour, continuous training and personal contact. (...) I let him understand that if he refuses to serve the citizen then there will be problems within the service as the latter will come back 3-4 times to bother the service and him personally and, as a result, the job will get stuck."

- b) Including the employees in the decision-making process and enhancing their sense of causality – building their responsibility for work performed.

"It is about empowering the people you are working with making them feel that they are part of the decision making, trusting them."

"On the activation level, to make them participants in this effort, to the degree that they may be able to perceive."

- c) Appealing to patriotism of Greeks.

"Right now I do feel that we have to rely on the patriotism of the Greeks."

It should be emphasised that most of the interviewed leaders pessimistically viewed the possibility to institutionalise the employee motivating mechanisms. They believe the key barrier is that the possibilities to shape the HR policy are highly limited.

Lack of competencies and the reluctance to improve one's competencies cannot be used as grounds to terminate an employment contract. At the same time, the mayor has very limited opportunities of promoting employees.

"We can promote sometimes within a very tight legal framework, our personnel choices are basically shaped by the legal framework which gives us little room to make changes."

"Even within the selection for promotion of the employees there is a specific model that is mainly to do with the service years and the formal qualifications."

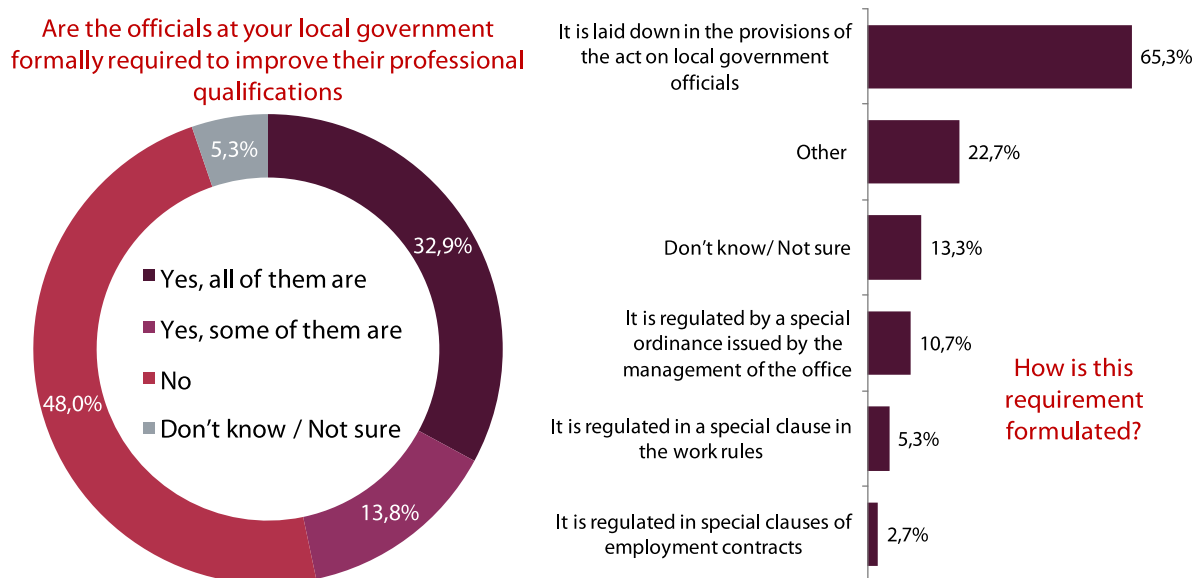
Employees' motivation to perform their work effectively and efficiently could be boosted by revising the existing legal framework, in accordance to the constitutional provisions, in order to provide leaders with more freedom to shape human resource policies at local level (including increased flexibility to provide salary incentives, hire staff etc).

Article 6 of the European Charter on Local Self-Government should be reminded here:

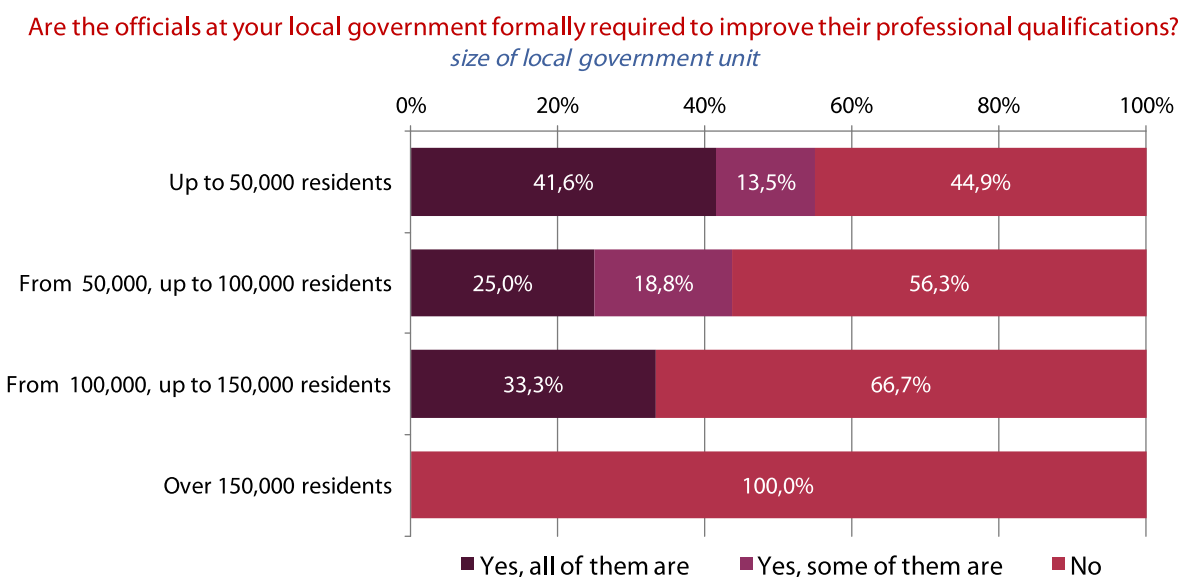
1. Without prejudice to more general statutory provisions, local authorities shall be able to determine their own internal administrative structures in order to adapt them to local needs and ensure effective management.
2. The conditions of service of local government employees shall be such as to permit the recruitment of high-quality staff on the basis of merit and competence; to this end adequate training opportunities, remuneration and career prospects shall be provided.

6. Training experience and needs

According to respondents' feedbacks, in nearly half of the local authorities surveyed either all or at least some employees are obliged to improve their competences. As a rule, this requirement is sanctioned by internal regulations.



This obligation is much more commonly imposed on employees of smaller offices. This may result both from the fact that such officials must carry out more tasks and that it is more difficult to replace people in a small structure. As said during one of the group interviews, the needs to train staff are critical in the vast majority of small local governments (especially those located on islands and in mountainous regions).



According to the leaders participating in the interviews, local governments lack mechanisms to develop the competences of their staff. No staff training plans are developed and no training needs analysis is performed: there are no investments in officials' knowledge and competences.

"You come in when you are 25 or 30 and nobody bothers you again until you are 65. Nobody invests in you; you do not go to courses; you do not go to seminars; nobody actually bothers to ask something more from you; so we do all that and things are actually improving."

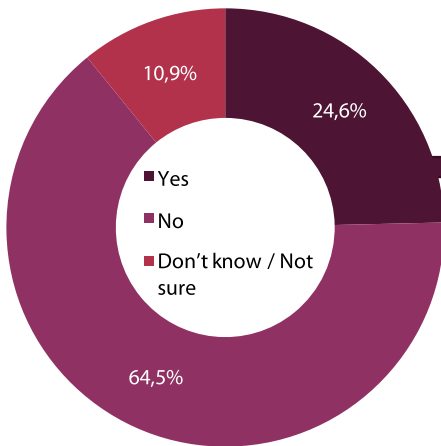
According to the respondents, in many cases this results from the fact that some mayors would be oriented mostly to day-to-day management: they are not aware of the importance of special knowledge and skills and they underestimate the added value of training. It was stressed that some leaders were distrustful about the proposed training initiatives or training needs reported by the staff. This can be confirmed by the words uttered by one mayor, who was quite critical about officials who *"...attend training courses or other similar events"*. In his opinion, *"municipal employees, you know, have no time to devote to such things..."*. During the interview, he also stressed he was not against training the staff but also emphasised that he did not accept the training practices prevailing in Greece.

"I am not against training courses. On the contrary, I believe that they have to take place. I also believe, however, that training courses have to be well-targeted, organised with parsimony and addressed to those that need them.... the distortion is caused by the fact that training courses are offered...generally and vaguely on administrative issues...an engineer needs to be acquainted with the concrete new system and legislation for public procurements. As soon as possible."

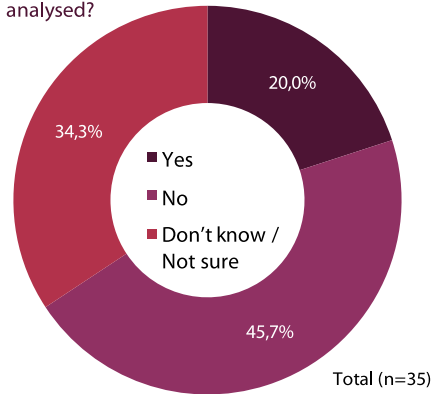
The findings from qualitative interviews were fully confirmed by the survey data. According to the results, offices very rarely analyse the needs of their staff with regard to competence development and even less frequently develop any training plans. Importantly, the declared training needs analysis is based on pre-developed and pre-implemented procedures in only 20% of cases.

It is important to look at the data as a whole, since social research practice shows that respondents often tend to present their actions in a more positive light than it is in reality. The research was designed to reconstruct the reality as accurately as possible. For this reason, the questions in the survey are interrelated. It is worth stressing that among these 24.6% positive replies (see below) only 20% gave an affirmative response to the question: "Is there a procedure, an ordinance or a rule which defines how training needs should be analysed?". This means that the process of analysing the training needs follows a real, formalised format in only 5% of the units (according to the respondents' declarations).

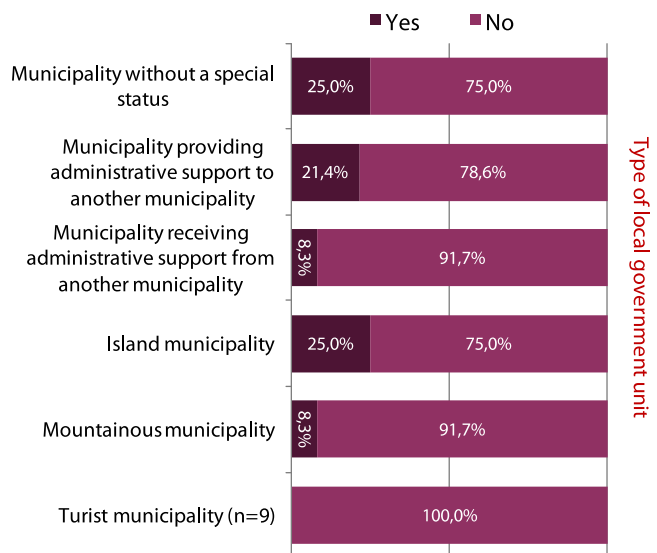
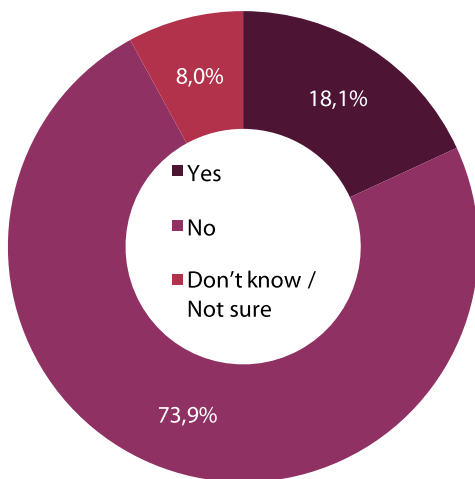
Does your office analyse the training needs of its staff?



Is there a procedure, an ordinance or a rule which defines how training needs should be analysed?

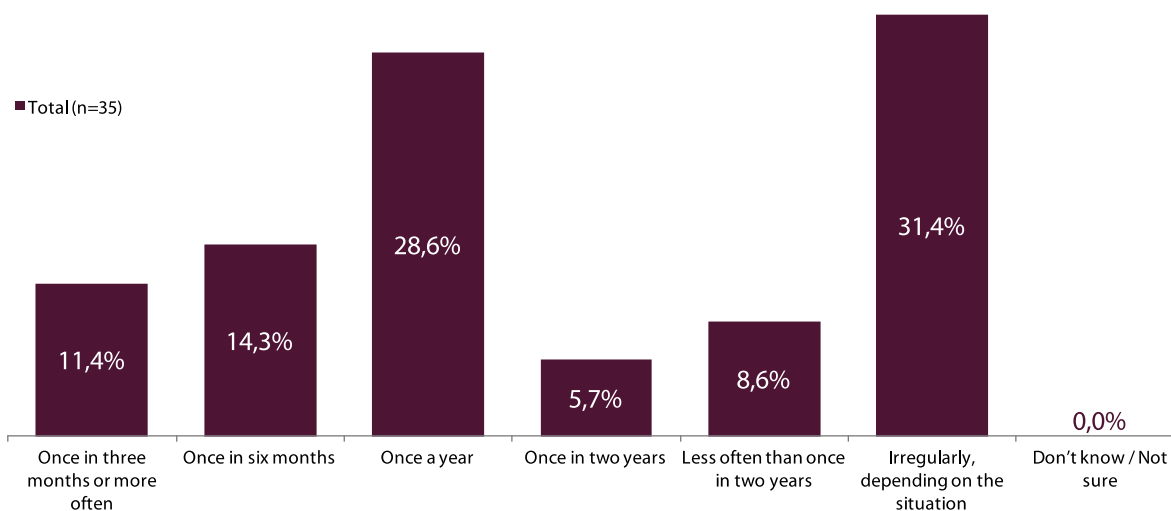


Does your office develop a training plan for its staff?

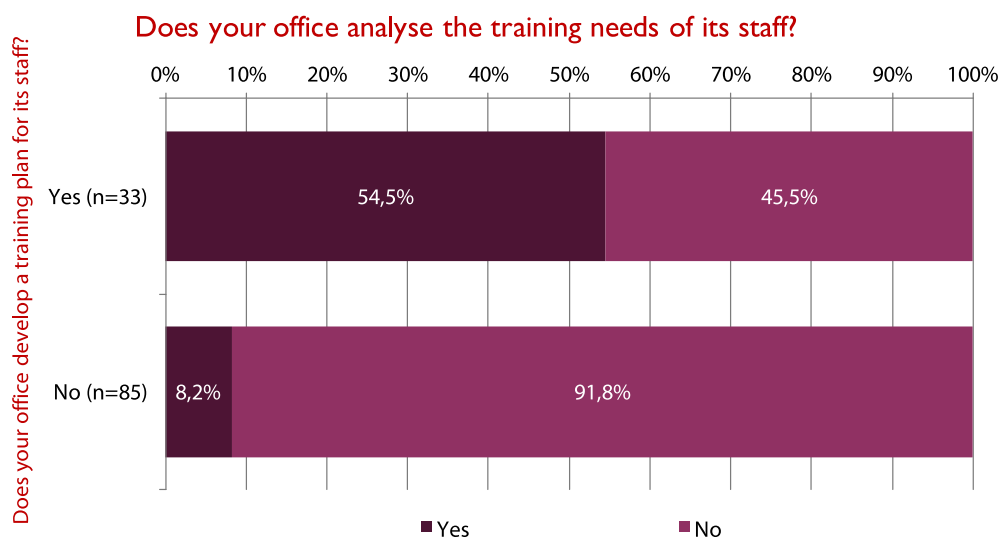


Among the local government units which do diagnose the training needs of their staff, we can notice significant differences in the approach to this element of organisational management. While more than a half of the respondents representing such offices declared that they conduct needs analysis at least once a year, as many as 31.4% of the respondents from this group indicated that such analysis is conducted irregularly. This means, firstly, that the practices of diagnosing training needs are extremely rare and, secondly, that they are ineffective in many cases. If an analysis is conducted irregularly, it does not allow the offices to monitor the development of staff's skills and, more importantly, irregularity means that such practices cannot become an integral part of organisational management of the staff.

How often are staff's training needs analysed?



As mentioned earlier, training needs analysis leads to the development of training programmes (staff's competence development programmes) only in some cases. Obviously, we cannot exclude that needs analysis is used as a basis to organise ad hoc training, yet one cannot fail to notice that an analysis alone, not supported by a staff development plan, becomes irrelevant.



The consequences of existing interest in developing staff's competencies are revealed by the findings: offices which pay attention to their staff's training needs are more likely to be perceived (by the respondents) as more effective. A similar relationship can be noticed in those units which oblige staff members to improve their qualifications.

6.1. Participation in training

The respondents from 7% of the local government units admitted that their employees did not participate in any training in 2015. In further 6% of the units the respondents had no information on this subject. This means that in 13% of LGUs training activities are not undertaken at all or they are very rare. As regards the training events in which the employees took part in 2015, most of them were commercial events organised by external providers as well as free training courses organised under projects where the unit concerned was a direct beneficiary.

What kind of (external) training did your staff participated in 2015?

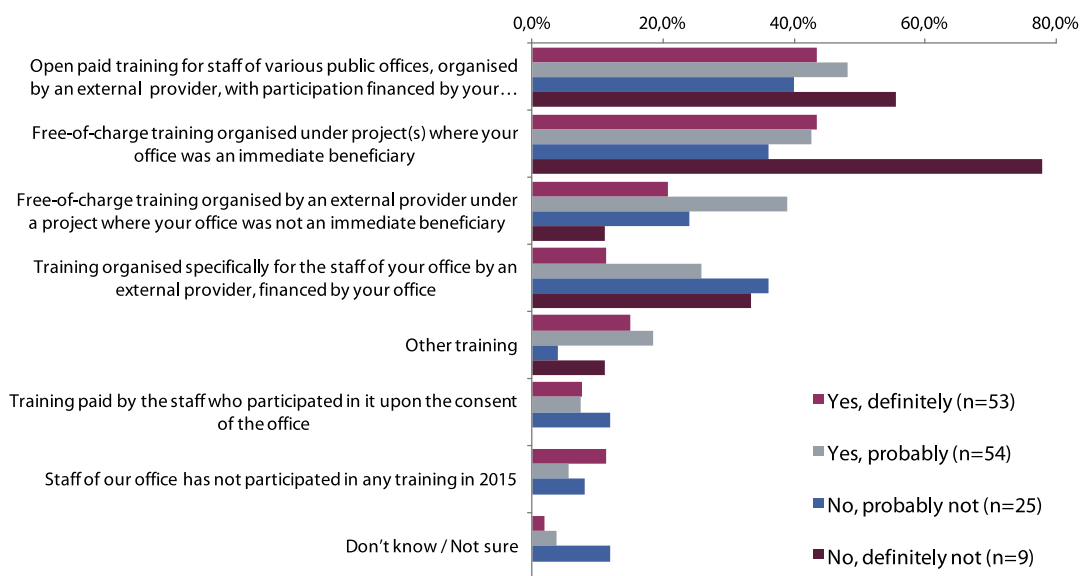


Free training courses conducted under projects for local government units were the most popular format, especially in the case of units supported by other local governments, and among major units.

It should be stressed that the participation in free training courses under projects where the local government unit was involved prevailed among those local governments whose representatives did not see the shortages in staff's competence as a problem. This observation forces us to ask about the sense of such educational efforts: one might wonder whether the trainings actually regarded real training needs and whether or not they may have been just an extra project component, perhaps not an essential one.

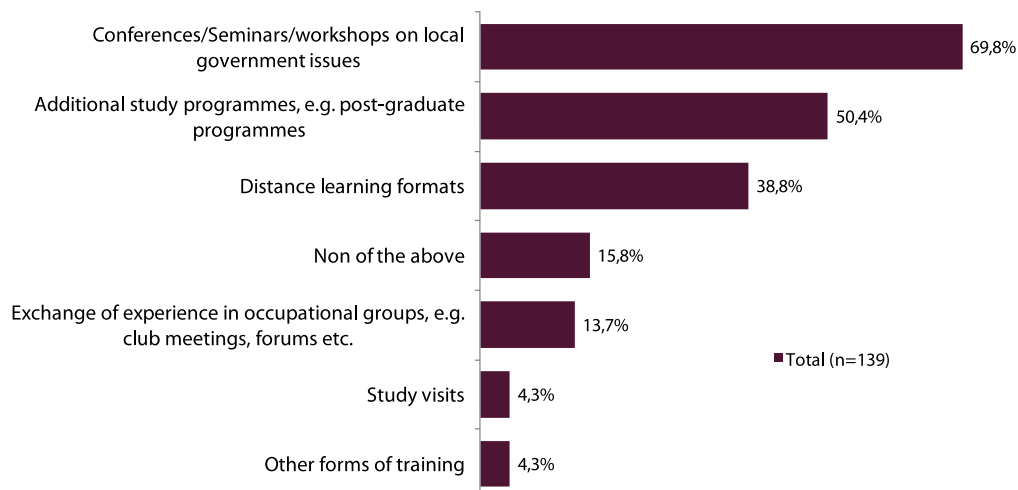
What kind of (external) training did your staff participated in 2015?

Can you see any problems in the work of your office caused primarily by insufficient knowledge or insufficient skills of officials at your local government unit?

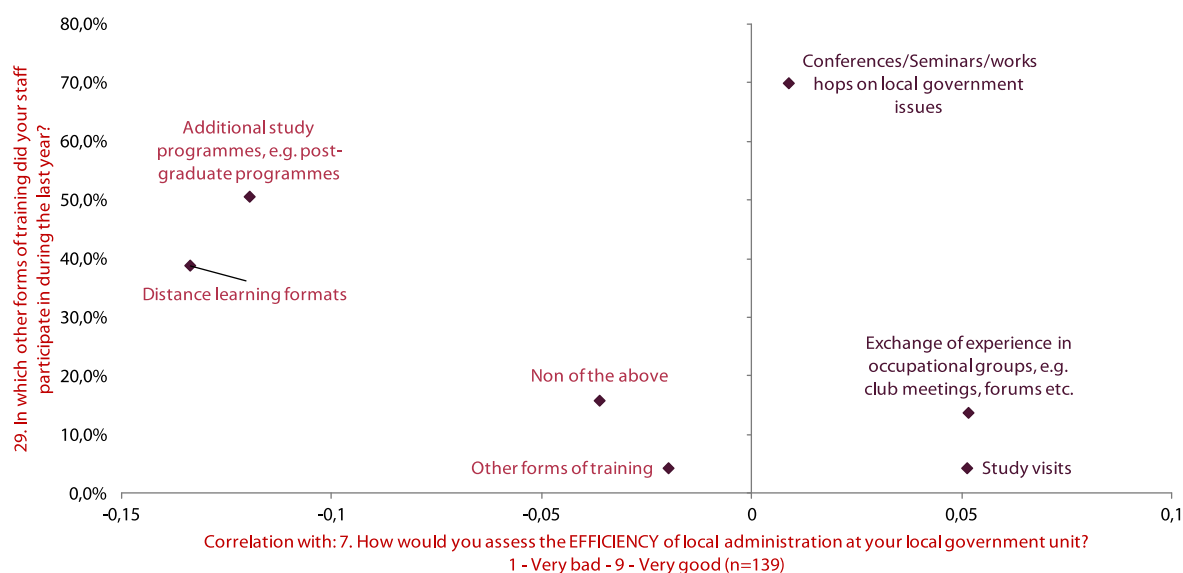


Apart from training, other forms of support for professional development which enjoyed interest among local government officials included conferences, seminars and workshops focused on local problems. Various kinds of post-graduate training programmes were less popular.

In which other forms of training did your staff participate in during the last year?



Very few local government units were involved in direct exchange of experience such as forums of local government officials or study visits. Bearing in mind the very limited cooperation between local governments we should point out that there is untapped potential and benefits that may derive from sharing best practices in the provision of public services and implementation of tasks by local governments. Data analysis confirms quite clearly that there is a relationship between the actual performance of the administration and the participation in an exchange of experience.



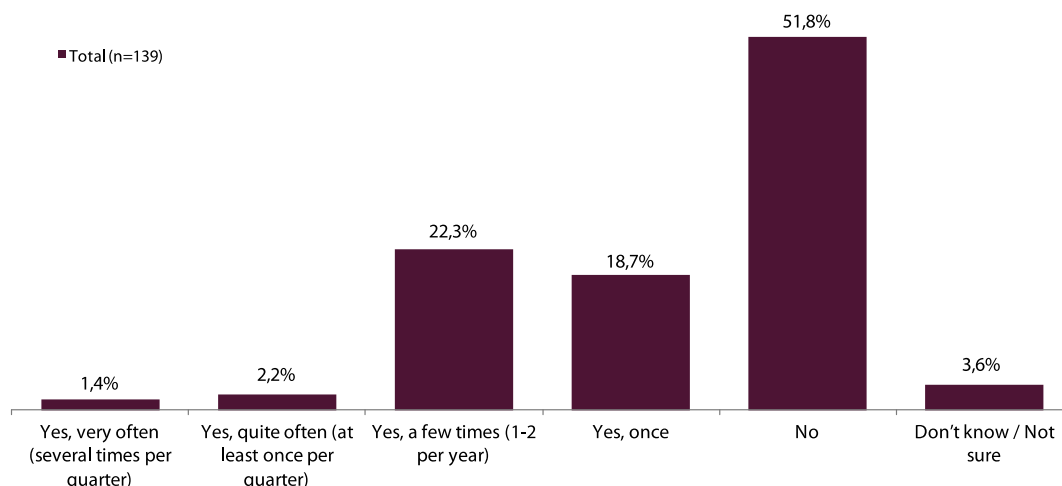
Local government leaders repeatedly emphasised the negative consequences resulting from the absence of exchange of experience between local government units: the lack of formal information flow channels between government officials, or the lack of forums to exchange experience. Under the current conditions, all mayors and officials who face problems typical of their function must solve them on their own, possibly relying on private contacts. Leaders emphasised that, in particular, they lacked the knowledge of how other local governments deal with various problems and how they organise the provision of public services.

"There is not even the most obvious mechanism that would allow us to serve best practices amongst us. You know, there is one municipality that does well with x and there is another one who does well with y. It should not just be a word of mouth or what you read in the Internet, it should be a mechanism that allows us to serve these practices."

"We do not share these practices...we do not share ideas...we do not share case studies...we do not have benchmarks...we do not have goals..."

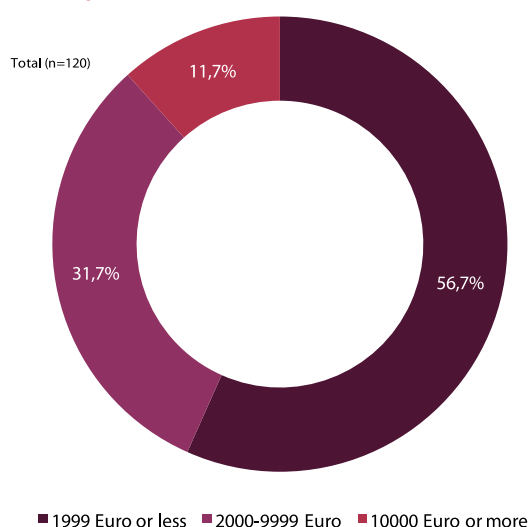
Internal training is an interesting form of competence development for the staff: it helps employees from different departments to exchange information or to draw on the knowledge of more experienced staff members. This form of training generally requires less funding and allows officials to use their working time more efficiently. Unfortunately, more than a half of local government units do not organise such training events. They are a regular practice in only less than 4% of the units, most of them being major offices. In some local government units, training would be organised ad hoc and on an occasional basis, mostly following concrete needs and proposals submitted by the heads of departments.

Were any internal training events organised at your office during the last year?

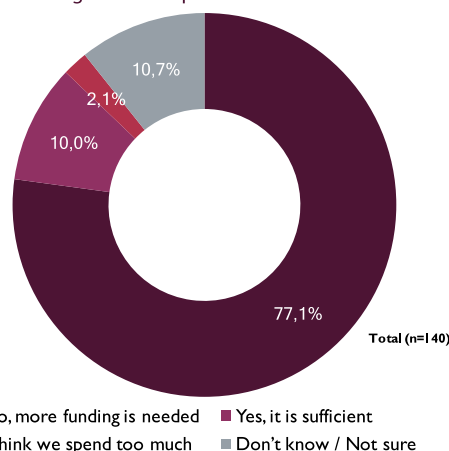


More than a half of local government units spent less than EUR 2,000 on training in 2015 (slightly over EUR 3,200 on average). The respondents admitted that the needs are greater than the means they can spend on that purpose.

How much money did your municipality allocate LAST YEAR (2015) FROM ITS OWN BUDGET for the training of its staff?



Do you consider the financing of staff's training to be adequate?



The reasons behind the financial restrictions can be found in the imposed austerity rules necessitated by the economic crisis. One respondent mentioned a situation where the financial inspector did not agree for money to be spent on training the local administration staff.

"I will give you an example which I had to face: a problem with the commissioner. In my technical service I have two civil engineers who wish to know more about a specialised subject that concerns development itself, as we said, on a long term basis. They had a proposal – and they also wanted it – to attend a special postgraduate programme at the University of Thessaly in order to advance their knowledge, for at least five years, while remaining in service in order for us, as a municipality, to form this project that we needed. The cost for two people was 7,000 euros. The commissioner did not approve of this and all this had to be abandoned unless I had taken the money out of my own pocket."

Other respondents maintained, however, that local governments do have funds for training and

confirmed that staff are trained whenever possible, even though not all units train their personnel to the same extent. The data indicates that the amounts allocated to staff training determine, for instance, the selection of a training organiser. Those local governments which have more funds were much more likely to use paid training provided by commercial firms.

The information obtained in the study indicates that the training offer is broad and local government offices do have funds for training, although such funds are limited in some cases (small local governments located in mountainous areas and on islands). What continues to be a problem, however, is that some officials are not motivated to improve their qualifications.

Stability of employment means that the average official has no major incentives to develop their competences and to participate in training. It seems that the only element that is conducive for the interest in the available training offer is the opportunity to collect promotion points. Therefore, people who sign up for training are mostly those who want to get promoted (and, as mentioned earlier, this motivation is not common). The participants of one of the focus groups stressed that some employees are ambitious and try to get additional degrees (also as a means towards promotion), while they are also following training seminars. According to some participants, in other cases, additional university degrees and training seminars would be a "good excuse" for some employees in order to get extra leaves.

"In the public sector there is always a group who loves their job and wishes to become better. And drawing on the support of such people we can respond to the requirements of society...this may be 10%-20% of our employees but they are really willing to offer and they love their job...it is on those people we count in terms of further training and it is with those who are making an effort to do our job."

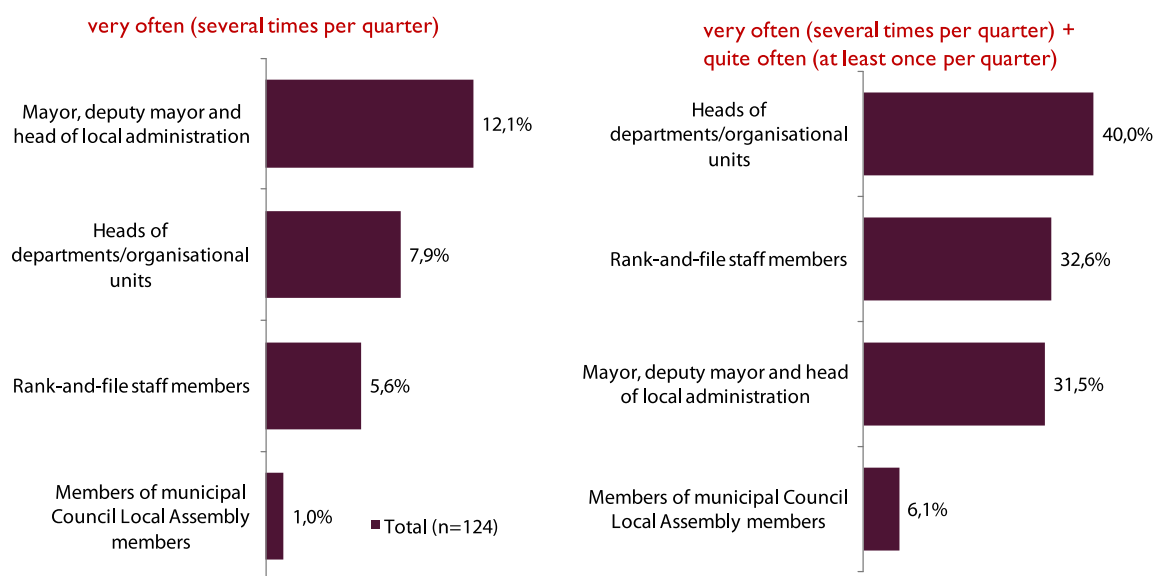
At least some of those seeking promotion are interested, above all, in training that would not be too burdensome while guaranteeing the necessary elements: in such cases, the application of the newly acquired knowledge in practice plays a secondary role. As a result, there might be no overlap between the needs for competence development in the unit and the available training courses that are attractive to officials. One way to protect offices from sending officials to training unnecessarily might be to develop relevant procedures for the selection of training and of people who should develop their professional qualifications in this way. However, the information collected in the study suggests that, in general, there are no clear criteria to select training events and no selection rules to identify employees who should participate in such events. All decisions are arbitrarily made by the superiors, i.e. the mayor or another official delegated to perform this task.

"Staff directorate will send an invitation for a seminar, which we are informed that is held. Then, requests come. And then I, in collaboration with staff directorate, see if these requests can be fulfilled."

Statements made by the interviewed leaders indicate that training is most sought by white collar workers whereas blue collars demonstrate little interest in training.

In relatively most cases external training was attended by the top management at the offices. Such training was attended somewhat less commonly by heads of departments and other organisational units.

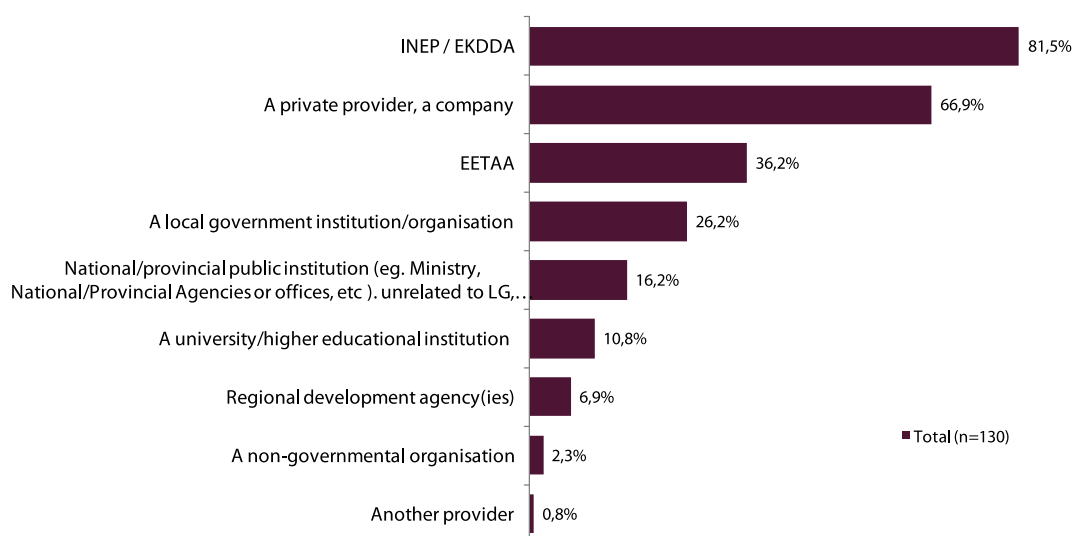
How often (in general) do the following take part in EXTERNAL training events:



Worth noting is the relationship between the intensity of management training and the resulting efficiency of local administration. In those offices where leaders participated in training less frequently, the perceived efficiency was lower.

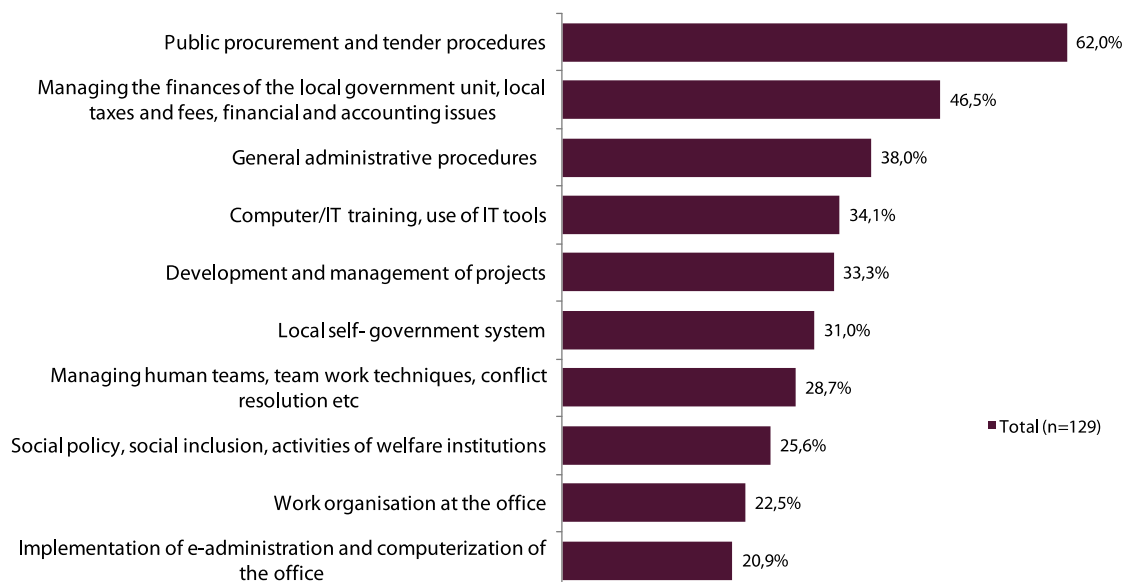
The largest group of respondents declared the participation of their staff in training organised by INEP/ EKDDA (data for 2015). Secondly, they mentioned various private training firms. Interestingly, hardly any local government units worked with non-governmental organisations in this respect. It should be stressed that the data presented here concerns the collaboration between the office and the training provider in 2015 but not the number of training events actually provided.

Who was the organiser or those training events? (top 10)

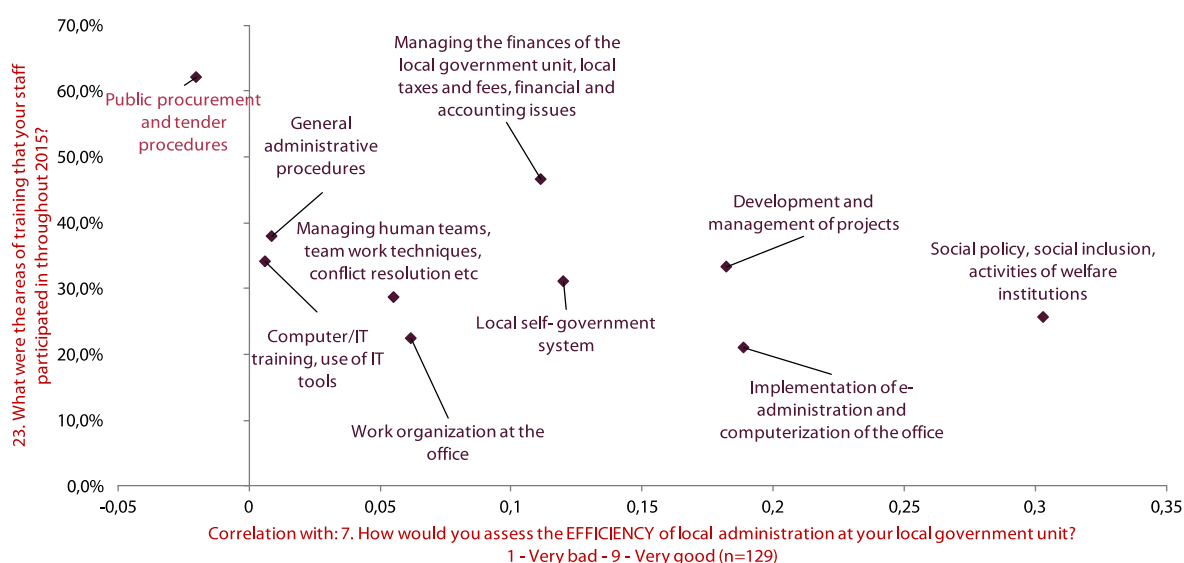


The most popular training courses in 2015 focused on topics such as public procurement and tendering procedures. Notably, these courses were most commonly chosen by offices rated as inefficient which, at the same time, were least likely to train their staff in the management of local finances and very rarely offered training related to work organisation to their staff.

What were the areas of training that your staff participated in throughout 2015? (Top 10)



At the same time, it is important to note that the most commonly selected training courses (“public procurement and tender procedures”) might be desirable for political reasons or due to austerity measures, but they did not translate into improved ratings of the performance of local administration. In the latter context, the following topics of training were relevant: “social policy, social inclusion, activities of welfare institutions”, “development and management of projects” or “implementation of e-administration and computerisation of the office”.



6.2 Training needs and postulates

The diagnosis of training needs should help to identify the discrepancies between the knowledge held by potential training/education participants and the knowledge which is desirable for some specific reasons. When describing the status quo, we usually refer to the realities of potential training participants (e.g. local government officials), presenting their way of working, addressing issues they struggle with, or identifying shortcomings in their performance. In a nutshell, we present a description of the situation, an analysis of professional practices of a specific group of people (local officials, local government leaders, councillors etc.).

This kind of analysis may produce two types of conclusions:

- it may identify training postulates - beliefs relating to the training needs among the potential target audience, which sometimes are accompanied by the desire to meet those needs; or
- it may identify the desirable level of knowledge or skills among specific groups of stakeholders, i.e. indicate the extent to which educational efforts may contribute to achieving a desirable state of things.

Worth remembering is that only in some cases the training expectations voiced by local officials will be identical with the development needs of their respective local government units. The actual effectiveness and efficiency of local administration may deviate from the expectations of specific stakeholders due to different external factors (such as the legal and institutional framework, historical background, economic factors etc.). It may also stem from external considerations. For instance, it may result from weaknesses in the governance of a local government unit (i.e. inefficient organisation of work, incompetence of some local administration representatives, faulty procedures in local institutions, financial problems related to wrong resources management, limited human resources etc.), or from motivating factors (e.g. working for the local government may not be perceived as attractive, or the work atmosphere in the office may discourage people from being committed and performing well). Only some of those considerations may be obvious and will be noticed by the personnel of a local government unit (or, more broadly, by people representing the sector of local government administration). Therefore, we will not always see a complete overlap between the training expectations and training needs in this respect.

Training requests

The respondents did realise the need to train their subordinates. In particular, it is necessary to train young staff coming to replace the older employees who will soon retire.

"Yes, certainly, they need it. Because, as I said, the work force is old and they will very soon be retiring. For this reason, we expect that through hiring new blood, which we are looking forward to, there will also be a benchmark of serious qualifications."

However, some leaders expressed very sceptical opinions about the added value training programmes could bring to local governments. One of them justified his doubts by saying that the problem lies not so much in deficiencies in qualifications but, rather, in the learned and established attitudes such as lack of commitment to the professional duties and lack of interest in achieving

better results at work. He also claimed that it was necessary to build local government institutions from scratch, based on new personnel:

"There should be employee exchanges in every local government either at first level or second level."

During the interviews, the leaders were rather perfunctory when speaking about specific learning needs for the staff, which was perhaps because they were generally reluctant about the effectiveness of training in the current situation in Greece. Or perhaps their attention was focused on other problems. However, they pointed out the need to develop basic computer skills and sometimes also the need to acquire advanced IT competence:

"Basic computer skills...Excel, Word...I think that is the most important...Microsoft Office."

"Even in basic skills such as the management of the tools that have to do with the world of informatics."

Some respondents postulated training in social work, social welfare and, in particular, work with immigrants:

"Stuff related to social workers and that sort of things that came up as a result of the crisis."

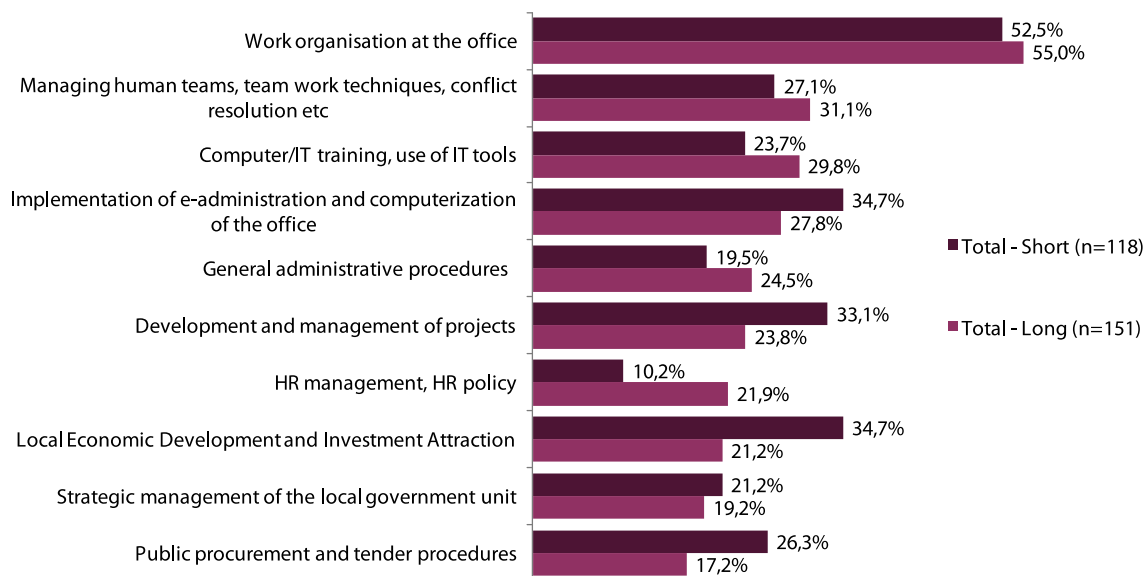
As mentioned earlier, one of the key problems affecting the local administration lies in frequent changes in law and regulations. Therefore, it is not surprising that some leaders also invoked needs resulting from those circumstances:

"New procedures that have been introduced through legislative changes.."

The respondents in both surveys agreed about the most desirable training topics: in the first place, they usually indicated the need for improved qualifications in the organisation of work at the local government office.

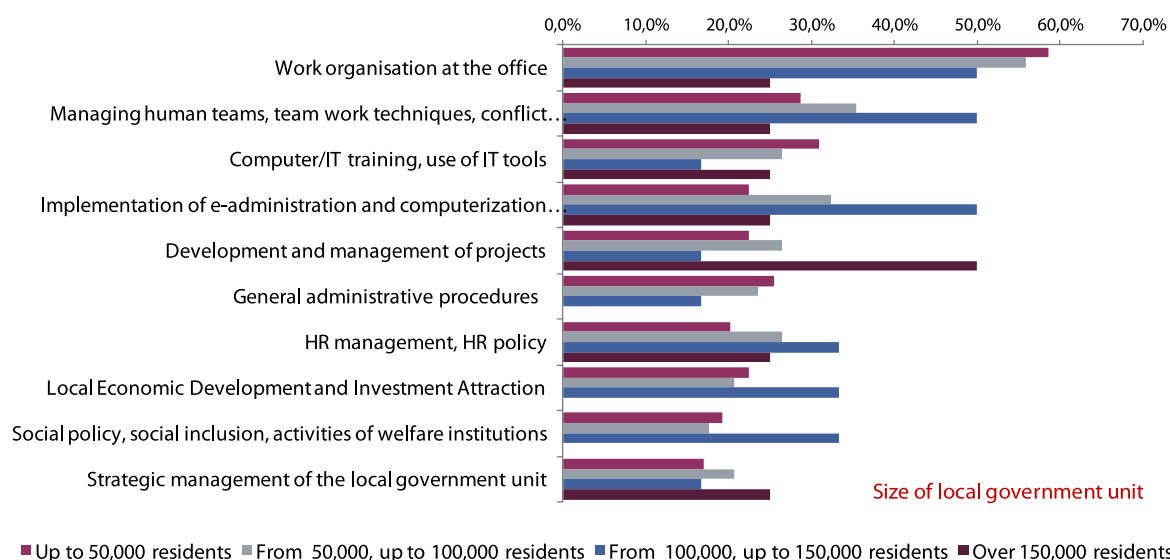
However, certain differences are visible as regards other areas of competence. Mayors were more likely to mention the need to improve qualifications in the implementation of e-government, local economic development and investment planning, as well as project management. Other respondents mentioned the need for human team management training as the second most important area. In addition, the respondents postulated strengthening computer and IT skills, whereas the need to strengthen the capacity of offices in the field of e-government came fourth, after the more basic needs.

Which of the areas of training listed below would you consider to be MOST NEEDED for your STAFF in the current situation? (top 10 indications)

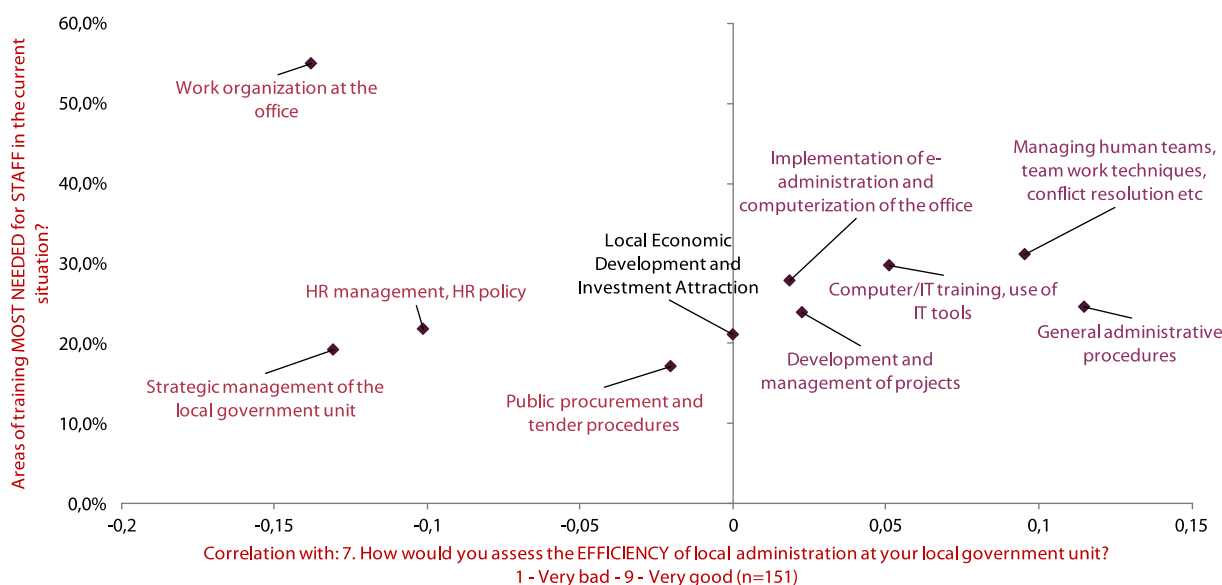


The analysis of training postulates by the size of local government units reveals significant disparities: smaller and medium-sized municipalities were more likely to mention the need for training in work organisation at the office, large units attached importance to topics such as the management of human resources and implementation of e-government, whereas the largest units strongly focused on the development and implementation of projects as their first choice. This diversity in reported training needs seems to be significant: smaller units, focused on day-to-day management, need support mostly in terms of administrative efficiency whereas larger units need specialists to work with investment projects as this would help to satisfy the development needs of those units.

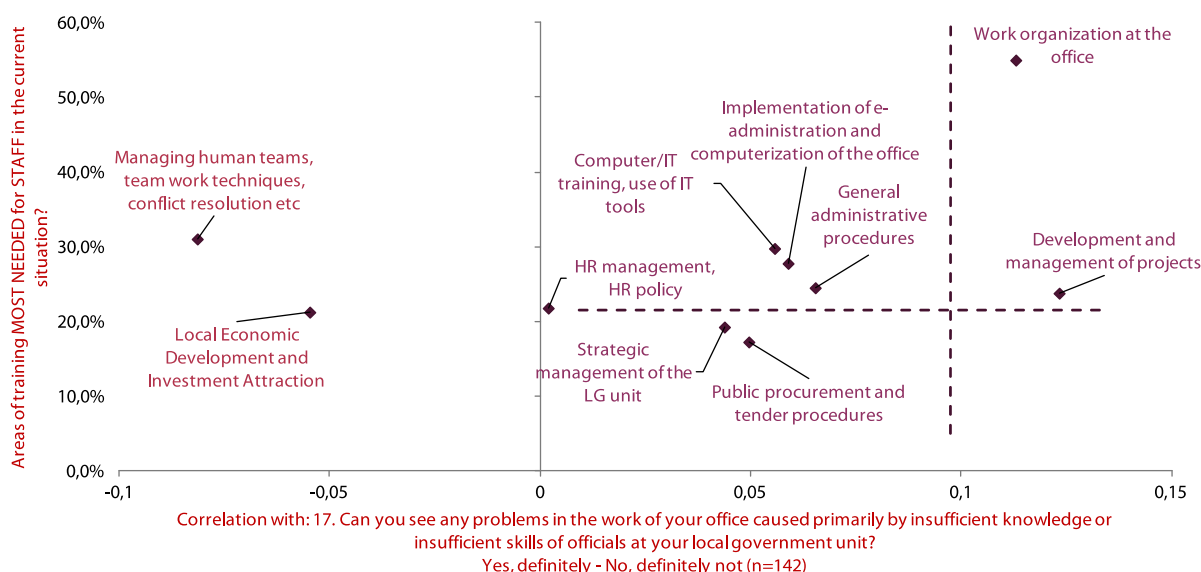
Which of the areas of training listed below would you consider to be MOST NEEDED for your STAFF in the current situation? (top 10)



Yet another interesting relationship was observed in connection with the respondents' self-assessment of the performance of local administration. Those local government units which, according to the respondents, worked efficiently were more likely to mention training to develop competences in team management, general administrative procedures, or the use of computer tools in administration. On the other hand, poorly performing offices put an emphasis primarily on training in the work organisation at the office and, less frequently, in strategic management of local government units and HR management.



The need for training in team management, teamwork, conflict resolution and local economic development was particularly emphasised in those offices whose representatives were aware of the shortcomings of their staff's qualifications. The units which reported no major competence problems were more likely to postulate the need for training in the work organisation at the office and the development and management of projects.



Therefore, the differentiation in reported training needs identified in the study stems mainly from the different perception of the most important needs and constraints of local government units. In larger offices, topics with some development potential come to the fore whereas smaller and very small units focus on matters relating to day-to-day management and the most basic problems that local government officials need to grapple with. The more efficient units recognise the importance and necessity of further improvement and systematic organisation of work whereas underperforming units tend to focus on the organisation of basic management processes.

Training needs

It is important to bear in mind that the diagnosis of training needs should help to identify the discrepancies between the current knowledge of potential training participants and the knowledge which is required or desirable for some reason. It turns out that in many cases the trainings proposed by potential participants deviate from their 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 identification of those 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 actually required knowledge is not gained).

In relation to the aforementioned comments, the training postulates mentioned by the respondents were verified in contrast with the problem areas declared as existing in local government offices. Of course, this exercise is not sufficient for an actual needs diagnosis. After all, there are also other factors which influence the operation of offices, such as systemic factors (discussed in the first part of this document), or management practices employed by leaders. However, we cannot neglect the fact that the causes of at least some problems are connected with lack of competencies among the staff of offices represented by the secretaries.

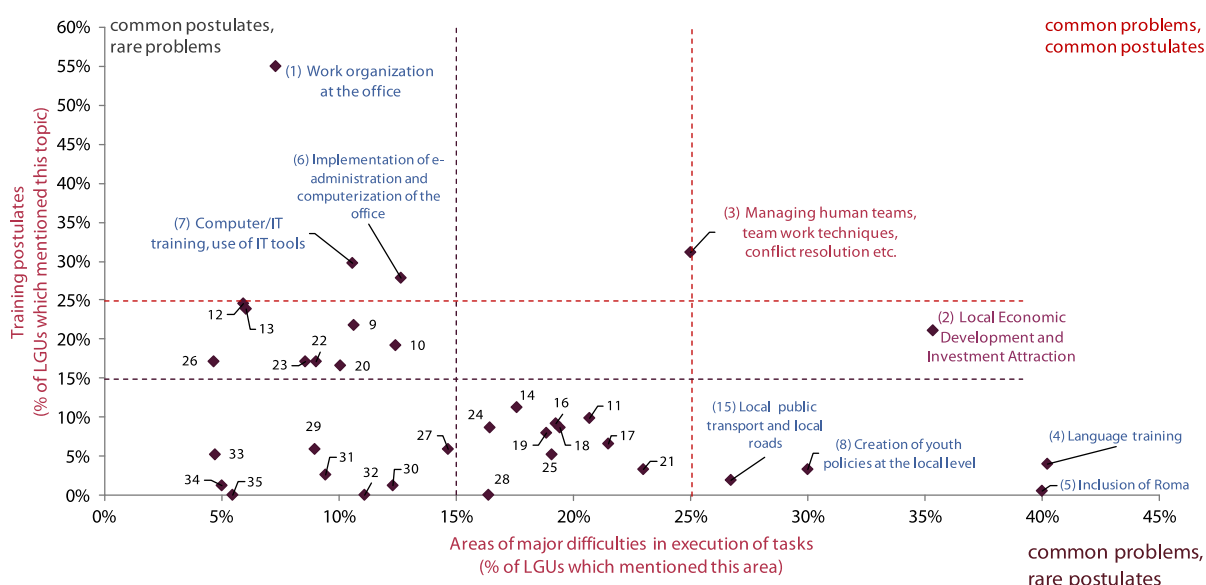
Based on respondents' statements, the training areas listed in the questionnaire can be grouped under four main headings:

1. Training postulated by numerous local government officials on topics which do not correspond with the most commonly mentioned problems in the management of local government units:
 - ↳ Work organisation at the office and development of digital competences.
2. Training postulated quite often by the respondents and related to the most common problems in the work of the offices:
 - ↳ Human team management, teamwork techniques, conflict resolution and local economic development.

3. Training postulated by a relatively small group of the respondents on topics corresponding with the most commonly mentioned management problems:

- ↳ Language training, development of competence in integration policies applicable to the Roma community, local transport, management of road infrastructure, and the creation of youth policies at the local level.

4. Other training topics: mentioned rarely, and unrelated to problems in the operation of local government offices.



Full list of training topics:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work organization at the office 2. Local Economic Development and Investment Attraction 3. Managing human teams, team work techniques, conflict resolution etc 4. Language training, selected foreign language 5. Inclusion of Roma 6. Implementation of e-administration and computerization of the office 7. Computer/IT training, use of IT tools 8. Creation of youth policies at the local level 9. HR management, HR policy 10. Strategic management of the local government unit 11. Public property management 12. General administrative procedures 13. Development and management of projects 14. Audit internal audit, management audit 15. Local public transport and local roads 16. Planning and implementation of infrastructural investments 17. Inspection control in various areas 18. Wastewater and solid waste management 19. Urban/spatial planning and management of real property | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 20. Work time management 21. European integration 22. Social policy, social inclusion, activities of welfare institutions 23. Managing the finances of the local government unit, local taxes and fees, financial and accounting issues 24. Building relationships with residents, public consultations, collaboration etc 25. Agriculture and rural development 26. Public procurement and tender procedures 27. Environment protection 28. Collaboration with non-governmental organizations 29. Ethics and prevention of corruption threats 30. Management of preschool and primary school system 31. Disaster and crisis management 32. Gender mainstreaming in LSG 33. Services to customers of the office, organization of the secretarial office, customer service centre etc. 34. Protection of classified information and personal data 35. Activities of cultural institutions, implementation of cultural policy |
|--|--|

Generally speaking, in the case of the first group mentioned above we can talk, at best, about training postulates or wishes. The topics from the first group are not related to the most essential development needs of the staff at Greek local government offices. This does not mean, however, that such topics would not be necessary for some specific local government units. There are certainly some units (and this is reflected in the data) which could improve their performance by

enhancing their staff's skills in the listed areas. However, these topics should not be seen as a strategic choice.

The second group comprises those areas of competence which should be prioritised, both in view of the reported demands and the management problems identified in the study. Under the existing circumstances of operation of Greek local government bodies, as presented in this report, training in the areas classified into this group should be recommended.

The third group includes issues that are not commonly recognised by local government officials as potential areas where staff's competence could be developed, although they are often related to the management problems experienced by the offices. It is definitely a good idea to consider staff training in the areas listed in this group. Perhaps, however, such training should take forms other than traditional, with particular emphasis on the exchange of experience and dissemination of good practices.

The remaining training topics, i.e. those classified in the fourth group, have no strategic importance at present.

7. Recommendations

1. Strengthen the management by objectives and evaluation of services and employees at the local level - An indispensable prerequisite of training strategies is the implementation of performance evaluation. New legislation and implementation plan(s) for modern performance evaluation methods could be adopted, building on good practices of municipalities and on the existing financial performance evaluation systems.
2. Elaboration of national Training Strategy for Local Government – A Comprehensive National Training Strategy for Local Government should be developed. This should be done in cooperation with main stakeholders, such as the responsible Ministries, the National Centre for Public Administration and Self-Government (EKDDA), the National Associations of Local Government (KEDE for the first tier and ENPE for the second) EETAA, as well as representatives of civil society and the private sector. This strategy could include *inter alia*, areas of training, groups subject to training, procedures to assess training needs, measures to monitor results.
3. Integration of National Training Strategy in the Strategic Plans of Regions and Municipalities – Training Strategy should become an integral and indispensable part of Local and Regional Strategic and Operational Plans in municipalities and regions. These should indeed include a chapter on the training strategy, according to the specific needs at stake.
4. Integration of training needs in Regulatory Impact Assessment – Training needs should be assessed prior to any revision of the legal framework. A sound analysis would inform the decision-making process improving the effectiveness of new legislation.
5. Pilot implementation of training programs and measures in selected regions, municipalities or even single units thereof - National training organisations, national and regional associations of local and regional self-government as well as the responsible ministries should implement (either as part of training strategies or on experimental basis) pilot training programmes to test new methods and address peculiarities of specific types of local governments (e.g. insular or mountainous municipalities).
6. Good practices and benchmarking of training - Good training practices, such as the training of junior employees by senior employees or of employees lacking certain skills by more experienced employees (which seem to be an informal practice in many Greek administrations) should be further collected, evaluated, optimized and disseminated by national training organisations and other stakeholders (such as associations of local governments).
7. Training incentives for local elected representatives and employees –The existing legal framework could be revised to provide for more incentives for local leaders and personnel to participate in trainings. For example they could be set as key elements for career advancement.
8. Training evaluation and follow up - Training needs analysis, actual trainings and performance should be evaluated and closely monitored. IT tools could ease reporting procedures and improve transparency with national stakeholders, civil society and the private sector should be included.

List of References

- Dexia, (2008), *Sub-national Governments in the European Union*; Paris: Dexia Editions
- Heinelt H., N-K Hlepas, (2006), *Typologies of Local Government Systems*, in: *H. Back, H. Heinelt, A. Magnier, (eds.), The European Mayor*, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden 2006, pp. 21-42.
- Hlepas, N-K. (2010), *Greece: A case of fragmented centralism and 'behind the scenes' localism*, in: *J. Loughlin, F. Hendriks, and A. Lidström, (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Local and Regional Democracy in Europe*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 414-432
- Sotiropoulos, D., (2007), *State and Reform in contemporary Southern Europe: Greece-Spain-Italy-Portugal*; Athens: Potamos(*in Greek*).
- Spanou, C., (2016), *Policy conditionality, structural adjustment and the domestic policy system. Conceptual framework and research agenda*; EUI Working Paper RSCAS 2016/60.
- Stoltenberg P., G. Terizakis, N. Hlepas and P. Getimis, (2016), *Cities in Times of Crisis. Fiscal Consolidation in Germany and Greece*; Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.
- Trutkowski, C, (2016), "Training needs analysis and national training strategies. How to ensure the right training at the right time to the right people?"; Council of Europe, Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire (CAWI)

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey conducted by the Council of Europe, in collaboration with the Greek Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction and the

We would like to remind you that this survey is completely anonymous. Your answers will only be used to prepare aggregate analyses and summaries.

- To go to the survey (and, each time, to move to the next question), please click on "NEXT" (bottom of the page).
 - You can interrupt the survey at any time (by clicking on "Postpone", in the top right corner) and return to the survey at any moment to answer the remaining questions.
-

1. What is the PRIORITY of your local government in the current term of office?

Please choose UP TO 2 ANSWERS FROM the following list:

- Infrastructural investments
- Social issues, e.g. solving social problems, social cohesion, mobilization of solidarity networks
- Stabilisation of the municipal/town budget
- Day-to-day governance, responding to problems as they arise
- Citizens' participation in decision-making
- Improving the quality of public/municipal services
- Another issue important for the locality (→ ask Q1a)
- Don't know, not sure

1a) You selected "another issue important for the locality" to describe one priority of the local government in the current term of office. Please describe this priority in brief:

✎

2. In your opinion, what are the sources of the GREATEST difficulties in the day-to-day management of your local government unit?

Please choose up to 3 categories

- Instability of the law, changing regulations
- Legal limitations of discretion in decision-making of local government in some areas
- Multiple controls over local government activities
- Wrong interpretation of the law by regulatory bodies
- Staff shortages in local administration
- Lack of competent staff
- Insufficient own revenues
- No adequate financing of commissioned tasks
- Passive citizens, their lack of interest in public affairs
- Excessive procedures associated with EU funding
- Conflicts between executive power in the local government (mayors) and the Council
- Political pressure, influence of political parties on how local government works
- Unfavourable macroeconomic phenomena
- Another source of problems (→ ask Q2a)
- Not sure

2a) You mentioned "another source of problems" as one of the difficulties in day-to-day management of your local government unit. Please describe this source of problems briefly:

☒

3) The law requires that the municipality/town should fulfil multiple tasks simultaneously. No task can be abandoned but some of them can be treated as more important in budget planning. Which areas do you think should be particularly SUPPORTED in the specific situation of your local government unit?

Please choose UP TO THREE most important items from the list below:

- School/pre-school education and care including extracurricular classes for children
- Activities of cultural institutions
- Supporting activities performed by local non-governmental organisations
- Local economic development and support to local businesses
- Welfare services
- Sport and recreation
- Health care and prevention
- Greenery
- Cleanliness in the streets and public areas
- Road infrastructure
- Waterworks and sewage system
- Participation of the municipality in urban planning and land management
- Disaster and crisis management
- Another area (→ask Q3a)

3a) When asked about budgeting priorities at your local government unit, you mentioned "another area". Which area did you have in mind?

☒

4) What is your overall assessment of your municipality/town AS A PLACE TO LIVE?

(Please move the slider to the position which best reflects your views on the matter.)

Enter a digit from 1 to 7 where 1 is the leftmost value and 7 is the rightmost value



5) Does your local government unit have an UP-TO-DATE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (or an equivalent strategic document concerning your entire local government unit)?

- Yes
- No (--> skip to question 5b)
- Don't know

5a) Were the RESIDENTS of your municipality involved in the work on the current development strategy?

Please choose one answer only

- Yes, the office worked intensively with the residents to develop the strategy
- The residents did not participate in developing the document but the draft document underwent public consultation
- No, we developed the strategy without involving the residents
- The residents were involved in some other way (please specify): ☒.....
- Don't know / Not sure

5b) And are you currently doing any work related to the development/updating of your development strategy (or an equivalent document)?

Please choose one answer only

- Yes, we are working on updating the existing document
- Yes, we are developing a new document
- No, but we plan to develop a strategy in the coming year
- No, and we have no plans to develop such a document in the coming year
- Don't know / Not sure

6) In the last three years, did your municipality conduct any self-assessments using any systematic tool?

Please choose one answer only

- Yes (--> ask question 6a)
- No (--> skip to question 7)
- Don't know(--> skip to question 7)

6a) And which tool did you use for the self-assessment?

Please provide the name or describe the tool briefly:

✎

7) Generally speaking, how would you assess the EFFICIENCY of local administration at your local government unit?

(Please move the slider to the position which best reflects your views on the matter.)

Enter a digit from 1 to 9 where 1 is the leftmost value and 9 is the rightmost value

very bad (1)	✎.....	(9) very good
--------------	--------	---------------

8) In your opinion, what would be the most effective way to boost the performance of your municipality ?

Please choose up to two key methods

- Improving staff's competencies
- Reorganising the work of your local government unit (please specify the purpose of such reorganisation): ✎.....
- Increasing employment at the municipality
- Raising staff's salaries
- Improving the way the management manages the work of officials
- Reducing employment at the municipality
- Changing remuneration rules for your staff (how?): ✎.....
- Improving the relationships between staff members
- Introduction of performance evaluation of staff/services
- Some other way (→ ask Q8a)
- Don't know / Not sure

8a) You mentioned "some other way" to boost the performance of your municipality . Please describe briefly what such actions could involve:

✎

9) What is your overall assessment of the following at your municipality:

Please choose one answer only in each row

	Very good	Fairly good	Moderate	Fairly poor	Very poor	Not sure
Employees knowledge of their job responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of work provided by officials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Level of officials' independence within their responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Officials' innovative thinking in solving problems that arise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Officials' motivation to improve their professional qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff's ability to work as a team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Officials' commitment and their work motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Officials' integrity in performing their work duties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of customer service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Officials' effectiveness in solving problems that arise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10) In your personal opinion, is a job at the local government office ATTRACTIVE or UNATTRACTIVE in comparison with other available employment opportunities?

(Please move the slider to the position which best reflects your views on the matter.)

Enter a digit from 1 to 9 where 1 is the leftmost value and 9 is the rightmost value

Definitely unattractive (1)	(9) Definitely attractive
-----------------------------	-------	---------------------------

11) Below is a list of various issues which may make a local government job attractive. Please specify if each of them is important or unimportant TO YOU PERSONALLY in the context of working for local government?

Please choose one answer only in each row

	Very important	Fairly important	Fairly unimportant	Totally unimportant	Not sure
Level of remuneration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Possibility to keep a balance between career and private life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interesting challenges involved in fulfilling job responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for career and professional advancement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities to improve one's competencies (skills, knowledge, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good reputation of the employer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job stability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Possibility to work with interesting people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Autonomy at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Varied tasks and responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

A chance for attractive bonuses and pay rises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proximity between workplace and home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working time, working hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

→ ASK Q12 only for items marked as „very important“ in Q11

12) And which of those factors play the most important role for you in the context of your work for local government?

Please name up to 3 most important factors (only factors you described as very important have been selected)

- Level of remuneration
- Possibility to keep a balance between career and private life
- Interesting challenges involved in fulfilling job responsibilities
- Opportunities for career and professional advancement
- Opportunities to improve one's competencies (skills, knowledge, etc.)
- Good reputation of the employer
- Job stability
- Possibility to work with interesting people
- Autonomy at work
- Varied tasks and responsibilities
- A chance for attractive bonuses and pay rises
- Proximity between workplace and home
- Working time, working hours

13) Which of the factors listed do you consider to be the most important ones FOR THE STAFF at your office, making your office attractive as a place to work at?

Please name up to 3 most important factors

- Level of remuneration
- Possibility to keep a balance between career and private life
- Interesting challenges involved in fulfilling job responsibilities
- Opportunities for career and professional advancement
- Opportunities to improve one's competencies (skills, knowledge, etc.)
- Good reputation of the employer
- Job stability
- Possibility to work with interesting people
- Autonomy at work
- Varied tasks and responsibilities
- A chance for attractive bonuses and pay rises
- Proximity between workplace and home
- Working time, working hours
- Something else is important (please specify): ☺.....
- Don't know / Not sure

14) In your opinion, is a job at your local government office SATISFACTORY for officials who are employed there?

(Please move the slider to the position which best reflects your views on the matter.)

Enter a digit from 1 to 9 where 1 is the leftmost value and 9 is the rightmost value

No, definitely not (1)	☞.....	(9) Yes, definitely
------------------------	--------	---------------------

15) Below listed are various factors which may MOTIVATE staff to GET ENGAGED and WORK BETTER. Please name those which are most important, moderately important and least important in motivating staff.

Please group those factors, placing each of them in the corresponding window on the right, by dragging them with the mouse.

- Key motivating factors (1)
- Important but not crucial (2)
- Without much importance (3)
- Difficult to describe/to classify into a group (4)

- Opportunities for personal growth and gaining experience ☞.....
- Sense of causality – having an impact on reality ☞.....
- Positive reputation of the employer ☞.....
- Good relations with supervisors ☞.....
- Being appreciated by the management of the office ☞.....
- Level of remuneration ☞.....
- Good co-operation within the office ☞.....
- A high degree of independence in performing one's tasks ☞.....
- Leader's charisma, respect for the mayor ☞.....
- Supervisors being interested in their subordinates ☞.....
- Opportunities to get promoted ☞.....
- Financial and in-kind awards ☞.....
- Sense of mission of the local government ☞.....
- A good atmosphere at the office ☞.....

16) Below mentioned are various areas where local government institutions fulfil their tasks or activities. Please provide a GENERAL ASSESSMENT of your office in terms of the FULFILMENT OF TASKS or PERFORMANCE OF ACTIVITIES in those areas.

Please subdivided those areas into ones where: (1) task are fulfilled smoothly and without major obstacles; (2) there are difficulties in fulfilling tasks but they are resolved; (3) there are major difficulties in fulfilling tasks and their resolution is highly problematic.

- Area where tasks are fulfilled smoothly (1)
- Fulfilling tasks is somewhat problematic (2)
- Major difficulties in fulfilling tasks (3)
- Not sure / No experience (4)

- ☞-----
- Activities of cultural institutions, implementation of cultural policy ☞-----
- ☞-----
- Agriculture and rural development ☞-----
- ☞-----
- Audit internal audit, management audit ☞-----
- ☞-----
- Building relationships with residents, public consultations, collaboration etc ☞-----
- ☞-----
- Collaboration with non-governmental organisations ☞-----
- ☞-----
- Computer/IT training, use of IT tools ☞-----
- ☞-----

Development and management of projects	✗
Disaster and crisis management	✗
Environment protection	✗
Ethics and prevention of corruption threats	✗
European integration	✗
Gender mainstreaming in LSG	✗
General administrative procedures	✗
HR management, HR policy	✗
Implementation of e-administration and computerisation of the office	✗
Inclusion of Roma	✗
Inspection control in various areas	✗
Language training, selected foreign language	✗
Local Economic Development and Investment Attraction	✗
Management of preschool and primary school system	✗
Managing human teams, team work techniques, conflict resolution etc	✗
Managing the finances of the local government unit, local taxes and fees, financial and accounting issues	✗
Planning and implementation of infrastructural investments	✗
Public property management	✗
Protection of classified information and personal data	✗
Protection of minority rights	✗
Public procurement and tender procedures	✗
Services to customers of the office, organisation of the secretarial office, customer service centre etc.	✗
Social policy, social inclusion, activities of welfare institutions	✗
Strategic management of the local government unit	✗
Urban/spatial planning and management of real property	✗
Wastewater and solid waste management	✗
Work organisation at the office	✗
Work time management	✗
Creation of youth policies at the local level	✗
Local public transport and local roads	✗

17) Can you see any problems in the work of your office caused primarily by insufficient knowledge or insufficient skills of officials at your local government unit?

Please choose one answer only

- Yes, definitely (-> ask question 17a)
- Yes, probably (-> ask question 17a)
- No, probably not (-> skip to question 18)
- No, definitely not (-> skip to question 18)
- Not sure(-> skip to question 18)

17a) Please describe those problems briefly:

✗

18) Are the officials at your local government formally required to improve their professional qualifications?

Please choose one answer only

- Yes, all of them are
- Yes, some of them are (please specify the categories of officials):
- No (→ skip to Q19)
- Don't know / Not sure (→ skip to Q19)

18a) How is this requirement formulated?

More than one answer allowed

- It is regulated in special clauses of employment contracts
- It is regulated in a special clause in the work rules
- It is laid down in the provisions of the act on local government officials
- It is regulated by a special ordinance issued by the management of the office
- Other (please specify): ~~☒~~
- Don't know/ Not sure

19) Which of the areas of training listed below would you consider to be MOST NEEDED for your STAFF in the current situation?

(indicate in total at least 1 and no more than 5 answers)

- Work organisation at the office
- Managing human teams, team work techniques, conflict resolution etc
- Computer/IT training, use of IT tools
- Language training, selected foreign language
- Work time management
- Development and management of projects
- Implementation of e-administration and computerization of the office
- Topics related to the Professional State Exam
- General administrative procedures
- European integration
- Services to customers of the office, organisation of the secretarial office, customer service centre etc.
- Strategic management of the local government unit
- Protection of classified information and personal data
- Public procurement and tender procedures
- Local self- government system
- Childcare
- Services to elderly
- Creation of youth policies at the local level
- Audit internal audit, management audit
- Agriculture and rural development
- Activities of cultural institutions, implementation of cultural policy
- Inclusion of Roma
- Disaster and crisis management

- Building relationships with residents, public consultations, collaboration etc.
- Environment protection
- Ethics and prevention of corruption threats
- Wastewater and solid waste management
- Local Economic Development and Investment Attraction
- Planning and implementation of infrastructural investments
- Urban/spatial planning and management of real property
- Public property management
- Social policy, social inclusion, activities of welfare institutions
- Collaboration with non-governmental organizations
- Inspection/ control in various areas
- HR management, HR policy
- Integration of refugees/migrants
- Managing the finances of the local government unit, local taxes and fees, financial and accounting issues
- Management of preschool and primary school system
- Gender mainstreaming in LSG
- Our staff do not need training
- Another area of training(-->please specify)
- Local public transport and local roads
- Not sure / hard to say

20) Do you see any other training needs regarding the staff of your office which have not been mentioned above?

Please choose one answer only

- Yes (--> ask question 20a)
- No (--> skip to question 21)
- Don't know(--> skip to question 28)

20a) Please provide a short description of those training needs:

⌘

21) Whatkind of(external) training did your staff participated in 2016?

More than one answer allowed

- Open paid training for staff of various public offices, organised by an external provider, with participation financed by your office
- Training organised specifically for the staff of your office by an external provider, financed by your office
- Free-of-charge training organised by an external provider under a project where your office was not an immediate beneficiary
- Free-of-charge training organised under project(s) where your office was an immediate beneficiary
- Training paid by the staff who participated in it upon the consent of the office
- Other training (please specify): ⌘
- Staff of our office has not participated in any training in 2015 → skip to Q24

- Don't know / Not sure → skip to Q24

22) Who was the organiser or those training events?

More than one answer allowed

- A local government institution/organisation
- Regional development agency(ies)
- A university/higher educational institution
- National/provincial public institution (eg. Ministry, National/Provincial Agencies or offices, etc). unrelated to local government, not a school or university
- EETAA
- INEP / EKDDA
- A non-governmental organisation
- Donor funded programmes/projects
- A private provider, a company
- Another provider
- Don't know/Not sure

23) What were the areas of training that your staff participated in throughout 2016?

Please select all applicable areas; More than one answer allowed

- Work organisation at the office
- Managing human teams, team work techniques, conflict resolution etc
- Computer/IT training, use of IT tools
- Language training, selected foreign language
- Work time management
- Development and management of projects
- Implementation of e-administration and computerization of the office
- Topics related to the Professional State Exam
- General administrative procedures
- European integration
- Services to customers of the office, organisation of the secretarial office, customer service centre etc.
- Strategic management of the local government unit
- Protection of classified information and personal data
- Public procurement and tender procedures
- Local self- government system
- Childcare
- Services to elderly
- Creation of youth policies at the local level
- Audit internal audit, management audit
- Agriculture and rural development
- Activities of cultural institutions, implementation of cultural policy
- Inclusion of Roma
- Disaster and crisis management
- Building relationships with residents, public consultations, collaboration etc.

- Environment protection
- Ethics and prevention of corruption threats
- Wastewater and solid waste management
- Local Economic Development and Investment Attraction
- Planning and implementation of infrastructural investments
- Urban/spatial planning and management of real property
- Public property management
- Social policy, social inclusion, activities of welfare institutions
- Collaboration with non-governmental organizations
- Inspection control in various areas
- HR management, HR policy
- integration of refugees/migrants
- Managing the finances of the local government unit, local taxes and fees, financial and accounting issues
- Management of preschool and primary school system
- Gender mainstreaming in LSG
- Our staff did not participate in any training this year
- Another area of training (--> ask Q23a)
- Local public transport and local roads
- Not sure / hard to say*

23a) You mentioned "another area of training" which your staff participated in earlier this year. Which area was that?

✎

24) How often (in general) do the following take part in EXTERNAL training events:

This question refers to your local government unit; Please choose one answer only for each row

	Very often (several times per quarter)	Quite often (at least once per quarter)	Quite rarely (1-2 times per year)	Very rarely (once in two years)	<i>Not sure</i>
Mayor, deputy mayor and head of local administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Heads of departments/organisational units	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rank-and-file staff members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Members of municipal Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Assembly members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25) How many officials are employed at your local government office?

Please specify the number of FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS for officials

✎

26) What was the budget of your municipality/town in 2015?

Please enter the VALUE IN EURO without commas, points etc.

✎

27) How much money did your municipality allocate LAST YEAR (2015) FROM ITS OWN BUDGET for the training of its staff?

Please specify the entire cost of staff training during 2015 , excluding internal (external in Greek) training, if any.

✎

28) Do you consider the financing of staff's training to be adequate?

Please choose one answer only

- No, more funding is needed
- Yes, it is sufficient
- I think the cost was too high
- Don't know / Not sure

29) Were any internal training events organised at your office during the last year?

Please choose one answer only

- Yes, very often (several times per quarter)
- Yes, quite often (at least once per quarter)
- Yes, a few times (1-2 per year)
- Yes, once
- No
- Don't know / Not sure

30) In which other forms of training did your staff participate in during the last year?

Please choose all applicable categories

- Additional study programmes, e.g. post-graduate programmes
- Distance learning formats
- Study visits
- Exchange of experience in occupational groups, e.g. club meetings, forums etc.
- Conferences/Seminars/workshops on local government issues
- Other forms of training
- Non of the above

31) Does your office develop a training plan for its staff?

Please choose one answer only

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / Not sure

32) Does your office analyse the training needs of its staff?

Please choose one answer only

- Yes (--> ask questions 31a-31b)
- No (--> skip to question 32)
- Don't know / Not sure (--> skip to question 33)

32a) Is there a procedure, an ordinance or a rule which defines how training needs should be analysed?

Please choose one answer only

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / Not sure

32b) How often are staff's training needs analysed?

Please choose one answer only

- Once in three months or more often
- Once in six months
- Once a year
- Once in two years
- Less often than once in two years
- Irregularly, depending on the situation
- Don't know / Not sure

Finally, we would like to ask a few questions for statistical purposes. We would like to remind you that THIS SURVEY IS COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS. Information from specific, individual questionnaires will not be made available anywhere and in any manner, and your local government unit could not be identified in any way.

Sex

- Female
- Male

Age

✎

Education

Please choose one answer only

- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- MSc
- PhD

Position

Pease select a category corresponding with your position:

- Mayor
- Deputy mayor
- General Secretary / General Director/Director
- Head of department
- Assistant/Consultant of the Mayor
- Staff member at a lower level
- Other (please specify): ✎.....

Service length at local government

Please provide the number of years worked at the local government, rounded up to full numbers:

✎

Type of local government unit

Please choose one answer only

- Municipality without a special status
- Municipality providing administrative support to another municipality
- Municipality receiving administrative support from another municipality
- Island municipality
- Mountainous municipality
- Tourist municipality

Size of your local government unit

Please choose one answer only

- Up to 50,000 residents
- From 50,000, up to 100,000 residents
- From 100,000, up to 150,000 residents
- Over 150,000 residents

Name of the Region of your city/municipality

- Attica
- Central Greece
- Central Macedonia
- Crete
- Eastern Macedonia and Thrace
- Epirus
- Ionian Islands
- North Aegean
- Peloponnese
- South Aegean
- Thessaly
- Western Greece
- Western Macedonia

Thank You for completing the questionnaire!

5) Can you see any problems in the work of your office caused primarily by insufficient knowledge or insufficient skills of officials at your local government unit?

Please choose one answer only

- Yes, definitely
 Yes, probably
 No, probably not
 No, definitely not
 Not sure

6) Which of the areas of training listed below would you consider to be MOST NEEDED for your STAFF in the current situation? (Regardless the group - indicate in total at least 1 and no more than 5 answers)

GROUP I PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> Work organisation at the office <input type="checkbox"/> Managing human teams, team work techniques, conflict resolution etc <input type="checkbox"/> Computer/IT training, use of IT tools <input type="checkbox"/> Language training, selected foreign language <input type="checkbox"/> Work time management
GROUP II SUPPORT IN COMPLETION OF TASKS/TECHNICAL SUPPORT	<input type="checkbox"/> Development and management of projects <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation of e-administration and computerization of the office <input type="checkbox"/> Topics related to the Professional State Exam <input type="checkbox"/> General administrative procedures <input type="checkbox"/> European integration <input type="checkbox"/> Services to customers of the office, organisation of the secretarial office, customer service centre etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic management of the local government unit <input type="checkbox"/> Protection of classified information and personal data <input type="checkbox"/> Public procurement and tender procedures <input type="checkbox"/> Local self- government system
Group III PROFESSIONAL TASKS/RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL SELF- GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> Childcare <input type="checkbox"/> Services to elderly <input type="checkbox"/> Creation of youth policies at the local level <input type="checkbox"/> Audit internal audit, management audit <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture and rural development <input type="checkbox"/> Activities of cultural institutions, implementation of cultural policy <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusion of Roma <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster and crisis management <input type="checkbox"/> Building relationships with residents, public consultations, collaboration etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Environment protection <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics and prevention of corruption threats <input type="checkbox"/> Wastewater and solid waste management <input type="checkbox"/> Local Economic Development and Investment Attraction <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and implementation of infrastructural investments <input type="checkbox"/> Urban/spatial planning and management of real property <input type="checkbox"/> Public property management <input type="checkbox"/> Social policy, social inclusion, activities of welfare institutions <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration with non-governmental organizations <input type="checkbox"/> Inspection/ control in various areas <input type="checkbox"/> HR management, HR policy <input type="checkbox"/> integration of refugees/migrants <input type="checkbox"/> Managing the finances of the local government unit, local taxes and fees, financial and accounting issues <input type="checkbox"/> Management of preschool and primary school system <input type="checkbox"/> Gender mainstreaming in LSG <input type="checkbox"/> Local public transport and local roads <input type="checkbox"/> Our staff do not need training

Finally, we would like to ask a few questions for statistical purposes. We would like to remind you that THIS SURVEY IS COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS.

Sex - Female - Male

Age ...

Education - Primary - Secondary - Tertiary - MSc - PhD

Position - Mayor - Deputy Mayor - General Secretary / General Director/Director
 - Head of department - Assistant/Consultant of the Mayor - Staff member at lower level

Size of your local government unit:

Please choose one answer only

- Up to 50,000 residents
- From 50,000, up to 100,000 residents
- From 100,000, up to 150,000 residents
- Over 150,000 residents

Thank You for compliting the questionnaire!

Appendix 3: Interview guidelines

The research findings should help to:

- ↳ Identify the key problems in the activity of local administration associated with the competence gaps/kills gaps among local government officials
- ↳ Outline the scope and type of needs related to the acquisition of knowledge and skills by local government officials, and explore the attitudes towards participation in training
- ↳ Assess the usability of previous training experience among main groups of local government officials working for municipal administration

Assessment of the operations of local government at the municipal level and residents' expectations

- How would you assess the current operation of local government in Greece? What is a success and what is a failure? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the local government and its operation? What is most missing and most needed for local government to operate seamlessly?
- Would there be a need for any reform of local government that would improve its performance? What would such a reform involve? (*about reasons for postulated reforms!*)
- What is your overall perception of the *activities of the local government* in this municipality? How is the performance of the local government reflected in public opinion? To what extent can the local government take credit for successes (if any)? To what extent have the failures (problems) been caused by the activity of the local government?
- What are the residents' expectations towards local government? How do you view those expectations? Are they justified? Do local authorities take those expectations into consideration when planning their activities?
- What are the key intentions and key goals of the local government? What are the priorities in local government operations in the next few years?

Management of the local government unit

- Are there any spheres in the operations of local government which pose particular problems for the management of the local government unit (*the entire unit, not just the local government office*)? Which spheres are those? What do the problems consist in? What are the consequences of those problems? Has anything changed in this respect in recent years? If so, what has changed and when?
- Where do these problems stem from? What are their sources and causes? (*probe in detail about local/translocal causes of problems*)
- How do the authorities of the local government unit address those problems? How successful are they in overcoming those problems? What is the outcome?

Assessment of the performance of the local government administration

- What are the strongest obstacles in the management of the local government administration? What do those difficulties consist in? What are their sources?
- How would you assess the performance of the municipality administration (*as a unit/office of public administration*)? Is the administration efficient in fulfilling the tasks within its area of responsibility? What kind of factors influences this performance? Which elements enhance/constrain the performance of the office?
- Is the administration effective in fulfilling the tasks and plans formulated by local authorities? Which factors play a role here/influence the effectiveness?
- Is the performance of the administration assessed/monitored in any formal way? How is this done? (*probe in detail*)
- How do local authorities identify problems related to the operations of the municipality? What kinds of methods (*formal/informal*) are used for such identification?
- How do the municipal authorities cope with the difficulties in managing the administration? Are they able to overcome those difficulties? Why? What kinds of factors determine the success/failure of those measures? What kind of factors influences the effectiveness of local authorities in solving those problems?
- Have there been any significant changes in the operations of the administration? If so, what did they involve? Why were they introduced? What were the outcomes of those changes?
- Do you see the need for any changes in the operations of the administration? What would such changes involve? What would be the purpose of those changes? Are/will those changes be introduced? (*if not, why not?*)
- Are there any problems in the supervision over the operations of the organisational units? What kind of problems are those? What are their causes? How are those problems solved? How would you assess the effectiveness of local government in addressing those problems?
- Does your municipality have a current development strategy? Does the strategy cover the performance of local administration or effectiveness of its activities? (*If so, probe on how this is included in the strategy, what specific provisions there are and whether they are executed.*)

External collaboration

- What is the picture of collaboration between local government authorities and the residents? To what extent are residents involved in the local governance affairs/public affairs? Do residents show interest in the affairs of the municipality? How is that interest manifested?
- Who are the most important external partners of the local government? What determines their role/importance? What does the collaboration with those partners look like? How would you assess this collaboration? What kind of postulates can be formulated with respect to this collaboration?
- What is the picture of the collaboration between the local government and external institutions/other local government units? What does that collaboration involve? What are the purposes and drivers of this collaboration? How would you assess it?
- Are there any practices to co-ordinate the activities/implement the policies with the neighbouring local government units? What do those practices involve? What are the practical aspects of this co-ordination? How is this collaboration carried out on a daily basis?

- What is the state of collaboration between the local government and the region (regional authorities)? What does this collaboration involve? Should any changes be introduced in this respect? Why?

Staff's motivation and engagement – capacity building factors at the LGU

- What is your view on the motivation of the staff at the local government office and their engagement in their work? What kinds of factors most strongly influence the level of motivation and engagement and how?
- Does the management of the administration take any actions aimed to improve the staff's motivation and engagement? What kinds of activities are those? Why are those activities undertaken (or why are no activities undertaken)?
- Is there any monitoring of the staff's needs related to the tasks they fulfil (*If not, why not? Is there perhaps no need to do so?*)? How does the office obtain information about the staff's needs related to their job responsibilities? Is there a systematic approach to identification of staff's needs related to their work? (*If so, what does it consist in?*) How is the information used?

Previous experience of training and attitudes related to training

- How would you assess the competencies of the staff at your local government office? Are there any knowledge gaps and/or skills gaps? What are they? What is the importance of those gaps? How do they affect the performance of the office?
- What is the staff's attitude towards participation in external training? What kinds of training are more appreciated than others? Why is that? Are there any examples of training that the staffs do not want to undertake? What are those?
- How would you describe the benefits of staff's participation in training? What is the most important element for local administration management? What is crucial for the management of the local government office?
- Does the participation of staff in training really translate into improved performance of the office? Does the staff training translate into improved quality of services offered by the office? How? What are the tangible benefits for the operations of the office?
- Are there any disadvantages/problems related to staff's participation in training? What are they? How bothersome are they? Can they be prevented in any way? How does your office address them?

Perception of training needs

- What kind of training is needed in terms to improve performance of municipality? How and by whom should this training be organized? Who should be trained and what should be the scope of training?
- What training for local government employees and council members is the most valuable in terms of using the acquired knowledge to improve local government management?