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MUNICIPALITIES IN THE EU INTEGRATION PROCESS OF ALBANIA

First Report 2018





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DISCLAIMER

- The present First Report highlights the importance of the role of the local government in the process of integration of Albania into the European Union related to the compliance with the accession commitments and criteria as from year 2017.

- The Report has been developed with the contribution of **Mrs. Zana Vokopola** and **Mrs. Entela Kallamata**, experts in the field of local government and decentralization at the Urban Research Institute, Tirana.

- The Report was developed in the framework of “**Municipalities for Europe**” EU funded Project under the auspices of **Mrs. Jolanda Trebicka**, the Team Leader.

- *The process of data collection has been carried out during November 2017 - January 2018 and professionally assisted by the Agency in the Support of Self-Local Government and the Ministry of Interior. In addition, the Local Coordinators that manage the EU Desks in each Municipality have contributed in the process of data collection as well in each of their respective municipalities.*

- This Report was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

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The European Union is fully determined to support Albania on its path towards EU membership. Accession takes place through the contribution of all levels of governance and of the whole society. When directly engaged, Albanian local administrations and citizens can best learn, grasp opportunities and meet the challenges that EU integration implies.

To have a desk in every municipality dedicated to the EU is an initiative that we have launched together with the Albanian authorities. The EU desks are now well established and operational. They contribute to disseminating information and to engage local administrations and citizens on EU matters: its policies, funds and programs. They are also essential in measuring the contribution of municipalities in the country's EU agenda.

EU integration is challenging. As accession will progress, more demands will be put in front of local government leaders and administrations. They will need to ensure that their citizens are offered the same services as citizens of the European Union and that local democracy is applied in an efficient and inclusive way. Development of new policies and programmes need to be evidence-based, fully supported by clear and accurate information on the implementation of EU standards and criteria on the ground.

This Municipalities' performance report about EU related matters is the first exercise of the kind. It is a snapshot of how Albanian municipalities are doing in fulfilling responsibilities that are clearly related to the accession process of the country. Municipalities give a contribution in important areas such as rule of law, human rights, social policies, agriculture and rural development, education and environment to name a few. Now that Albania is developing an institutional architecture dedicated to EU integration at the local level, this exercise should become a regular reference point for monitoring progress of EU integration at the local level.

In complementarity with the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior, we count on Albanian municipalities to be a powerful engine of the country's journey towards the European Union!

H. E. Romana Vlahutin
EU Ambassador to Albania

ABBREVIATIONS

EU	European Union
DOPA	Department of Public Administration
SIPD	Social Inclusion Political Document 2016-2020
DISE	Draft Inter-Sectorial Strategy on Environment 2015-2020
HIDAACI	High Inspectorate of Declaration and Control of Assets and Conflict of Interest
FOC	Fight against Organized Crime
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
PWDS	Persons with Disabilities
MTBP	Mid-Term Budgetary Program
NAPPWDS	National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities 2016-2020
NAPEE	National Action Plan on Energy Efficiency 2011-2018
NAPIRE	National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020
AERP	Albania's Economic Reform Program 2017-2019
ASPA	Albanian School of Public Administration
NSGEAP	National Strategy on Gender Equality and Action Plan 2016-2020
NSSP	National Strategy for Social Protection 2015-2020
CSDLG	Crosscutting Strategy on Decentralization and Local Governance 2015-2020
ISSAC	Inter-sectorial Strategy against Corruption 2015-2020
CPARS	Crosscutting Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015 – 2020
PUEDS	Pre-University Education Development Strategy 2014-2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to point out the importance of the role of the local government in Albania's EU integration process, by presenting its responsibilities towards the fulfillment of the accession criteria and EU standards, and the status of their fulfillment in year 2017, which can serve as the basis for assessing the performance of local government in the integration process for the coming years. The structure of this report is based on the National Plan for European Integration 2017-2020 and the European Commission Report on Albania. It is also referred to the national strategic and political documents and the legal framework for each field of the EU accession criteria and standard, for which the local government entails responsibilities within the framework of the local self-government functions provided by Law 139/2015 "On Local Self-Government".

The conclusions of the report are summarized below.

POLITICAL CRITERIA

Democracy

Local Government Capacity Development

During 2017, the local administration has participated mostly in trainings on professional subjects, with an average of 7 trainings and 14 trained officials; in 29% of the municipalities in the country the administration has not yet participated in any training on the civil servants legislation, while 81% of them have not participated in any training on the new Code of Administrative Procedures. Meanwhile, 50% of the municipalities do not allocate budgets for their administration staff members to participate trainings.

One-stop shops have been set up in 19 municipalities, which comprise 31% of the country's municipalities; in 37 municipalities the one-stop shops have not been established yet, which comprise 61% of the municipalities. No digital services (e-services) are still provided in 52% of the municipalities.

Increasing the accountability of the local government

In 2017, citizens received answers to their requests and complaints from their municipalities on average in 75% of the cases; however, provision of official responses does not either necessarily represent a full addressing of citizens' requests and complaints, or represent solving of the problems they embrace.

There are still no local government performance management systems in place. Community structures have not yet been established.

Increasing the transparency of the local government

During 2017, all municipal decisions or the most important decisions have been published on the municipality website in about 79% of the country's municipalities. The average number of public hearings organized during the process of drafting the mid-term budgeting program is 5, while hearings about the realization of planned revenues and expenditures is about 6. On the other hand, up to 14% of the country's municipalities still do not organize public hearings. No municipality in the country prepares a budget for citizens.

Inclusion/involvement of the community in the local government decision-making

During 2017, in public hearings on drafting the medium term budgetary program - being one of the main processes of the decision-making - approximately 23 citizens have participated on average; there are not enough data available for the number of vulnerable groups represented by civil society organizations. Public hearings and discussion forums with social groups within the community are the two main methods used by the municipalities for the community inclusion in this process.

Enhancing the review by the municipality of the Ombudsman reports' findings and recommendations

During 2017, on average, only 1 report has remained in the process of review beyond the deadline set by law; on the other hand, 41% of the municipalities did not receive any reports from the Ombudsman.

Consolidation of the civil society at local level

In 2017, approximately half of the municipalities in the country have no data on the number of recommendations received by civil society organizations during their local decision-making process or the number of accepted recommendations.

Law Enforcement / Rule of Law

Strengthening the regime on asset declaration and control and conflict of interest

During 2017, in the framework of the fight against corruption, in 87% of the municipalities in the country the mayors declared their assets and private interests.

Strengthening local government capacities in the fight against corruption

Up to 2017, the network of local anti-corruption coordinators has been established in 36% of the country's municipalities, while the local anti-corruption focal points have been established/appointed in 26% of the municipalities all over the country. Municipalities have participated, on average in one (1) training on the fight against corruption organized by the National Coordinator on Anti-Corruption.

Human Rights

Strengthening the capacity of the local government to implement national and international human rights standards

During 2017, municipalities have participated on average at 1 training organized by the central government or civil society, with 4 trained officials. 49% of the municipalities have good cooperation with civil society organizations in identifying and addressing cases of human rights violations, while 28% do not have any cooperation in this area.

ECONOMIC CRITERIA

Existence of a functioning market economy

Improving the business environment

Until 2017, 79% of the country's municipalities have not undertaken any activity to promote the development of small and medium-size enterprises in their territory and have not provided any support services; 96% of the municipalities have not allocated a special budget to support small and medium-size enterprises.

Offices for development and promotion of tourism have been set up and are operational in 35 municipalities, which make up 57% of the country's municipalities, while they are not yet established in 38% of them.

ABILITY TO ASSUME MEMBERSHIP OBLIGATIONS

Agriculture and Rural Development

Strengthening local government capacities in the information systems and rural and agricultural counselling

By 2017, the agricultural information and counselling offices have been established in 62% of the country's municipalities, while they are still missing in 34% of them.

Improving productivity and competitiveness in the agricultural sector

Up to 2017, 57% of the country's municipalities have not a complete or facilitated road network, linking the agricultural areas to their shopping centers and neighboring municipalities, while 21% of them have a partial or a partially facilitating network.

Since the beginning of the implementation of the Administrative and Territorial Reform, the budget for the construction of the road network has been increased to 33% of the municipalities, and for 49% of them there has been no special budget allocation for this purpose.

Restoring, maintaining and developing ecosystems depending on agriculture and forestry

Up to 2017, only 10% of the municipalities in the country have a local plan or are in the process of drafting a local plan for nature and biodiversity in their territory; these are mainly plans for conservation and development of the ecosystems within the territory of the municipalities, in order to protect the environment, such as rivers or forests, but not for agricultural-dependent ecosystems.

Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policies

Improvement of sanitary-veterinary conditions in order to protect consumers' health

By 2017, the municipalities have in their structure, on average, 3 veterinary inspectors. 54% of the country's municipalities have not been trained on EU requirements in the area of food and veterinary safety. Veterinary checks are carried out daily and almost daily in 71% of the municipalities; they reported on average four cases of food and veterinary safety violations to central authorities; 51% of the municipalities have not reported any such cases.

Transport policies

Increasing road safety at the local level

By 2017, on average, 61% of the territory of the municipalities of the country have an existing road network. On average 36% of this network is within legal construction standards and 27% complies with the legal standards of signaling. 13% of the municipalities have not allocated a special budget for this purpose.

Energy

Increasing efficiency of energy use

In 2017, about 71% to 75% of the country's municipalities have not participated in any training on the minimum legal requirements for the thermal quality of the buildings with single dwelling or multiple dwellings, as well as for private services, respectively. None of the municipalities have hired additional employees to control the energy efficiency requirements of buildings within its territory. 91% of them have not carried out inspections of single and multiple dwellings and private services.

Implementing methods for improving energy efficiency

In 2017, in 83% of the country's municipalities, energy advisory services have not been provided and there has been no cooperation with central authorities in this regard.

Taxes

Improve the administration of the local tax and tariff system through the increase of the taxable threshold

During 2017, 51% of the country's municipalities have planned or implemented tax policies to promote formalization of the economy in their territory. Municipalities have undertaken on average 271 on-the-spot inspections to prevent the informal economy. They have organized on average 4 public hearings on information and business involvement in discussing municipal tax policies; however, 11% of the country's municipalities have not conducted any hearing at all. A nonpayers' database is set up in 89% of the country's municipalities; such a pattern is still missing in five municipalities in the country.

Social policy and employment

Social protection at the local level

Up to 2017, the division for the needs assessment and referral of social care services has been established in 26% of the country's municipalities; in 69% of them such division is not yet established, so there is not yet any assessment of the needs of the social groups in need for social protection.

In 47% of the municipalities there is no additional staff employed in the social protection sector, and in 43% of the municipalities there are no additional employees for the administration, monitoring and evaluation of the national economic aid scheme. In 84% of the municipalities, no performance report of social care services for PWDS has been compiled.

In 48% of the municipalities there is no day care center; in 15% of them there is a daily center for the PWDS group, and in 21% of the municipalities there are multifunctional centers that provide social care services for some groups in need. The average number of people who benefit from social, day care or multifunctional care centers is 154.

Supporting active work programs

In 2017, 10% of the country's municipalities cooperated with the regional education directorates to improve or expand the opportunities for vocational education in their territory, according to the labor market needs. However, 78% of the municipalities do not provide financial support for the vocational education of unemployed people in their territory receiving economic aid, in cooperation with the regional employment office; similarly, 80% of them do not provide financial support to the people from the PWDS group. In addition, 81% of the municipalities do not provide financial support for young people who complete university studies or vocational education and intend to start a private business in their professional field.

Social inclusion at the local level

Until 2017, only 10% of the country's municipalities have a local action plan for social inclusion. Also, the statistics database with EU indicators on social inclusion has increased to 10% of the municipalities in the country; on the other hand, 49% of the municipalities have not been trained by the line ministry on measuring and assessing the methodology and monitoring of national and EU indicators for social inclusion.

Judiciary and fundamental rights

Strengthening of the child's right protection system

Until 2017, 61% of the country's municipalities have established a child protection unit in the structure responsible for social services; the unit is still missing in 34% of them; 49% of the municipalities have also created a monitoring system on cases of children at risk and / or in need of protection; in 44% of the municipalities such system is still missing.

During 2017, on average, 19 cases of child rights violations were identified in the territory of the municipalities and the average number of protection orders issued was 17; on the other hand, 82% of the municipalities have not allocated a special budget for the protection of children's rights.

Protection from Discrimination

Until 2017, 25% of the municipalities of the country have established a system for monitoring the cases of discrimination occurring in the territory of the municipality, while in 69% of them there is no such system yet. Most municipalities, i.e. 54%, have no cooperation with the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination; 13% of them have signed a cooperation agreement, however no joint activities have been undertaken in this area, no joint services have been provided, nor there is a regular and mutual reporting between the two institutions.

Protection of national minorities

Up to 2017, 28% of the municipalities of the country have established a system for monitoring the cases of violations of the rights of national minorities in their territory; the national minorities that are subject to monitoring in these municipalities are mainly Roma and Egyptian minorities.

Inclusion and accessibility of people with disabilities

Until 2017, 16% of the municipalities in the country have created a unit for assessing the needs and a referral system for people with disabilities; 63% of the municipalities have not participated in any training related to the topics of needs assessment and referrals. The average number of social workers in the municipality that provide services to people with disabilities is 5; 23% of the local municipalities have drafted a local action plan for the given vulnerable group.

In 52% of the municipalities, the PWDS infrastructure is present only in a part of the schools in their territory. In 21% of them, the infrastructure is missing in all schools and no municipalities are making investments for their equipment/provision.

Integration of Roma and Egyptians

Until 2017, a local action plan for the implementation of the national action plan in this area has been drafted in 21% of the country's municipalities. However, 78% of the country's municipalities do not have trained officials for the implementation of the national plan, as well as 41% of the municipalities have not yet established cooperation with line ministries in the form of consultations on the development of local programs for the implementation of planned measures as foreseen in this plan. In 23% of the municipalities, the cooperation has been established, and in 13% of the municipalities the cooperation is continuous. 38% of the municipalities have established cooperation with the regional education directorates aiming at identifying school age Roma and Egyptian children; also, 25% of the municipalities have established cooperation with the regional employment offices aiming at employment of Roma and Egyptians or with

regional education directorates for their vocational training, preparing them for the labor market. Most of the municipalities in the country have not yet cooperated with any of the regional line ministry structures in order to integrate the two communities.

Strengthening of the system for ensuring gender equality

Until 2017, in 75% of the municipalities of the country, a gender-responsive structure has been created, while in 84% a local gender equality coordinator has been appointed, regardless of whether there is a special structure or not.

76% of the municipalities have not participated in any training from the respective line ministry on the National Referral Mechanism in this field. In 24% of them there is no specialized service available for women victims of domestic violence; on average, 2 specialized services have been offered at the national level, the largest number offered is 6 services.

The gender targets are set in 30% of the country's municipalities in the medium-term budget program, while in 70% of them there are no set data or data available.

36% of the municipalities cooperate with civil society on gender equality issues in their territory mainly in the form of joint activities. On the other hand, in 44% of the municipalities in the country there are no local civil society organizations with whom to establish a cooperation relationship in the field of gender equality.

Justice, Freedom and Security

The fight against organized crime

Up to 2017, 51% of the country's municipalities have set up a working group to implement the Action Plan for Combating Organized Crime.

Education and Culture

Increase participation in preparatory classes for pre-school education

In 2017, 45% of the municipalities in the country have not undertaken any awareness raising campaigns targeting parents for the inclusion of children in the pre-school education system, while 72% of the municipalities have not undertaken any investments to expand the nursery / kindergarten capacity in their municipality.

Quantitative and qualitative inclusion of marginalized groups in the pre-university education system

In 2017, none of the country's municipalities have allocated a budget to ensure the school enrollment and attendance of any school-age child through CSOs, groups of vulnerable groups or regional education directorates; 74% of the municipalities have not allocated any budget for the financial support of children of school age, whose families belong to groups in need.

Improving the school infrastructure of pre-university education

In 2017, 43% of the country's municipalities have not allocated a budget for the rebuilding of schools in their territory.

Preservation and protection of material and non-material cultural heritage

In 2017, 86% of the country's municipalities have not reported any violation and illegal construction in areas that are part of the cultural heritage of the municipality. 70% of the municipalities have not allocated any budget for the protection and development of cultural heritage values in the territory of their municipalities.

Supporting creativity and creative activity of Albanian artists through the enhancement of cultural activities and the involvement of artists

During 2017, the country's municipalities have organized on average 10 cultural activities to promote the culture of national area and culture; on average, the municipalities organize 6 regular calendar activities to promote the culture of the national area and culture.

Environment and Climate change

Develop action plans for improving the quality of environmental air at the local level

Until 2017, 64% of the country's municipalities have not drafted a plan for improving air quality and 62% of them have not yet integrated strategic action papers on improving environmental air quality.

Improve integrated waste management

Until 2017, 62% of the country's municipalities have not yet prepared a local integrated waste management plan. Out of 7 municipalities that have an integrated waste management plan, only 3 of them collect and deposit waste on a regular basis accordingly. To date, none of the municipalities has allocated waste at the source under recyclable streams.

In 82% of the country's municipalities there are no unauthorized landfills. In average, the country's municipalities have 1 authorized landfill in their territory.

Strengthen implementation of task force decisions on acoustic pollution in urban centers and coastal tourist areas

By 2017, 22 municipalities have not yet set up a task force, while 83% of the country's municipalities have not been trained by the line ministry in this regard.

Afforestation of degraded surfaces

Until 2017, 38% of the municipalities in the country do not have an action plan for the management of the forest forestry fund. In average, the municipalities have 5 specialists in their structure dealing with the management of the forestry fund.

Financial Control

Strengthening local government capacities in financial management and control

During 2017, in 37 municipalities of the country, the municipal council has undertaken on average 2 internal controls. During the last two years there is on average a decrease of 33% of the level of statutory and unpaid arrears of the municipalities to third parties.

I. INTRODUCTION

This is the first national report drafted on the local government accountability in the process of integration of Albania in the European Union.

Based on the National Plan for European Integration 2017 – 2020 and European Commission Report on Albania, this report represents the level of fulfillment by the local governments in 2017 of EU related matters, part of the country's EU agenda.

The report comes two years following the undertaking of the reform on decentralization and local governance and the new administrative and territorial division of the country as one of its core components. Its purpose is to bring to the attention of the central and local government the importance of the latter in Albania's EU integration process by presenting its responsibility in meeting EU accession criteria and standards, and the status of their fulfillment in 2017, which can serve as the basis for assessing the performance of local government in the integration process in the coming years.

II. METHODOLOGY

The data for this report have been collected through a matrix organized/structured according to three components as in the European Commission Country Report (political criteria, economic criteria, ability to assume membership obligations) in which the local government entails responsibilities within the framework of functions of local self-government provided in the Law 139/2015 'On Local Self-Government'. For each of the sectors, objectives have been selected as defined in the national strategic and political documents and which, at the same time, are priorities under the National European Integration Plan 2017-2020. For each respective objective, have been developed indicators reporting their accomplishment/fulfillment, which derive (i) from these documents, or (ii) the legal framework of the respective sector.

Objectives deriving from national strategic and national documents may be strategic or specific in the relevant original document; independent of such reference. In this report they are described as specific in the understanding of their implementation by the local government.

The indicators for each sector and objective are both qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative indicators are aggregated at the national level by the arithmetic mean. However, the arithmetic mean is not an adequate statistic when the variance of the data across municipalities is high; therefore, in each of these cases, the quantitative indicators have been interpreted according to the highest and lowest value. The qualitative indicators are divided in categories of answers and are interpreted by the frequency of answers for each category against the total number of answers, accompanied in each case with histograms.

The matrix has been completed by 60 out of 61 municipalities of the country; the only Municipality that has not filled in the matrix is Finiq. However, the 60 municipalities have not provided data for each indicator; also, those indicators which are dependent on the answers of another indicator, have a possible number of answers smaller than or equal to the number of answers of the indicator on which they are dependent, therefore, smaller or equal than 60. In each case, the quantitative indicators have only been aggregated at the national level when their number of answers ensures a margin of error of the aggregation at 2% - 7,5% with 95% probability.

Definitions

Cooperation of the municipality with central, regional or local CSOs in certain areas is interpreted in this report as based on the number of activities organized jointly, signing of cooperation agreements, regular mutual reporting and joint provision of local services.

Report limitations

The report is compiled on the basis of the data reported by the municipalities. Consequently, its findings may be inaccurate in those cases when and to the extent at which data may be inaccurate. Given that this is the first exercise of this kind in the country, the indicators developed in each field have room for improvement and simplification of the description, as well as in any field there is room for removal and addition of other indicators. Due to the inter-sectorial character of the exercise, in the event of its recurrence in the years to come, it is recommended that the process of collecting data from municipalities be accompanied by support to their human resources. In this context, the conclusions of this report do not constitute per se an assessment on the performance of the local government in the process of Albania's integration into the EU; but they can serve as the basis for a repetition of such an exercise by the Governments of Albania in the years to come.

III. POLITICAL CRITERIA

Sustainability of institutions that ensure democracy, rule of law, human rights and respect and protection of minorities

1. Democracy

Democracy entails governance, Ombudsman and civil society clusters, as far as local level is concerned.

1.1 Governance

Strengthening of good governance is one of the strategic goals of the Inter-Sectorial Strategy for Decentralization and Local Governance 2015 – 2020 (ISSDLG). According to this strategy, the specific objectives of this goal, which are priorities of the country's EU integration process, entail capacity building, enhancing the accountability and transparency, as well as community engagement in local government decision-making process.

Specific Objective: capacity building of the local government

Public administration is in the focus of the objective for capacity building of the local government; the accomplishment of the key instrument as defined in the ISSDLG entails short and long term trainings provided by the Department of Public Administration (DoPA) and School of Public Administration (ASPA). In addition, the cross-cutting strategy of public administration reform 2015-2020 is drafted in particular for the development of the capacities of the local government. The establishment of (unique) one stop shop offices offering digital local administrative services (through information technology) is foreseen in this document.

The average number of trainings provided by DoPA on civil servant legislation, in which municipalities have participated is 3, with an average number of 12 administration staff; about 29% of the municipalities have never participated in any training on this topic.

The average number of thematic expertise based training sessions provided by ASPA, in which municipalities have participated is 7, with an average number of 14 administration staff . 4% of the municipalities have never participated on thematic expertise based training.

Municipalities have participated on average 2 trainings on Human Resources Information Management System, with an average of 3 administration staff and only 1 training on the new Code of Administrative Procedures, with 1 administration staff; about 81% of the municipalities have never had a training session of this current topic.

The budget spent by municipalities attending these trainings has been on average 485,000 ALL/per administrations staff or approximately 37,300 ALL/training for each civil servant; however, such estimation may be overrated due to the inaccurate information provided by municipalities on the indicators' data. Moreover, about 50% of the municipalities have no budget allocated for participating on trainings.

The (unique) one stop-shop offices have been established in about 31% of the municipalities all over the country, while in 61% of them there is none established yet; in 8% of the municipalities there are no data available.

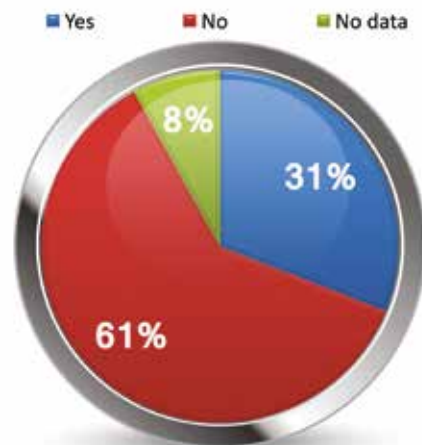


Chart 1:

Establishment of a (unique) one stop shop in a municipality

On the other hand, the average number of the one stop shop offices established in the municipalities of the country (including administrative units of the municipalities) is about 1.5; the highest number reported is 19 offices established. The average number of digital administrative services provided is about 8.5; the highest number of services provided is 83, but in about 52% of the municipalities there is not any digital administrative service provided yet.



Problems and challenges

- Limited financial and human resources in establishing one-stop shop offices and extending them in the respective administrative units;
- **Limited financial and human resources** in increasing the number of digital administrative services in the one-stop-shop offices; Unification of a sole electronic system of all local programs and systems of the administrative services;
- **Selection of qualified employees** with adequate criteria according to the job description;
- **Application of the knowledge** gained through trainings into practice and exchange of know-how with other colleagues;
- application of the new know-how on Human Resources Information Management System, improvement of the know-how on the Code of Administrative Procedures;
- **Limited financial capacities** (per diems for trainings) compared to training needs on implementation/application of different administrative practices, including the enforcement of other laws;
- **Minimal human resources** capacities to harmonize municipality strategic documents with the midterm budgetary programs (MTBP);
- **Lack of a program** and a calendar of trainings for the local administration; lack of coordination with the central government institutions on being informed about different trainings planned for the municipalities.

Specific objective: enhancing the accountability of the local governance

The mechanism of collecting and providing answers to the complaints and requests of the citizens by the municipality administration is a basic accountability mechanism for a good governance. On the other hand, ISSDLG defines the municipality council as the local administrative body in charge/responsible for the inspection and monitoring of the performance of the administration; through the municipality council

and this direct responsibility, the community structures are included in fulfillment of the objective on the enhancement of local government accountability, as well as for the overall goal of strengthening good governance. At the moment, community structures are still not established in the municipalities all over the country. The Strategy also defines the performance management systems as a direct instrument in enhancing the local government accountability, but it does not elaborate them further.

On such basis, the fulfillment of the objective is estimated only with regard to the basic mechanism of the collection and provision of answers to citizens by the municipality administration. On average, the citizens receive answers for their requests and complaints in about 75% of the cases.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** on setting up an integrated system for the management of the requests and complains of the citizens;
- **Building human capacities of the municipality** to trace the requests and complaints submitted and define their status of settlement;

Specific Objective: increase the transparency of the local government

The instruments that municipalities have enabled to provide information to their community on the decisions they make and on the processes of decision making have been assessed with regard to the transparency of the local government; but the level of use or access of these instruments by the community has not been assessed. This means that the indicators selected do not assess yet the increase of transparency of the local government, but only the accomplishment/implementation of the measures, which have either been defined in the ISSDLG with regard to the accomplishment of this specific objective, or they derive from legal obligations.

Therefore, the publication on the web of the municipality decisions and its local budget, as well as the organization of public consultations/hearings on local finances, have been assessed.

The decision of the municipality can be traced on the website of the municipality for the majority part of the municipalities: about 66% of the municipalities publish all their decisions and about 13% of them publish the most important ones; in about 16% of the municipalities no decisions are yet published on the website.

■ All ■ The mos important ■ None ■ No data

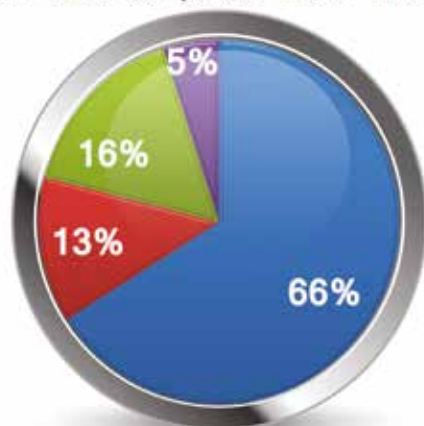
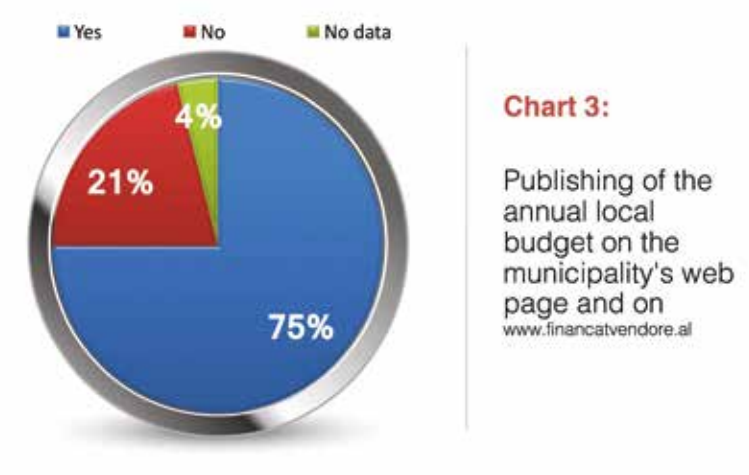


Chart 2:

Decisions of municipalities published at the municipality web page

The local budget of the municipalities is published in about 75% of the municipalities of the country in their respective websites, or at the webpage www.financatvendore.al; even in that case, a group of the municipalities comprising about 21% of the total number of the municipalities do not yet publish their local budgets in any of these two websites.



The average number of public hearings organized during the process of drafting the medium-term budgetary program in the municipalities of the country is about 5; the largest number developed is 21, while in 7% of the municipalities no public hearing during this process has taken place. Also, the average number of public hearings organized by the municipality on the realization of planned revenues and expenditures is about 6; their largest number reaches 30, developed at neighborhood and village level, while for this part of the local financial sector, about 14% of the municipalities have not organized any public hearings.

The preparation of a budget for citizens - the local budget structured in a form that can be read by them stands alongside these tools of increasing the transparency of the local government. Still, no municipality in the country prepares such a budget. However, there are initiatives of publishing on the municipality's website the descriptions and values of the local budget, mainly for capital expenditures, in a readable form for citizens.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial and human capacities** for setting up and updating the municipality website;
- **Increase human capacities for the use** of digital transparency instruments

with citizens;

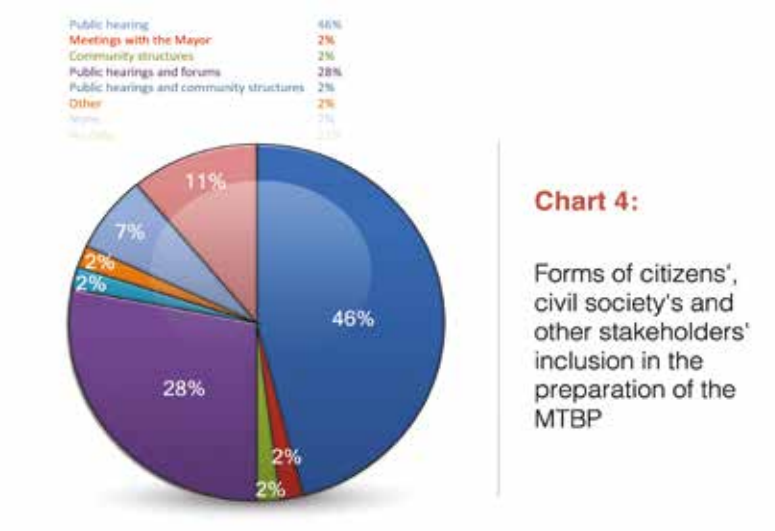
- **Raising awareness of the community** in order to be more active on the information of the local budget and other municipal decisions;
- **Simplification of specific financial terms** for citizens during public hearings.

Specific Objective: engaging the community in the local government decision making

The involvement of the community in the decision-making is assessed through participation in the municipal budget preparation process as one of the most crucial local government decision-making processes and directly related to the community.

In public hearings on drafting of the MTBP, 23 citizens participated on average, while the highest number of attendance reaches 88 citizens; the lowest number is 3. For the number of vulnerable groups represented by civil society organizations there is no data for nearly half of the country's municipalities. In the rest of the municipalities, on average, about 3 groups in need are represented; however, due to the small number of responses, it is not possible to generalize this average at a national level.

Public hearings are used on average by approximately 46% of the country municipalities as the only form of inclusion of their community in the MTBP drafting process; along with discussion forums with social groups within the community (groups in need and other groups of interest), they are the two main methods used on average by approximately 74% of the municipalities in the country. Community structures, the establishment of which is a specific objective of the ISSDLG, is evidenced only in 1 municipality. For this purpose, meetings with the mayor are possible also in only one municipality.



In 7% of the municipalities there is no form of community involvement in the MTBP drafting process, while in 11% of the municipalities there are no data available.



Problems and challenges

- Lack of forums as structures through which citizens and local civil society can participate during the municipal decision-making processes;
- The lack of community structures;
- Participatory budgeting implementation.

1.2 The Ombudsman

The People's Advocate Institution (the Ombudsman) is essential for the improvement of governance at the local level through the control of public administration activity vis-à-vis citizens on the basis of the complaints filed by them.

Specific Objective: Improving municipality reviewing capacities of the reports on observations and recommendation of the People's Advocate (Ombudsman)

At the national level, the average number of reports of findings or recommendations that the People's Advocate submitted to the municipalities in 2017 was 7, and 7 is the average number of reports accepted by the municipality; the largest number of reports received reaches 102, on the other hand, about 41% of the municipalities have not received any reports from the People's Advocate.

On average, only one of them remained in the process of review by the municipality beyond the deadline set by law; the highest number reaches 10.



Problems and challenges

- Drafting of an action manual/plan for the municipality to review the reports of the Ombudsman's findings and recommendations.

1.3 Civil society

Civil society is also an essential structure for improving governance at the local level through participation in the decision-making process and monitoring and evaluation of this process and the performance of local government.

Specific objective: strengthening civil society role at local level

For roughly half of the country's municipalities there is no data on the number of recommendations submitted by CSOs during the local decision-making process and the number of these recommendations accepted, and thus influencing the decision making. For the rest of the municipalities, this number reaches 2 recommendations approximately; however, due to the small number of responses, it is not possible to generalize this average at the national level.



Problems and challenges

- **Lack of local CSOs**, especially in the small municipalities;
- **Limited specialization of local CSOs** in areas related to local functions, hence limited opportunities to influence the decision-making of the municipalities effectively;
- **Development of a database/register** for local CSOs participation in decision-making processes of the municipality;
- **Lack of forums, as structures** through which civil society can participate in municipal decision-making processes.

CONCLUSIONS ON DEMOCRACY

In terms of local government capacity development, during 2017, the local administration was trained more on professional subjects with an average of 7 trainings and 14 trained officers. About 29% of the municipalities have not yet participated on legislation for civil servants, while about 81% of the country's municipalities have not participated on the new Code of Administrative Procedures. About 50% of the country's municipalities do not allocate budgets for employees to participate on trainings.

One-stop-shops have been set up in 19 municipalities, which make up about 31% of the country's municipalities, while not yet set up in 37 municipalities, i.e. about 61%. No digital service (e-service) is yet offered in about 52% of the country's municipalities.

In terms of increasing accountability of the local government, in 2017, on average, citizens received responses to their claims and complaints in about 75% of the cases; however, providing official responses does not necessarily represent full addressing of citizens' requests and complaints and does not even represent solving the problem they entail. There are still no local government performance management systems. Community structures have not yet been established.

In terms of increasing the transparency of the local government, by the end of 2017, all municipal or major decisions have been published on the municipality website in about 79% of the municipalities, i.e. the major part of them. The average number of public hearings organized during the process of drafting the mid-term budgeting program is 5, while the number of public hearings organized about the realization of planned revenues and expenditures is about 6. Up to 14% of the country's municipalities still do not organize public hearings and there are initiatives for their development at the neighborhood and village level. No municipalities in the country prepare a budget for citizens yet.

In terms of community involvement in the local government decision-making process, about 23 citizens have participated in public hearings for the preparation of the MTBP during 2017; the level of participation of vulnerable groups through civil society organizations does not have sufficient data to obtain an average at national level. Public hearings and discussion forums with social groups within the community constitute the two main forms used by municipalities to involve the community in the MTBP preparation process, while community structures are not yet widely established.

With regard to improving the municipality capacities of reviewing the reports of the Ombudsman's findings and recommendations, during 2017, on average, only one report has remained in the process of review beyond the deadline set by law; on the other hand, about 41% of the municipalities have not received any reports from the People's Advocate.

In terms of the consolidation of civil society at the local level, for 2017, approximately half of the municipalities in the country have no data on the number of recommendations received from CSOs during their local decision-making processes or the number of recommendations accepted.

2. Rule of law

2.1 Fight against corruption

Specific objective: Strengthening the regime of disclosure and control of public officials' wealth and cases of conflict of interest

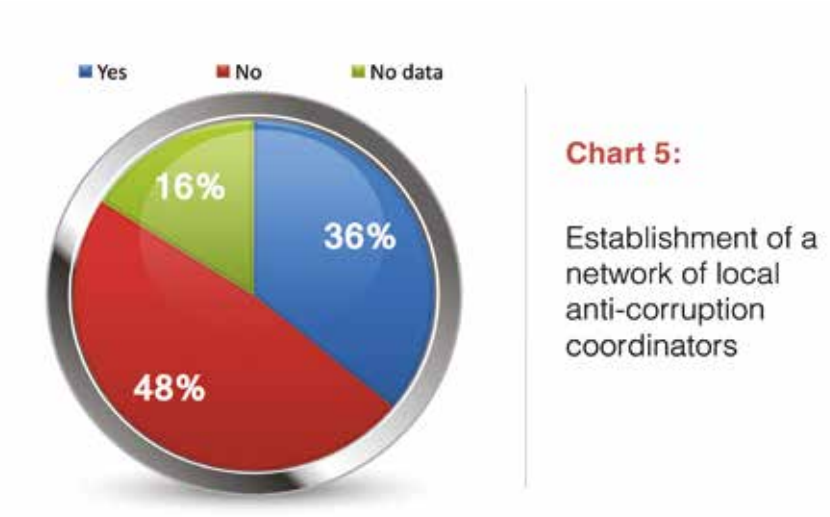
For most of the country's municipalities, in about 87% of them, the mayors have declared to HIDAACI the assets and private interests; with the latest amendments to the legislation, the mayors are the only local government officials that are subject to the declaration according to this law. For the rest, which accounts for about 12% of the municipalities, there are no data available.

Declared conflicts of interests cases by the municipal administration officials is reported only in 1 municipality, accompanied by the resignation of employee from the respective post.

Specific objective: Strengthening the capacities of the local government in the fight against corruption

The establishment of a network of coordinators and anti-corruption focal points in the municipality constitute the measures undertaken from the National Coordinator against Corruption for co-ordination of work in the fight against corruption under the ISSAC.

The network of anti-corruption coordinators in the municipality is only partially established, in 36% of them, while in 48% of the municipalities it is not yet existent; for 16% of the municipalities there are no data available regarding the establishment of this network.



Moreover, the anti-corruption focal points have been established/appointed only partly, i.e. in 26% of the municipalities all over the country; in 46% of the municipalities they have not been yet appointed, while in 28% of the municipalities there are no data regarding the appointment of these focal points..

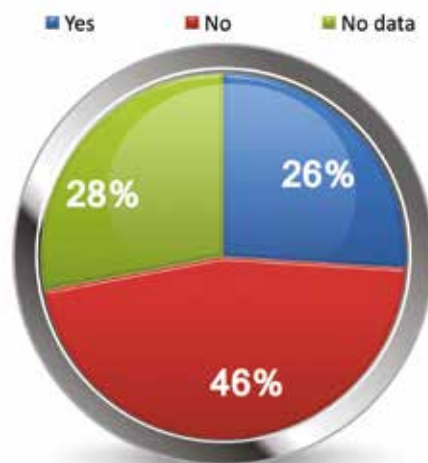


Chart 6:

Establishment of local anti-corruption contacting points in the municipality

At the national level, the municipalities have participated, on average in 1 training on the fight against corruption, organized by the National Coordinator against Corruption.

The electronic register of the municipality, as a transparency tool applicable to each of the municipal sectors, is updated in about 85% of the country's municipalities - where regular updates apply in about 64% of them. On the other hand, around 5% of the municipalities do not yet have an electronic register, while in 10% of the municipalities there are no data available.

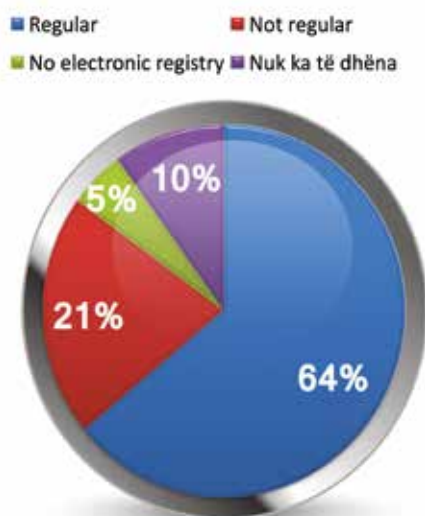


Chart 7:

Level of update of the electronic registry of the municipality

Specific Objective: Formulation and Adoption of Anti-Corruption Policies by Local Government

The Inter-sectorial Strategy against Corruption 2015-2020 defines the objective of formulating and adopting anti-corruption policies at the local government. For achieving this objective, instruments of increasing the transparency of local government have been defined as one-stop shops and online publication of the municipal decisions regarding local finances; the setup of a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the public services delivery and social assistance in the municipality is provisioned as well in this strategy.

Thus, assessment and monitoring of the economic assistance through (i) the national scheme , or by (ii)

a special committee of the municipality - occurs in about 23% of the country's municipalities. For most of the municipalities, 56% of them, there is no monitoring and evaluation mechanism of this service, while in about 21% of the municipalities there are no data available. The monitoring and evaluation of the public services delivery is a direct function of the local government, which represents a general problem of the municipalities of the country but is not specifically evaluated for the purpose of this study.

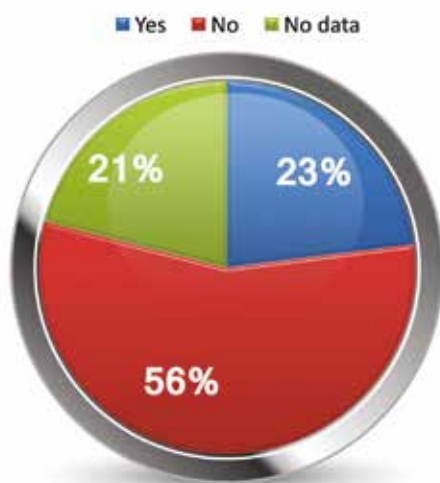


Chart 8:

Establishment of a M&E mechanism of public service delivery and economic aid



Problems and challenges

- **Limited human capacities for the implementation** of the national anti-corruption strategy at the local level and for drafting a local action plan in line with this strategy;
- **Lack of local administration training** by central authorities (National Coordinator against Corruption).

CONCLUSIONS ON THE RULE OF LAW

In the fight against corruption, ***in terms of strengthening the regime of declaration and control of assets and conflicts of interest***, in 2017, in about 87% of the municipalities of the country, the mayors declared to HIDAACI their assets and private interests.

In order to strengthen local administration capacity in the fight against corruption until 2017, the network of local anti-corruption coordinators is set up in 36% of the country's municipalities, while local anti-corruption focal points are appointed in 26% them. Municipalities participated on average at 1 training organized by the National Coordinator against Corruption.

In terms of formulating and adopting anti-corruption policies by the local government, until 2017, for the majority of the municipalities (56%) there is no mechanism for monitoring and assessing economic assistance.

3. Human Rights

Specific objective: Strengthening the capacity of local government to implement national and international human rights standards

At the national level, the average number of trainings on national and international human rights standards organized by central authorities or civil society in which municipalities have participated is 1, and the average number of trained officials is 4. For the identification and addressing cases of human rights violations, about 49% of the municipalities have established a good cooperation with civil society organizations; about 10% of the municipalities describe it as a very good cooperation. On the other hand, there is a high number of the municipalities that have no co-operation in this regard, for about 28% of them and also a small part of 5% have poor cooperation with civil society. In about 8% of the municipalities there are no data available.

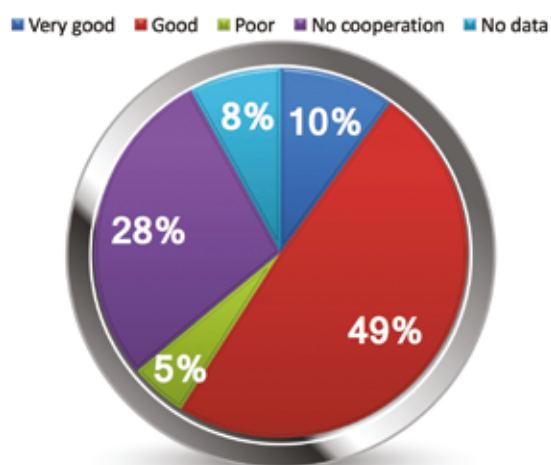


Chart 9:

Level of cooperation of the municipality with CSOs on identification and addressing of cases of violation of human rights within the municipality's territory



Problems and challenges

- **Lack of specialized** local CSOs in this domain;
- **Identification of cases of human rights** violations in rural areas, mainly due to the poor road infrastructure in these areas;
- **Human resources development** in the human rights sector;
- **Sustainability of the municipality** services in the human rights protection domain.

CONCLUSIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

In order to strengthen local government capacity to implement national and international human rights standards, during 2017 municipalities have participated on average at 1 training organized by the central government or civil society, with 4 trained officials. About 49% of the municipalities have good co-operation with civil society organizations in identifying and addressing human rights violations, while 28% of the municipalities do not have a co-operation in this regard.

IV. ECONOMIC CRITERIA

Functional market economy and the capability to handle the EU competition and market forces

1.1. Existence of a functional market economy

Specific objective: Improvement of the business environment

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in the development of a country's economy; based on this, the establishment of a favorable business climate is a priority of the country's EU integration process, which, at the same time coincides with the role of the municipalities in the field of local economic development.

In 74% of the cases, the municipalities have prepared a strategic development plan; this part comprises 45 municipalities, of which 36 are municipalities supported by the central government or donors for the drafting of their overall local plan; 9 other municipalities may have a strategic development document for the new municipal territory, also designed with the support of foreign donors. Meanwhile, about 25% of them have not prepared or planned drafting such a document, while in 1% of the municipalities there are no data available.



About 16% of the municipalities have organized activities to promote the development of small and medium enterprises; the majority of them, i.e. 79%, did not conduct such activities, while in 5% of the municipalities there are no data available.



Chart 11:

Municipality activities for stimulating the development of small and medium enterprises

Only 18% of the municipalities have provided support services for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises; the majority of them, i.e. 79%, have not provided such services during last year, while in about 3% of the municipalities there are no data available in this regard.

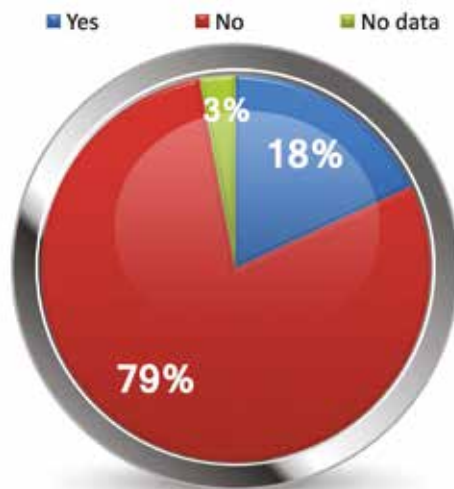


Chart 12:

Municipality services supporting the development of small and medium enterprises

The vast majority of the municipalities, or 96% of them, have planned no budget to support small and medium-sized enterprises over the past year. The largest amount of budget planned in this regard is 2,600 thousand ALL; however, this total may be overestimated or underestimated due to inaccurate communication of the municipalities about the data on this indicator.

Offices for tourism development and promotion have been set up and are operational in about 57% of the country's municipalities and in 38% of them they are not set up yet; in this regard, in 5% of the municipalities there are no data available.

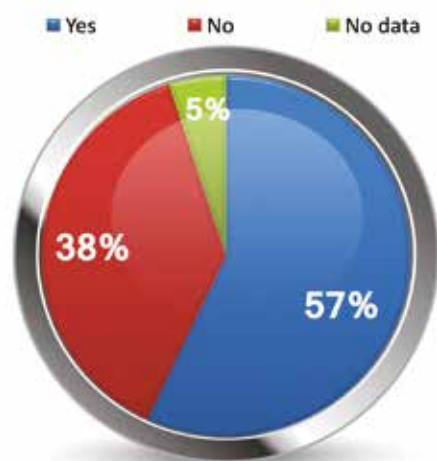


Chart 13:

Office for the development and promotion of tourism established and functional



Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** for drafting and implementing a municipal development strategy;
- **Limited financial capacities** to support new businesses (small and medium-sized enterprises) with financial assistance and the set-up of a competitive grant scheme for them;
- **Limited financial capacities** for setting up an accurate database on businesses;
- **Limited financial capacities for the establishment** of information points in the municipality, as well as coordination with tourist agencies and tourist businesses to have accurate statistics for tourists.

CONCLUSIONS ON THE EXISTENCE OF A FUNCTIONING MARKET ECONOMY

In terms of improving the business environment, by 2017, about 74% of the country's municipalities have prepared a strategic development document for the municipality. On the other hand, about 79% of them have not undertaken any activity to promote the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and have not provided any support service for their development. About 96% of the municipalities have not allocated any budget to support the small and medium-sized enterprises.

Offices for the development and promotion of tourism have been set up and are operational in 35 municipalities, which make up about 57% of the country's municipalities, while not yet being set-up in 23 municipalities, or about 38% of them.

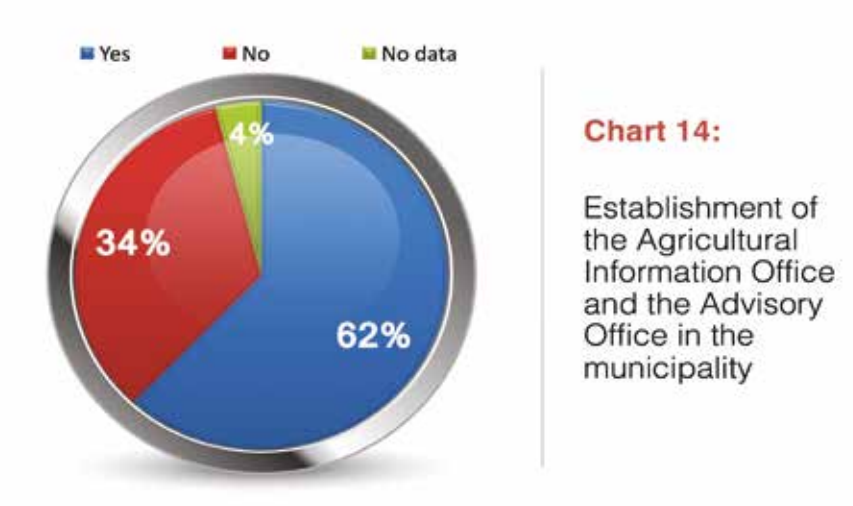
V. ABILITY TO ASSUME MEMBERSHIP OBLIGATIONS

Ability to take over/engage in accession commitments, in particular the ability to effectively implement the rules, standards and policies of the acquis, as well as commitment to political, economic and monetary union

1. Chapter 11: Agriculture and rural development

Specific objective: Strengthening the capacities of the local government administration in the agricultural and rural information and advisory system

Agricultural Information Offices and Advisory Offices have been established in about 62% of the country's municipalities, while they are still missing in 34% of them; in about 4% of the municipalities there are no data available.



Municipalities have participated on average in 2 trainings on national priorities in the agriculture and rural development sector - competitiveness of the agricultural sector and improvement of production techniques, which are in line with the EU integration process. However, this includes municipalities that have not yet set up an information and advisory office, so they do not yet have a structure for meeting the purpose of these trainings.



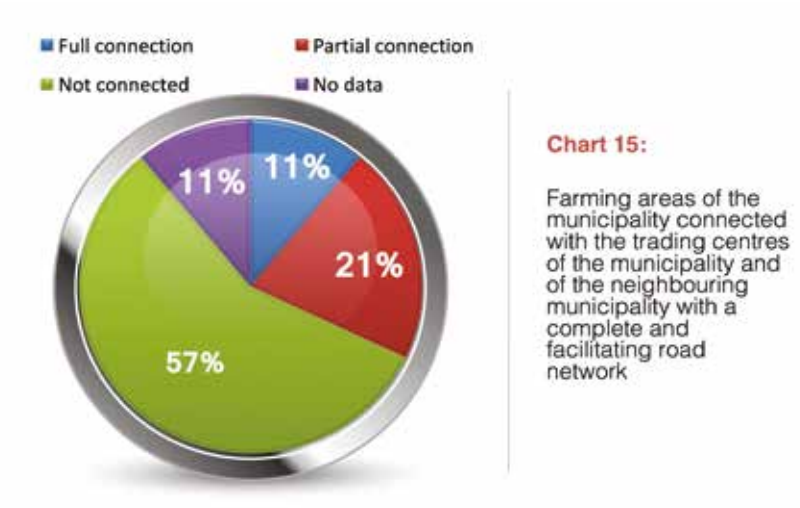
Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** for the establishment and functioning of agricultural information offices and advisory offices in the municipality;
- **Limited financial capacities** for setting up a database of this sector;
- **Limited financial and human capacities** for drafting local strategies on agriculture at the local level in harmony with the national strategy; insufficient knowledge of the national strategy;
- **Cooperation with advisory organizations** specialized in this field;
- **Providing all farmers** with ownership certificates;
- **Poor road infrastructure** in remote rural areas.

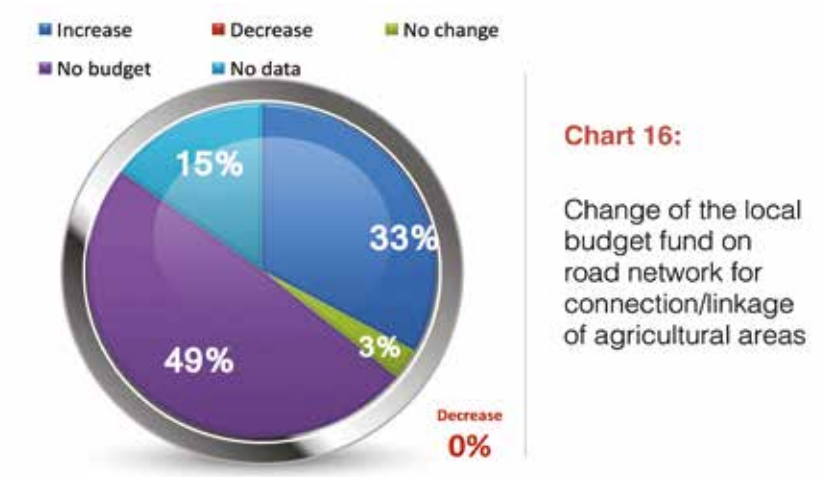
Specific objective: Improvement of productivity and competitiveness in the agricultural sector: improvement of rural infrastructure, balanced territorial and economic development of rural areas

Improving productivity and competitiveness in the agricultural sector is a strategic objective of the Cross-cutting Strategy for Rural and Agricultural Development 2014-2020. Improvement of rural infrastructure and their balanced territorial and economic development are priorities of the National Plan for European Integration, which serve to achieve this objective; through the direct responsibility of the local government in the road infrastructure sector, municipalities have a role in achieving both of these priorities and, consequently, the achievement of the strategic objective.

Only about 10% of the country's municipalities have a complete and facilitating network of roads for connecting the agricultural/rural areas of the municipality with the shopping centers and neighboring municipalities. Most of them, around 57%, do not have a full network or the state of the network does not facilitate the connection with rural areas. While about 21% of them have a partial or partially facilitating network. For this indicator, about 11% of the municipalities have no data available.



On the other hand, since the beginning of the implementation of the Administrative and Territorial Reform in the country in 2016, about 49% of the municipalities of the country do not have a special budget for the construction of this road network, while for 3% of them the budget has not changed. On the other hand, there was no budget decrease in any municipality and in 33% of them the budget has increased. In 15% municipalities there are no data available.



At the same time, the average amount of grants for agriculture and rural development since the beginning of the RAT implementation in 2016 is approximately 9,260,000 ALL or 4,630,000 ALL per year; however, this result may be over or underestimated due to the inaccurate communication of the municipalities for the data provided on this indicator.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** for improving the road network of rural areas;
- **Establishing an inter-municipal cooperation** for linking agricultural production with regional markets;
- **Finding new public spaces and establishing** a public private partnership for building new regional markets.

Specific objective: Restoration, conservation and development of ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forests

About 10% of the municipalities have a local plan (or are developing one) about the nature and biodiversity in their territory; these are mainly plans for conservation and development of ecosystems within the territory of the municipalities in order to protect the environment, such as rivers or forests, but not for ecosystems dependent on agriculture. About 78% of the municipalities do not have a natural and biodiversity plan, while in about 7% of them there are no data available.

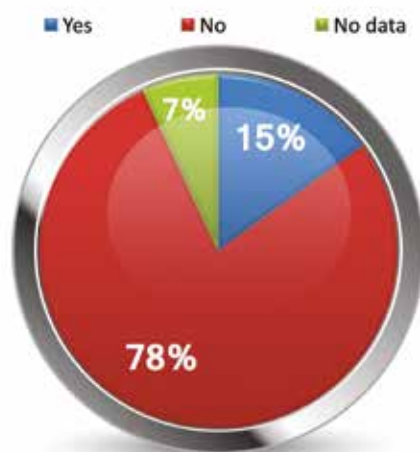


Chart 17:

Preparation of a local plan for the conservation and development of biodiversity/ecosystem in the municipality



Problems and challenges

- **Increase of the financial and human capacities** for drafting and implementing a local plan for nature and biodiversity in the municipality, which is resilient on agriculture;
- **Community awareness on the maintenance** of pastures and forests.

CONCLUSIONS ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

In terms of strengthening the local government capacities in the agricultural and rural information and advisory system, until 2017, the Agricultural Information Offices and Advisory Offices have been established in about 62% of the municipalities, while they are still missing in 34% of them.

In terms of improving productivity and competitiveness in the agricultural sector, until 2017, around 57% of the country's municipalities do not have a complete or facilitating road network for connecting rural areas to the shopping centers and neighboring municipalities, while around 21% of the municipalities have a partial or partially facilitating network. Since the beginning of the implementation of the Administrative and Territorial Reform, the budget for the construction of the road network has increased in about 33% of the municipalities of the country, and about 49% of them did not have a specific budget allocated for this purpose.

In terms of the restoration, conservation and development of ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forests, until 2017, only about 10% of the municipalities in the country have or are under development of a local plan for nature and biodiversity in their territory; these are mainly plans for conservation and development of ecosystems within the territory of the municipalities in order to protect the environment, such as rivers or forests, but not for agricultural-dependent ecosystems.

2. Chapter 12: Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policies

Law 139/2015 “On Local Self-Government” does not foresee any functions for local government in the food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary domain.

This sector is regulated by Law 9863, 28.01.2008 “On Food”, Law 10465, 29.12.2011 “On the Veterinary Service in the Republic of Albania” and Law 105/2016 “On the Protection of Plants”.

The purpose and the provisions of the law “On nutrition” and “On the Protection of Plants” do not include the local government. Meanwhile, the purpose of the law on veterinary services includes the local government with articles 19, 22, 24, 54, 61, 80 and 128, which provide for responsibilities and competences over local government and regulating its role in the process of management and monitoring within the sector. In particular, the Council of Ministers Decision 230/20.03.2013, based on the Law 10465, is an important decision for the role of the local government in the veterinary service.

At the national strategic and political level, the sector development is planned in the Cross-cutting Strategy for Rural and Agricultural Development 2014-2020. This strategy outlines in paragraph 1.7.2 the local government as one of the competent authorities involved in food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary management in the country, as well as defines its responsibilities and powers for the veterinary service, based on law 10465.

The National Plan for European Integration, the European Commission Report as well as the CSRAD, point out that although the sector has started reforming by harmonizing previous legislation with the EU acquis, the result of which is the above legal framework, the joint responsibilities of governmental institutions are not clear, yet incompatible with the new territorial administrative reform, and as a consequence the legal framework needs to be reviewed.

Under these conditions, setting targets for the local government in this area has been done in pursuit of the CSRAD and Law 10465, being the strategic and legal framework still in force. However, since the field is not part of the functions of local self-government, also under the applicable law, this chapter of the report is questionable and there is room for review.

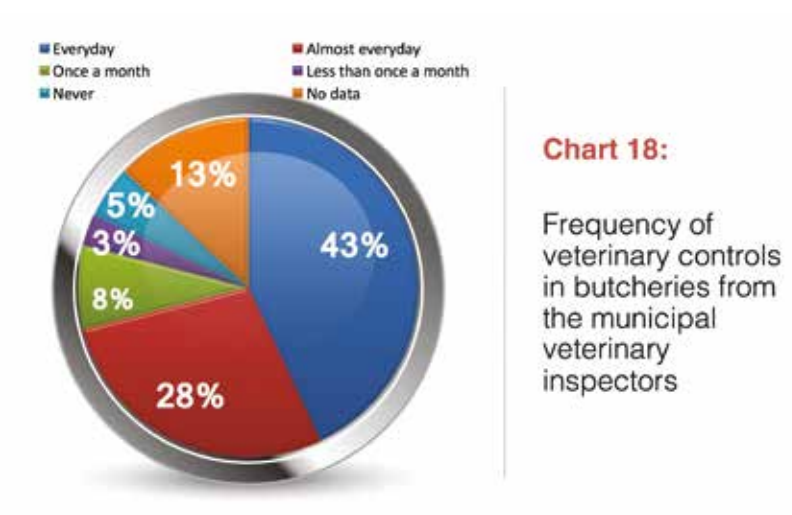
Specific objective: Improvement of sanitary-veterinarian conditions in order to protect the health of consumers

The average number of veterinary inspectors in the municipality administration is 3; the highest number of inspectors is 26 while about 2% of the municipalities do not have any veterinary in their administration structure.

The average number of veterinary inspectors trained on EU requirements in the field of food and veterinary safety is 1; the highest number trained is 26, but the majority of the municipalities, 54% of them, have not been trained on this topic.

Municipal veterinary inspectors in 43% of the cases exercise veterinary inspections every day at the slaughter stations; Almost every day these inspections are carried out by 28% of the municipalities; in 8% of the cases the inspections are carried out at least once per month and only 3% the inspections are performed less than once per month.

About 5% of the municipalities have not carried out veterinary checks at meat slaughter stations, while about 13% of them have no data available on this indicator.



The average number of infringements related to food and veterinary safety reported to central authorities is 4; the highest number of cases of reported violations is 25, while 51% of the municipalities have no cases reported. For this indicator, the result cannot be generalized at the national level due to the low number of responses, with only 43 municipalities.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** (labs, equipment) for service delivery;
- **Increase the inspection capacities** of private subjects (meat traders), in line with EU requirements in the field of food safety and veterinary;
- **Limited financial capacities** for establishing a register for wandering animals;
- **Limited financial capacities** for opening shelters for wandering animals;
- **Increase staff capacity** for setting and implementing standards in slaughterhouses for the quality and safety of fresh meat;
- **Ambiguity in the sense of the existing** legal framework, where the competences of the local veterinary service are not very clear, thus hampering the enforcement of this function;
- **Cooperation with veterinary** and food security institutions at local and central level.

CONCLUSIONS ON FOOD SAFETY, VETERINARY AND PHYTOSANITARY POLICIES

In view of improving the sanitary and veterinary conditions aiming at protecting the health of consumers, by 2017, the municipalities have allocated to their structure on average 3 veterinary inspectors. About 54% of the country's municipalities have not yet been trained on EU requirements in the field of food safety and veterinary. Veterinary inspections are exercised daily and almost daily by 43 municipalities, which make up about 71% of the total municipalities. Municipalities reported on average four cases of food and veterinary safety violations to central authorities; while 22 municipalities, which make up 51% of the country's municipalities, have not reported any such case.

3. Chapter 14: Transport policy

In the field of transport policies, the increase of road safety at the local level is a priority for the European Integration process of the country.

Specific objective: Increase of road safety at the local level

In terms of increasing road safety at the local level, the municipalities have estimated as indicators a percentage of the existing road network of the municipal territory which is within the legal construction standards, a percentage of the existing road network of the municipality territory which is within the legal signaling standards, a percentage of the territory of the municipality of the existing road network, the number of villages in each administrative unit connected to the city center via the existing road network, the local budget for the planned maintenance of roads in the MTBP and the fund of the local budget for planned construction / rehabilitation of roads in the MTBP.

At national level, an average of 36% of the existing road network of the municipality territory is within the legal construction standards; the highest percentage for this indicator being 90%, apparently it is overestimated; however, most of the municipalities report very low percentage of this indicator.

On average 61% of the territory of the municipalities has an existing road network; there are municipalities that reported that 100% of the territory is covered by a road network, while the lowest reported rate is 3%.

On average, 27% of the existing road network of the municipality territory is within the legal standards of signaling; the highest percentage for this indicator is 90%, while the lowest percentage is 0.1%.

The average number of villages in each administrative unit connected to the city center through the existing road network is 43; the highest number is 141 villages, but there are municipalities that do not have any villages linked to the center of the municipality. The indicator needs to be re-evaluated including the total number of villages in a municipality.

The budget value of the municipalities for road maintenance planned in the 2018 – 2020 MTBP is on average 57.674 thousand ALL. The highest budget foreseen by the municipalities is 1,389,775 thousand ALL, but there are also municipalities that have not planned any funds for this budget line/item.

In average, the municipalities have foreseen a value of 257,509 thousand ALL for construction / rehabilitation of planned roads in the MTBP. The highest value foreseen in the budget by municipalities is 7,753,936 thousand ALL, but there are also municipalities that have not planned any funds under this budget line/item, 13% of them respectively.

However, both of these outcomes may be overestimated due to inaccurate communication from the municipalities of the data sets on indicators.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** of the municipalities for the rehabilitation or construction of roads in their territories according to international standards;
- **Limited financial capacities** for drafting long-term strategic plans and control plans;
- **Building administrative capacity** mainly in the development sector;
- **Better collaboration and cooperation** between municipalities.

CONCLUSION ON TRANSPORT POLICY

In terms of increasing road safety at the local level, by 2017, on average 61% of the territory of the municipalities of the country has an existing road network. On average 36% of it is within legal building standards and 27% of it is within the legal standards of signaling. About 13% of the municipalities have not allocated any budget for road construction / rehabilitation.

4. CHAPTER 15: ENERGY

The National Plan for European Integration sets out as one of its priorities in the field of energy the adoption and implementation of the National Action Plan for Energy Efficiency 2011-2018; this plan, based on the legal responsibilities of the mayor as the authority responsible for the development of its territory, pledges municipalities at increasing the efficiency of energy use in buildings with one dwelling and multi dwellings and in buildings for private services by improving the implementation of minimum legal requirements for thermal quality of these buildings. In this regard, the municipality is instructed to employ additional/extra trained employees to inspect the energy efficiency requirements in buildings.

Specific Objective: Increasing Efficiency of Energy Use - in single-family and multiple dwelling buildings and buildings for private services

The municipalities of the country have participated approximately at 1 local administration training on minimum legal requirements for the thermal quality of buildings with one dwelling, multiple dwellings, and private service buildings in the framework of NEEAP. Some municipalities have participated in 7 to 10 trainings, while about 71% to 75% of them have not participated in any training on these topics.

None of the country's municipalities have hired additional employees to inspect the energy efficiency requirements of buildings within its territory. On the other hand, most municipalities have not conducted inspections of buildings with one or more dwellings and private service buildings; the highest number is 90, but the entire group of the municipalities that carried out these inspections comprises around 9% of the total number of the municipalities in the country.



Problems and challenges


- **Lack of human capacities** specialized in this field;
- **Lack of the local administration training** on human capacity development in this field;
- **Drafting an inspection plan** in the field;
- **Lack of tools for conducting** field inspections;

Specific Objective: Implementation of Methods for Improving Energy Efficiency in the Housing Sector

The average number of energy advisory services provided by the municipality or for which the municipality has cooperated with the central authorities is 1; the highest number of these services is up to 20, but for about 83% of the municipalities, energy advisory services have not been provided and there has been no cooperation with central authorities in this regard.

Specific objective: Use of energy performance agreements for public service buildings and for street lighting

The use of energy performance agreements by municipalities is still at an early stage. The average number of seminars with this theme organized with municipalities is 1, the highest number is 4, and however 75% of the municipalities have not attended any seminar on this topic.

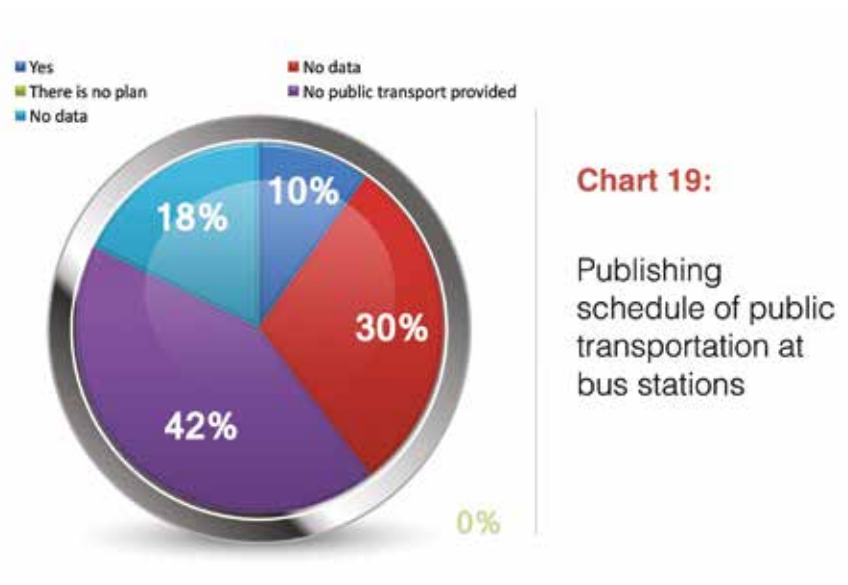
 **Problems and issues**

- **Lack of local administration training** on energy performance agreements..

Specific objective: Improvement of public transport

In the public transport sector, the National Action Plan for Energy Efficiency determines the need to increase the capacity of local public transport to promote the reduction of the use of individual vehicles by citizens.

In 43% of the municipalities there is no public transport service provided by the municipality, but the needs of citizens for mobility are met by private operators. About 10% of them offer public transport and publish the transport plan at bus stations; about 30% do not publish any transport plan. In about 18% of the municipalities there are no data available.



In 16 municipalities of the country, where public transport is provided, the average public transport on urban lines is on average 31.5 minutes; similarly, in 19 municipalities in the country, where the service is provided, the average number of vehicles' years of use is 25 years.



Problems and challenges

- **Use of vehicles produced** after year 2000 and getting rid of the vehicles before this year of production;
- **Lack of human capacity** to increase the public transport service in the municipality;
- **Lack of interest from private operators** for several inter-city lines;
- **Set up an electronic ticketing system** in the urban transport service;
- **Set up SIT intelligent systems**, station computerization;
- **Implement the reporting of the GPS** system for assessing the performance of the public transport service.

Specific objective: promotion of walking and bicycling

In the public transport sector there is also a need to promote walking and bicycle riding to promote the reduction of the use of individual vehicles by citizens. At the national level there are approximately 2.4 km of bike paths in the urban areas of the municipalities and 55% of the internal road network is equipped with sidewalks. The bike paths have a maximum length of 25 km, while 60% of the municipalities have not any kilometer of bicycles roads; the highest percentage of the internal road network with sidewalks reaches 90% in certain municipalities, while the lowest percentage reaches only 1%.

Municipalities have organized on average one promotion campaign of walking and cycling during the last year while about 54% of the municipalities have not organized any campaigns.



Problems and challenges

- **Lack of financial capacities** for major investments in the construction of bicycle routes;
- **Expropriation of dwellers** and private lands;
- **Technical difficulty to interfere** with sidewalks in the streets within neighborhoods;
- **Citizens' awareness** on the importance of walking and bicycling.

CONCLUSIONS ON ENERGY

In terms of increasing the efficiency of energy use, in 2017, about 71% to 75% of the country's municipalities did not participated in any training on minimum legal requirements for the thermal quality of one-dwelling buildings and multi-dwelling buildings, and for private service buildings, respectively. None of the municipalities has hired additional employees to inspect the energy efficiency requirements of buildings within its territory. About 91% of them did not carry out inspections of single and multiple flats and private services.

Regarding the implementation of methods for improving energy efficiency, in 2017, in about 83% of the municipality's energy advisory services were not offered and there was no cooperation with the central authorities in this regard.

Regarding the use of energy performance agreements, in 2017, about 75% of the municipalities did not attend any seminar on this subject.

In terms of improving public transport, by 2017, 43% of the municipalities do not provide public transportation services by the municipality, but the needs of citizens for mobility are met by private operators; in 16 municipalities in the country, where public transport is provided, the frequency of vehicles in urban lines is on average 31.5 minutes; In 19 municipalities in the country where the service is provided, the average number of vehicles years in use is 25 years.

In terms of walking and bicycle riding promotion, by 2017, there are approximately 2.4 km of bicycle roads in the urban areas of the municipalities and 55% of the internal road network is paved with sidewalks; around 60% of the municipalities have no km of bicycle routes.

5. Chapter 16: Taxes

The National Plan for European Integration, in the field of taxation, sets the main objective for improving the administration of taxes on the increase of the taxable base. In this regard, local government units play an important role as long as it is legally guaranteed the right to establish the level of tax, its method of calculation, as well as their collection and administration within the limits and according to the criteria set out in the legislation concerned.

Specific objective to: Improvement of the administration of the local taxes and tariffs system in terms of increasing the taxable base

Achievement of this objective has been assessed with indicators as planned/implemented municipal tax policies aimed at promoting the formalization of the economy in its territory during the last year / planned in the MTBP, the number of field inspections undertaken by the municipality in order to prevent informal economy in its territory during the last year, the number of public hearings with groups coming from business, organized by the municipality with the aim at informing and involving in discussing the municipality's tax policies, as well as establishing an effective database of municipal debtors.

The tax policy for promoting formalization of the economy in the territory of a municipality during the last year was planned / implemented by 50% of the municipalities in the country, 30% did not plan / implement tax policies, and in about 20% of them there are no data available.



Chart 20:

Municipal fiscal policies implemented/designed which stimulate formalisation of the economy in its territory during the last year/planned in the MTBP

The average number of field inspections undertaken by the municipality in order to prevent informal economy in its territory during the last year is 271; however, this indicator has significant fluctuations between large and small values; where the largest number of inspections is 2,800 and the smallest number 2 inspections.

The average number of public hearings with groups coming from business organized by municipalities for information and involvement in discussing municipal tax policies is 4; the largest number is 40, but there are municipalities that, despite the legal requirements, have not organized any public hearings in this regard, correspondingly 11% of them.

Municipal debtor's database is set up by 89% of the municipalities in the country; in general, these programs are in Excel format, however, there are also exemptions from municipalities that have established a dedicated program which serves for the administration of various entities' register for all tax liabilities to the municipality. About 8% of the municipalities have not yet set up a program for this purpose, while 3% have not responded.



Chart 21:

Establishment/effectiveness of a database (program) of debtors of the municipality



Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** to establish an efficient system for the collection of local taxes and tariffs;
- **Increase of inspection capacities** in the field;
- **Ambiguity in the understanding** and implementation of laws by taxpayers;
- **Increased participation** of citizens and civil society in the hearings and level of

discussing problems;

- **A liaison/coordination between** central and local government institutions to prevent the informal economy;
- **Cooperation with institutions and various groups** of interest/stakeholders for the construction of a precise and flexible fiscal cadaster.
- **Deficiencies in the implementation of tax policies** due to the greater territorial extension/expansion of the municipality

CONCLUSIONS ON TAXES

In terms of improving the administration of the local tax and tariff system through the increase of the taxable base, during 2017, 51% of the municipalities of the country have planned / implemented tax policies for promoting the formalization of the economy in their territory; however, 18 municipalities, which make up about 30% of the country's municipalities, have not yet compiled / implemented such a tax policy.

Municipalities have undertaken on average 271 field inspections in order to prevent the informal economy in the country. They organized 4 public hearings with the purpose of informing and involving business in discussing municipal tax policies; however, 6 municipalities, which make up 11% of the country's municipalities, have not conducted any hearing.

Municipal debtor's database is set up by 54 municipalities, which make up 89% of the municipalities in the country; such a base has not yet been set up in five municipalities in the country.

6. Chapter 19: Social policy and employment

Strategic development of the area of social protection of vulnerable groups is defined in the National Strategy for Social Protection 2015-2020, which shares responsibility for this area between the central and local government; the responsibility attributed to the local government matches its direct functions in the field of social services in Law 139/2015 'On Local Self-Government'.

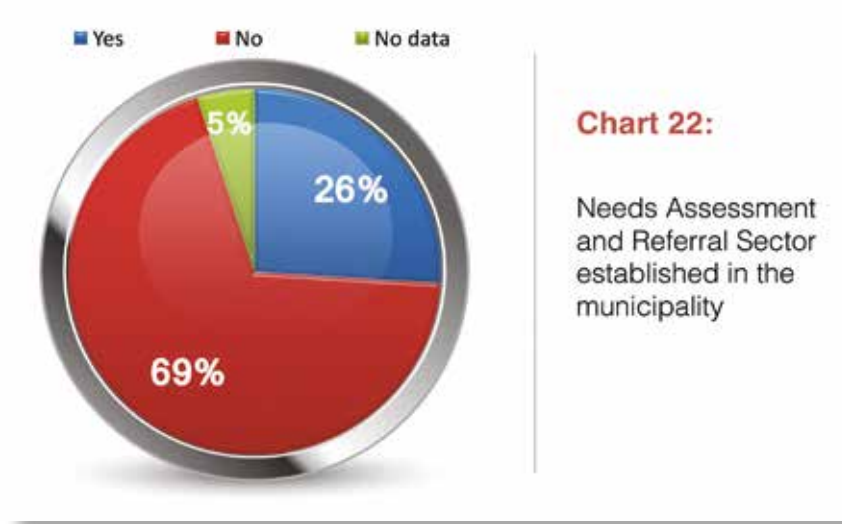
The strategy plans an active approach to social protection of vulnerable groups through the linking of social protection services to active employment programs, with the ultimate goal of preventing and reintegrating groups in need in society and the economy of the country. The basic instruments for implementing this approach in the Strategy are the economic assistance for poverty alleviation and relief, disability payments and social care services for vulnerable groups related to vocational education and employment. On this basis, the following two objectives for the local government have been defined:

Specific objective: social protection at the local level

The National Social Protection Strategy 2015-2020 is demanding in terms of the increase of social care services, and consequently of the local staff covering the sector. On this basis, the average number of local government officials added to the structure of the country's municipalities for social protection is 3; the largest number reaches 35, however, in about 47% of the municipalities there are no additional employees to cover this area. Also, the average number of employees added to the structure of the municipalities for administration, monitoring and evaluation of the national economic assistance scheme is 2, the highest number being 12, but even so, in some 43% of the municipalities there is no civil servant added.

On the other hand, the average number of trained officials in the country's municipalities on the national strategy for social protection and the responsibility it incurs to municipalities is 6, while about 14% of them do not have any trained staff.

A sector for the needs assessment and referral to social care services has been raised to about 26% of the country's municipalities, while still not at around 69% of them; for about 5% of the municipalities there is no data in this regard.



Also, at national level, the average number of performance reports of social care services for people with disabilities is less than 1, and about 84% of the municipalities have not been drafted any reports.

The average percentage of local incomes planned for social care spending in 2017 for 44 municipalities in the country is about 2%; the largest percentage reaches 19%, however, the average cannot be generalized at national level due to the small number of responses.

About 57% of the country's municipalities have a statistical database on the social care services they provide, while about 30% of them do not yet have. For about 13% of the municipalities there is no data. SKMS plans to establish an integrated information system at central and regional level (Information Management System) for social care services; on this basis, as the indicator does not clarify the databases for which municipalities are asked, it cannot be concluded that 57% of the municipalities have a database under the integrated information system planned in the SKMS.

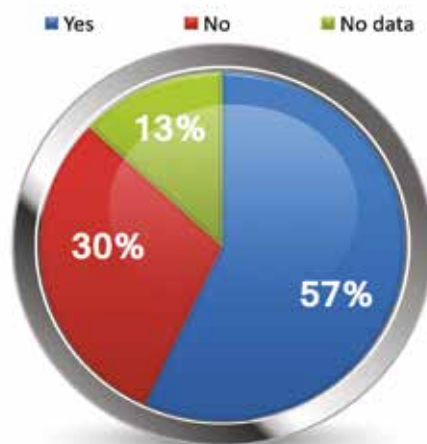


Chart 23:

Statistical database on social care services provided by the municipality

In about 48% of the municipalities in the country there is no day care center (DCC) for social care. In about 15% of them there is a daily center for the PWDS group, in about 5% there is a day center for the elderly and in about 2% of the municipalities the day centers are for the Roma and Egyptian or for orphan children.

In about 21% of the municipalities are established multifunctional centers (MFCs) which provide social care services for some vulnerable groups. In about 7% of the municipalities there is no data. Also, in municipalities that have day care centers or multifunctional centers for vulnerable groups, the average number of persons receiving service is 154; the highest number is 1,019 while the smallest number is 8.

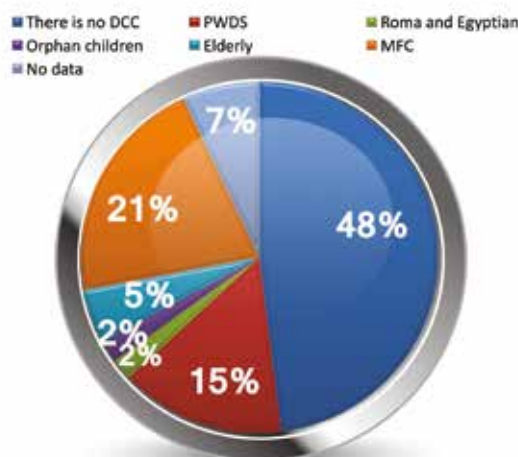


Chart 24:

Groups in need for which a day care center in the municipality has been established

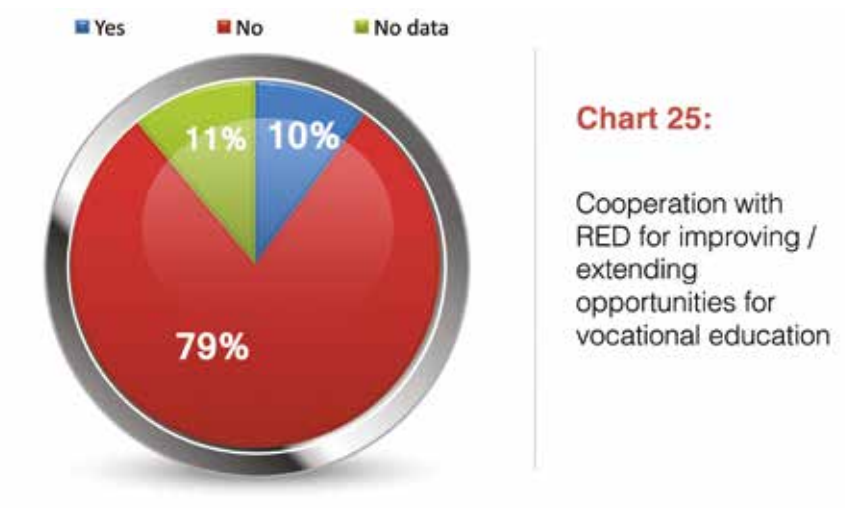


Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial and human capacity** to establish the sector on needs assessment and referral;
- **Limited financial capacities** for setting up a database for vulnerable groups on the basis of which local action plans are drafted;
- **Limited financial capacities** to establish day care centers for socially vulnerable groups;
- **Cooperation and coordination with central** and regional institutions in addressing vulnerable groups;
- **Cooperation and coordination** with local CSOs in this area.

Specific objective: support for active work programs

Within the scope of social protection through active labor programs, only about 10% of the municipalities cooperate with the regional education directorates to improve or expand the opportunities for vocational education in their territory, according to the needs of the labor market. About 79% do not have co-operation in this regard, and about 11% have no data.



The average number of unemployed people receiving economic aid who, at the same time, are financially supported by municipalities for vocational education in cooperation with the regional employment office is 38. About 78% of the country's municipalities do not provide financial support in this regard. Likewise, the average number of persons from the PWDS group who are financially supported by the municipalities for vocational education in cooperation with the Regional Employment Office and the PWDS is 7. About 80% of the country's municipalities do not provide financial support in this regard.

The number of young people completing university and professional education, who are financially supported by the municipalities to start a private business in their professional field, is 3. About 81% of the municipalities in the country do not provide financial support in this regard.

A special group of unemployed people of a society are young people of working age who, besides not working or even attending university or professional education; where the group is recognized in EU member societies like NEET .

In Albania, the level of municipality's awareness on this group is still very low; only about 3% of them know this group or have a database for it.

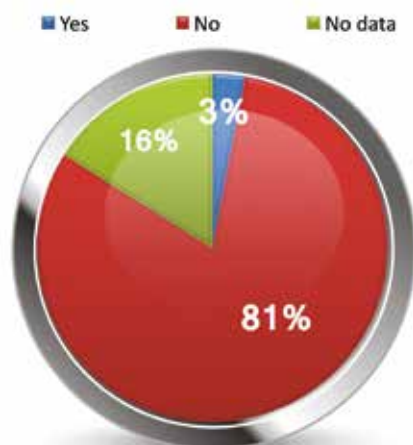


Chart 26:

Municipality Awareness Level on NEETs in its Territory

For this reason, there is a lack of cooperation with regional education directorates for socio-economic reintegration of this group. In only one municipality of the country, 53 young people have been financially supported for reintegration into the university or professional education system, in cooperation with the regional education directorate and the regional employment office.

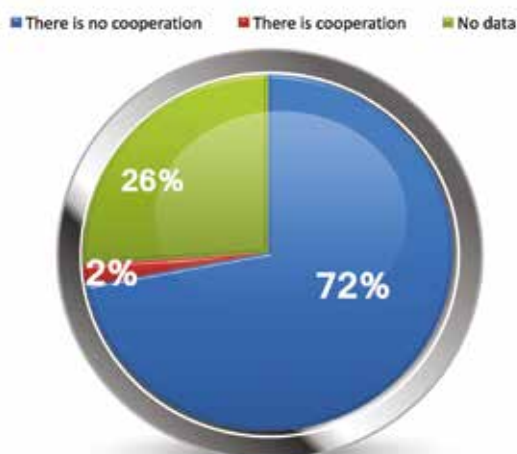


Chart 27:

Co-operation with RED for the socio-economic reintegration of NEET



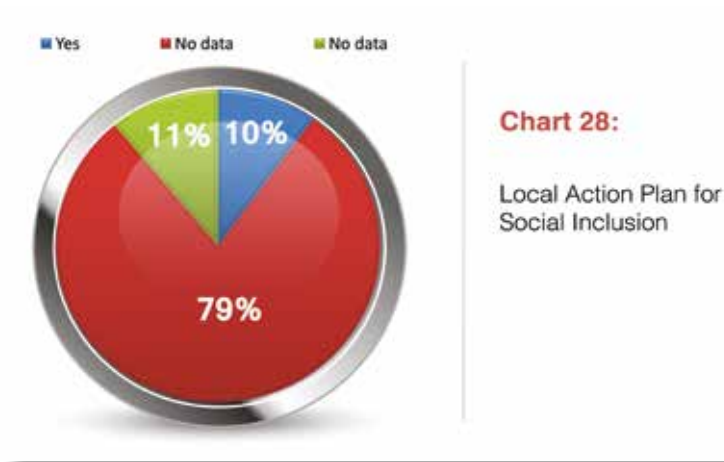
Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** to financially support unemployed with economic assistance and people with disabilities for vocational education;
- **Limited human capacities** to implement the legal basis in this area;
- **Acknowledgement and identification** of the NEET group in the territory of the municipality.

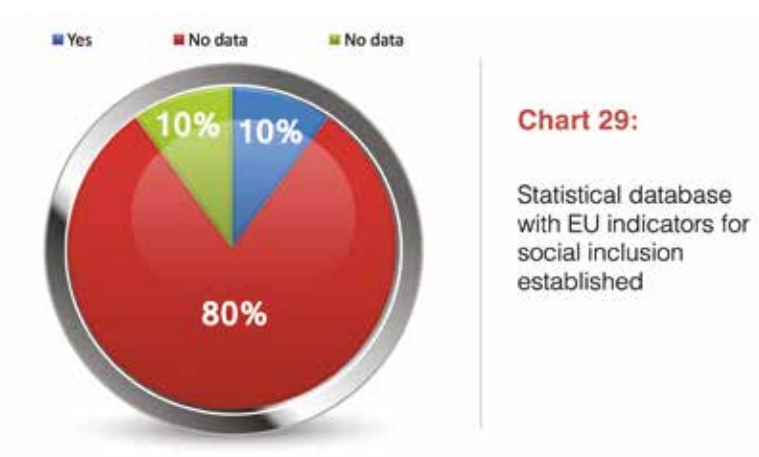
Specific objective: social inclusion at the local level

The strategic development of the area of social inclusion of the groups affected by social exclusion is defined in the Political Document on Social Inclusion 2016-2020; the basic approach to the development of this area is the establishment of a system of measurement of social inclusion in the country through national and EU statistical indicators as well as its evaluation and monitoring. This requires the cooperation of central and local government, as well as social protection. Responsibility attributed to the local government matches its direct functions in the area of social services in Law 139/2015 "On Local Self-Government".

About 10% of the country's municipalities have a local action plan for social inclusion, compiled, pending or awaiting approval, which is supported by the DPPS. The majority, around 79% of the municipalities do not yet have an action plan, while about 11% of them have no data.



Also, the statistical database with EU indicators on social inclusion is increased to about 10% of the country's municipalities, while it is absent in most of them, while at the same time no action plan has been drafted in this area.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited human capacities for measuring**, evaluating and monitoring EU indicators on social inclusion;
- **Limited financial capacities** for participation in trainings by the line ministry;
- **Limited human capacities for drafting** a local action plan for social inclusion.

CONCLUSIONS ON SOCIAL POLICY AND EMPLOYMENT

In terms of social protection at the local level, by 2017, the sector for assessing needs and referral to social care services has been established to about 26% of the country's municipalities; in about 69% of them has not been established yet, so there is still no assessment of the needs of social groups for social protection.

In about 47% of the municipalities, there are no additional employees in the social protection sector, and in around 43% of the municipalities there are no more employees involved in administering, monitoring and evaluating the national economic assistance scheme. The average number of trained employees on the national social protection strategy and the responsibility it incurs to municipalities is 6, while about 14% of them do not have any trained staff. In about 84% of the municipalities, no performance report of social services for PWDS was compiled.

In about 48% of the municipalities in the country there is no day care center; in about 15% of them there is a daily center for the PWDS group, while in about 21% of the municipalities are established multifunctional centers that provide social care services for some groups in need. The average number of people in groups in need who benefit from social, day care or multifunctional care centers is 154.

In terms of support for active labor programs, in 2017, around 10% of the country's municipalities have collaborated with regional education directorates to improve or expand the opportunities for vocational education in their territory, according to the labor market needs. However, about 78% of the municipalities do not provide financial support for the vocational education of unemployed people receiving economic aid, in cooperation with the regional employment office; similarly, about 80% of them do not provide financial support to people from the PWDS group. About 81% of the municipalities do not provide financial support to young people who complete university and professional education and want to start a private business in their professional field. In Albania, the level of awareness of the municipalities on working age youth, except for those not working, attending university or vocational education, is still very low; only 1 municipality recognizes this group or has a database for it.

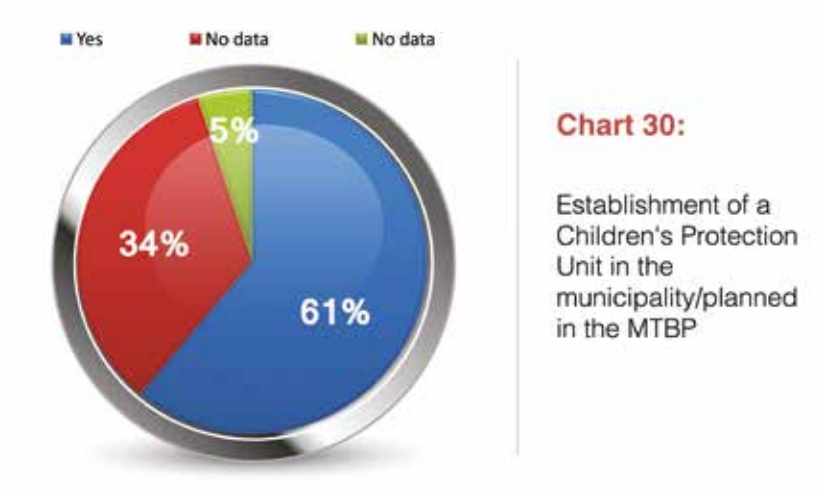
In terms of social inclusion at the local level, by 2017, around 10% of the country's municipalities have a local action plan for social inclusion. Also, the statistical database with EU indicators on social inclusion is raised to about 10% of the municipalities; on the other hand, about 49% of the municipalities were not trained by the line ministry for measuring and evaluating methodology and monitoring of national and EU indicators on social inclusion.

7. Chapter 23: Judiciary and fundamental rights

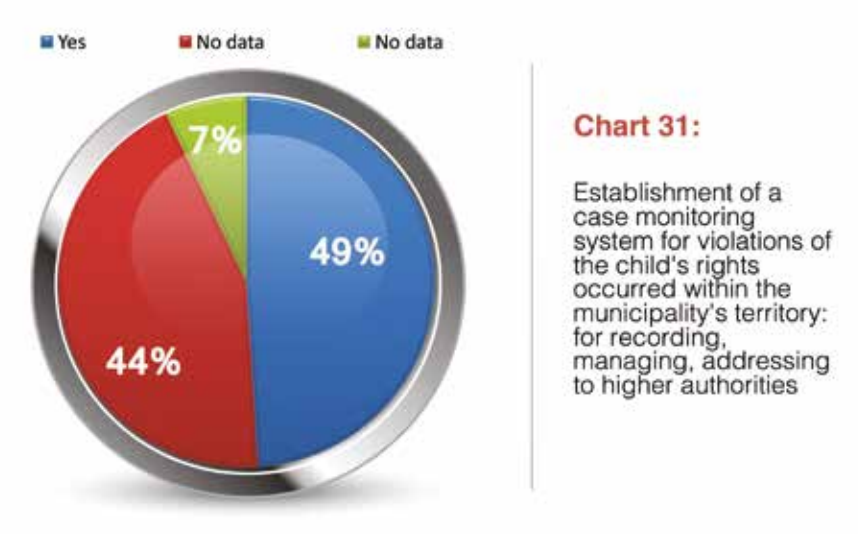
The ability of the local government to protect the fundamental rights of the social groups in need is assessed on the basis of the fulfillment of its obligations deriving from the respective law, i.e. through the degree of its enforcement. Specific objectives of this domain for the main social groups in need have been outlined on this basis.

Specific objective: strengthening the system for the protection of children's rights

Based on the Law 18/2017 "On the Rights and Protection of the Child", each municipality establishes a child protection unit in its structure in charge of social services. At the national level about 61% of the municipalities have already established this type of unit/structure, while about 34% have not yet done so. In about 5% of the municipalities there are no data available..



About 49% of the municipalities have also established a system of monitoring the cases of children at risk and / or in need of protection in the territory of the municipality; this system should, according to the law, enable the prevention, identification, evaluation, protection and following up the cases of the child at risk and / or in need of protection. About 44% of the municipalities do not yet have such a system, while in about 7% of them there are no data available.



The average number of child protection workers/employees in the country's municipalities is 1; the highest number reaches 8, but almost 45% of the municipalities do not have any employee.

The law stipulates that a municipality should have at least 1 child protection worker/employee for each of its administrative units with more than 3,000 children. On this basis, the indicator needs to be re-evaluated with additional information on the fulfillment of this standard by the country's municipalities.

It is observed that there are municipalities that, according to the data provided, have established a child protection unit within their structure responsible for social services, but on the other hand, they do not have a case monitoring system or do not have dedicated social employees for child protection. In these municipalities, the establishment of child protection units may still be incomplete, so the above indicator should be overestimated. In addition, a monitoring system that enables the prevention, identification, evaluation, protection and proper follow up of cases for the child at risk and/or in need of protection should coincide with a higher average number of social workers/employees for child protection; in contrary, their low average number indicates of the possibility that municipal monitoring systems in this area are also still incomplete.

During 2017, an average of around 19 cases of child rights violations were identified in the municipalities of the country; about 17 of them have been identified through child protection workers/employees. The largest number of identified cases amounts to 310. In 39% of the municipalities of the country no cases of violation of the rights of the child have been identified. -62% of these municipalities did not have the unit for the protection of the child while the rest are municipalities where this unit is established (as well as municipalities where there are no data available). The average number of child protection orders issued by municipalities over the last year is around 17. On average, in the country's municipalities over the past year, only one child protection service was provided. The largest number of them was 12, but in 69% of the municipalities no kind of child protection service was provided.

During 2017, the country's municipalities distributed child protection on average about 1% of the local budget for social services. However, around 82% of them did not allocate a special budget for the fulfillment of this function.

On average, during 2017, the country's municipalities have organized around 5 activities to promote the protection of children's rights.

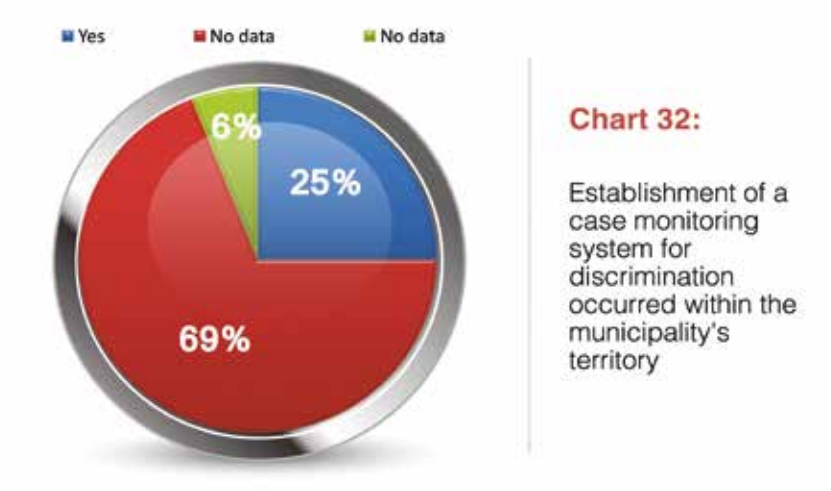


Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacity** to increase human resources in the sector;
- **The lack of information** on activities undertaken in the framework of this issue;
- **The lack of a database** in the sector;
- **Training of the Child Protection Unit** for More Comprehensive Knowledge;
- **Monitoring and evaluation** of cases of violence against children;
- **Limited financial and human capacity** to increase childcare services: legal services, psychological, educational, financial support and employment of family members;
- **Limited co-operation** with central and regional institutions in this area;
- **Limited financial and human capacities** for establishing and functioning of a center for abused children: logistical difficulties, staff training, knowledge of legislation and exercised competencies;
- **Continuous treatment of cases** of child rights violations: fighting child reinstatement cases;
- **Increase the number of child** protection workers (PMF);
- **Delays in the process of finalizing** some of the protection orders.

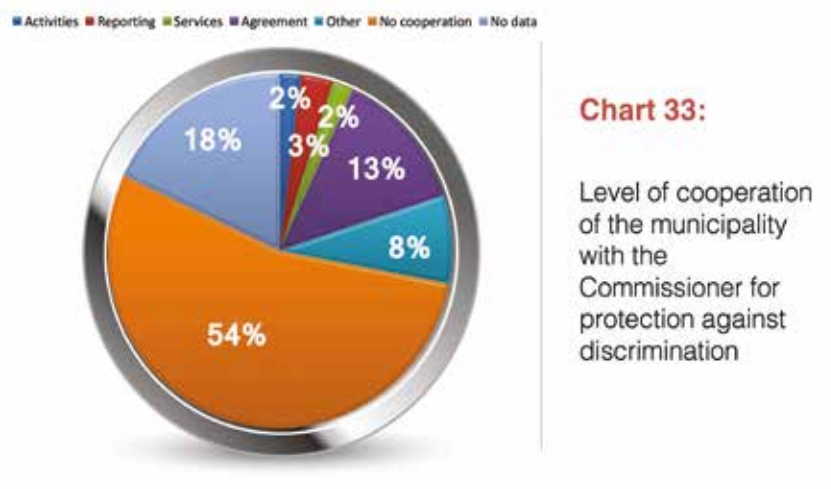
Specific objective: effective implementation of the Law 10221/2010 “On the Protection from Discrimination”

The law 10221, dated 04.02.2010 “On the Protection from Discrimination” is fully aligned with four directives part of the EU legislation in this area. On this basis, a specific objective for EU integration is to establish effective implementation by the local government. The average number of local administration employees trained for the new law on the protection from discrimination is 2. About 31% of the municipalities do not have any trained staff in this regard. In 25% of the municipalities in the country, a system for monitoring cases of discrimination occurred in the territory of the municipality has been established, while in 69% of them there is no such system yet. About 6% of the municipalities did not have any data available.



About 98% of the country's municipalities have not organized awareness raising campaigns for the protection against discrimination of people from LGBTI community.

Most of the municipalities in the country, around 54% of them, have no co-operation with the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination; about 13% of them have concluded a cooperation agreement, however no joint activities are undertaken in this area, no joint services are provided, nor there is a regular or mutual reporting between the two institutions; there are 1 or 2 exceptions from municipalities which make up 2 to 3% of the total municipalities in the country; an 8% of the municipalities claim cooperation in a form that is not any of the above-mentioned. In about 18% of the municipalities there are no data available.





Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacity** to increase human resources in the sector;
- **Improving communication and information** of the community: changing the mentality of the society towards the group of persons pertaining to the LGBTI community;
- **Continuous training** on the management of discrimination cases;
- **Lack of human capacity to establish** a monitoring system for cases of discrimination

Specific Objective: Effective Implementation of Law 96/2017 “On the Protection of National Minorities in the Republic of Albania”

In some 28% of the municipalities of the country, a system for monitoring the cases of violations of the rights of national minorities in the territory of the municipality has been established; on the other hand, the national minorities that are subject to monitoring in these municipalities are mainly Roma and Egyptian minorities.

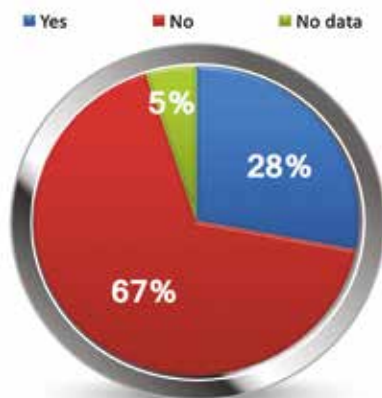


Chart 34:

Establishment of a case monitoring system for violations of the right of minorities occurred within the municipality's territory

About 3% of the municipalities in the country, the municipality provides information in the language of the national minority in its territory; this percentage is comprised of two municipalities, which have Macedonian national populations in their territory. In other municipalities that have national minorities, information on minority languages is not available or these municipalities have no data available.

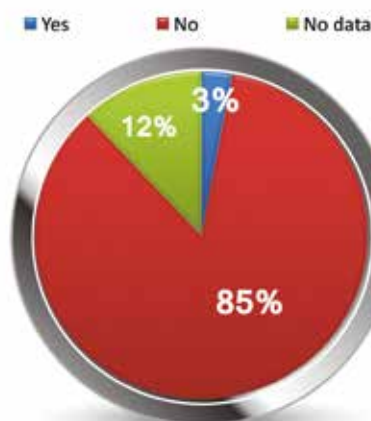


Chart 35:

Information by municipality in the national minority language within its territory

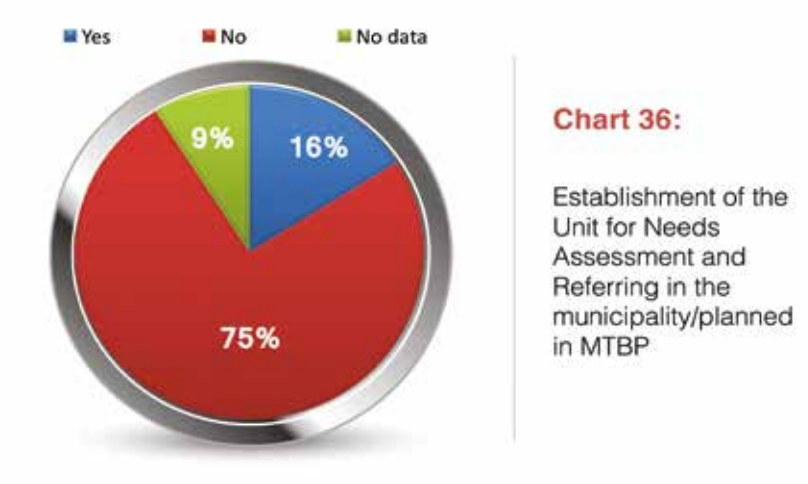
The law 96/2017 recognizes the right of national minorities to use their language in relation to the institution if they are over 20% of the total population of the municipality and when there is a sufficient demand from them. On this basis, the indicator needs to be re-evaluated with additional information supplementing these two conditions by the country's municipalities.

 **Problems and challenges**

- **Limited financial capacities** for providing services related to national minorities: lack of work equipment and services (computer, printer, internet);
- **Lack of human resources to establish** a monitoring system for cases of discrimination;
- **Increase the number of participants** in these awareness-raising and community education activities;
- **Families belonging to national minorities** are often relocating families making it difficult to provide services to them.

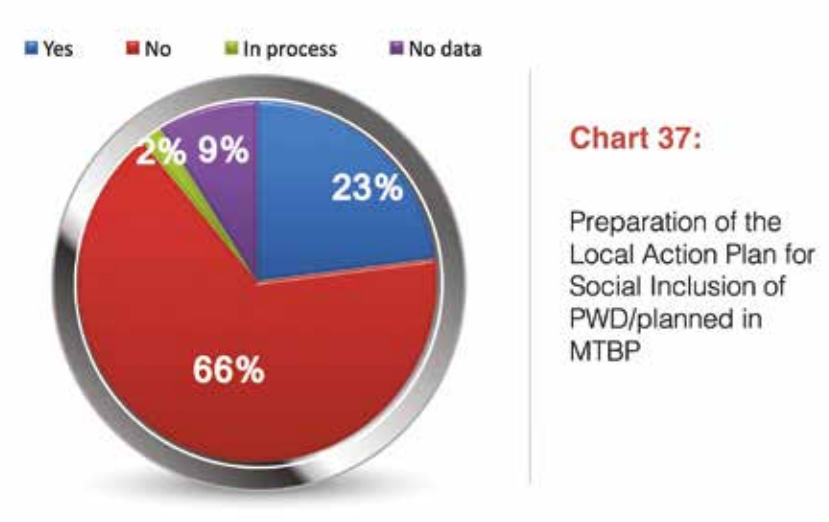
Specific Objective: Effective Implementation of Law 93/2014 “On the Inclusion and Accessibility of Persons with Disabilities”

At the national level, only about 16% of the municipalities have established the needs assessment and referral unit in the municipality, provided for in the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities 2016-2020; about 75% of the municipalities have not yet established one, while in about 9% of them there are no data available. The average number of social workers in the municipality for the service of persons with disabilities is around 5, while in about 6% of the municipalities in the country this vulnerable group is not covered by any social worker.

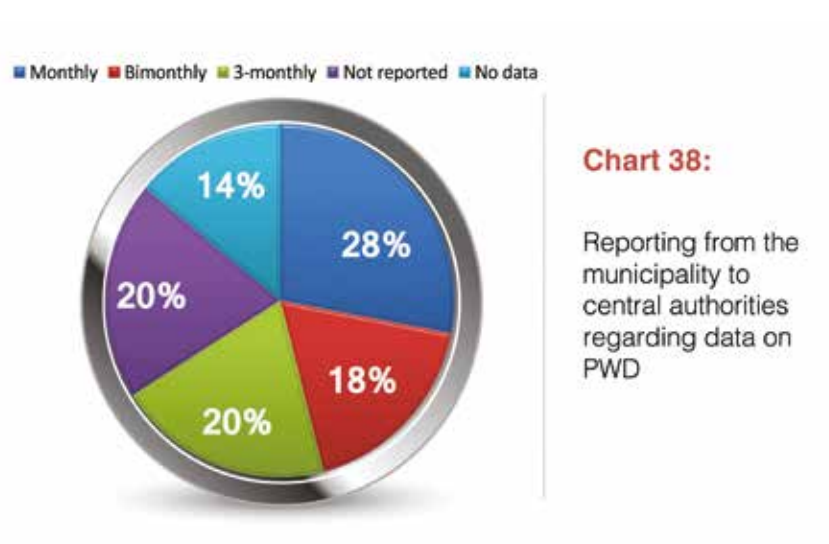


Municipalities have participated in 2 training sessions in average organized by central authorities on accessibility standards for disabled people, the highest number is 8 trainings, while 29% of the municipalities have not participated in any training on this topic. Also, 1 is the average number of trainings by central authorities for assessing needs for and referral to which the municipality has participated; the largest number is 3, but about 63% of the municipalities have not participated in any training on this topic.

The NAPDP also foresees drafting by the municipality of local action plans for people with disabilities, in support of the national plan. About 23% of local municipalities have drafted a local action plan in this area and 2% of them are under development. The majority of the municipalities, about 66%, do not yet have an action plan. In about 9% of the country's municipalities there are no data available.



The municipalities of the country on a regular basis report data to central authorities on persons with disabilities in their territory every month, every two months and every three months. About 20% of the municipalities do not report data in this area, while in about 14% of them there are no data available.



In about 11% of the municipalities in the country, the infrastructure for persons with disabilities is present only in city schools - their administrative unit center. This group is part of about 52% of the municipalities in the country where this infrastructure is present only in a number of schools in their territory. In about 21% of the municipalities, infrastructure is missing in all schools and no municipality is making investments for their equipment. In about 26% of the municipalities there are no data available.

■ Only in cities ■ A part ■ None ■ No data



Chart 39:

Number of schools in the municipality equipped with infrastructure providing access to PWD



Problems and challenges

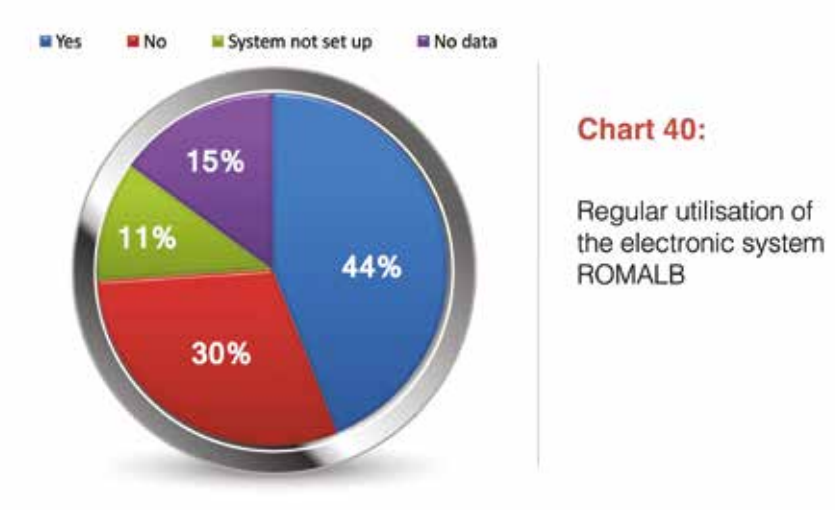
- **Limited financial capacities** for adapting public infrastructure for people with disabilities, overlapping of services, lack of sub-legal acts, non-inclusion of transport fees;
- **Training of the local administration** on the quarterly reporting of the municipality in the line ministry on PWDS issues;
- **Limited financial capacities** for participation in trainings;
- **Limited financial capability** to increase employees in the sector..

Specific objective: improvement of the coordination of work between central and local authorities for the implementation of the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020

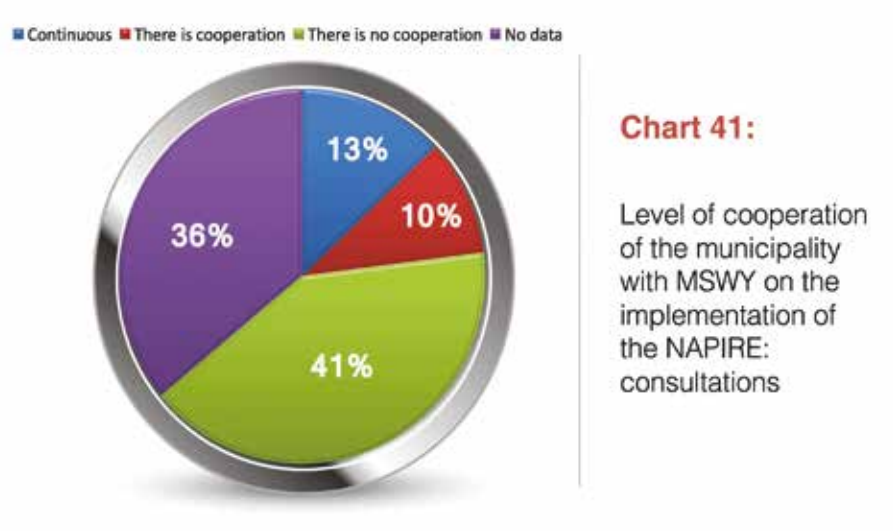
The rights of Roma and Egyptians are a priority of this area according to the National Plan of European Integration. Municipalities are one of the main actors in the design and implementation of the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020; in their content, some of the policy areas, specific objectives and the measures provided for in this plan are functions of the local government. Some of them are central or delegated functions for which line ministries co-operate with municipalities through their regional directorates and offices.

About 78% of the municipalities in the country do not yet have trained staff for the implementation of PK-VIRE; the average number of trained staff at the national level is 1. Regarding the electronic data system ROMALB, the average number of trainings in which municipalities have participated is 1, while 36% have not participated in any training.

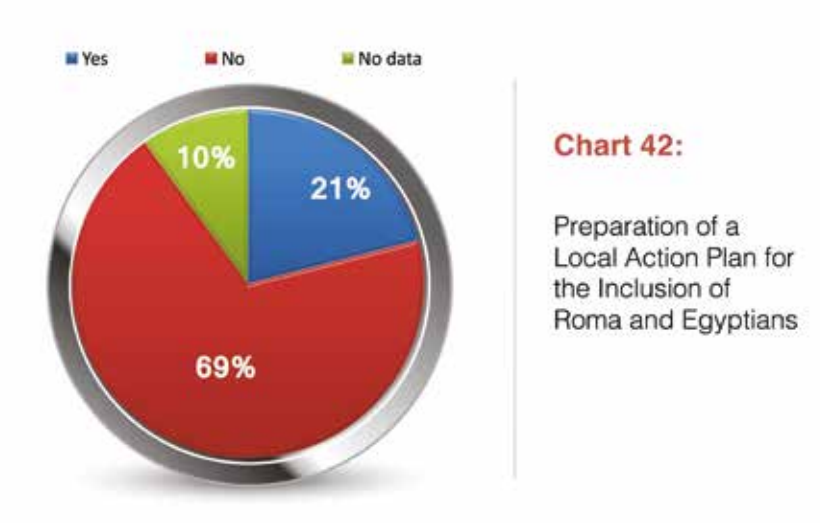
This system is regularly used by about 44% of the country's municipalities, while it is not yet established to about 11% of them, as well, about 30% of the municipalities do not use it regularly. In about 15% of them there are no data available.



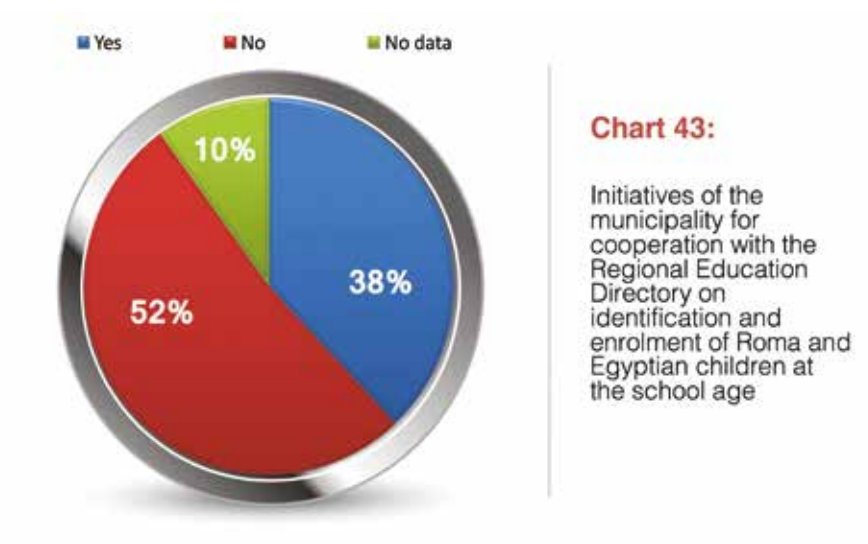
Overall, regarding the implementation of PKVIRE, about 41% of the municipalities in the country have not yet established cooperation with line ministries in the form of consultations on the development of local programs for implementing the measures foreseen in the Plan. In about 36% of them there are no data in this regard. In about 23% of them cooperation has been established, and even in less than 13% of the municipalities of the country this cooperation is continuous.



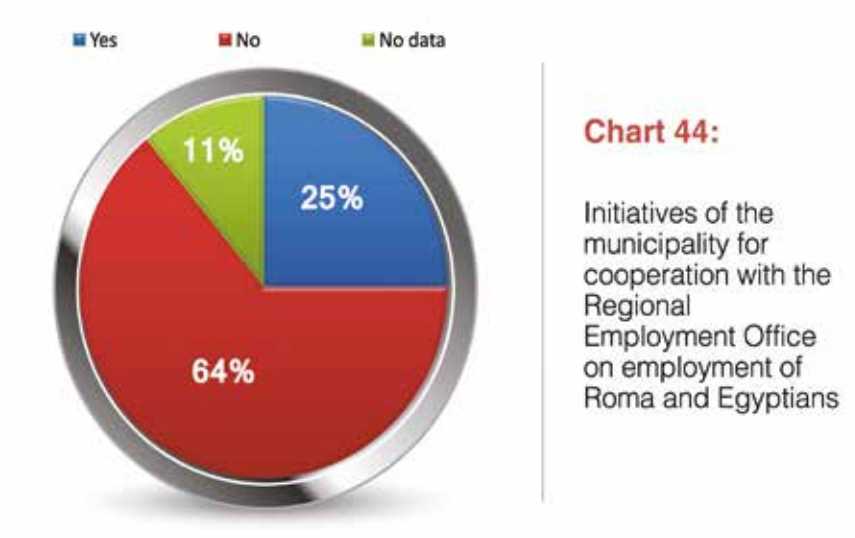
A local action plan under the national plan PKVIRE was drafted in about 21% of the municipalities, while the majority, around 69% of them have not drafted any such plan. In about 10% of the municipalities there are no data available.



Despite the lack of a local action plan for the integration of Roma and Egyptians in most of the country's municipalities, around 38% of them have established cooperation with regional education directorates with the aim at identifying Roma and Egyptian children of school age; also, about 25% of them have established cooperation and regional employment offices for the employment of Roma and Egyptians or regional education directorates for their vocational training, with a view to preparing for the labor market.



On the other hand, most of the country's municipalities, respectively 52% and 64%, have not yet cooperated with any of the regional structures of the line ministries, with the aim at integrating the two communities.



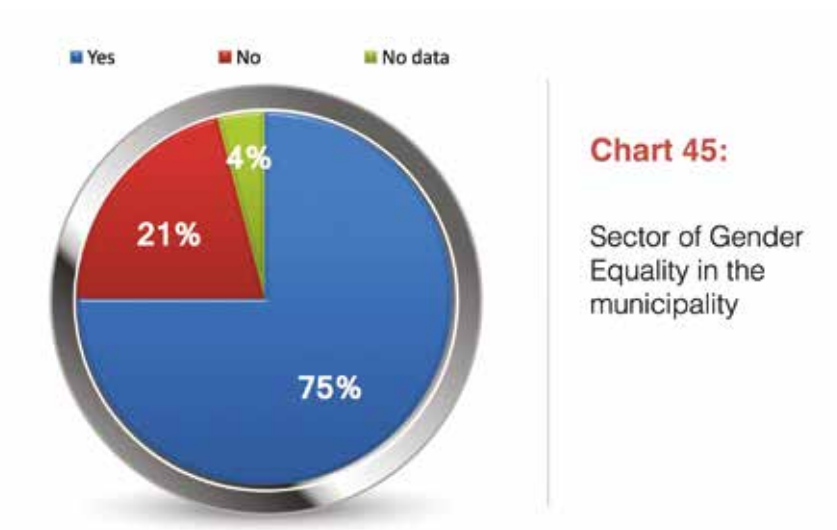
Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial and human** capacities for drafting a local action plan;
- **Limited financial capacities for providing** services related to the Roma and Egyptian community lack of working tools (computers);
- **The lack of sustainability** of projects implemented in the municipality through CSOs;
- **Limited financial and human** capacities for providing services in accordance with needs;
- **Limited human and financial** capacities for maintaining and updating data in the electronic system;
- **Specialization and training** of local administration in this area;
- **Frequent change** of local administration in this area;
- **Limited financial capacity** to set up field groups that identify the needs of the Roma and Egyptian community;
- **Families belonging to the Roma** and Egyptian community are often relocating families, making it difficult to provide services to them.

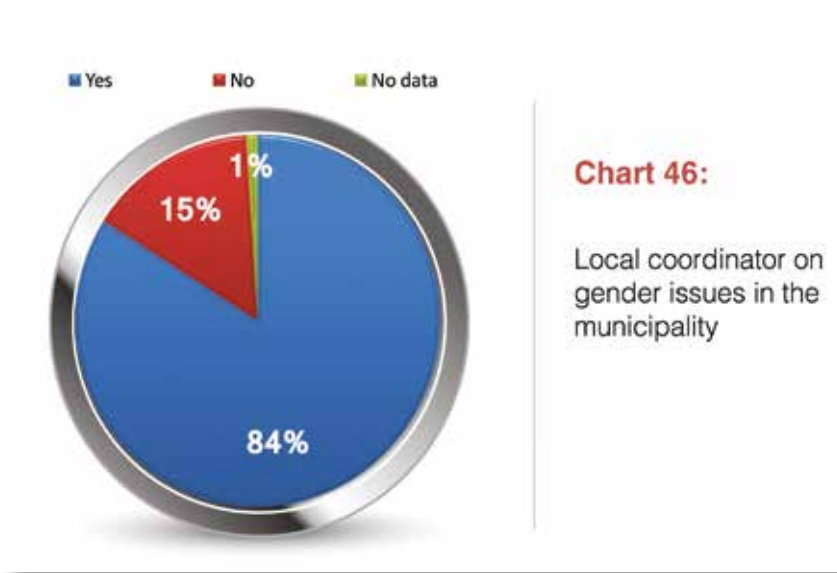
Specific objective: strengthening the system for ensuring gender equality

The National Strategy on Gender Equality and its Action Plan 2016-2020 is drafted for the gender equality issues, from which the following indicators derive, according to the instruments specified in the document.

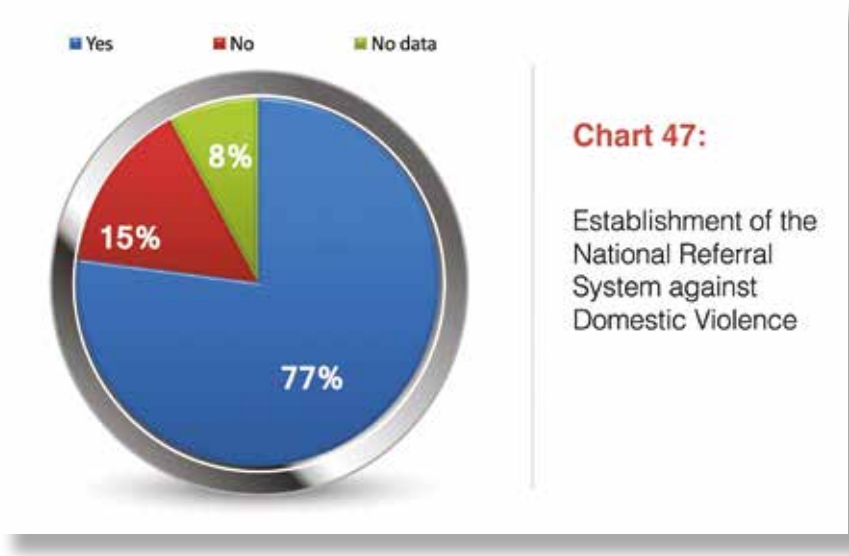
In about 75% of the municipalities in the country, a gender-responsive structure has been established, and in about 84% a local gender equality coordinator has been appointed, regardless of whether there is a special structure or not.



In about 15% of the municipalities there is still no local coordinator in this area, which is a local government obligation as defined by the NSGEAP; in about 21% of the municipalities there is no special structure.

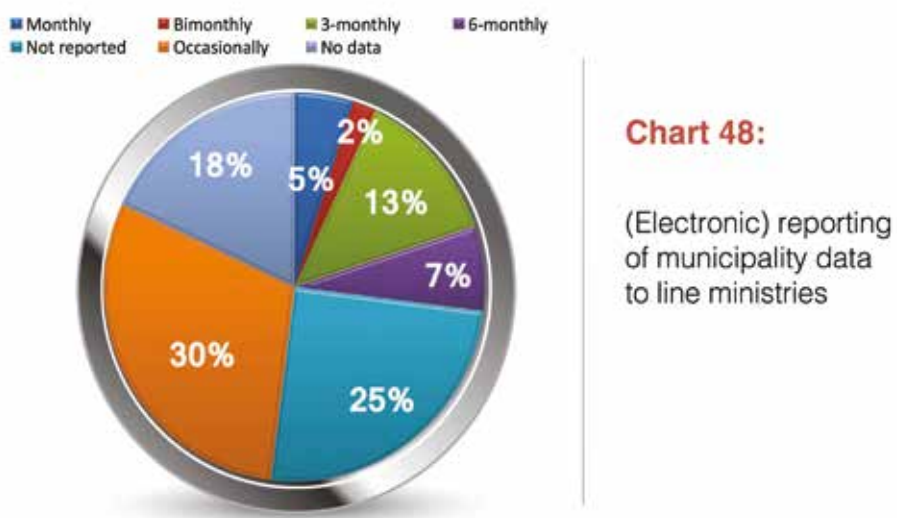


On the other hand, the National Referral Mechanism, defined in the NSGEAP, is now extended to 47 municipalities, which make up about 77% of the country's municipalities.

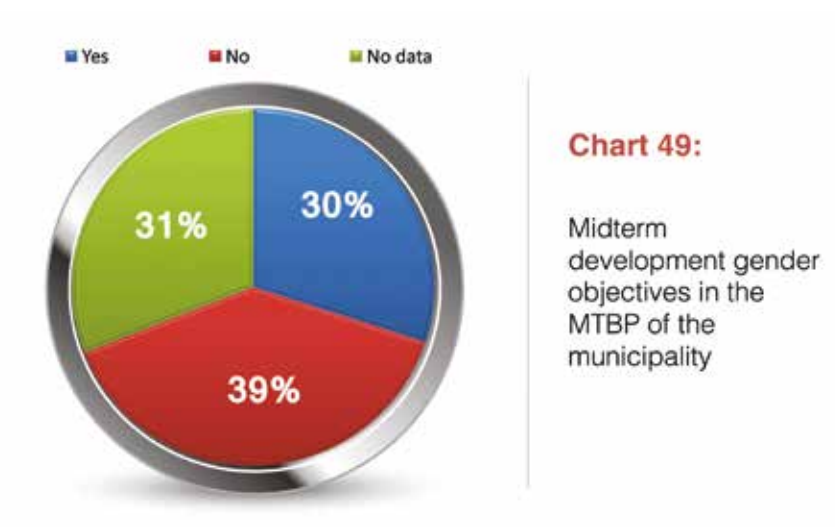


However, the average number of trainings by the line ministry for the National Referral Mechanism in which the municipalities participated during 2017 is 1, while about 76% of them have not participated in any training. Also, in some 24% of the country's municipalities there is no specialized service available for women victims of domestic violence; on average, 2 specialized services are offered at the national level, and the largest number offered is 6 services.

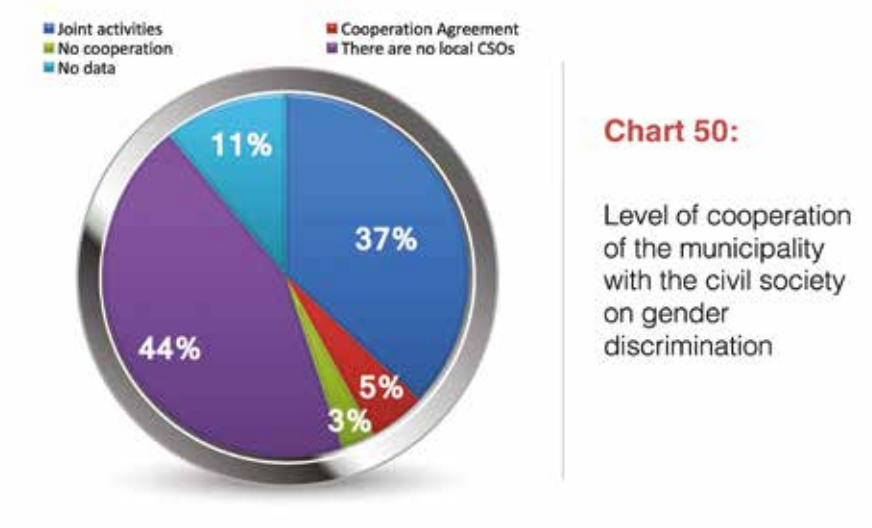
About 59% of the municipalities in the country report on gender equality data in their territory, 30% of the municipalities report based on the cases presented, while about 29% report on a regular basis, every month, and every two months, every quarter or six months. From about 25% of the municipalities there is no reporting, while in about 18% of them there are no data available.



The gender objectives are defined in about 30% of the country's municipalities in the mid-term budget program, while in 39% of them are not defined; in 31% of the municipalities there is no data available.



Around 36% of the municipalities cooperate with civil society for cases of gender equality in their territory mainly in the form of organizing joint activities; only in about 5% of the municipalities this cooperation is based on an agreement. In about 3% of the municipalities there is no cooperation with civil society in any form, while in about 11% of them there are no data available.



On the other hand, in about 44% of the municipalities in the country there are no local civil society organizations with which to establish a cooperative relationship in the field of gender equality.

The average number of nurseries and kindergartens built by the municipality in their administrative units over the last two years is 1; according to the NSGEAP through nurseries and kindergartens in rural areas of their territory, municipalities can support women in their integration into the labor market, hence entering the country's workforce. However, about 73% of the municipalities have not built any kindergartens or nurseries.

At the national level, approximately 3 municipal activities are organized to promote gender equality; their number reaches 22, but about 42% of the municipalities have not organized any awareness-raising and education activities in this area.

During 2017, about 65% of the 40 municipalities in the country have not distributed budgets to women who are victims of domestic violence, such as social housing, social care services, or economic assistance. However, for this indicator the result cannot be generalized at national level due to the small number of responses.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** for delivering services in this area;
- **Limited financial capacities** for providing social housing or lack of a residential center for victims of violence;
- **Lack of special facilities** for dealing with cases in this area;
- **Planning and handling** emergency cases;
- **Coordination of work with regional** institutions that have joint responsibility in this area;
- **Limited financial resources** for working tools and Internet services;
- **Limited financial capacities** to cover potential cases in remote municipal administrative units and infrastructure;
- **The lack of local CSOs** operating in this area with which municipalities can cooperate;
- **Limited human capacity** for data collection and reporting in this area.

CONCLUSIONS ON JUDICIARY AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

In order to strengthen the child protection system, by 2017, about 61% of the municipalities in the country have established a child protection unit within their social service structure, while the unit still lacks around 34% of the population. About 49% of the municipalities have also established a system of monitoring the cases of children at risk and / or in need of protection in the territory of the municipality; in about 44% of the municipalities the system still lacks. During 2017, an average of around 19 cases of child rights violations were identified in the municipalities of the country; the average number of child protection orders issued is about 17. In 39% of the municipalities no case of child rights violation has been identified - 62% of these municipalities did not have a child protection unit. About 82% of the country's municipalities have not allocated a special budget for the protection of children's rights in their territory.

In terms of protection against discrimination, until 2017, in 25% of the municipalities of the country a system for monitoring cases of discrimination occurred in the municipality territory was established, while in 69% of them there is no such system yet. Most of the municipalities in the country, around 54%, have no co-operation with the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination; about 13% of them have concluded a cooperation agreement, however no joint activities are undertaken in this area, no joint services are provided, nor there are regular and mutual reporting between the two institutions.

With regard to the protection of national minorities, by 2017, in about 28% of the municipalities of the country, a system for monitoring the cases of violations of the rights of national minorities in the territory of the municipality has been established; the national minorities that are subject to monitoring in these municipalities are mainly Roma and Egyptian minorities.

With regard to inclusion and accessibility of persons with disabilities, by 2017, only about 16% of the municipalities have created a unit for needs assessment and referral to the municipality; around 63% of the municipalities did not participated in any training on needs assessment and referral. The average number of social workers in the municipality for the service of persons with disabilities is around 5, while in about 6% of the country's municipalities this vulnerable group is not covered by any social worker. About 23% of local municipalities have drafted a local action plan for people in the PWDS group. In about 52% of the country's municipalities, the PWDS infrastructure is present only in some of the schools in their territory. In about 21% of the municipalities, infrastructure is missing in all schools and no municipalities are making investments for their equipment.

In terms of Roma and Egyptian integration, by 2017, around 78% of the country's municipalities still have no trained staff to implement the national action plan in this area. About 41% of the country's municipalities have not yet established cooperation with line ministries in the form of consultations on the development of local programs for the implementation of the planned measures in the national action plan. In about 23% of them cooperation has been established, and even in less than 13% of the municipalities of the country this cooperation is continuous. A national action plan for the implementation of the national plan has been drafted in about 21% of the country's municipalities, while the majority, around 69%, have not drafted this plan.

The ROMALB electronic data system is regularly used by about 44% of the country's municipalities, while it is not yet raised to about 11% of them, also about 30% of the municipalities do not use it regularly; the average number of trainings for ROMALB in which municipalities participated is 1, while 36% of them have not participated in any training.

About 38% of the municipalities have established cooperation with regional education directorates with

the aim of identifying Roma and Egyptian children of school age; also, about 25% of them have established cooperation and regional employment offices for employment of Roma and Egyptians or regional education directorates for their vocational training, with a view to preparing for the labor market. On the other hand, most of the municipalities in the country have no cooperation with any of the regional structures of the line ministries in order to integrate the two communities.

With regard to strengthening of the system for ensuring gender equality, by 2017, in about 75% of the municipalities of the country, a gender equality structure was established, and in about 84% a local coordinator for gender equality was established, whether or not there is a special structure or not. About 76% of the municipalities have not participated in any training from the line ministry for the National Referral Mechanism. Also, in some 24% of the country's municipalities there is no specialized service available for women victims of domestic violence; on average, 2 specialized services are offered at the national level, and the largest number offered is 6 services.

About 59% of the municipalities in the country report on gender equality data in their territory, 30% of the municipalities are reported based on the cases presented, while about 29% every month, every two months, every quarter or six months. Of the 25% of the municipalities, no reporting is carried out. Gender targets are set in about 30% of the country's municipalities in the mid-term budget program, while in 70% of them there are not defined or there is no data.

About 36% of the municipalities cooperate with civil society for gender equality cases in their territory mainly in the form of joint activities; only in about 5% of the municipalities this cooperation is based on an agreement. On the other hand, in 44% of the municipalities in the country there are no local civil society organizations with which to establish a cooperation relationship in the field of gender equality.

About 42% of the municipalities have not organized any awareness-raising and education activities in this area.

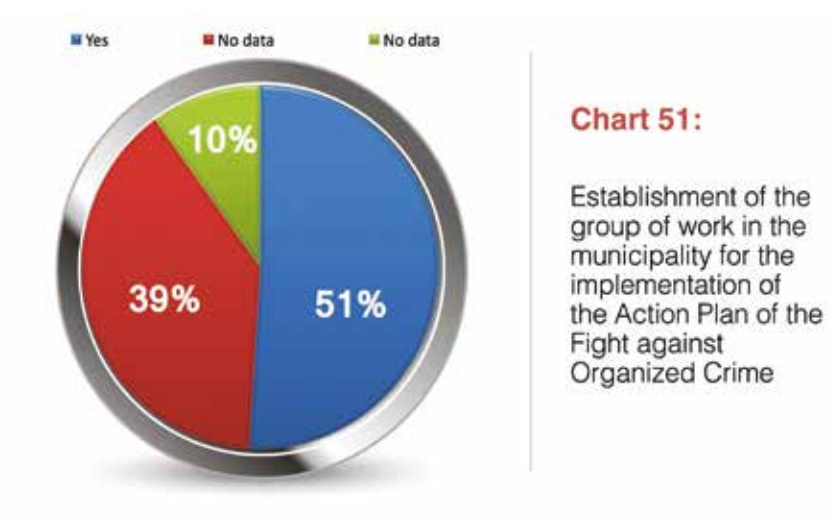
8. Chapter 24: Justice, freedom and security

The National Plan for European Integration 2017 - 2020, in the area of justice, freedom and security, defines the fight against organized crime as a key objective.

Specific objective: advance the fight against organized crime

The achievement of this objective is assessed through the indicator, working group in the municipality for the implementation of the Action Plan for the Fight against Organized Crime established.

Thus, this group is set up in 51% of the country's municipalities, while 39% have not yet set up a special group for the implementation of the Action Plan for the Fight against Organized Crime.



Problems and challenges

- **Cooperation and coordination** with the central government to set up working groups for the implementation of the Action Plan for the Fight against Organized Crime remains limited;
- As long as this is a new structure set up in a large part of the country's municipalities, **training of members of the working groups is needed.**

CONCLUSIONS ON JUSTICE, FREEDOM AND SECURITY

Towards the development of the fight against organized crime, by 2017, around 51% of the municipalities in the country have set up a working group for the implementation of the Action Plan for the Fight against Organized Crime; about 39% of the country's municipalities have not yet set up this group.

9. Chapter 26: Education and Culture

Specific objective: increase participation in preparatory classes for pre-school education - the possibility of participation and mass inclusion of children in the pre-school education system

The National Plan for European Integration determines the increase in participation in preparatory classes for pre-school education and the possibility of mass participation and involvement of children in this system as an important priority in the field of education and culture. Furthermore, the Pre-University Education Development Strategy 2014-2020 defines the activity of inclusion of children in pre-school education and preparatory classes to meet its strategic objective for quality and inclusive education. In this regard, Law 139/2015 “On Local Self-Government” makes municipalities responsible for the administration and regulation of the pre-school education system in kindergartens and nurseries.

At the national level, the average number of nurseries in the municipality is 2 children; the largest number is 33, while 19 municipalities in the country have no nurseries, and consequently, the community needs are not addressed for this service. About 42% of children enrolled in nurseries in 2017 are nursing children.

Coverage with gardens, on a national level, looks better, with the average number of kindergartens being 24, the highest being 103. During 2017, for the 38 municipalities in the country 79% of children enrolled in kindergartens are kindergarten children. However, for this indicator the result cannot be generalized at national level due to the low number of responses.

The municipalities of the country have undertaken on average 1 awareness raising campaign on parents for inclusion of children in the pre-school education system; the largest number is 5, while there are municipalities that have not undertaken any campaign in this framework, i.e. 45%.

On average, the investment fund to expand the nursery / kindergarten capacity according to the needs assessed by the local municipalities is 5,456,193 thousand ALL; the largest amount of budget in this regard is 120,000,000 thousand ALL; this result may be overestimated due to inaccurate communication of the data for the indicator by municipalities. However, around 72% of the municipalities did not undertake any investments to expand the nursery / kindergarten capacity in their municipality.



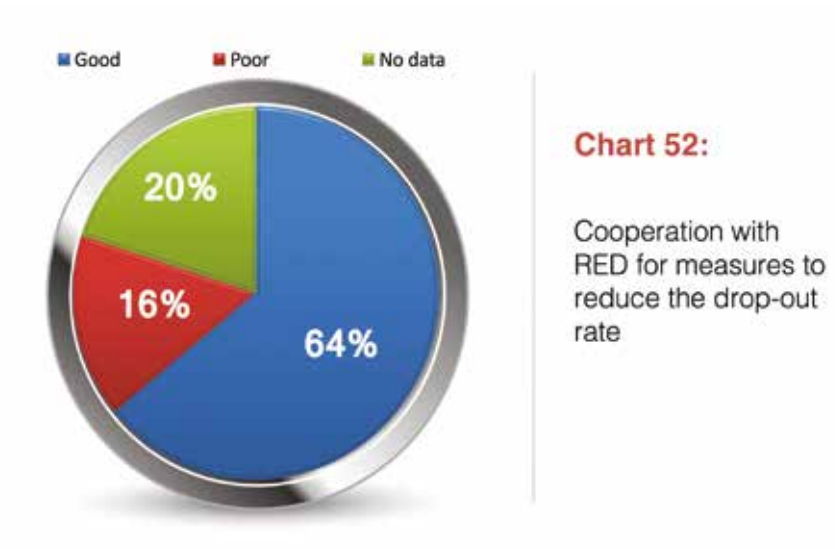
Problems and challenges

- **The lack of financial capacities** for infrastructure investments such as increasing the number of classes, building new buildings for kindergartens and nurseries, reconstruction of existing buildings etc.;
- **Limited financial capacities** for setting up a digital database for assessing the needs for children’s enrollment in kindergartens due to lack of data on children registered in municipal administrative units;
- **Limited inclusion of parents in decision-making** as well as lack of awareness raising campaigns for children’s enrollment in kindergartens.

Specific Objective: Quantitative and qualitative inclusion of marginalized groups in the pre-university education system

The National Plan for European Integration in the field of education and culture defines the quantitative and qualitative inclusion of marginalized groups in the pre-university education system as an important priority. Indicators to assess the objective are derived directly from Law 69/2012 “On the pre-university education system in the Republic of Albania”.

The level of cooperation between the municipalities and the regional directorates for the education of measures to reduce the drop-out rate is estimated by 64% of the municipalities in the country, about 16% of them evaluate poorly, while for 20% of the municipalities there is no data. However, Law No. 69/2012 “On the pre-university education system in the Republic of Albania” and the Strategy for the Development of Pre-University Education 2014-2020 do not entail the responsibility/role of the municipality for dealing with school dropouts, nor in cooperation with the regional educational directorates.



None of the municipalities has foreseen budget to ensure the enrollment and attendance of any child of school age, through CSOs, Roma and Egyptian community, PWDS and Regional Education Directorate.

In 2017, the local budget fund for the financial support of children of school age, whose families belong to groups in need, is on average 285,714 thousand ALL; which are awarded in the form of scholarships for children of these families. However, this result may be overestimated due to inaccurate communication of the data for the indicator by municipalities. However, about 74% of the municipalities did not allocate budget for the financial support of school-age children whose families belong to groups in need.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** for the treatment of marginalized groups in the territory of their municipalities;
- **Limited financial capacities and lack of coordination** with central and local institutions such as: regional health centers, regional education directorates and other educational structures as well as the Civil Registry to create a digital database from which to generate statistics on the number of children in the PWDS and Roma and Egyptian communities;
- **Clarification of the municipality role** in addressing school drop-outs (human resources and financial resources).

Specific objective: Improvement of school infrastructure of pre-university education

The 2014-2020 Pre-University Education Development Strategy in the Learning and Inclusion Objective defines the activities for creating friendly environments in schools as well as completing the mapping and completion of the network with reconstructed or new schools as municipal responsibility. In this regard, Law 139/2015 “On Local Self-Government” stipulates the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of pre-university education system buildings as municipal responsibilities.

About 39% of the municipalities have provided PWDS infrastructure in projects for reconstruction/construction of schools in their municipalities; while in 38% of the municipalities, PWDS infrastructure is missing in the foreseen projects, while for about 23% of the municipalities there is no data.

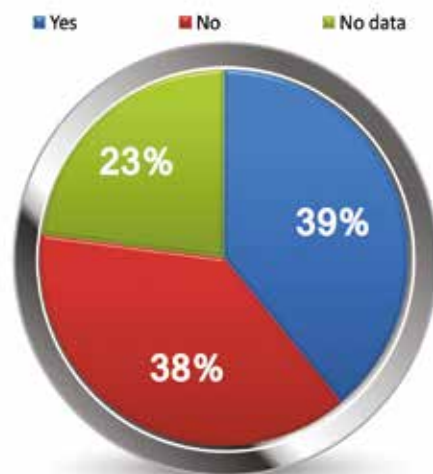


Chart 53:

PWDS Infrastructure
in School
Reconstruction/Cons
truction Projects

On average, the investment fund of the local budget for the reconstruction of schools in the municipalities of the country, in 2017, is 36,472,402 thousand ALL; the highest value is 653,000,000 ALL; however, this result may be overestimated due to inaccurate communication of the data for the indicator by municipalities. However, about 43% of the municipalities, for 2017, did not have a budget for the reconstruction of schools in their municipalities.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** for the reconstruction or construction of new schools in the territories of their municipalities;
- **Limited financial capacities for extending** the infrastructure for people with disabilities in all educational institutions.

Specific objective: conservation and protection of material and non-material cultural heritage - national treasure of Albanian people in generations

Preservation and protection of the material and non-material cultural heritage- the national treasure of the Albanian people in generations is a priority of the National Plan for European Integration 2017-2020 in the field of education and culture. Municipalities, pursuant to Law No. 139/2015 "On Local Self-Government", are responsible for the development, protection and promotion of cultural values and cultural heritage of local interest, as well as the administration of facilities related to the exercise of these functions.

About 86% of the municipalities at the national level have reported no cases of violation and illegal construction in areas of cultural heritage of the municipality; 6 municipalities reported violations, of which 4 have taken measures.

On average, the local budget fund for the protection and development of the cultural heritage values of the municipalities for 2017 is 7,035,046 thousand ALL; the highest value is 170,957,115 thousand ALL. However, this result may be overestimated due to inaccurate communication of the data for the indicator by the municipalities. However, about 70% of the municipalities did not allocate budget for the protection and development of cultural heritage values of the municipalities for 2017.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** for the protection of cultural heritage values and heritage of local interest, as well as the administration of facilities in the territory of their municipalities;
- **Limited financial capacities of residents**, who own flats part of the cultural heritage, to cope with the high cost of restoration according to legal criteria.

Specific objective: support creativity and creative activity of Albanian artists through the enhancement of cultural activities and the involvement of artists

The National Plan for European Integration 2017 - 2020, in the field of education and culture, defines the support of creativity and creative activity of Albanian artists through the enhancement of cultural activities and the involvement of artists as an important priority. In this regard, municipalities, pursuant to Law 139/2015 "On local self-government", are responsible for organizing cultural activities and promoting national and local identity, as well as the administration of facilities related to the exercise of these functions.

The average number of cultural activities organized by the municipalities for the promotion of the local culture and the national culture in 2017 is 10; the largest number is 78, while 6% of the municipalities have not organized any promotional activities in this regard.

Meanwhile, municipalities in the calendar of their annual activities regularly organize on average 6 cultural activities for the promotion of the local culture and the national culture; the largest number is 28.

On average, the local budget for cultural activities organized by the municipalities in 2017 amounts to 8,368,752 thousand ALL; however, this result may be overestimated due to inaccurate communication of the data for the indicator by municipalities. Meanwhile, about 10% of the municipalities, for 2017, have not allocated a budget in this regard.

The average rate of participation in cultural activities organized by 8 municipalities in the country is 9,509 people per year; the largest number is 24,500. However, for this indicator the result cannot be generalized at national level due to the low number of responses.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** for the continuous support of artists and the development of promotional activities;
- **Increase cooperation with the Ministry of Culture** as well as artists / artisans to keep alive cultural traditions such as folk songs, wardrobe and handicrafts of the municipalities.

CONCLUSIONS ON EDUCATION AND CULTURE

With regard to the increased participation in the preparatory classes for preschool education - the possibility of substantial participation and involvement of children in the pre-school education system, 19 municipalities in the country have no nurseries, while the average number of kindergartens in each of the country's municipalities is 24. About 42% of children enrolled in nurseries are nursing children; while 79% of children enrolled in kindergartens are kindergarten children. About 45% of the country's municipalities have not yet undertaken any awareness-raising campaigns on parents to include children in the pre-school education system, while 72% of the municipalities have not undertaken any investments to expand the nursery / kindergarten capacity in their municipality.

Regarding the quantitative and qualitative inclusion of marginalized groups in the pre-university education system, none of the country's municipalities has planned budgets to ensure the enrollment and attendance of any school-age child, through CSOs, Roma and Egyptian Associations, PWDS associations and the Regional Directorate for Education; while about 74% of the municipalities have not allocated budget for the financial support of school age children, whose families belong to groups in need.

In terms of improving school infrastructure of pre-university education, about 38% of the municipalities have not yet provided PWDS infrastructure in the projects for reconstruction/construction of schools in their municipalities; while for 2017, around 43% of the country's municipalities did not allocate budget for reconstruction of schools in their territory.

In terms of preserving and protecting the material and non-material cultural heritage - the national treasury of the Albanian people in generations, about 86% of the municipalities in the country have reported no cases of violation and illegal construction in parts of the cultural heritage site of the municipality and in 6 municipalities where there were reports of violations, 4 measures were taken. About 70% of the municipalities, during 2017, did not allocate budget for the protection and development of cultural heritage values in the territory of their municipalities.

In order to support the creativity and creative activity of Albanian artists through the enhancement of cultural activities and the involvement of artists, during 2017, the municipalities organized on average 10 cultural activities to promote the regional culture and the national culture; meanwhile, municipalities regularly organize 6 regular calendar activities to promote the culture of the national area and culture. To organize cultural activities, in 2017, on average, the municipalities of the country allocated 8,368,752 thousand ALL budget.

10. Chapter 27: Environment and climate change

Specific objective: awareness raising and capacity building of local governments for their role in protecting the environment, nature and forest management

Awareness raising and capacity building of local government for the environmental protection, nature and forest management is a priority towards the European integration of the country; this priority is at the same time a specific objective in the Draft Inter-Sectorial Strategy on Environment 2015-2020.

The average number of local government officials trained for environmental legislation and environmental priorities in terms of EU integration is 2; the highest number of trainees in a municipality is 7; around 23 % of the municipalities are not trained on this topic.

For the implementation of environmental legislation and environmental priorities in terms of EU integration, on average, on the national level, one employee of the local administration is trained; the highest number of trainees is 6; meanwhile, a considerable part of the municipalities have not benefited from this training, respectively 31%.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited and continuous trainings** in time on topics related to the protection of the environment, nature and forest management, as well as the difficulty that the knowledge acquired by the trained staff are applicable in practice

Specific Objective: Education of Young Generations for Environmental Conservation and Pollution Minimization

The education of young generations for environmental conservation and pollution minimization is a priority for the country's European Integration process and as a specific objective under DSNM.

In 44 municipalities of the country, the average number of awareness raising campaigns in high school and secondary schools for environmental conservation and minimization of pollution organized by the municipality is 3; the largest number is 14, but there are municipalities that have not organized any campaign with this focus, respectively 21% of them. However, for this indicator the result cannot be generalized at national level due to the low number of responses.



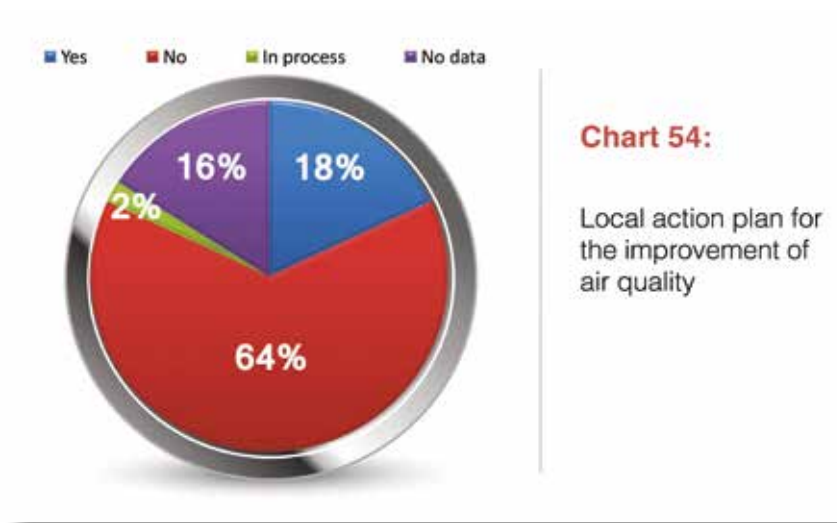
Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial capacities** for organizing educational / awareness-raising meetings in schools;
- **Limited involvement of civil society local actors**, schools and students in dealing with environmental issues.

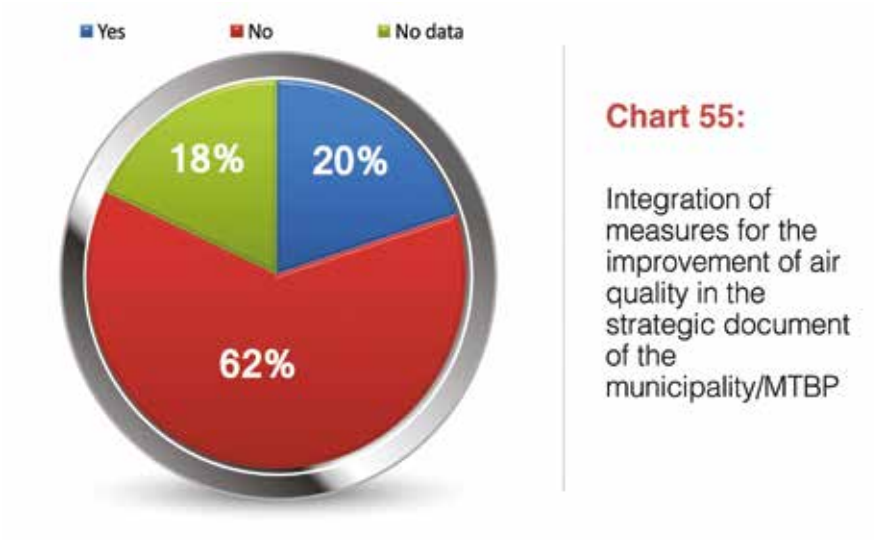
Specific objective: drafting action plans for improving the quality of environmental air at the local level

Drafting of local action plans for the improvement of the environmental air quality is as a high priority of the European integration process. In this regard, DSNM sets out as a specific objective the adoption and implementation of air quality action plans at the local level.

Despite legal requirements, only 18% of the country's municipalities have drafted an action plan for improving the quality of environment air quality and 2% others are working on this plan. Most municipalities, 64% do not have such a plan, while 16% of them have no data available.



Only 20% of the country's municipalities have integrated in their strategic documents actions to improve the quality of the environmental air; while 62% of other municipalities do not have such an integrated strategic document; about 18% of the municipalities have no data available.



Problems and challenges

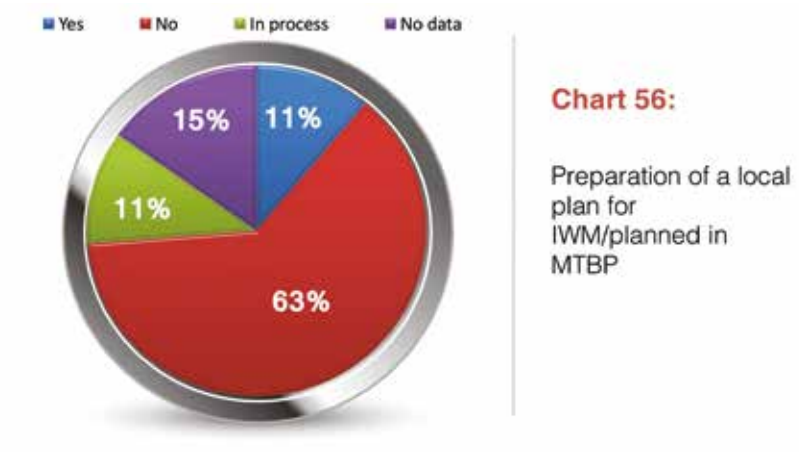
- **Limited financial and human resources capacities** for the design and implementation of action plans for the improvement of the environmental air quality at the local level.

Specific Objective: Improvement of Integrated Waste Management

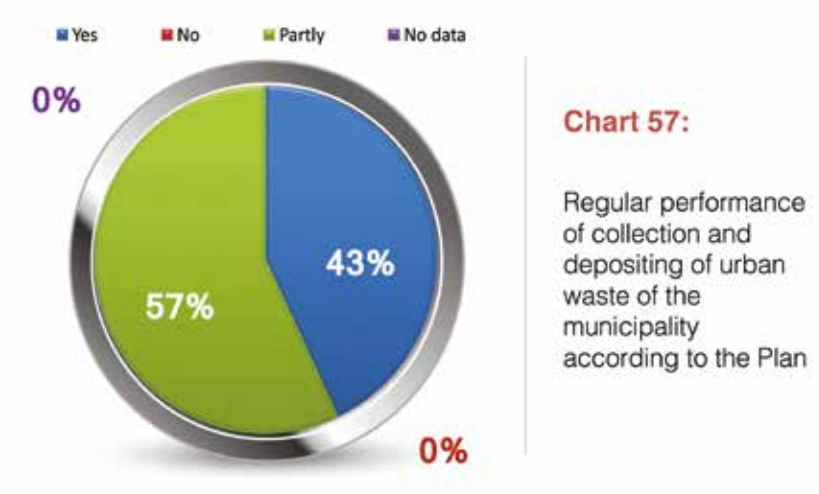
Improved integrated waste management has been identified as an important priority in the country's European Integration process. In addition, the draft inter-sectorial strategy on environment 2015-2020 sets out the improvement of integrated waste management as a specific objective, focusing on meeting national and international standards, waste treatment within these standards and raising social awareness on the harmful effects of waste on the environment. Thus, the indicators used to evaluate this objective have been derived precisely from this strategy.

These indicators are a local IWM plan compiled, municipal waste collection and depositing is done regularly according to the plan, recyclable waste of the municipality territory are transferred to recycling companies, the number of unauthorized landfills in the territory of the municipality, the number of landfills authorized in the municipality territory, the number of authorized landfills in the territory of the municipality, waste are separated at source at 1-2-3 directions and the distance of the center of the municipality from the nearest landfill.

Regardless of the legal requirements, only 11% of the municipalities in the country have drafted or planned a local integrated waste management plan and 11% others are drafting such plan. Most municipalities, 63% of them do not have such a plan, while 15% have provided no data.



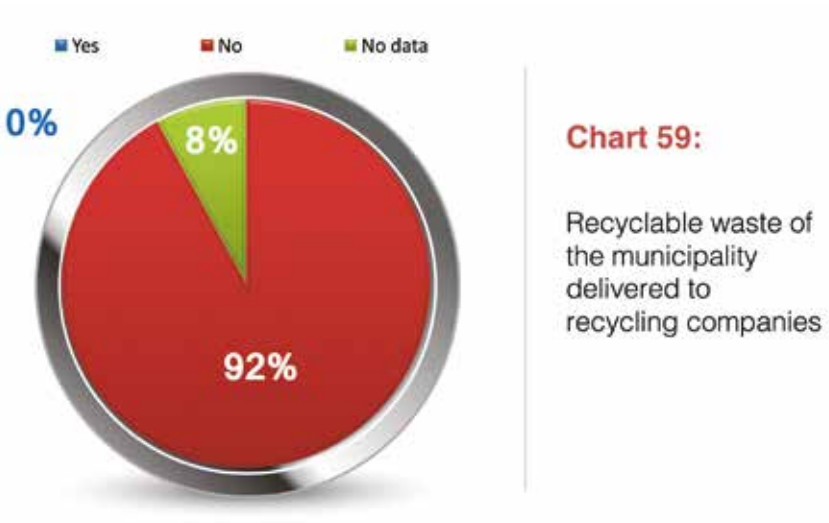
Municipal waste collection and dumping is done on a regular basis by 43% of the municipalities in the country that have an integrated waste management plan; 57% of other municipalities use it only partially.



The municipalities of the country do not perform any waste collection or the separation of the waste according to the recyclable streams, therefore the activity is not present.



On the other hand, municipal waste is provided to recycling companies, but this happens not in a formal way, not through municipal structures, which currently do not recycle. The informal recycling sector is present, however, often limited to a small number of people who collect recyclable waste streams, mainly plastic, glass and metal, from containers.



The average number of unauthorized landfills in the territory of the municipalities of the country is 1; the highest number registered is 5, which can be referred to the landfills of former communes or villages; meanwhile, about 82% of the municipalities do not have unauthorized landfills in their territory. On the other hand, the average number of authorized landfills in the territory of the municipalities is 1, with the highest registered number being 7; while 11% of the municipalities do not have an authorized landfill approved by the city council.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited staff capacities** to understand and implement the existing legal framework related to the environment, especially the one on integrated waste management;
- **Limited financial capacities** for extending the integrated waste management service across the municipal territory;
- **Limited financial capacities** for the construction of regional landfills, and consequently closure of landfills approved or not by decision of the municipal council;
- **In all cases, there remains a challenge** for differentiated waste collection and community awareness in this regard.

Specific objective: strengthening the implementation of task force decisions on acoustic pollution in urban centers and coastal tourist areas

In terms of environmental noise policy, one of the key priorities in this area, identified in the National Plan for European Integration is to strengthen the implementation of task force decisions on acoustic pollution in urban centers and coastal tourist areas. In this regard, the cross-cutting environmental strategy 2015-2020 outlines a specific objective on strengthening the enforcement of noise legislation.

Furthermore, the sector is regulated by law 9774/2007, 'On the assessment and management of noise in the environment' which assigns the municipalities responsibilities like the design and implementation of local action plans for the residential noise; the leadership of the noise mapping process; delineating quiet areas in a residential environment or in an open environment, as well as imposing other noise constraints, in accordance with the local action plan.

The task force established for acoustic pollution in urban centers and tourist areas in the territory of a municipality has an average number of 14 municipal police inspectors; the largest number of representatives in a task force is 19; while, a significant number of the municipalities, 54% of them, do not have a task force yet. However, the results for this indicator cannot be generalized at the national level due to the low number of responses, only from 41 municipalities.

Municipal inspection capacities remain low; approximately 83% of the country's municipalities have not been trained by the Ministry of Environment.



Problems and challenges

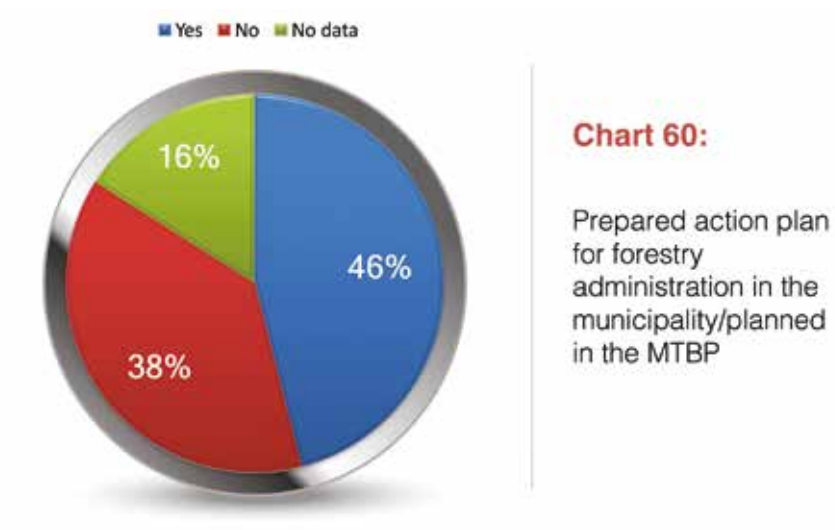
- **Limited financial capacities** for setting up a task force structure for enforcing decisions on acoustic pollution in urban centers and coastal tourist areas.

Specific objective: afforestation of degraded areas through recycling in the destination of forest resource revenues and arrears of entities operating in the forestry fund

Afforestation of degraded areas is a priority of the country's EU integration process. In this area then DSNM aims at a sustainable management of forest and pasture resources, the inclusion of all local actors in the management and sustainable development of this sector, the introduction of ecosystem payment schemes as well as institutional and legal strengthening.

The sector is also regulated by the law no. 9385/ 2005, "On Forests and Forestry Service", where indicators to measure this objective derive from.

About 46% of the municipalities have designed an action plan for the management of the municipality's forestry fund but a significant part has not yet drafted or planned such a plan in the budget, while about 16% of the municipalities did not have data.



The Law on Forests and Forest Service grants the municipalities the responsibility to make sure that **the ratio of a municipal employee versus the forest and pasture land area** he covers is not less than one employee per: a) 750-1,000 ha for high forests; b) 1,500 to 2,500 ha, for low forests and shrubs; c) 4,000-6,000 ha for pastures and meadows

The average number of forest fund management specialists in a municipality is 5; the highest number is 25; approximately 5% of the municipalities have no inspector; the indicator may also include municipalities which have no forest fund in their territory. Therefore, this indicator needs to be re-estimated with additional information on the fulfillment of the abovementioned legal conditions by the municipalities of the country.



Problems and challenges

- **Limited financial and human capacities** for drafting a plan and setting up a digital database for the management of the forest fund in the territory of the municipalities;
- **Moreover, a component that the municipalities** have identified is the provision of financial resources in support of the capacity building and the increase of the forest fund they have in their territory.

CONCLUSIONS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

With regard to the awareness raising and capacity building of the local governments about their role in protecting the environment, nature and forest management, around 23% of the country's municipalities have not yet been trained on environmental legislation and environmental priorities in terms of EU integration, while about 31% of them have not been trained yet for the implementation of this legislation.

In terms of educating young generations on environmental conservation and minimizing pollution, in 44 municipalities, three awareness raising campaigns for environmental protection and minimization of pollution have been organized on average in high schools and primary schools; around 21% of the country's municipalities have not yet organized any such campaign.

In terms of drafting action plans to improve the air quality at the local level, 39 municipalities, which make up 64% of the municipalities in total, have not yet drafted such a plan. About 62% of the municipalities have not yet integrated in their strategic documents any specific actions to aiming at improving the air quality.

In terms of improving integrated waste management, 62% of the municipalities have not yet drafted or planned a local plan for an integrated waste management. Of the 7 municipalities that have an integrated waste management plan, only 3 municipalities collect and dump waste on a regular basis in line with the plan. Still, none of the country's municipalities perform any collection and waste separation according to recyclable streams, and consequently the activity is not present. About 82% of the country's municipalities do not have unauthorized landfills in their territory. On average, the country's municipalities have 1 authorized landfill in the territory of the municipality.

In order to strengthen the implementation of the decisions of the task force on acoustic pollution in urban centers and coastal tourist areas, 22 municipalities have not yet set up a task force, while about 83% of the municipalities in the country have not been trained by the Ministry of Environment; consequently, the inspection capacities of the municipalities still remain low.

In terms of the afforestation of degraded areas through the recycling into the destination of the revenues from the forest fund and the arrears of the entities operating in the forestry fund, about 38% of the municipalities have not yet drafted an action plan for the management of the forest fund of their municipality. In average, the municipalities have 5 specialists in the management of the forest fund in their structure.

11. Chapter 32: Financial Control

A sound financial management and a transparent and effective control system are priorities for the EU integration process of the country. The financial control domain as a whole is regulated by the law 10296/2010, 'On Financial Management and Control', as amended, for the enforcement of which further efforts are required to increase human resources capacities as referred by the European Commission Report on Albania 2016. For the local government, the municipal council is responsible in this area.

Specific objective: strengthen local government capacities in financial control and management

The implementation of the annual expenditure plan by municipalities is presented at a good level, on average 83%; there are municipalities that have managed to achieve this plan at 100%, while the minimum rate registered for this indicator is 62%. Meanwhile, 27 municipalities make an average of 81% of the planned annual revenues plan, but for this indicator the result cannot be generalized at the national level due to the low number of responses.

In 37 municipalities in the country, the average number of internal controls undertaken by the municipal council in the last year is 2. However, the result for this indicator cannot be generalized at the national level due to the low number of responses.

Municipalities report on average 33% decrease on the level of identified and unpaid liabilities to third parties over the last two years; 5% of the municipalities report to have paid 100% of their arrears, but there are municipalities that have not managed to make any changes to improve this indicator, i.e. 8% of them.



Problems and challenges

- **Completing the revenue plan** and keeping under control the expenses of the municipality;
- **Insufficient funds** to finance big strategic projects;
- **Limited financial capacities** for settlement of outstanding and unpaid arrears to third parties;
- **Conduct of internal controls undertaken** by the municipality council due to the limited capacities of the municipality council members, the need for their training on this process;
- **Capacity building of the municipality** staff to use the national register for PWDSs

CONCLUSIONS ON FINANCIAL CONTROL

In terms of strengthening local government capacities in financial management and control, on average, the municipalities of the country have implemented 83% of their annual expenditure plan; while 27 municipalities have implemented on average 81% of the planned annual revenue plan. In 37 municipalities in the country, the municipal council, in 2017, has undertaken on average 2 internal controls. There is an average decrease of 33% of the level of statutory and unpaid arrears of the municipalities to third parties over the last two years.

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- Graph 4. Forms of community engagement in the MTB drafting process
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