

**Increasing the level of administrative
functionality of four municipalities in northern
Kosovo**

December, 2018

Reserve:

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Research context

Within the project *"Increasing the level of administrative functionality of four municipalities in northern Kosovo"* Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC) conducted a research in all four Kosovo's northern municipalities with an aim to produce concrete plan of trainings needed for better functionality of municipal services. The research was conducted on the territory of northern Kosovo, in four Kosovo Serb majority municipalities (North Mitrovica, Zvecan, Zubin Potok and Leposavic).

The aim of the research was to explore weaknesses in municipal functionality, to propose concrete actions that can give more efficiency in municipal service delivery and to increase citizens' knowledge about the work of northern municipalities.

Even though the northern municipalities were established as a part of the Kosovo system following the Kosovo's local elections (2013, 2017), when the mayors of these municipalities were elected and the municipal assemblies were constituted under the laws of Kosovo, there is still some resistance of local officials in the implementation of certain legal provisions and requirements of Kosovo's laws. There are still many problems in the functioning of local self-governments, primarily in the functioning of municipal administrations and in the implementation of applicable legislation.

For this reason, it was necessary to examine the level and quality of information available to citizens, to obtain their attitudes and expectations about the municipal services, and to improve work of municipal administration and assess the needs for municipal service delivery in selected municipalities, according to the financial, technical, administrative and social capabilities of the municipalities.

Research methodology

Quantitative research

- Research method:** F2F research fieldwork, combined with internet survey.
- Place of research:** Northern Mitrovica, Zvečan, Zubin Potok and Leposavic
- Research period:** 3 September-28 September 2018
- Sample size:** 400 respondents in the fieldwork. 135 internet survey.
- Sample description:** From a total of 535 respondents, 41% of respondents were male and 59% were female respondents.
- Northern Mitrovica:* 162 respondents
- Zvečan:* 127 respondents
- Zubin Potok:* 108 respondents
- Leposavić:* 138 respondents
- Sample type:** Stratified random representative sample based on the municipality of residence
- Post stratification:** Age, educational level and employment status

Qualitative research

- Research method:** 8 focus groups
- Place of research:** Northern Mitrovica, Zvečan, Zubin Potok and Leposavic
- Research period:** 17 September-13 November 2018
- Focus groups:** Criteria for selection of participants: gender, age, education, place of residence and employment (representatives of municipality)

Interviews

Interviews included 16 individual conversations with the municipal officials, both from administrative and political part of municipal staff.

Criteria for selection of participants were: municipal officials, equal number of administrative and political part of municipal staff, in all four municipalities.

Public discussions

4 Public discussions were organized, one in each of four targeted municipalities; discussions included representatives of CSOs and citizens in targeted municipalities.

The most important results

Only 15% of respondents believe that they are very well informed about the work of their respective municipality;

The vast majority of respondents think that information should be increased through social media (43%) and TV/radio programs 35%;

Even 94% of respondents don't follow and don't know what decisions of municipal assembly are;

Generally, responders are satisfied with the professionalism, efficiency and kindness of the employees, (from 62% in Z.Potok to 36% in N.Mitrovica, very or partially satisfied);

Responders are completely satisfied with the work of the Mayors (34%) and Communal services structures (22%);

Respondents believe that the budget of municipalities should focus on development of road infrastructure, water supply and agriculture;

Respondents believe that increasing staff efficiency, faster demanding, simplifying procedures; improving technical skills are the most important things that should be improved for better functionality of municipality toward general population.

Research Summary - Perception of key problems

Results of the survey:

- The survey showed that in general, citizens are not dissatisfied with the work of municipal structures, but on the other hand they consider that there is a need to improve municipal functionality and service delivery.
- Level of available information to citizens has proven to be a bigger problem, as the results show that only 15% of the respondents think that they are well informed about the work of their respective municipality. The same problem was identified in public discussions, participants were not satisfied with transparency of how the funds are spent, and especially with the process of employment in municipal administrations. It shall be noted that the research was done before launching of web applications for municipalities and, therefore, it is possible that the situation has changed to certain extent.
- There is a need for better communication, especially between elected representatives and citizens, at the moment this communication is very weak and it is reduced to personal contacts. This communication should be established and held at regular basis.

The results of focus groups, interviews and public discussions:

- During interviews and focus groups with representatives of municipalities, both from political and administrative sectors, it has been shown that current situation with semi-functional municipalities is more political issue than an organizational issue. The participants highlighted many problems, infrastructure, lack of staff, poor technical equipment, lack of cooperation with central institutions and others, but generally respondents think that lack of functionality is more political issue than technical. They see as a problem that the Association of Serbian Municipalities has not been established, which in their view is the main political issue in functionality of municipalities. The vast majority of respondents believe that the municipalities in the north have not been established fully; there are still a number of problems which have not been solved. This prevents the functioning of the municipalities in full capacity.
- What has proved to be a need is further training of workers and elected representatives in the field of modern technologies and communication in the digital world. In today's digital time, many tasks can be easily organized and prepared with better knowledge of modern technology; this is especially needed for representatives of mid-age and senior generations who have challenges in accepting new technologies.
- Of the total number of respondents, majority think that their knowledge and skills are adequate, or more appropriate, for the work they do. Therefore, it can be said that almost all respondents

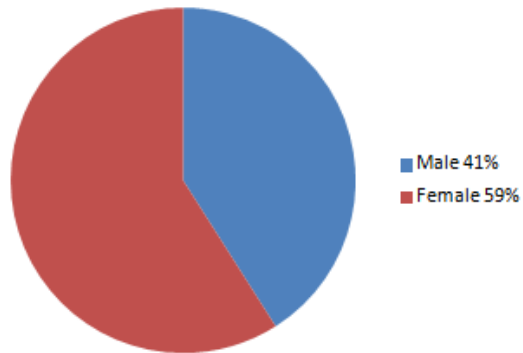
consider that they are competent to perform their jobs, from which it could be concluded that the system of self-evaluation does not show realistic picture.

- Professional development is not considered a basic link in the expansion of knowledge and the system of promotion. Informal forms of education (trainings, seminars, workshops, etc.) would be said to be only auxiliary means, which do not have much importance in the perception of developing their own abilities.
- In today's "knowledge society" the concept of competence understanding has been changed. Instead of a traditional understanding of the concept of skills, which relates to the possession of technical skills, this concept increasingly insists on having specific skills, such as communication, conflict situations, negotiation skills, team work, etc.
- Regarding cooperation with local partners and expectations from local partners, the respondents answered that they have a correct relationship, both with civil society organizations, as well as with the private sector. On the other side participants in public discussions stated that cooperation is good but that they expect more transparency in a work of respective municipalities, especially in the field of budget spending, public procurement and employment.
- In all conversations the problem that Association of Serb Municipalities is not yet formed presents the biggest issue. The formation of this Association is seen as a major issue in resolving the problems in the functioning of the northern municipalities.
- Cooperation with central institutions is generally not at a good level, there are frequent communication problems, and there is a need to increase the level of cooperation of local self-government units with the Ministries in the corresponding administrative areas in terms of professional development and appropriate training of employees.

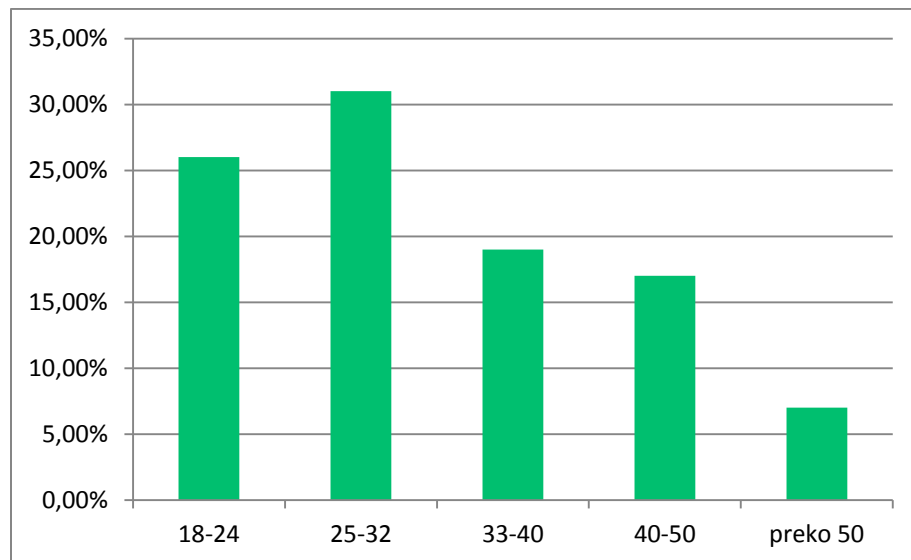
Demography

Question 1. Gender

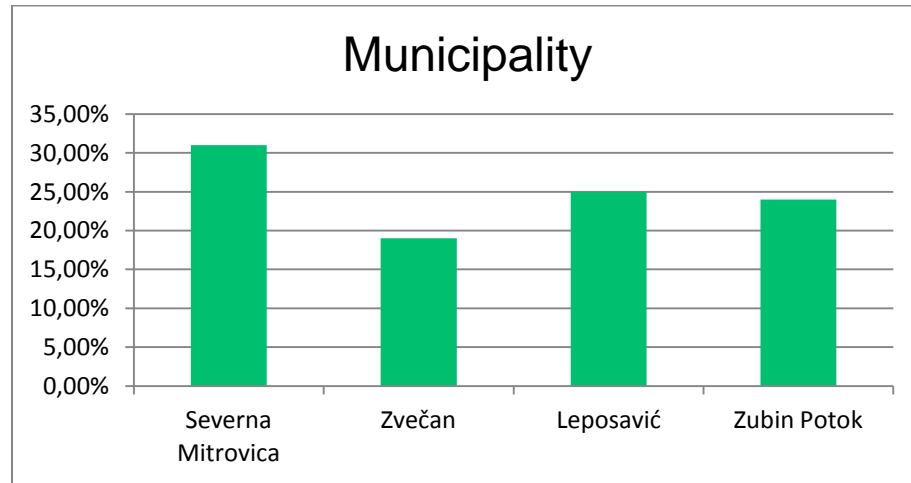
Gender



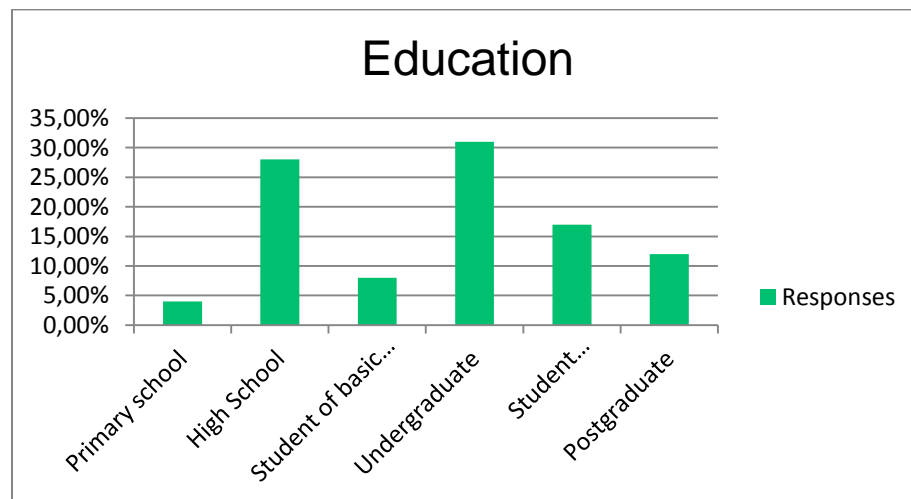
Question 2. Age



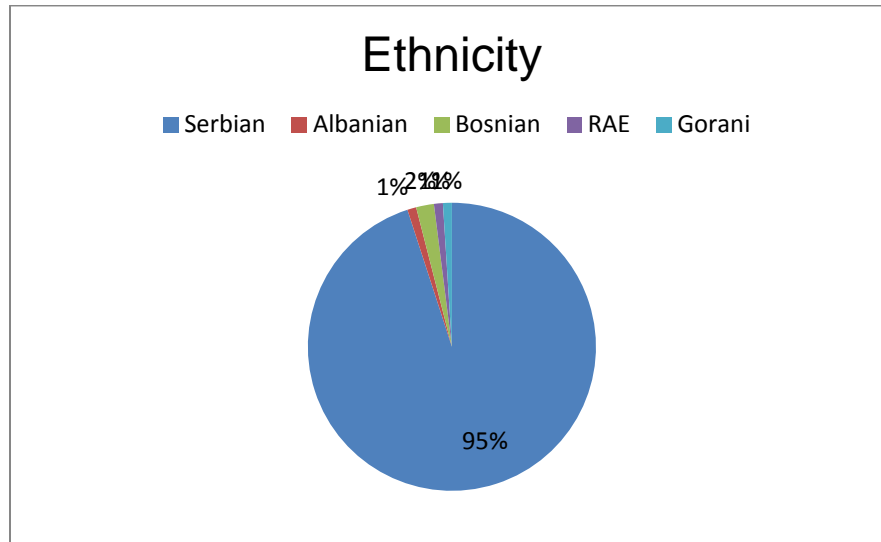
Question 3. Municipality



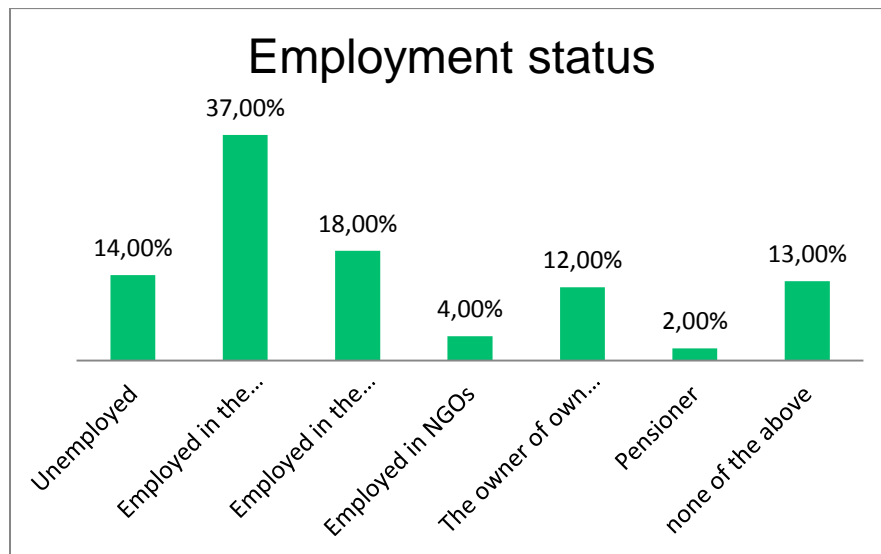
Question 4. Education



Question 5. Ethnicity



Question 6. Employment Status

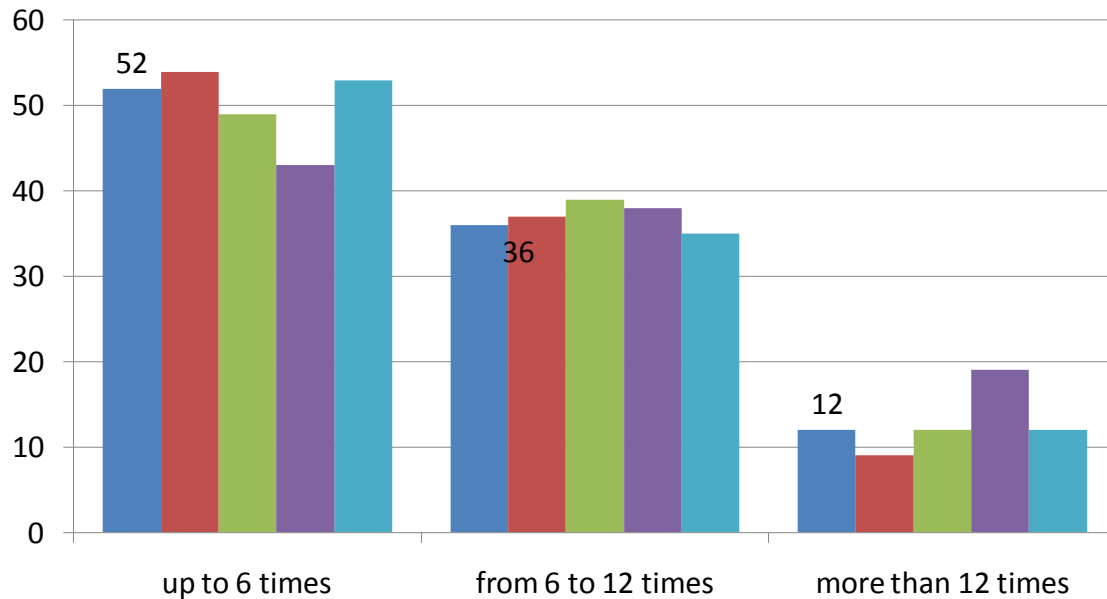


Research results

Question 7. How often do you use municipal services per year?

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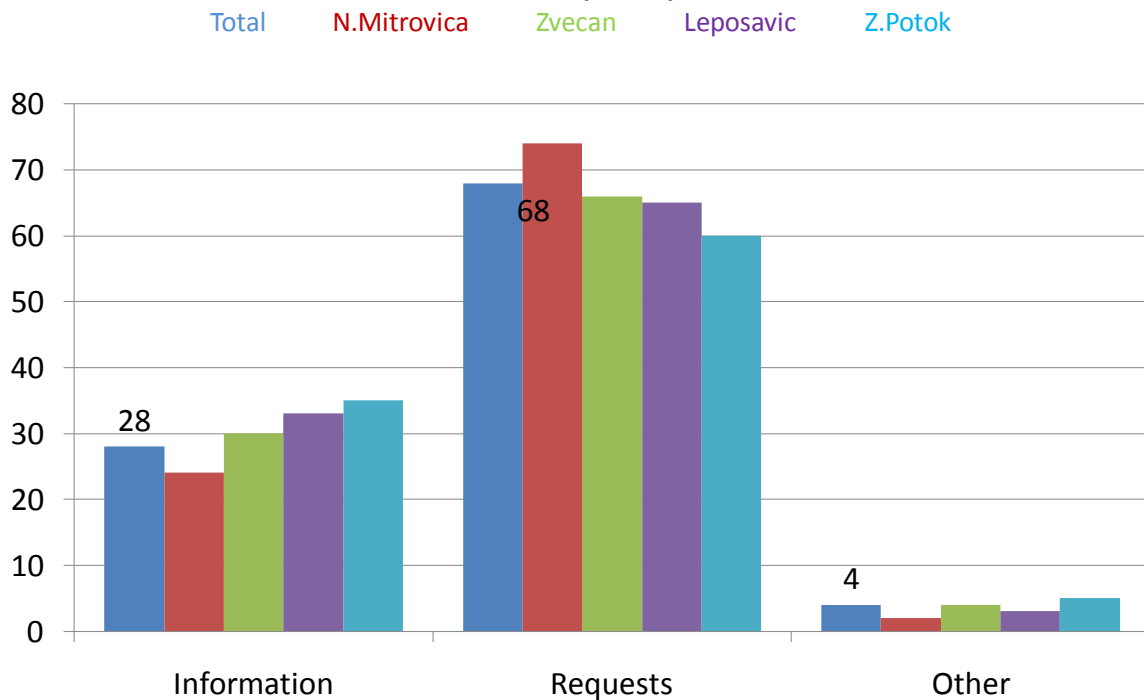
Total N.Mitrovica Zvecan Leposavic Z.Potok



As we can see from the chart, around half of respondents said they use services of municipality up to 6 times per year, other half use service more often. There are no significant differences among municipalities. The respondents that use the service of municipalities more than 12 times per year, are in great majority unsatisfied with the service provided by municipality.

Question 8. What kind of services do you usually look for in your Municipality?

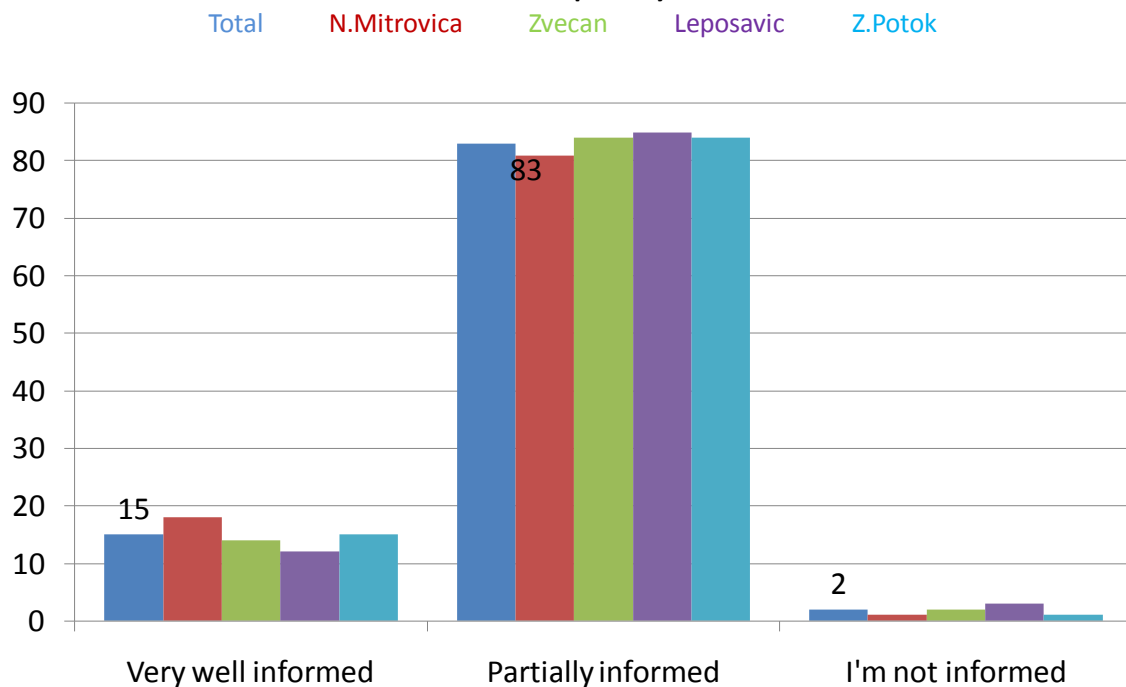
What kind of services do you usually look for in the Municipality?



When it comes to the type of service that respondents are looking in municipalities, majority is had certain requests to municipal administration. There are no significant differences between responses in different municipalities.

Question 9. To what extent are you informed about the work of your municipality?

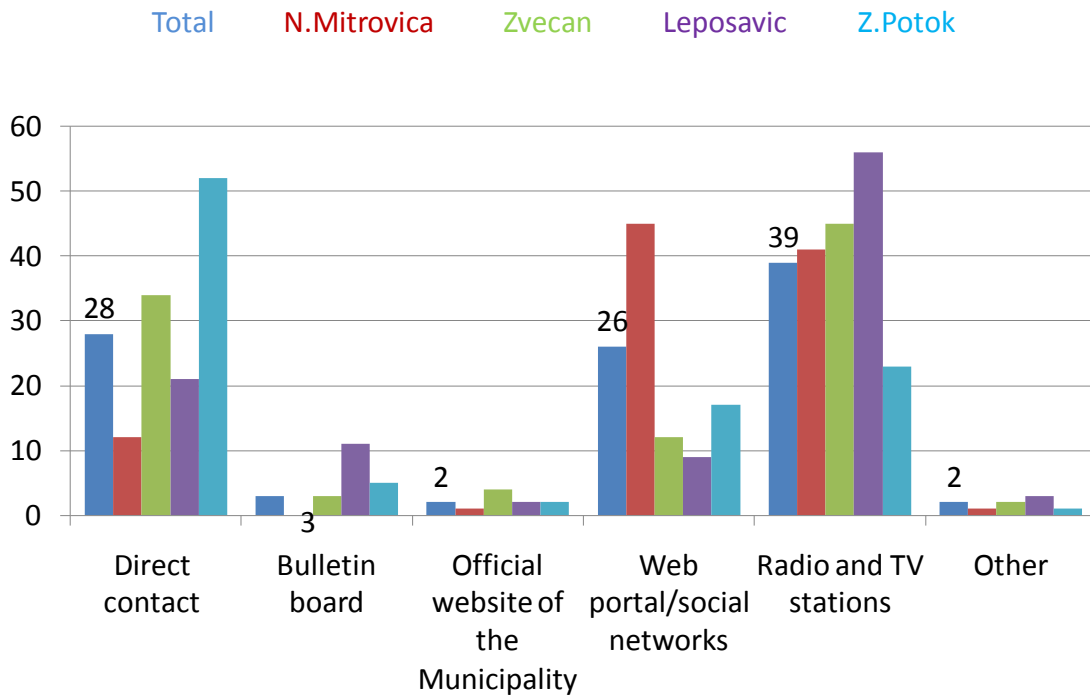
To what extent are you informed about the work of your municipality?



When asked in what extent are you informed about the work of your municipality only 15% answered that they were very well informed, while 83% expressed that they were only partially informed.

Question 10. How do you get informed about the work of your municipality?

How do you get informed about the work of your municipality?

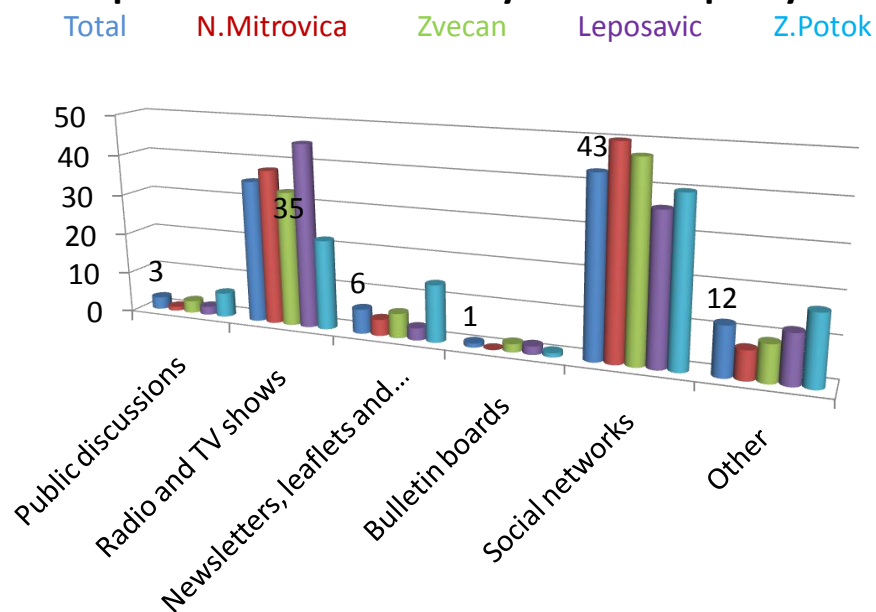


As we can see from the chart, responders are getting information's in a different way depending on their respective municipality. In smaller municipalities Zvecan and Zubin Potok, significant number of respondents answered that they were getting information in a direct contact with people, from employees of the municipality directly or indirectly from neighbors and friends. In North Mitrovica majority is getting information through web portals and social media, while in Leposavic majority gets information's through radio and TV stations.

When survey was implemented official websites of the municipalities were not in function, in a meantime web platform as well as mobile applications were launched for all four municipalities in northern Kosovo.

Question 11. List your suggestions for improving citizens' awareness of the plans and activities of your municipali

List your suggestions for improving citizens' awareness of the plans and activities of your municipality?



Answering on the ways to improve citizens' information about work of their respective municipality, two answers were dominant: radio/TV and social networks/web pages. Interesting fact is that answers were connected to age of responders; younger respondents mainly suggested social networks, while mid-age responders suggested TV and radio.

Question 12. Do you follow (in person or in some other way) the session of the Municipal Assembly?

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Yes No

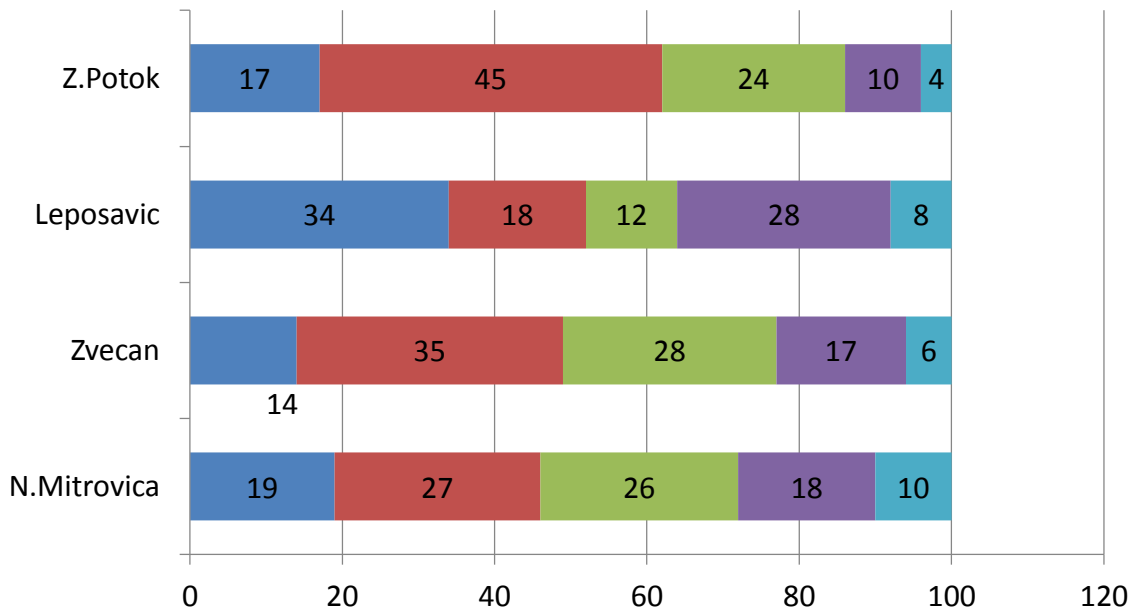


Only 6% of respondents follow, in some way, work of municipal assembly (majority of them from Leposavic). The same problem was mentioned in public discussions, participants were not satisfied with a transparency of municipal assemblies.

Question 13. Are you satisfied with the professionalism, efficiency and kindness of the employees in the municipality towards you?

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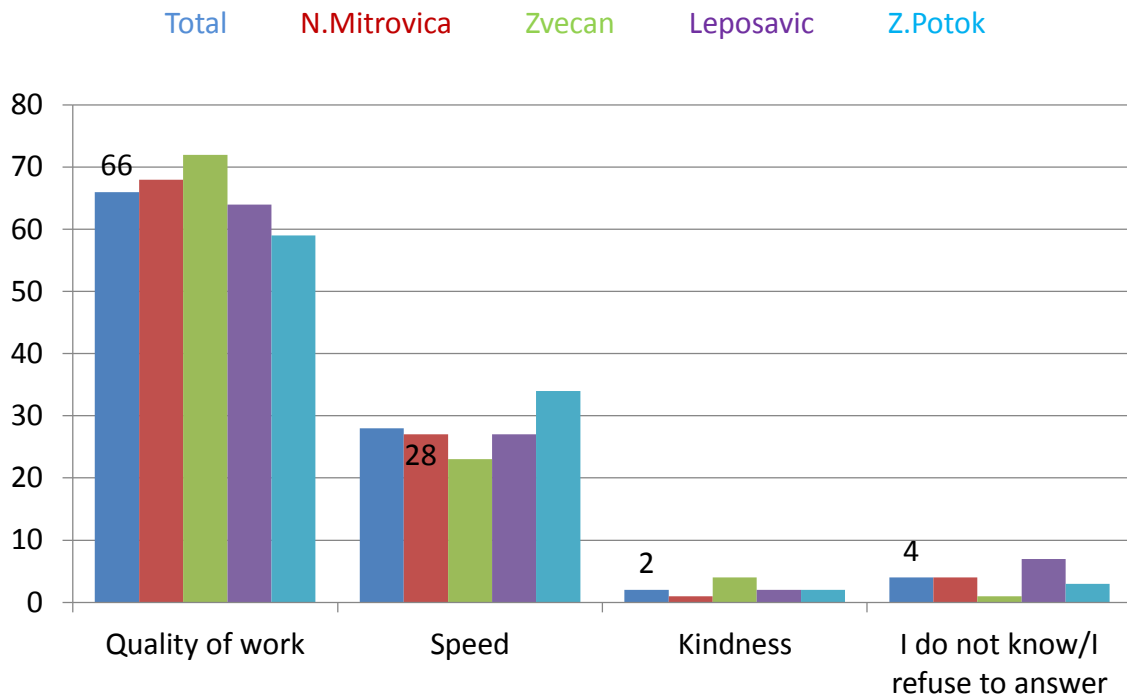
Very satisfied Partially satisfied Partially dissatisfied Very dissatisfied I do not know



When asked if they were satisfied with the work of employees in the municipalities, results are divided. We can say that half of respondents are satisfied, and half are not. Problem is that respondents who stated that they had contact with municipality more than 12 times per year were in vast majority unsatisfied.

Question 14. **What is most important to you in contact with the Municipal Services?**

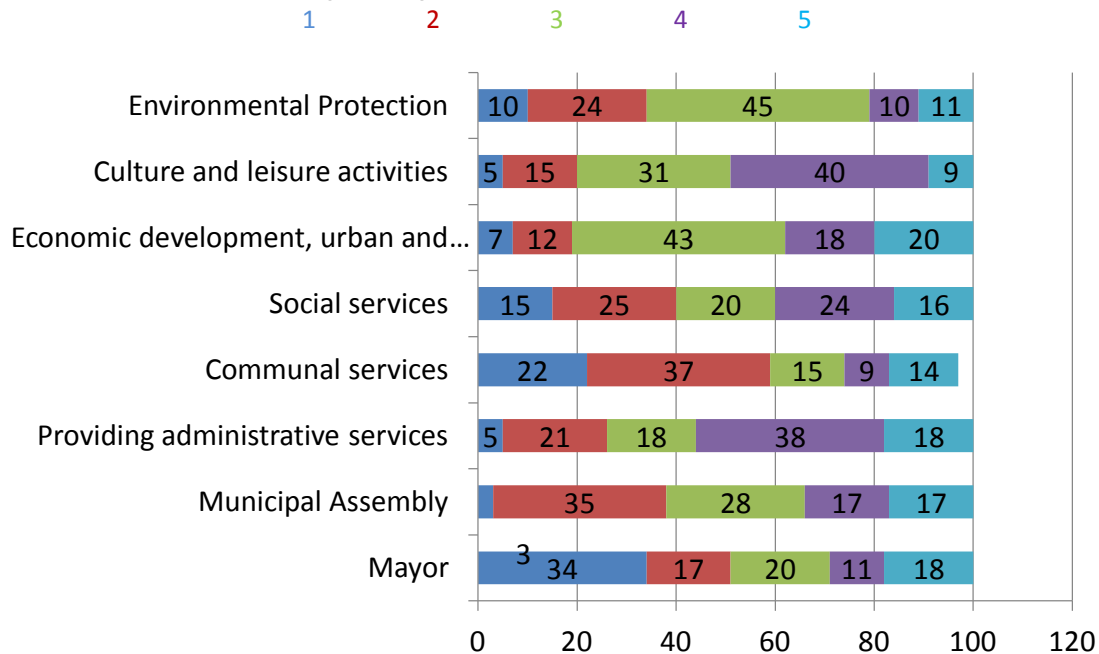
What is most important to you in contact with the Municipal Services?



When asked what was the most important thing in contact with respective municipality, answers are 66% quality of work and 28% speed of work. This tells us that respondents are interested to have their requests solved in qualitative way and in a reasonable time frame.

Question 15. How satisfied are you with the work of the structures and the provision of services?

**How satisfied are you with the work of the structures and the provision of services?
(where 1 is - completely satisfied, and 5 - I'm not satisfied at all)**



On a question, how satisfied were you with a work of concrete municipal structures, most positive results received communal service and mayors, while respondents were not satisfied with economic development and cultural activities.

Question 16. **Did you have a situation that you could not solve a problem or exercise some rights related to the work of your municipality?**

Did you have a situation that you could not solve a problem or exercise some rights related to the work of your municipality?

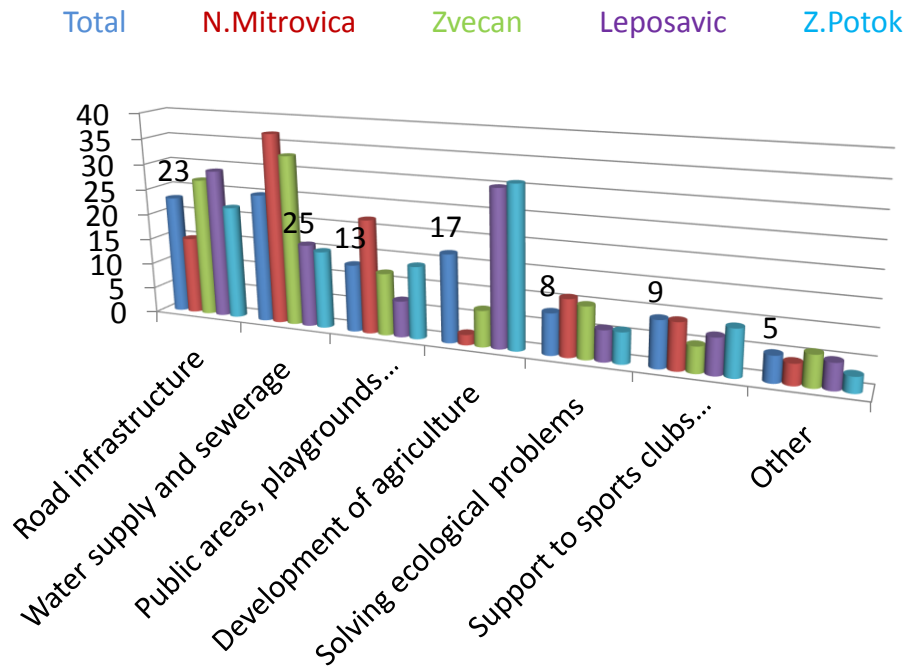
Yes No I do not want to answer



Approximately 15% of respondents stated that the respective municipality did not solve their problem. However, these unresolved problems mainly included issues of personal documents, which is not in the competence of the municipal administrations. The other problem that occurred in significant number is the problem with cadaster books.

Question 17. In your opinion, the budget priorities of the Municipality should be ...?

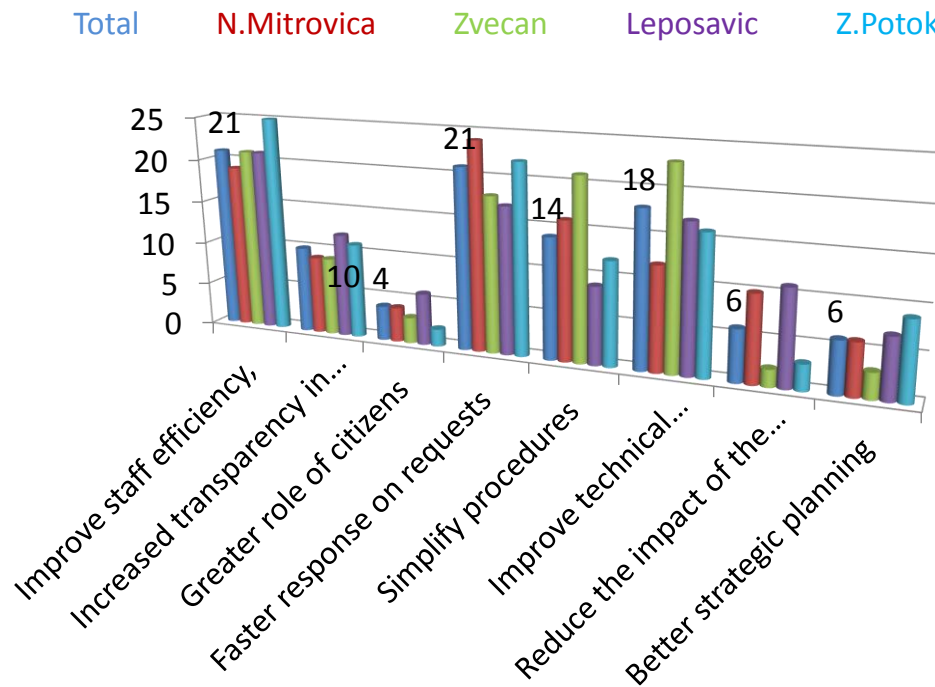
In your opinion, the budget priorities of the Municipality should be ...?



Respondents believe that the budget of municipalities should focus on development of road infrastructure, water supply and agriculture.

Question 18. In your opinion, what should be done to improve the work of your municipality?

In your opinion, what should be done to improve the work of your municipality?



Respondents believe that increasing staff efficiency, faster responses, simplifying procedures; improving technical skills are the most important things that should be improved for better functionality of municipalities toward general population.

Conclusions:

Research has shown that the current non-functionality of municipalities in northern Kosovo is not so related to incompetence of municipal staff, the problem is more political in nature, related to Belgrade and Pristina relations. This was also demonstrated during the project. Therefore, in our analysis we were more focused on the relations of the respective municipalities with the citizens.

The research has shown that citizens should be more informed about the work of their respective municipalities, all participants agreed on this regardless of whether they are people employed in municipalities or only citizens.

The lack of information is among greatest problems for citizens and elected representatives. Information on the work of local municipal assemblies is the lowest and citizens' participation in the work of the assemblies is almost non-existent. This is a big problem because generally when there is higher participation of citizens in the functioning of their respective municipalities, the work of institutions is more efficient.

Recommendations:

- System for Increased transparency in the work of the local elected officials should be implemented with aim to create positive circumstances for developing links of trust and confidence between the municipalities and citizens. This should be done by training elected officials in various technical expertise; Information Technology, Social networking, Communication skills, etc.. and also providing technical equipment to the local officials for better communication with citizens.
- Smooth relations between the local government and the representatives of different communities should be established, the best way should be by organizing Municipal Community Safety Councils, which is the legal obligation of municipalities, which has not been implemented.
- Organizing regular public hearings as informal meetings between citizens and local self-governments in order to know public opinion and exchange information on civic issues before action is taken. Public hearings should be organized early enough so the citizens will have sufficient time to discuss the issues, should be followed by local media and through social networks to make sure that all the necessary information and documents are disseminated.
- Spending of budgetary funds should be more transparent, especially in part of public procurement process in which local self-governments should join their efforts with local business and civil society members in order to implement specific activity of mutual benefit and interest. This refers to municipal service funded and operated by the business sector, where the

factor of involvement of local business can creates an opportunity for participation of citizens in decision making at local level.

- Civil society must take on the role of monitoring the work of municipalities in terms of protecting the rights of citizens, combat against corruption and reduce the impact of politics on the regular operation of municipal administrations.
- A serious campaign for the combat against corruption should be organized with all participants in the municipal system, as well as citizens.

NOTE: NGO ACDC wants to thank everyone who actively participated in this research, representatives of municipalities, civil sector, media, interviewers and most citizens who have decided to give their effort and time.