



Report on the performance of Municipalities in the area of communication with citizens

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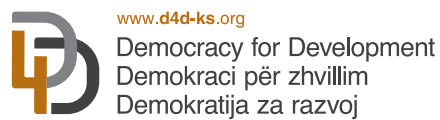
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Introduction

Transparency, accountability, and citizens' participation are the core elements of modern democracies at the central, as well as the local level. Municipalities that govern well are not governing alone. In fact, good governance means effective institutions and participation of all groups and interests of the society. The governance that is based on the wide participation of citizens reflects best on the principle of accountability and institutional transparency.

Provision of services to citizens, transparency, accountability, and participation of citizens are crucial for the reaching of the European standards of governance. These standards were conceptualized in 2008 in the Innovation and Good Governance Strategy at the Local Level of the Council of Europe, and are the standards which Kosovo municipalities are trying to reach.

This brief analysis, now a study of trends was initiated in 2019 from the Institute for Democracy and Development, analyzes the perceptions of the citizens in relation to the level of the implementation of the three basic principles of local governance in Kosovo, more precisely, the accountability, transparency and participation of citizens. Moreover, the purpose of this analyzing document is the offering of concrete recommendations pertinent to the strengthening and the improvement of the public policies in the above-mentioned areas.

Main data show that there is still lack of connection between the work of the municipalities and the requests coming from the citizens, this then leads to an

accountability which is not satisfactory. Likewise, a challenge for the local governments in Kosovo remains the participation of citizens in important decision-making processes, knowing that citizens are not that well informed about the work of the municipalities, and consequently they feel that the services they get from the municipal officials are not that satisfactory.

Methodology

In order to have an analysis on the level of the implementation of the principles of accountability, transparency, and citizens' participation at the local level in Kosovo, this report uses the method of a public survey through an omnibus. The findings from this survey have been processed, analyzed and are shown in this document.

A survey of the public opinion through an omnibus was conducted in June 2020, in order to understand the level of citizens' satisfaction with municipal services, accountability of municipalities to citizens, as well as the communication of citizens with the municipalities. There were in total five questions asked in this survey and the sampling methodology was a random one. The survey involved 1065 respondents (48.5% women and 51.5% men), the sample was designed to ensure a representative sample with a reliability threshold of $\pm 3\%$, designed according the ethnicities: Albanian, Serbian, and other Non-Serbian minorities. The survey covered the entire Kosovo and according to settlements (urban 43.5% and 56.5% rural). The findings of this survey have been analyzed and compared with the same questions made in 2019, using the same methodology and sample.

Results of the Survey

In this part of the paper the results from the questionnaire are presented together with an interpretation of such results. The Institute of Democracy for Development (D4D) has prepared a questionnaire in 2019 and with the very same methodology has again developed the questionnaire in 2020. This made it possible for us to have comparative data in different time frames and also the possibility to analyze the trends of citizens' perceptions and the work of the municipalities.

Citizens' satisfaction with municipal services

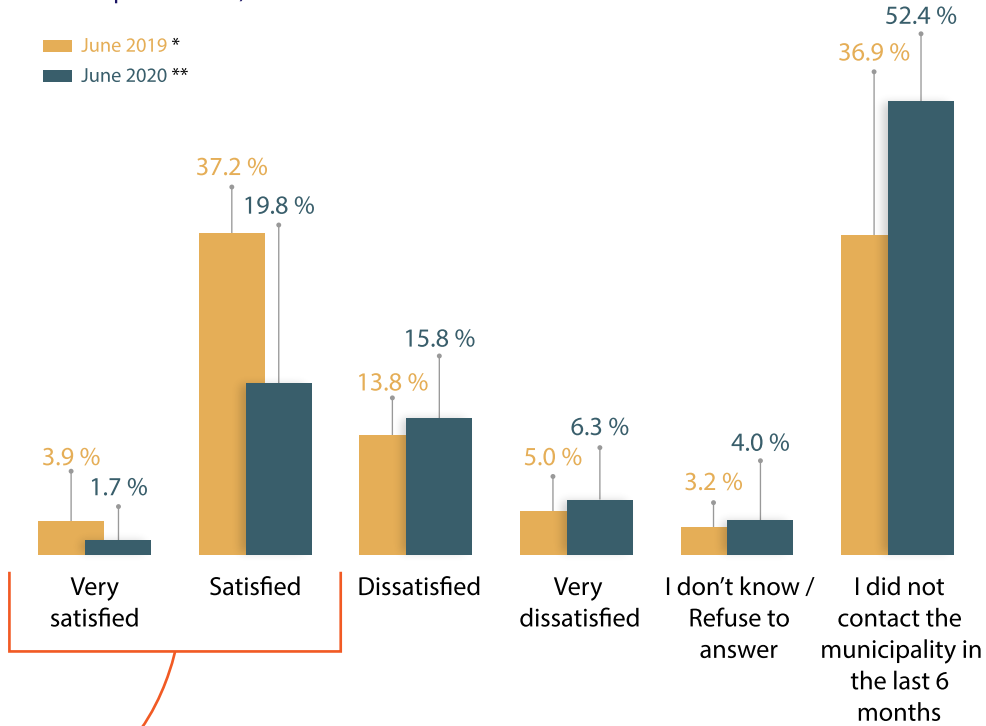
In 2019 and 2020 two trends were noticed: decrease of citizens' satisfaction during communication they had with municipal officials, and increase in number of citizens who did not contact the municipality in the last six months. While in 2019 there were 37% of citizens who stated that they were satisfied with the services they received from

municipal officials, but this percentage decreased drastically in 2020, where only 20% of citizens stated that they were satisfied with the services they received.

There were no major differences in the number of the citizens who were dissatisfied and this is due to the fact that there is an increased number of citizens who in the last six months did not contact the municipality with any requests at all. While in 2019, 37% of the citizens did not contact the municipality, in 2020, more than half of the citizens (52%) did not have any contacts at all with the municipality. Contacts with the municipality included questions, requests for access to information, complaints, or requests for municipal services. Having in mind that this period includes also the period of isolation, as a measure for the prevention of the spreading of the pandemics with Covid-19, it is supposed that there is a decrease in contacting the municipality, which is also shown in the graph on page 5..

If you have contacted your Municipality in the last 6 months, how satisfied are you with the service provided by municipal officials?

(with inquiries, request for access to information, complaint, request for municipal services)



Which municipal services had improvements?

(Top 3 answers)***

June 2019

- 1 Acceleration of procedures for obtaining civil status documents
- 2 Acceptance and review of requests
- 3 Acceleration of procedures to obtain a construction permit

June 2020

- Acceleration of procedures for obtaining civil status documents
- Acceleration of procedures to obtain a construction permit
- ↓ Acceptance and review of requests

* The survey was conducted during June 2019, with a total of 1065 respondents in the whole territory of Kosovo.

** The survey was conducted during June 2020, with a total of 1070 respondents in the whole territory of Kosovo.

*** If the respondents answered with "Very satisfied" or "Satisfied".

Municipal services that have improved

In this section only those citizens were asked who responded that they were satisfied or very much satisfied with the services offered by the municipal officials. In 2020, 21,5% of the citizens stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received from the municipal officers. This group was then asked about which municipal services were improved and this involved a number of the main services offered by the municipality.

Trends show that there are changes, but not in the order of the services that have shown improvements. In both years, the three municipal services that were perceived to have improved the most are: expediting of the procedures for the issuing of the civil status documents, expediting of the procedures for the issuing of construction permits, and the receiving and reviewing of the requests.

The municipal services with the most of the improvements have remained the same, however there are some positive changes in relation to the access to public documents and in 2019, 10.3% of the citizens responded that this service has been improved, and in 2020, this percentage reached to 14.4%.

A matter of concern remains the fact that the budgeting according to citizens' requests is not perceived to have any visible improvements, except for 9.9% of the citizens who think that there is improvement in this service. Lack of participation of citizens in

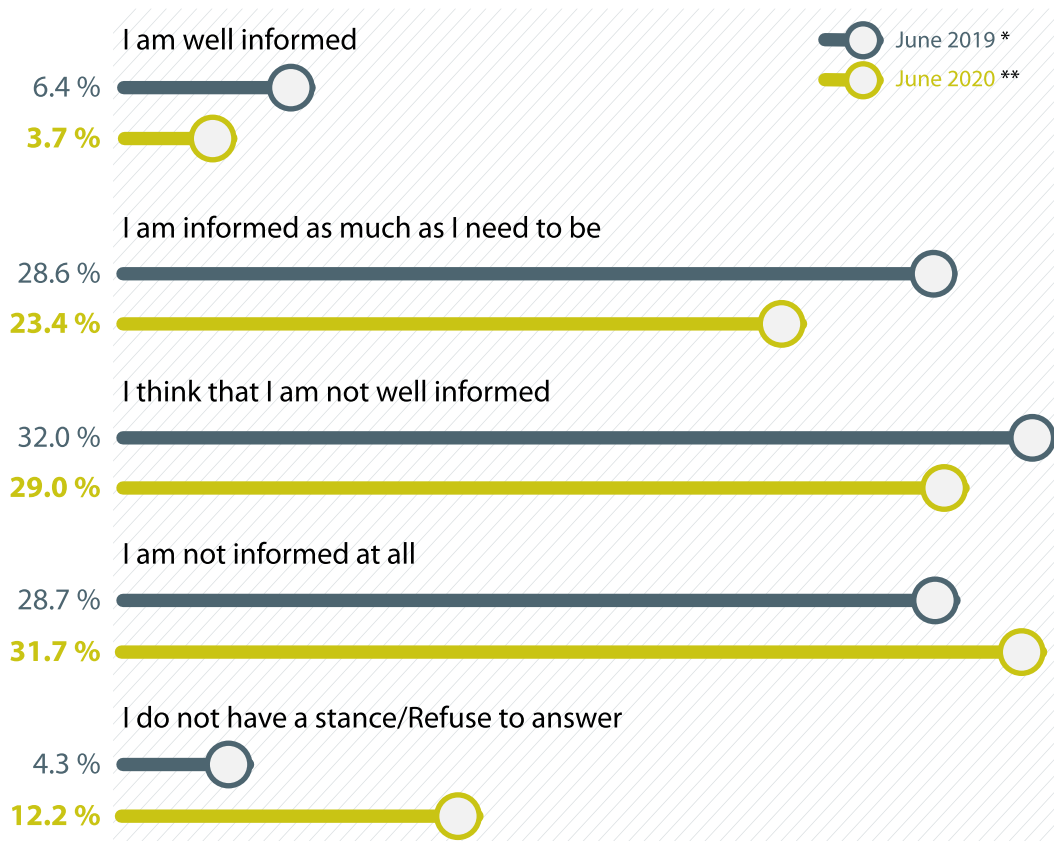
public debates about the budget may be attributed to lack of proper information of the citizens about the opportunities for participation in such debates, but also due to the lack of an innovative approach of the municipalities to increase the participation of citizens. Recently, public budget hearings in some municipalities are being organized online as well, but we still don't have any data that could tell us more about the effect of this type of public hearing.

Communication of the municipality with the citizens

Citizens still think that they are not sufficiently informed about the work of the municipalities. There were no major changes in this aspect and due to this reason in 2020, 60% of the citizens think that they are not well informed or not informed at all about the work of the municipalities. The same figures were for 2019 as well when it comes to the lack of proper information. The only major change is with the citizens who did not have an opinion or refused to answer. In 2019, 4.3% of citizens refused to answer, whereas in 2020, this percentage was increased to 12.7%.

The high percentage of citizens consider that they lack information and that municipalities should have a more active approach towards the informing of the citizens, especially with the use of suitable means of information (such as, social media).

How much do you consider that you are informed about the work of the Municipality?



* The survey was conducted during June 2019, with a total of 1065 respondents in the whole territory of Kosovo.

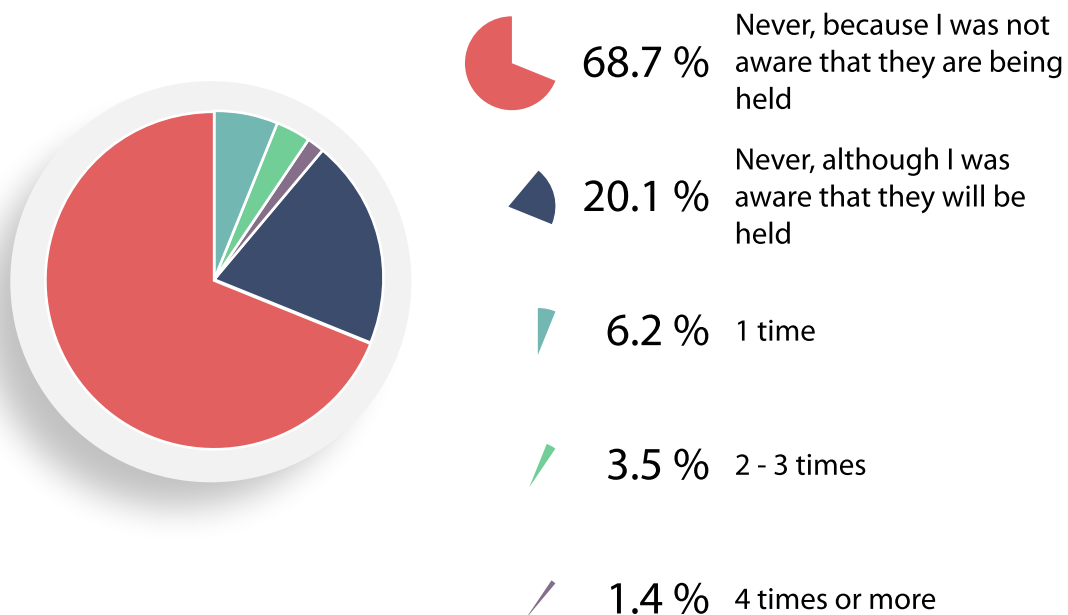
** The survey was conducted during June 2020, with a total of 1070 respondents in the whole territory of Kosovo.

Public hearings without any public

Public hearings, even though are one of the best ways for assessing the problems of the citizens and the reaching of the consensus about the solution to these problems, but these are not being used effectively. Lack of information not only about the importance of the public hearings, but also for organizing them is still one of the key problems. Almost 3 in 4 citizens (68%) are not at all aware about the holding of the public hearings in their municipalities, and about 20% of citizens did

not participate in any, even though they were aware of public hearings being organized. This way, only 11.4% of the citizens have participated at least once in public hearings. These figures show that municipalities should work in two directions in relation to public hearings, first by managing to transmit to the citizens the importance of public hearings and then by creating mechanisms for the informing of the citizens about these hearings.

In the last 6 months, how many times have you participated in public hearings organized by your Municipality?

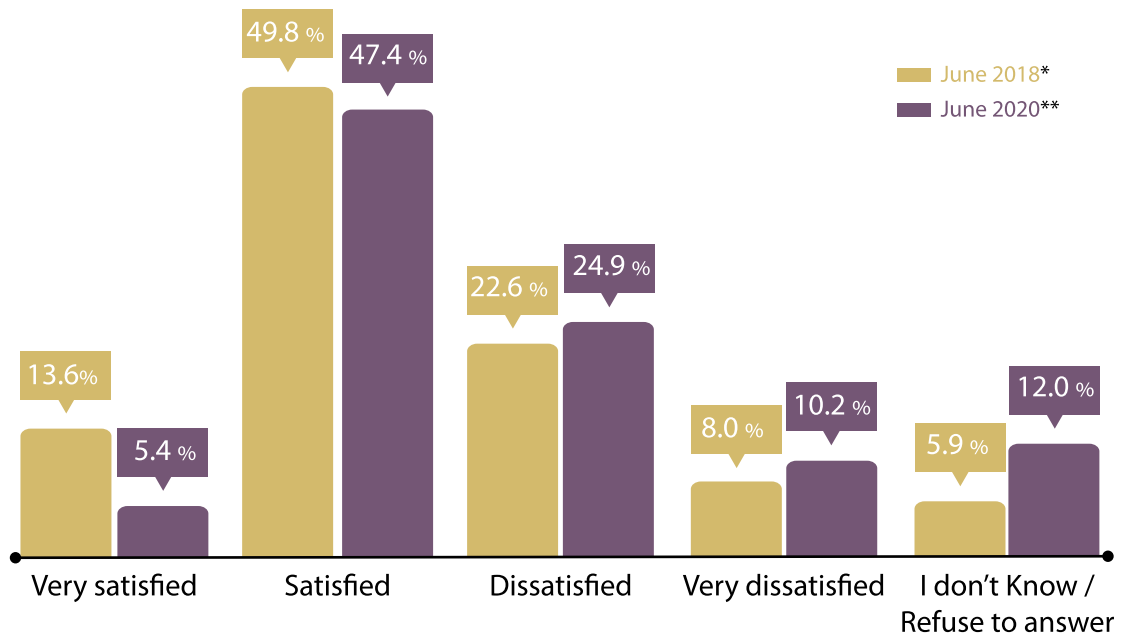


Citizens' satisfaction with local governance

In the first question the citizens gave their answers about their satisfaction with local governance, whereas in this part of the report they were asked about the overall perception about the work of the municipalities. Despite the fact that municipal services and local governance are closely related and it is supposed that the answers are relatively of the same nature, however this is not shown in these data.

Compared to 2019, we don't see any major changes in the data for 2020. Satisfaction with local governance is about 52%, whereby 47.4% of the citizens are satisfied with the governance, and 5.4% are very satisfied. Compared to 2019, the percentage of those that are very satisfied with governance was about 13.5%. Again, we can notice an increase in the number of citizens that refused to answer, from about 6% in 2019 to a double increase of 12% for 2020.

How satisfied are you with the local governance in your municipality in the last 6 months?



* The survey was conducted during June 2018, with a total of 1064 respondents in the whole territory of Kosovo.

** The survey was conducted during June 2020, with a total of 1070 respondents in the whole territory of Kosovo.

Recommendations

The recommendations shown in this document are based on the data collected from the questionnaire. These are general recommendations for the municipalities and there are some municipalities that have adopted these recommendations. Improvement of the communication and effective cooperation between municipalities would help in the tackling of the problems through lessons learned, since most of the problems are of the same nature. The key recommendations from this document are the following:

- Develop online platforms that would enable information for the citizens and would help the communication between the municipalities and the citizens about public consultations, public hearings and the offering of services for the issuing of personal documents, e-banking payments, and checking of the bills. Currently, municipality of Prishtina offers a good basis for such a platform and this can be adapted for every municipality.
- The proactive use of social media. Most of the existing municipalities have opened their pages in social networks which are managed by municipal officials. But, most of them lack the proactivity in the updating of these pages with information for citizens, and also currently are focused in one platform only (in this case, Facebook).
- Creation of platforms or the use of the existing platforms for discussing with citizens. Transforming the physically present discussion into an online one should be considered by the municipalities with low participation of citizens in public debates, and in budgetary hearings. Even so, the municipalities have to develop awareness raising campaigns for the citizens, so that their participation is increased in the consultations and public and budgetary hearings, etc.
- The use of visual methods for presenting the information. Lack of citizens' participation may be due to the lack of displaying the information in a simple and understandable way. Therefore, the municipalities should invest in the use of audio and visual methods when displaying the information.
- The municipal annual work plans should have measurable indicators, so that at a later stage could be placed online in order to be monitored by the citizens. This method would help in the increase of responsibility of the municipalities towards their citizens, increase of trust, and the improvement of communication between the citizens and the municipalities.
- Access to public documents should be facilitated for the citizens. Currently, only 4 out of 38 municipalities have online systems for filing of requests for access to public documents and that allow for the monitoring of the status of their requests.