Social Sustainability & Citizen Engagement
Urban Partnership Program II

Kumanovo
City Synthesis Report

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Kumanovo
City Synthesis Report

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Introduction

As part of the World Bank Group-Austria Partnership Program for Strengthening Local Governments in South-Eastern-Europe countries, the World Bank Social Development Unit has developed a Social Sustainability and Citizen Engagement (SSCE) Initiative, which continues and expands on the successful approach of the social sustainability assessments undertaken in phase I of the Urban Partnership Program. These assessments addressed two dimensions of socially sustainable and inclusive urban development:

- *Social Accountability and Participation* to increase accountability in the delivery of services and programs and empower urban marginalized and vulnerable groups to participate in their cities' development; and

- Proactively addressing the challenges of *Marginalization* to identify the needs of socially excluded groups and associated inequalities.

The initiative aimed to increase knowledge and awareness about citizen engagement (CE) mechanisms among stakeholders, including vulnerable groups. The first phase of the project involved five pilot cities in four countries in South Eastern Europe (SEE): Banja Luka (BiH), Durres (Albania), Pristina (Kosovo), Sarajevo (BiH) and Skopje (FYR of Macedonia). The SSCE Initiative in UPP II builds upon the lessons and best practices that emerged during the first phase of the UPP, enhances the focus on the Citizen Engagement (CE) component, and expands its scope to include seven countries, and nine cities in this second cohort.

Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development in Tirana and the Institute for International Urban Development (I2UD) in Cambridge, Massachusetts have assembled a team of local experts to carry out research and fieldwork in this second phase in the following cities: Elbasan (Albania), Gjilan (Kosovo), Kumanovo (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Karlovac (Croatia), Ulcinj and Kolasin (Montenegro), Pancevo and Sabac (Serbia).

Phase 1 of this project resulted in detailed, analytical reports of each of the nine cities covering demographic, social, physical, economic, cultural, institutional and political issues. The results of this research are summarized in **Section 1 – City Profile**. The full reports are available upon request. During this initial stage, the city teams also identified vulnerable groups to be the focus of the second phase of the assessment. This selection was made on the basis of official information obtained from institutions responsible for the provision of various public services at a local level, findings from research studies made by international and national organizations, as well as other relevant documents (laws, provisions, local development strategies, etc.) and representatives from marginalized and vulnerable communities and NGOS consulted during the inception phase.

Phase 2 involved extensive fieldwork and consultation with community members and other stakeholders. Each city team carried out a multiple Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs). The FGDs were held with each vulnerable group, often with men and women separated for part of the discussion. The teams also conducted FGDs with NGO representatives. The questionnaires used to conduct these discussions are available upon request. Focus group participants were recruited through a public call advertised via mailing lists and social networks and in cooperation with local grassroots NGOs that work with the identified vulnerable communities. In-Depth Interviews were carried out with at least two representatives of three of the following groups of stakeholders: local government representatives, the business

sector, and the NGO sector. Local Government Associations were also consulted and interviewed in the process.

Section 2 provides a summary overview of the issues raised during the FGDs and IDIs. The summary is organized according to the three themes covered during the FGDs:

- Existing levels of social accountability and citizen engagement;
- Opportunities and constraints for social accountability and citizen engagement; and
- Social Inclusion.

For Phase 3, a Participatory Scenario Development (PSD) Workshop was held in Kumanovo on June 24th, 2016. The objectives of the PSD workshop were to:

- Raise awareness of the results of the previous two phases;
- Provide recommendations for the local government authorities, the wider civil society and intermediaries, i.e. NGOs, CBOs; and
- Map out solutions to reinforce socially sustainable city development and integrity in public services.

The workshop brought together stakeholders from multiple sectors and engaged them in identifying locally relevant pathways of autonomous and planned *change (improvements)* in the context of social accountability, sustainability and good governance.

The participants were encouraged to envision a future scenario for the introduction of various social accountability and social inclusion mechanisms. As a result, stakeholders developed a 'sense of ownership' for the scenarios. Particular focus was placed on the use of ICT tools for drafting socially inclusive accountability initiatives. **Section 3** builds on the scenarios agreed on by the workshop participants, as well as their recommended detailed actions for implementation, and suggests three key interventions to set the City of Kumanovo on a path towards greater accountability and citizen engagement.

Two Annexes are included in this City Report. Annex 1 presents the concept and application of the SSCE Index. Despite efforts to harmonize the Index application and disaggregate data among different respondents, each city collected data differently, resulting in findings that are not able to be read comparatively across cities. Findings nonetheless offer an evidence base for decision makers in each city analyzed. Annex 2 provides a representation of the questions that constitute the questionnaire distributed in the participating cities. Different colors represent different pillars or categories both horizontally and vertically. Horizontal scores represent the different aspects of Citizen Engagement (CE) including willingness and capacity on the demand side, willingness and capacity on the supply side, and feedback and monitoring. Read horizontally, the matrix gives a Citizen Engagement "pulse" on different sectors that correlate to other components of the Urban Partnership Program.

1. City Profile

1.1. General City Profile

The Municipality of Kumanovo, situated in the north-eastern part of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, is the largest in the country (Figure 1). It stretches over a territory of 509.4 km²[1] consisting of 48 rural settlements and the City of Kumanovo, as its administrative seat. With a population density of 112 inhabitants per km² it is well above the national average (79.1 inhabitants/ km²). The City of Kumanovo, being the second largest in the country (after Skopje) is located at the intersection of the two most important corridors in the country (motorway and railway Corridors 8 and 10).

Figure 1: Map of Municipality of Kumanovo (Source: Wikipedia)

Based on the new administrative-territorial organization from August 2004 and the disaggregated data from the 2002 census, the total population of the Municipality of Kumanovo was 105,484 inhabitants,[2] out of which 76,272 (72.3%) were living in the City of Kumanovo, and 29,212 (27.7%) were living in the rural settlements.[3] In 2014, the Municipality of Kumanovo was estimated to have 108,817 inhabitants, thus, the population of the municipality has increased by 3.16% in the past 12 years.

While the Municipality of Kumanovo is characterised by a positive migration flow, in a period of five years there has been an increase in the share of both emigration and immigration within the general migrant population in the country. While in a short term, economic emigration could have a positive economic impact through remittance and reinvestment of capital, on a long-run it could negatively impact the general demographic profile of the municipality.

As part of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, especially in the period of 1970-1990, Kumanovo was an industrial city where large state owned enterprises, operating in various industrial sectors, employed the biggest share of workers from Kumanovo and its surrounding villages. The town's metal-processing, tobacco, agriculture, footwear and textile industries have made it an economic, trading and cultural centre.

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[1] Macedonian Platform against Poverty: *Report on poverty and social exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia for 2011*. [e-publication]. Available at: http://mpps.org.mk/images/stories/publikacii/PUB-Report-poverty-social-exclusion-RM-2011_ENG.pdf_pp. 54. [05.02.2016]

[2] State Statistical Office: *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Macedonia*, *2012*. [e-publication]. Available at: http://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziPublikacija.aspx?id=34&rbr=338 pp. 61. [05.02.2016]

[3] *State Statistical Office publication "Census of population, households and dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia, 2002, Book X, pp.41,* [e-publication]. Available at: http://www.stat.gov.mk/publikacii/knigaX.pdf; Municipality of Kumanovo: *Demographics*. Available at: http://kumanovo.gov.mk/demografija/ [05.02.2016]

In the years to come (1993 onwards) the poor privatization process, transformation and restructuring of the economy, market liberalization, etc. have lead to increasing unemployment and poverty among citizens. However, it is interesting to note that the human capital (knowledge and skills) developed during the period when Kumanovo was an industrial centre, substantially contributed to emerging of new small and medium manufacturing companies, especially for footwear and food production (milk and dairy products), which absorb a significant number of the workforce in the municipality. As noted by the Regional Chamber of Commerce of the north-eastern region, dominant industrial sectors in the Municipality of Kumanovo include: mining, agriculture and livestock (sheep, goats and cows), construction, metal-processing, food production (milk and dairy products), production of mineral water and trading; tourism (thermal water and bath), and transport services.[4]

Based on the 2002 census, the ethnic composition of the Municipality of Kumanovo was presented with 63,746 Macedonians (60.43%), 27,290 Albanians (25.87%), 9,062 Serbs (8.59%), 4,256 Roma (4.03%), 1,130 others (1.07% - 292 Turks, 147 Vlachs, 20 Bosniaks and 671 others).[5,6] Looking at migration from an ethnic perspective, over a period of five years, Macedonians and Roma have more often shown a tendency to move out of the municipality, with outflow being bigger than inflow. In contrast, Serbs and Albanians tend to immigrate towards Kumanovo. As stated by the municipal officials "*the dominant religious group in the city of Kumanovo are the Orthodox Christians (76.64%),[7] and the rest belong to Islamic and Evangelical Methodist confessions.*" (No other data on religious groups in the municipality is available.)

Based on population estimates, in 2014, 19,693 inhabitants are under 15 years old while 12,624 are 65 years and above. Over a period of 12 years, the share of youth in the general population of Kumanovo Municipality has decreased from 21.9% in 2002 to 18.1% in 2014, while the share of the elderly population has increased from 9.9% in 2002 to 11.6% in 2014. The total population age 10 and over that is literate accounts for 86,677 persons while 4,177 are illiterate. Looking at literacy through the gender perspective, 44,605 are men and 42,072 are women. In contrast, 959 men and 3,218 women are illiterate.[8]

According to the 2014 Annual Employment Agency Report, in Kumanovo 10,815 persons or 8.7% are registered as unemployed persons.[9] The number of unemployed persons in 2014 has almost doubled in comparison to 2013, when 6,670 persons, or 6.9% of the total unemployed persons in the country, were looking for a job.[10] Yet, compared to 2011 and 2012, the number has halved. In 2011, 23,111 persons and in 2012,[11] 19,463 were unemployed.[12] These rather dramatic

[4] Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Macedonia: *Regional Chamber of Commerce in Kumanovo*. Available at: http://www.mchamber.mk/(S(fggfzi3qtxnm21bgoff0bpza))/default.aspx?mId=64&lId=1&smId=10 [05.02.2016]

[5] State Statistical Office: *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Macedonia*, *2012*, [e-publication]. Available at: http://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziPublikacija.aspx?id=34&rbr=338 pp. 68. [05.02.2016]

[6] State Statistical Office: *Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia, 2002*. Available at: http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/knigaXIII.pdf [05.02.2016]

[7] Source: Wikipedia

[8] State Statistical Office: *Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia, 2002*. Available at: http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/knigaXIII.pdf pp. 37. [05.02.2016]

[9] Agency for employment of Republic of Macedonia: *Annual report*, 2014. [e-publication]. Available at: http://www.avrm.gov.mk/content/%D0%98%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%98%20%D0%BD%D0%B0%20%D0%90%D0%92%D0%A0%D0%9C%202014.pdf pp. 4. [05.02.2016]

[10] Agency for employment of Republic of Macedonia: *Annual report*, 2013. [e-publication]. Available at: http://www.avrm.gov.mk/content/AVRMGodisen2013.pdf pp. 6. [05.02.2016]

[11] Agency for employment of Republic of Macedonia: *Review of unemployed persons*, 31.12.2011. Available at: http://www.avrm.gov.mk/content/pdf/p1gradselo122011.pdf [05.02.2016]

changes of the number of unemployed population in the Municipality of Kumanovo, in a period of only 4 years (2011-2014), could probably be explained to be a consequence of several factors, including the new national government methodology of evidencing unemployed persons, which introduced the distinction of active and passive employment seeker (active seekers are obliged to register in the State Agency once a month, while the passive seekers have an obligation to do so every six months), and resulted in a drastically decreased official numbers of unemployed population in the country. It is interesting to note (based on the data) that the unemployment rate of women with higher levels of schooling is higher, compared to men. On the other hand, the unemployment rate of men with lower levels of schooling is higher, compared to women.

1.2. Vulnerable Groups and Exclusion

On the basis of the statistical data reflecting the unemployment rates of different social groups, such as: gender, ethnicity, age and disability, the following could be considered potential vulnerable groups:

- Unemployed persons without education or with finished primary education, accounting for 43% of the total unemployed population in Kumanovo.

- Unemployed persons at age 45-49 years accounting for 12.5% of the total number of unemployed persons in Kumanovo as well as the population at age 25-29 years representing 12.3% of the total number of unemployed persons in the municipality.

- Vulnerable women, including are those with secondary education (13.8% of the total number of unemployed persons in Kumanovo) as well as those without education or finished primary education (12.1% of the total number of unemployed persons in Kumanovo).

- Unemployed persons with disabilities, accounting for 1.4% (on 31 December 2014)[13] of the unemployed population of which 61% are men and 19.5% are women without education or finished primary education, and, 16.1% are at age 40-44 years and 14.8% are at age 25-29 years.[14]

- In addition, illiterate women and single-parent families with children can be a potential vulnerable group. The rising national figures on homelessness supplemented by local data and incidence of domestic violence could also indicate that homeless people and victims of domestic violence can be potential vulnerable groups.

- In the last couple of years, there has been an increasing trend of Roma immigration towards EU countries. Refused asylum seekers have been returned to the country and could face a social risk of poverty.

According to Article 22, of the *Law on local self-government* (05/02), municipalities and the City of Skopje are responsible for provision of social protection for the following groups:

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[12] Agency for employment of Republic of Macedonia: *Review of unemployed persons*, 31.12.2012.
http://www.avrm.gov.mk/content/pdf/p1gradselo122012.pdf [05.02.2016]
[13] Agency for employment of Republic of Macedonia: *Review of unemployed persons according to age groups*, 31.12.2014.
Available at: http://www.avrm.gov.mk/content/Statisticki%20podatoci/Dekemvri%202014/p2vozrast122014.pdf [05.02.2016]
[14] Agency for employment of Republic of Macedonia: *Review of unemployed persons with disability according to educational attainment*, 31.12.2014. Available at:
http://www.avrm.gov.mk/content/Statisticki%20podatoci/Dekemvri%202014/NevraboteniInvalidiSporedProfilStepen.pdf
[05.02.2016]

- children (kindergartens) and elderly (centres for elderly) (they are responsible for financing, investments and maintenance of the facilities);
- persons with disabilities (provision of social care);
- children without parents and parental care;
- children with educational-social difficulties;
- children in special needs;
- children from single-parent families;
- street children; children in social risk;
- persons misusing drugs and alcohol;
- raising public awareness of the needs for securing social protection;
- accommodation for persons in social risk; and
- provision of education for children in pre-school age.[15]

Article 11, of the *Law on social protection* (148/13) foresees for extended responsibilities of the municipalities in assisting:
- victims of domestic violence;
- victims of human trafficking; and
- elderly without family care.

There is no legal regulation that ensures representation / guaranteed seats of marginalized groups in the local councils. As stated by the municipal official, representation of the interests of marginalized and vulnerable groups of citizens is exclusively declarative. There is no real, concrete action carried out in a systematic form.

In order to implement local policies related to the social component, the Municipality of Kumanovo has adopted a Program for Development of Social Welfare of the Municipality of Kumanovo (2015-2017). Additionally, the municipality has a Local Action Plan for implementation of the Decade of Roma and annual programs for social protection prepared by the Department of Social Protection.

In the Municipality of Kumanovo there is notable urban segregation of the Roma population. Roma in Kumanovo live in several settlements: Sredorek, Baraki, Stari lozja, Bavci, Proevce, Bedinje, Juzarska maala, Cigansko sokace, as well as in the centre of the city. Most of the Roma in Kumanovo live in Sredorek, where they have access to basic infrastructure of water and electricity but do not have sewers. As the settlement is located between two rivers, it is under threat of floods. Part of the Baraki settlement has resolved their sewage problem, but it still persists in the settlements of Bavci, Stari Lozja and Proevce. All other settlements have infrastructure. Most of the residents in Sredorek, Baraki and Bavci, due to unpaid bills for water and electricity, face cuts and restrictions in service supply.[16]

According to the assessments done by Roma CSOs, unemployment among youth from the ethnic minorities, in particular Roma is estimated to be higher than among Macedonians and Albanians. NRC analysis indicates that young Roma are primarily involved in non formal work, such as

[15] Government of The Republic of Macedonia: *Law on local self-government* (05/02). Available at:
http://www.skopje.gov.mk/images/Image/%D0%97%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%20%D0%B7%D0%B0%20%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0%20%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%83%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B0.pdf pp. 7. [05.02.2016]
[16] National Roma Centrum: *Promoting social inclusion of young people in marginalized rural communities.* [e-publication]. Available at:
http://static.nationalromacentrum.org/pdf/brosura-inkluzija-ang.pdf pp.6. [05.02.2016]

agricultural work and temporary construction work that do not yield high profits. In this way the young people not only do not have an adequate income, but are also not registered or insured and are not able to use the benefits from the social security system.[17] Parallel to the problem of unemployment, young Roma face a lack of access to information related to the active employment measures offered by the Government, the possibilities for subsidized employment or public vocational trainings.[18] Many of the unemployed Roma are uneducated or have incomplete or primary education. This point to the fact that the problem of unemployment is not just the result of insufficient work offers, but also stems from low work qualifications of the working age population.[19]

There are several Roma NGOs that are active in raising awareness and providing information with regards to legal services. For example, the NGO National Roma Centrum was engaged in a campaign aimed to address the urgent and unmet need for assistance to the Roma population in civil and personal registration for obtaining personal documents. The NGO "DROM", besides providing legal aid to Roma citizens and trainings to Roma pupils from primary schools, is engaged in monitoring the budget transparency of the Municipality of Kumanovo.

1.3. Local Governance vis-à-vis Social Inclusion

The Law on Local Self-Government passed in 2002 put into operation the constitutional provisions and created the basis for the commencement of the decentralization process. However the actual transfer of competences began in July 2005 with the enforcement of the Law on Territorial Organization of Local Self-Government, adopted in 2004. The consolidation of the local self-government system included the adoption of a number of laws like the Law on Territorial Organization (2004), the Law on Financing the Units of Local Self-Government (2004), and the Law on Local Elections (2004), among others. The Territorial Organization Act of 2004 decreased the number of municipalities from 124 to 84. With the amendments of 2013 the number of municipalities was reduced to 80, and the City of Skopje was recognized as a particular unit of local self-government.

The municipal bodies include the Council and the Mayor. The Council is a representative body of the citizens. The number of council members depends on the number of inhabitants of the municipality and shall not be less than nine (if the number of residents is up to 5,000), nor more than 33 members (if the number of residents exceeds 100,000). The Council of the Municipality of Kumanovo has 33 members. Based on Article 127 from the Statute of the Municipality of Kumanovo[20], Council sessions are open to the public. However, as stated by the municipal official, because of space problems, the hall for meetings of the Council does not allow for the presence of citizens. In some situations there is no place for the municipal administration or representatives of public institutions or enterprises. In order to bridge the space problems and to enable citizens to be informed about the work of the Council, Council sessions

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[17] National Roma Centrum: *Promoting social inclusion of young people in marginalized rural communities*. [e-publication]. Available at: http://static.nationalromacentrum.org/pdf/brosura-inkluzija-ang.pdf pp.11. [05.02.2016]
[18] National Roma Centrum: *Promoting social inclusion of young people in marginalized rural communities*. [e-publication]. Available at: http://static.nationalromacentrum.org/pdf/brosura-inkluzija-ang.pdf pp.12. [05.02.2016]
[19] National Roma Centrum: *Promoting social inclusion of young people in marginalized rural communities*. [e-publication]. Available at: http://static.nationalromacentrum.org/pdf/brosura-inkluzija-ang.pdf pp.12. [05.02.2016]
[20] Statute of the Municipality of Kumanovo, Official Journal of the Municipality of Kumanovo, no.13/03, 13/07, 08/15 Available at: http://kumanovo.gov.mk/sluzhbeni-glasnitsi/

are recorded and published on the web page of the Municipality of Kumanovo. Additionally, the municipality has signed a contract with the regional television "TV +," on which there is a direct broadcast of the Council sessions.

The smallest units of local administration, foreseen by the Constitution and the Law on Self-government are the neighbourhood self-governments or local communities**.** However, as stated by a municipal official: "*Local communities in the Municipality of Kumanovo, after the enactment of the Law on Local Government in 2002, were faced with the problem in terms that they were no longer treated as legal entities and lost their independence. The Municipality of Kumanovo has an Advisor for local communities (neighbourhood self-governments), who is responsible for communication and cooperation with them. However, if taken into account the necessity and importance of local communities in the process of creating local policies and their participation in the Local Self Governance (LSG), it can be said that currently their position and role is more declarative and not real.*"

In addition to the Constitution, the Law on Self-Government from 2002 provides for the direct participation of citizens in decision-making on matters of local relevance, determining the forms in which they can execute their rights. According to Article 25, the forms of citizen participation are civil initiatives (Article 26), citizen gatherings (Article 27) and referendums (Article 28). In addition, citizens have the right, individually or together with others, to submit appeals and proposals regarding the work of the municipal organs or administration (Article 29).

Additionally, the Statute of the Municipality of Kumanovo foresees citizen participation. As stated by the local government "*Both the Statute, and the Rules of Procedure of the Council of the Municipality of Kumanovo regulate certain opportunities for public participation and accountability standards of the municipal authorities (the Mayor and the Council). Foreseen forms of public participation and accountability include council members' questions, and attendance of the media at the Council sessions.*"

Based on the free judgment of the municipal officials, citizens (including marginalized groups), do not demonstrate a high level of interest to engage with local governments and service providers. There is no evidence that the citizens of Kumanovo Municipality have ever used the *referendum* mechanism in place. There is also no available information about *citizens' initiatives* as a form of citizen engagement with the authorities. However, this needs to be further investigated, and validated, especially the reasons why citizens in general, and vulnerable and marginalized groups in particular, show little interest in being actively engaged, but also in demanding better services from their local governments.

In terms of existing legal requirements for citizen engagement in development, infrastructure and services projects, it can be noted that there are certain laws that require mandatory participation of citizens in the drafting process. Such is the case with the Law on Urban Planning and the Law on Protection of the Environment and Nature.

1.4. ICT for Social Accountability and Citizen Engagement

The website of the Municipality of Kumanovo[21] is accessible from different platforms. Although it declares tri-lingual information accessibility (in Macedonian, Albanian and English), only the Macedonian option is functional. The website includes basic demographic data and the history of

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[21]http://kumanovo.gov.mk/

the municipality, information on the mayor and his obligations, information on the Municipal Council (members, agenda of Council meetings from the period 2011-2013, information on members of various Commissions working on specific issues, such as: social protection, environment, relations between communities, etc.) and a Municipal Journal (in Macedonian and Albanian, from 2009 onwards). It also includes information on the municipal administration, departments, their obligations, and the municipal secretary. Phone and e-mail information of the managing persons from each department is clearly indicated on the website. The site also includes information on public enterprises that are under local authority, with clearly indicated contact numbers. There is a news section, which includes a variety of information on local happenings, though it is not always updated. There is also video information of each Council meeting, updated relatively frequently.

The website allows the following services: e-tax, "send a request for a meeting with the mayor" (which is not accessible), possibility to download forms and templates for building permits (e-forms), useful links (ZELS e-building permits, etc), as well as links to the municipality's strategic documents (budgets, strategies, action plans, etc.) sorted by sectors (finance, culture, sport, social protection, local economic development, international cooperation and EU integration, education, urban planning), none of which is accessible (functional) or up-to-date.

There is also information on the location of the building, including a Google map reference, main contact info and an e-mail of the municipality. It provides links to the Government of Macedonia and the Parliament and banners from collaborators of the municipality, such as: CSOs, ZELS and Internet media outlets publishing information on events happening in Kumanovo.

Key variables that could impact (hinder) the use and access to the website of the municipality, are: illiteracy (IT and general), level of education, poverty level, especially among vulnerable groups, but also the web site design (not very user-friendly design).

Besides the website, the Municipality also uses Facebook and YouTube as channels of communication with citizens. On their website they have links to their Facebook and YouTube profiles. Recently, the Municipality Sector for Local Economic Development launched a new website titled "Visit Kumanovo"[22] aimed to communicate to the wider public, local and foreign visitors useful information about different types of services available in the Municipality of Kumanovo, like historical and tourist attractions, travelling information, profane and sacral architecture and monuments, restaurants and places for sport and leisure, etc. It is available in three languages (Macedonian, Albanian and English), and provides possibility for contacting, giving suggestions for improvement and involvement.

According to information formally obtained from the Municipality of Kumanovo regarding ICT:

 "The local government of the Municipality of Kumanovo during 2012 made a Strategy for ICT development in the Municipality of Kumanovo, giving a general analysis of the capacity and conditions of ICT in the Municipality of Kumanovo. At the local government level, the municipality is facing large problems because de facto, the sectors of the municipality are located (physically) in buildings on four different locations, which largely reflects (and affects) the quality of the ICT services. In 2001-2002, the municipality opened a Centre for information of the citizens (Citizens Info-desk), while in 2008 they implemented the one-stop- shop project.

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[22] https://visitkumanovomk.wordpress.com

From 2003, in the Municipality of Kumanovo there is an Info-point of the European delegation in Macedonia. However, none of these projects has shown sustainability.

The perception of the overall level of practicing e-governance in the municipality must be taken as a judgment of the person who answered the questionnaire. Based on their assessment the level is low and unsatisfactory. As a local government, the Municipality of Kumanovo has a Facebook profile. In the context of quality and access, they are not able to give a quantitative indicator because the municipality has no established system of monitoring and evaluation of the development of information and communication technology in Kumanovo."

1.5. Access of Public Services

All inhabitants have equal access to services for registration and the acquisition of identity documents. The process of registration is unbiased and non-discriminatory towards persons from vulnerable and marginalized groups. However, the findings in the Report on Implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid 2014-2015 states that: *"only thorough changes of the system in place could actually facilitate access to justice for poor people and people from vulnerable categories, which is not the case nowadays"*.[23]

According to the World Bank report, *Issues related to the urban and municipal development: Guide for policies* from 2006, "informal urban and suburban settlements have developed in an unplanned way, usually without formal building permits, on a public land within municipal jurisdictions (or as often happens outside the municipal borders), illegally subdivided private land or in open areas such as rivers banks."[24] Compared with other cities in the country, Kumanovo ranks second in area of the city territory with substandard settlements, after Skopje (600 ha), and is third in the number of inhabitants living in those areas, after Skopje (30,000 inhabitants) and Prilep (13,850 inhabitants). These numbers lead to the conclusion that more than 10% of the population of Kumanovo lives in substandard settlements.[25]

According to the data of the State Statistical Office, in the first quarter of 2015, 69.4% of the households had access to the Internet at home, which is one percentage point more in comparison with the same period in 2014. The participation of households with broadband connection in the total number of households increased from 67.7% in 2014 to 69.0% in 2015. Almost all (99.5%) of the households with Internet access had broadband (fixed or mobile) connection to the Internet.

The Municipality of Kumanovo has one health institution in primary health care (Policlinics) and one institution in secondary health care (General Hospital). There is also a Centre for Public Health. There are 69 teams in primary health care in Kumanovo (maximum of 107 serving 107,365 inhabitants), seven teams in gynaecological services in primary health care (maximum of

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[23] 2014-2015 Report on Implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid, pp.59; Available at:
http://static.nationalromacentrum.org/pdf/Izvestaj-besplatna-pravna-pomos-2015-ANG.pdf
[24] The World Bank: *Issues related to urban and municipal development: Guide for policies*, No. 37278-MK. [e-publication]
Available at: http://www-
wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2007/08/08/000310607_20070808152042/Rendered/PDF/372780MAC
EDONI1Policy0Note01PUBLIC1.pdf pp.40 [20.02.2016]
[25] The World Bank: *Issues related to urban and municipal development: Guide for policies*, No. 37278-MK. [e-publication]
Available at: http://www-
wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2007/08/08/000310607_20070808152042/Rendered/PDF/372780MAC
EDONI1Policy0Note01PUBLIC1.pdf pp.41 [20.02.2016]

15 serving 43,453 women), 55 teams in dental service in primary health care (maximum of 107 serving 107,365 inhabitants), 49 pharmacies (maximum estimated at 36 for a residential area of 107,365 inhabitants).[26] There are 14 labs for medical and bio-chemical analysis (maximum estimated at 10) for the Northeast Region, including Kumanovo.[27] Reports such as *A Review of Progress in Maternal Health in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*, issued by UNFPA in 2009, mention the unequal access to health information favouring urban populations over those in rural areas. Roma are particularly marginalized in terms of access to health services and information. In addition, not all women have equal access to these services, with large differences in urban and rural areas and particularly within socially vulnerable groups (e.g. Roma, women with low educational levels and illiterate women).

In total, 95% of the inhabitants in Kumanovo have access to safe drinking water. In 2014, 181,654 denars (approximately 3,000 EUR) were allocated by the municipality to secure equal access to water. The quality and safety of drinking water in the villages with local water supply and public fountains has improved in 2014 compared to 2009, as a result of growing public awareness for safe drinking water and initiatives undertaken by the local populations (timely disinfection of drinking water, provision of sanitary protective zones around water intakes, cleaning of reservoirs, etc.).[28] Yet, there is still unequal access to water services by people living in urban and rural areas. Roma populations living in the suburban areas are also affected. In total, 13,266 inhabitants live in sub-standard settlements with water infrastructure coverage of 30%. The World Bank report assessed access to water, sewage and communal garbage as poorest in Kumanovo.[29] Only 23.1% of the inhabitants living in the rural areas have access to sanitation and wastewater treatment.

There are 18 primary schools, out of which seven are rural schools. Some parents point to a tendency of ghettoisation of Roma pupils in primary schools, which as an effect makes these schools unattractive to the pupils from other ethnicities.[30] In Kumanovo, there are five secondary schools. While the percentage of Roma in primary schools is around 5%, their involvement in secondary school decreases to around 1%.[31] The Municipality of Kumanovo is continually working with the civil sector to overcome barriers in Roma pupils' participation in the educational process. The municipality had been involved in the project "Inclusion for Roma children in kindergartens" together with the NGO DROM and the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy.

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[26] Government of Republic of Macedonia: *Decision on network of health institutions*, 81/2012. Available at:
http://zdravstvo.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/uredba_za_mrezata_na_zdravstveni_ustanovi.pdf [20.02.2016]
[27] Government of Republic of Macedonia: *Decision on network of health institutions*, 81/2012. Available at:
http://zdravstvo.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/uredba_za_mrezata_na_zdravstveni_ustanovi.pdf pp.13 [20.02.2016]
[28] Country report on the situation of equitable access to water and sanitation in the Republic of Macedonia", 2016
[29] The World Bank: *Issues related to urban and municipal development: Guide for policies*, No. 37278-MK. [e-publication] Available at:
http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2007/08/08/000310607_20070808152042/Rendered/PDF/372780MACEDONI1Policy0Note01PUBLIC1.pdf pp.41 [20.02.2016]
[30] KUMANOVSKI MUABETI: *The number of born does not match with the children enrolled in school in Kumanovo*. [e-news] Available at:
http://kumanovskimuabeti.mk/brojkata-na-rodeni-i-deca-zapishani-na-uchilishte-vo-kumanovo-ne-se-sovpagja-video/ [20.02.2016]
[31] DROM: *Bilten*, No. 3. [e-news] Available at: http://www.drom.org.mk/files/bilteni/Biltenbr.3.april-juni2008.MAKEDONSKI.pdf [20.02.2016]

2. Summary of Focus Group Discussions and In-Depth Interviews

The CSD Kumanovo City Team organized a total of five FGDs and 13 IDIs, carried out from May 5th-May 26th, 2016. Based on the findings presented in the Analytical Report (the inception phase), but also respecting the suggestions and preferences of the municipal administration, focus groups were held with representatives of civil society organisations, neighbourhood self-governments (*mesna samouprava*) from the municipal urban and rural communities (*urbani i ruralni zaednici*), vulnerable populations (youth and unemployed persons), and business community representatives (deemed important by the municipal administration focal team).

In total, 77 participants (46 men and 31 women), took part in the five focus group discussions. Two FGDs were held with the main social categories that were identified in the earlier stage of research as vulnerable groups in the City of Kumanovo, namely unemployed persons and youth. The composition of the unemployed persons group in terms of level of education (13 with higher education, six who completed secondary education, one with incomplete secondary education) and gender (6 men and 14 women), reflects and supports the findings presented in the Analytical City Report, particularly that the unemployment rate of women with higher levels of schooling is higher than that of men.

In choosing participants for the civil society organisations' focus group, special attention was paid to having NGOs that represented different target groups and have been active in diverse areas of work (democracy and human rights, environment, domestic violence, social issues, education, and rural development). The gender imbalance in the neighbourhood self-government and business community representatives' focus groups is a likely indicator of women's position in the community and points to broader underrepresentation in business and government activities. Balanced ethnic representation (Macedonian, Albanian, Roma, Serbian) was taken into consider in all five FGDs. All focus groups were held in a restaurant (Grazia) with a very pleasant environment located in a suburb of Kumanovo.

The focus group discussions were planned to last approximately two hours with the work structured in four parts: introductions, discussion, presentation of the Social Accountability Index (purpose and the questionnaire), and a concluding segment.

A more detailed report of the FGDs and IDIs, including a breakdown of participants, question list, and elements of discussion is available upon request.

2.1. Existing Social Accountability and Citizen Engagement Levels

2.1.1.　　*Views on the current state of local affairs*

Every focus group discussion started with the question, "What is the first thought that comes to your mind when you hear the words "accountability," "transparency" and "participation"? What is your definition?" The majority of the responders connected these terms with the provision or sharing of information of public interest, some with a responsible way of conduct, while others, relating to the current political situation in the country, stated that "because of the abuse of the very substance of these terms, what comes to mind first is the mere opposite: manipulation, secrecy and exclusion."

Regarding how accountable and transparent they consider their city administration and its services, the rating was between "not at all" and "partially satisfied."

Not at all! Before, the budgeting process was more open to the public, but in the last several years the practice of presentation and consultation with the public has dropped out."

"There is no transparent procedure about how the budget for youth is designed and who decides on the priorities."

"Regular citizens face difficulties in reaching the municipal administration."

"Information about the work of the municipality is not easily accessible."

<div align="center">***</div>

"City council meetings are available via local electronic media (TV). However, council agendas are not published on the municipal website prior to the meeting, so one can decide whether to watch the meeting or not."

"There are improvements when it comes to the involvement of CSOs in the process of designing of strategies. We, as an NGO, were invited to participate in development of the strategy for education."

"The Municipality helped me to get employed in the Centre for persons with mental disability, because I was proactive and applied to their call for community work."

<div align="right">*- Responses of FGD participants*</div>

It is interesting to note the comments of NGO representatives about their practices of transparency and accountability used with their constituents, in comparison to those used by the municipality. The point was made that civil society organisations should also be more transparent in their work and demand the same from their local governments. The need for greater transparency of both institutions and civil society organisations was also confirmed during the in-depth interview (IDI) process with representatives of local and national institutions in Kumanovo. While NGOs are recognised as an important social partner of the institutional administration, the way they set priorities and operate is not always perceived as neutral and consistent to their mission and values.

2.1.2. *Methods for obtaining information about public services*

With regards to the quality of information, remarks revealed that information was not updated, and that the data on the website was not easily navigable. This weakness of the municipal website was also acknowledged by the municipal administrative officers involved in the IDI process and recognised as a necessary future intervention. Related to most common channels used to access information, answers varied depending on the age, education level and social status of the participants. Younger participants and those with higher education levels cited the Internet (institutions' official web portals, but also social networks) as their primary source of information regarding the provision of public services offered by both the local administration and other public institutions. When asked how those who do not use computers and Internet could get access to information, they suggested that besides modern ICT tools, authorities should also use the traditional channels to inform citizens about the services they provide.

Many of the participants said that in addition to the Internet they also used other media like TV newspapers, etc. to get information about the services and other programmes offered by the national and local governments. However, still the most common is to "*ask friends*" in person or

by phone. The municipal administrative officers involved in IDI process are fully aware of the prevailing use of "*word-of-mouth*". They understand that access to information depends on the social characteristics of the users and are developing services in a way that allows for a user-based approach in disseminating information, using both traditional and modern communication tools.

In terms of accessibility of services and information, and what to do when citizens face a problem, participants had different experiences. Several of them said that they are familiar with some of the mechanisms available to citizens to complain when having problems with certain services, but almost all of them said that "*if you want to finish the job, it is quicker / easier to ask a friend (or find a friend of friend) who works there.*" However, some of the participants pointed out that although filing a claim or complaint is a time-consuming process, citizens should get used to it because "*for one thing it leaves a trace*" and "*if there is a mechanism, than it should be respected - by all!*" There were also comments made that the quality of services, regardless of the type of service, depends directly and uniquely on the person that provides them. One participant noted that, "*when this person is gone, the rules are changed!*"

2.1.3.   Methods for inquiries/complaints about services and participation

In terms of how to improve mechanisms for complaints (feedback of information and monitoring), the general perception is that when it comes to detecting problems, discussion goes rather smoothly. However, when it comes to proposing suggestions for improvement, it seems as if "*we were caught by surprise.*"

2.2.   Opportunities and Constraints for Social Accountability and Engagement

2.2.1.   City activities related to Accountability and Citizen Engagement

Participants' perceptions about cooperation with the local government differed according to the group. Civil society organizations mostly assess their cooperation with the municipal administration as correct, although not really substantial. The most unsatisfied participants were the representatives of the neighborhood self-governments.

Representatives from neighbourhood self-governments all noted that even though their role is to be the mediators between the citizens and the municipal administration, they cannot effectively perform this function because of their legal status with the Law on Local Self Government. Additionally, they all expressed criticism on the quality of communication with the municipal administration.

> "*The law does not recognise us as legal entities, which means we cannot have bank accounts and financial independence.*"
> "*We are writing requests about the citizens needs and priorities, but the other side is hard of hearing.*"
>   *- Responses from FGD participants representing neighbourhood self governments*

2.2.2. Perceived obstacles to participation in decision making

The perception from the focus group discussions is that neither the business sector nor the neighbourhood local-governments recognise the potentials of cooperation with the CSO, in terms transfer of know-how (capacity building trainings, analysis, researches), especially from the perspective of practical experience in involvement and engagement of citizens (which could benefit the neighbourhood self-governments in more populated local communities, with over 10,000 citizens as pointed out by one of the presidents at the neighbourhood self-governments focus group). It also goes the other way round, as CSOs also do not seem to recognise them as potential partners in improving the environment for greater citizen participation in the local development processes.

The business community group stressed that the cooperation with the municipal administration is mainly related to requests for donations. However, they do not get any support from the municipality. Words of criticism were also addressed to the quality of municipal services, especially related to access to information and building permits.

> *"The municipality is not providing any support to the business community for participating in branch-specific fairs."*
>
> *"There is no harmonization between the education policy and labour force demand in Kumanovo. Although the education policy issue is under jurisdiction of the national government, still the municipality has mechanisms to intervene, but they are not doing that."*
>
> *- Responses from FGD participants representing the business community*

It is important to note that municipal administration officers involved in the IDI process also identified the lack of trust between the business community and the municipality as an obstacle in more fruitful cooperation between these agents.

2.2.3. Suggestions for Improvement

Representatives from neighborhood self-governments were all unanimous in their views that in order to increase citizen participation, their position (both legal and especially financial) has to be improved, and coordination with the municipal administration enhanced.

It is interesting to note that the municipal administration is "on the same side," as expressed in the IDI process. They also recognise the need for greater support of the neighbourhood self-governments, which, in a way, will help them to better communicate with the local population (especially in the rural areas in the municipality).

From the perspective of CSOs, improvements are seen in terms of greater involvement both on the policy level (greater involvement in the process of creating strategies) and in terms of provision of services (which, to some extent they are already doing, though City-CSO coordination could be improved). The need for a greater trust and coordination between the municipality and CSOs is also recognized by the representatives of both local and national institutions involved in the IDI process.

Participants from the business community noted that things need to change and more efforts by both sides are required to improve cooperation, and thereby contribute to the economic development of the municipality and its citizens.

> "*The Municipality should appoint a focal person who will work with the business community, where we can present our needs and ideas, and get relevant information.*"
>
> *- Suggestion by FGD participant representing the business community*

2.3. Social Inclusion

Participants in FGDs were generally aware of the vulnerable groups in Kumanovo. Groups recognized as vulnerable by the participants included: the unemployed, people at social risk, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, women, and youth. Participants recognized these groups as vulnerable for a number of reasons: gender-based discrimination, disability, discrimination based on ethnicity, and social risk status.

The reasons that vulnerable groups cannot access information and afford include physical distance, architectural barriers, and financial reasons.

> "*Some people at social risk cannot afford to pay for communal services, even for water. It is fair to say that Municipality of Kumanovo provides subsides for the families at social risk (unemployed) for covering part of the bills for water.*"
>
> *- Response of an FGD participant*

Access to information is perhaps the most problematic. The education system does not inform students of where they can go for different services or about their rights as citizens. Even less informed are those citizens who belong to vulnerable and marginalized groups. This lack of information and knowledge is evident on both sides: the providers (civil servants) in order to perform their tasks well need to be better informed, educated and trained, and the users (the citizens) of services need to be more aware of their rights. The representatives of institutions involved in IDI process also acknowledged the need for a better work balance between the office and the field tasks. They recognize that their role is to serve the public, so in order to do that, they need field visits and observations. The lack of resources for such activities (such as: lack of vehicles) hinder them from properly assessing the situation and designing evidence-based programs. As one possibility to improve social inclusion, women participants suggested that the municipality should consider gender sensitive budgeting.

2.4. In-Depth-Interviews

In total, 13 in-depth interviews (IDIs) were organised with representatives of the local government, national institutions and public enterprises. The interviews were held with senior officials including Heads and Deputies of Departments, Executive Managers, and Department/Unit Advisors delegated by their senior officers.

The interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and were held on the premises of the institution (municipality, public institution), or in the same location where the FGDs were organised. Most of the interviews were held in person (11). Ten of them were audio-recorded and transcribed, while in one interview only notes were taken, as requested by the respondent. Two interviewees preferred to answer the questionnaire in written form and to send it via e-mail. The local government association was also consulted.

The City Team conducted interviews with the following respondents:

   Ms. Katerina Bitovska, Ministry of Justice, National Registry Office, Skopje

Ms. Liljana Kraljevska, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Inter-municipal Centre for Social Work in Kumanovo, Adviser

Mr. Marjan Denkovski, Ministry of Health, Centre for Public Health in Kumanovo, Doctor

Ms. Teuta Redzepi Sabedini, National Employment Agency, Centre for Employment in Kumanovo, Adviser

Ms. Frosina Trajkovska, Municipality of Kumanovo, Head of Social Protection Unit

Ms. Divna Todorovska **and** *Mr. Zhika Krstevski*, Municipality of Kumanovo, Adviser and Head of Education Department

Mr. Aleksandar Gelevski, Municipality of Kumanovo, Adviser, Urban Planning Dept.

Ms. Bisera Blagoevich, Municipality of Kumanovo, Head of Public Relations Department

Mr. Zoran Pavlovski, Municipality of Kumanovo, Head of Strategic Planning and Local Economic Development Department

Ms. Marina Aleksova, Local public institution, General manager at the Kindergarten "Angel Shajche"

Ms. Violeta Georgievska, Local public institution, Adviser at the Nursing home "Zafir Sajto"

Mr. Dragan Janevikj, Local public enterprise, Vice-manager at the Public enterprise "Vodovod i kanalizacija"

Mr. Vidan Aleksikj, Local public enterprise, Technical manager at the Public enterprise "Kumanovo gas".

Data gathering and management

Many respondents agreed that the lack of up-to-date date hinders strategic thinking and appropriate planning of resources. The last official national data originating in 2002 is inappropriate for developing evidence-based policies. At the same time, different institutions apply different data gathering and management strategies, while one may operate on the municipal level, others operate on a regional level. Such practices complicate comparison between statistical units and raises skepticism and even suspicion of the validity of any data. The local administration is not in a capacity to gather and update diverse data and relies on civil society organizations and national institutions to access demographic data. The efforts made by the municipal Social Protection Unit to conduct the first social mapping on the territory of Kumanovo and gather primary data on potential beneficiaries of their social welfare program should be acknowledged in this respect. All respondents agree that a wider share of data is necessary for the proper management of the largest municipality in the country. Inter-operable systems of data, accessible for all local and national institutions, could ease the common interaction and make communication more efficient and constructive.

Distribution of competencies between institutions/departments

All respondents agree that the responsibilities and authority of the municipality are defined in the national legal framework and corresponding by-laws, as well as in the guidelines and decisions approved by the institutions on national level. Yet, not everyone is satisfied with the distribution of governance competencies and responsibilities between the national and local authorities. The local administration accentuates the need for further engagement in the process of decentralization, even re-thinking its practical implementation. In fact, there is a need to continue with a third phase of fiscal decentralization that would enable the municipality to administer

revenues and expenditures more thoroughly, and in such way, to be directly involved in creating (and managing) local life. In this moment, the local administration acts as a mediator between the citizens and the national government. Their perception is that each time citizens feel dissatisfied with the national policies, negative feelings are directed towards the local administration. Some national institutions in Kumanovo also accentuate the need for a transfer of competencies for certain services from the national to the local level, such as in health care.

The local administration emphasizes the lack of finances within local governance to address the diversity of local services needed and offered to the citizens. The local budget of the municipality had been blocked for several years. The local institutions that are partly financed through national funds (the so-called 'block subsidy') are dissatisfied with the amount of received financial support, which in their view is not meeting their daily needs. The situation is dramatic in the kindergarten, which is the sole institution of this kind in the largest municipality in the country and operates with 50% overstretched capacity without the entitled national funding.

Strategic priorities

Each respondent from the local administration stressed discrepancies between projected and implemented plans in municipal departments and units. "*Within our financial possibilities*" is a phrase repeatedly used to describe the disparity between vision and reality. In their views, the daily politics influences the administration's work and interferes in the course of prioritization of local problems. In such way, the existence of strategic documents is not fully utilized and inexpedient.

The local administration is fairly well equipped with personnel and teams in each department or unit are multi-ethnic. Yet, a strategic approach towards volunteering and using other local resources is missing. Such activities are project-based and fully dependent on external funding, usually from foreign donors.

In a few cases, respondents accentuated the need for rationalization or ergonomics of human resources within the units. There is a need to re-structure the horizontal and vertical structure of departments, units and personnel, so to better respond to the current needs for service providing. For example, there is a need to re-structure the Department for strategic planning, local economic development and taxes in two or even three different units, as all of them are complex in terms of tasks and personnel.

In contrast to the local administration, the local public institutions need more employees, especially in regards to the need of specialized personnel (dialectologists) in the schools and the kindergarten working with children with special needs. There is a vast number of unemployed among these specific profiles, but there is lack of finances to engage them continually.

Access to information

Formally, all respondents agree that there is a practice of open access to information for all citizens regardless of their diverse social status and background. At the same time, there is an awareness of the need for additional assistance and fostering of diverse approaches to reach different groups of citizens. Yet, some respondents from both the local and national institutions are not sensitive to the barriers that vulnerable people face in accessing appropriate information. Both, the local administration officers and representatives of public institutions are not satisfied with the level of use of ICT tools in the communication between the municipality/institutions and citizens. Local administration officers are also dissatisfied with the functionality of the

municipal website, as it is not regularly updated and the site does not provide timely information of all activities, especially of activities carried out by different departments. It only reports on activities of the Mayor in a timely fashion. Some institutions do not have a web site. Those that have a web site find it useful in maintaining regular communication with the beneficiaries (municipality, schools).

Other mechanisms, such as consultative meetings, debates and the like are used only within the obligatory framework for information/consultation with the citizens. The local administration has no special strategy for communication with citizens and has not envisioned any forms of participative planning/budgeting, etc. in regards to access and communication, beyond what is usually practiced. They emphasize that citizens usually prefer direct contact because they are more trustful of face-to-face communication. The local administration has therefore organized an 'open door policy' and schedule with citizens on a weekly basis.

When assessing the role of the media in making their activities more visible, all respondents believe that local media are available and open to disseminate information to their beneficiaries.

Access to services

In general, both, the local administration officers and representatives of public institutions consider that there are no excluded citizens, although they are aware that some social groups experience difficulties in accessing certain services. All believe that there is no systemic exclusion of certain groups of citizens. Yet, there are needs, which are not fully met, due to technical problems or reluctance to do so, such as the case with enjoyment of cultural rights of non-majority ethnic communities and the opportunity to learn the language and culture of vulnerable groups as part of the formal education curricula.

The local administration undertakes steps and interventions directed against segregation and social exclusion including social packages for vulnerable persons and transport for children (particularly children with special needs). However, the omission of the rule of regionalization in regards to school admittance does create opportunities for segregation of the Roma children, in particular. This would result in the creation of more of less mono-ethnic schools with an expected tendency of children to opt for schools where they can study among their peers.

In regards to physical access, respondents are aware that municipal buildings as well as public institutions are not accessible for people with reduced mobility and there is lack of infrastructure around the city to facilitate the movement of people with reduced mobility. There are also areas within the municipality that face limited access to water, sanitation, transport, street maintenance, collection of communal waste, social services (such as kindergartens), and health services (gynecologists, a physician in the rural patrol and patronage services). Still, the municipality believes that they are doing everything in their power and within their financial possibilities to meet these needs of the citizenry.

Respondents highlighted that some local public institutions work beyond their projected capacity, yet acknowledging that this does not reduce the quality of their services. Some representatives of public institutions acknowledged the fact that there is lack of proper health care for people with addictions, and that the largest municipality in the country lacks a Centre for Mental Health.

While the prioritization of problems is influenced by daily politics, as acknowledged by local administration officers, it is more common to rank sanitation or utilities services first (access to water, sewage) rather than social services (such as: nursery care for the elderly in rural areas).

There are ideas for sustainable local development (use of bio-fuel, communal waste management with additional activities), but they are only conceptual and their implementation have neither been foreseen nor planned for the near future.

It is important again to note that the municipality has initiated a process of social mapping intended to identify the main social needs and risks among citizens, and also to provide data to support the municipal social benefits program.

Communication and collaboration

Some municipal representatives evaluate inter-sectoral cooperation as excellent; others as insufficient. The later think that personal contacts and interpersonal relations affect the quality of the interdepartmental communication. There are examples of joint activities (e.g. education and social welfare units), but they are ad-hoc or project-based, rather than strategic.

The communication and cooperation with other institutions, either local or national was generally evaluated by respondents as correct. Yet, there is no mutual exchange of data and information in order to contemplate or create common strategies. "*Everyone acts within the scope of their duties*" is the most common phrase used to describe the quality and frequency of collaboration between the municipal administration and the public institutions. There is no interoperability of data, which hampers more effective communication and collaboration between the institutions.

Communication and cooperation with civil society organizations by both the representatives from the municipal administration and the public institutions is generally evaluated as correct. "*The collaboration is usually based on unilateral shared data*" - acknowledges a representative of a national institution. The municipal administration, as well as those from the national institutions, recognizes the role of the civil sector as a direct supplier of social services, especially in regards to vulnerable groups, such as: Roma, redundant workers, and persons with mental disability. However, the cooperation between institutions and the civil society sector mainly consists of logistical support from institutions (providing working space for activities) and is rarely program-driven or financial. CSOs in part replace the work of the municipality in providing social services. However, a common criticism addressed to CSOs is that they lack a systemic approach in their work; it is often grant-driven and designed to meet donors' interests. "*CSOs work as in a campaign*", is a common view shared among the institutions. Due to a lack of interest among donors, some social issues are never on the working agenda of CSOs, such as access to water. Only a few CSOs have been provided with financial and logistical support by the municipality.

The most common topic of cooperation between the municipal administration and the civil society sector relates to the needs of persons with disabilities and the Roma community and their issues with employment, housing, access to documents. Still, there are issues that deserve further attention, such as access to water and sanitation and improvement of the architectural environment for better physical accessibility for persons with reduced mobility.

The municipality has not developed a systemic approach in the communication with the citizens. While the municipal administration remains open for communication and consultation with the citizens, it is a declaratively rather than effective possibility for citizens` participation. The role of the neighborhood (urban and rural) self-governments as a mediator between the municipality and the citizens is not fully recognized. The municipality does not have finances to invest in order to increase the level of citizens` participation in local decision-making processes. The legally binding mechanisms for citizens` participation are mainly respected; however other than

(un)informed debates and boxes for compliments and complaints, not much is being invented. There are no specific investments in boosting the motivation of citizens to participate in the local processes.

> "*I believe that the Mayor should feel greater responsibility towards the citizens, and he should cooperate with them more effectively. The municipal council could be a concrete example of transparent communication; its sessions are broadcasted on the media. But still I think it is not on the highest of their role, and to be socially accountable it is not enough to do only that.*"
>
> *- In-Depth Interview Respondent*

When structural modes of communication between the institutions and citizens are missing, the needs of citizens are identified through the communication between neighbors and friends. As a result, citizens have more faith in the direct contact with the administration and only infrequently use different channels to get information on local issues.

In regards to the business sector, the relationship with public institutions has only been partially leveraged, namely through sponsorships and donations. There is no strategy for their greater involvement in financing of local projects in diverse fields, such as social policy and education. Partly the reason for the ineffective "use" of the business sector is "*their mistrust in the local administration, profiling them as "punishers" rather then partners*" as expressed by a representative of the local administration.

Opportunities for improvement of inter-institutional cooperation and promotion of citizen engagement

Local administration officers and institutions recognize that there is no single, one-size-fits-all approach that works well for all social groups. "*Different approaches for different target groups, would have better effects*" – is one proposal for improved social accountability. Some institutions are reflexively critical about the lack of their investment in sustaining effective communication with citizens.

> "*My impression is that citizens feel distant and as strangers in their communication with this institution. As if we were more price worthy, and not part of them! I have no idea how and what needs to be changed! I think that citizens are not motivated to know about us, and it is our mistake that citizens are not motivated; we should spend more time outside the office, not only to be stuck behind the desks. We should be in the media, citizens should realize that they are part of our work, we are not their enemies*"
>
> *- In-depth Interview Respondent*

Moreover, the need to develop interoperable databases with shared and open data for all agencies and institutions is increasingly pressing and needed. Furthermore, there is a need to maintain mutual coordination as part of the daily functioning of the administration and institutions in order to increase their transparency and social accountability.

According to the Executive Director of the Macedonian Association of Local Self-Government Units (ALGU) Dushica Perisic, decentralization reform has been a catalyst for greater social accountability measures and practise by municipalities. Ensuring municipal accountability and transparency comes is primarily done through a web presence (website), as well as other electronic and print media. Digital municipal services for building permits, other applications related to land management, and procurement also seek to ensure transparency and reduce corruption in the specific municipal competence of urban planning. Ongoing projects cited by

Mrs. Perisic concerned with the issue of transparency and citizen enegagement include the "Community Forums" project of the SDC and Swiss Embassy, USAID projects focusing on the issue since 2000, and a UN-Women participatory gender budgeting project. The "Community Forum" project 60 municipalities (including ZELS) working on city-citizen consultations, particularly in the realm of participatory budgeting.

3. Scenario Development Outcomes and Recommendations

The Participatory Scenario Development Workshop for the city of Kumanovo was held on June 24th, 2016. The workshop was designed and carried out in close cooperation with the Coalition for Sustainable Development team and the Municipality of Kumanovo, continuing the practice established from the very beginning of implementation of the SSCE component to engage municipal authorities at every stage of the project with the aim to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility of project outcomes, including the scenarios.

The aim of the PSD workshop was to introduce participants to the findings from the inception phase and the FGDs/IDIs and, related to the three key issues identified for all cities participating in the project, to discuss possible options and tools to improve social accountability and citizen participation at the municipal level.

A particular focus was placed on the utilization of ICT tools for encouraging participatory approaches, strengthening integrity in public services, and increasing the demand for good governance and civic participation.

Participants at the workshop included representatives from diverse stakeholder groups:

- Local government officials (Department of Urban Planning, Department of Education, Department of Information and Public Relations, Department for Local Economic Development, Department of Strategic Planning, Department of Information Technology, Department of Social Protection, Protection of Children and Health Care, members of the City Council),
- Neighbourhood self-government (urban and rural neighbourhood self-government representatives),
- Public institutions (National Agency for Employment –Kumanovo branch; Inter-municipal Centre for Social Work, Kumanovo; Elderly Care Facility "Zafir Sajto", Kumanovo)
- Public enterprises (PE "Vodovod")
- NGOs (Poraka Nasha, working with persons with mental disabilities; DROM, working mainly with Roma; Florence Nightingale, working mainly with women (in rural communities) and victims of domestic violence; Centre for Intercultural Dialogue, youth organisation; Centre for Rural Development, youth organisation; Vior, women organisation, Majka, humanitarian association)
- Private businesses (representatives of the clusters of the shoe industry, and restaurants services)
- Non-affiliated citizens (including persons from socially excluded/disadvantaged groups, such as youth, unemployed, elderly, etc.).

A total of 50 people participated in the workshop. In terms of composition, the team took care to ensure balanced ethnic (Macedonian, Albanian, Roma, Serbian) and gender representation (23 men and 27 women participated).

Workshop structure

The PSD Workshop was designed to last approximately five hours. The work was structured in three sessions: introduction, group work, and closing (plenary presentation of scenarios and

discussion).

The introductory part included brief presentation of the UPP and its four components, with a focus on SSCE, its goal, methodology, approach, and activities, followed by a short presentation by the Head of the Sector for tax administration, strategic planning, local economic development (LED) and IT, on "why and how" the Municipality of Kumanovo became part of UPP II. Next, the participants were introduced to the basic elements of a social accountability strategy, key stakeholders and the connection between them, followed by a presentation of the key findings from the inception phase and FGD/IDI by the CSD team directly involved in the desk research, FGDs, IDIs, and index measurement. In addition to these results, examples of good practices from the region were presented including: ICT as tools for increasing transparency (cases of Pula and Indjija); participative budgeting for greater accountability (cases of ten municipalities in Serbia[32] and Elbasan, Albania); neighbourhood self-governments as drivers for active citizens participation (case of Sabac[33]). .

The group work session lasted approximately three hours. Participants worked in three groups, their objective being to develop scenarios (desired reality and steps to achieve it), for each of the key identified topics: (a) social inclusion vis-à-vis service provision; (b) existing social accountability and information exchange mechanisms between the local government officials and civil society; (c) opportunities and constraints for social accountability – matters of transparency and participation. Techniques used by the moderators included Issue-Solution Cards and Back-casting. The "energisers" used during this session were chosen to point out to different levels of involvement ("Organise a wedding!"), to emphasise the need of strategising prior to action ("the Magic carpet"), and use of various channels of information ("No laughing, please!").

The closing session included a plenary presentation of the proposed solutions of all three groups, discussions and closing remarks for the next steps related to designing the action plan. After the workshop, the team held a working meeting with the moderators to sum up the impressions and key points. It should be noted that the event was featured by the leading local TV station in Kumanovo.

PSD Workshop dynamics

The level of commitment of the participants throughout the entire process was very high. They engaged very actively in the discussion, especially in the second part of the workshop - the scenario development process, and after, during the presentation of the scenarios.

The work in each of the groups started with reflecting on the groups' key topic and explaining the process after which the moderators gave issue-solution examples to stimulate participants' thinking about what issues/problems they perceive important, and encourage their proposals of solutions/interventions.

Each group managed to come up with a scenario with specific steps to be undertaken, as well as suggestions for measures/adjustments needed to enhance the enabling environment for such an initiative.

A more detailed report of the PSD Workshop, including elements of discussion and more detailed prioritization by participants is available upon request.

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[32] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pr1M5EB-ifw
[33] http://sabac.rs/

3.1 Theme 1: Social Inclusion vis-à-vis Service Provision

Dilemmas related to social inclusion and provision of services were provided as an introduction and guide for discussions, including:

- **Validity of statistics:** How to create evidence-based policies for services if the data on the number of potential users is not known (or is out of date)? How to ensure their involvement, if the users are not known? (You don't know how many there are; you don't know who they are, you don't know where and how to reach them)

- **Institutions' competences and citizens' information:** Are citizens familiar with the specific competencies of institutions in order to address their requests to the appropriate place?

- **The capacity of the institutions to analyze the needs and concerns of their customers:** Do institutions make a proper analysis of the needs of their users?

3.1.1. Existing problems and corresponding potential solutions

a. (1) The municipal website, and the websites of the public enterprises and institutions, do not provide sufficient or adequate information to the citizens. (2) Municipal managing personnel (heads of sectors) are inefficient in delivering accurate and timelz information to the IT sector of the municipality.

> **Solution**: (1) Creation of a protocol on communication procedures between the sectors and the Department of Public Relations in the municipality and on the preparation of information for the public (collection, analyses, selection and provision).

b. (1) There is a problem with getting information of public importance from the municipal sectors to be placed on the website. (2) Through the municipal website, citizens often ask questions on issues that are not within the competence of the local government. (3) Problems exist between the institutions on a local and national level and in municipality-government communication related to the provision of permits for services that can be offered on-line. For example, issues arising with the Ministry of Economy for obtaining a permit for the on-line payment of taxes and fees.

> **Solution**: (1) Definition of an inter-sectoral communication protocol for the dissemination of data and regular updates of the website. (2) Fulfill the staffing need for IT personnel in the municipality. (3) A clear definition of responsibilities within the municipality and between institutions at a local and national level.

c. (1) There are non-functional official municipal e-mails (the result is result in delayed answering) (2) There is a lack of communication of the municipality with the Ministry of Education. (3) There are insufficient opportunities for the training of employees at the Department of Education in the municipality.

> **Solution:** (1) Improving the municipal IT infrastructure to enable on-time responding to emails sent by the citizens. (2) Improvement in inter-sectoral and intra-sectoral communication. (3) Establishment of procedures that will set up a system for staff training and career advancement of employees.

d. (1) Citizens do not have information or are not aware of issues related to: required documentation for provision of certain services; entities responsible for different types of services; the standard length of procedures; legal constraints and discrepancies between the citizens needs and the competencies of the municipality.

> **Solution:** (1) Creation of an Information Centre (or informative leaflet) to provide support to citizens on where, how, and what issues can be addressed by the municipal administration. (2) Simplification of procedures by the municipality. (3) Adjustment of the legislation (on both the central and local level) to meet the needs of local government.

e. (1) The existing system for e-taxes does not provide enough control for the user; e-payment of taxes and utility charges is not possible.

> **Solution:** (1) Upgrading of the existing system for e-taxes by introducing a system of control by the users and modules for e-payment.

f. 1) There are a lack of specialists for children with mental and physical disabilities in schools, kindergartens and in companies that employ people with disabilities.

> **Solution:** (1) A more engaged approach by the competent authorities (both local and national) and employment of at least one special education teacher in schools (and business companies)

g. (1) A lack of open places in the kindergartens. (2) Increased unemployment (particularly among youth and the population aged 40 - 50). (3) A general lack of urban civic culture in our community. For example, benches are often broken and waste is thrown everywhere. (4) There are no paved roads and no sanitation in some settlements in the urban part of the municipality (in the city).

> **Solution:** (1) Opening of more kindergartens. (2) Creation of job opportunities/new jobs. (3) Campaigns to raise awareness among citizens on the culture of urban living. (4) Better urban planning.

h. (1) Lack of care centres for street children and women who are victims of domestic violence. (2) Lack of places for information (info-desks). (3) Lack of awareness among employees in the municipal institutions.

> **Solution:** (1) Opening of care centres. (2) Opening of info-desks (offices) that will offer a wide range of information and with staff covering issues from different areas of interest. (3) Training of employees.

i. (1) There is a current lack of respect for the predefined work procedures for all processes in the municipality. This is important for identifying the individual responsibilities of each employee in the Kumanovo Municipality.

> **Solution:** (1) Detailed operating procedures outlining the who, what, how, and when of responsibilities to be respected by all municipal employees with the section related to service procision accessible (available) to citizens.

j. (1) Lack of a database on how many elderly citizens need accommodation. (2) Lack of access to information on services offered by the Elderly Care Centre. (3) Lack of possibilities for using different ways of submitting the application for admission to the Centre (the centre does not use modern ICT tools for better access to information and services offered by the institutions).

Solution: (1) Develop a database of elderly as a target group by regions (urban and rural areas in the municipality) and define services that are essential and those that can be realised through a team comprised of seniors (elderly people, pensioners), social workers, and medical staff. (2) Create a website for the Elderly Care Centre "Zafir Sajto". (3) Make the requirements for admission to the institution available on-line via the website.

k. (1) Insufficient information about the services offered by the Municipal Centre for Social Services of the Department of Social Protection. (2) Lack of cooperation between municipal departments. (3) Buildings that are under jurisdiction of the municipality are left unused and neglected**.**

Solution: (1) Establish increased media visibility of the work and the services offered by these sectors through the municipal Department of Public Relations. (2) Establish coordination bodies with participation of representatives of the municipal departments, civil society organizations and relevant institutions. (3) Plan for the adaptation, transformation and better utilization of the derelict buildings.

3.1.2. *Vision: (desired situation)*

Better access to information for citizens on the work and responsibilities of institutions (at the central and local level) accountable for the provision of different services in Kumanovo.

Specific Proposal: *Creation of a protocol (procedures) on the system of information and public relations, within and between institutions*

WHAT	Creation of a protocol on communication procedures between the municipal sectors and the Department of Public Relations in the municipality, and a clear definition of competences and services within the municipality and between institutions (local and national).
WHY	Created protocols and procedures will contribute to improve intra- and inter-institutional communication and will increase the quality of information available to citizens related to which institutions are responsible for the provision of different types of services, what is and what is not under the municipality's jurisdiction, who is responsible for addressing their problems and needs, and which documents are required, among other information.
HOW	Phase 1: Preparation activities - Step 1: Set up a working team (experts, inter-institutional representatives); - Step 2: Provision of support for the working team (space and logistics by the local government) Phase 2: Creation - Step 3: Creation of protocols and procedures (team of experts in cooperation with inter-institutional representatives) - Step 4: Creation of a team for monitoring and evaluation (inter-institutional representatives) Phase 3: Adoption and implementation

	- Step 5: Adoption and implementation by the institutions (each involved institution) - Step 6: Monitoring and evaluation report (inter-institutional representatives)
WHO	Parties involved: local government, public institutions, public enterprises, agencies and centers at the local level.
WHEN	Time frame: 24 months; Phase 1 and 2: 6-9 months; Phase 3: 15-18 months.
INDICATORS	Increased percentage of citizens informed about the activities and competences of the central and local level institutions in Kumanovo by the end of month 24.
HOW MUCH	Tentative estimate: 5000 EUR

3.2 Theme 2: Existing social accountability and information exchange mechanisms between local government officials and civil society

Dilemmas related to social accountability and information exchange mechanisms between the local government officials and civil society were provided as an introduction and guide for discussions, including:

- **Access to information:** In theory, access to information is provided equally to all citizens. However, there is a need for assistance and a different (group specific) approach for diverse groups (age, social vulnerability, socio-economic status, level of education).

- **Use of ICT as a tool for better access to information:** The most frequently used tools for access to information are the websites. However, the level of use of ICT for better access to and greater availability of information is not at a satisfactory level.

- **Mechanisms for direct citizen participation:** Some of the mechanisms such as referendum initiatives for local issues, civil initiatives, citizen meetings, submission of complaints and suggestions on the work of the municipality and the municipal administration, and the statute for direct participation of citizens in local politics, have never been used.

- **Mechanisms for feedback and monitoring:** Insufficient use and promotion of the mechanisms for feedback of information and monitoring.

3.2.1. *Existing problems and corresponding potential solutions*

a. There is a lack of citizen participation in local budgeting processes and no real financial decentralization

> **Solution:** Make changes to the Municipal Statute to ensure greater participation of citizens (CSOs to start an initiative for changing the Statute).

b. There is a lack of participation among citizens and neighborhood self-governments in creating programs of the municipality.

> **Solution:** The municipality and all local authorities should institute a practice of posting a call for community participation in the creation of development programs of the municipality.

c. Neighborhood self-governments are not functioning properly as a result of a problem with the existing provisions on their legal status.

> **Solution**: Changing the legal framework; CSOs and NSG (as local mediators) should submit initiatives to the Association of Units of Local Self-Governments for changing of the Law on Local Self-government referring to the legal status and financing of neighborhood self governments.

d. Unclear (not well defined) competencies restrict the ability of marginalized groups to exercise their rights and benefit from more services that could be provided by the municipality.

> **Solution**: Opening an Office - Municipal Centre for Social Services, with a lawyer and a social worker to assist citizens in exercising their rights.

e. The political parties have a decisive influence and key role in the Municipality and their powers needs to be reduced (separation of political parties from the governments).

> **Solution**: Changes in the Statute and relevant legislation, and a clarification of legal loopholes in the legal framework; Organized citizen pressure to affect change in local government; public disclosure of the problem through the media; activation of the neighborhood self-governments and of the civil society more broadly.

f. Poor communication of the local government with CSOs and the business sector.

> **Solution**: Better co-operation with the media; A more responsive Department of Information and Public Relations in the municipality; Establishment of a coordination body for cooperation with public enterprises, CSOs and the business sector.

3.2.2. *Vision (Desired Situation)*

A transparent, committed (human-orientated) and participative local community.

Specific Proposal: A municipality aware of the needs of its citizens.

WHAT	1. Changing the legal framework for the better functioning of the local government, including neighborhood self governments. 2. Democratization and self-initiatives in the institutions to improve their performance and efficiency in solving citizens' problems. 3. Better inter-institutional cooperation. 4. Transparency of institutions and neighborhood self governments and increased awareness of citizens on their rights and administrative procedures.
WHY	• To promote upgraded and constructive cooperation between the local governments and civil society, as well as with other relevant institutions. • To increase accountability and interaction between the local governments and civil society, and information sharing among institutions on "who is doing what". This will result in more meaningful cooperation between the municipality and civil society.

HOW	1. An initiative of CSOs and NSG to change the law, municipal Statute, and demand clarifications regarding legal ambiguities submitted to the Municipality and the Association of Units of Local Self-Governments (ZELS).
	2. Initiative for evaluating the work (quality of service provision) of institutions; Introduction of a career promotion system, based on the assessment of the administration.
	3. Establish a coordinating body and Info-desk to inform citizens.
	4. Updated and timely information on the websites of the local government and institutions; Opening of an Info-desk in the municipality (with appointed personnel to provide feedback information); Forums and public debates to inform citizens (through involvement of local TV, NSG and CSOs). All of these initiatives should be part of a regular (and continuous) municipal practice.
WHO	1. CSOs and neighborhood self governments.
	2. To start as a project initiated by the local government and CSOs
	3. To be initiated by the municipality, with the involvement of volunteers.
	4. Local government, neighborhood self government, and CSOs
WHEN	By the end of 2016, the Municipality plans to establish a coordination body, which will include representatives of all institutions and CSOs. The coordination body will prepare a working program to improve access to information and increase cooperation among the key stakeholders.
INDICATORS	Established Coordination Body and the Info-desk; Prepared working program.
HOW MUCH	Tentative estimates (budget) are not defined.

3.3 Theme 3: Opportunities and Constraints for Social Accountability – matters of transparency and participation

Dilemmas related to existing constraints for social accountability and opportunities for greater transparency and participation of civil society were presented as an introduction (and guide) for discussion, including:

- **There is no clear approach by the local government for a communication system with citizens** (The local government does not have clear and systematic approach for communication with the citizens aimed at increasing their motivation to participate in local processes).

- **Neighborhood self-governments are not recognized as a link between citizens and local government.** Both citizens and the local government disregard the chain of communication (Citizen-NSG-LG); The most common practice instead is "jumping immediately to the Mayor".

- **Possibilities of cooperation and utilization of civil society potential (capacity) is not recognized enough by the neighborhood self governments and the business sector** (Capacities, in terms of knowledge accumulated within civil society organizations, can be beneficial to both the local governments and the business sector as to how to stimulate greater citizens engagement; in addition, such cooperation would be beneficial for the civil society organizations in terms of learning from the business community about

possible economic activities that would help them in their self-sustainability).

3.3.1. *Existing problems and corresponding potential solutions*

a. Lack of interest by the citizens and by the neighborhood self governments (both from the urban and rural communities) for proactive cooperation.

> **Solution**: Meaningful cooperation of neighborhood self governments with NGOs for capacity building on greater citizen participation in local community development processes.

b. The voice of youth is insufficiently heard in the local development policies.

> **Solution**: Develop a City-youth ICT platform and offer off-line options to improve participation and increase transparency in the creation of youth-relevant local policies.

d. There is a lack of knowledge and lack of information on how, where, and to whom to address when citizens have an idea/initiative for a community project (viewpoint shared by a representative of a rural neighborhood council). Not knowing the procedures results in projects remaining unrealized**.**

> **Solution**: Roll out an initiative (campaign) that presents and explains procedures to citizens as to how and where to present their ideas (initiatives) in order to increase possibilities for their realization and ensure better impact of the project outcomes.

e. Insufficient transparency of the procedures for presenting the initiatives of citizens, directly and/or through the neighborhood self governments.

> **Solution**: Creation of a clear protocol on the steps and procedures of presenting citizen initiatives, which would contribute to a greater efficiency (when submitting the initiatives of citizens, directly and/or through NSG) and effectiveness (during their implementation).

f. Lack of meaningful communication between the citizens from rural areas of the municipality and the local government.

> **Solution**: More frequent meetings of representatives of the local authorities with citizens (both in urban and rural areas of the municipality) and mechanisms to gradually resolve the priority problems (needs) of the rural population.

g. Problems in communication between neighborhood self governments and the local government.

> **Solution**: The local government is to designate a team of people who will communicate with neighborhood self governments, tasked to communicate further with the competent municipal departments on the concerns and needs of NSGs. Form a coordinating body for NSGs, which will act as a real link between the local authorities and citizens (and NSGs), similar to the Association of Units of Local Self-governments, with a guaranteed seat for a representative of this body in the Municipal Council, and a plan and program to strengthen the capacities of the coordinating body.

h. Lack of and poor cooperation of local authorities with NGOs and the business sector.

> **Solution**: Initiate a campaign by the local government to encourage greater cooperation with NGOs and the business sector; Establishment of a practice for regular meetings of the local government with NGOs and the business sector.

i. Lack of opportunities for presentation of quality ideas proposed by the citizens to the municipality.

> **Solution**: Launch "Saturday for ideas" to re-establish the practice for direct meetings with citizens, or something similar that will create forums for citizens to present their ideas and proposals.

j. Municipal sectors have lost a direct contact with citizens.

> **Solution**: To introduce an open day called "Municipality with the citizens", not in the municipal offices, but outside, in the city square, with representatives of all sectors and their managers (heads of sectors).

k. Lack of transparency of the local goverment.

> **Solution**: Better (improved) website of the local government, greater presence in the media (TV and print) and establishment of municipal information centers.

l. Lack of knowledge and lack of information by citizens on exercising some their right in the institutions of the local government, but also insufficient dedication by the civil servants to provide information to the citizens**.**

> **Solution**: Greater commitment by the officials in the institutions and local government for clarifications of the services they provide and the procedures for citizens to exercise their rights, dissemination of information through the media, and other available channels (ICT, leaflets, etc.)

m. Poor communications between the local government and public institutions, and with citizens, in the area of data exchange in the interest of the parties concerned (citizens).

> **Solution**: Connection of the electronic systems of local government and public institutions, greater use of ICT tools to exchange data and information between institutions and citizens (inter-institutional and with citizens), and interoperability of data.

n. Unregulated riverbed (a problem in the neighborhood of Sredorek)

> **Solution**: Build a riverbed

o. Problems with waste disposal and hampered cooperation with the public enterprise "Chistota i zelenilo" (a problem in the neighbourhood of Sredorek).

> **Solution**: Distribution of containers for waste, better cooperation between the local government and neighborhood council of Sredorek, better flow of information between them.

p. Inter-ethnic character in neighborhood self governments in rural areas.

> **Solution**: More frequent meetings and workshops bringing together and connecting with the rural population (local communities) and assisting them in addressing cultural, educational and other similar problems.

q. Lack of communication within the local government.

> **Solution**: Rulebook on procedures for improvement of inter-sectoral coordination and cooperation.

3.3.2. Vision *(Desired Situation)*

The Municipality of Kumanovo is closer to its citizens through: more transparent and better services for citizens in all spheres of social living; active participation of citizens in the creation of their future; active participation of neighborhood self governments and NGOs (not only as individuals) in all spheres of community living; and accountability and openness to the needs of citizens in all spheres of social living.

Specific Proposal: Priority 1 – Active participation of neighborhood self governments in planning the development of Kumanovo

WHAT	The active participation of neighborhood self governments in planning the development of Kumanovo. To achieve this priority there are two options: one is to launch an initiative through the Ministry of Local Government and the Association of Units of Local Self-Government (ZELS). The second is for the municipality itself to initiate a process that would provide for the proactive role of NSGs and their participation (and through them, the participation of citizen) in the planning of the development of Kumanovo.
WHY	For a greater role of the neighbourhood local self-government it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of the existing NSG office (located in the municipality), but also of the NSGs themselves (financial and logistical support through that office, to create an enabling environment for their proactive participation).
HOW	1. Establishment of a working team and coordination body 2. Identification of promoters of the idea (contacts with counsellors from the local government and with the people from the existing municipal NSG office) 3. Strengthening the capacity of the NSG office, the coordination body, and the NSGs 4. Creation of a working plan (operational plan) 5. Provision of resources for adaptation and renovation of the existing NSG offices (also defining their budget and workspace) 6. Establishment of a communication strategy between all parties concerned (the municipal office of NSGs and the coordination body, amongst NSGs, between NSGs and the local government, and between NSGs and citizens) through various channels (meetings, emails, one-on-one, with the media, etc.).
WHO	Personnel responsible for NSGs at the Department of General and Legal Affairs in the local government; Councils and presidents of NSGs; Citizens from the neighborhood communities; and NGOs, the media, and the business sector. It is important to find a person that is recognized and respected by the

local community, a champion of the initiative (this mechanism should be used especially in the rural communities).

WHEN	Time frame: 6-12 months: Steps 1 to 4 12-24 months: Steps 5 to 6 Long-term strategy: 2-5 years with defined milestones.
INDICATORS	Established Coordination Body; Prepared working plan; Created communication strategy; Defined budget and space requirements; Adapted and renovated existing offices of NSGs.
HOW MUCH	Tentative estimates (budget) are not defined.

Specific Proposal: Priority 2 – Institutionalization of participatory budgeting in the Statute of the Municipality

WHAT	Institutionalization of citizen participation (in the Statute of the Municipality)
WHY	Institutionalization of citizen participation in designing the municipal budget (participatory budgeting) requires amending the Municipal Statute (introduction of a new provision that clearly states that participatory budgeting is mandatory) and ensuring transparency of all procedures.
HOW	1. Initiation of the procedure to amend the Statute; 2. Establishment of a working group (lawyers, representatives from the municipal sector (finance) and the City Council) to prepare the amendment; 3. Consultation with all relevant sectors in the municipality; 4. Promotion of the initiative in a transparent manner through various forms and locations (such as the media, public transport taxis, markets, etc.); 5. Preparation of a guideline on participatory budgeting; 6. Implementation of all required institutional procedures: public hearing in the Council, public debates with citizens and NGOs. 7. Adoption of the amendment by the Municipal Council. 8. Initiation of a project-based budgeting procedure.
WHO	Local government, neighborhood self governments, civil society (CSOs and citizens)
WHEN	Time frame: 6-12 months: Steps 1 to 4 12-24 months: Steps 5 to 7 Long-term strategy: 2-5 years with defined milestones.
INDICATORS	An initiative for amending the Statute; Set up of a working group; Created protocol on the steps (announcement of the initiative, reporting, promotion) Guideline on participatory budgeting; Adopted amendments on mandatory participatory budgeting.
HOW MUCH	Tentative estimates (budget) are not defined.

4. Key Considerations for Next Steps

The process of refinement of the proposed scenarios was foreseen to continue at a meeting planned to take place in September 2016.

The CSD team worked with representatives of the three PSD Workshop groups (two or three people from each group) and with the working team from the Department for Local Economic Development to develop a more detailed Action Plan by using the catalyst project strategy approach to define the implementation steps.

A tentative timeline of the City Action Plan process was defined during the meeting of the working group during September 2016.

During the Socially Inclusive Cities regional conference held in Zagreb at the end of March 2017, city representatives from Kumanovo gave an update on the next steps towards pursuing the City's Action Plan. Working with the city's Department of Local Economic Development, the Kumanovo City Team helped to define an action plan aimed at establishing a coordination body to encourage citizen participation and reviving the citizen information office (Info-desk) within the municipality. These priority actions reflect a consensus on the importance of local communities in participatory governance and decision making, and seek to build up their capacity to articulate demands of citizens across both urban and rural communities.

Stakeholders from Kumanovo also discussed carrying the work of the action plan forward through working groups and a binding document or statutory acts that mandate citizen engagement practices that can continue beyond legal or administrative changes. They envisioned envisioned meeting again in two years to learn from regional leaders in social sustainability and citizen engagement and to present the results of their implemented action plan, which would include new skills and practices acquired by all stakeholders to enforce accountability and transparency measures.

ANNEX 1: SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT INDEX

Concept Note

The objective of the SSCE Index is to assist municipalities, civic groups and NGOs to develop a set of indicators that gauge progress towards increasing social accountability and citizen engagement, particularly among marginalized communities or vulnerable groups.

The Index originally emerged from the Social Sustainability Audit of UPP I (2012-2013), which functioned as a tool used by City Teams to assess the supply and demand of information and participation in a given municipality and the state of feedback/monitoring mechanisms based on the three date gathering phases – Municipal Profile, FGDs and IDIs, and Participatory Scenario Development Workshops. This index has been revised in content and application to demonstrate greater conceptual linkages with the other three UPP II initiatives and alignment with the World Bank's Citizen Engagement Framework.

The consortium built upon the Index developed during UPP I and tried to preserve as much of its content as was relevant to the new conceptual organization of the new Index. While the Social Sustainability Index assessed the supply and demand side factors of Transparency and Participation and the feedback mechanisms that create a continuous process, the SSCE Index assesses the supply and demand sides of willingness and capacity for citizen engagement, as well as the feedback mechanisms that create a continuous process and the use of ICT to broaden the reach of CE initiatives and streamline CE processes.

Conceptual Framework of the SSCE Index

The SSCE Index is structured as six questions addressing five pillars of citizen engagement being investigated throughout this project cycle based on the three concepts of Willingness (demand and supply); Capacity (demand and supply); and the Feedback/Monitoring that serves as the connective tissue. In addition, the same six questions can be read in a way that gives an additional reading of the thematic strengths and weaknesses of social accountability and citizen engagement initiatives in each municipality (a "pulse" on perceptions of citizen engagement in areas related to other components of the UPP).

In the city of Kumanovo, 71 participants from both the FGDs, as well as the IDIs were administered the SSCE Index questionnaires. Six questions were asked within each of the five main categories. Participants were given three answers with which to respond to the questions:

Yes (2), Maybe (1), and No (0). The highest possible score for any one category would be a composite score of 12 while the lowest could result in a score of 0. Responses were recorded within each discussion group and then aggregated to generate a citywide radar chart displayed below.

Index Results for Kumanovo
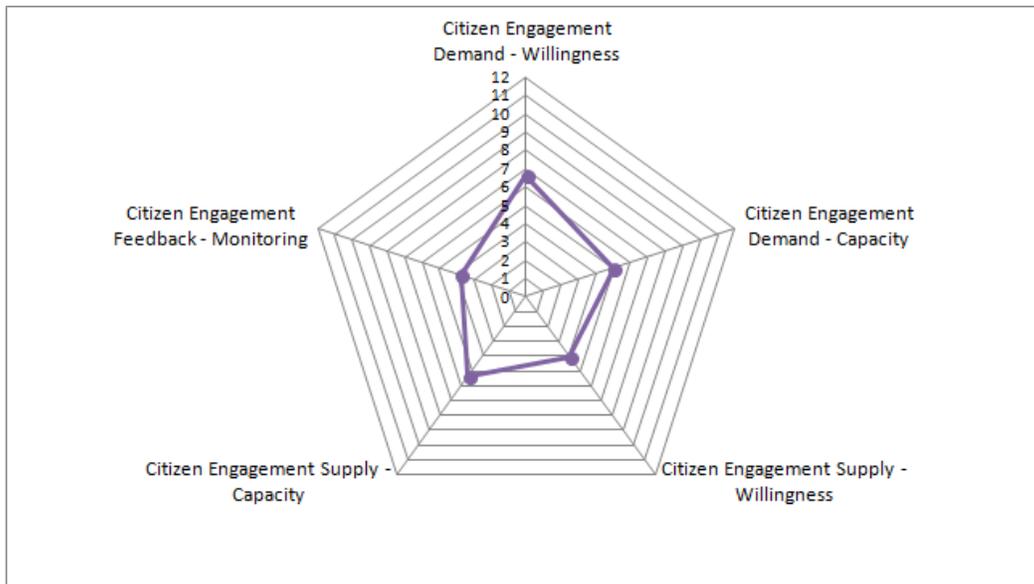
The highest score is recorded in the area of "Citizen Engagement Demand – Willingness" reflective of the responses gathered from the five focus discussion groups. Within each group, scores for the willingness of participants to engage in local governance consistently received the highest marks, although "Demand – Capacity" scored lower suggesting an imbalance of opportunity for participation. Kumanovo has an online portal for disseminating information. However, citizens and local government employees both indicated the need for more frequently updated of information, as well as alternative means of communicating information for those who don't have access or the literacy skills needed to navigate the site. The area of "Feedback and Monitoring" reported the lowest score, perhaps in part due to the perceived dearth of technological options for issuing complaints or grievances, in addition to the continued primacy of traditional communication strategies such as "word-of-mouth". The sentiment reported during the IDI's describing an unsystematic approach to communicating with citizens may persist despite the relatively higher marks for Supply – Capacity.

Index results for each of the five focus group discussions and in-depth interviews are shown in the following radar charts.
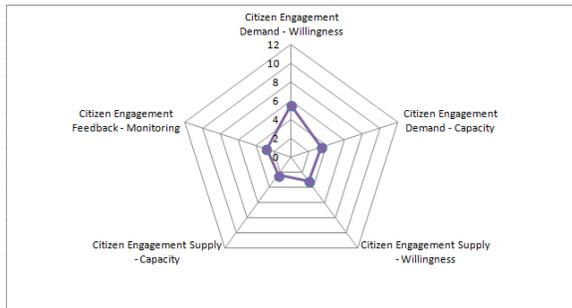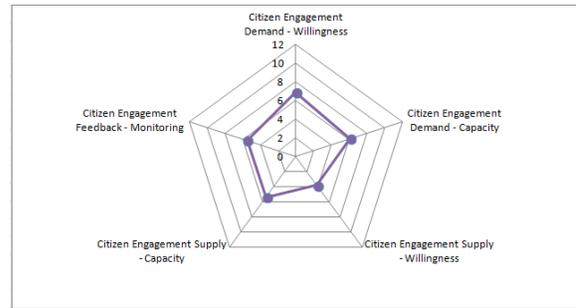
NGO Index Results
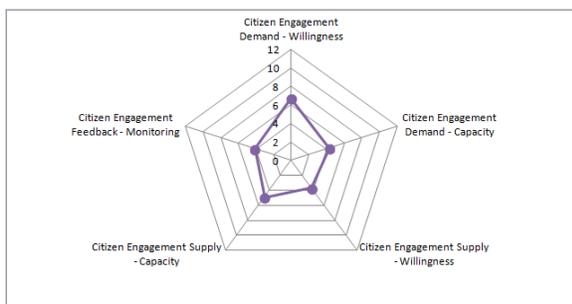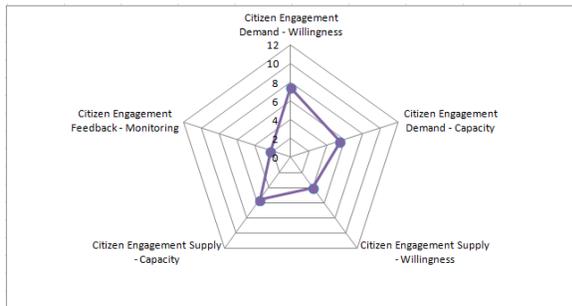

Self-Government Index Results
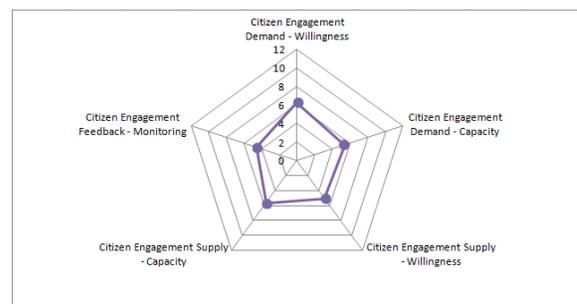
Youth Index Results

Business and IDI Index Results

Unemployed Index Results

Once disaggregated, index results reveal insights specific to groups based on the categories by which they were created. While some groups such as NGO, neighborhood self-government units, and business/IDI offer a fuller and more balanced set of responses, other groups for youth and unemployed show charts with apparent dips and lower scores, potentially reflecting more critical views of the state of citizen engagement in Kumanovo. While the results of the index are reflective of the views articulated within the five focus group discussion sections, as well as the participants of the in-depth interviews, participant feedback also expressed the desire for future questionnaires to include an option for "I don't know" which would provide insight into the potential mismatches between service provision and citizen awareness of opportunities for interaction.

In order to see how social accountability and citizen engagement initiatives at the municipal level relate with themes such as anti-corruption, municipal finance, and urban planning and in order to find synergies between the SSCE program and other components of UPP II, responses of the participants in FGDs, IDIs and PSD workshop can also be analyzed by topic. These "pulse" scores for Kumanovo are currently unavailable. To calculate these scores, please request the raw data from the City Team.

ANNEX 2: INDEX QUESTIONS AND SCORING FRAMEWORK

	Participatory Governance (0,1,2)	Transparency & Anti-Corruption (0,1,2)	Municipal Finance (0,1,2)	Service Provision, Planning & Policy (0,1,2)	Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups (0,1,2)	Use of ICT (0,1,2)	
CE Demand – Willingness	1. Do citizens attend and actively participate in city council meetings?	2. Is there an anonymous way to report municipal fraud or corruption?	3. Is there demand for participatory budgeting processes from citizens or CSOs?	4. Do platforms exist through which civil society discusses municipal service / planning / policy?	5. Are minority or vulnerable communities represented in the current city council?	6. Do citizens and CSOs engage with the municipality online?	Total CE Demand Willingness Score (out of 12)
CE Demand – Capacity	1. Are there elected neighborhood councils or equivalent structures?	2. Are citizens given sufficient notice about upcoming city council meetings or public forums?	3. Are citizens aware of how the city's budget is spent?	4. Do citizens know where to go to report a municipal issue or grievance?	5. Do NGOs exist that actively engage in representing the interests of vulnerable groups?	6. Are citizens able to reliably access municipal information online?	Total CE Demand Capacity Score (out of 12)
CE Supply – Willingness	1. Is the municipality accountable to other institutions in terms of implementing mechanisms of citizen engagement?	2. Is there a document (charter) outlining the responsibilities of both government and citizens that is publicly accessible?	3. Does the city administration present municipal budgets to neighborhoods as part of the formal fiscal preparation cycle?	4. Is there an active information desk available to citizens?	5. Are vulnerable groups consulted in preparing strategic policy documents, budgets, etc.?	6. Does the municipality have an open data policy?	Total CE Supply Willingness Score (out of 12)
CE Supply - Capacity	1. Does the city hold meetings/ consultations with the public to gain information on issues that are important to citizens?	2. Is citizen-accessible information updated regularly through various platforms?	3. Does the municipality have financial resources for investment in citizen engagement or a participatory budget?	4. Is there an annual citizen service satisfaction survey?	5. Does the city have a program to engage with vulnerable groups or CSOs that represent them?	6. Are there municipal staff with ICT training or the opportunity for such training?	Total CE Supply Capacity Score (out of 12)
CE Feedback / Monitoring	1. Are neighborhood councils (or similar structures) effectively linking the citizens to the city (or municipality)?	2. Are citizen grievances responded to or addressed in a timely and transparent manner by the relevant departments / service providers?	3. Are citizen or civil society inputs incorporated into municipal budgets?	4. Are time limits for responses to citizen grievances / reports abided by?	5. Has the municipality addressed key issues of concern to vulnerable groups based on their inputs?	6. Do grievance/ complaint systems use multiple types of technology?	Total CE Feedback Loop Score (out of 12)
	Total Participatory Governance Score (out of 10)	Total Transparency & Anti-Corruption Score (out of 10)	Total Municipal Finance Score (out of 10)	Total Service Provision, Planning, and Policy (out of 10)	Total Inclusion Score (out of 10)	Total ICT Score (out of 10)	SSCE SCORE (out of 60)
	↑ Cities without Corruption (CE Pulse)	↑ Cities without Corruption (CE Pulse)	↑ MFSA (CE Pulse)	↑ UPSA (CE Pulse)			