



Partners-Albania,
Center for Change and Conflict Management

ASSESSMENT OF MUNICIPALITIES PERFORMANCE IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Survey administered in municipalities of
Korça, Elbasani, Kuçova, Rubiku,
Municipality Unit 1 and 5 in Tirana

Supported by British Embassy and the Embassy of the Kingdom
of the Netherlands in Tirana

This survey was administered by Partners - Albania in framework of the project **“Working together toward a more accountable and transparent local government”**. The project was financially supported by the British Embassy and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Tirana.

Findings, conclusions and interpretations in this document are presented by the group of experts.

P-A expresses its gratitude to all citizens and municipality representatives who made possible this survey. We appreciate their openness in sharing with us their opinion.



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Table of Contents

I.	Summary	5
II.	Data and Methodology	6
II. 1	Survey Objectives	6
II. 2	Issues	6
II. 3	Results	6
II. 4	The Sample	7
II. 5	Sample Characteristics	8
III.	General Data	10
IV.	Municipality Performance	12
V.	Recommendations	24

I. Summary

This report presents the findings of the survey “Assessment of municipalities performance in service delivery”, administered by Partners-Albania during August–September 2008, in framework of the project “Working together toward a more accountable and transparent local government”.

The survey aimed to present new methods and tools to cure and prevent corruption at local government. The Sample consisted of 600 citizens in six pilot municipalities. Direct interviews with citizens were conducted after receiving a service at one of the municipality desks.

Some of the survey findings include:

General results

- At large, the municipalities do not issue a Application Acknowledgement Note. This may create the grounds for corruption;
- Almost half of interviewed citizens think that application procedures for services are unclear;
- Lack of information about application procedures often leads to submission of incomplete documentation and prolong service delivery procedures;
- Tariffs for services are partially published in five out of six municipalities involved in the survey;
- In some cases citizens pay higher tariffs than official ones because the tariffs are not made public;
- All municipalities use different information channels to inform citizens;
- Citizens have limited information regarding their rights and role in decision-making processes;
- Most of citizens get the required services within an hour. It demonstrates reduction in servicing time due to improved procedures in place;
- Overall, the citizens are of the opinion that the municipality is not fully aware of their needs;
- Majority of citizens expect important changes in their municipality work.

II. Data and methodology

II.1 Survey objectives

Partners-Albania administered the survey during August – September 2008. The survey aimed to collect information on the municipalities' performance in service delivery, citizens' perception on their municipality work, and citizens' involvement in decision-making processes.

The survey was focused on:

- Services offered by the municipalities as part of their exclusive, delegated and joint functions. In the survey participated six municipalities who expressed their willingness to participate, selected through an open invitation.
- Citizens' experience in receiving municipal services.
- Citizens' information with regard to municipal services.
- Local government approach to citizen participation in decision-making.

II.2 Issues

The questionnaire administrated was prepared by Partners-Albania. The information solicited consists in the following categories:

- General information
- Municipality performance in service delivery
- Citizens' involvement in decision-making

II.3 Results

The report results are mainly presented in the form of frequencies. The figures are approximated to the closest percentage. The margin of error is $\pm 5\%$.

II.4 The Sample

This survey targeted citizens in municipalities of Korça, Rubiku, Kuçova, Elbasani, Municipality Units 1 and 5 in Tirana. The targeted number of respondents was 600, administered in four weeks time. The number of respondents per each municipality was set based on the respective population. The respondents were randomly selected after they had concluded an application and/or received an answer at the municipality desk.

The interview aimed to solicit citizens' evaluation regarding quality of services and procedures regulating service delivery, with respect to clarity, timeframe, information sources and level of tariffs.

The survey used a combination of closed questions and evaluation rate in a scale from one to five.

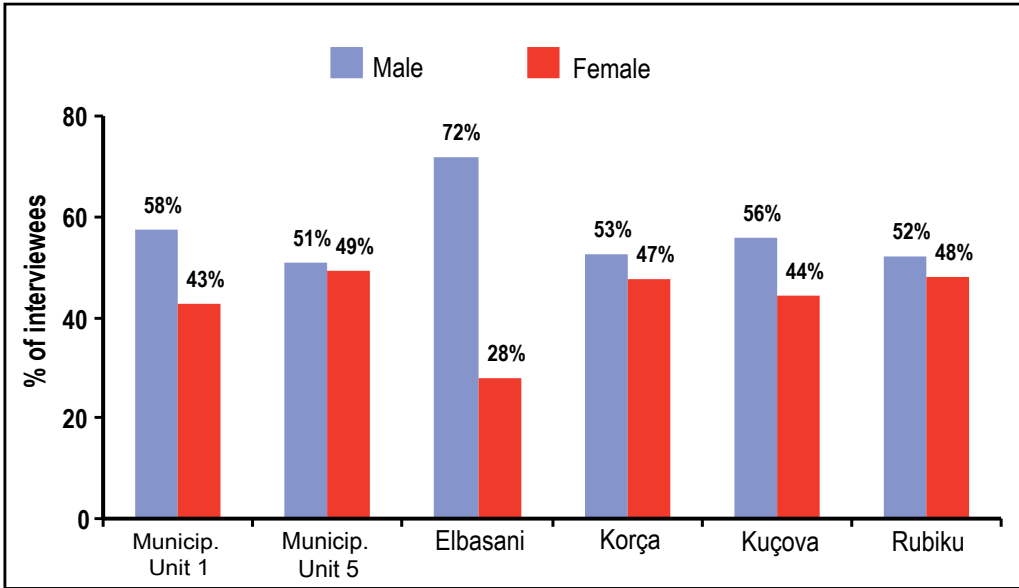
Table 1. Distribution of the sample in participating municipalities

Municipality	Number of questionnaires	% of questionnaires administered according to location
Korça Municipality	150	25.0
Elbasani Municipality	150	25.0
Kuçova Municipality	75	12.5
Rubiku Municipality	75	12.5
Municipality Unit 1, Tirana	75	12.5
Municipality Unit 5, Tirana	75	12.5
Total	600	100

The interviews were conducted by 12 local interviewers. The data was elaborated in SPSS program.

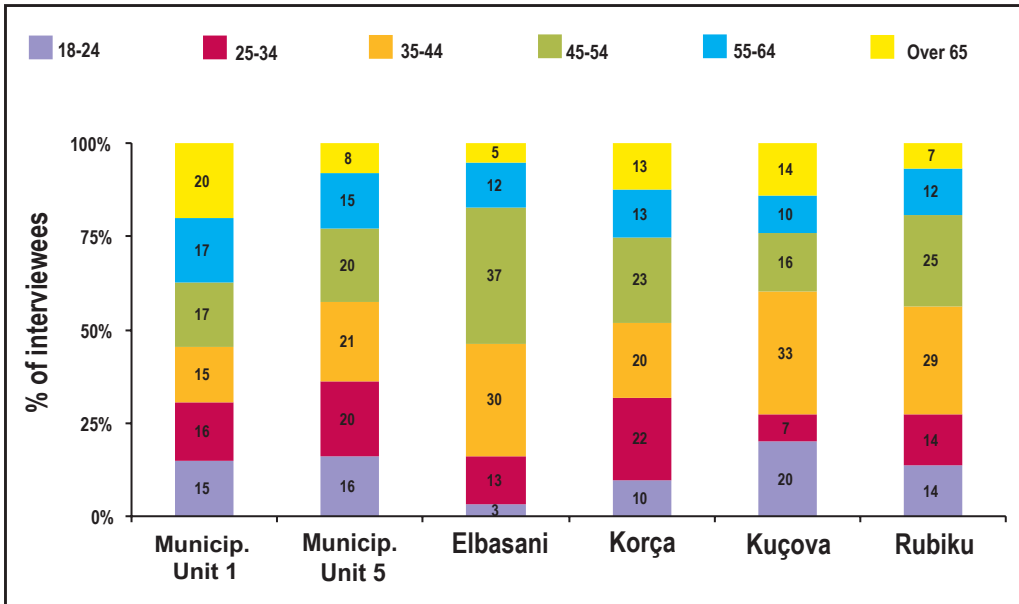
II.5 Sample Characteristics

Graphic 1. Gender



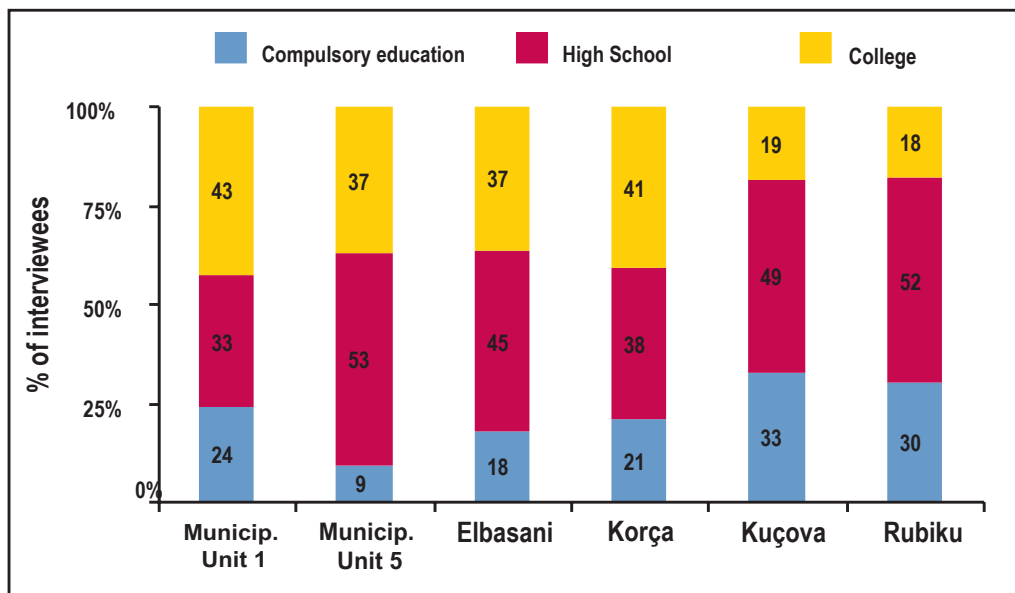
The sample gender representation is balanced. There is a domination of male respondents in Elbasani municipality but this doesn't affect the general opinion.

Graphic 2. Age



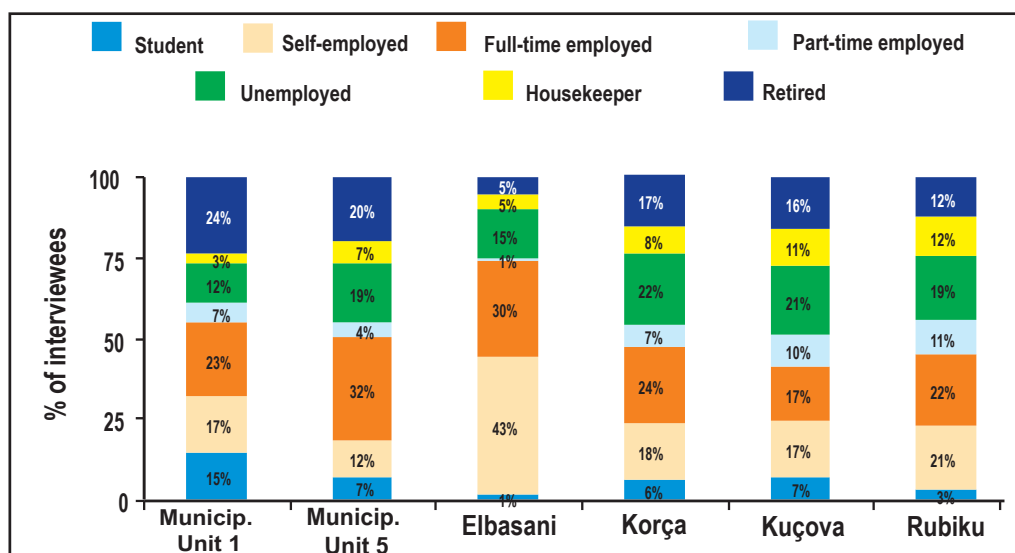
There is a wide age representation in the sample, enabling solicitation of information by diverse targeted groups.

Graphic 3. Education



70% of respondents have high school or college education. This is considered an important factor in getting qualified citizens' opinion regarding knowledge of municipal staff on the legal framework.

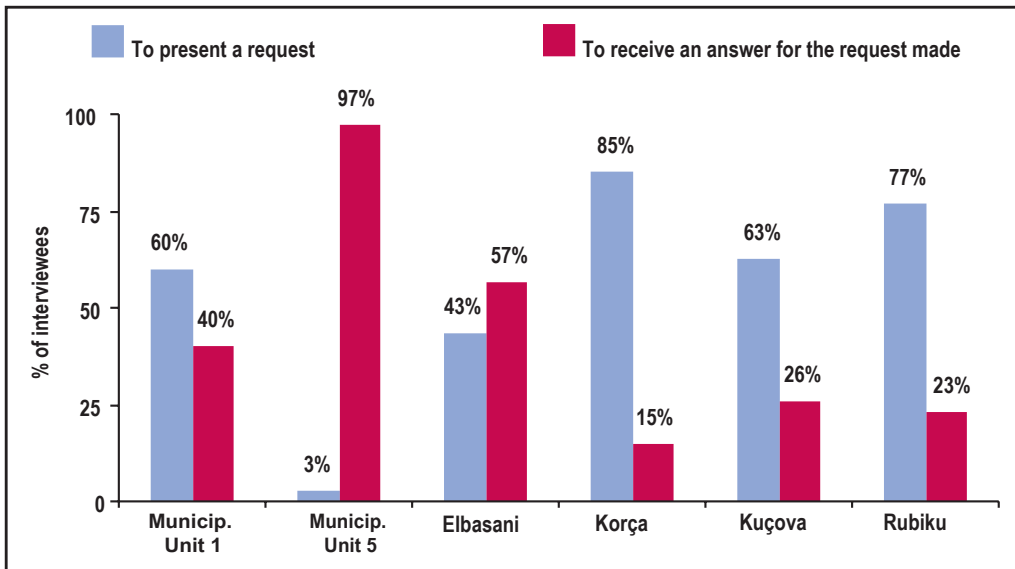
Graphic 4. Employment status



All seven employment categories are represented in the sample. This is important when evaluating the performance of municipalities in service delivery.

III. General data analyses

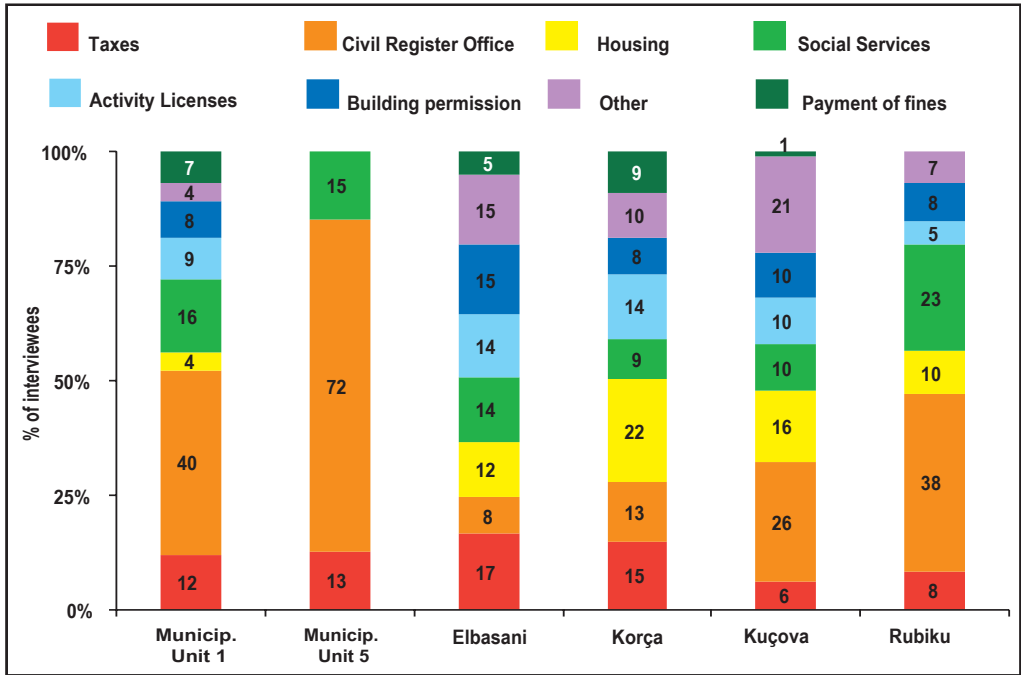
Graphic 5. Reasons to approach municipality (n=600)



The majority of respondents in Korça, Rubiku and Kuçova approached the municipality to apply for a service and the rest to receive an answer about their application. In the Tirana Municipality Unit 5, 97% of respondents were there to receive an answer. In Elbasani and Tirana Municipality Unit 1 we see a more balanced distribution of the sample regarding the reason for approaching the municipality.

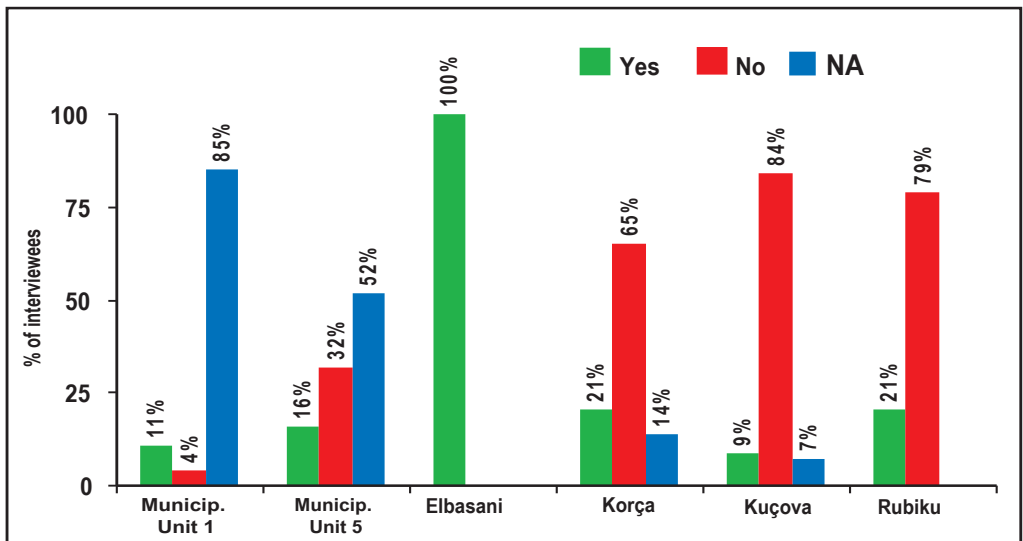
Graphic 6. Types of services required (n=600)

The services offered by municipality are increased over the years. Despite that, the services requested differ in type and frequency from one municipality to another. Services offered by Civil Registry Office are the most requested in Korça, Rubiku and Tirana Municipality Units 1 and 5. Except for the Tirana Municipality 5, citizens in the other five municipalities have applied for all municipal services. Korça municipality scores the highest number of respondents applying for Housing (22%), while 17% of respondents in Elbasani have applied for Taxes. The second more frequent reason to approach the municipalities of Rubiku and Tirana Municipality Units 1 and 5 are Social Services. In Elbasani, Korça and Kuçova it is noted a similar percentage of respondents visiting the municipality for Social Services, Building Permissions and Activity Licenses (See Graphic 6 in page 11).



Graphic 7. Issue of Application Acknowledgement Note (n=600)

The majority of respondents in five municipalities claim that municipality desks do not issue Application Acknowledgement Note. Only in Elbasani 100% of respondents received the acknowledgement note for their application.



IV. Municipality performance

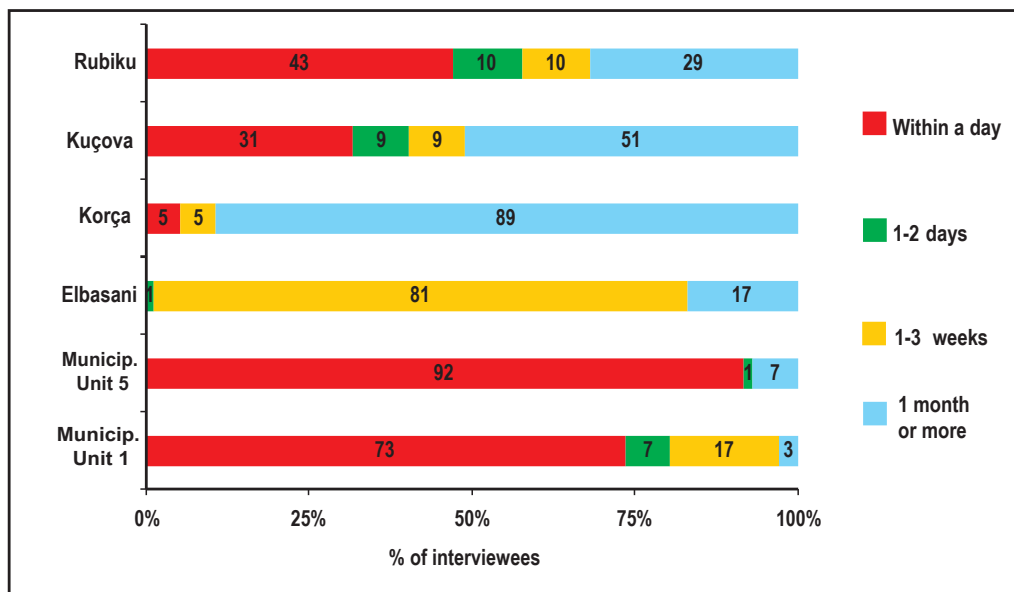
Graphic 8. Responding timeframe (n=264)

The time to receive a response varies depending on the type of service required. It is clear that majority of respondents in Tirana Municipality Units 1 and 5 have received a response to their request within a day. This is because the majority of requests in these two units consist in services provided by the Civil Register Office and local taxes. The same situation results in other municipalities when applying for the same services.

This result is also closely linked to the time required by the municipality to proceed with citizens requests for these services, as regulated in the legislation.

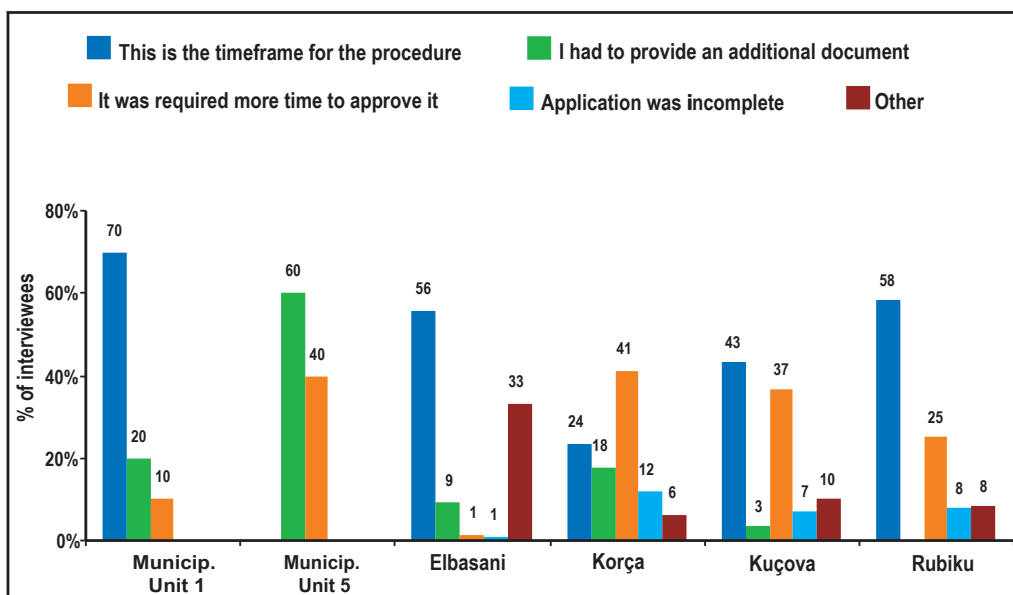
In other municipalities, responding time varies according to type of services required. So, 80% of respondents in Elbasani report a responding time between 1 to 3 weeks, while 89% of respondents in Korça report more than one month.

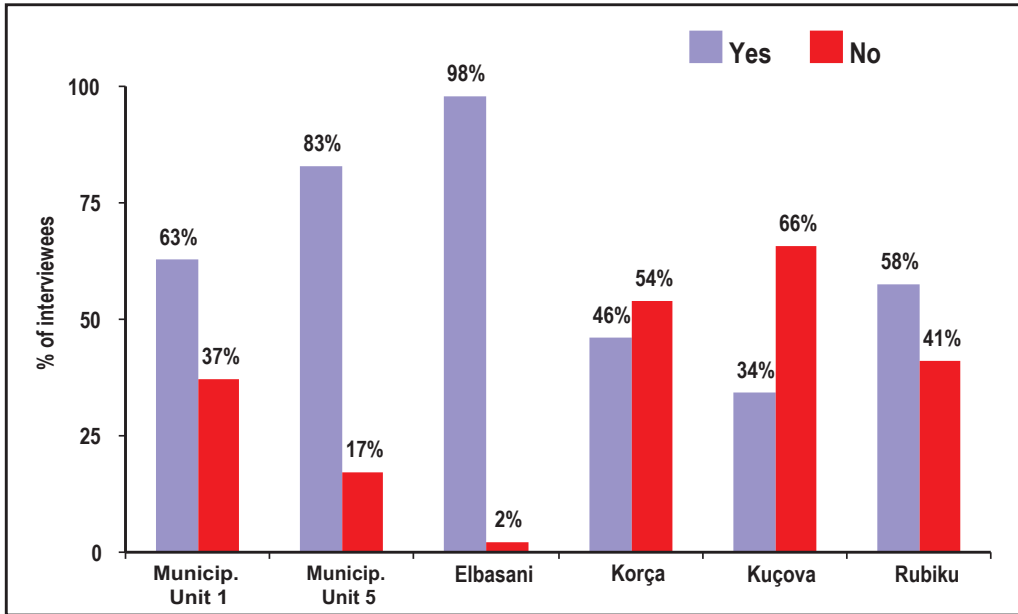
31% of respondents in Kuçova and 43% in Rubiku report a responding time within a day, while 51% and 29% of respondents in respective municipalities report a responding time longer than a month.



Graphic 9. The Administrative procedures timeframe (n=160)

In Elbasani, Rubiku and Tirana Municipality Unit 1, the administrative procedures timeframe is in compliance with legal requirements, in majority of cases. Meanwhile, in Korça and Tirana Municipality Unit 5 the timeframe was longer due to incomplete applications. A contributing factor to this is citizens' lack of information regarding the application procedures.



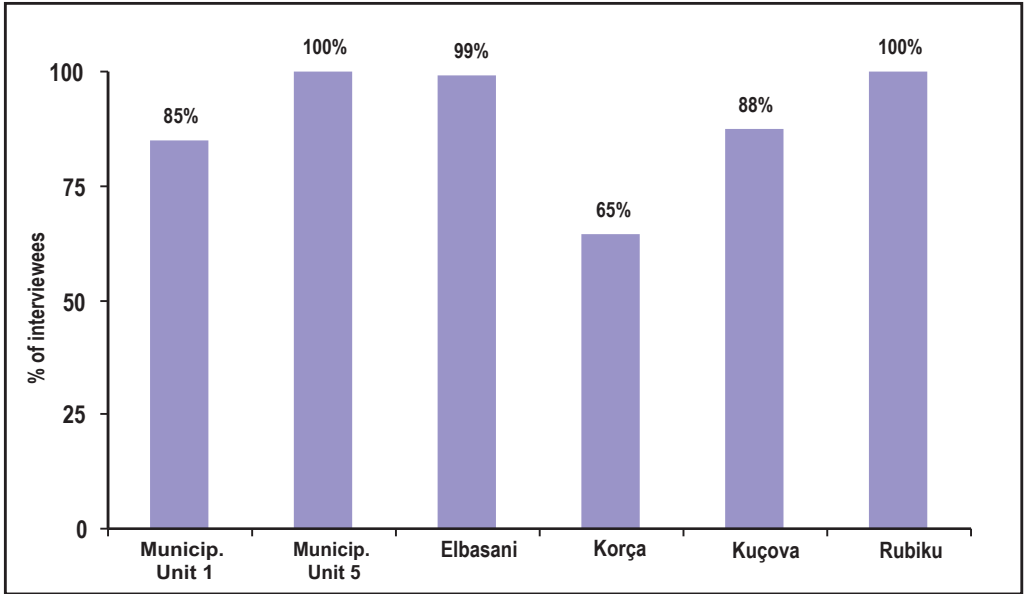
Graphic 10. Publication of tariffs (n=600)

Municipalities participating in the survey publish the service tariffs, although not to the required extent. In general the tariffs for services provided by Civil Register Office and local taxes applications are published. Only in Elbasani 98% of respondents claim that the tariffs for services are published. Considering that the sample in this municipality applied almost equally for all the services, we conclude that tariffs for any municipal services are published.

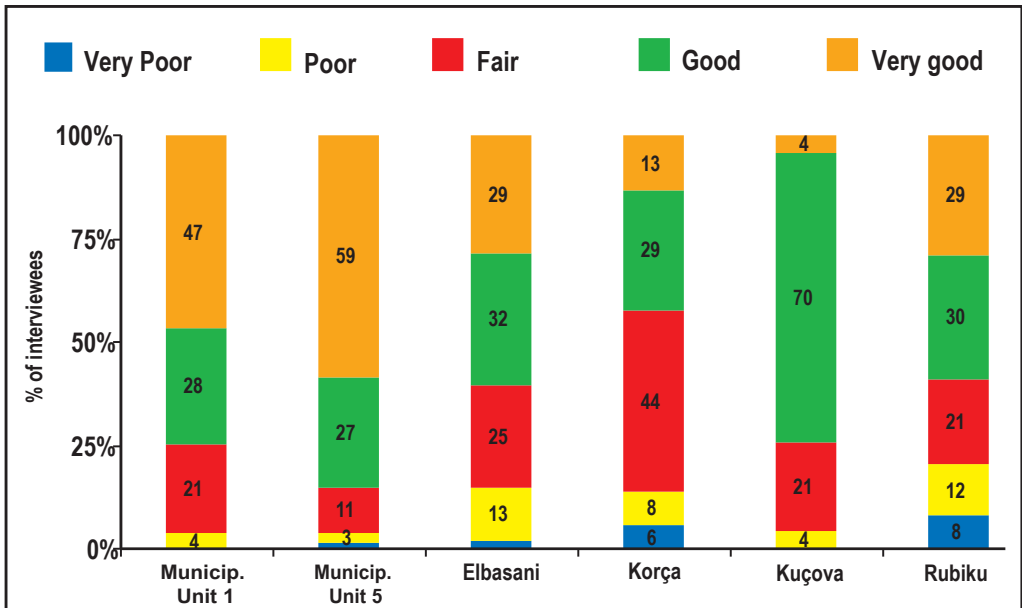
There is still room for improvement in Kuçova, Korça and Rubiku municipalities in this area.

Graphic 11. Paid tariffs compared to official ones (n= 351)

Due to lack of transparency, a considerable number of respondents in Korça and Kuçova claim to have paid higher tariffs than the official ones. Municipalities should take immediate measures for increasing transparency as a way to reduce corruption in municipal service delivery (see Graphic 11 in page 15).

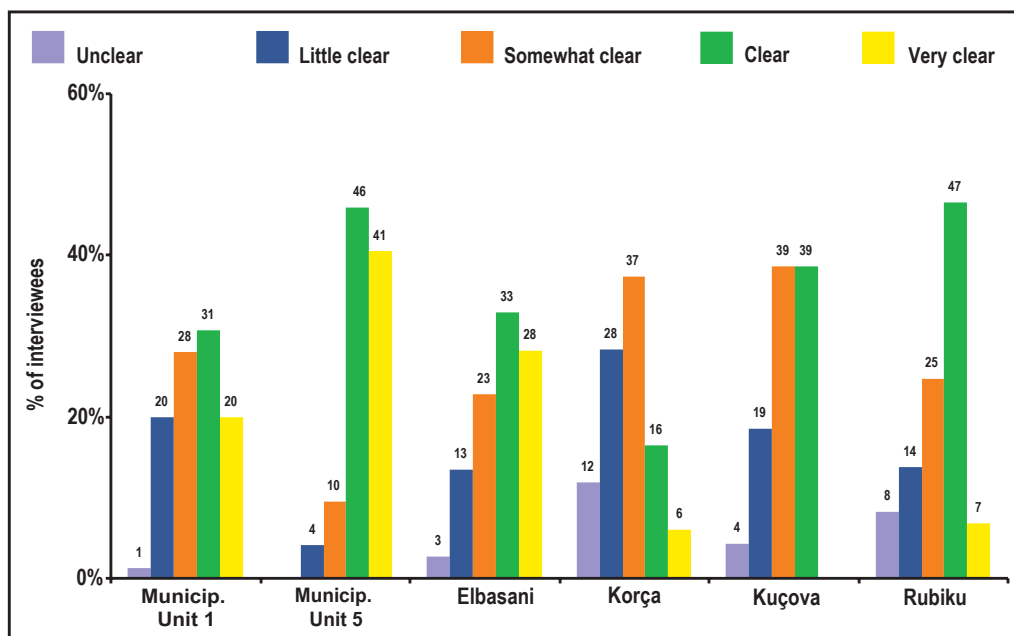


Graphic 12. Municipal staff legal knowledge (n = 600)



42% of respondents in Korça and almost over 60% of respondents in other municipalities are of the opinion that their municipal officials are equipped with good and/or very good legal knowledge.



Graphic 13. Clarity of procedures (n =600)

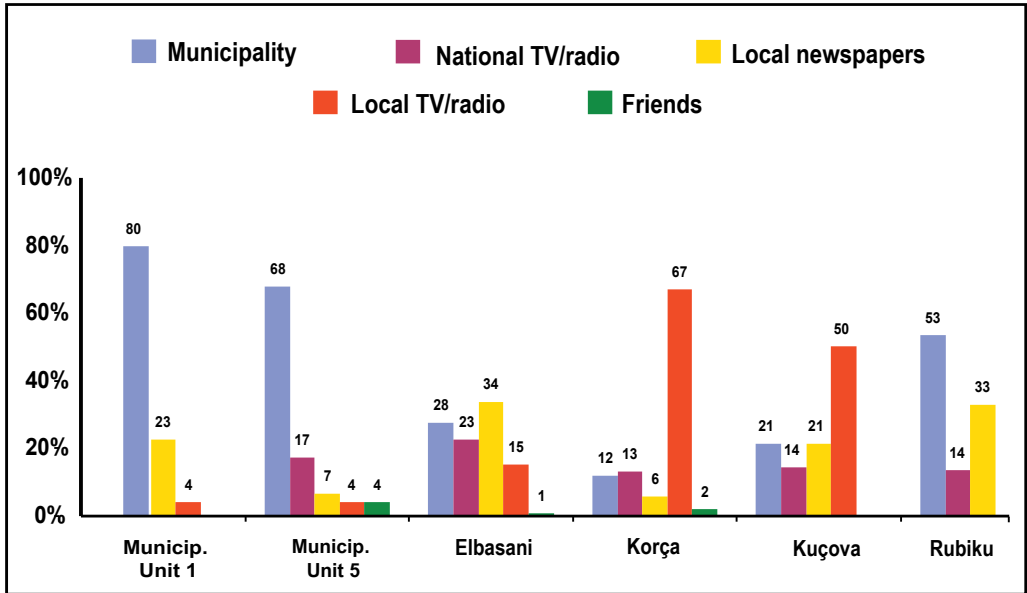
Clarity of application procedures is an important factor that determines the overall citizens' opinion about their municipality performance. 50% of respondents in Elbasani, Rubiku and Tirana Municipality Units 1 and 5 claim that the procedures are clear and/or very clear, while only 30% of respondents in Kucova and 22% in Korca share the same opinion.

The main causes to unclear procedures are lack of information regarding the documents required, and the Department and/or municipal official in charged.

Based on these results, all the municipality structures should coordinate with the Citizen Information Offices (CIO) to channel information to citizens in a transparent way. Municipalities where CIOs are not in place yet, should take immediate measures to establish them.

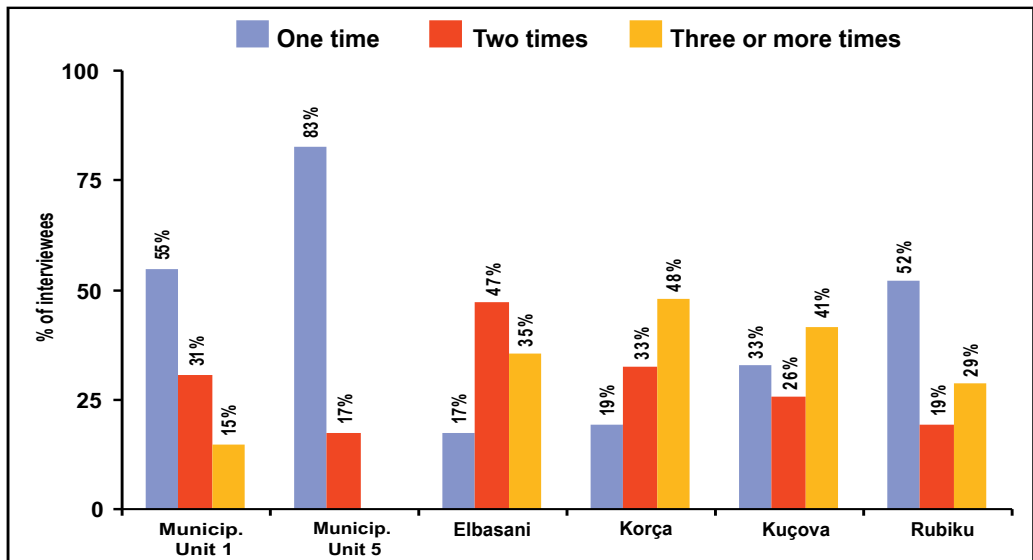
Graphic 14. Sources of information (n= 344)

Elbasani, Kuçova and Korça municipalities use different public information channels. So, in Rubiku and Tirana Municipality Unit 1 the municipality is citizens' main information source. The local newspaper is an important source of information in Elbasani, Rubiku, Kuçova and Tirana Municipality Unit 1. National and local media is another important information channel in informing citizens about the municipality work, development policy issues and more (See Graphic 14 in page 17).

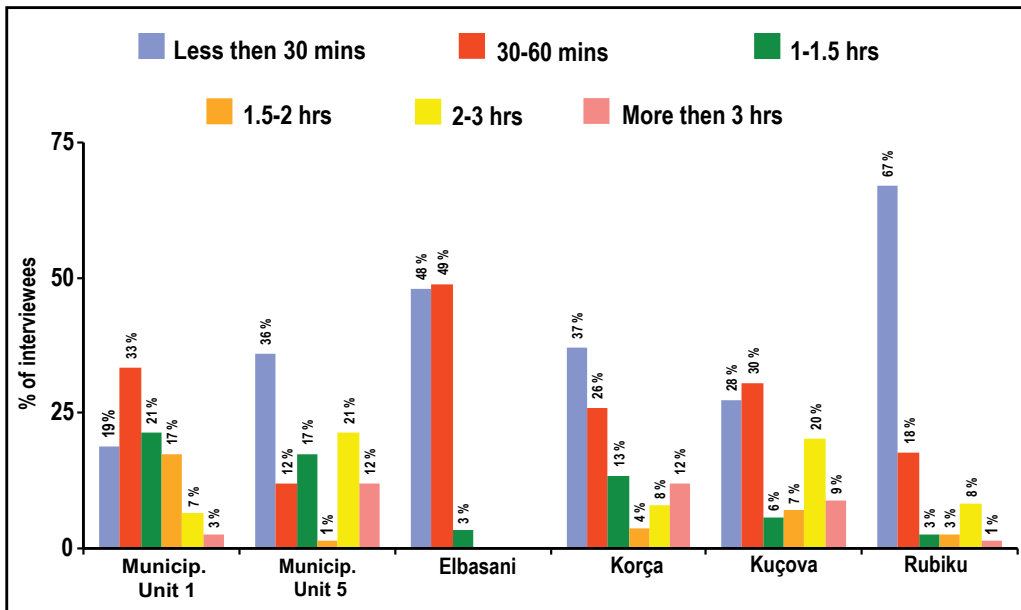


Graphic 15. Number of visits to complete the procedure (n=600)

There is a considerable number of citizens in Elbasani, Korça, Kuçova and Rubiku, who visit the municipality three or more times to complete the procedure. The reason to this anomaly is not the prolongation of administrative procedures as established in the legislation, but lack of citizens' information about application procedures timeframe. Considering the application processing time required, the municipalities should enact internal procedures that establish respective timeframes and make them public.



Graphic 16. Time spent at the municipality desk (n=600)

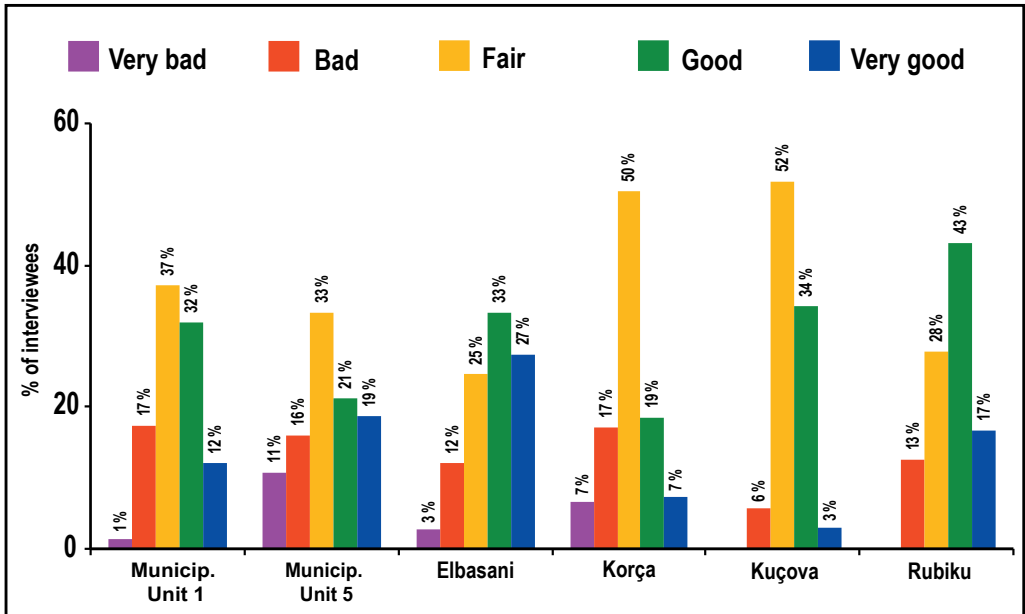


Almost in all municipalities, more than 50% of the respondents have spent up to an hour to receive the required service. Only in Elbasani 97% of the respondents were served within an hour, despite the type of service required. The service efficiency in this municipality is factored by the existence of two One-Stop-Shops that provide most of the municipal services.

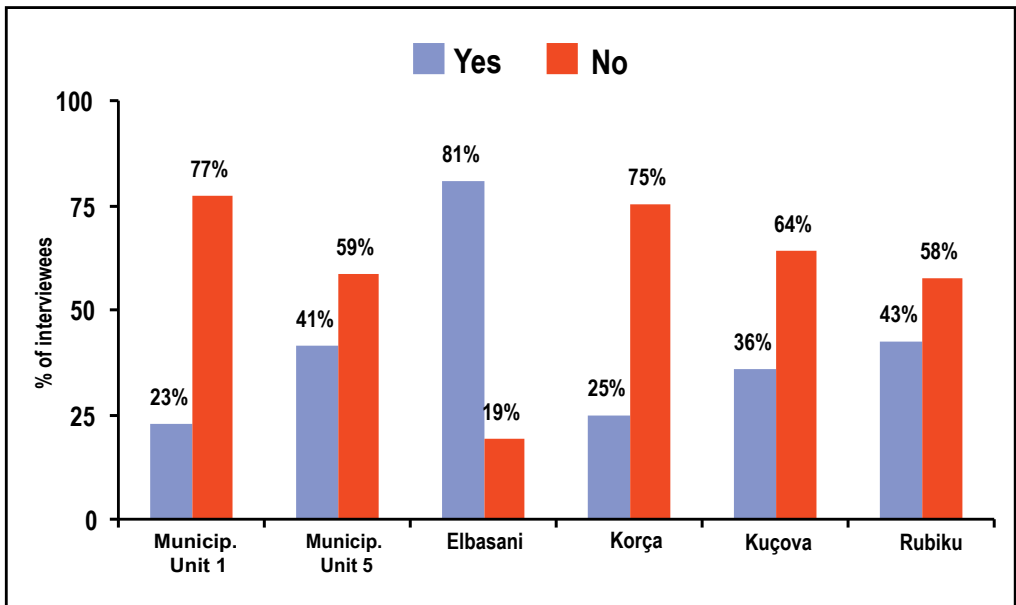
In Tirana Municipality Unit 5, about 30% of respondents were served in two or more hours. This delay is created because of high number of requests submitted to the Civil Register Office and its limited capacity. The time when the survey was administrated (August-September) mark the peak of public requests for such services.

Graphic 17. Evaluation of services (n=600)

The citizens' evaluation about the quality of municipal services differs. About 60% of respondents in Elbasani and Rubiku, and 40% in Tirana Municipality Units 1 and 5, evaluate the quality of municipal services as Good and / or Very good. In Korca and Kuçova municipalities, about 50% of respondents evaluate the quality of municipal services as Fair (see Graphic 17 in page 19).

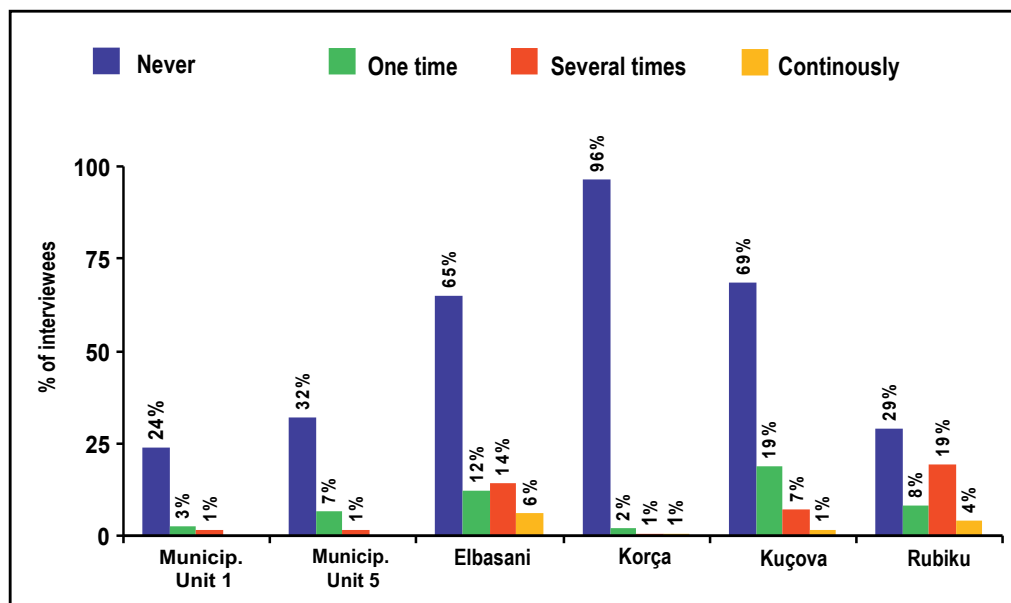


Graphic 18. Information on the right to participate in decision-making (n=600)



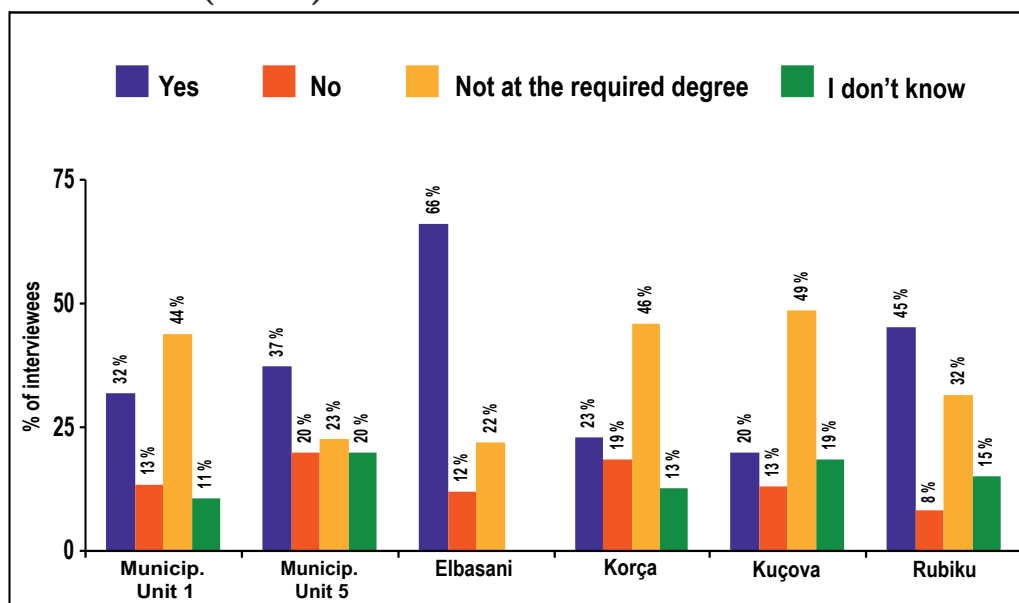
In five out of six municipalities participating in this survey, citizens have limited information on their rights to participate in decision-making. Only in Elbasani, 81% of the respondents are aware of their rights. It is mainly because of extended citizens' participation in this municipality in processes such as strategic planning, urban planning and participatory budgeting.

Graphic 19. Involvement in decision-making (n=421)



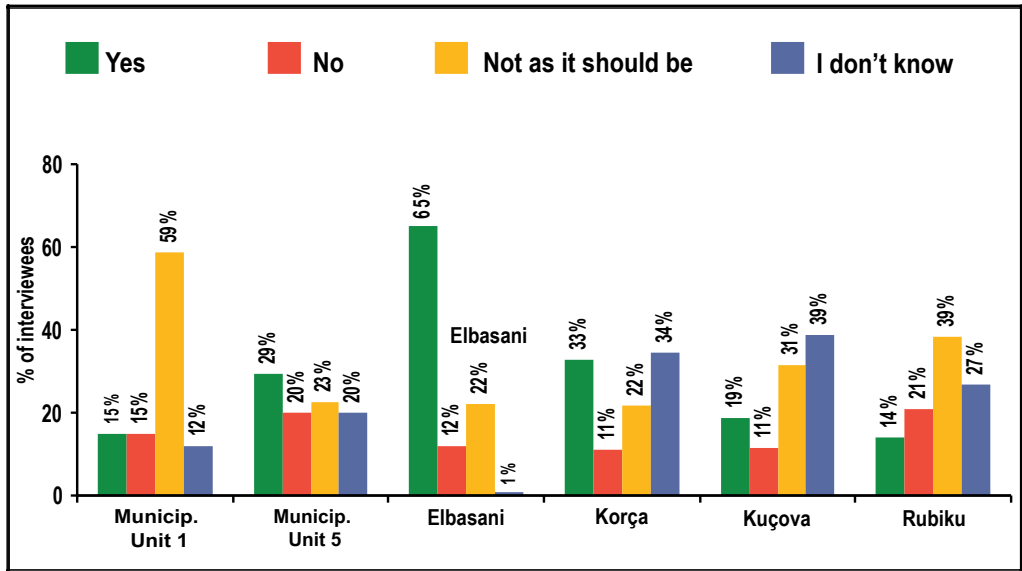
Citizens' participation in decision making process is influenced by the level of information they have with regard to their rights, but also to the extent these rights have been materialized in participatory processes initiated at municipal level. Municipalities of Elbasani, Rubiku and Kuçova have the highest percentage of respondents that have participated one or more times in participatory processes. Still this percentage is very low.

Graphic 20. Municipality awareness of citizens' needs and issues (n=600)



The work of local government should build on community needs and issues. The overall citizens' opinion with regard to their local government awareness about their needs and issues is low. More than 40% of respondents in Korça, Kuçova and Tirana Municipality Unit 1 are of the opinion that their municipality is not aware at the required degree. While 66% of respondents in Elbasani and 45% in Rubiku give a positive evaluation (see Graphic 20 in page 20).

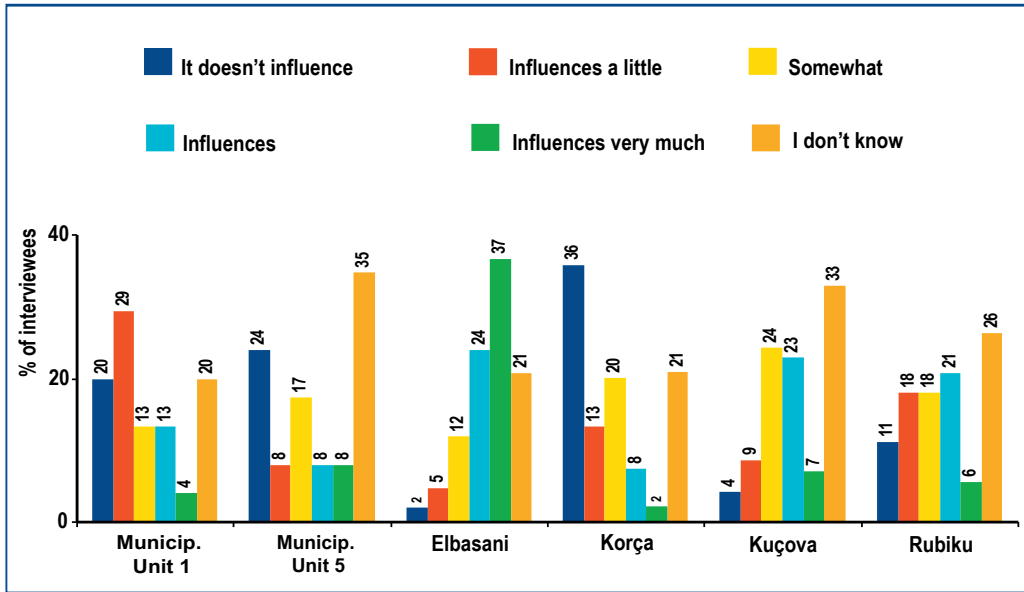
Graphic 21. Transparency in service provision (n=600)



Effective Citizen Information Office and public information access to service delivery are two crucial factors to increased transparency of municipal service delivery. Elbasani marks the highest with 65% of respondents considering the applied procedures as transparent, while in Kuçova, Korça, Rubiku and Tirana Municipality Unit 1, a high percentage evaluate the procedure as non transparent and/or further improvement needed.



Graphic 22. Civil society influence in the local government performance (n=600)

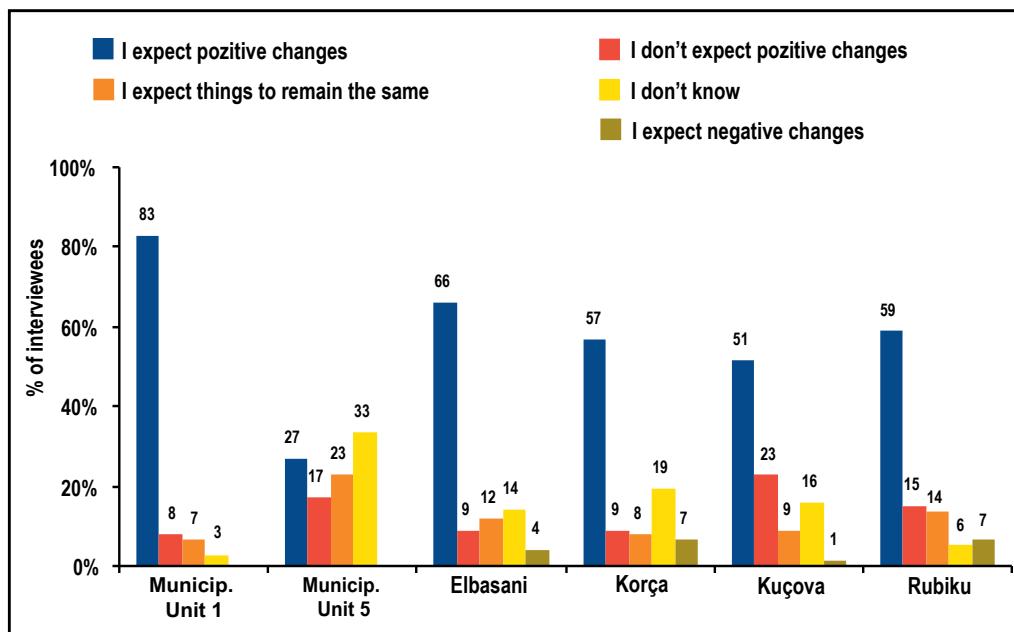


Civil society has and continues to play an important role in local governance. Its role is strengthened in the last years. A series of processes have been initiated to improve governance and increase transparency. In Elbasani 61% of respondents consider the influence of civil society in the local government work as relatively strong. In Rubiku and Kuçova only 30% of respondents have the same opinion.

More than 49% of respondents in Korça, Tirana Municipalities Units 1 and 5 have the opinion that civil society has no and/or limited influence in their local government work.

Graphic 23. Citizens' expectations (n=600)

More than 50% of respondents in Korça, Kuçova and Rubiku expect important positive changes in their municipalities. Citizens in Tirana Municipality 1 and Elbasani are the most enthusiastic with respectively 83% and 66% positive expectation rate. This optimism is related to the good performance of their municipalities' staff, and the good level of information citizens have on the future development plans of their local government unit.



V. Recommendations

Partners-Albania comes with a set of recommendations, based on the survey findings, to support improvements in the local government work and increase transparency.

Main recommendations consist in:

1. Municipalities should give a higher attention to increase public access and improve information channels with citizens. The Municipality of Rubiku and Tirana Unit 5 should establish Citizen Information Offices which would improve access to information by all interest groups.
2. Some municipalities already have Citizen Information Offices in place but they do not function as one-stop-shops where diverse request by citizens are addressed. In most of the cases these Offices serve as a stopping point from where citizens are indicated to other municipality departments. An example is Korca municipality where radical change in the operation of CIO is needed.
3. Municipalities should enact procedures that regulate documentation of requests and complaints made by citizens. Issuing of Application Acknowledgment Note is a minimum mandatory requirement to be applied.
4. Tariffs for all municipal services should be public. This would contribute directly to prevention of corruption and bribery;
5. Municipalities should enact internal procedures to regulate information elaboration methods, tools and ways for effective information delivery, human and financial resources management, publication of tariffs for services, complaints filing procedures.
6. In some municipalities, there are a high number of requests for certain services (e.g. Civil Register Office) mostly during summer time. We recommend alternative ways to serve citizens such as submission of requests and receiving the service the following day, distribution of application numbers, provision of some services by phone or e-mail.
7. It is evident that municipal staffs lack skills in serving citizens. Training may be considered as one of the means to build skills of municipal staff in the areas of:
 - Customer Care
 - Conflict Management
 - Communication Skills

Municipal leadership should use different methods to identify staff training needs.

8. Municipalities should select communication tools that proved to be effective in their communication with citizens.

9. Municipalities should conduct frequent internal and external evaluations of services they provide, as a way to increase quality and prevent corruption. Implementation of participatory processes is crucial in bringing citizens closer to their local government.