

# Policy Report on the Application of Regulation No.08/2011 on Organization and Responsibilities of Municipal Offices for European Integration

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**Policy Report on the Application of  
Regulation No.08/2011 on Organization  
and Responsibilities of Municipal Offices  
for European Integration**

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## Executive Summary

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The Municipal Offices for European Integration remain the only vertical structures in advancing the EU agenda at the local level. Their role is prescribed in the Regulation no.08/2011 on Organization and Responsibilities of Municipal Offices for European Integration, full implementation of which is key in ensuring a successful municipal role in the European integration process of Kosovo.

The aim of this policy report is to address the role of municipalities in the EU Integration process, in particular the extent to which the Regulation no.08/2011 on Organization and Responsibilities of Municipal Offices for European Integration is applied across Kosovo municipalities and to advocate for its successful implementation, thus empowerment of these Offices.

This policy report has utilized a qualitative approach to assess the application of the Regulation no 08/2011 as most of the functions, duties, and responsibilities assessed are of coordination, support, and assist nature. For assessment of these roles, there is a need to gather firsthand data including perceptions from key actors involved. Thus, for these purposes, this policy report has employed data tri-

angulation method including a) website search for 38 municipalities, b) conducted interviews with key stakeholders including the MLGA and the Kosovo Association of Municipalities, c) conducted a focus group with European integration civil servants from the seven biggest municipalities in Kosovo (Prishtina, Prizren, Peje, Mitrovica, Gjakova, Gjilan, Ferizaj), and d) conducted an online survey with all European integration civil servants from 38 municipalities.

The analysis demonstrates that the Regulation no.08/2011 has limited application throughout Kosovo municipalities. A number of challenges and problems identified include the following: two municipalities lack an Office for European Integration; most of the municipal European integration civil servants have never been consulted in assigning local public policy priorities; more than half of them are rarely or never consulted in drafting municipal budget or invited in working groups to draft municipal regulations or strategies; half of them were never trained on how to apply for EU funds and more than half of them have never applied for any type of EU funding; around 70% of civil servants are rarely or never invited in director's council meeting led by the Mayor.

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d) conducted an online survey with all European integration civil servants from 38 municipalities.

Therefore, this policy report recommends and provides extensive justification for the following evidence-based recommendations:

- South Mitrovica and Gračaninca should establish a Municipal Office for European Integration and this Office shall act under the supervision of the Mayor of the respective Municipality, in accordance with article 2 of the Regulation no 08.2011.
- Upon taking office every Mayor along with his/her executive staff should be informed about the role and functions of the Office. In addition, the Regulation no 08/2011 should be provided to them via any channel of communication. This given, the frequency of problems encountered during the data monitoring and evaluation process would lower.
- All Mayors should invite European integration civil servants during the director's council meeting. This given, they will be informed about any municipal plans and activities and will have the opportunity to provide their feedback.
- All Mayors' cabinets and directors of departments should consult with the municipal European integration civil servants in assigning local public policy priorities to advance the reforms deriving from the EU agenda.
- Municipal European integration civil servants should be consulted when the municipal budget is drafted, as the budget dimension remains the key precondition for implementing any local public policy.
- Municipal European integration civil servants should be trained related to applying for EU funds.
- The Regulation no.08/2011 should be amended to revisit the collaboration role of these Offices with the Ministry of Finance and the Office for European Integration (former Ministry of European Integration).



# INTRODUCTION

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Advancement of Kosovo's European Integration path and rapprochement with the EU remain key strategic priorities for Kosovo institutions and the political elite. On this context, Kosovo has signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) as the first contractual agreement between Kosovo and EU, in 2015. With the signing of the SAA, a year later, in 2016, Kosovo has drafted its National Plan for Implementation of the SAA (NIPSAA) and agreed to implement a series of reforms spread into three blocks: a) Political, b) Economic, and c) European Standards- Approximation of Kosovo's Legislation with EU Acquis. Moreover, several mechanisms are established, the so-called SAA structures, at the national level to ensure smooth inter-institutional coordination and to openly discuss the progress/regress in each policy area. These structures include the Stabilization and Association Council - a high-political level structure, the Committee - a technical level structure, seven

sub-committees that address sectorial policies and two special sub-committees including the one on public administration and on normalization.

None of the above-mentioned structures includes the local level, yet a high number of SAA reforms fall under the responsibility of the local level, although the municipality itself is not mentioned as an institution responsible to deliver under the NIPSAA. In the current setup, the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA), identifies all reforms that fall under the local level in documents such as the NIPSAA and the country report. The MLGA also reports on behalf of all Kosovo municipalities to the office for European Integration at the Prime Minister's office (former Ministry of European Integration).<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, all the other institutions responsible to implement any SAA reforms, do report directly to the office for EU integration at the Prime Minister's Office.



**This policy report is structured as follows: the second section addresses the methodology; the third section discusses the role of the municipality in the European Integration process; the fourth section discusses the results of the application assessment of the Regulation no.08/2011; the fifth section provides the conclusion and policy recommendations.**

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Shkelqim Jakupi, Director of the Department for EU Integration and Policy Coordination. 11 March, 2021. Prishtine.

The role of the municipality in advancing the EU agenda is regulated through the Regulation no 08.2011 on Organization and Responsibilities of Municipal Offices for European Integration, sponsored by the Prime Minister's Office and applicable since 2011. The local offices on European integration, deriving from this regulation, are the only vertical mechanism at the local level responsible to carry out and coordinate the European Integration process.

This policy report is structured as follows: the second section addresses the methodology; the third section discusses the role of the municipality in the European Integration process; the fourth section discusses the results of the application assessment of the Regulation no.08/2011; the fifth section provides the conclusion and policy recommendations.

# METHODOLOGY

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For assessing the application of the Regulation no.08/2011, this policy report utilizes a qualitative approach and employs method data triangulation including:

- 1 38 municipal website searches.
- 2 Conducted interviews with key stakeholders including the MLGA and the Kosovo Association of Municipalities
- 3 Conducted a focus group with municipal European integration civil servants from the seven biggest municipalities in Kosovo (Prishtina, Prizren, Peje, Mitrovica, Gjakova, Gjilan, Ferizaj).
- 4 Conducted an online survey with all European integration civil servants from 38 municipalities. The survey was in both languages, Albanian and Serbian. The survey contained 20 questions, as shown under Annex I.

Furthermore, other documents at the national and international level related to the role of municipalities in this process have been consulted.

# THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES IN THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS

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This section discusses the overall role of municipalities and the responsibilities they carry toward advancement and coordination of the European Agenda at the local level.

The role of municipalities in the EU integration process is central, although as mentioned above the municipalities themselves are not listed, in the key policy framework- NIPSAA, as the responsible institution for implementing specific measures. They are consistently engaged in advancing the EU agenda while implementing specific actions like the housing provision, children education, municipal public services for the returnees, amongst others.<sup>2</sup> These and other similar actions are an obligation of the MLGA and municipalities as part of the reintegration of repatriated persons, in accordance with the National Strategy for Sustainable Reintegration of Repatriated Persons.<sup>3</sup> This strategy also requires further empowerment of local actors in this regard.

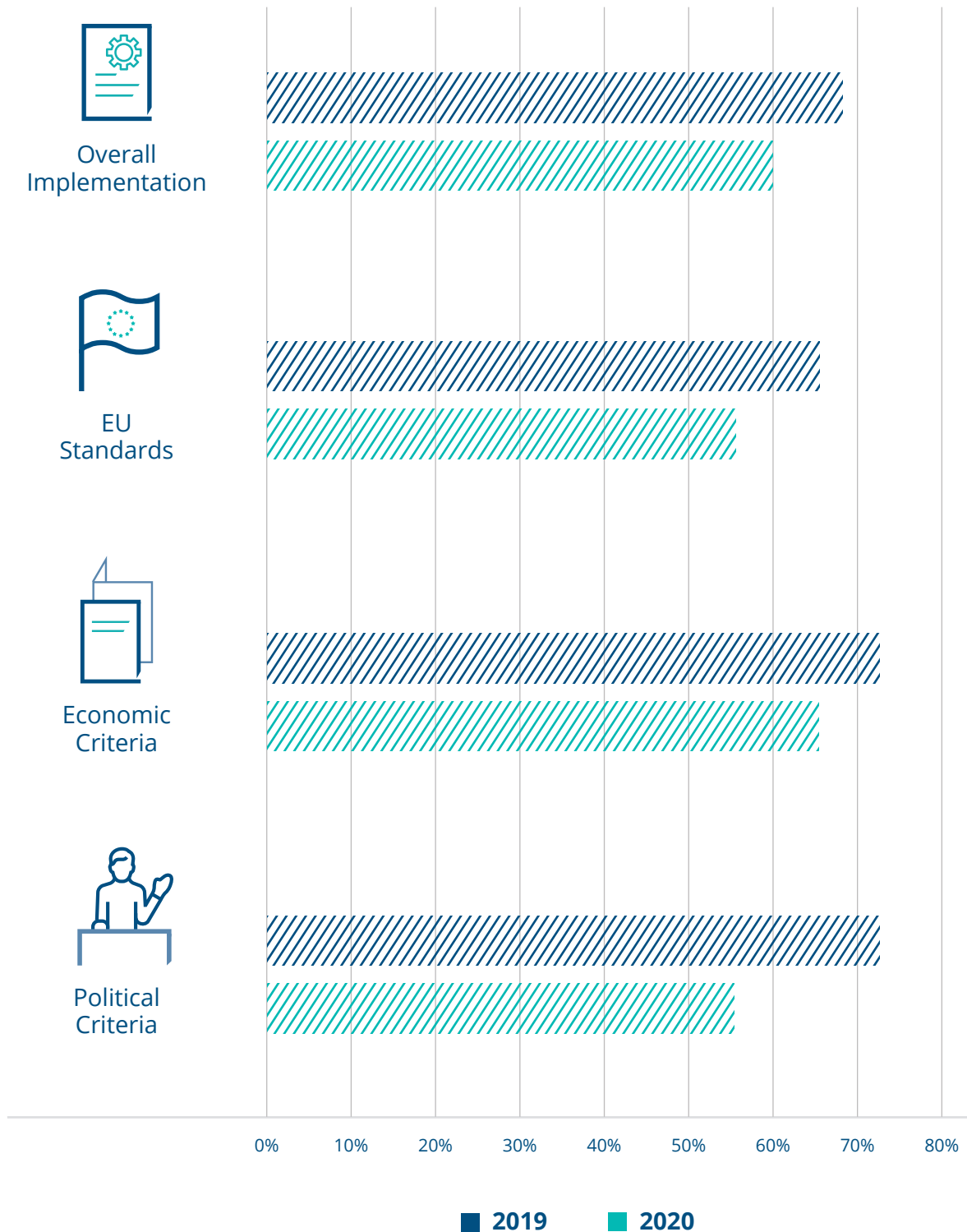
Ministry of Local Public Administration (MLPA), on annual basis, monitors the implementation of the European Reform Agenda at the local level. The political criteria at the local level reports on the implementation of reforms related to public administration, ombudsperson, civil society, fight against terrorism, cultural heritage; the economic criteria includes reforms related to a functional economy, taxes, enterprises and internal market; the EU standards includes agriculture and rural development, energy, judiciary and fundamental rights, protection of minorities, justice, freedom and security, border management, public health, amongst others. The below table shows the overall implementation of these measures and divided in the three categories: Political Criteria, Economic Criteria, and EU Standards for 2019-2020.

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2 Ministry of Local Government Administration. (2014) "Guidelines for the Role of Municipalities in the EU Integration Process". Republic of Kosovo.

3 Ministry of Internal Affairs. "National Strategy for Sustainable Reintegration of Repatriated Persons 2018-2022" Republic of Kosovo.

## Overall implementation of measures on European agenda at the local level



**Table 1.** The level of fulfillment of European agenda at the local level 2019-2020

Source: Ministry of Local Government Administration, Report on fulfillment of municipal obligations deriving from European agenda, 2021.

The data are gathered from all European Integration civil servants across municipalities and the MLPA verifies these data on the field when necessary.<sup>4</sup> The 2020 data shows that municipalities have performed worse when compared to 2019, thus it is important to note that this lower performance is present due to COVID19 restrictions leading to cancelation of various local activities planned across the three categories. These MLPA reports also includes a section on recommendations depending on what needs to be done.

Moreover, the role of the municipalities in implementing the visa liberalization roadmap since 2012 has also been immense. The obligations deriving from this roadmap were related to democratization, rule of law, and adoption of *Acquis Communautaire*, while a number of these obligations fell under the responsibility of the local level. In this context, the MLGA with the aim of supporting the local level offices has identified several actions that fall under the responsibility of the municipalities including human rights, empowerment of local offices for returnees and communities, implementation of the ethics code, and similar.<sup>5</sup>

The MLGA has also drafted a guidelines document in which it discusses the role of municipality in the EU integration process entitled "Guidelines for the Role of Municipalities in the EU Integration Process".<sup>6</sup> In this guidelines document, the MLGA draws on the responsibilities of the MLGA itself and of the local level while it pinpoints to the obligations deriving from the visa liberalization roadmap, the national strategy on reintegration of repatriated persons, and the Regulation no.08/2011. This remains the only document at the central level that addresses the role of the local level in the European Integration process of Kosovo.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the adoption of the Regulation no.08/2011 for Organization and Responsibilities of Local Offices for European Integration marked an important step in clarifying the role and functions of the Municipality in this process. According to this regulation each municipality should establish a local Office for European Integration under the supervision of the Mayor, amongst others.<sup>8</sup> Even though these offices were established in 2011, only in 2015 did they become functional.<sup>9</sup>

We have asked municipal European integration civil servants about their opinions on the role of the municipality in this process and the extent to which the Regulation no 08.2011 is applied. According to the perception data, few view the role of their municipality as important and substantial in the European integration process of Kosovo and some others view it as not strongly backed up by the central level or as moderately good without further elaborating on what they mean.<sup>10</sup> Below we cite few of their opinions towards the municipality role in the European integration process.

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4 Interview with Shkelqim Jakupi, Director of the Department for EU Integration and Policy Coordination. 11 March, 2021. Prishtine.

5 Ministry of Local Government Administration. (2014). "Guidelines for the Role of Municipalities in the EU Integration Process" Republic of Kosovo.

6 Ibid

7 Interview with Shkelqim Jakupi, Director of the Department for EU Integration and Policy Coordination. 11 March, 2021. Prishtine.

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8 For more see "Regulation No.08/2011 on Organization and Responsibilities of Municipal Offices for European Integration. The Government of the Republic of Kosovo. Article 2. The Municipal Office for European Integration.

9 Ibid

10 Results from the online survey with all European Integration civil servants from the municipal level (38 municipalities). The surveys were filled out for 20 -27 April 2021. They were sent in both languages. We received answers from 27 municipalities.



“The role of the municipality in this process is very important since many of the obligations deriving from the national EU agenda should be implemented by municipalities.”<sup>11</sup>



“Considering the fact that all reforms begin from municipalities including public services, primary and secondary education, primary health services, civil registration, I think that the role of the municipality is very important. It is also important the municipality actions are in line with EU objectives.”<sup>12</sup>



“I view the role of the municipality in this process as challenging and slightly supported by the central level.”<sup>13</sup>



“Active and supporting role”<sup>14</sup>



“I view the role of the municipality as lukewarm and not substantial.”<sup>15</sup>

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11 Ibid  
12 Ibid  
13 Ibid  
14 Ibid  
15 Ibid

Regarding the application of the Regulation no 08/2011, from 1 -5 (the closer to 5 the better the application), the average score from 27 civil servants who have replied to our online survey is 2.78. According to their perceptions, the score of 2.78/5 demonstrates limited application of the Regulation no 08/2011.





Furthermore, Kosovo has established its Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM) based on the European Charter of Local Self-Government.<sup>16</sup> The AKM is a not-for-profit organization that represents the interests of its local members and aims to create an efficient, sustainable, and democratic local government. The AKM has 17 Collegia and each serves as a basic mechanism to bring together directors of municipal departments and civil servants. Civil servants that are part of the local offices on EU integration form one Collegia, the so-called the EU Integration Collegia. Different from other Collegias who consist of members that hold political positions in the municipality, member of this Collegia are all civil servants.

The EU Integration Collegia is a body that gathers three to six times per year to discuss and identify various needs and challenges of civil servants work-

ing on EU integration as part of EU integration local offices.<sup>17</sup> Collegia body serves well to connect all civil servants across municipalities and aids them to articulate better their needs. According to the head of this Collegia, to empower these civil servants at the local level, we have sent official letters to mayors and we have asked them to invite EU integration civil servants in every municipal meeting with municipal directors.<sup>18</sup> This given, civil servants should be updated with municipal project agenda and actions to provide their expertise to the mayor and municipality. Moreover, this Collegia is part of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS). Members of the Collegia are frequently invited in various trainings and events, yet not always they are represented. Lack of political support to financially back them, lack of the right to freely travel across Europe without a visa, and lack of English Language skills are some of the common barriers.<sup>19</sup>

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16 For more see the European Charter of Local Self Government. Article 10. Local authorities shall be entitled, in exercising their powers, to co-operate and, within the framework of the law, to form consortia with other local authorities to carry out tasks of common interest.

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17 Interview with Ajshe Beverniku, Head of the EU Integration Colelgia. March,2021. Prishtine.

18 Ibid

19 Interview with Ajshe Beverniku, Head of the EU Integration Colelgia. March,2021. Prishtine.

# ASSESSMENT APPLICATION OF THE REGULATION NO.08/2011

The assessment of the application of Regulation no.08/2011 is divided into four parts including.

- I. the existence of the Municipal Office for European Integration,
- II. the fulfillment of its functions,
- III. the fulfillment of its duties and responsibilities,
- IV. collaboration with central institutions.

## The existence of the Municipal Office for European Integration

Based on regulation no.08/2011, article 2, each municipality shall establish the Municipal Office for European Integration (hereinafter, Office) and this Office shall act under the supervision of the respective Municipality.

The data gathered from municipal websites reveals that most of the municipalities have an Office for European Integration, as shown in the figure below. Only two municipalities, South Mitrovica and Gračanica have a directorate for European Integration, while the other municipalities have an Office. These Offices are named after as Office for European Integration, Sector for European Integration, Law and European Integration Office, Office for International Cooperation and European Integration, but they all function under the supervision of the Mayor in accordance with the Regulation no. 08/2011.

The lack of an Office for European integration in the Mayor's cabinet in accordance with the Regulation, is identified as one of the key challenges toward successfully performing their functions, duties, and



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Municipal Offices for  
European Integration



2

Directorates that cover  
European Integration

responsibilities as European integration civil servants.<sup>20</sup> In this context, they do not participate in the meeting of municipal directors' council in addition to other meetings, but rather they are represented by their department director. The latter is a political position that is appointed and can be dismissed by the Mayor. At the same time, the department director may not necessarily understand the discipline and does not have the institutional memory that the civil servant has. On the other hand, participation in the municipal directors' council is considered as a key mechanism for empowering the role of the Offices.<sup>21</sup> This mechanism is the only manner to remain updated about municipality activities, plans, and priorities and they can provide their expertise and support in prioritizing and planning in accordance with the EU agenda.

Furthermore, 18 out of the 38 municipalities have not listed any information (name, surname, email, phone number) of the civil servant responsible for European Integration in their municipality website. This could be interpreted as lack of responsibility, lack of transparency, and/or negligence by the municipalities.

Regarding the number of staff in each municipality, article 6.5 of the Regulation indicates that each Mayor depending on the municipality needs and budget can determine the number of the staff. The data gathered reveals that each municipality has at least one civil service responsible for the European Integration process based on the Regulation (only three municipalities have two civil servants per Office).<sup>22</sup> According to the head of the Association Colegia on European Integration, one civil servant per municipality is enough to perform the functions and responsibilities of the Office in accordance with the Regulation, yet the problem remains in empowering these Offices.<sup>23</sup>

## The fulfillment of its functions

Based on regulation no.08/2011, the Office has several functions as follows:

- **Coordination** of the European Integration process
- **Coordinates** the process of regulation framework development and Municipality policies linked to European Integration.
- **Participation** in assigning municipal priorities.
- **Regular monitoring, reporting and evaluation** of the implementation of these strategic documents and municipal priorities before the Mayor and central authorities.
- **Coordinating** EU and other external assistance
- **Support** to all municipal structures in improving consultancies and civil dialogue with civil society and with other interested parties and the broad audience in the municipal level.
- **Coordination and participation** in developing and implementing policies and strategies aiming to develop municipal capacities to successfully complete all necessary reform, including monitoring.
- **Increasing** the awareness of municipal administration, civil society, media, business audience on EU integration process and in promoting European values.

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20 Information from the Focus Group (through zoom platform) with civil servants from seven biggest municipalities in Kosovo. 22 April 2021.

21 ibid

22 Data gathered from municipal websites (38) searches (14 and 15 April, 2021).

23 Interview with Ajshe Beverniku, Head of the EU Integration Colegia. March, 2021. Prishtine

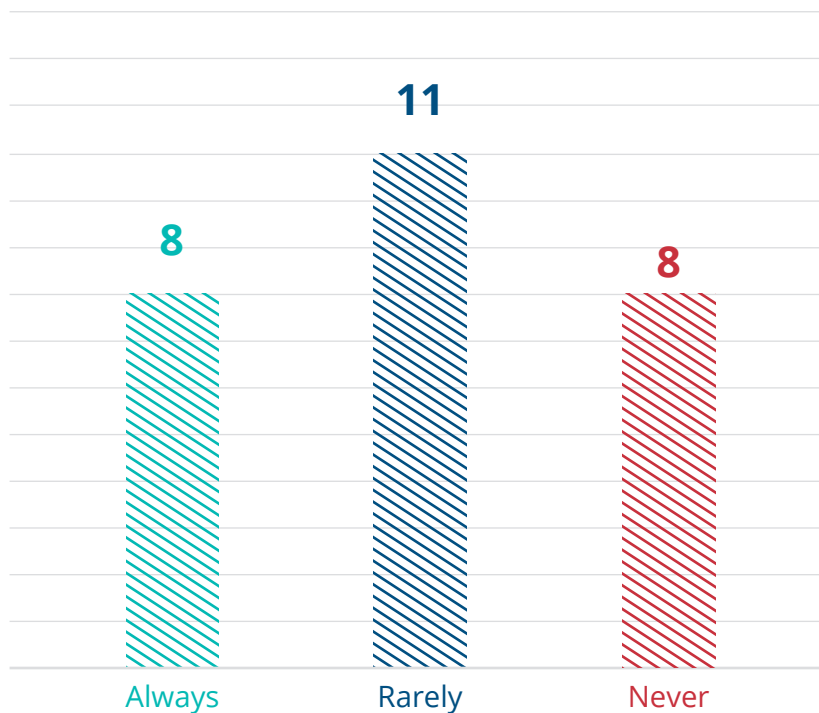
The key words that best describe the functions of the Office are coordination and support. Coordination and support are not two easily quantifiable and measurable concepts. Yet, this analysis gathers several viewpoints through a focus group with civil servants, online survey, and interviews to assess the application of these functions.

In assessing their function of coordinating the European Integration process and in assigning municipal priorities, we have looked at how often they are invited in meetings with other heads of directorates

by the Mayor and in what forms they provide their input in assigning municipal priorities.

The survey data reveals that 8 civil servants from eight municipalities have never been invited in a meeting with the board of directors, by the Mayor's cabinet. 11 have stated that sometimes they are invited, resulting in a total of 18 Offices that most of the time are neglected from the Mayor's cabinet. As shown in the figure below, only 8 civil servants have declared that they are always invited in the meeting with the board of directors, led by the Mayor.

### How often are you invited by the Mayor's cabinet in meetings with the Board's Council?



On the other hand, this meeting is a key mechanism through which European integration civil servants can be informed with the ongoing projects and priorities, so that they can provide their feedback and coordinate the European integration process, assist in assigning priorities, and provide monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the implementation of these strategic documents and municipal priorities. Moreover, all focus group participants have also considered the participation in these meetings as a crucial dimension in successfully performing their role. One of the civil servants, views this mechanism -as the most productive manner- to provide feedback and to further advance the reforms that derive from the EU agenda.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, as mentioned above there is a body within the structure of the Kosovo Association Municipalities, called EU Integration Collegia that aims to identify and promote the needs and interests, respectively, of all Offices across municipalities. In this context, they have sent direct requests to the Mayor's Cabinet, once a new Mayor has taken office, to consider seriously the role of the European integration civil servant within its municipality and to invite them in all their meetings with the Board of Directors.<sup>25</sup> Yet, this request is not binding and remains within an advisory character.

Another key challenge identified in fulfilling Office functions related to supporting and improving the dialogue with civil society and other interested parties, as well as increasing the awareness of municipal administration, civil society, media, business, and audience on EU integration process is the lack of budget. Some of these Offices have shown interest to organize symbolic activities on important dates like on Europe's Day, but they lack the necessary budget to do so.<sup>26</sup> Thus, it remains highly challenging to perform the support function towards increasing

awareness among various actors in relation to the EU integration process and towards improving consultations with the civil society sector.

Overall, the assessment analysis demonstrates that few Office functions are not applied, while several other coordination functions are partially performed. Two major constraints identified include lack of budget and lack of participation in meetings with other decision-making bodies of the municipality. The latter, clearly reflects a limited role of the European integration civil servants within the municipality structure.

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24 Information from the Focus Group (through zoom platform) with civil servants from seven biggest municipalities in Kosovo. 22 April 2021

25 Interview with Ajshe Beverniku, Head of the EU Integration Colelgia. March,2021. Prishtine

26 Information from the Focus Group (through zoom platform) with civil servants from seven biggest municipalities in Kosovo. 22 April 2021.

## The fulfillment of its duties and responsibilities

Based on Regulation no 08/2011, the Office has several duties and responsibilities as follows:

- **Providing professional support**, expertise, and advice to the Mayor and municipal directors in determining municipal priorities in the area of European integration.
- **Coordinates** closely with the Mayor, the Chair of Municipal Assembly and Head of Directorates as well as with all other municipal decision-making structures in developing the municipal policies, regulatory development framework, and in drafting the municipal annual plan aiming to reflect priorities and objectives of all national strategic documents on European integration and Kosovo-EU relations.
- **Provides support and advice** to the legal services of the municipality and of municipal assembly committees aiming to reflect the acquis and respective EU policies.
- **Closely coordinates and cooperates** with the Ministry of Local Government and Office on European integration in determining and planning municipal activities within the frames of national strategic documents for European integration.
- **Conducts regular monitoring, reporting and evaluation** of municipal priorities and strategic documents' implementation as well as relevant activities in the frames of national strategic documents.

- **Closely coordinates and cooperates** with the responsible Ministry of Local Government and Ministry of European Integration in ensuring that challenges, needs, priorities, as well the reporting of municipal achievements, are reflected in the regular work proceedings of inter-institutional coordinating structures for European integration.
- **In close collaboration** with the Responsible Ministry of Local Government and that of European Integration, within municipal frames, coordinates the programming and implementation of EU and other external source assistance within municipality frames.
- **Coordinates and cooperates** with Public Communication and Information Office in Municipality concerning communication and information issues related with European Integration.

Like the Office functions, the key word describing the duties and responsibilities of these Offices include coordination, provision of support and advice, cooperation, and regular monitoring and reporting.

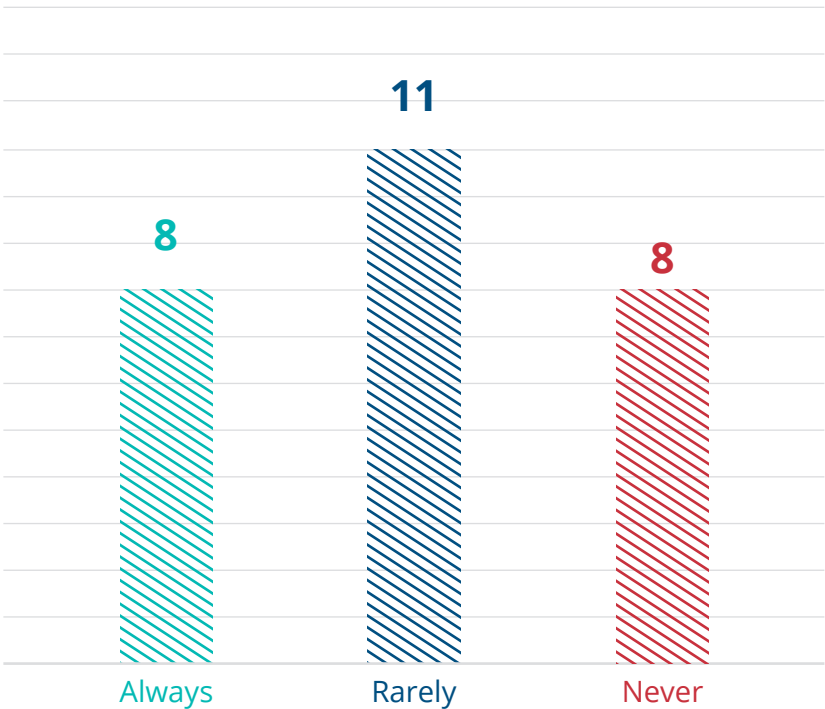
Offering professional support and advice in assigning municipal priorities is not a practice across these Offices.<sup>27</sup> Civil servants have not been given the chance to advise the Mayor or any of the Director Departments in terms of determining priorities for respective departments or the municipality in general. For instance, in the case of South Mitrovica, a municipality that does not have an Office for European integration, but two civil servants that cover these responsibilities within the Directorate for European Integration and Social Welfare, have never been in a meeting with the Board of Directors or any other high level meeting, as they are always represented by their Director (a political position elected by the Mayor).

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27 Information from the Focus Group (through zoom platform) with civil servants from seven biggest municipalities in Kosovo. 22 April 2021

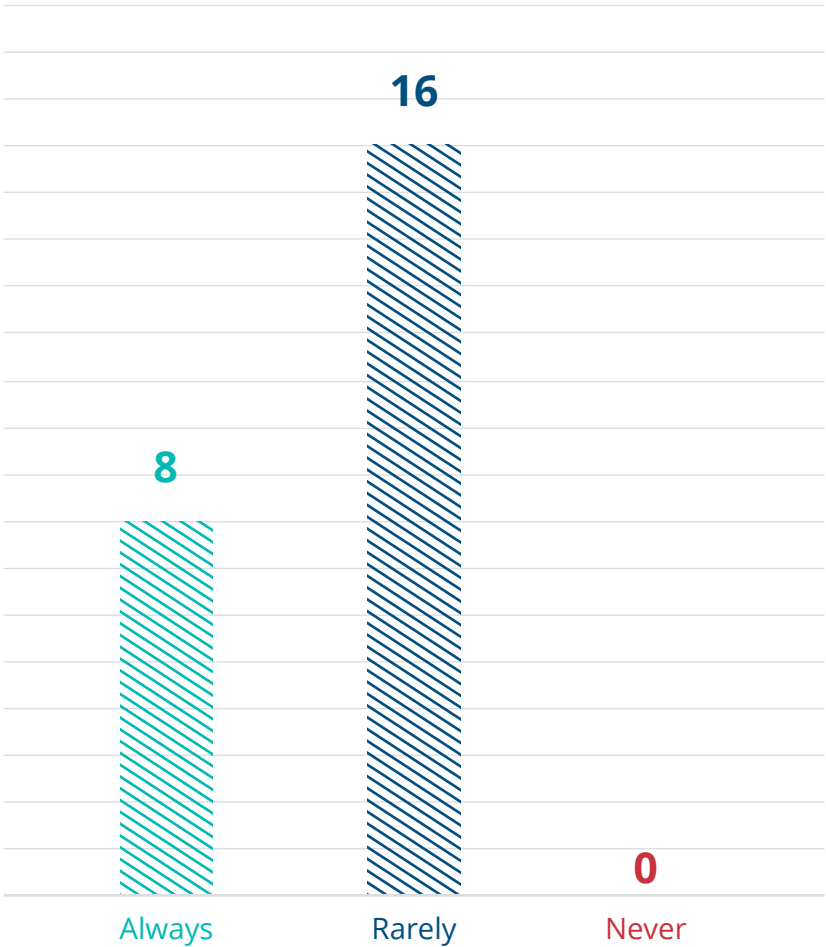
Moreover, as shown in the below figure, 19 European integration civil servants are never or rarely invited in meetings related to municipal budget planning, while only 8 are always invited. This given, it becomes challenging to push forward any local public policy deriving from the EU agenda.

**How often are you invited in budgetary planning meetings?**



They are also rarely or never invited for the preparation of any strategy or other legal act in the municipality. As shown in the below figure, 6 have stated that they were never invited by the Mayor or any of the departments to contribute to this regard, 16 have answered that sometimes they are invited. On the other hand, only 8 are always invited in such meetings/working groups.

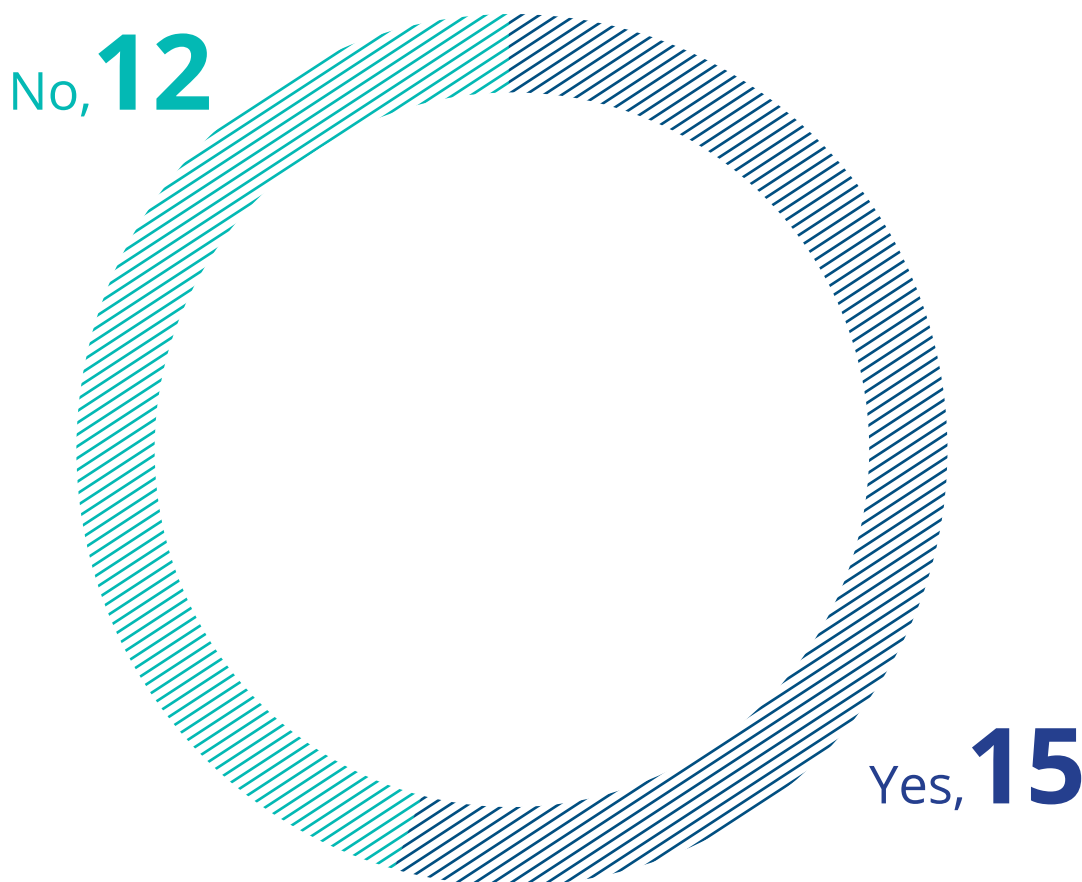
**How often are you invited in budgetary planning meetings?**





For assessment of the support and advice provided to the municipality, in particular municipal assembly committees, we have asked European integration civil servants if they have ever offered advice or support to the municipal assembly, and if yes in what form. As shown in the figure below 12 have answered to have never offered such support and 15 said yes.

**During your work in the municipality, have you ever offered support to the municipal assembly committees?**



The support provided was in both forms, written and spoken. Few have provided support in the drafting of various regulations while being part of working groups or have provided legal advice to check for EU acquis compliance. Yet, the number of those that have never cooperated with the municipal assembly in the form of providing support or advice remains high (12 Offices).

The close coordination and collaboration with central level institutions is discussed in section IV.

To sum up, the assessment analysis demonstrates limited application of Office duties and responsibilities due to the factors identified above including the lack of invitation by the Mayors' office to take part in the board of directors' meeting, to offer support to the municipal assembly committees, or to be part of any working group to draft municipal regulations or other legal acts.

### Collaboration with central institutions

Based on Regulation no 08/2011, the Office in accomplishing its duties has to coordinate the work regularly and closely with the following institutions

- a) the Office for European Integration (former Ministry of European Integration),
- b) Ministry of Local Government Administration, and
- c) Ministry of Finance and other respective institutions.

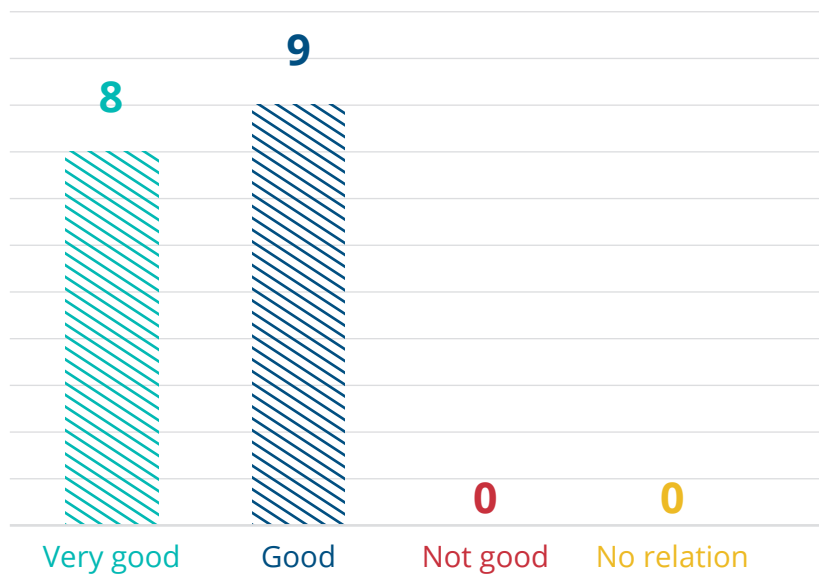
First, to assess the level of collaboration we have asked civil servants (through the online survey) what relationship they have with the Ministry of Local Government Administration (very good, good, not good, no relationship). As shown in the below figure, 18 have stated to have a very good relationship and 9 a good relationship. While none answered to have not good or no relationship.

The same view was hold during the focus group discussions where all agreed that they have very good working relationship with the Ministry, and they report twice on yearly basis to it regarding the local level responsibilities deriving from the EU agenda.<sup>28</sup>

The same view was hold by the Director of the Department for EU Integration and Policy Coordination in the MAPL.<sup>29</sup>

Second, to assess the level of collaboration between civil servants and the Ministry of Finance we have asked the same question through the online survey. As shown in the figure below, 22 have stated to have no relationship with the Ministry of Finance, 2 marked a good relationship, and 3 answered to have a very good relationship.

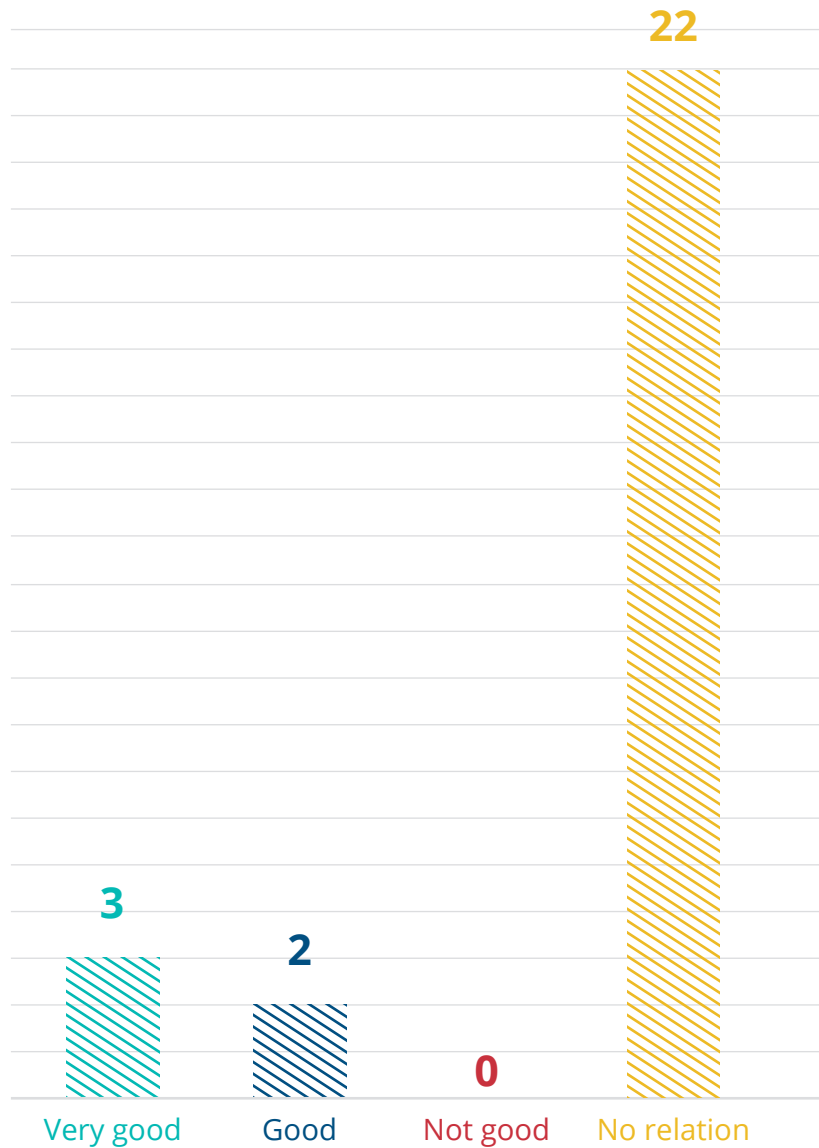
### What working relationship do you have with the Ministry of Local Public Administration?



28 Information from the Focus Group (through zoom platform) with civil servants from seven biggest municipalities in Kosovo. 22 April 2021

29 Interview with Shkelqim Jakupi, Director of the Department for EU Integration and Policy Coordination. 11 March, 2021. Prishtine.

### What working relationship do you have with the Ministry of Local Public Administration?

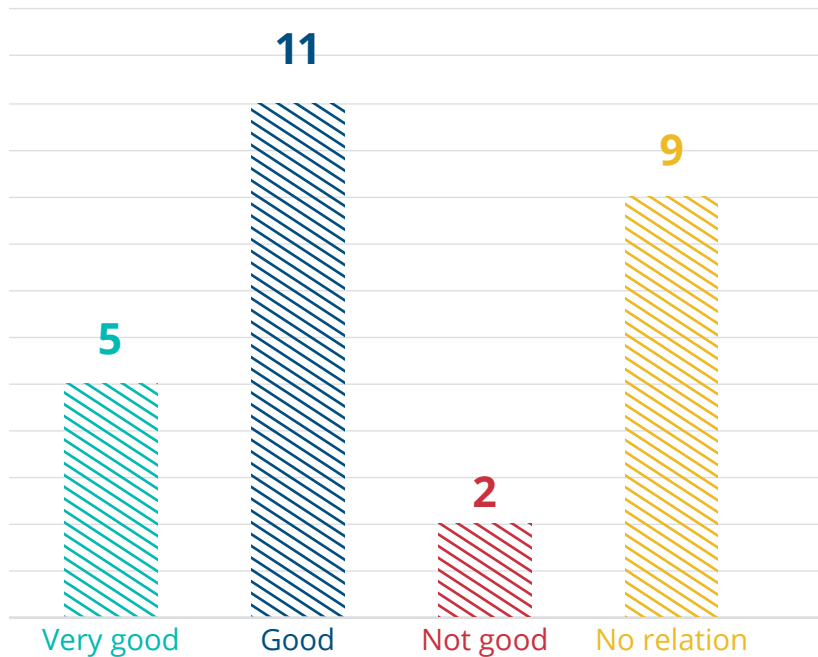


During focus group discussions the same view was held and they agreed that they have no relationship with the Ministry of Finance (MF). According to them, all the work is done with the MAPL and they do not have any collaboration forms with the MF. One stated that the municipality has its finance officer who collaborates with the Ministry, thus having no need for them as European integration civil servants to coordinate directly with the MF. In this context, another civil servant stated that there is also space for

amending the regulation to exclude the MF as no form either need of communication is present.

Third, to assess the level of collaboration between civil servants and the Office for European Integration, we have asked the same question through the online survey. As shown in the below figure, 5 have answered to have a very good relationship, 11 answered to have a good relationship, 2 not a good relationship, and 9 do not have any relationship.

### What working relationship do you have with the Office for European Integration (former Ministry of European Integration)?



On the other hand, during the focus group all agreed that they have no collaboration with the Office for European integration. To illustrate this lack of collaboration, one of the participants stated that “I don’t even know where their offices are, and I do not know after their Ministry was dissolved what happened to the institution”.<sup>30</sup> In this context, another one stated that if regulation is amended, the role and collaboration with this Office should be revisited since until today we did not have any communication with them.

Overall, civil servants seem to have very good working relationships with the MAPL while reporting twice a year to them. On the other hand, they do not have any relationship with the other two central government institutions, MF and the Office for European Integration, mentioned in the Regulation no.08/2011.

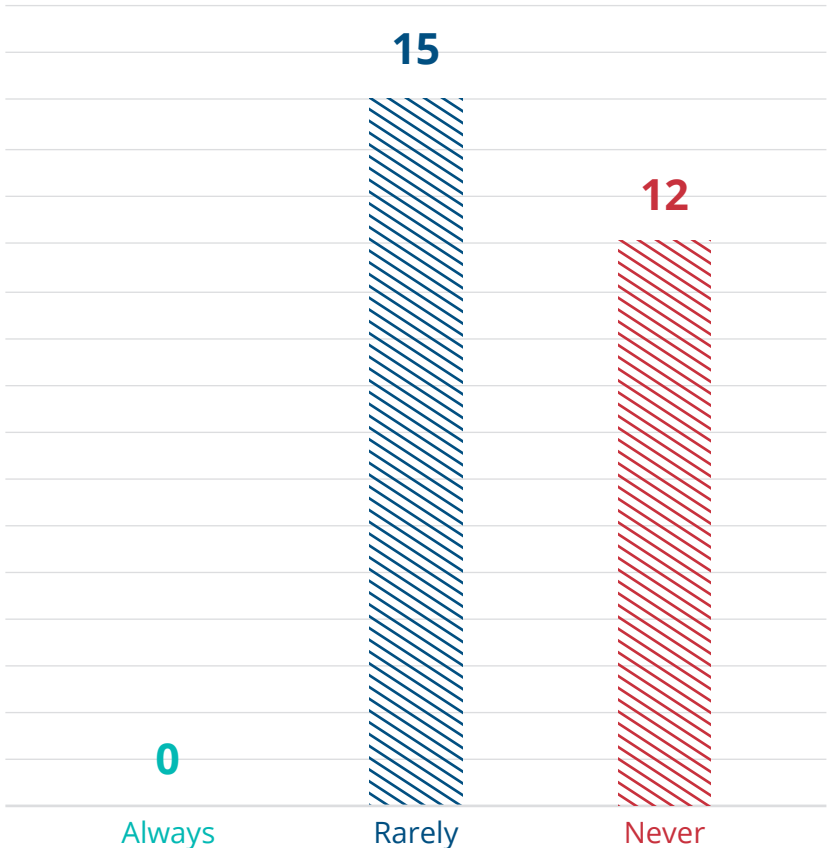
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30 Information from the Focus Group (through zoom platform) with civil servants from seven biggest municipalities in Kosovo. 22 April 2021

# CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This section addresses capacity building needs that municipal EU integration civil servants have identified to empower the role of the Office. Most agreed that the role of the municipality and their role is key in advancing the EU agenda at the local level, yet according to them this role is not accepted as such within the municipality structures including the Mayor’s office.<sup>31</sup> As shown in the figure below, 15 have stated that sometimes they face problems to acquire data from other departments for monitoring and reporting purposes. On the other hand, 12 stated that they have never faced such problems. Yet, the problem is evident because more than half of the municipalities are confronted with such problems or have to use friendship channel to gather information for monitoring and reporting purposes.

**During your monitoring and evaluation work in the municipality, have you ever encountered problems from other departments' colleagues to gather data?**

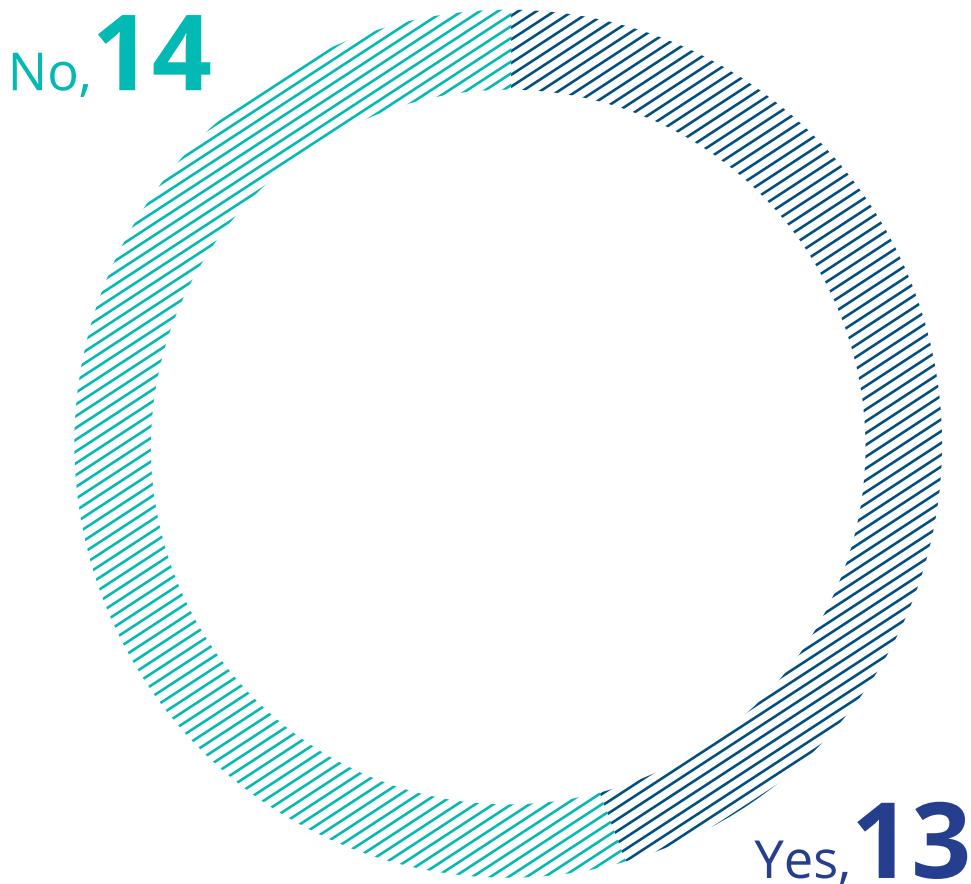


31 Ibid.

To illustrate the lack of their role importance, one of the civil servants stated that other departments sometimes argue - why shall we report to you thus making it harder for EU integration civil servants to gather monitoring data.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, monitoring and reporting of the implementation of EU deriving reforms remains one of the key roles of these Offices.

Moreover, 13 European integration civil servants answered with yes when asked if they have received training related to applying for EU funds, and 14 stated that they did not receive such trainings as shown in the figure below.

### Have you received any training related to applying for EU funds?

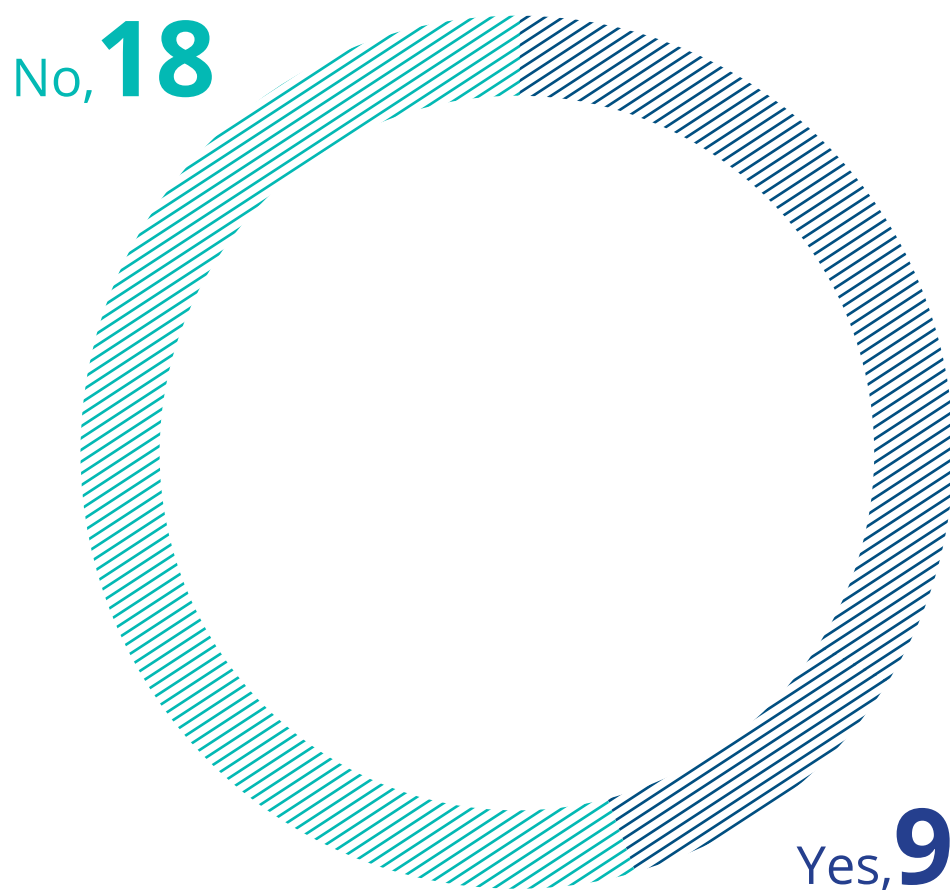


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32 Information from the Focus Group (through zoom platform) with civil servants from seven biggest municipalities in Kosovo. 22 April 2021

On the other hand, when asked if they have applied for EU funds on behalf of the municipality they work, 9 said to have done so, and 18 said no, as shown in the figure below. This data is compatible with the training needs identified by civil servants including training on how to apply for EU funding (data from the online survey).

### Have you ever applied for EU funding?



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Furthermore, we have also asked municipal European integration civil servants to identify their training needs, which would also aid them to empower their role within the municipality. The list of the needs recognized includes the following:

- 1 How to Apply for EU funds (12 have mentioned training for EU funds, in addition to training for funds in general).

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- 2 Project Management Cycle

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- 3 Study visits to other EU countries

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- 4 Collaboration with other international organizations

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- 5 English Language courses

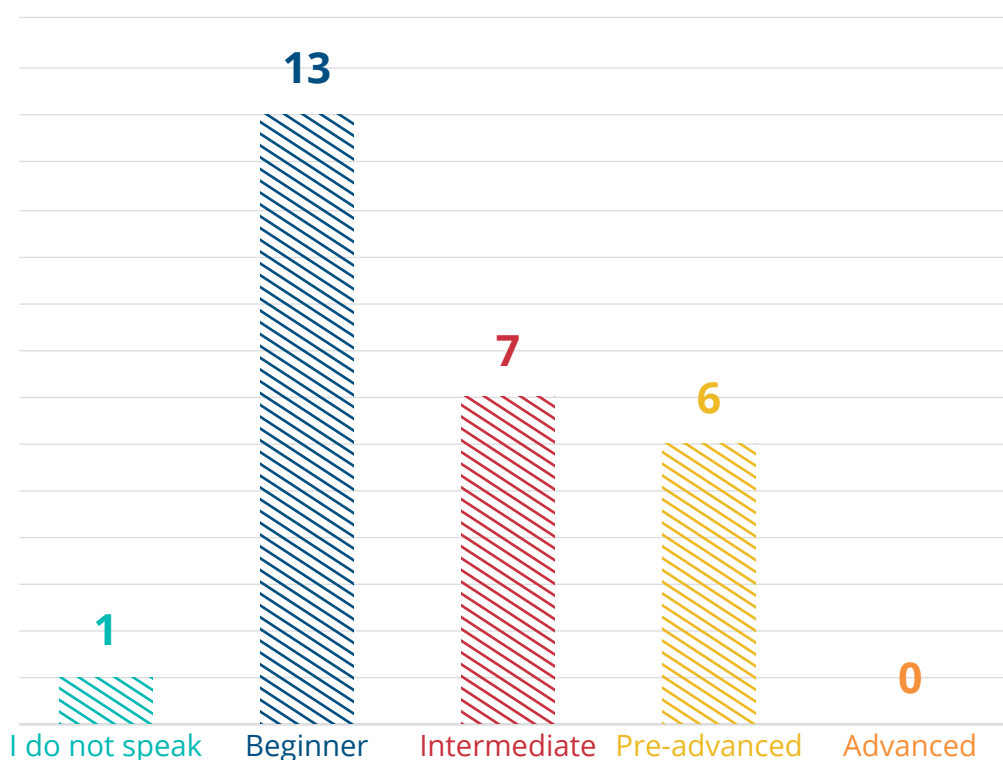
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- 6 Training on preparation of the periodic report



As shown, some of the European integration civil servants have identified the need for attending English language courses, and at the same time the survey data reveals that 14 have limited English language skills while being unable to attend a seminar/training in English. 13 have stated to have better English skills and can attend trainings in English and few speak clearly as shown in the figure below.

### What level of English do you speak?



More than half of all civil servant do not have the language capacities to take part in a seminar, training, or a course delivered in English language, reflecting a major stumbling block in coordinating EU integration funds, facilitating the dialogue with external actors, and applying for EU funds and other international funds.

## CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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This policy report has assessed the application of the Regulation no.08/2011 on the Organization and Responsibilities of Municipal Office for European Integration and advocates for further empowerment of these Offices.

This policy report has utilized a qualitative approach to assess the application of the Regulation no 08/2011 as most of the functions, duties, and responsibilities assessed are of coordination, support, and assist nature. For assessment of these roles, there is a need to gather firsthand data and perceptions from key actors involved. Thus, this policy report has employed the method of data triangulation including a) website search for 38 municipalities, b) conducted interviews with key stakeholders including the MLGA and the Kosovo Association of Municipalities, c) conducted a focus group with European integration civil servants from the seven biggest municipalities in Kosovo (Prishtina, Prizren, Peje, Mitrovica, Gjakova, Gjilan, Ferizaj), and d) conducted an online survey with all European integration civil servants from 38 municipalities.

The analysis demonstrates that the Regulation no.08/2011 has limited application throughout Kosovo municipalities. Several challenges and problems identified include the following:

- Two municipalities lack an Office for European Integration.
- Most of the municipal European integration civil servants have never been asked to aid in assigning local public policy priorities.
- More than half of them are rarely or never consulted in drafting municipal budget or invited in working groups to draft municipal regulations or strategies.
- Almost half of them have never offered support/ advice to the municipal assembly committees.
- More than half of them stated that sometimes they encounter problems with other directorates in gathering information for monitoring and reporting purposes.
- Around 70% of civil servants are never or rarely invited in a meeting with the director's council meeting led by the Mayor.

- Half of them were never trained on how to apply for EU funds and more than half of them have never applied for any type of EU funding.
- More than half of all civil servant do not have the language capacities to take part in a seminar, training, or a course delivered in English language.
- They are unable to organize events in raising awareness among the municipal actors and civil society actors about the European agenda reforms, due to lack of budget.
- All Mayors should invite European integration civil servants during the director's council meeting. This given, they will be informed about any municipal plans and activities and will have the opportunity to provide their feedback.
- All Mayors' cabinets and directors of departments should consult with the municipal European integration civil servants in assigning local public policy priorities to advance the reforms deriving from the EU agenda.
- Municipal European integration civil servants should be consulted when the municipal budget is drafted as the budget dimension remains the key precondition for implementing any local public policy.
- Municipal European integration civil servants should be trained related to applying for EU funds.
- The Regulation no.08/2011 should be amended to revisit the collaboration role of these Offices with the Ministry of Finance and the Office for European Integration (former Ministry of European Integration).

**Therefore, according to our evidence-based findings and with the aim to empower the Municipal Offices for European Integration, this policy report provides the following recommendations:**

- South Mitrovica and Gračaninca should establish a Municipal Office for European Integration and this Office shall act under the supervision of the Mayor of the respective Municipality, in accordance with article 2 of the Regulation no 08.2011.
- Upon taking office every Mayor along with his/her executive staff should be informed about the role and functions of the Office. In addition, the Regulation no 08/2011 should be provided to them via any channel of communication. This given, the frequency of problems encountered during the data monitoring and evaluation process would lower.

# ANNEX A:

## Survey on the role of Municipality in the European Integration Process

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1 Name and Surname\* \_\_\_\_\_

2 Municipality\* \_\_\_\_\_

3 How many European integration civil servants are in your municipality?

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4 What level of English do you speak? \*

- I do not understand (have zero knowledge of the English language)
- Beginner (I can communicate on some simple topics and know some phrases)
- Intermediate (I can understand and attend training where only English is spoken)
- Pre-advanced (I communicate clearly on a variety of topics and use a rich English vocabulary)
- Advanced (I speak the same as my mother tongue)

5 What working relationship do you have with the Ministry of Local Public Administration?

- Very good
- Good
- Not good
- No relation

6 What working relationship do you have with the Ministry of Finance?

- Very good
- Good
- Not Good
- No relation

7 What working relationship do you have with the Office for European Integration (former Ministry of European Integration)?

- Very Good
- Good
- Not Good
- No relation

8 How often are you invited by the Mayor's cabinet in meetings with the Board's Council?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

9 How often are you invited in budgetary planning meetings?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

10 How often are you invited in a working group to draft a regulation or other municipal legal acts?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

11 During your work in the municipality, have you ever offered support to the municipal assembly committees?

- Yes
- No

12 If you answered the above question with YES, then about what advice did you give and in what form?

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13 Do you receive any training for EU funding application?

- Yes
- No

14 Have you ever applied for EU funding?

- Yes
- No

15 During your monitoring and evaluation work in the municipality, have you ever encountered problems from other departments' colleagues to gather data?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

16 How do you assess the role of the municipality in the European Integration process (describe in two or three sentences)?

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17 At what level, from 1- 5, do you assess the application of the Regulation no. 08/2011 on the Organization and Responsibilities of Municipal Offices for European Integration (the closer to 5 the closer to full implementation?)

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18 What kind of training do you need? Please list 3 fields at most.

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19 How do you think that the role of your Office can be empowered within the municipality?

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20 In your opinion, at the municipal level, what reforms are the most difficult to implement?

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## ANNEX B:

# Contact Information related to European Integration Offices in Kosovo Municipalities and Civil Servants

Municipality	Office/Department	Civil Servants
<b>Deçan</b>	Office for Communities and European Integration	<b>Nezir Balaj</b> <b>E-mail:</b> nezir.balaj@rks-gov.net
<b>Gjakovë</b>	European Integration Sector	<b>Arbër Gola</b> <b>Email:</b> arber.gola@rks-gov.net <b>Tel.:</b> 038/200 – 44092
<b>Glllogoc</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Gentianë Morina</b> <b>Email:</b> gentiane.r.morina@rks-gov.net
<b>Gjilan</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Burim Elezi</b> <b>E-mail:</b> burim.elezi@rks-gov.net <b>Tel.:</b> +383 (44) 212 336
<b>Dragash</b>	Law and European Integration Office	<b>Adem Emini</b> <b>Email:</b> adem.emini@rks-gov.net
<b>Istog</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Muhamet Gusturanaj</b> <b>E-mail:</b> muhamet.gusturanaj@rks-gov.net
<b>Kaçanik</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Hidajete Guri</b> <b>Email:</b> hidajete.hoxha-guri@rks-gov.net



Municipality	Office/Department	Civil Servants
<b>Klinë</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Have Thaçi- Fejza</b> <b>Email:</b> have.thaqi@rks-gov.net <b>Tel.:</b> 03820043756
<b>Fushë Kosovë</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Nurije Fazliu</b> <b>Email:</b> nurije.fazliu@rks-gov.net
<b>Kamenicë</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Zijadin Thaqi</b> <b>E-mail:</b> zijadin.thaci@rks-gov.net <b>Tel:</b> 03820047645
<b>Leposaviq</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Dragana Milutinović</b>
<b>Lipjan</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Linda Shahini</b> <b>E-mail:</b> linda.shahini@rks-gov.net
<b>Obiliq</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Kushtrim Mirena</b> <b>E-mail:</b> kushtrim.mirena@rks-gov.net
<b>Rahovec</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Arben Gashi</b> <b>E-mail:</b> arben.a.gashi@rks-gov.net

Municipality	Office/Department	Civil Servants
<b>Pejë</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Teuta Blaka &amp; Tahir Shala</b> <b>E-mail:</b> Teuta.Blaka@rks-gov.net ;
<b>Podujevë</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Ylber Salihu</b> <b>E-mail:</b> Ylber.Salihu@rks-gov.net <b>Tel.:</b> 038/200 41-017
<b>Prishtinë</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Ajshe Berveniku</b> <b>E-mail:</b> ajshe.berveniku@rks-gov.net
<b>Prizren</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Eleonora Fetollari Buş</b> <b>E-mail:</b> eleonora.fetollari@rks-gov.net <b>Tel.:</b> +381(0) 38 200 44-752
<b>Skënderaj</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Mirsad Gashi</b> <b>E-mail:</b> mirsad.gashi@rks-gov.net <b>Tel:</b> +383 44 418 571
<b>Shtime</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Ekrem Reqica</b> <b>E-mail:</b> ekrem.reqica@rks-gov.net;
<b>Shtërpcë</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Tasa Radic - Zyrtar</b> <b>E-mail:</b> tasa.radic@rks-gov.net
<b>Suharekë</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Shaban Asllanaj</b> <b>E-mail:</b> shaban.asllanaj@rks-gov.net <b>Tel:</b> +383 29 271 608

Municipality	Office/Department	Civil Servants
<b>Ferizaj</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Hilmi Mustafa</b> <b>E-mail:</b> hilmi.mustafa@rks-gov.net <b>Tel:</b> 038 200 46 072
<b>Viti</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Florent Ymer,</b> <b>E-mail:</b> florent.ymeri@rks-gov.net ,
<b>Vushtrri</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Xhavit Mehmeti -</b> <b>E-mail:</b> xhavit.mehmeti@rks-gov.net
<b>Zubin Potok</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Latinka Utvic</b>
<b>Zveçan</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Jelena Djokic</b>
<b>Malishevë</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Haxhi Krasniqi</b>
<b>Novobërdë</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Arbenita Llapashtica</b>
<b>Mitrovicë e Veriu</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Hamit Mripa</b> <b>E-mail:</b> hamit.mripa@rks-gov.net;

Municipality	Office/Department	Civil Servants
<b>Mitrovicë e Jugu</b>	Directorate for European Integration and Social Welfare	<b>Sadije Jashari</b> E-mail: sadije.jashari@rks-gov.net
<b>Junik</b>	Office for European Integration	<b>Turim Ganijaj</b> E-mail: turim.ganijaj@rks-gov.net Tel: +383 49 760 230
<b>Hani i Elezit</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Avni Bushi</b> E-mail: avni.bushi@rks-gov.net;
<b>Mamushë</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Fahri Kruezi</b> E-mail: fahri.kruezi@rks-gov.net Tel: 0038 345 271 096
<b>Graçanicë</b>	Directorate for Economic Development and European Integration	<b>Nebojša Milovanović</b> E-mail: ebojsa.milovanovic@rks-gov.net
<b>Ranillug</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Arton Dubova</b> E-mail: arton.dubova@rks-gov.net
<b>Partesh</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Jovica Maksimovic</b>
<b>Kllokot</b>	Office for International Cooperation and European Integration	<b>Përparim Rexhepi</b> E-mail: perparim.rexhepi@rks-gov.net;



