

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN DECISION MAKING PROCESSES IN SELF-GOVERNMENT UNITS IN REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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Abstract

This paper is based on the quantitative survey conducted between public administration members from the municipalities of the Eastern or so called Bregalnica region. This survey is a part of the wider project “Transparency and participation in the decision making processes in self-government units in the Eastern planning region in Republic of Macedonia”, conducted on Goce Delchev University, Faculty of Law in the period of 2014/2015. From this research we can determine that there is need for improving of the work of the local administration in Republic of Macedonia. Furthermore, we are locating the factors of influence during the decision making process for more efficiency and effectiveness, but also and necessity for their implementation in practice.

Keywords: *Local self-government, decision making process, public administration, transparency, democracy.*

Introduction

Basis for reforms of the state administration in Republic of Macedonia have been founded in the Strategy for reforms of the public administration which was passed in 1999. Since then, each political structure which is ruling follows, applies and sophisticates the basic principles of the Macedonian administration system, the ruling of the law, transparency competency,

stability, responsibility, predictability, equal treatment for all, efficiency and ethics. The most comprehensive strategy for the reform of the public administration refers to the period from 2010-2015 and it contains precisely confirmed activities and changes where it will move, the further process of modernization of the administration in Republic of Macedonia. The basic aim of the strategy is creation of public administration which will secure highly qualitative services of the citizens and business as well as highly professional support of the government and other involved parties in the policy creation. That is why steps have been planned that resulted with essential, organizational and legal changes. For the implementation of the legal standards, the ascent is put on the increase of the effectiveness, efficiency and the transparency of the administration, increase of the openness of the system, improvement of the quality of the services, which will produce with satisfaction at the citizens and the business section. Basically, the organizational changes that will mark this period are the changes of the Law for organization and work of the department of the state authority by which a transformation has been made at the Ministry of Information Society¹ into the Ministry of Information Society and Administration. At the same time, the Ministry took over the authorities from the domain of the state and public services² as well as the responsibility for the realization of the strategy for reform in the administration. Another law which established new category of employees in the public services is the Law of public staff³. By this law, for the first time statute, the rights, obligations and the responsibility of the public staff have been arranged which have huge influence towards the way, culture, science, labor and social affairs, social and children protection, institutions, funds, public companies founded by Republic of Macedonia, municipalities that is the city of Skopje. It is important to be emphasized that by this law, distinction has been made between the state and public administration in the Republic of Macedonia which in the previous period has been a topic of many polemics and dilemmas whether this group of workers have been treated according to the Law of state staff or according to the Law of working relations. The Law of public servants represents unique legal frame which defined only the basic principles and standards for achievement of the function of the public

¹ Official Gazette of republic Macedonia number 167/10

² Ministry for preparation of legal and sub legal acts for the development of the policies and standards for management for human resources and for following of the employment and management with human resources in the state and public service. With article 26-a paragraph (2) Law for organization and work of the organs of the state management, the state management inspector is a organ as a part of the Ministry for information society and administration

³ Law of public clerks (Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia number 52/10)

administration and the principles and standards which come out of the characteristics that each of the activities has, a possibility has been left to be arranged in special laws.

According to the Law of the Local Government ⁴ the municipalities are autonomous in the regulation and execution of the activities in the public interest. This means that the municipalities are given exclusive powers that can not be taken away or limited, except in cases specified by law. ⁵

Analyzing the legal structure of decision-making process in the local government in Macedonia, it could be realized the use of consensual model - collective decision. The local governments in Macedonia represent organizations which have legal personality. The law provides the decisions to be based on the will of all citizens living in the community through various forms and ways, civil initiatives, and establishing NGOs, the presence of the council sessions. This means that the citizens can express their opinions, make suggestions, and the members of the municipal council representatives elected by the people make the decisions. In this established system of decision-making, each has its own role and contribution to the success of the decision.

The process of decision making begins with compiling the first draft of the agenda, prepared by the administration in coordination with the President of the Council. The main points of the decision making are largely proposed by the mayor, councilors and officials from the administration of a particular portfolio for which it is necessary a decision to be made by the municipal council. Certain proposals are collected by citizens for issues as a result of citizen initiative or questions that require public debate. Prior to the Council meeting, the committees which are in charge of the proposed items have to determine their appropriateness and validity. The decision is considered adopted if voted by more than half of the members present, unless provided by the majority. The role of the administration in the decision-making process in the local government is logistical meaning the administration should create a base for quality decisions making process.

4 Law on Local Self-Government "Official Newspaper" 5/2002

5 Manual decentralization representatives of civil society organizations to monitor the process of implementation of decentralization in Macedonia / [author Jane Vrteska Natasha Ilijeva-Acevski Georgi Hristov]. - Skopje: Foundation Open Society Institute - Macedonia, 2013. - 160 p. : Illustrator. ; 24 cm Footnotes to the text. - Bibliography: p. 160 - Contains: Annex 1-3 ISBN 978-608-218-174-5

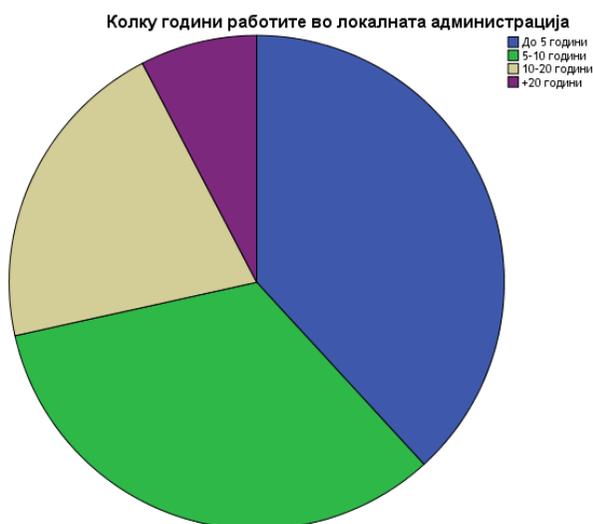
Methodology, independent and control variable

The questionnaire was conducted in the period 2014/2015, as part of a broader research "Transparency and participation in decision-making process in local self-government units in the Eastern Region in the Republic of Macedonia", conducted at the Law Faculty of the University "Goce Delchev" in Stip. The survey was conducted on the territory of the municipalities in the Eastern Planning, or so-called Bregalnica region, which included 144 respondents, members of the local administration in municipalities Stip, Karbinci Probishtip Cesinovo-, Zrnovci, Kocani, Vinica, Makedonska Kamenica, Pehcevo and Berovo.

Within the questionnaire were asked 44 questions relating to the views of members of the local administration about their participation in decision making at the local level, as well as views on issues of sphere in functioning of the local administration.

Within this research 45, 1% of respondents are male, while 54, 9% of respondents were female. Age from 18 to 35 years old are 29,2%, 46, 5% are aged 35 to 50 years and from 50 to 65 years of age are 22, 2%. According to the education they possess, 22, 5% have secondary education, while 74, 3% of respondents with higher education. Less than 5 years' work experience in local administration have a high 38.2% of respondents, from 5 to 10 years' work experience are 33, 3%, 10 to 20 years work experience in local administration have 20, 8% and only 7 6% of respondents have more than 20 years of service (Figure 1).

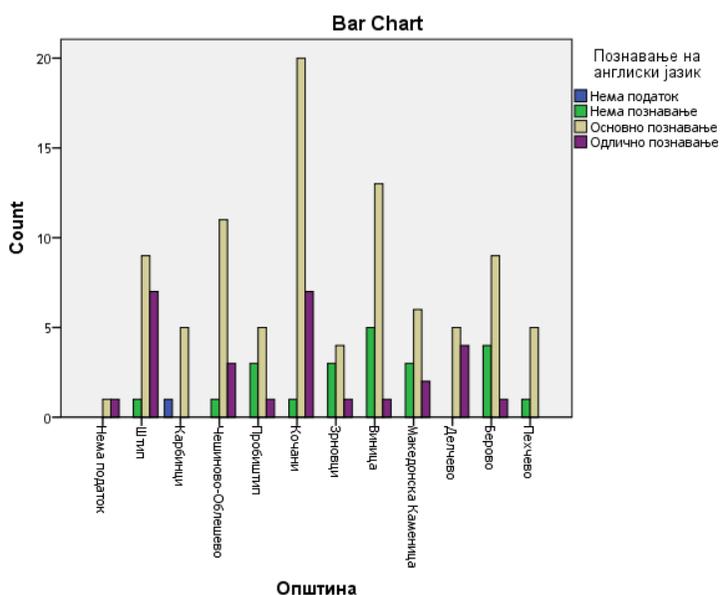
Figure 1



17, 4% of respondents members of the local administration have indicated that the positions equivalent to higher education, or counsellor, Junior or Senior Associate. 18, 8% of respondents reported having vacancy head of department or sector, 16% claim to have a work placement officer (Senior Associate, Independent executive, junior executive or technical secretary). Surprisingly, a high 25% chose the option Other (Administration), and 17 4% Other (rest of). This points to a lack of organization and systematization of jobs in municipalities that are subject of this investigation. Also, if we compare with the previous question, there is no indication that jobs are always tailored to the appropriate level of education.

In the area of education we can note that a high percentage of respondents have a basic knowledge of English and computers. So, 15, 3% of respondents said they have no knowledge of English, 64, 6% claim to have basic knowledge and fluency in English are 19, 4% of respondents. If an inspection by municipalities may be noted that the best English language has the administration of Delcevo and Stip (Figure 2). What can be seen from the survey results is that there is a significant difference in perceptions of knowledge of working with computers. In fact, only 2.1% did not have any knowledge of working with computers, 40, 3% believe that they have a basic knowledge and high 56 3% claim to have excellent knowledge of working with computers. Such differences in perceptions and knowledge of the English language and work with computers are more or less symptomatic, if we take into account that very often work with computers depends on knowledge of the English language.

Figure 2

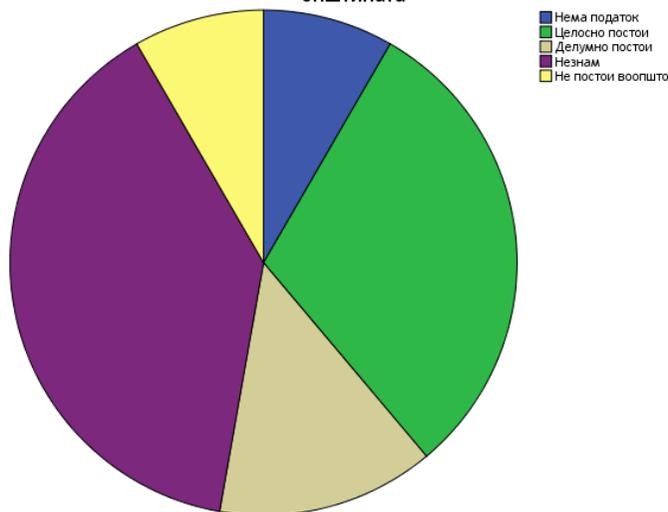


Research Results

In the frame of the survey we can notice that a high percentage of respondents, members of the local administration or do not know or claim that there are not adequate procedures for making a decision. Thus, the question, *Whether there is a procedure or other document refers to actions that should be taken when making the draft decisions to the Municipal Council?*, 8, 3% did not answer the question, 38, 9% said dont know, and 8, 3% said not exist at all. The same question *Exists fully* answered 30, 6%, and *Partly exist* 13, 9% (Figure 3). The situation is similar when we talk about the existence of a procedure for strategic planning. Asked, *Is there a procedure for the preparation of strategic plans in the local government?*, with *Yes* answered, 45,8%, 15, 3% answered negatively, and *Don't know* answer 32, 6% of respondents.

Figure 3

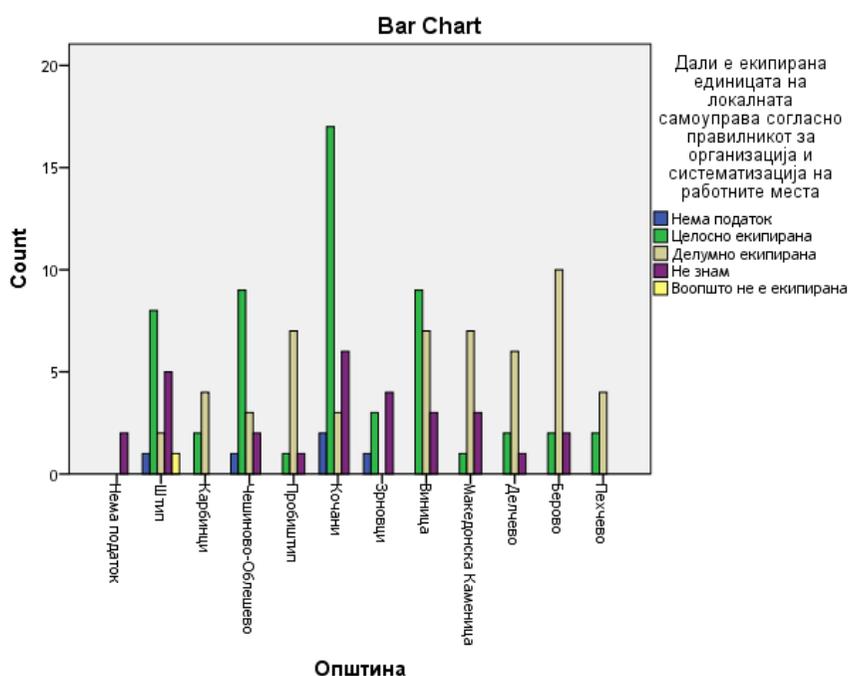
Дали постои процедура или друг документ кој упатува на дејствија што треба да се преземат при креирањето на предлог-одлуките до Советот на општината



However, the majority of respondents in their reply argue that the existing procedures are applied in practice. It seems contradictory, despite the fact that the answers to the previous question that less than half of the surveyed local administrators argue that there are some procedures, still, greater percentage of those who claim that they are implemented. This leads to two assumptions: 1) that a significant part of the procedures are not formalized and are reduced to verbal instructions and 2) there are procedures, but they are under-represented in terms of professional engagement of the local administration, but those which exist are implemented in practice .

According to the perceptions of the local administration, Local self-governments in the East region are fully or partially staffed (filled with enough administration employees). Thus, the question: *Is local self-government unit staffed according to the Rules of organization and systematization of jobs?*, Fully staffed answered 38, 9%, 36, 8 chose *Partially staffed*, and only 20, 1% said *Do not know*. If we make analysis by municipality, we see that better staffed are larger municipalities as opposed to smaller and rural. Exception makes municipality Cusinovo-Obleshevo. However, the best staffed municipalities are Stip, Kocani and Vinica (Figure 4).

Figure 4



If the previous two questions are leaving room for discussions, then we have almost unified response to the question *Is the administration of the local self-government participating in compiling the agenda and preparation of the conclusions of the meetings of the municipal council meetings?*, In this sense, high 77, 1% said *Yes*, while only 9% of the administration are not involved in the preparation of the decisions of the meetings of municipal councils.

Asked, *Is there a separate organizational unit for strategic planning in local self-government unit?*, most of the respondents answered with *No* or *Don't know*. However, high 38, 9% answered positively. In this sense, the answers of respondents, members of the local administration, in the

municipality Berovo there is most developed strategic planning unit (Figure 5). Yet, high rate or 59% of the administrative workers are participating in the creation of local strategic plans. The results are logical in sense to which most involved in strategic planning managers, while the least involved are referents (Figure 6). Therefore, we can conclude that although there is a lack administrative structure and procedures, a high percentage of local administration is involved in the strategic planning of the municipalities.

Figure 5

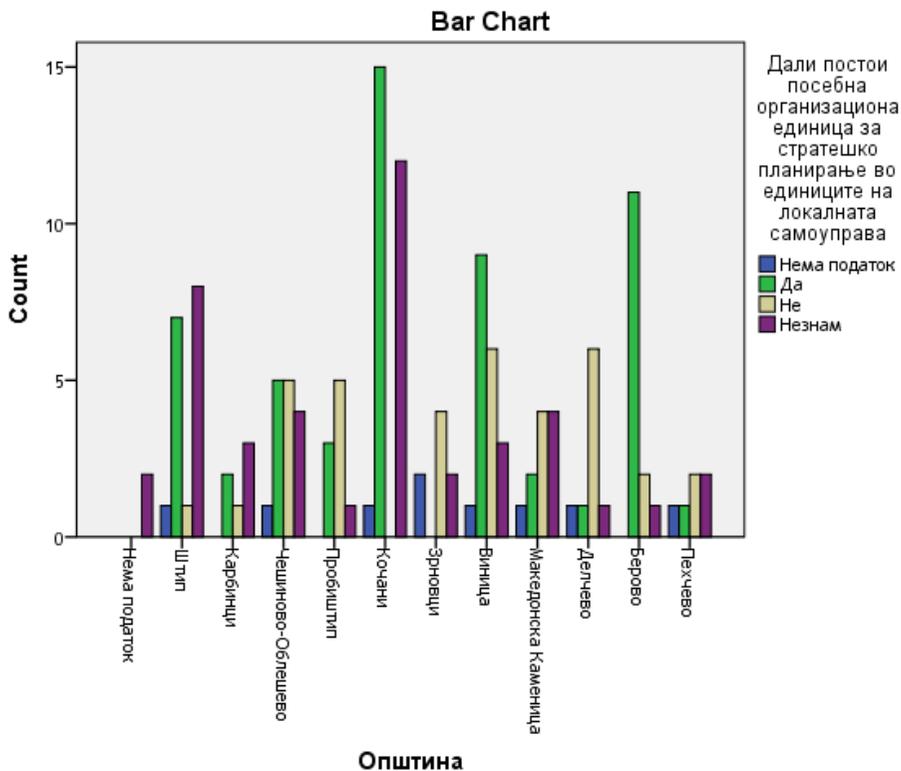
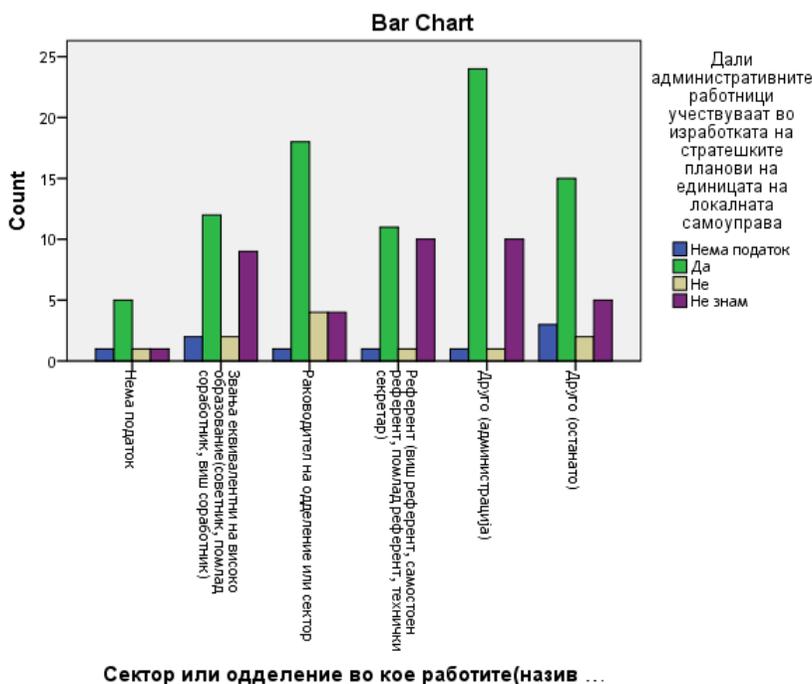
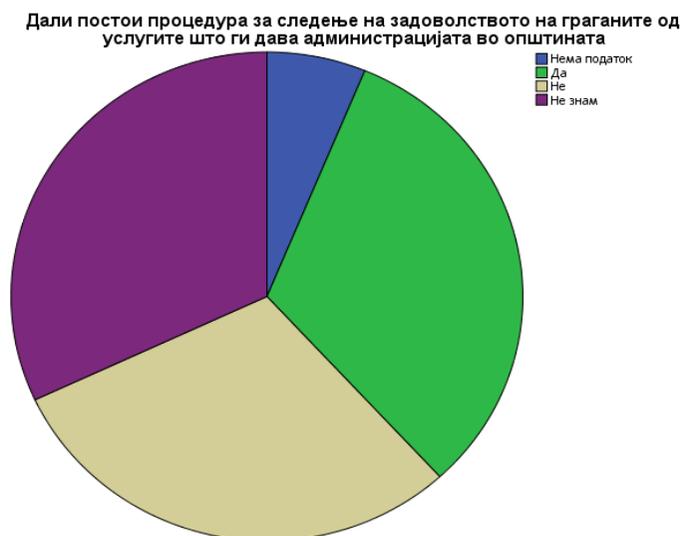


Figure 6



When it comes to transparency and accountability of the local administrative workers we have asked several questions. Asked, *Is there a system of evaluation in local government units?*, 22, 9% answered *Yes*, that there is no such a system of evaluation claim 25, 7%, and high 45, 1% of respondents *Don't know* whether there is an evaluation system. However, when it comes to communicating with the citizens, high 69, 4% of respondents claimed that in the municipality, in which they work, there is a person responsible for external communications with the public. Yet, the question *Is there a procedure to monitor citizens' satisfaction with the services provided by the administration of the municipality?*, 31, 9% claim that there is such a procedure, 29, 9% claim that such a procedure does not exist and 31, 9% said *Don't know* (Figure 7).

Figure 7



However, the situation is slightly different when we asked the question *Whether there is a monitoring system of the administration of the municipality as a basis for locating the responsibility?* According to the perceptions of the local administration high 41% of respondents claim that such a system of monitoring the work of the administration *Fully exist*, 27, 1% claim that there is a *Partially exist*, 24, 3% said *Don't know*, and only 2, 8% said *It does not exist*. However, respondents claim that there is no motivation system (Table 1). Only 29, 9% were rewarded for their work, 62, 3% have never received any award and *Don't know* answered 5, 6% (Figure 8). Asked, *Is there initiated and implemented procedures to disciplinary responsibility over the administration in the local self-government unit?*, 36, 1 percent claim to have witnessed such a procedure in the unit in which they work, 38 2% have never witnessed any of their colleagues to be punished, and *Don't know* answered 21, 5%. However, if the question is put whether any of them had been punished, only 14, 6% of respondents claimed they were punished for their work, and high 63, 2% of respondents claimed that against them personally were never initiated or conducted disciplinary or responsibility measures. At the end of this section, a high percentage of local administration claims that there is place for complaints, where citizens can complain about the administration work. So the question, *Is there a place for complaints for the work of the administration?*, 52, 1% said that such a place exists, and only 20% claim that one such place does not exist (Figure 9).

Table 1
Is there motivation system for the administration in your self-government unit

	Frequenc y	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
There are no records	5	3,5	3,5	3,5
Yes	32	22,2	22,2	25,7
No	80	55,6	55,6	81,3
Don't Know	27	18,8	18,8	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	

Figure 8

Дали некогаш сте добиле награда за вашата работа од единицата на локалната самоуправа во која работите

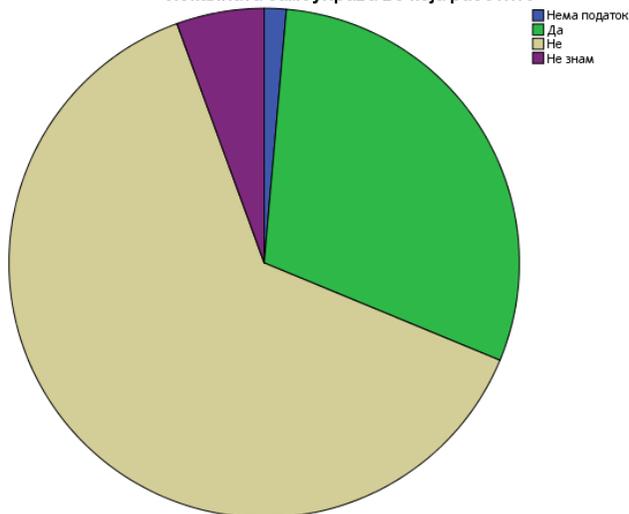
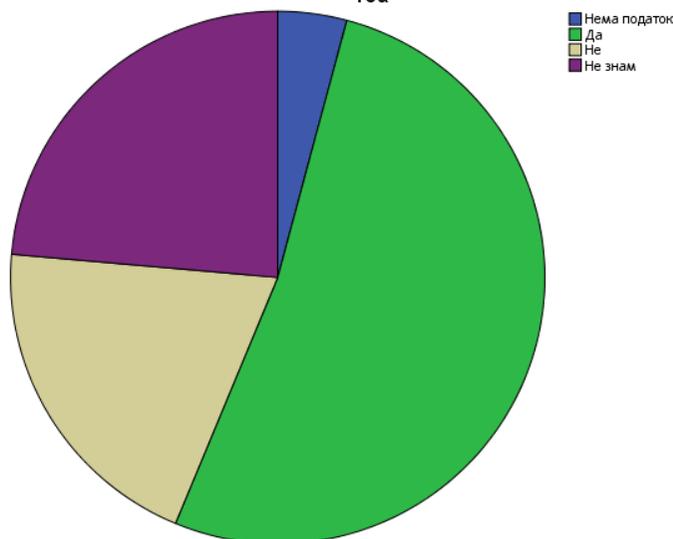


Figure 9

Дали постои место за поплаки од работењето на администрацијата и дали се евидентирани и анализираат поплаките и што се превзема во врска со тоа



The next set of questions are relates to the internal organizational system and functioning of local self-government within the municipalities of the Eastern Planning Region of the country. Half of the respondents, or 50%, answered that there is an electronic system for keeping records (Table 2). This is a high percentage, but given that we live in an information society, there is need this perception of public administration to increase, and therefore in the future to set an assumption of greater use of electronic data storage system, and use of electronic networks to increase transparency.

Table 2

Is there system for electronic keeping of the records

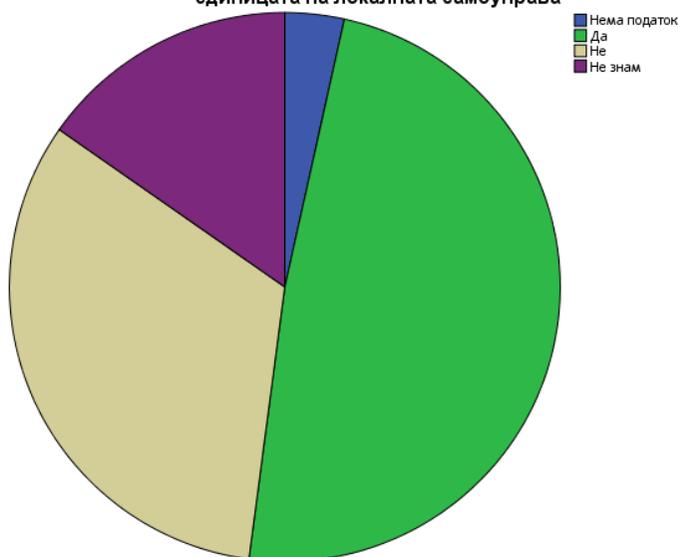
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
There is no record	10	6,9	6,9	6,9
Yes	72	50,0	50,0	56,9
No	29	20,1	20,1	77,1
Don't Know	33	22,9	22,9	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	

Asked, *Are there professional administrative officers performing risk analysis during the process of the decision adoption?*, 20, 8% said *Yes*, 38, 2% claim that there are no officers who assess the risks, and 38, 9 answered *Don't Know*. This leads to the assumption that lack adequate analytical center, even in larger municipalities, leads to lower quality of made decisions.

Asked, *Are there trained administrative staff for the preparation of projects of international character?*, high 62 5% claim that there are trained administrative workers which can prepare projects of international significance, 17, 4% claim that there are not enough trained administrative staff and 15, 3% said *Don't know*. Also high 62, 5%, members of the public administration argue that there is an appropriate unit for managing of human resources. This complements 48, 6% of respondents which claim that there is a plan for training and professional development of local administration, and high 32, 6% which claim that such plans for professional development do not exist (Figure 10).

Figure 10

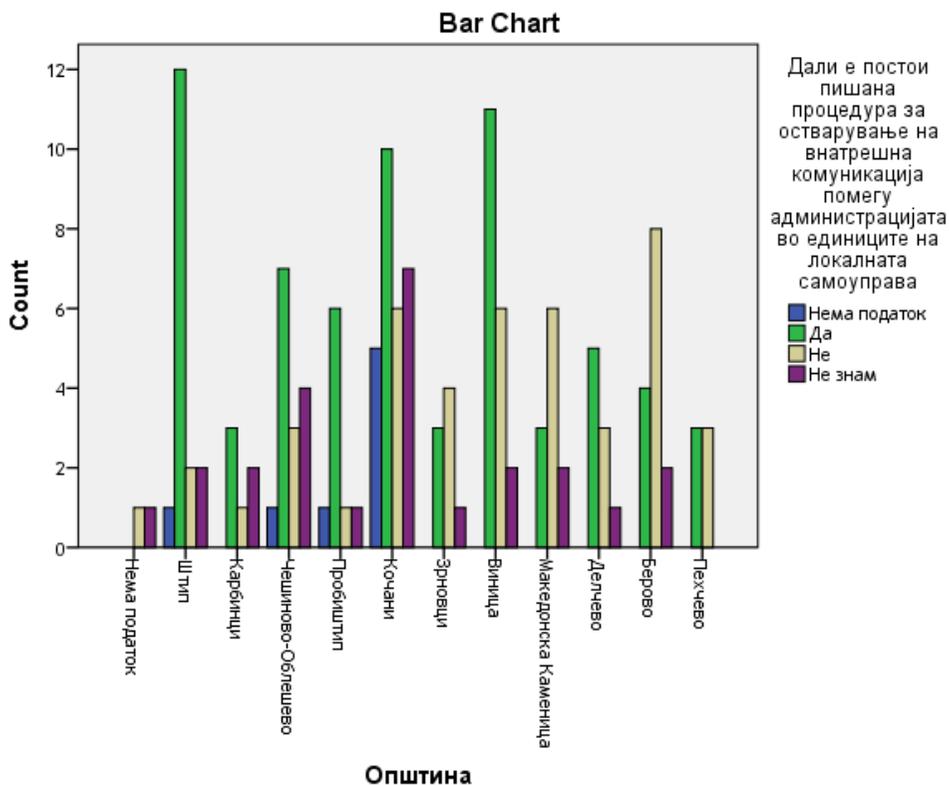
Дали постои план за обука и стручно усовршување на администрацијата во единицата на локалната самоуправа



There is division over the question *Are there a quality standards in local government unite?*, 29, 2% claim that such standard *exists fully, partly exists* for 24, 3% of respondents, with *Don't know* answer 22, 9%, and by 18, 8% of respondents these quality standards *are not established*. This complements the question *Is there written procedures for the exercise of internal communication between the administration in local government?*, of which 46, 5% said *yes*, 30, 6% answered *negative*, and with *Don't know*

17, 4% of the respondents. In Figure 11 you can see the situation by municipalities.

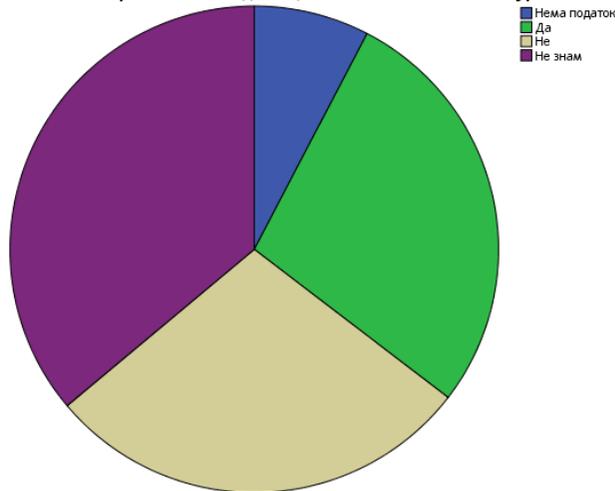
Figure 11



Finally, we should notice that one of the most problematic issue is the fact that the public administration does not pay enough attention for analyzing of the available resources. Asked, *Did you made analysis of the available resources in the municipality that may be proposed as an entrepreneurial projects for the citizens of the local government?*, 27, 8% answered *yes*, 28, 5% answered *no* and high 36, 1% of the respondents employed in public administration responded with *Don't know* (Figure 12).

Figure 12

Дали имате изработено анализа на расположливите ресурси на подрачјето на општината што можат да се предложат како претприемачки проекти за граѓаните на единицата на локалната самоуправа



Conclusions

One of the key problems facing the local administration in the country is the issue of transparency in decision-making, and the level of participation, as of the citizens toward the local authorities and as well of administration is self in the internal procedures within the local governments.

From the conducted research it can be noted that there are under-developed internal procedures, especially when it comes to written procedures in the process of creating and decision making. Although, according to the perceptions of employees in local administration, local governments are well equipped, there is lacking of appropriate qualifications, a better system of internal organization and better developed system of motivation of the employees in the local administration.

Special attention should be paid for building the system for forwarding the requests and initiatives from citizens. This is complemented by the lack of sufficient merit built system of rewards and penalties, which are greatly affecting the level of motivation. But it also requires special attention to be paid to the continuous formation and education through training and exchange of practical experiences of local administration, especially with in the regions.

Although a high percentage of members of the local administration are claiming to have knowledge of projects design, which is complemented by

knowledge of English and computers, however, shocking is the data that indicates a very low level of analysis of available resources and cooperation with in local business sector.

Recommendations

- Introducing a written procedure of communication at all levels of the public administration functions. This is particularly important when it comes to processing of requests and suggestions from citizens even during maintaining semiformal but and formal meetings. In this way will increase the possibilities for establishing the responsibility of local administrators.
- Conducting permanent trainings and seminars in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of administration at the local level. This is particularly important as need for greater communication between employees in local administration at regional level, in order to exchange experiences and practice.
- Establishment of procedures and a clear system of penalties and rewards that will improve the motivation of the local administration.
- Building system for estimating of existing resources of municipalities and local administration, as well as risk analysis on which they are exposed.
- More attention must be paid to the preparation of strategic planning.
- Creation of local bodies for cooperation with the local business sector.